

Visitors will pay more at Loch Lomond

BY TERRI MORGAN
Special to the Mercury News

Anglers will have to pay a little more to get into Loch Lomond Reservoir when the popular Lompico preserve opens on March 1.

Visitors will pay \$4 a day to drive into the 32,000-acre park in the Santa Cruz Mountains, up from \$2.50. Pedestrians and bicyclists will be charged \$1 apiece to enter, an increase of 35 cents. Dogs, allowed only when on leash, will cost their owners \$1 each.

Chief ranger Walt Cacace said the price increases were requested by the Santa Cruz Water Department, which runs the preserve, to help keep pace with inflation.

"The last time our fees increased was 12 or 13 years ago," Cacace said. "It's been long overdue."

Other fees to rise

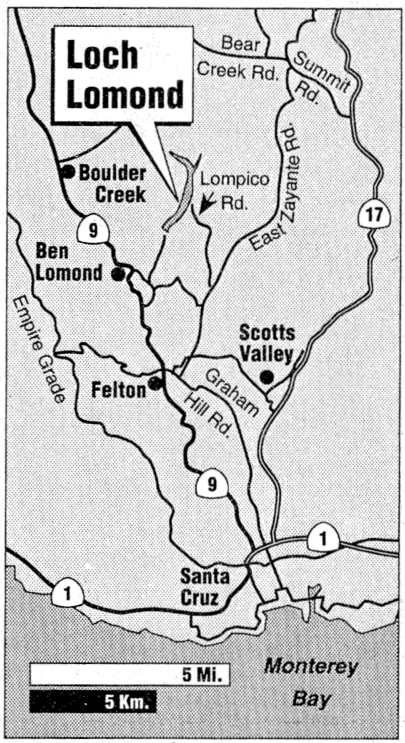
Boat-launch fees will double, and rental prices will climb. Boats on trailers will cost \$5 to launch, and car-top craft \$4. Rowboats can be rented for \$5 an hour, \$18 for 5 hours or \$25 a day. Motorboats will cost \$8 an hour to rent, or \$25 for five hours and \$35 a day.

Paddle boats will be available later in the season for \$4 an hour.

The increases have been approved by the Santa Cruz City Council and the water commission, Cacace said. Final approval by the state water department also is expected, he added.

Fishing frenzy

California's extended drought forced rangers to close Loch Lomond to the public from 1987 until 1992 because water levels were too low to launch boats safely. When the preserve reopened last April it was mobbed by thousands of eager bass and trout fishermen, all hoping to land a monster that hadn't seen a



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hook in five years. The long-awaited reopening and the ensuing fishing frenzy both captured extensive media coverage. Cacace said the opening week publicity ultimately scared away many potential visitors.

The park will be open from 6 a.m. until sunset, seven days a week. If water levels remain high enough, the preserve will stay open until mid-September.

The reservoir, formed when Newell Creek was dammed more than 30 years ago to store supplies for Santa Cruz, is filling so rapidly that the water is turbulent and murky.

"My staff's calling it 'Lake Willy Wonka' because it looks like a lake of light chocolate," Cacace said. "The fishing's not going to be too good for the first month or so because fish, especially trout, don't like a lot of sediment."