



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

With all the rain that fell last winter, Loch Lomond Reservoir remains nearly full at the beginning of August.

RESERVOIR

Continued from A1

given when it was rechristened with a cup of water brought over from Scotland a few years after it opened: Loch Lomond. "This makes Loch Lomond unique. And by golly, I don't think you could have situated a reservoir in a more picturesque location," said Scot Lang, Loch Lomond's chief ranger, as anglers and boaters enjoyed a sun-dappled weekday, the lake still brimming with spring rains.

IF YOU GO

LOCH LOMOND
RESERVOIR'S 50TH
ANNIVERSARY

WHERE: Loch Lomond Recreation area, 100 Loch Lomond Way, Felton
SPECIAL OFFER: Half-priced admission and boat rentals Friday through Aug. 12
CONTACT: 335-7424, www.cityofsantacruz.com

To celebrate the anniversary, the city is offering half-price admission and boat rentals over the next week, beginning Friday. The move is intended to call attention not only to Loch Lomond's beauty, but of the role it played — and contin-

ues to play — in the growth of Santa Cruz. The name was chosen to match other Scotch appellations in the region [Ben Lomond, Bonny Doon], and it quickly became a popular recreational destination. No swimming is allowed [to do so would require pricey upgrades to the city's water system] but you can rent a boat to traverse the lake's 3-mile length, and the largemouth bass and bluegill are biting. "It's nice. You get all the trees and the water. And you can also walk through the forest. There's all kinds of little animals," said Cynthia Perry of San Francisco, taking an afternoon walk with a friend and a dog. "It's a nice lake," said John Crane, fishing with grandson Michael McKay. "You're shaded, and it's very clean."

In a region where water issues impact everything from UC Santa Cruz student enrollment to a proposed desalinization plant, it is almost certain the county will never see another Loch Lomond: It is hard to imagine a scenario where damming a local stream wouldn't be met with a huge political outcry.

But that wasn't necessarily the case when planning for the reservoir began in the 1950s. Water supplies from local streams were reaching their limits, inadequate to meet the city's projected growth, particularly with a new university on the horizon.

Builders trundled up the valley to construct a massive, 200-foot-high earthen dam that has survived numerous earthquakes. It took two years for the 150-foot-deep reservoir to fill up, and it was the first of what were originally 19 such reservoirs planned throughout the area.

The lake's 3 billion gallons of water aids the city during peak summer water use. But it also has helped get through some drought years, particularly 1976 and 1977, when water provided a lifeline for residents who otherwise would have been hit with severe rationing.

The weather has also affected recreational use. The reservoir was also closed to the public for five very dry years, from 1987 to 1992, when the dam broke, so to speak, and locals wound their way through Lompico, up the wooded, hairpin route to Loch Lomond, and crashed the gates. "That was the busiest day in the park's



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Starr Hettelsater sprays a coat of sun block on Jaime Martinez before boarding their row boat at Loch Lomond Reservoir on Wednesday.



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Loch Lomond's Bragging Board is filled with pictures of happy anglers and big fish.

history," Lang said. "People probably remember the line of cars all the way to Graham Hill Road." At 50, the reservoir is still going strong, and ready to take on a new role. The lake has always been seen as a backup supply, a savings account to draw from when water runs low. But it is a big piece of a new city conservation plan that will rely on more water from Loch Lomond, as the city hopes to satisfy the federal government's desire to leave more water in local streams and rivers, all to help fish populations.

"We save the lake as much as possible. We pretty much take as much as we can take from all the streams and rivers. And in doing so, we haven't exactly been fish-friendly," said Bill Kocher, the city's water director. "We'll be pulling the lake down a lot more than we ever did." Kocher said the modest celebration — discounted admission and rental prices — was the least the department could do to acknowledge Loch Lomond's history. "We should at least bring it to people's attention," Kocher said.