

# More than fishing at Loch Lomond

Loch Lomond

## City seeks public input on recreation plan

**W**hat recreational activities would you like to see at the 335-acre Loch Lomond Recreation Area in the Santa Cruz Mountains? The city of Santa Cruz Water Department, which manages the area, is seeking public input at a community meeting on May 30.



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"We are seeking different viewpoints about recreation use at Loch Lomond from the whole community," said Lydia Tolles, a department

management analyst.

The recreation area contains the 175-acre Loch Lomond Reservoir, a key component of the city's water supply system and the primary source of emergency water storage, which aims to lessen impacts of dry spells and droughts. Accordingly, there are constraints on the types of recreational use, Tolles said.

The area was first opened for limited recreational use in 1963. Fishing has always been a star attraction, said Chris Berry, watershed compliance manager for the city. From 2001 through 2008, the number of annual visitors to the area ranged from about 40,000 to 50,000. In 2008 the state



**Kids fish from the shore of Loch Lomond Reservoir.**

DAN COYRO/SENTINEL FILE

Department of Fish and Game ordered an end to stocking trout in Loch Lomond and many other lakes across the state to protect native salmonids and amphibians. With fewer trout and limits on anglers using their own boats, the area in 2011 received about half as many visitors.

This year, Fish and Game is stocking the reservoir with sterile trout, so that even if fish were to escape over the reservoir dam, they could not interbreed with native steelhead. Berry expects that with the restocking, the number of visitors to the area will again pick up.

Fishing is not the only recreational

attraction at Loch Lomond. Seven miles of existing trails are currently open to hiking and dog-walking [leash only] around the edge of the reservoir and in upland areas. Bicycles are permitted only on paved areas, though equestrian use is prohibited due to water-quality concerns.

City rangers oversee operation of a park store and a boat-rental fleet, and provide education, security, and first aid.

The county does not allow people to go in the reservoir, so swimming and stand-up paddling are inappropriate, Tolles said.

Other constraints on recreation are also needed to protect the

water supply. Restrictions on boating remain in place to prevent transport into the reservoir of invasive mussels. Private boats used at the reservoir must be stored on site. Otherwise, rental boats are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Berry emphasized that additional recreational activities should not increase the risk of catastrophic fire.

"We're open-minded about recreational opportunities, but we're trying to balance that with the city's primary goal of protecting the water supply," he said.

The city held a public meeting at the Zayante Fire Station on April 21 and has circulated an online survey.

The city has contracted with BluePoint Planning to conduct the recreation study and to recommend appropriate activities for the area. The study will weigh community input with department goals and policies affecting the operation of the reservoir and Recreation Area.

The next community meeting seeking public input on recreation for the Loch Lomond Recreational Area will be 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Santa Cruz Police Department Community Room, 155 Center St.

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