

Twenty-Five Years at Lake Berryessa - What Comes Next?

by Peter Kilkus

Traditionally the transition to a new year is a time for self-reflection. Sometimes the old year ends with warm feeling of good times well-spent. Other times it recedes into a mist of melancholy memories. Usually both at the same time.

Every new year marks important anniversaries.

2023 was the 25th anniversary of the beginning of my love affair with Lake Berryessa. 1998 was my first full year at the lake after buying my place at Steele Park. The surprise of fast rising water overflowing Glory Hole by 4.75 feet and coming up under my house was an "exhilarating" experience! I had also just bought my first digital video camera and tested it with a tour of Steele Park Resort. I posted the six minute version on YouTube. I'm sure it will bring back happy memories to the many of you who had the great family experiences the resort offered.

Steele Park Resort Tour 1998:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkPV8dZS6pM>

2024 will be the 15th anniversary of the 2009 pointless and unnecessary demolition of Steele Park Resort by the Bureau of Reclamation. I become sad and angry every time I watch the video of the tragedy I just posted.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4pxcbA9pUY>

2023 was the 10th anniversary of the Bureau of Reclamation's failed process to try to bring a new recreation company, Pensus, to the lake to rebuild the five demolished resorts: Putah Creek Resort, Berryessa Marina Resort, Rancho Monticello Resort, Spanish Flat Resort, and Steele Canyon Resort. After a Catch-22 style fiasco presided over by the Bureau of Reclamation, Pensus was kicked out in 2012.

2024 will be 9th anniversary of the Bureau of Reclamation's last 2015 attempt to find any new recreation companies to rebuild the closed resorts. They were very apologetic, actually admitting their culpability in the sad state of affairs at the lake at the time. They set up community meetings and financed several studies. But in typical bureaucratic fashion most of the perpetrators of the crime either retired or were "promoted" out of the area. Nothing happened after that.

2023 was the 7th anniversary of the beginning of the Lake Berryessa News' 2016 campaign to have Napa County retake control of the lake resorts which it had given back to the Bureau of Reclamation in 1975. Before 1975 Napa County had successfully managed the lake since it first filled in 1958.

2024 will be the 4th anniversary of the signing of the 2020 Managing Partner Agreement between Napa County and the Bureau of Reclamation. Napa County now has management responsibility for the Lake Berryessa recreation areas (aka, resorts).

2023 was the 3rd anniversary of Napa County's 2020 bid proposal for three of the closed resorts. After two years of no progress, the winning bidder, Sun Outdoors, bailed out. Will Camp Margaritaville Resorts now have the opportunity to be the hero?

2024: Will it be the birth of a new beginning and the start date for many positive anniversaries in the future? The Lake Berryessa community and the hundreds of thousands of Lake Berryessa supporters including previous and present users certainly hope so.



