

Little Rock Recreation Area Now Under Permit and Managed by Concessionaire

The Primary Purpose of the Little Rock Dam is to provide a water source to the Palmdale Water District. The Little Rock Recreation Area was financed through the Davis-Grunsky Act through the California Department of Water Resources to take advantage of the recreational opportunities provided by the reservoir and surrounding area.

Little Rock Creek also is home to a federally protected and endangered species, the Arroyo Toad. Additionally, there are heritage resources in the immediate vicinity. This resulted in a Forest Closure of areas upstream from the reservoir and of Little Rock Road.

Over the past several years, Southern California has been invaded by the Quagga Mussel, a major threat to the reservoir and to the entire Palmdale Water District water system and recreational use of the reservoir. Such an infestation could significantly increase customer water bills. The Quagga Mussel moves from place to place in microscopic form via boats, kayaks, canoes, trailers, motors, boating and swimming equipment, and even boots. It can live out of water for 10 days or more. Inspections and treatment are costly and can be ineffective. Therefore, in late 2009, in cooperation with the Palmdale Water District, the reservoir was closed to outside boating.

For years the recreation area has suffered from overcrowding, gang activities, illegal OHV activities, fence cutting, graffiti, destruction of government property, vandalism, shooting into buildings, people entering habitat and heritage areas, the inability of visitors to reserve picnic areas for planned events, no overnight activities including camping, people using the area without Adventure Passes, no OHV activities because of a lack of security, and inadequate staffing and maintenance.

In August 2001, The Forest Service announced:

The district will seek out opportunities with the public sector to help develop reasonable and successful options to address the nighttime vandalism/graffiti, public safety and endangered species protection issues occurring in the LRA in an effort to restore overnight use of the area.

Consistent with this direction and in an effort to make the Little Rock Recreation area a better, cleaner, safer facility for all, the Angeles National Forest is conducting a three year test to determine if a concessionaire agreement is financially viable and capable of solving many of the current problems. If so, there will be an opportunity for public comment, resulting possibly in open bidding for the long term concessionaire opportunity.

Questions and Answers

Question: Is the facility now private and who determines the fees?

Answer: The facility is a part of the Angeles National Forest which approves fees charged by the concessionaire.

Question: How were the fees determined?

Answer: The fees are consistent with those charged at the nearby Lake Piru on the Los Padres National Forest.

Question: Is an Adventure Pass required?

Answer: No.

Question: Is the Senior Pass accepted?

Answer: The Forest Service cannot require it, but the concessionaire has elected to accept Senior Passes for those 62 and older.

Question: May I reserve a picnic area?

Answer: Yes. Call 661-533-1900.

Question: Can I boat and fish?

Answer: Yes, boats are available for rent.

Question: What do I get for the fees I pay?

Answer: Some of the money goes for security and gate control, aiding to prevent overcrowding. Over time, the concessionaire has an incentive to make you want to come back by improving the experience and facilities. The Forest will encourage the concessionaire to make agreed upon improvements in lieu of payments otherwise made to the Forest Service.

Question: Why doesn't the day use area that a driver can use for \$5 daily have picnic tables?

Answer: It will. For now, please bring a folding table.

Question: When will the Little Rock closure area be opened?

Answer: We cannot say for sure. And the fact that the Palmdale Water District will be removing sediment in the reservoir compounds the issues involved. However, the improved security/gate control offered under the concessionaire arrangement is a step towards resolution.

If you have further questions or comments, please call Barbara Ramey, Permit Administrator, at 661-296-9710.