

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

## **Initial Plan for Phased Implementation of the 2005 Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (Draft)**

**New Melones Lake Project  
Central California Area Office  
Mid-Pacific Region**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2005 Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, or REA for short (P.L. 108-447), provides authority for Reclamation to join four other federal agencies in a fee collection and revenue retention program, issue special recreation use permits, and participate in a nationwide parks pass initiative called the Interagency Pass program. For Reclamation, implementing this legislation marks the first time that certain recreation areas such as New Melones Lake are provided the opportunity to retain revenues at the site collected, to be used for the enhancement of recreation facilities and services and other public benefits. Previous fee authority required all revenues to be deposited into the Land and Water Conservation Fund or the Federal Treasury.

Visitors to New Melones Lake Recreation Areas have access to high quality standard and expanded amenities which meet the criteria for a fee program under REA. Amenities such as developed boat launch ramps and day use areas with paved parking, permanent restrooms, sanitation services, onsite ranger staff and other features have historically been provided free of charge at New Melones. Visitors to New Melones are currently being charged fees only for camping, while most other reservoir-based recreation areas in the region also charge fees for day use, boat launching, RV dump stations, pets etc. Per Reclamation Manual PEC-01-01, "recreation" is a proprietary activity for which user charges are to be collected: these charges are to be based on 'market' or 'comparable' prices. Failing to charge comparable fees potentially undermines the ability of other local businesses and agencies to compete for recreation dollars. This is contrary to the requirements contained in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A25.

Costs to operate and maintain the developed facilities and services, and protect the natural and cultural resources at New Melones have increased substantially due to inflation and additional regulatory requirements, as well as costs to provide for expanding visitation as urban centers grow. Federal appropriations have not grown in response to the expanded needs, resulting in deferred maintenance, cutbacks in services and reduced ability to provide adequate resource protection.

By implementing REA and establishing appropriate new fees for both standard and expanded amenities, such as fees for boat launching, day use and RV dump station use, revenues could be generated and a portion retained for authorized expenditures at New Melones. Financial impacts to frequent users will be lessened by the Interagency Parks Pass program, augmented by site specific discount passes good only for use at New Melones.

By participating in REA, Reclamation will be credited with a portion of the revenues from the sale of Interagency Park Passes nationwide. Interagency Park Pass dollars are expected to be a significant revenue stream which can help fund the implementation of REA and the recreation program. Special Recreation Use Permits are also included under REA, and if implemented at New Melones, would enable retention of fees generated from Special Events.

As part of the Public Participation program of REA, the public will have the opportunity to provide input to Reclamation regarding the establishment or changing of recreation use fees, and in determining the best use of revenues generated by fees. Reclamation will conduct a public relations program to inform the public of the use of recreation fee revenues.

In summary, implementation of REA at New Melones would provide multiple benefits. Charging appropriate use fees will satisfy the required market comparability with other public and private agencies. In addition to providing needed revenues for services such as law enforcement and public education, and for site improvements such as universal accessibility, interpretive exhibits and multi-use trails, REA would enhance the customer service program for over 800,000 visitors per year. One-stop customer service will be provided through the Interagency Parks Pass program, which will offer a discount for frequent users of parks both nationwide and locally. The net impact will be fair value for recreation, enhanced resource protection and more efficient operation and management.

The New Melones Lake Initial Plan for Phased Implementation of the 2005 Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act is provided as a guide for understanding how Reclamation intends to implement the many requirements of the law, for the public, community partners, park staff, Reclamation management and sister agencies.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Authority

As stated in H.R. 4818 Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004, VIII Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, Sec. 803. Recreation Fee Authority. (a) Authority of Secretary – Beginning in fiscal year 2005 and thereafter, the Secretary may establish, modify, charge, and collect recreation fees at Federal recreational lands and waters as provided for in this section.

On December 13, 2006, Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Robert W. Johnson approved the participation of Reclamation in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (Public Law 108-447), hereafter termed “REA.” and named New Melones Lake as a “Designated REA Site.”

On 11/08/2007, Reclamation adopted Directives and Standards LND 01-02 for implementation of REA.

## 1.2 Purpose

New Melones Lake proposes to begin implementation of REA in Fiscal Year 2008, with full implementation in Fiscal Year 2009. The New Melones Lake Initial Plan for Implementation of REA will ensure that all requirements of Public Law 108-447 and LND 01-02 are met.

Described below is the background on current fees and revenues generated at New Melones, proposed fees and revenues under REA, site criteria for fees, fee collection options, staffing needs and facility improvements needed for full implementation, recreation passes, use of revenues, and public involvement.

# 2. Background

## 2.1 Authority for Fee Collection

User fees have historically been collected at New Melones Lake under the Federal Water Projects Recreation Act, P.L. 102-575, and Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCFA) of 1965, as amended.

## 2.2 Current User Fee Program

### 2.2.1 Special Use

This revenue is derived from special recreation events and activities under a Right of Use permit. The cost of the permit varies depending on the nature and duration of the activity.

