



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Walt Cacace, Loch Lomond ranger, stands by the fleet of boats that will remain unused again this summer due to low water.

# Loch Lomond fish pray for drought

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LOMPICO — While continuing drought means no fishing or boating at Loch Lomond for the third straight summer, it also means the fish in the reservoir are growing fat and happy without any anglers and their assorted fish-fooling hardware.

"Once we open again it'll be a real killer-type season," said Chief Ranger Walt Cacace this week. "The fish are getting a lot larger without anyone bothering them."

Loch Lomond Reservoir stretches about three miles from dam to spillway up Newell Creek. When full, its waters lap at the edges of the surrounding redwood forest and provide a peaceful retreat in which to fish and paddle a canoe or small boat — no powerboats are

allowed. Along with the San Lorenzo River and various wells, Loch Lomond supplies water to the city and San Lorenzo Valley Water District.

Lack of rainfall this winter has left the reservoir about 12 feet too shallow to open to the public. The water just clears 548 feet above sea level — 2 feet higher than last year at this time, but still not high enough. Cacace said that at this water level the banks are dangerously steep, tree stumps are hidden just under the water, and the bottom edge of the boat ramp is still "high and dry."

Last week's official announcement of the park's closing assures that the large-mouth bass, channel catfish, rainbow trout, bluegill and sunfish in Loch Lomond will have another unmolested year.

Cacace said that the bass have been spawning two times a year, as opposed to their usual one, since their nesting areas have been left undisturbed these last two years.

Unlike the bass and other fish here, trout won't breed in Loch Lomond and have to be stocked each year by the state's Fish and Game Department. "They're strictly put and take," Cacace said. But the trout that have managed to evade both bass and fishhooks are doing well, he said.

So the best that anglers can do at Loch Lomond is look forward, next summer perhaps, to a superb fishing season. In 1983, after the last time the park was closed for a summer due to the torrential rains of 1982, rangers say that just about anybody who put a line in the water caught a bass.