

Addendum 1. Dueling Napa Register Letters To The Editor

Return Lake Berryessa to the taxpayers: March 2, 2001

Carol A. Kunze

I was very glad to see Nathan's Crabbe's Feb. 25 article on Lake Berryessa. Many of us who live at the lake are very frustrated over current conditions and lack of access. The lake is basically run like a private resort. The few public areas have little in the way of facilities and the seven concessions at the lake have a lock on the rest of the best shoreline. The resorts have fenced in the areas in which they are authorized to provide concession services so they can charge a fee to access the lake.

Geography and private property lines mean that much of the shoreline outside the concession areas cannot be accessed without entering and paying a fee to a resort. In fact, these entrance fees may not be legal. The Bureau of Reclamation office at the lake has asked the Bureau's lawyers for an opinion on whether the resorts can charge entrance fees, but months have now gone by and no opinion has been forthcoming. The frustration over lack of access to the lake can be extreme in the Berryessa Highlands, the residential area at the end of Steele Canyon Road at the southern end of the lake. Public access to the lake is entirely blocked by the resort which has the concession contract for this area.

Residents drive within a few yards of the lake every time we leave home. Yet we are fenced off. One can stand on Steele Canyon road and gaze at the land beyond the local resort's concession area — one just can't get there. Residents have to drive 20 miles to find free public access to a lake that is a stone's throw away. The Bureau of Reclamation is equally frustrated because of its lack of enforcement power, making it difficult to enforce the concession contracts, coupled with the inadequacy of the contract terms themselves.

Previous efforts by the Bureau to bring about improvements have suffered from public indifference. However, as Crabbe's article indicates — change is coming. The Bureau of Recreation is now engaged in a visitor services planning effort to plan the future of the lake. There are many of us who are want to "take back the lake" from the private interests and return it to the public.

Mobile home owners want to make Berryessa better: December 12, 2001

Peter Kilkus

The Bureau of Reclamation is in the process of creating a Visitors' Services Plan (VSP) for Lake Berryessa. The details are on its website at www.mp.usbr.gov/berryessa. This potentially positive process is guaranteed to generate controversy at the highest levels of federal, state and local government because of its goal to remove all long-term trailers from the lake.

We have formed Task Force 7 at Lake Berryessa (TF7) with representatives from all of the resorts on the lake. Our goal is to prevent the removal of mobile homes from Lake Berryessa through political action, community education and environmental stewardship. We are very concerned that many trailer owners don't believe the threat is serious. We can assure them that it is. The original 50-year resort leases will end in 2008. All resort owners must bid for a new contract

against anyone who wants to buy their resort. And the Reclamation has made it clear that they want an end to the decades-old tradition of family trailers on the lake. We believe that additional public access, amenities and trails can be achieved without the wholesale destruction of trailers.

Put it in perspective. There are fewer than 1,300 mobile homes clustered in only seven resorts along the many, many miles of the western shoreline, all of which is available to the public. In a spate of emotional overkill, the resorts have been misrepresented as major polluters of the lake. But per the Bureau of Reclamation itself, there is no longer a pollution problem important enough to even merit a section on its Web page. I quote: "Reclamation is pleased to announce that due to the compliance and diligence of the concessionaires (resort owners) and the affected permittees (trailer owners), the cleanup has proceeded to such a degree that there is no longer a need for a separate information site on these issues. Reclamation thanks those involved for their understanding and conscientious efforts to help clean up Lake Berryessa."

Whatever incompetence, indifference and irresponsibility over the years on the part of the Bureau, the resort owners and the trailer owners themselves led to past problems, they are being solved. Maybe it took the wake-up call of more than 100 families losing their trailers to bulldozers at Pleasure Cove, but all resorts are improving their problem sites. Rancho Monticello has a Landscape and Architectural Committee that regularly meets with the resort owner. The Spanish Flat resort owners are taking pictures of substandard sites and requesting that trailer owners fix up their property.

As Lake Berryessa trailer owners, my neighbors and I on Task Force 7 love this lake and take its protection seriously. We recognize our good fortune in owning a mobile home at the lake, but we also recognize our responsibilities and support a reasonable increase in public access. But will the Reclamation's attempt to increase usage lead to a decrease in satisfaction for everyone, including residential homeowners around the lake? Per government estimates, more than 1.2 million people visit Lake Berryessa each year, and Reclamation wants to increase that number! Is there a real public policy benefit in creating a situation that allows an "opportunity" for 1,000 unhappy campers versus 500 happy campers on a weekend? The 1,300 mobile home owners contribute 30-40 percent of the resort revenue compared to the more than 1 million other visitors! I'd call that a cost-effective subsidy for all users.

The Visitors' Services Plan is scheduled for completion in 2003, with a "conditions assessment" of all resorts ongoing and the environmental impact statement in process. TF7 believes we need a rational, balanced plan, not one that causes the demolition of 1,500 trailers and the world's largest yard sale in 2008.

Give public access to Lake Berryessa, Feb 20, 2002

Carol Kunze

Let's talk about exactly what is going on at Lake Berryessa. Some 1,300 families from around the Bay Area have had exclusive use of two-thirds of the vacation sites at the lake for nearly 40 years. When the trailers' owners are at their residences elsewhere in the Bay Area, their vacation trailers sit unoccupied on federal recreational land, preventing anyone else from using the site.