### **2.2.2 Individual Camping**

This revenue is derived from camping in Tuttle town Recreation Area (Acorn, Chamise, and Manzanita Campgrounds) and Glory Hole Recreation Area (Ironhorse and Big Oak Campgrounds). Fees are collected through the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS) and on-site through self-registration payment stations. For 2007, camping fees were charged year round as follows: walk-in sites (limit of four people, one vehicle - \$12 per night); and standard sites (limit of eight people, two vehicles - \$16 per night). Campers that possess a Golden Age, Golden Access (or the replacement passes under REA, called Interagency Senior and Interagency Access) pass are entitled to a 50% reduction in their camping fee.

### **2.2.3 Group Camping**

This revenue is derived from camping in Tuttle town Recreation Area group campgrounds (Fiddleneck and Oak Knoll). For 2007, camping fees were charged year round as follows: Fiddleneck 30-60 people, maximum 12 vehicles \$120 per night; Oak Knoll 20-50 people, maximum 10 vehicles \$100 per night. There is no reduction in fee for pass holders for the group campgrounds.

### **2.2.4 Group Picnic**

This revenue is derived from use of a group picnic site at Tuttle town Recreation Area (Eagle Point). For 2007, the daily fee for use of the site was \$75. There is no reduction in fee for pass holders for the group picnic area.

### **2.2.5 Golden Age Pass**

Until December 31, 2006 New Melones Lake issued Golden Age cards (for U.S. citizens, 62 years and older) in the Visitor Center. This cost for this lifetime card is set at \$10. It provided visitors a 50% reduction in camping fees.

### **2.2.6 Coin Operated Showers**

Certain restrooms in Tuttle town and Glory Hole Recreation Areas have coin operated showers. The amount of revenue varies depending on the amount of visitor use. For 2007, the fee for shower use was 50 cents for 5 minutes.

## 2.3 Current Fee Revenues

During fiscal year 2006, New Melones Lake collected the following revenues from user fees:

<i>Type of fee</i>	<i>Amount collected</i>
Special use	\$3,775.00
Camping (individual)	(collected at New Melones) \$81,552.68
Camping (individual, group and group picnic)	(collected by NRRS) \$174,777.00 (*CLIN fees) -\$33,143.70 NRRS Refunds -\$23,985.00 Net NRRS Revenues - \$117,649.00
Golden Age card sales	\$460.00
Coin-operated showers	\$9,433.25
<b>TOTAL Gross Revenues</b>	<b>\$269,997.93</b>

\*The CLIN fee is the portion of the camping fee paid to ReserveAmerica for the reservation transaction. It is a fee set under the interagency contract.

During fiscal year 2007, New Melones Lake collected the following revenues from user fees:

<i>Type of fee</i>	<i>amount collected</i>
Special use	\$3,979.42
Camping (individual)	(collected at New Melones) \$92,143.50
Camping (individual, group and group picnic)	(collected by NRRS) \$163,535.00 (*CLIN fees) -\$37,732.34 NRRS Refunds -\$22,086.00 Net NRRS Revenues - \$103,716.66
Golden Age card sales	\$70.00
Coin-operated showers	\$11,100.25
<b>TOTAL Gross Revenues</b>	<b>\$270,828.17</b>

\*The CLIN fee is the portion of the camping fee paid to ReserveAmerica for the reservation transaction. It is a fee set under the interagency contract.

## 3. Implementation of REA

### 3.1 Site Criteria for Fees

Specific guidance was provided by Congress in the REA legislation setting criteria for sites which can participate in the program. Furthermore, the REA legislation prohibited



certain fees at Bureau of Reclamation sites (example entrance fees). At authorized REA sites, fees may be collected for Standard Amenities and for Expanded Amenities which meet the criteria set forth by REA.

### **3.1.1 Standard Amenity Recreation Fee**

New Melones Lake has the following locations which currently meet the criteria for the standard amenity fee. Under the REA legislation an area must have all required amenities to be eligible to have a standard amenity fee.

#### Glory Hole Recreation Area and Tuttle town Recreation Area

- REA 3(f) (4) (A) An area that provides significant opportunities for outdoor recreation;
- REA 3(f) (4) (B) An area that has substantial investments;
- REA 3(f) (4) (C) An area where fees can be efficiently collected;
- REA 3(f) (4) (D) An area that contains all of the following amenities:
  - (i) Designated developed parking
  - (ii) Permanent toilet facility
  - (iii) Permanent trash receptacle
  - (iv) Interpretive sign, exhibit or kiosk
  - (v) Picnic tables
  - (vi) Security services.

### **3.1.2 Expanded Amenity Recreation Fee**

New Melones Lake has two locations which meet the criteria for the expanded amenity recreation fee. An area must have at least five of nine amenities described in REA 3(g) (2) (A) (i-ix) to meet this criteria (per December 14, 2006 Draft Interagency Implementation Handbook for Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act). Listed below are the areas and amenities contained within that meet the REA legislation requirements:

#### Glory Hole Recreation Area and Tuttle town Recreation Area.

- REA 3(g) (2) (A) Developed campgrounds that provide the following facilities:
  - (i) Tent or trailer spaces
  - (ii) Picnic tables
  - (iii) Drinking water
  - (iv) Access roads
  - (v) Collection of the fee by an employee or agent of the Federal land
  - (vi) Reasonable visitor protection
  - (vii) Refuse containers
  - (viii) Toilet facilities
  - (ix) Simple devices for containing a campfire
- REA 3(g)(2)(B) Use of highly developed boat launches with specialized facilities or services such as mechanical or hydraulic boat lifts or facilities, multi-lane paved ramps, paved parking, restrooms and other improvements such as boarding floats, loading ramps, or fish cleaning stations.
- REA 3(g) (2) (E) Use of sanitary dump stations.

