

Mid-Pacific Region

Lake Berryessa and Monticello Dam

Background

Lake Berryessa is a federal reservoir formed when the Bureau of Reclamation built Monticello Dam on Putah Creek in 1957. The lake is managed by Reclamation's Mid-Pacific Region, Central California Area Office.

Nestled between Blue Ridge and Cedar Roughs, east of the Napa Valley, Lake Berryessa can store 1.6 million acre-feet of water and is one of the largest bodies of fresh water in California. The lake is 26 miles long and 3 miles wide with 165 miles of shoreline. Reclamation and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife jointly manage a 2,000-acre wildlife area along the east side of the lake, the Lake Berryessa Wildlife Area.



Monticello Dam on Putah Creek forms Lake Berryessa.

Solano Project

Lake Berryessa is part of Reclamation's Solano Project, built during the 1950s and early 1960s, which distributes agricultural water to farmland in Solano County and municipal and industrial water to the county's principle cities, including Vacaville, Vallejo and Fairfield. The Project's primary features include Monticello Dam and Lake Berryessa, Putah Diversion Dam and Lake Solano and the Putah South Canal.

The Monticello Hydroelectric Plant was built in 1983 and has a generating capacity of 11.5 megawatts. On average, the plant supplies 2 million kilowatt hours of clean energy annually, equivalent to approximately 80,000 barrels of oil. The Solano Project, including the Hydroelectric Plant, is owned by Reclamation and operated under a cooperative agreement by the Solano County Water Agency/Solano Irrigation District.

Recreation

Just 70 miles northeast of San Francisco and 40 miles west of Sacramento, Lake Berryessa's central location offers exceptional year-round recreation. The lake's water reaches temperatures of up to 75 degrees in the summer, making it an ideal place for water sports. Anglers enjoy fishing for both cold and warm water species, such as rainbow trout, bass, catfish, crappie and bluegill. Reclamation provides two free public areas, Oak Shores and Smittle Creek Day Use Areas, which offer picnic tables, barbeque grills, hiking trails, off-shore fishing and beach-related activities. Acorn Beach offers a group picnic site with shade shelters. Reclamation also manages a free public boat launch at Capell Cove and free hand-launching for canoes and kayaks at the Oak Shores and Eticuera Day Use Areas.

Lake Berryessa provides many opportunities to explore a variety of plants and wildlife. The Monticello Dam area at the southeast corner of the lake is one of the best local birding areas. The early-spring nesting season and late-fall migration season are the best times to visit for exceptional bird watching. The grassy hills dotted with oak and Manzanita provides opportunities to view eagles, hawks, songbirds and turkeys. Shoreline viewing may include Canada geese, pelicans, great blue herons, western grebes, wood ducks, snow geese and common loons. Other wildlife seen around the lake include deer, gray foxes, bobcats, black bears, coyotes and mountain lions.



Lake Berryessa Rangers offer a wide variety of activities throughout the year, held rain or shine and provided free of charge. Activities range from nature hikes along the Smittle Creek Trail to 2- to 3-hour paddling tours, bird watching walks, and lectures on topics such as the lake's plants, animals and history.

Other annual events at Lake Berryessa include:

- C.A.S.T. for Kids (Catch a Special Thrill) that provides children with disabilities or disadvantages an opportunity to experience the sport of fishing.
- California Coastal Clean Up Day when volunteers join Reclamation and the Solano Resource Conservation District and partners to help clean up Lake Berryessa's waters and shoreline.
- National Public Lands Day that provides volunteers a chance to participate in an ongoing restoration effort at the lake, planting native trees and plants and installing birdhouses.



Visitors enjoy the lake's Oak Shores Day Use Area.

The Lake Berryessa Rangers also operate a Water Education and Information Station to provide not only fun family activities but also relay water safety and conservation messages; a free lifejacket loaner service is also offered. The Station, located in the Oak Shores Day Use Area, is open from 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on summer weekends (Memorial Day through Labor Day) and on holidays.

Interpretive programs and events at Lake Berryessa tie into President Obama's *America's Great Outdoors* initiative (<http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/>), which seeks to empower Americans to share in the responsibility to conserve, restore, and provide better access to our lands and waters and leave a healthy, vibrant outdoor legacy for generations to come. Activities led by Lake Berryessa Park Rangers also support the Department of the Interior's *Let's Move Outside* initiative (<http://www.letsmove.gov/lets-move-outside>), which was created to encourage children and their families to enjoy outdoor activities, which abound in every city, town and community.

Recreation Information

- **Reclamation Facilities** – 707-966-2111, ext. 0, <http://www.usbr.gov/mp/cao/berryessa>.
- **Markley Cove Resort** – 707-966-2134, John & Linda Frazier, <http://markleycoveresort.com/>.
- **Pleasure Cove Marina** – 707-966-9600, Forever Resorts, <http://goberryessa.com>.
- **Lake Berryessa Wildlife Area** – 707-944-5500, managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/lands/wa/region3/lakeberryessa.html>.

For More Information:

MP Region Public Affairs
916-978-5100
www.usbr.gov/mp

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