These sites are handed down in families from generation to generation. For a member of the general public to have access to one of these sites, they must buy the trailer, at a premium of course, for the location. In ads in the local paper for the sale of these trailers, the advantage of the location is often the first item listed. From the issue of Sept. 12: "Pleasure Cove, Front Row #

60, Lake Front View," "Putah Creek Space #54, On The Water," "Rancho Monticello, #82 Road F, Lake View." Also in this issue is an ad for a trailer on one of these sites which is "On the Lake" and "Next to Pool & Tennis Crts." The asking price? \$139,000.

This is in contrast to standard policy in other parks of a time limit on use of a site, such as two weeks or 30 days in a 12-month period, to ensure broad public access to our natural resources. The impact of this exclusive use? A 1972 GAO report said "access to and use of the lake by the general public has been severely restricted because of (1) extensive development by concessionaires of mobile home parks along the shoreline and (2) failure to provide public recreational facilities in accordance with the Public Use Plan."

More than 20 years after that conclusion was written a second report documented in 1995 that the Bureau of Reclamation (which administers the lake) had little success in reducing private, exclusive use of the recreation lands for long-term mobile home sites.

There are now two public parks for day use only at the lake and a public boat launch ramp. This does not justify barring the public from two-thirds of the overnight sites in the seven resorts at the lake. A proposal has been made for a shoreline trail encircling the entire lake. Apparently, a number of the trailer owners oppose it. Mr. Batory criticizes trails as "unsightly." It seems more likely that trailer owners oppose a shoreline trail because they don't want to lose private shoreline trailer sites.

The underlying policy question is whether people should be allowed exclusive use of a site in a public recreational area. The Bureau has answered that question: No. Bureau policy prohibits such exclusive use in order "to maximize public recreation opportunities." Existing exclusive use is to be phased out as contracts permit.

Well, contracts for the trailer parks are all expiring, but it looks like the trailer owners are gearing up to fight to retain their exclusive sites by bringing political pressure to bear on the Bureau. The Bureau has summarized comments filed by the public on these issues. On the organization's site we learn from one submission that the trailer owners are "organizing as we speak" and that if the Bureau decides the trailers must go "all hell will break loose."

They plan to flood the Bureau and congressmen with letters, faxes, e-mail and whatever else it takes. It's time for the lake to provide for a broader range of recreation than just power boats and jet skis. It's time for quiet public campgrounds in a natural setting operated on a nonprofit basis, instead of noisy, commercial campgrounds on the edge of a parking lot or road. It's time there were hiking trails to allow access to areas which are inaccessible due to dense vegetation or steep hills. It's time the Bureau's policy prohibiting exclusive use on public recreational land was implemented at Lake Berryessa. Who will win? The special interest exclusive use group or the public? Stay tuned.

Trailer ownership at Lake Berryessa defended: March 1, 2002

Peter Kilkus

From previous letters I know that Carol Kunze finds the truth too confining, but her latest February 20 letter descends into fevered ramblings worthy of the old TV show "Dallas."

She describes decades-long conspiracies by generations of land barons to deny the use of public property to hordes of clamoring tourists. And when we evil trailer owners are not in our palatial

estates, the long lines of cars filled with families with crying children who only wish to touch their piece of the promised land, are forced to wait outside the gates of our exclusive resorts like so many peasants.

Ms. Kunze would have us believe that there is some great body of people she designates as "The General Public" who are severely suffering because of the situation at Lake Berryessa. And as a highly organized group of one, she will speak out for them, even if she has to finesse the facts a bit.

Ms. Kunze does not live in Napa. She lives in the Berryessa Highlands above Steele Park and seems to consider the lake her own private resort. She resents not being able to get into Steele Park for free. The fact that she likes trails and dogs (I like them too) more than boats is her prerogative but does not justify misrepresenting what is happening at the lake.

The truth is somewhat more sedate. Most of the fewer than 1,300 trailers turn over ownership as regularly as any other real estate. I bought my mobile home at Steele Park four years ago after falling in love with Lake Berryessa as a camper. Of my 10 closest neighbors, nine have owned their places less than six years. Most of us use our places year around on weekends. There are time limits to our use: No more than 6 months of the year total and no more than 90 days continuous.

To be clear, the seven existing "resorts" are actually "public parks" because they are run by individuals or companies under contract to the government to provide public access and amenities to "The General Public" who wish to visit the lake. They are government concessions. Some members of "The General Public" would rather not pay the concession entrance fee so they use the other government-provided facilities that have significantly fewer amenities. But the definition of "public" is not "free". Very few government-managed "public" campgrounds are free (note our state and national parks), and it is unrealistic (as even the Reclamation concedes) to assume free access to any facility on Lake Berryessa in the future. As we have all seen, the cleanup costs and environmental problems caused by large numbers of day campers is significant.

The crux of the matter is that long-term trailer use is not inconsistent with increased recreational opportunities and new recreational facilities such as trails, campgrounds, and designated non-motorized water areas. Most trailer-owners support these goals. No trailer-owner I know opposes more shoreline trails even if they go right under our decks. We know this is public land and we want people to enjoy it. The proposal for a trail encircling the lake was made by Ms. Kunze herself and has few supporters because of its impracticality with respect to environmental concerns.

Those of us who spend a lot of time at the lake know that the resorts and campgrounds are not filled during most of the year, especially the winter. The trailer owners' monthly payments make up 30-40% of the resort revenue and help carry them through the winter. We see the "public" campgrounds with empty spaces even during summer weekends. And total recreational use has remained steady at approximately 1.5 million visitors per year since the late 1980's, per Reclamation.