- o REA 3(g) (2) (F) Participation in an enhanced interpretive program or special tour.

## 3.2 Phased Implementation

### 3.2.1 Phase I ( Fiscal Year 2008)

#### 3.2.1.1 Summary of Proposed Fees

<i>Fee</i>	<i>rate</i>	<i>type of fee</i>
Special use	variable	Special use
Individual Camping (per night)		
Standard site	\$18 <sup>1</sup>	expanded amenity
Walk-in site	\$14 <sup>2</sup>	expanded amenity
Group Picnic (per day)	\$75	other
Group Campground (per night)	\$100-\$120	other
Interagency Senior pass	\$10	other
Coin operated showers (per shower)	50¢ per 5 minutes	other
RV Dump station (per use)		
Non-registered camper	\$15 <sup>3</sup>	expanded amenity
Registered camper	\$8 <sup>4</sup>	expanded amenity

#### 3.2.1.2 Special Events

This program is under review. Fee rate schedules have been established for common categories of special recreation events or uses. Other special use will be charged fees in accordance with 43 CFR Part 429.

#### 3.2.1.3 Individual Camping

Walk-in sites \$14 per night, Standard sites \$18 per night (increase \$2 per night).

A camper that pays a camping fee receives the following amenities/services: restrooms (some with coin operated showers), each site has a picnic table, fire ring/grill, parking area for one or two vehicles. Payment of a camping fee also includes the use of boat launching and use of other facilities within the recreation areas. Campers are allowed pets at no charge. As camping fees are classified as “expanded amenity fees,” a camper that posses a Golden Age, Golden Access, Interagency Senior, Interagency Access pass is entitled to a 50% reduction in their camping fee.

#### 3.2.1.4 Group Camping

No change to current fees would be made.

#### 3.2.1.5 Group Picnic

<sup>1</sup> \$18 is the proposed fee, an increase of \$2 from the 2007 fee.

<sup>2</sup> \$14 is the proposed fee, an increase of \$2 from the 2007 fee.

<sup>3</sup> \$15 is the proposed new fee. Fees have not been charged for this service in the past.

<sup>4</sup> \$8 is the proposed new fee. Fees have not been charged for this service in the past.

No change to current fees would be made.

#### **3.2.1.6 Interagency Senior Pass**

These lifetime passes, which replaced the Golden Age pass in 2007, will be issued in the campgrounds and Visitor Center for a one-time fee of \$10. These cards entitle the card holder to a 50% reduction on expanded amenity fees.

#### **3.2.1.7 Coin operated Showers**

A nominal fee is charged for the use of hot showers at New Melones for the purpose of conserving water and electricity/energy. No change in fees would be made at this time. Passes are not valid for shower fees.

#### **3.2.1.8 RV Dump Stations**

Reclamation will establish a new fee beginning April 1, 2008, for use of the RV dump stations at New Melones Lake. Historically there has been no fee to use the dump station in Glory Hole or Tuttletown Recreation Area. Neither facility has a mechanism to control who uses the dump station, whether camper, day user, or traveler on Highway 49. This policy has resulted in excessive use beyond that attributed to visitors using New Melones recreation facilities. Costs to pump-out and maintain the wastewater treatment facilities has increased dramatically in recent years, necessitating use limits and fees to help offset costs. Also, a free dump station significantly impacts area campgrounds that offer this service for a fee. For example, the Angels RV Park located across from the entrance to Glory Hole Recreation Area charges non-campers \$15 to use their dump station, and has thus been undercut by Reclamation offering free use of its facilities.

Self-registration pay stations will be established at each dump station to enable New Melones to charge a fee to recover some of the costs associated with providing this service. Furthermore this new fee will ensure that New Melones Lake charges a fee comparable to other facilities in the area.

Proposed Fees:

- *Non-registered campers* that request to use the RV dump station facility would pay \$15 per use. As an “expanded amenity fee” persons who use a dump station facility that possess a Golden Age, Golden Access, Interagency Senior or Interagency Access pass will receive a 50% reduction in this fee (\$7.50 per use).
- *Registered campers* that request to use the RV dump station facility would pay \$8. As an “expanded amenity fee” persons who use a dump station facility that possess a Golden Age, Golden Access, Interagency Senior or Interagency Access pass will receive a 50% reduction in this fee (\$4 per use).

#### **3.2.1.9 Fee Comparability Study**

Per Reclamation Manual PEC-01-01, “recreation” is a proprietary activity for which user charges are to be collected: these charges are to be based on ‘market’ or ‘comparable’ prices. Failing to charge comparable fees potentially undermines the ability of other local businesses and agencies to compete for recreation dollars. This is contrary to the

requirements contained in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A25. In order for Reclamation to comply with these requirements a User Fee Study was completed in 2007. The findings of this study were used in determining proposed fee amounts for Phase I and II.

