CAPELL COVE BOAT LAUNCHING FACILITY FEASIBILITY REPORT

Capell Cove Parking Area & Boat Ramp

Capell Cove Boat Ramp

Bureau of Reclamation
$250,000 Grant

SUMMARY

The Boating and Waterways Commission (Commission) is being asked to provide Advice and Comment on the Bureau of Reclamation's (BOR) request for a $250,000 planning contract to develop plans to rehabilitate and upgrade the Capell Cove Boat Launching Facility (BLF) at Lake Berryessa.

The proposed planning grant would fund the design and permitting for and establish an engineer's cost estimate for:

- construction of a cable-guided boarding float and landing on the east side of the boat ramp,
- repair or replacement of the restroom,
- construction of accessible parking at the restroom and near the top of the boat ramp,
- and installation of project signage.

It is anticipated that BOR would request additional grant funding of $1,348,500 to construct the project in FY 2028/29. The total project cost is anticipated to be approximately $1,598,500. There are no expected problematic financial, engineering, permitting, stakeholder or public access issues associated with this project. If approved, planning is expected to be complete by October 2028.

California State Parks, Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) seeks Commission Advice and Comment on this proposed $250,000 Waterways Connection Initiative (WCI) planning contract to the Bureau of Reclamation for the Capell Cove BLF described in this May 8, 2025 Feasibility Report.

GRANT APPLICANT AND PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION

Grant Applicant

The applicant for the proposed project is the Bureau of Reclamation. The BOR owns all the boat launches on Lake Berryessa, including Capell Cove BLF, but Capell Cove BLF is the only one operated by BOR. All other BLFs on the lake are leased by BOR to private enterprises.

Commission Site Visit

Boating and Waterways Commission members are expected to complete an official visit to the proposed boat launching facility site on May 7, 2025, as part of the Commission tour.

Previous Commission Action

In FY 1977/78, the Commission approved a grant of $260,000 that completed construction of the Capell Cove BLF.

In FY 1994/95, DBW provided $105,000 through a Ramp Repair and Modification grant to repair the parking lot that had been damaged by a washout.

GENERAL LOCATION AND AREA

Capell Cove BLF is located at 1700 Berryessa-Knoxville Road, Napa, California 94558, approximately 79 miles northeast of San Francisco and 67 miles west of Sacramento. The project site is in the eastern portion of Napa County, approximately 27 miles west of the city of Winters.

From Sacramento International Airport, take I-5 north for eight miles to Woodland, CA. In Woodland, take Highway 113 south for eight miles toward Davis, CA. Take exit 29 and then follow County Highway 6 west toward Winters, CA for 11 miles. In Winters, County Highway 6 turns into Highway 128. Continue west on Highway 128 for 27 miles, then turn right onto Berryessa-Knoxville Rd. Follow Berryessa-Knoxville Rd. for approximately three miles to arrive at Capell Cove BLF.

Source: Google Maps

Area

Lake Berryessa is the largest lake in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. Economic activity in the vicinity of Capell Cove consists largely of agriculture and recreation. The small town of Moskowite Corner is approximately seven miles south of Capell Cove BLF. About five miles west of Capell Cove are the vineyards of Pope Valley and Chiles Valley. Further west, the cities of St. Helena and Yountville are each about 20 miles from the project site. These two cities are in the heart of Napa Valley and its world-famous vineyards and wineries. Wine production and wine tourism are major industries in this area. In the other direction, about 25 miles to the east, one reaches the city of Winters and the Sacramento Valley, a major area of agricultural activity in the State. Near Winters, nut trees are a significant agricultural crop, but a huge range of agricultural products are produced in this area.

Recreation is an important economic activity along the shores of Lake Berryessa. Numerous outdoor recreation activities are pursued all year long at Lake Berryessa, including hiking, bird watching, photography, picnicking, fishing, and hunting. The grassy hills dotted with oak and manzanita provide excellent opportunities to view eagles, hawks, songbirds, wild turkeys, deer, and other wildlife.

There are several privately operated boat ramps on Lake Berryessa within 15 miles of Capell Cove, including Steele Canyon Resort, Pleasure Cove Marina, Putah Creek Campground, Markley Cove Resort, and Spanish Flat Campground. All these facilities have launch fees significantly higher than the launch fee charged at Capell Cove. Other than recreation, economic activity in the immediate vicinity of the lake is limited due to the rugged, hilly terrain that predominates in the area and zoning restrictions that limit development in the watershed of Lake Berryessa.