Because a public policy is written does not make it right. The Reclamation Manual /Directives and Standards LND 04-01, Section 2-C states: Exclusive use is any use which excludes other appropriate public recreational use or users for extended periods of time. Exclusive use occurs when there is not:

1. An established process that frequently rotates users of specific sites, and

2. A process which accommodates changes in use, including a process for determining or accommodating other desired public uses and resources values.

By definition, "exclusive use" is not actually occurring at Lake Berryessa because large areas of each government concession "frequently rotate users of specific sites," and there are technically no "areas which exclude other appropriate public recreational use or users for extended periods of time." There are no areas of my park, for example, except the dirt under the trailers, which are "excluded from other appropriate public recreational use/users." And there is a process, the Visitors' Services Plan, "for determining or accommodating other desired public uses and resources values."

All areas of the shoreline and hills are open to boaters and hikers to picnic. There are often boaters stopping on the shore of the cove where I have my mobile home. Many people walk the extensive shoreline. In fact, there is a two mile trail that goes past my place which any member of "The General Public" can use. There are many proposals for increasing recreational use of Lake Berryessa without eliminating the trailers, and it is intellectually dishonest to blame the trailer-owners for limiting public access to Lake Berryessa.

A group of us have formed Task Force 7 at Lake Berryessa with members from all the public concessions. Our goal is to prevent the removal of mobile homes from Lake Berryessa through political action, community education, and environmental stewardship. We do not intend to be the rabble-rousers mischaracterized by Ms. Kunze, but a reasonable group of citizens exercising our constitutional rights to make sure rhetoric such as hers doesn't obscure key public policy issues.

Don't let feds destroy Berryessa homes: April 24, 2003

Peter Kilkus

In a March 27 commentary in the Napa Valley Register, Tom Aiken of the Bureau of Reclamation formally unveiled the Bureau's "Disneyland Concept of Nature" as the basis for its long-delayed Visitor Services Plan.

Because the federal government owns Lake Berryessa and a small ring of land around it, the bureau seems intent on unilaterally applying its flawed recreational policies and on ignoring the legitimate concerns of the rest of Napa County and its residents.

Anyone who thinks there is any "return to nature" element in this plan is deluding themselves. If there were no dam, the "nature" of this valley would be a bedroom community of thousands commuting daily to Napa, Fairfield, and Vallejo. The bureau's plan may give us some of those commute nightmares anyway.

First Mr. Aiken rewrites some history. The bureau never wanted to manage the lake and abdicated this responsibility to Napa County. The original resorts developed mobile home sections under full control of Napa County and its standards because the resorts were economic failures without a steady source of income to subsidize all the short-term recreational facilities they provided. When the bureau assumed management of the resorts, their concession contracts allowed the continuation of long-term sites. Even their Draft Environmental Impact Statement produced in the early 1990s acknowledged the economic value of long-term sites and the serious negative economic impact their destruction would produce.

Then Mr. Aiken rewrites some reality. No part of the shore of Lake Berryessa is "off-limits" to short-term recreationists. All the lakeshore is open to anyone at any time. Land access to some parts of the shoreline require entry to one of the resorts which provide a wide range of amenities, not just some dirt beaches with a couple of latrines and barbecue pits offered by the bureau. The bureau oversees these resorts and receives a franchise fee from the concessionaires who manage them. Most state and federal parks charge a fee. The Lake Berryessa situation is no different. No one should believe that there will be "free" access to these supposed "off-limits" areas in the new plan.

Since 1975 the bureau has dramatically mismanaged the lake and its concessions. They now want to blame the mobile home owners with "40-year-old" houses for the situation. Remember, old is not bad or they'd be trying to eliminate all us senior citizens from the lake too. The bureau allowed the deterioration of some of the resort properties for decades. But only a minority of the units need upgrading. Most long-term users take significant pride in their homes at the lake. Homeowner groups at Putah Creek, Rancho Monticello, Spanish Flat, and Steele Park are working to have all owners upgrade their properties. Also, there is no evidence that the mobile homes pollute the lake in any significant way, which is another fiction you may have heard.

Sadly, the permittees are the scapegoats in this process. There is no compelling public policy reason to destroy 1,300 mobile homes while creating the world's largest yard sale as well as possibly the greatest negative environmental impact the lake has ever endured.

As I've learned over the many years I've loved Lake Berryessa, the majority of permittees consider themselves as environmental stewards of the lake. Short-term "recreationists" are not necessarily environmentalists. Check out campsites after a wild weekend. Go to the Putah Creek Bridge on a Saturday or Sunday!

Replacing long-term mobile homes with hundreds of new short-term cabins and hotel/motel rooms while aggressively advertising (reintroducing) Lake Berryessa to the greater Bay Area is not my idea of an environmentally-sound Visitor Services Plan.

Lake plan should keep mobile homes: August 21, 2003

Peter Kilkus

Our organization would like to formally protest the Bureau of Reclamation's public presentation and recently released brochure regarding its Visitor Services Plan.

Your Aug. 12 article, "Officials plan makeover for Lake Berryessa," about this process perpetuates their incorrect stereotypes — especially the photographs you published. Having sat through their slide presentation twice and reviewed the brochure in detail I must say that they are crudely unprofessional in their attempt to blame every problem that ever occurred at Lake Berryessa on the existence of mobile home sites at the resorts.

