FOLSOM LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA
GENERAL PLAN/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE
A Partnership between California Department of Parks and Recreation and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

January 2003

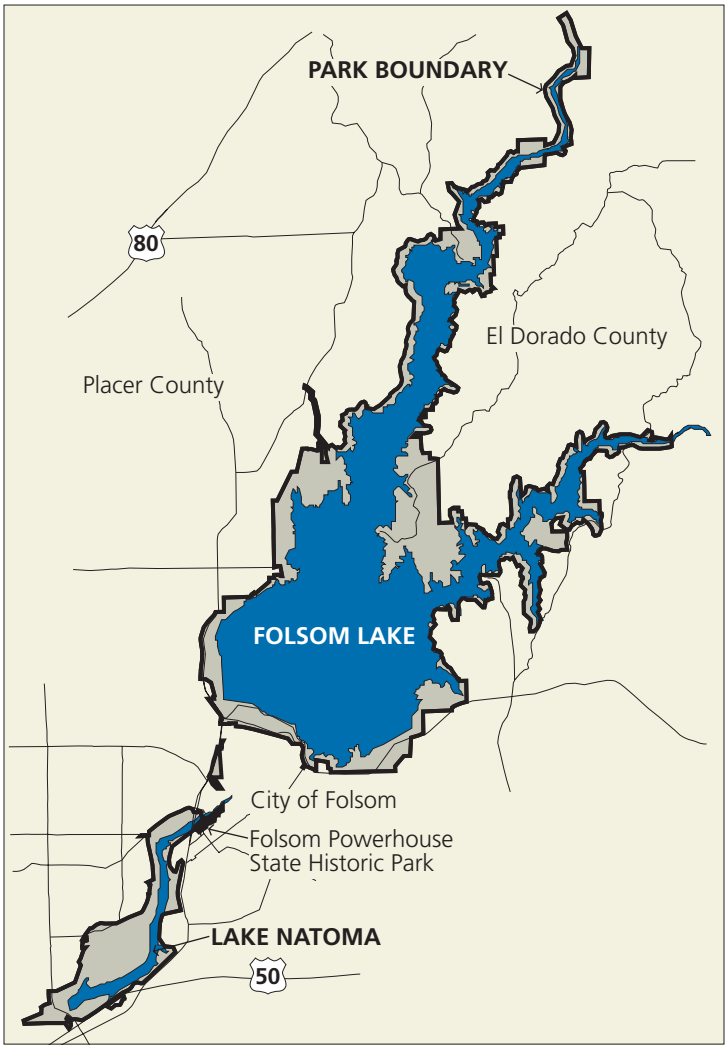
It is my pleasure to introduce the first of a series of newsletters intended to update interested readers on the progress of the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area General Plan/Resource Management Plan. The current General Plan for the SRA was adopted in 1979, more than twenty years ago. The changes that have occurred in the region in that time period have been enormous. The population of the six-county Sacramento region has increased by over 700,000 people and is projected to grow by almost 1 million people in the next twenty years. This influx of people enriches our State, but it is also presents challenges to protecting the natural and cultural resources of the State Park System while providing recreation opportunities for a growing population.

At Folsom Lake SRA, the population increase has been manifested in the marked increase in residential development immediately adjacent to the park. This interface between urban and wildland raises a whole host of issues and concerns, including fire and fuel management.

The greater demand for recreation opportunities is evident both in the increased boating traffic on the two lakes within the SRA, on the trails, and in the campgrounds. Not only are more people recreating, but new types of outdoor recreation sports activities have been created. As the region builds out, Folsom Lake SRA becomes an even more critical open space resource for the region. While completing this plan is a tremendous amount of work, the process provides an exciting opportunity for you to be part of the development of a blueprint for success for Folsom Lake SRA for the next twenty years. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Ball
Gold Fields District Superintendent



Background

The California Department of Parks and Recreation, working in partnership with the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation, has begun the process of updating the Folsom Lake SRA General Plan/Resource Management Plan (RMP). This two-year project will result in a single and cohesive management document for the SRA that will guide the future protection of natural and cultural resources and the development of public use facilities. This newsletter is intended to introduce you to the General Plan/ RMP update project. It provides a brief history of the Folsom Lake SRA, summarizes the purpose and process for completing a general plan, and outlines future opportunities for public involvement.