History

Lake Berryessa was created in 1957 when the Bureau of Reclamation completed Monticello Dam on Putah Creek. The lake is named after the Berryessa family, which received a land grant in this area in 1843. Monticello Dam provides flood control protection to the city of Winters and other downstream communities, as well as high-quality water supply for irrigation and for the cities of Vacaville, Suisun City, Vallejo, and Fairfield. The Solano County Water Agency manages the water level at Lake Berryessa, but the BOR owns the reservoir and would be responsible for maintaining the project site and improvements at no cost to the State for the duration of the contract term.

When Lake Berryessa was created, it was not intended for recreational use and was fenced off from public access. Interest from the public opened access to the lake, and private concessionaires were authorized to provide recreational activities through 50-year contracts. The original concessionaires derived significant income from long-term leases for mobile homes and camping trailers, but when the concessionaire contracts expired starting in 2007, BOR prohibited mobile homes and manufactured homes within 1000 feet of the lake and ordered the removal of existing units. Water quality concerns were a significant factor in the drive to move housing units away from the lake. Since then, BOR has worked to encourage short-term visitor use at Lake Berryessa.

Usage

Boating, fishing, and camping occur year-round at Lake Berryessa. The lake has a well-established population of warm-water fish including largemouth and smallmouth bass, channel and bullhead catfish, black crappie, and bluegill. Cold-water species stocked by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, include rainbow trout and salmon. There are also several developed campgrounds along the lakeshore.

During the summer, as the air and water temperatures rise, the lake becomes an ideal place for water sports. Wakeboarding, jet skiing, water skiing, kayaking, fishing, paddleboarding, and swimming are all popular summer activities.

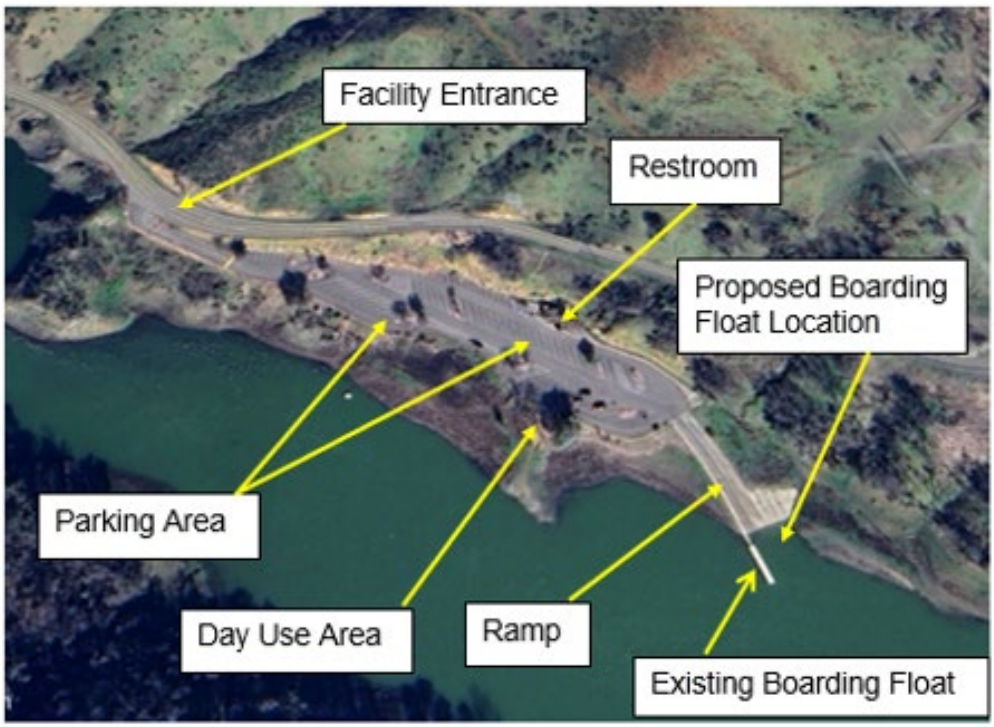
Existing Conditions

Capell Cove is currently a developed boat launch facility that was built in the early 1980s, but some of its facilities have fallen into disrepair. The boat ramp and parking area are in good condition, but the bathroom is not currently operational, the facility is not ADA-compliant, and BOR would like to increase the launch capacity of the boat ramp. The annual total of motorized launches at Capell Cove is approximately 11,170, with 1,100 annual non-motorized launches.

Existing facilities include a two-lane ramp with boarding floats on the west side of the ramp. Boaters launching from the lane on the west side can use the boarding float to facilitate launching, but there is no boarding float on the east side of the ramp. Because there is currently only one lane with a usable boarding float, boaters often treat the facility as if it only has one lane instead of two lanes. This boater behavior has reduced the efficiency of the facility, causing long delays for launch and retrieving.

