

(Editor's Note: The Lake Berryessa News does not write about politics except when the politics affects the Lake Berryessa community. The following opinion column is aimed at correcting misinformation being spread publicly regarding the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program and the Steele Canyon Recreation Area planning process.)

Lake Berryessa is Under Attack - Again! - A Call To Action!

An Editorial Opinion by Peter Kilkus, Editor-Publisher

As I watched a video clip of a long-time opponent of the renewal of our Lake Berryessa community speaking at the last Napa County Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, January 7, 2025, I thought someone had accidentally posted a clip of her from 25 years ago. I debated her on Napa Public Television way back then, and her style of aggressive misrepresentation has not changed much. The video of her comments is available to review for yourselves at:

<https://youtu.be/FJX25b0VHdc>

Her buzzwords describing 20-year old issues and requesting a "broader conversation" for which we "need more information" to make the choice between a "family-friendly vs party lake" have not been valid for more than 20 years. During that time, despite all the hard work to protect the lake, our community has been subject to the ravages of evil, entropy, and the economy. But we've had five functioning resorts still operating with no "party lake" problems. Her comments come a year after the first sneak attack on Camp Margaritaville RV Resorts at the Supervisors meeting on November 7, 2023.

Those of you who follow the news about Lake Berryessa may have noticed a few articles that week popping up in local media after that meeting. The subject was the Napa County supervisors' approval of a negotiating agreement with Camp Margaritaville Resorts in its bid for the revitalization of the Steele Canyon Recreation area. The item was originally on the "consent agenda" which means it was deemed generally unobjectionable and not in need of a public hearing. This was the same process that was used two weeks earlier to approve the interim contracts for Steele Canyon and Spanish Flat, and was one reason neither I, nor any other supporters of the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Process, attended the meeting.

But at the last minute the item was unexpectedly removed from the consent agenda by an unknown person and opened for discussion and public comment. This was followed by a concerted attack on the proposal from a small clique of pseudo-environmental exclusionists.

Their comments were little more than empty ad hominem arguments against the word "Margaritaville". They appeared to be crafting a new "The Little Lie" to replace "The Big Lie" I documented in my book: Policy and Politics Betray the People: The Lake Berryessa Saga: 1958 - 2020, "The Lake Berryessa resorts, especially the mobile homes in the resorts, discouraged the general public from accessing the lake, prevented the public from using the best parts of the shoreline, and also polluted the lake."

Their "Little Lie" is that "Margaritaville" means an exceptionally large resort with wild and crazy Cabo Wabo type activities that will be inappropriate for our community. None of their comments were valid. They simply wanted to frighten people with the image, despite the substance of the actual proposal. The real name of the bidder is Camp Margaritaville Resorts which focuses on family camping and lodging, especially RV camping. I stayed at a Margaritaville Resort in the Cayman Islands several years ago. It was one of the less expensive resorts on the beach, with simple but elegant facilities, great beach, nice restaurants, bars, shops, and pools.

What concerned me most about that November 2023 meeting was that it appeared to have been a coordinated, pre-planned stealth attack on the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Project which blindsided the County itself and the majority of the Lake Berryessa region residents, especially those in the Berryessa Highlands, who were not able to make comments of support at the meeting.

Having watched the meeting video more than once, I can affirm that Mr. Lederer, Ms. Sears, and the Camp Margaritaville representative Mr. Wilkens, did excellent jobs in answering all questions in detail, refuting every negative comment before they were made by the speakers later.

The totality of the meeting was positive in its presentation of the facts. It would have been even better with some Lake Berryessa community supporters there to add their positives comments. As I told the supervisors, "If you actually wish to hear what the real people think about the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Project, please provide a date and time at which I can have dozens of Lake Berryessa supporters lined up to speak in support of the Camp Margaritaville Resorts proposal or any other reasonable plan for our lake community."

I've made the Supervisors' meeting video available on YouTube at:

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

The video is an hour long but answers every relevant question in detail.

I also excerpted a statement by Supervisor Pedroza completely contradicting the negative misinformation being spread by the naysayers at the meeting. Supervisor Pedroza has consistently supported the Lake Berryessa community since he was first elected. I am hopeful that new Board of Supervisors will also be similarly supportive.

