



MEETING SUMMARY

Recreation Management and Visitor Use and Needs at Silverwood SRA

Meeting Details

Date: 10 July 2017

Time: 10:30 AM

Location: **Silverwood State Recreation Area Administrative Offices**

Objectives: Gather information on recreation management and visitor use and needs at Silverwood Lake SRA

Attendees

Kirby Gilbert, Stantec; Lisa McCandless, Stantec; Russ Dingman, District Superintendent; Norb Ruhmke, Sector Superintendent; Robert Scholfield, Maintenance Supervisor

Summary

As part of the recreation study, this interview was scheduled with Parks to get an overview of the recreation management and visitor use observations and needs. Several topics were covered, including facility condition; day, weekend and holiday operations; and a general overview of maintenance practices. The meeting started off with a short overview of the general recreation management framework. Norb and Russ provided some general observations as follows:

- The concessionaire, Rocky Mountain Recreation Company, only runs the marina and beach store. Their contract is up for renewal in February, 2018.
- Parks staff at the facility include 3 supervisors and 5 rank-and-file badged officers as part of the Visitor Services that includes patrols on the water and in recreation areas. On busy weekends, Visitor Services may include patrols along Highway 138.
- Facilities maintenance is another set of Park employees led by Bob Scholfield (from Dana Point/Doheny State Beach previously).

- There is a \$10 fee for vehicles using day-use facilities; boats and trailers are an extra charge. The fee is charged per vehicle coming through the entrance kiosk whether to park only or launch inside the park. For boaters, there are 60 total boat launch reservations that can be made per day through reserveamerica.com. There is no limit to how many people come into the park in a vehicle and it was mentioned that some families/groups will go out and back into the park in order to pick up people and shuttle them in under the same vehicle day use pass.
- All camping reservations, including the 6 group camps (3 in Cleghorn Canyon-100 max people at each site and 3 at Miller Canyon-40 max people at each site), are made at reserveamerica.com. However, on August 1st, Parks is shifting all reservations to the new California Reservation System. Camping is \$45/night for a standard site and \$50/night for a site with electric and water hookups. Three cars per campsite are allowed.
- There is no charge for walk-ins and the reservoir is open at all times to anglers, however the park is only open to vehicles and day use from 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM in winter and 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM in summer (April – September). All boating vessels are required to be trailered by sunset, and all vehicles must be out of the Day Use area by 9:00 PM or they will be issued a citation. Twin Coves (informal dispersed use area near Live Oak boat in site) and the Chamise/Vista Point area coming off SR 138 are popular, free, walk-in day use spots.
- The Park consistently fills up on all Holiday weekends by mid-morning and users are turned away starting as early as 9:00 AM, often parking on the highway or waiting in line for boaters and day users to exit. Day use limits are governed by parking which the Park calculates at 1,500 vehicles. Some boaters and day users line up as early as 3:00 AM to get into the park when they open at 6:00 AM. By 2:30 PM the park often can open back up, and before that they can go into a “one-out, one-in type” pattern, particularly for boaters waiting to launch as wake boarding boats often leave after the morning as they are looking for glassy calm water conditions and will leave when water gets rough.
- There are 25 boat passes available by reservation through reserveamerica.com and a maximum of 150 boats are allowed to come into the park each day. In addition, the concessionaire has 20-30 boats for rent.
- Many summer weekends can also fill up (day use and campgrounds) and necessitate closing off users at the entrance kiosk. The busy season is generally from Easter week through mid-October or sometimes mid-November. Boating use decreases when the lake water temperatures drops in late Fall. The group camps are generally only open on weekends (by reservation only) and are consistently full each weekend.
- Miller Canyon day use just opened back in 2016 as it had been closed for over 10 years from damage after the Old Fire (2003). Miller Canyon offers a different recreation experience and has a self-pay parking area (\$10 day use fee per

vehicle). There is a newly surfaced access road that leads from the parking lot to the lake. There is also a well maintained natural surface hiking trail (Miller Canyon Trail) that runs from the group camp along the East Fork Mojave River to the shore. In addition, the Silverwood Bike path goes around the lake at Miller Canyon and intersects both the access road and the Miller Canyon Trail. There are more hiking and paddle oriented water activities in this area and wildlife viewing is popular there, particularly outside the summer season. No power boats are allowed in that arm of the lake (East Fork, of West Fork Mojave River).