There are currently 45 vehicle-trailer parking stalls and 20 single vehicle parking stalls. Of those, one vehicle-trailer stall and two single vehicle stalls are marked for accessible use but don't meet the requirements. There is a bathroom that was built when the facility was first developed, but it has not been operational since approximately 2016. Currently, port-a-potties are in place at the facility, and there is a small day use area with a picnic table.

Capell Cove Boat Launching Facility



Source: Google Earth

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Proposed DBW Scope

If approved, DBW would contribute up to $250,000 for the design, engineering, and permitting for the future construction of the following improvements:

Boarding Float

Installation of a 60’ cable-guided boarding float and landing on the east side of the existing launch ramp.

Parking Area

The asphalt parking area would be re-designed and graded to create ADA compliant parking for necessary vehicle-trailer and single vehicle parking. Parking area would be slurry sealed and striped.

Restroom Upgrade

Repair or replacement of the restroom to reopen and provide ADA accessibility

Water Intake System

Repair of the water intake system, including excavation of the water line.

ADA Compliance

Provide solutions for accessibility to parking stalls, restroom, and the top of the boat launch ramp.

Additional Features

Install an information kiosk, directional signage, and a solar light at the top of the ramp. BOR will be required to determine if the project area typically experiences frequent use by a non-English speaking population, and if so, must also provide signage in the local predominant non-English languages.

Project Signage

A new concrete project credit sign would be installed at the facility giving credit in part to the Waterways Connection Initiative for funding the project and BOR for operation and maintenance of the facility.

Cost Estimate

The proposed planning grant is for up to $250,000 to fully fund the design, permits, and establish an engineer’s estimate of probable construction costs. Any remaining unspent funds will be used for construction expenses, if approved. The total project cost is expected to be $1,598,500. (see Table 1: Capell Cove BLF Project Cost Estimate).

Table 1: Capell Cove BLF Project Cost Estimate

CONSTRUCTION SCOPE	COST ESTIMATE
Mobilization / Demobilization	100,000
Parking Area	300,000
Boarding floats	280,000
ADA Compliance	200,000
Additional Features – Info. Kiosk, Directional Signage, and Solar Light	40,000
Restroom Upgrade	200,000
Water Intake System Repair	20,000
Project Signage	10,000
Construction Subtotal	**1,150,000**
NON-CONSTRUCTION COSTS	
Escalation 9%	103,500
Contingency 10%	115,000
Engineering 12%	138,000
Inspection 5%	57,500
Permits 3%	34,500
Non-Construction Subtotal	**448,500**
TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COST	**1,598,500**
Non-construction cost percentages are of the construction subtotal	
3% per year for 3 years = 9% escalation	

Project Status

A concept sketch of proposed site revisions has been agreed to between DBW and BOR.

Timeline

BOR estimates that the planning and permitting would be completed approximately three years from execution of the proposed planning contract and construction would take an additional three years, once funded.

Engineering Feasibility

There are no particularly difficult or unusual problems associated with the proposed project.

Environmental Impact and Permits

BOR will complete the NEPA process and obtain Army Corps of Engineers 401 and 404 permits for this site and anticipates that no other project permits will be required.

PROJECT METRICS

Annual Launches

Current: According to the boat launch data provided by the BOR, the annual number of boat launches at the existing facility is 11,070 motorized vessels.

Future: For purposes of this feasibility analysis, DBW assumes the project improvements will result in a 15 percent increase in usage to 12,731 motorized launches per year.

Annual User Day

Based on the California Facilities Boating Needs Assessment Study published in 2002, the average number of users per boat (motorized) at Lake Berryessa is 3.64, therefore the current estimated annual number of user days is 40,295 (current annual launches x user per boat).

User Day Value

The 2018 California Boating Needs Assessment Study established a unit day value in the Greater San Francisco Bay Area region. The unit day value is an established way to measure recreational benefits boaters gain from the experience of boating on a particular body of water. The unit day value, adjusted for CPI, is $43.28. The total current annual unit day value for the facility is $1,743,959 (unit day value x annual user days).

Benefit-Cost Ratio

A common method in the analysis of investments is to establish the net present value of the benefits and net present value of the costs associated with a project. If the benefit-cost ratio exceeds “1” then the investment, weighed against available investment alternatives, is worthy of consideration from a financial perspective. The results of this analysis are as follows:

Benefit. The total net present value of benefits over the 20-year life of the project is estimated at $3,696,640.

Cost. The net present value of costs over the 20-year life of the project is $1,910,070 ($1,598,500 capital costs plus $311,570 annual operation and maintenance costs).

