

Santa Cruz angling to open reservoir

■ RESERVOIR

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Before the latest wave of storms started Feb. 9, the reservoir surface stood at 540 feet above sea level. Wednesday, it was at 549.5 feet — a full 11 feet higher than at this time last year.

The lake must reach 560 feet before Kocher will open it. That's the lowest level that puts the boat ramps underwater.

The city could pump water from the San Lorenzo River into the reservoir to raise its level faster. But to add the 400 million gallons necessary to bring it up 10 feet would take 50 days of pumping, said Kocher.

Another 10 inches of rain would do the job much easier.

When steady runoff occurs from nearby streams such as Newell Creek, Loch Lomond's height increases about one foot with every inch of rain.

Because no one has fished at the reservoir since the summer of 1987, the bass and trout in the lake have now reached "outrageous" size, Kocher said.

Local anglers are well aware of that news. And not being able to dangle a worm and hook in front of the trophy fish has left many fishing enthusiasts as eager as children awaiting Christmas.

"They want to shoot me," said Kocher. "They think it's some kind of conspiracy against fishermen. But if we get the rain, I'll open it."