- Miller Canyon road was re-constructed, new culverts were put in, but a gate was installed and the access road is no longer for public vehicular use. It was noted that road funds cannot be used for the improvements or to repair bike paths. Miller Canyon also has many shoreline-based social trails at each developed site.
- There are a few major washouts of the Silverwood Bike Path between Miller Canyon and the Sawpit Marina area. State Parks mentioned that they are planning to do a complete reroute of the trail in this section from Black Oak Day use area to Miller Canyon. The current trail alignment is close to the shore and needs to be re-constructed to allow for better surface water runoff and retaining walls to prevent washouts.
- When asked where most users come from, staff noted that they come from all over the San Bernardino or Los Angeles area but in particular the weekend boating users come from Hesperia, Victorville, Lancaster, Fontana, Rancho Cucamonga, and Palmdale as well as the small communities around those areas (near the Highway 15 corridor). People from those areas are within a one hour drive of the Park. Demand for boating and water activities has increased at Silverwood Lake in last several years as the other lakes in the region, including Lake Perris, Elsinore, and Diamond Valley reservoir have had low water conditions. It was mentioned in the meeting that Silverwood Lake has the most consistent high water levels for public use reservoirs in the State Water Project.
- Parks is seeking grant money from Division of Boating and Waterways to procure trash bags that could be handed out or made available to dispersed users walking in from Highway 138 as garbage is particularly bad and accumulates after heavy use weekends in places like Chamise Cove and Twin Coves. Trash is picked up daily at the developed sites, and restrooms are cleaned on rotation during busy days. A barge is used to pick up trash from boat-in sites (and highway walk-down areas) on Fridays. The barge was down for one week earlier this year. Squirrels and wind further disperse trash throughout the area.
- Fishing use is year-round but more consistent and a bit higher from Fall to early Spring. Bass fishing tournaments arranged in advance (including those with night fishing) can take place outside the busy summer season (Memorial Day to Labor Day).

- There are some special events at Silverwood Lake SRA, including an Apple fest held by the Mojave River National Historic Association, Veterans Appreciation Days, “Cast for Kids”, there are bald eagle tours held by Parks on Saturdays in December and January (when bald eagles are present); and Parks does interpretive campfire programs in the camping areas during the busy summer season. The Park hosts some Fall period school tours, and other programs in summer such as At Risk Youth, Fam Camp, and Cal Pals.
- Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) users typically use the park facilities. Equestrian use along the PCT is very low, however the park has stables in the Cleghorn Canyon area (by the Group camps).
- In recent years there have been more blue green algae blooms on the lake. Last year, it was so severe the lake was closed for 7 days. DWR tests the waters at the Inlet and Outlet areas (to be verified). Parks has asked for increased testing due to the algae’s tendency to blow around and back up in the various coves around the lake. There are three established water quality advisory levels: 1) Caution; 2) Warning; and 3) Danger (no body contact). On July 11th, the advisory level increased from Caution to Warning based on recent tests. On July 15th, the advisory level increased from Warning to Danger, and people were not permitted within the day-use areas on that date.
- Parks compiled a list of all recent ADA improvements at the Park and provided this list to the study team. Silverwood Lake SRA currently ranks as a high priority location for ADA improvements within the State Park system. The recent ADA projects have included a Phase I and Phase II, which are now mostly complete. These improvements include campsite modifications and improvements, and 30 concrete tables that are fully ADA compliant and accessible in the Cleghorn Canyon Day Use Area. In addition, the Access Construction Unit (ACU) within Parks has also provided smaller improvements in the Park such as installing ADA –compliant ramps. State Parks has a Master Trails Plan that dictates ADA compliance for Silverwood Lake trails. Parks mentioned that a 1.5% side slope and 7.5% general slope is preferred and the goal.