Ratio. Therefore, the estimated Benefit-Cost Ratio is 1.94.

User Fees

BOR currently charges a $10 fee per vehicle for day use, which includes entry, parking, and boat launching. BOR is not planning to change the fees charged after construction of this project is completed.

CONCLUSION

DBW’s analysis indicates that this project, as proposed, is feasible from an engineering perspective, is cost effective, and increases public access.

COMMISSION ADVICE AND COMMENT

The Department of Parks and Recreation, Division of Boating and Waterways seeks Commission Advice and Comment on this proposed $250,000 (WCI) planning contract to the Bureau of Reclamation for improvements described in this *May 8, 2025 Feasibility Report*.

CONDITION

The BOR, at its expense, must complete all NEPA requirements. No funding will be disbursed until this condition is met.

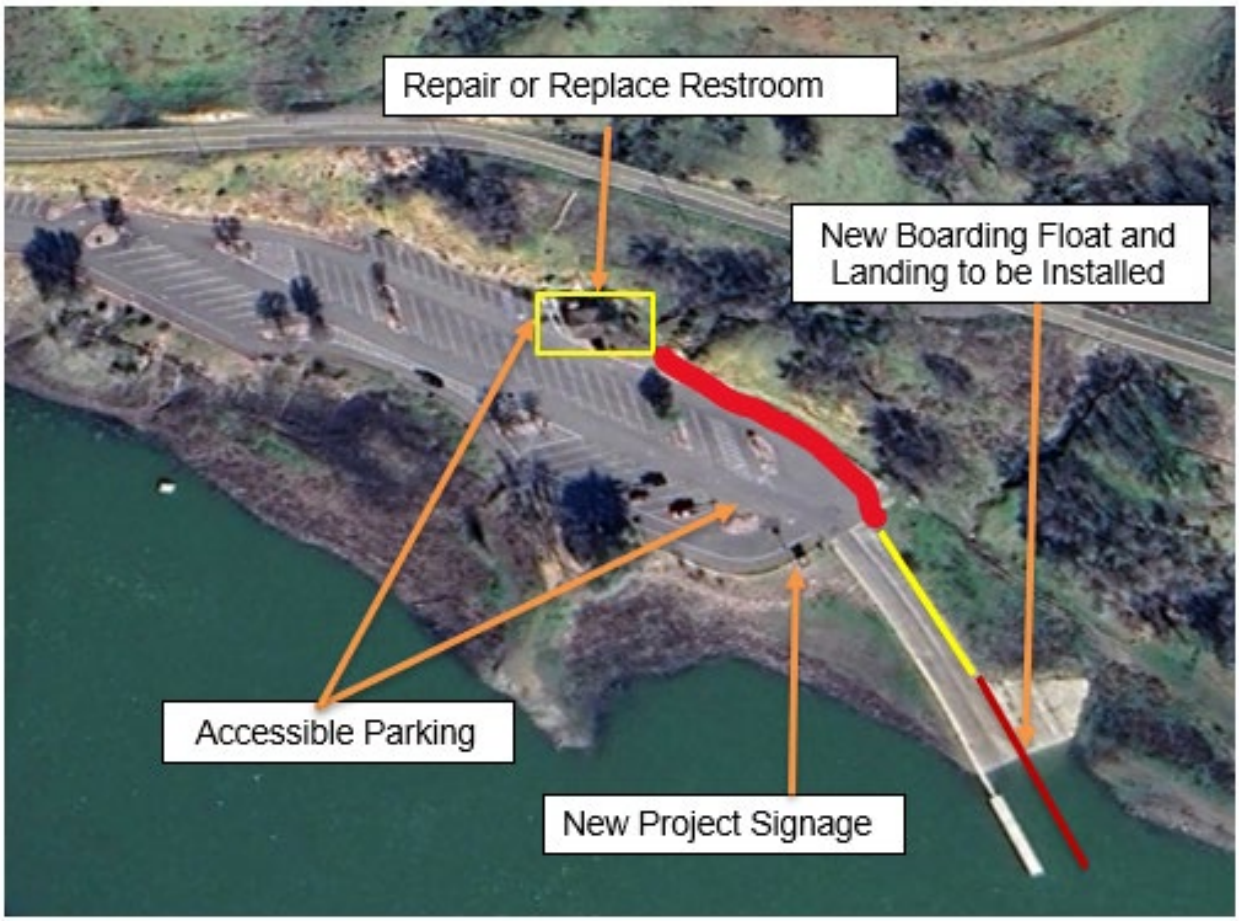



Exhibit A – Proposed Design