### 3.2.2 Phase II (Fiscal Year 2009)

#### 3.2.2.1 Summary of Proposed New Fees

<i>Fee</i>	<i>rate</i>	<i>type of fee</i>
Annual Boat Launch pass	\$60	other
Annual Day Use pass	\$40	other
Interagency Annual pass	\$80	other
Daily amenity fee	\$6	standard amenity
Daily boat launch fee	\$8	expanded amenity
Daily campers' overflow vehicle/visitors	\$6	expanded amenity

#### 3.2.2.2 Annual Boat Launch Fees

This pass is valid 12-months from date of issuance and would be valid for the expanded amenity [boat launch] fee at New Melones Lake only. It does not apply to or provide a discount on other expanded amenity fees such as camping.

#### 3.2.2.3 Annual Day Use Pass

This pass is valid 12-months from date of issuance and would be valid for the standard amenity fee at New Melones Lake only. It does not apply to or provide a discount on expanded amenity fees such as camping or boat launching.

#### 3.2.2.4 Interagency Annual Pass

This pass is valid 12-months from date of issuance, and is valid at many federal facilities. It provides free entrance at places such as Yosemite National Park. This pass is not presently honored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at places such as New Hogan Lake. This pass applies to entrance fees (U.S. National Parks) and standard amenity fees (Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management).

#### 3.2.2.5 Daily Amenity Fee

This new daily fee would be charged for use of standard amenities at New Melones Lake such as: picnic tables, restrooms, parking, trails, and basic visitor services such as ranger patrols, etc. Persons visiting Glory Hole Recreation Area and Tuttletown Recreation will use, as a part of their visit, one or more of these basic services and amenities. A fee of \$6 per day could be charged. Persons who possess a Golden Age, Golden Access, Interagency Senior or Interagency Access pass will not be charged the daily amenity fee. This fee does not include use of expanded amenities such as boat launching or camping. As a "daily" fee, this 'permit' will expire at midnight on the date of issuance. The daily amenity fee is not required for registered campers. This fee would apply to all methods of visitor entry into Glory Hole or Tuttletown Recreation Areas, whether by vehicle, foot, bicycle etc.

### **3.2.2.6 Daily Boat Launch Fee**

This new daily fee would be charged for expanded amenities including specialized facilities and services, associated with launching boats. Persons visiting Glory Hole Recreation Area and Tuttle town Recreation Area will use, as a part of their visit with a boat, jet ski or other type of watercraft, a boat ramp facility which may include some or all of the following: multi-lane paved launch ramp and parking lots, permanent restrooms, courtesy docks, navigation buoys, lighting, fish cleaning station, floating restrooms, etc. A fee of \$8 per day could be charged. As an “expanded amenity fee,” persons who use a boat launch facility that possess a Golden Age, Golden Access, Interagency Senior or Interagency Access pass will receive a 50% reduction in this fee (\$4 per day). As a “daily” fee, this ‘permit’ would expire at midnight on the date of issuance. This fee would not apply to registered campers.

### **3.2.2.7 Daily Campers Overflow Vehicle/Visitors fee**

It is common practice for campers to bring more vehicles than the limit per campsite (for a standard site the limit is two, for walk-in sites the limit is one). This daily fee of \$6 could apply to vehicles of campers over the limit. This daily fee would also apply to visitors to campers and visitors to houseboat users at the marina. As an “expanded amenity fee” persons that possess a Golden Age, Golden Access, Interagency Senior or Interagency Access pass will receive a 50% reduction in this fee (\$3 per day). As a “daily” fee, this ‘permit’ would expire at midnight on the date of issuance. A multi-day pass would be available.

### **3.2.2.8 Application of Fees**

With the exception of the RV dump station fee for registered campers or non-registered campers, and fees for the coin operated showers, there are no other multi-layered fees. Generally stated, the higher level expanded amenity fee will allow for use of all lower-level standard amenity fee areas. For example, a visitor that pays the expanded amenity fee for boat launching would not also pay the standard amenity fee to use a day use area or trail.

### 3.3 Potential Revenue

**It is anticipated that with Phase I there may be the following gross revenues:**

<i>Type of fee</i>	<i>estimated range</i>
Special use <sup>5</sup>	\$4,000 - \$5,000
Camping <sup>6</sup>	\$250,000 - \$270,000
Interagency Senior card sales <sup>7</sup>	\$400 - \$600
Coin-operated showers	\$9,000 - \$11,000
RV Dump Station	\$2,000 - \$4,000
<b>Total Estimated Gross Revenues:</b>	<b>\$265,400 - \$290,600</b>

Note: While increased camping rates may lead to higher camping revenues, with the implementation of the NRRS reservation system moved to on-site field locations, there may also be an increase in the number of refunds.