First Reclamation shows multiple slides of sewage violations at uncontrolled dry sites that have not existed for more than two years (and could not exist under any circumstances in the future) to paint all mobile home and trailer owners as crass polluters. This is as offensive as it is untrue. Reclamation was entrusted with the responsibility to know of these violations. Even a process of resort self-inspection and reporting should never have been allowed without a strong auditing program in place. It was the California Watershed Posse and the California Regional Water

Quality Board that ultimately resolved a situation that should never have existed. The attempt by Reclamation to now take credit for this resolution would be downright amusing if it were not for the fact that it exemplifies Reclamation's less than honest approach to this whole issue.

The silliest slide of the bunch is the one showing a closed business on Knoxville Road. Reclamation states, "The local economy receives little benefit from the current long-term private uses (observe the lack of restaurants, stores and service stations under the current conditions)." But Reclamation itself states that there are more than 1.3 million visitors per year to the lake, and in the same breath says that there are "only" 1,300 trailers that don't contribute more than a few thousand visitors per year. If 1.3 million visitors can't support local businesses outside the resorts, how could 1,200 trailers hurt them?

The reasonable private use of public land is a long-standing American principle, especially when that use supports the common good and provides additional revenue for operations that could not otherwise be funded. Many examples exist from the simplest 30-year leases of cabins by the U.S. Forest Service in Colorado to more substantial grazing and mining leases — including the privately owned concessions at Lake Berryessa. The reason the long-term sites are important in this context is that they provide 60 to 70 percent of the revenue to fund the short-term recreation opportunities at the lake.

Under Reclamation's own guidelines — "Private use of public lands and lakeshore should not continue into the future" — the concessions themselves (private companies that are guaranteed a profit by the government) should be eliminated since they are the most egregious example of public use of private land that can be imagined!

Some people believe that all recreational opportunities should be provided gratis by the government (all the taxpayers) as a public service. Any fair-minded person knows this idea is a fantasy. Concessions operate in all our national parks; state parks are not free. What is necessary is a balanced plan to provide varied recreational opportunities at reasonable cost to citizens.

There is no scientific evidence that long-term sites have polluted the waters of Lake Berryessa. There is no economic evidence that long-term sites can be easily replaced by other revenue sources. There is no numerical evidence that large numbers of Californians are being denied access to the lake because of the long-term sites. The problem is in the mind of the obsessed bureaucratic beholder, not the eye of the informed rational observer.

A reasonable number of long-term sites conforming to applicable health and safety codes and providing a baseline revenue during rainy seasons or droughts must be part of any common-sense future plan for the lake. The Bureau of Reclamation had a plan that was 80 percent complete in 1993! Where is their plan today?

Spinning Power Point slides showing non-existent sewage violations and amateur Photoshop depictions of tents on a hill are not a plan. To see a real plan that you can review and comment on now go to www.LBVSPT.info.

Private access to Berryessa is wrong: September 16, 2003

Genji Schmeder

John Muir knew that the best way to create a constituency to protect Yosemite was to take people there. Once they experienced it firsthand, they would share his love for the area and take action to ensure its protection by supporting National Park status.

The redevelopment of Lake Berryessa is probably the last chance in our lifetimes to turn this recreation area into a place that will instill respect for the environment and motivate users to protect and conserve the area. The Lake has wilderness quality areas to the east and west, and northward to the county border, as well as additional wilderness in Lake and Yolo counties. Our Congressman Mike Thompson, along with Sen. Barbara Boxer, are proposing several of these areas for wilderness designation.

The eastern portion of Napa County where Lake Berryessa is situated also has some of the greatest biodiversity in the United States. There are numerous examples of rare serpentine rock and the unique plants hardy enough to call that severe habitat home. There is a rare stand of genetically pure Sargent Cypress. There are deer, bears, coyote, mountain lions, bobcats, bald eagles, peregrine falcons, white pelicans and many other bird species in an area of the county with 45,000 acres of public land.

Sadly, few people in Napa County are aware of the richness of natural resources in the eastern part. The redevelopment of Lake Berryessa in a manner that would serve the public could change this. What would the Sierra Club like to see?

- Sustainable development blending with the natural surroundings.
- A recreation area that provides a more park-like experience.
- Cabins for rent by the night or week.
- Public campgrounds with space for each campsite, and tent sites separate from RV sites.
- Zoning in the lake to create quiet and safe areas for families and non-motorized recreation.
- Trails, lots of trails.
- An interpretive center that focuses on the area's biodiversity, with nature presentations and hikes.
- A single concessionaire instead of the current seven independent concessionaires.
- Management of all day-use areas by a public agency.
- A concerted effort to transform this lake to a family-friendly, safe recreational area with access to nature for short-term visitors from Napa and nearby counties.

Access to publicly owned natural resources connects us to the land. It is this personal connection that has created the constituency that is actively engaged in saving the earth from pollution and degradation. Reserving portions of recreational land for the exclusive use of a few is an abuse of public land. We all have an obligation to protect our public lands. We all have the right to enjoy them. The eastern part of our county could become a great recreational area for all of us.

Return Berryessa to the public: December 15, 2003

Wendy Wallin

Two pieces in your Nov. 13 Opinion page cried out for comment. The rhetorical "When did California become a Mexican state?" was so compelling, I decided to weave my reaction to that into my comments about the "makeover" plan for Lake Berryessa.