Pedroza statement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbbDDbWzMdE>

This meeting resulted, probably as planned, in a spate of articles in local news outlets focusing only on the opponents' misrepresentation of the facts - and the word "cringey". Interestingly, Tuesday's little coordinated group of naysayers had never raised its head before in opposition to any of the other proposals over the last few years. Perhaps Sun Outdoors or Suntex Marinas just sounds better to them than "Margaritaville". Why didn't they complain two years earlier when the bid was awarded to Sun Companies (Sun Outdoors) which had proposed a more expansive plan?

Hopefully the Board of Supervisors will live up to its agenda statement that:

"The County hopes that the private investment associated with a long-term concession agreement will improve recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, provide new employment opportunities, and possibly become an anchor for revitalization of the Lake Berryessa community."

After that attack, which included false statements that the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program might violate the Napa County General Plan or that it didn't include "nature-based recreation", I wrote several reports refuting those allegations. These reports are available on my website (<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/>) at:

[Lake Berryessa and the Napa General Plan](https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Past-Stories-&-Reports/Lake-Berryessa-and-the-Napa-General-Plan.pdf)

<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Past-Stories-&-Reports/Lake-Berryessa-and-the-Napa-General-Plan.pdf>

[Environmental Management at Lake Berryessa](https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/)

<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Past-Stories-&-Reports/Environmental-Management-at-Lake-Berryessa.pdf>

[Nature Based Recreation at Lake Berryessa](https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Past-Stories-&-Reports/Nature-Based-Recreation-at-Lake-Berryessa.pdf)

<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Past-Stories-&-Reports/Nature-Based-Recreation-at-Lake-Berryessa.pdf>

The primary refutation of every comment made last week and the comments made by the small, unrepresentative group on November 7, 2023, is the **Ragatz Report** funded by Napa County. It includes comprehensive analysis of Lake Berryessa's potential as an asset to Napa County and a detailed survey of several thousand lake users, including Napa County residents. The Lake Berryessa News and the Lake Berryessa Chamber of commerce worked diligently to get as many people as possible to respond to the survey.

[2017 Ragatz Report Full](https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/References-PDFs/2017-Ragatz-Report-Full.pdf)

<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/References-PDFs/2017-Ragatz-Report-Full.pdf>

[Ragatz Report Introduction & Summary of Recommendations](https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Lake-Berryessa-Support-Documentation/Ragatz-Report-Introduction_Summary_Recomendations.pdf)

https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Lake-Berryessa-Support-Documentation/Ragatz-Report-Introduction_Summary_Recomendations.pdf

On a personal note, although I publish, write, and edit The Lake Berryessa News and am the president of the Lake Berryessa Chamber of Commerce, I am essentially a community advocate dedicated for the last 25 years to the success of the Lake Berryessa community. I have been an environmental advocate since I read Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" in the late 1960's. I've been amusingly accused of several personal flaws during my advocacy for the future of Lake Berryessa, but no one can question my environmental credentials. In the interests of transparency, I've posted my full resume at:

<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Lake-Berryessa-Support-Documentation/Peter-Kilkus-Resume-2025.pdf>

The Introduction states that I "have twenty-five years of corporate management experience in all aspects of telecommunication equipment design and manufacturing. Wrote ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems program for three local Lake Berryessa resorts. Successfully managed ISO 9001 Quality Management System certification for two companies. Public service as a member of the San Anselmo Town Council and Solid Waste and Recycling Advisory Committee. In-depth knowledge of business and environmental issues."

For those who are actually interested in environmental quality at Lake Berryessa, here are links to the Environmental Management System I wrote for Rancho Monticello Resort. I also wrote EMS programs for Steele Park Resort and Markley Cove Resort.

[Rancho Monticello Environmental Management System](https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Lake-Berryessa-Support-Documentation/RM-001-Rancho-EMS-Manual.2.pdf)

<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Lake-Berryessa-Support-Documentation/RM-001-Rancho-EMS-Manual.2.pdf>

[Rancho Monticello Achieves ISO 14000 Certification](https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Lake-Berryessa-Support-Documentation/Rancho-ISO-14001-Press-Release.pdf)

<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Lake-Berryessa-Support-Documentation/Rancho-ISO-14001-Press-Release.pdf>

[International Standard: ISO 14000, Environmental Management Systems
https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Lake-Berryessa-Support-Documentation/ISO-14001-Standard-copy.pdf](https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Lake-Berryessa-Support-Documentation/ISO-14001-Standard-copy.pdf)

I care about my neighbors and the fact that we've lost more than a decade of family recreation at the lake. My focus now is on the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Process, for which I ask the Lake Berryessa community's continued support.

