

DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Santa Cruz park ranger Dave Brooks walks back from Clar Innis Island — now a peninsula — in Loch Lomond Reservoir, where the water level is the lowest in 16 years. The tree stumps are normally under water.

# Lowering the Loch

Dry conditions, fish protection push city to draw down reservoir  
*Loch Lomond* 9-10-13

By J.M. BROWN

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SANTA CRUZ — With nearly two months before the rainy season begins, Loch Lomond Reservoir has hit its lowest level in 16 years as the city wrestles with consecutive dry winters and mandates to surrender river and stream flow for fish habitat.

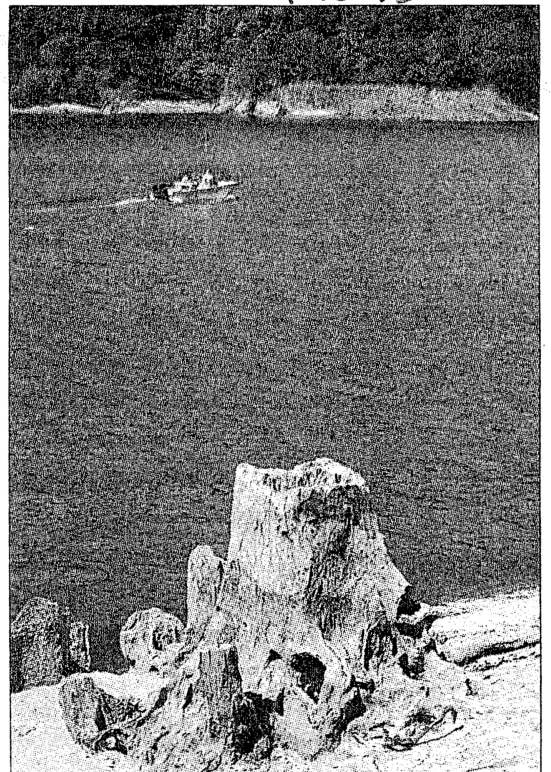
The city has drained 600,000 gallons from the 2.83 billion gallon lake, leaving the primary water storage facility at 79 percent full. That level is 2 feet above the city's goal of ending the dry season at 75 percent.

Water Conservation Manager Toby Goddard said the reservoir hasn't dipped below 80 percent since 1997, when it hit 70 percent. The drawdown has been enough for the lake's Clar Innis Island to become a peninsula, a far contrast to many winter seasons when the reservoir has spilled.

"We have had two dry years, and we operated the system this year in a way that left more water in the North Coast streams and the San Lorenzo River, but that put greater pressure to take that water out of Loch Lomond," Goddard said.

This summer, the city ceased diversions on Laguna Creek, a major source of freshwater on the North Coast, and increased bypasses on the lower portion of the river to support fish habitat, Goddard said. State and federal regulators have urged the city to alter operations at Loch Lomond and make other infrastructure improvements to increase the water available for endangered and threatened species.

The city and neighboring Soquel Creek Water District have proposed a joint seawater desalination facility to generate a new water supply, but city officials have expressed an intent



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Santa Cruz park ranger Dave Brooks and city worker Glenn Cole cruise the Loch Lomond Reservoir, passing tree stumps and shoreline normally under water.