In a continuously evolving territorial world, the conquerors, settlers or pursuers of Manifest Destiny ultimately declare themselves the "rightful owners," and from appropriation of territory (even when achieved illegally, inadvertently or ruthlessly), a misinformed sense of entitlement develops. One

outcome of this in California is an attitude that our neighbors, who at some earlier date were entitled to inhabit the area, are no longer welcome. Here's the crossover to Lake Berryessa.

At first there was a town, Monticello. (Oops, well, not exactly first. Before that there were descendants of people who at some point might have migrated from Asia, etc.) At any rate, the town of Monticello, located at what is now the bottom of Lake Berryessa, was destroyed in order to create a source of water for agriculture. The people who had (not quite originally) settled in the Berryessa Valley were relocated, the town razed, the vegetation burned and the wildlife displaced to provide water for farms in Solano County. As it turns out, even farmland in Solano County is gradually being replaced by new settlers who populate new developments and are the new "rightful owners" of the land and the water.

The reservoir, designated for the public's recreational use but allowed by default to be populated by customers of private concessionaires who rent trailer space and boat launch rights, became largely inaccessible to the general public. Perhaps in the earlier stages of its development it was less congested, and the natural beauty of the shores was not significantly marred. At this stage of its existence, however, it is not a friendly lake for those interested in easy access and quiet enjoyment of the natural environment.

As a resident of the Berryessa area, I generally avoid the lake because it is noisy, there are very few trails and quiet beaches and the "resorts" are, for the most part, little more than eyesores pushed right up to the edge of the lake. Even when visiting a friend who owned a trailer at the Spanish Flat Resort, we found no reasonable access to the shoreline, and no view to speak of from the morass of trailers jammed into the area.

My friend finally gave up her trailer, since very few of her family or friends had any interest in joining her there at what was little more than a degraded trailer park stuck next to a lake, with no place close by for extended hikes, safe swimming or peaceful, non-motorized boating. Many others we have spoken with see the lake as little more than a place where people make noise, drink a lot and litter.

I would like to see that attitude toward the lake change. The only way I can imagine that happening is if there is a new ethic applied to managing the lake. That ethic seems to be the foundation of two alternatives proposed by the Bureau of Reclamation. Each alternative (B and D) returns access of this public land to its current rightful owners — the public. As it is, those who have "settled" on the public land bordering Lake Berryessa and have inadvertently taken it over (by using these trailers as exclusive "vacation homes"), are claiming that they have a right to the land.

Their right to this public land is no stronger, by virtue of their renting trailer space from the concessions, than is my right, the right of other Napa residents and the right of many others who have expressed a desire to see parity for non-motorized water recreation, effective preservation of landscape and wildlife and more opportunity to experience the rich biodiversity of the region. I am encouraged by the Bureau's determination to take back the land for all of us, and by their commitment to restoring its unspoiled value. The land will never be returned to its "original" inhabitants. But I can at least hope that the sense of entitlement shared by many of the seasonal occupants won't prevent the reclamation and restoration of Berryessa's natural integrity.

Berryessa plans fall short: February 17, 2004

Wes Plunkett

I would like to share my views regarding the proposed U. S. Bureau of Reclamation Draft Environmental Impact Statement for recreation at Lake Berryessa. I grew up at the lake and currently own a boat and RV storage business there. My family owns the Spanish Flat Village Center and my parents founded Spanish Flat Resort and Spanish Flat Water District. They had a vision for the Spanish Flat area as a community, and in many ways they succeeded. I think it still can continue to grow.

While I agree that changes are needed at the lake, I don't believe that any of the alternatives proposed by the USBR is the answer. In fact, with the exception of Alternative A (no action) they could diminish or even end recreational opportunities at the lake if attempted because they are unrealistic. The resorts would not be profitable under the conditions the USBR wants to create. It's unlikely they can get the funding they would need to carry out any of their plans, or new concessionaires to provide the capital to rebuild everything. In fact, the removal of the resort infrastructure and 1,300 mobile homes would create a legal, logistic and environmental nightmare.

The long-term sites are there because of economic necessity. The USBR says long-term sites restrict lake access to the public. It's a big lake, and there's lots of room for public access. Currently the USBR can't even afford to properly maintain the facilities they have. Perhaps if they charged a modest user fee it would help. I think if Napa County was more involved at the lake things could improve.

The USBR has waged a smear campaign against the resorts in particular and the lake in general in an attempt to generate support for their plans to rip out everything and start over. If they had spent all that time and money in a more positive way, the situation would be much better for everyone. They are required by the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) to be unbiased and objective in their legal responsibilities. They have been neither.

Section 401 of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968 states: "All viewpoints, National, Regional, State and local shall be fully considered and taken into account in planning Federal or Federally assisted development programs and projects."

The USBR should either comply with this act or hand over lake management to someone who will. The effects on the local businesses outside the resorts would be disastrous if alternatives B, C or D are implemented. According to the USBR's Dornbusch Report, recreation at the lake would have to be shut down for at least two years while resort facilities are rebuilt with no guarantee of when they might reopen. None of these small businesses can survive without lake visitors and would be forced to close their doors. This would be of no benefit to the Lake Berryessa community or Napa County.

There is a common sense alternative that is not in the USBR's DEIS. It has been developed by the Lake Berryessa Visitor Services Planning Task Force and is known as alternative A+. It avoids the slash and burn mentality of the USBR's preferred plan (Alternative B) but retains the more workable aspects. The USBR should include this alternative in their DEIS.

