



COUNTY OF LAKE

MARKETING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

255 North Forbes Street
Lakeport, California 95453-5406
707-274-8574 FAX 707-263-1012

www.lakecounty.com

**CONTACT: Terre Logsdon, (707) 263-2822
Debra Sommerfield, (707) 263-2277**

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FISH ARE BITING, BIRDS ARE SINGING, FOLKS ARE BOATING ON CLEAR LAKE

Above-Average Lake Level a Plus for Summer Vacationers

LAKE COUNTY, CA – While several California reservoirs are considering closure to boating due to low water levels, Clear Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake in the state of California, remains open for boating, fishing, and other recreational opportunities.

As of July 31, Clear Lake's water level is above its average according to the USGS (United States Geological Survey). Unlike reservoirs that are built to store water, Clear Lake is a natural lake and low-water problems are not anticipated for the remainder of this year.

"There's plenty of water in the lake for the public launching facilities and boating," said Robert Lossius, Assistant Public Works Director for the County of Lake. With 14 free public boat ramps and dozens of private ramps around Clear Lake, lake access is convenient – and affordable – for residents and visitors.

Clear Lake is vast – 63 square miles and approximately 100 miles of shoreline. In total, more than 1,600 docks and piers exist on Clear Lake, and only those privately owned docks that were constructed decades ago may have any issues with lower water levels – which they sometimes do late in summer before the winter rains begin.

Lakes have existed at the site of Clear Lake for approximately 2.5 million years, making it possibly the oldest lake in North America. The lake has changed shape over time, with a continuous lake in the Upper Arm (between Lakeport and Lucerne) for at least the last 450,000 years, while the Oaks Arm and Lower Arm are less than 17,000 years old.

Clear Lake lies in a broad basin in the Coast Ranges of Northern California. A vast watershed and relatively shallow depth, combined with a Mediterranean climate, make the lake a paradise for fish and wildlife. This combination of circumstances keeps Clear Lake's water warm and rich in nutrients, making it highly productive,

or eutrophic. Studies indicate that Clear Lake has been eutrophic — providing abundant food for fish and wildlife — since the last ice age, more than 10,000 years ago.

Although Clear Lake's average water temperature throughout the year is 61 degrees Fahrenheit, summertime water temperatures often warm to 75 degrees in August, perfect for water-related recreational activities and a major factor in why Clear Lake is known as the "Bass Capital of the West."

The warm waters of Clear Lake support large populations of bass, crappie, bluegill, carp, and catfish. In the summer, schools of thousands of minnows can be seen near the shore, where they are given protection to grow swimming among the beds of tule reeds and other aquatic plants. Two-thirds of the fish caught in Clear Lake are largemouth bass, with a record of 17.52 pounds. The record for catfish is 33.25 pounds.

Lake County – The Perfect Destination for a "Staycation"

Higher fuel costs are encouraging many boaters to look at alternative boating experiences and many families to vacation closer to home, making Clear Lake the perfect destination for family-friendly fun. Clear Lake offers kayaking, canoeing, rowing and sculling opportunities and many local businesses offer affordable rentals.

"The water's been great this year," said Mike Sullivan, director of the Clear Lake Scullers, an organization that teaches youth and adults – residents and visitors alike – how to scull, row, and paddle safely so everyone can enjoy all the beautiful bodies of water in Lake County along with stunning wildlife.

Located along the Pacific Flyway, birding and wildlife viewing are two favorite pastimes that go well with leisurely rowing on all of the water bodies in Lake County, which hosts more than 300 species of birds. Resident birds include the great blue heron, American white pelican, green heron, Clark's and western grebes, osprey, double-crested cormorant, and black-crowned night heron. All of these birds – and many more – can be viewed while paddling.

Sullivan noted that in addition to the many grebes, herons, osprey, and other water fowl to be seen on the lake, river otters often are seen near the launch site for the Clear Lake Scullers, as well as in some of the lake's channels and sloughs.

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Beyond Clear Lake, another favorite for swimming and boating includes the cool, spring-fed waters of Blue Lakes, situated along Highway 20 just west of Upper Lake. Blue Lakes are best known for their exceptional clarity and relaxing atmosphere. No boat may exceed 5 mph, making the lakes perfect for kayaks, canoes, paddleboats, or simply a quiet day of fishing or swimming.

Important Note: With the recent threat posed by invasive Quagga and Zebra mussels to water bodies throughout California, Lake County has established an Invasive Species Inspection Program to protect the county's lakes and rivers from this invasive species. Prior to launching on any Lake County water body, all vessels (boats, kayaks, seaplanes, personal watercraft, etc.) are required to go through a simple inspection screening process to obtain an inspection sticker, which must be displayed on the vessel. To find out how to obtain an inspection sticker, contact the Lake County Mussel Hotline: (707) 263-2556, or www.co.lake.ca.us/mussels.

Other water bodies in the area include Indian Valley Reservoir, Lake Pillsbury located in the heart of the Mendocino National Forest, and Highland Springs Reservoir. For lake and boating information, visitors may request a copy of the Lake County Boating Map by contacting the Lake County Visitor Information Center by phone (800) 525-3743, or e-mail info@lakecounty.com.

For more information on the Clear Lake Scullers, contact Mike Sullivan at (707) 349-9779 or www.clearlakescullers.org.

Located in beautiful Northern California, Lake County is a nearby vacation destination – just two hours by car from the San Francisco Bay Area, the Sacramento Valley, or the Pacific Coast. Visitors to Lake County experience the state's cleanest air basin, spectacular scenic beauty, fine wines, headliner concerts, and unsurpassed recreational opportunities — from hiking, biking, golf, and off-road adventures to boating, fishing, kayaking, birding, and even rockhounding. The local area code is 707. For visitor information, contact the Lake County Visitor Information Center at (800) 525-3743 or www.lakecounty.com.

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