To counteract the false information being spread about Steele Canyon Campground and the Camp Margaritaville process, I encourage everyone who supports the revitalization of our beloved lake to take action and contact our supervisors. Please tell them you appreciate the County's continued support of the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program and why.

District 1: Joelle Gallagher.
Office: 707-253-4828
Joelle.Gallagher@countyofnapa.org

District 2: Liz Alessio
Office: 707-259-8276
liz.alessio@countyofnapa.org

District 3: Anne Cottrell
Office: 707-253-4827
Anne.Cottrell@countyofnapa.org

District 4: Amber Manfree
707-259-8278
Amber.Manfree@countyofnapa.org

District 5: Belia Ramos
707-259-8278
Belia.Ramos@countyofnapa.org

I'll end this long report with a letter from RoseAnn DeMoro to the Napa Register on Saturday, January 11, 2025. RoseAnn was a Steele Park mobile home owner, as was I. I think this letter expresses the present view of most people in our lake community, of Lake Berryessa News readers, of people I've spoken with across our region, of folks in Napa, and of visitors from around the Bay Area. RoseAnn has done significant research on the Camp Margaritaville RV Resort locations, with positive results.

To the Napa County Board of Supervisors,

I want to welcome the 2025 Board of Supervisors and wish them all the best. I also want to encourage them to please approach the Camp Margaritaville project with enthusiasm. Lake Berryessa is a Napa County treasure.

After discovering the lake when I lived in the Bay Area, we leased a small cabin on the lake. Prior to the federal government not renewing the leases, along with our kids, relatives and friends we spent many wonderful times throughout the years together there. The reflections on that time are priceless. The memories golden.

In the aftermath of losing that, I came to realize that families recreating together are some of the greatest ties that bind. They build community, the most wonderful shared memories, supportive family units, and are great opportunities for exercise. That is what happened at those resorts back then. People bonding with people.

Now we have a chance for incredible recreational activities again with the potential of Camp Margaritaville rebuilding the Steele Canyon Recreation Area. As a staunch environmentalist I have studied their resorts across the county. They are socially conscious and, as I understand it, the plans call for a soft footprint.

Families throughout Napa will have the opportunity to love and enjoy the lake as we did and find a safe, local place to gather free of distraction. There are thousands who will agree with me.

RoseAnn DeMoro,Napa

For the facts about what happened at Lake Berryessa, here are links to free downloadable chapters in my book:

[Policy and Politics Betray the People: The Lake Berryessa Saga: 1958 - 2020](https://www.amazon.com/Policy-Politics-Betray-People-Berryessa-ebook/dp/B08MFSQDBR/ref=sr_1_1?)

https://www.amazon.com/Policy-Politics-Betray-People-Berryessa-ebook/dp/B08MFSQDBR/ref=sr_1_1?

[Chapters: https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/styled-7/](https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/styled-7/)

[I. The Five Tragedies Of The Berryessa Valley: A History Of Heartbreak](#)

[II. Lake Berryessa Political History Timeline](#)

[III. The “Big Lie”: How It All Began](#)

[IV. The “Big Fail”: Napa Abandons Lake Berryessa \(1975\)](#)

[V. The “Big Picture”: Lake Berryessa Issues: 1957 - 2012](#)

[VI. The “Big Illusion”: Notice Of Intent](#)

[VII. The “Big Fight”: Facts Do Matter](#)

[VIII. The “Big Betrayal”: Perversion Of Public Law 96-375](#)

[IX. The “Big Mistake”: Pensus - The Beginning Was The End!](#)

[X. The “Big Hole In History”: Post-Pensus Blues](#)

[XI. The “Big Boondoggle”: Creation Of A Phony National Monument](#)

[Addendum 1. Dueling Napa Register Letters To The Editor](#)

[Addendum 2. The Napa Register View](#)

[Index Of Primary Documents](#)

For context see my videos of a 1998 tour of Steele Park Resort and the final 2009 destruction of Steele Park Resort at:

Steele Park Resort Tour 1998:

<https://youtu.be/PkPV8dZS6pM?si=pul5qrqzJj7Pqeop>

Destruction of Steele Park Resort 2009:

<https://youtu.be/i4pxcbA9pUY?si=AZIsS-DcuziUgwTu>

For information - do your own research.

<https://www.margaritavilleresorts.com/locations/ways-to-stay/rv-resorts>