One more thing. Carol Kunze, John Kent and other supporters of the USBR's preferred plan would have us believe that there are few opportunities for nature based recreation at the lake. The USBR

already has several large no wake areas, a no boat bird sanctuary, miles of developed free day use area with hiking, swimming, fishing, kayaking, lots of public access to undeveloped areas and a 2,000-acre cooperative ecological reserve known as Quail Ridge.

Sure, if you venture outside a no wake zone in your kayak on a summer weekend you might get buzzed by a jet ski or swamped by a boat wake. But for seven to eight months of the year, the whole area is practically deserted. This is a time when you can fully enjoy the natural beauty of the lake as my family and I have since the lake was filled. So, it's already much more than a "powerboat lake." Kunze's and Kent's Sierra Club-style rhetoric is long on emotional appeals and short on facts. Let's remember this is a man-made lake and by definition will never be "wilderness quality."

Drop Enviro-Elitism at Lake Berryessa: March 13, 2005

Peter Kilkus

Your reporter's use of some of the background comments I made about my love for Lake Berryessa and my desire to live within and contribute to that community was a bit narrow and obviously misunderstood by some folks. Yes, I enjoy riding my ATV in the beautiful — and legal — Napa County Knoxville Off Highway Vehicle area, as well as farther north at Stonyford. Yes, I enjoy riding my California and Lake Tahoe-legal jet ski on Lake Berryessa. But my Berryessa "lifestyle" also includes my hiking shoes, my mountain bike, my kayak and my little electric motor inflatable. Napa County and Lake Berryessa are perfect for all of them.

What your article did not include is that I am a life member of the Sierra Club as well as a member of other environmental and sustainability groups, was senior trainer and board member for the Environmental Forum of Marin, and have been a sustainability advocate for more than a decade beginning with my service on the San Anselmo Solid Waste and Recycling Advisory Committee. I was also on the San Anselmo Town Council for five years and mayor for one.

As councilmember I formed the Quality of Life Commission which is dedicated to fostering a sustainable San Anselmo. I have also worked on sustainability elements for the Marin County General Plan and the San Anselmo General Plan. Contributing to my local community — environmentally, economically and politically — is a fundamental part of my lifestyle.

Those pseudo-environmentalists who attempt to demonize other community members out of some misplaced sense of their own moral superiority are doing a disservice to Napa County and to the whole Lake Berryessa community. There are no sinister "special interest groups" plotting to do evil things.

We all want Lake Berryessa to be accessible to the public, provide the infrastructure necessary to service a broad range of needs, and to the maximum extent possible, be economically self-sufficient. Lake Berryessa should be a sustainable community, which means a considered balance of environment, economics and social equity (or planet, pocketbook and people, if you prefer). The future of Lake Berryessa should be based on real needs and real data, not some economically-misguided, enviro-elitist model.

Majority opposes Reclamation plan: November 26, 2005

Peter Kilkus

I'm the Executive Director of the Lake Berryessa Chamber of Commerce and also the editor of the Lake Berryessa News. Our 56 business members are nearly unanimous in opposing Reclamation's plan for Lake Berryessa. I travel a 150 mile paper route every two weeks (thank goodness my Prius gets 47 mpg) through Fairfield, Napa, Yountville, St. Helena, Calistoga, Angwin, Pope Valley and all around Lake Berryessa. The hundreds of people I've talked to - local residents and businesses - not trailer owners - are also nearly unanimous in opposing the Reclamation plan. When people finally understand what the government is trying to do, they are incredulous and wonder what is wrong with the Bureau of Reclamation.

The City of Winters agrees. Berryessa residents and businesses, not just mobile home owners, were well-represented in Winters. The Solano County supervisors also criticized Reclamation's plan last week. This is absolutely not a "trailers-only" issue! How can the government force a plan like this down the throats of an unwilling local community when excellent lower-cost alternatives exist?

And where was Congressman Mike Thompson? After ignoring hundreds and hundreds of letters, emails, and phone calls, he finally pops up in a response to a single over-the-top letter from a disgruntled trailer owner. He piously wants us to believe he really cares about an open process, but immediately starts talking partisan politics.

And after the "revolt of the constituents" at Winters, he is reported to have immediately sent in his aide to try to buy off the Winters City Council, implying he'd get any changes they want into the Reclamation plan. He disingenuously talks about "Republican lobbyists", yet personally knows they work for Democrats - as they are doing at Lake Berryessa. He appears to be consciously trying to make this a partisan issue. Not only has this process not been open or transparent, it has been invisible!

This is not a partisan issue. It is about bad planning and bad faith on the part of the government. It's about not listening to real people. Republicans and Democrats alike should, And Do, oppose Reclamation. It is not an environmental issue either. Although some supporters of the Reclamation plan continue to lie about it, there are no sewage or health and safety problems at the lake. Mike Finnegan of Reclamation confirmed this in Winters last week when he stated that there were no problems at the resorts as far as Reclamation is concerned.

I have a kayak and a jet ski, a mountain bike and a boat, hiking shoes and an ATV. My family and I use them all regularly. Supporters of a reasonable plan for the lake are trying to be inclusive without destroying the best parts of what exists. There is room for everyone.