**It is estimated that with Phase II there may be the following gross revenues:**

<i>Type of fee</i>	<i>estimated range</i>
Special use	\$4,500 - \$5,500
Camping	\$260,000 - \$280,000
Interagency Senior card sales <sup>8</sup>	\$2,000 - \$4,000
Coin-operated showers	\$9,500 - \$11,500
RV Dump Station <sup>9</sup>	\$6,000 - \$12,000
Annual Boat Launch pass <sup>10</sup>	\$120,000 - \$240,000
Annual Day Use pass <sup>11</sup>	\$4,000 - \$12,000
Interagency Annual pass <sup>12</sup>	\$8,000 - \$24,000
Daily amenity fee <sup>13</sup>	\$90,000
Daily boat launch fee <sup>14</sup>	\$280,000
Daily campers' overflow vehicle/visitors <sup>15</sup>	\$30,000
<b>Total Estimated Gross Revenues:</b>	<b>\$814,000 - \$989,000</b>

<sup>5</sup> Based on changes in the Right of Use program.

<sup>6</sup> Includes group, individual, on-site and NRRS collections. Does not exclude NRRS CLIN fees, refunds etc.

<sup>7</sup> Sales in campground and visitor center.

<sup>8</sup> Sales of 200-400 Interagency Senior cards

<sup>9</sup> Based on reopening of the Glory Hole RV dump station in FY 09.

<sup>10</sup> Sales of 2,000 to 4,000 Annual Boat Launch passes. Unknown number at discounted sales rate.

<sup>11</sup> Sales of 100 to 300 Annual Day Use passes. Unknown number at discounted sales rate.

<sup>12</sup> Sales of 100 to 300 Interagency Annual passes

<sup>13</sup> Based on 15,000 Daily Amenity permits sold.

<sup>14</sup> Based on 40,000 Daily Boat Launch permits sold. Unknown number at discounted sales rate.

<sup>15</sup> Based on 5,000 Daily campers overflow/visitors permits sold. Unknown number at discounted sales rate.

Developing estimates for the new fees is extremely difficult. There are no current and usable visitor use surveys for New Melones Lake. Visitation numbers are based solely on traffic counter readings. These readings however, do not measure what activity visitors participate in. Traditionally facilities that introduce new fees can expect a 1-5% reduction in visitation for the first 1-3 years. A wide range of estimates is provided as New Melones Lake does not know how many visitors will use a federal passport to provide a 50% discount on certain fees and passes. It can also be anticipated that in the first year there may be a lower rate of pass sales, with an increasing rate as people become familiar with the fee program.

In addition, many factors can influence visitation patterns and associated revenues. Weather patterns, precipitation rates, fluctuating lake levels, facility conditions, local and regional events and many other factors may have impacts on tourism, making seasonal revenues highly variable.

### **3.4 Recreation Passes**

New Melones Lake will issue and honor the following Federal Recreation Passes:

#### **3.4.1 Golden Age/Interagency Senior Pass**

These passes are issued to U.S. citizens 62 years of age and older. They would provide 100% discount on standard amenity fees and 50% discount on expanded amenity fees. These passes do not apply to group facilities and special recreation permit fees. A pass holder could purchase an Annual Boat Launch pass (at a 50% discount) and then pay no fee to launch their boat.

#### **3.4.2 Golden Access/Interagency Access Pass**

These passes are issued to U.S. citizens with permanent disabilities. They would provide 100% discount on standard amenity fees and 50% discount on expanded amenity fees. These passes do not apply to group facilities and special recreation permit fees. A pass holder could purchase an Annual Boat Launch pass (at a 50% discount) and then pay no fee to launch their boat.

#### **3.4.3 Interagency Annual Pass (Phase II)**

Sold for \$80 by a variety of federal agencies, these passes provide 100% discount on standard amenity fees. This pass would not apply to expanded amenity fees such as camping and boat launching.

#### **3.4.4 Annual Day Use Pass (Phase II)**

Sold for \$40 and valid for a period of 12-months from date of issuance. This pass would apply to standard amenity fees. This pass would not apply to expanded amenity fees such as camping and boating.

#### **3.4.5 Annual Boat Launch Pass (Phase II)**

Sold for \$60 and valid for a period of 12-months from date of issuance. This pass would apply to this expanded amenity fee. This pass would not apply to other expanded amenity fees such as camping.

### **3.4.6 Notes**

There is no authorization in REA for a site-specific annual pass for ‘expanded amenity fees.’ However guidance in the 2006 Draft Interagency Implementation Handbook for Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (page 13, policy 5(a) (1)) indicates that an annual pass may be used for an expanded amenity fee for limited circumstances “to ensure consistency and reduce visitor confusion.” An annual pass for boaters is justified because it would allow New Melones Lake to be consistent with other federal facilities. Lake Mead and Lake Powell, both National Park Service areas with lake operations, offer annual passes for their boaters. New Hogan Lake, the closest U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lake, offers an annual pass for their boaters. Additionally, it is likely that a significant number of boaters would be interested in purchasing an annual pass. Not offering such a pass would significantly impact customer service.

## **3.5 Fee Collection**

### **3.5.1 Methods**

#### **3.5.1.1 Off-site**

Since 2003, New Melones Lake has been a part of the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS) operated by ReserveAmerica. Managed by an interagency contract, NRRS processes campsite and group reservations for facilities operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Park Service, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Reclamation. Persons making reservations can do so by calling a toll free number or logging onto [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov).

As noted on the table for Fee Revenue Fiscal Year 2006, NRRS collects over half of the camping revenues for New Melones Lake. Camping fees collected by NRRS for New Melones Lake are deposited into a U.S. Treasury lock box.

NRRS was introduced in 1997, and used a software program titled “Park Office” for day to day field operations. Using this program, personnel can manage campsite transactions in the field, whether it is to check-in a camper, transfer their campsite on their request, or process a refund if they depart early.

New Melones Lake has not utilized this program. Instead like many other locations without operating entrance stations, it had until February 2007, relied upon a faxed “Daily Arrival Report.” It was based upon this report that personnel at New Melones Lake knew of incoming campers arrival information. However, without the use of Park Office, the staff at New Melones Lake was unable to make site transfers, print other reports, initiate refunds etc.

In February 2007 ReserveAmerica began a conversion of its reservation system from Park Office to a new system called ORMS as a part of an ‘e-government’ initiative. Unlike Park Office, ORMS is a web based program. No data or records are retained on-site; it is all available through an agency section on [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov). New Melones



Lake started to use ORMS in February and is currently managing its campsite reservations through this system.

### **3.5.1.2 On-Site**

New Melones Lake will continue to manage campsite reservations through ORMS year round. However, this system is designed to meet all fee collection needs for a site. Day use, special event, and boat launch fees in addition to camping fees can be collected with the ORMS program.

Staff using ORMS in an entrance station setting will be able to process all necessary actions to manage campsites such as check-in, transfers, refunds etc. They can issue Federal Recreation passes, and daily permits. With ORMS, staff will be able to collect fees by cash, check, and credit card. The latter will substantially improve the level of customer service that New Melones Lake can provide.

During periods when the entrance stations are not in operation, such as the non-peak season, all collections will continue to be entered into the ORMS. This will allow Reclamation to maintain strong accountability of the fees it collects under the REA program.

## **3.5.2 Staffing**

### **3.5.2.1 Staffing for Phase I**

The collection of camping fees, and the new dump station fees, would be through self-registration pay stations. With the exception of the dump station fees, this would be a continuation of the existing program. Volunteer camp hosts would live on-site to provide assistance, information, and assist in managing the reservation program. Park Rangers would handle fee compliance issues.

### **3.5.2.2 Staffing for Phase II**

#### *Peak Season Collection*

During the peak season, collection of fees would be handled by contractors that would work in the Glory Hole and Tuttletown Recreation Area entrance stations. Each contract would require two people. This would ensure a second person is available during high traffic at the entrance station, and so that one person can be available in the campground to manage on-site issues. Park Rangers would handle fee compliance issues.

#### *Non-Peak Season Collection*

During the non-peak season collection of camping and day use fees would be through self-registration pay stations. With the exception of the dump station fees, this would be a continuation of the existing program. Volunteer camp hosts would live on-site to provide assistance, information, and assist in managing the reservation program. Park Rangers would handle fee compliance issues.

## **3.6 Use of Revenues**

### **3.6.1 Distribution of Revenues**

Under REA 5(a) (7) the Secretary shall issue guidelines for the administration of the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass, which shall include agreement on price, the distribution of revenues between the Federal land management agencies.

Under Directives and Standards LND 01-02(G)(5) one hundred percent of all recreation pass fees collected at a specific designated REA site...will remain available for expenditure, without further appropriation, until expended at that site.

Under REA 7(c)(1)(A) not less than eighty percent of the recreation fees from site-specific agency pass revenues collected at a specific unit or area of Federal land management agency shall remain available for expenditure, without further appropriation, until expended at that unit or area.

Under Directives and Standards LND 01-02(G)(4) twenty percent of the REA user fees collected at a specific designated REA site will remain available for expenditure, without further appropriation, for recreation purposes only, until expended by the region [Mid-Pacific Regional Office].

### **3.6.2 Authorized Expenditures**

Under REA (8)(a)(3), fees collected under this program shall be used for: (A) repair, maintenance, and facility enhancement directly related to visitor enjoyment, visitor access, and health and safety; (B) interpretation, visitor information, visitor service, visitor needs assessments, and signs; (C) habitat restoration directly related to wildlife-dependant recreation that is limited to hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, or photography; (D) law enforcement related to public use and recreation; (E) direct operating or capital costs associated with the recreation fee program; and (F) a fee management agreement established under REA 6(a) or a visitor reservation service.

Under REA 8(b) recreation fees may not be used for biological monitoring on Federal recreational lands and waters under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 for listed or candidate species.

Under REA 8(c) not more than an average of fifteen percent of total revenues collected under this program may be used for administration, overhead, and indirect costs.