Children ask, "Why'd they take our lake?" June 28, 2007

Elizabeth Parodi

Good Day. The fundamental elements of societal norms taught from the early stages of development are learning to play fair and to share. And, don't be a bully. Let's be clear from the start what this means:

- The concept of fairness involves treating everyone equally and impartially. This means that no matter what the rules are, as long as they are applied equally and impartially, the playing field is still level.
- To share is to partake of, use, experience, occupy or enjoy with others.
- To bully is to make one's way aggressively or by intimidation or threats of intimidation.

We are the parents of children of Lake Berryessa Marina. We are honest hardworking people who, more likely than not, do not invest in the stock market or take long, luxurious vacations. But rather, we invest in our children. We invest in our children and their happiness, with a strong desire to perpetuate momentous times, within the safety and security of Lake Berryessa Marina.

We assist our children in learning to play, to share and to enjoy exploring their worlds. We are nurturing parents, involved in the growth and development of our children. They are taught these basic fundamentals, along with the respect for nature and all creatures, large or small. They hold in high regard others' privacy, possessions and family time. We instruct that they clean up after themselves and others, if necessary, to maintain a clean and safe Lake Berryessa Marina. They honor the dock rules, water safety rules and the time-to-be-quiet-because-neighbors-are-sleeping rules.

They easily comprehend the concept of sharing when neighbors spend time together sharing meals, stories and friendship. They understand that to follow the rule is to play fair. To play fair is to be rewarded. They recognize that their reward is to come back to their clean and safe lake, surrounded by family and friends, ready to share their next adventure. A substantial number of our children are now young adults with children of their own. Many of our youth are great-grandchildren to the original "settlers" at Lake Berryessa Marina. Whatever the age, they are creating the memories of tomorrow. And they are playing fair and sharing.

We are invested not only financially, but of more importance, emotionally to Lake Berryessa. Our family began camping at Steele Park in 1967, only to finally settle in A-Cove at Lake Berryessa Marina in 1975. Our little trailer has borne witness to the birth of six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren to Ben and Barbara Parodi. Papa Ben always called it his "cabin in the sky."

It is now the year 2007, some 30-plus years later. Our little trailer, which has witnessed and validated each stage of our lives, is in jeopardy. Why? Because you are not playing fair. You are not sharing. Lake Berryessa can easily be shared, used, enjoyed and experienced by park tenants, day-users, bird watchers, dog walkers, hikers, boaters, campers, fishermen, kayakers and more.

As adults, we are aware that along with teaching and learning the rules comes understanding of reward versus consequence. Our children know that in keeping the rule comes reward. They also understand that an unhappy consequence is the result of not abiding by the rule.

My 3-year-old grandson innocently asks, "Why did they take our lake, Grandma? We on time out?" Sadly, I can only respond that we did nothing wrong. We possess pride of ownership in our home away from home, and we honor and respect the lake and what it represents to our family. How do I explain that is it not a "time out" but rather a "take away?" We played fair. We shared. Unfortunately, the bullies did not — and do not.

When will the Bureau of Reclamation "play fair" and begin to honor the fundamental element of societal norm and "share" the notion of treating everyone equally and impartially?

Present vs. Past: Bureau must answer for Lake Berryessa

Bette Maron, Berryessa Highlands

I, for one, believe in a strong federal government. Except it is now evident when decision are made a continent away in Washington, DC by bureaucrats with no realistic conceptions of local needs and conditions time and money is wasted to no avail.

The Bureau of Reclamation's plans for Lake Berryessa had beautiful expectations of creating newly built, well managed facilities to entice more people to enjoy what Lake Berryessa offered when the resort concession contracts would expire and new bids would be sought. They held meetings for those of us who lived in the area to offer our ideas. And they assured us the transition to new concession holders would be easy and smooth. That was 10 years ago!

Here is what the Steele Park Resort offered when I moved to the Berryessa Highlands. The marina near the boat launch ramps had a café for quick orders along with an adjacent grocery. Down by the docks there was a bait shop. When fishermen got back with their catch they had a place with running water to clean their fish. In fact, the camp sites had easy access to water; moreover, the campers had real rest rooms with included showers.

There were covered docks which could be rented so that boats could be kept in the water for the season, besides garages where other boats could be stored. Boats could also be rented for the day. And there even was a ski school. A restaurant and bar overlooked the main body of the lake. People who lived in the park as well as those in the nearby neighborhood would frequent both eateries. The atmosphere at the main restaurant would remind one of what they saw in that old sitcom "Cheers." Among other amenities a popular ice cream parlor opened in the summers. This was a place both campers and those who lived in the neighborhood enjoyed. That was 10 years ago, before everything was razed to the ground.

Reclamation could've chosen to keep what was good and improve what needed improvement. However, Reclamation didn't see the whole picture. Although extensive camping and day use access was already available, mobile home sites immediately adjacent to the lake could've been eliminated. There was plenty of remaining area a bit farther inland. It was these mobile home owners who did odd jobs around the resort, helping to keep it clean and free of rubbish left by campers. More significantly, it was the rent they paid for the land they occupied that made the whole enterprise viable. They still brought money into the park when campers didn't show during the winter off season. They also spent their money in the park.

Ten years on from that document published by Reclamation here is what we now have:

Plenty of camp sites, but with no electrical hookups anywhere, and no convenient access to water. Instead of nice restrooms, they have portable outhouses. There isn't even any water to service the out of service fire hydrants, even though each camp site does have a fire pit. There are no amenities other than that fire pit and a picnic table by each site. There is a pre-existing launch ramp that had not been demolished as the Reclamation had done at the other resorts.