### **3.6.3 Potential Use of Revenues Generated**

#### **3.6.3.1 *Cost of Collection (Direct Operating or Capital Costs Associated with Recreation Fee Program)***

The primary use of revenues will be to offset costs of collection, outlined in REA (8) (a) (3) (E) above as “direct operating or capitol costs associated with the recreation fee

program.” The following is a description of projected costs to start-up and continue implementing REA at New Melones recreation areas:

- ***Improvements Needed to Implement REA Phase I***
  - *Self-registration pay stations*

Install self-registration pay stations to collect dump station fees at the Glory Hole and Tuttle town Recreation Area facilities. These pay stations would be the same as what is presently used in the campgrounds.
  - *Construct Three (3) new campground host sites*
    - a. Construct a new camp host site in Big Oak #108 (this work is funded for completion during Fiscal Year 2008).
    - b. Construct a new camp host site in Ironhorse #7 including the removal of the existing host site in Ironhorse #1 (this work is funded for completion during Fiscal Year 2008).
    - c. Construct a new camp host site (preferably in Chamise campground). Cost estimate \$10,000.
  - *Entrance Station Computer Stations*

Install satellite internet and computer equipment in each entrance station.
  - *Entrance Station Redesigned/Relocated*
    - a. The entrance stations are not ADA accessible. The windows in the buildings are not at the appropriate level for a person in a wheelchair to make transactions etc. The entrance stations do not have ramps for employees or the visiting public to access or enter the building or make transactions at a window of the entrance station.
    - b. The initial set up for the entrance station operations will be for the staff to handle all tasks, whether registering for a campsite or collecting payment for a daily fee. This will be a complex operation, and during peak periods could prove quite challenging to staff members. New Melones Lake should consider the construction of entrance stations near camp host sites so that day use and camping operations can be separated.
    - c. The Glory Hole entrance station does not have an exit lane. As a result, departing campers, visitors with questions or other matters, cannot contact staff without leaving the recreation area, turning around, and going back into line to ask. The existing entrance station may need to be relocated to accommodate this need.
  - *Fee Signs*

The existing fee signs would be replaced to reflect the new campsite and dump station fees and to correct the website for reservations. The cost estimate for these signs is \$4,000.

- ***Improvements Needed to Implement Phase II***

To fully implement REA at New Melones Lake, a number of steps must take place and are described below with estimated costs.

- *Self-registration pay stations*

Install self-registration pay stations to collect fees during off-season periods and during days/hours when entrance stations closed. Include utilities if needed to operate, although pay stations with solar power are on the market. Pay stations would be installed adjacent to the entrance stations for Glory Hole and Tuttle town Recreation Areas. If necessary, additional pay stations could be placed adjacent to boat ramp and day use parking lots in the recreation areas.

- *Initial Entrance Station Set-Up*

Improvements would need to be made to existing entrance stations to include cash registers, surveillance system, furniture, restrooms, drinking water and fee signs.

- *Other Expenditures*

O&M Costs. Once an entrance station operation is started up there would be on-going and year to year operating costs. Janitorial services would be contracted to clean and service the restroom facilities. Other on-going expenses include: electric use would increase; drinking water to be provided; administrative supplies; security monitoring and video camera surveillance.

- *Fee collectors*

- *Non-peak season*

During the non-peak season of October through March, entrance stations would not be staffed. Collection of fees would be through self-registration pay stations. Fee compliance in the campgrounds will be done by volunteer hosts and park rangers. In the day use areas fee compliance will be done by park rangers.

Campgrounds would be staffed by two volunteer host (stipend) couples per recreation area. To offset the costs of living on-site, couples are provided a stipend of a set amount per day (currently \$10) plus mileage for gasoline when a personal vehicle is used (currently 48.5¢ per mile).

The cost estimate for the volunteer hosts is approximately \$5,040<sup>16</sup>. For park ranger staff the estimate is approximately \$11,000.00<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Based on \$420 per month per recreation area, for six months \$2,520, for two recreation areas is \$5,040.

<sup>17</sup> Based upon GS-4 park ranger at the pay rate of \$12.36 per hour for 522 hours x 1.75% for effective rate.

○ *Peak season*

Unless authorized to hire seasonal Reclamation staff six park attendant contracts would be used to staff the entrance stations from April 1 until September 30, seven days a week, between the hours of 7:30 a.m. until 11 p.m.

Each contract would require two adults, ensuring that two people are available during peak periods in the entrance station, and one person can be available in the campground to handle campground checks and assist visitors. The cost estimate for six contracts is \$150,000.

**3.6.3.2 Law Enforcement**

REA revenues will be important for the enhancement of existing law enforcement services at New Melones Lake. Contracts for expanded law enforcement services with Tuolumne and Calaveras counties would provide for enhanced visitor safety, security and quality of experience.

**3.6.3.3 Interpretive Services, Visitor Information, Visitor Services, Visitor Needs Assessments and Signs**

The New Melones project has a substantial number of unique resources which lend themselves to visitor education and enjoyment such as Natural Bridges located in Coyote Creek. There are presently no interpretive or educational wayside exhibits, or trail brochures for any of its existing trails. Exhibits or kiosks could be set up at trailheads to better provide the public with information, safety messages and maps. The New Melones Lake visitor center opened in 1994. Since then no improvements or modernizations to the exhibits has been made. Exhibits are not ADA compliant. Tuttleton Recreation Area does not have an outdoor amphitheater or facility to provide educational and interpretive programs to visitors. The existing amphitheater at Glory Hole Recreation Area requires improvements for ADA accessibility and other improvements.

**3.6.3.4 Reservation Service**

REA revenues will be used to pay for the contract fees or direct costs to Reclamation for visitor use of the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS).

**3.6.3.5 Repair, Maintenance and Facility Enhancement related directly to visitor enjoyment, visitor access and health and safety**

Because REA was intended to provide for enhanced visitor services and facilities, it is hoped that regular appropriations will continue to provide for normal levels of facility repair, operations and maintenance. Repair, operations and maintenance of enhancements will be financed through REA revenues.

- **Universal access and design**

Universal Access and Design. Recreation facilities at New Melones are required to be brought into compliance with federal accessibility regulations upon renovation, or when new facilities are constructed. Significant accomplishments in accessibility could be realized through utilization of REA funds for park improvements.

- Trails Development and Maintenance. Existing trails are maintained through a combination of paid staff and volunteers. These trails could be better maintained with additional funds. Additional trails are planned and could be constructed if funding for construction, operations and maintenance is available.

### **3.6.3.6 *Habitat restoration directly related to wildlife-dependant recreation that is limited to hunting, fishing, wildlife observation or photography.***

Prescribed burns to remove built up fuels and enhance wildlife. Burns would remove such wildland fuels as ceanothus, coyote brush, chamise and other dry land fuels. Prescribed burns will not only reduce fuel loads but also improve wildlife hunting opportunities by providing brush islands for game, improve grasses and small forage, improve water retention and reduce wildfire dangers.

Restoration of areas damaged by off-road vehicle operations. Outlying areas have been damaged by trespassers and illegal off-road vehicle operation. Re-establishment of woodland habitat would provide for wildlife, reduce erosion, and assist in repair of damaged lands.

Wildlife Habitat Improvements. Installation of game guzzlers in selected locations within wildlife management areas would provide a water source for both large and small game including upland game birds.

Installation of Fishery habitat in coves located in Angels Creek and French Flat regions of lake. Placement of protective devices such as wire mesh screens, anchored trees and other devices would enhance fisheries around the lake by providing protected areas for fry to hide from predatory fish and give them an opportunity to grow, improving the fishing opportunities throughout the lake.

Oak Woodland enhancement Tuttle town and Glory Hole Recreation Areas. Planting of Oak Trees native to this region would not only enhance the upland game bird populations within these areas, they would also provide shade and shelter for recreationists visiting the park. Oak plantings would replace trees that have died or been lost through construction of the recreation facilities.

## **3.7 Timelines**

### **3.7.1 Phase I**

- Reservations for campsites are accepted up to six months in advance. The target date to implement Phase I is April 1, 2008. Camping fees should be adjusted no later than January 2008 to ensure all reservations are at the new fee rate starting with peak season (April 1, 2008).

- Fee signs at New Melones Lake will have to be replaced with new ones reflecting the new camping fees and dump station fees. Depending upon which method is used, a local vendor, or the BLM sign shop, sign production could take months. New fee signs should be drafted by December and ordered no later than February 2008.
- Installation of self-deposit vaults and gates at dump stations must be installed by 1 April 2008.

### **3.7.2 Phase II**

For new fees to take effect by October 1, 2008, the improvements listed in section 3.6.3.1 would need to be in place. Site specific annual passes would be developed and printed. Full implementation of all components of this plan would occur with the start of the recreation peak season in April, 2009.

## **3.8 Public Involvement**

The following sections in REA discuss public involvement:

- REA 4(b) requires “advance notice” of six months in the Federal Register to establish a new recreation fee area. New Melones Lake is an established REA site; therefore no Federal Register notice is required.
- REA Section 804 (a) requires the Secretary to provide the public with opportunities to participate in the development of or changing of a recreation fee established under this Act.
- REA 4(b) also requires the Secretary to publish a notice of new fees or change to an existing fee in local newspapers and publications located near the site.
- REA 4(e) (1) requires clear notification of fees and passes to be posted and included in publications.
- REA 4(e) (2) requires where practicable, posted notification where work has been performed using fees or pass revenue.

In order to provide for public involvement and ample advance notification of Reclamation’s planned implementation of REA, including establishment of new and increased fees, a proactive public relations strategy should be developed and implemented by winter of 2008, prior to release of new fees on the reservation and park website.

Working jointly with Mid-Pacific Region Office of Public Affairs and Central California Area Office’s Recreation Division staff, New Melones Lake will use the following

methods of communication to provide information to the public, local communities and organizations:

Recreation.gov. New Melones Lake will post all fees on the website for campsite reservations. Persons making reservations will automatically be charged the new camping rate during peak season once the inventory is updated.

New Melones Lake website. All fees will be posted on the New Melones Lake website.

Local media. Press releases, ads, interviews by media will be done to ensure the broadest available outreach of information to the public on the fee program at New Melones Lake.

Signage. Information on New Melones fees will be available at the entrance station, Administration Office, Visitor Center, bulletin boards, self-registration pay stations, and in pamphlets available upon request.

Interagency Working Group. The Resource Manager will make presentations of the REA program for New Melones Lake at the Interagency Working Group meetings which includes representatives of county governments and other local entities that have connection to tourism.

Visitor's Bureaus. New Melones Lake utilizes the visitor's bureaus to publicize educational and interpretive programs, but flyers and postings on their web site can also be done on our fee program.

Other outreach as needed, such as presentations to stakeholder groups, Boards of Supervisors, City Council etc.



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