We have recently been informed that all the resorts needing new concessionaires did receive bids, but none of the bids met Reclamation demands. We have no idea if those lacks were critical or just cosmetic. Apparently, they aren't allowed to make it public.

A neighbor asked me what I thought the Reclamation should try to include in any new contracts they'd accept. Well... campers could use decent restrooms and convenient access to potable water. A snack bar would be nice, and an ice cream parlor wonderful. Perhaps they could allow boat docks to be installed for those who'd like to keep their boats ready to use conveniently.

It would be a start that could be built upon. It would allow more possible concessionaires to be in a position to be able to bid for the Reclamation contracts. The potential bidders could suggest their own ideas for improvements which the Reclamation could take in consideration when awarding the final contract.

The dream that the Reclamation originally had never was realistic. Ten years on from that smooth transition they promised, nothing has been achieved except the ruining of the lake economy – the loss of local businesses and jobs for local residents, and even the well-being of any potential business a little down the road, because no one comes to support them when nothing is being offered in the resort parks.

I urge whoever might have the power to make the decisions that affect the future of Lake Berryessa not to give credence to those that insist the federal government is incapable of credible action. You might even consider investing Reclamation funds to rebuild some of the infrastructure you insisted be demolished and which led to 10 years of economic collapse around the lake.

Flaws in Reclamation's plans for the lake: April 24, 2009

Lucy White

The abandoned prospectus and awards have devastated the Lake Berryessa community. If the flaws are known in the prospectus, then a new prospectus should be released immediately.

Five resorts are closed to the public — indefinitely. Putah Creek Resort and Lake Berryessa Marina Resort are in bankruptcy, where most of the mobile homes and trailers, along with all facilities, were abandoned. The Bureau of Reclamation is attempting to clean up those two resorts, with little evidence to date, while providing security. Rancho Monticello Resort, Spanish Flat Resort and Steele Park Resort are all cleaning up their resorts and providing their own security; nearly all of the mobile homes and trailers have been removed from those resorts.

With all five resorts closed, there are no facilities open to the public on the entire 22 miles of the west side, other than Reclamation's day parks and turnouts. Markley Cove Resort and Pleasure Cove Resort provide the only services, which are at the most southern end of the lake. Both resorts have stores but neither resort has a restaurant or café. With the other five resorts closed, there is absolutely no prepared food service on Lake Berryessa.

It appears that Pete Lucero of the Bureau of Reclamation has, independent from guiding documents, pushed for "hotel" accommodations at Lake Berryessa. He has stated, "Pensus, for example, plans to build hotels, day-use areas, restaurants and other improvements." Pensus, which was awarded five concessions is the example used by Pete Lucero, failed to sign a contract after nearly a year of negotiations.

The current base infrastructure at Rancho Monticello Resort creates a reasonable opportunity to adapt various business models, allowing for recreational uses according to the guiding documents and public demand. All uses — lodging, cabins, park models, RV sites, camping — as well as

many day uses, require the same land development — level and accessible. The Visitor Services Plan/Record of Decision requires the new concessionaires to utilize existing corridors (roads, etc.) whenever possible. Roads, parking lots, sewer and water systems, launch ramps and fuel dispensing allow for a transition to new concessionaires with a reasonable business opportunity for bidders.

As an example, we bid on five resorts Putah Creek Resort, Rancho Monticello Resort, Lake Berryessa Marina Resort under Lago Resort LLC, which was to be formed if awarded the contract. The underlying concept of the plan was inspired by Carneros Inn and Calistoga Ranch, adapted to a more affordable outdoor/recreation environment, with cabin-type accommodations, along with RV and camp sites. Michele Kaufman Design, leading green designer, prepared the cabin plans for the proposal.

The plan for Rancho Monticello Resort included a new event center, restaurant, café, eco-friendly cabins/park models (80 per year up to 500 cabins), RV sites and camping. Final determinations would be based on public demand and would be adaptive throughout the contract. All uses would be short term.

Reclamation received six bids comprised of six bidders responsive to the prospectus: (1) Recreation Del Sol Enterprises, LLC bid on all seven resorts; (2) Pensus Group, LLC bid on six resorts, which included Markley Cove Resort and excluded Pleasure Cove Resort; (3) Lago Resorts, LLC bid on five resorts, all but Steele Park Resort and Pleasure Cove Resort; (4) Steele Park Resort, Inc. (current concessionaire) bid on their resort; (5) Forever Resorts/Pleasure Cove, LLC (current concessionaire) bid on Pleasure Cove Resort; (6) Markley Cove Resort/Frazier X10, LLC (current concessionaire) bid on their resort. Reclamation's representation that there were 21 responsive bids is misleading; the point system in the prospectus forced bidders to bid on multi-concessions to be competitive.

There needs to be a sensible resolution that incorporates fair business practices, is financially and environmentally responsible, and is in the public interest. With an interim contract, there could be a logical transition plan, bridging the current concessions with the new concessionaire(s).

What is this costing the government? The current concessions were developed and managed for 50 years, at no cost to the government, while creating jobs, commerce, paying franchise fees and providing access, facilities and services to the public. It should be the continued goal of the government to provide necessary and appropriate facilities and services to the public at reasonable rates, and to avoid interruption of services to the public.

It appears that the ultimate goal of the Bureau of Reclamation is to minimize, if not eliminate, public access to Lake Berryessa. What happens at Lake Berryessa will be carried out across America. The public deserves access to the public lands and waters.