A Brief History

In 1955, the construction of Folsom and Nimbus dams by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was completed, resulting in the creation of Folsom Lake and Lake Natoma. The dams and lakes were designed as part of the massive Central Valley Project to provide flood control, water storage, and power generation. Responsibility for the operation of these facilities was transferred to the Bureau of Reclamation (the Bureau) at that time. One year

PHASE I: June 2002 to August 2002

PROJECT INITIATION

- Project Initiation
- Site Reconnaissance & Data Collection
- Base Map Preparation/Develop GIS Format and Protocols
- Stakeholder Identification
- Establish Project Web Page

PHASE II: September 2002 to January 2003

UNDERSTANDING THE SITE AND PLANNING CONTEXT

- Stakeholders/Focus Group Meetings
- Draft Resource Inventory -- Existing Conditions
- **Public Workshop #1--Issues and Opportunities (November '02)**
- Newsletter #1
- Final Resource Inventory
- Newsletter #2

later, the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) entered into an agreement with the Bureau to design, build, and operate recreation facilities at Folsom Lake and Lake Natoma. The lakes would later be designated by State Parks as the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area. Although most of the lands within the SRA are owned by the Bureau and managed by State Parks through a lease agreement, State Parks does own some land in the area.

A master plan for the recreation facilities around the lakes was completed in 1957, and one year later the first permanent recreation facilities opened for public use. In 1976, work on the first General Plan for the SRA began and was adopted in 1979. Much has changed since that time. The popularity of jet skis and sailing has transformed the boating environment on Folsom Lake. Likewise, kayaking and other paddling sports have become favorite activities on Lake Natoma. The popularity of rowing on Lake Natoma is witnessed by the increase in the number of annual competitions on the Lake and by increasing attendance at these events. Land-based recreational activities have also changed with the popularity of running, mountain biking, and inline skating greatly increasing trail use.

As noted in Jacqueline Ball's introduction, the most significant change has been the incredible growth of the Sacramento region since 1979, a trend that is expected to continue. The resulting increase in visitation and encroachment of development affects both the character of the park and the experience of park users. The general plan is needed to comprehensively address how facilities are currently used and what facilities may be needed in the future.

A New General Plan/RMP for Folsom Lake SRA

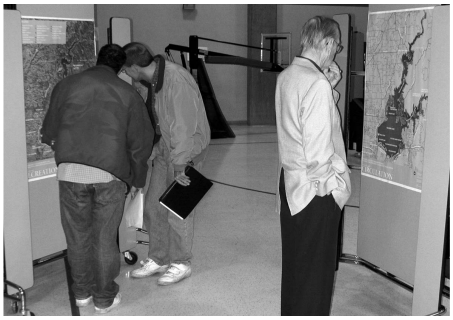
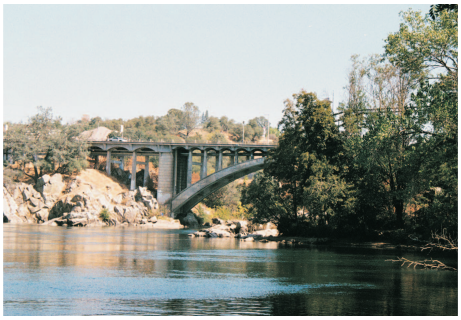
State Park units are required under the California Public Resources Code to have an adopted general plan. Federal regulations require a resource management plan be in place for federally-owned lands. The preparation of these plans is based on an analysis of the resources and conditions of the lands, consideration of State and federal planning policies and regulations, and incorporation of input received from both the public and other agencies. Specifically, the updated General Plan/RMP for the Folsom Lake SRA will:

- Identify significant natural, cultural, aesthetic, and recreational resources and values;
- Determine uses and visitor activities that are appropriate and compatible with park resources and surrounding areas;
- Establish guidelines for operations, protection and preservation of resources, development of facilities, and interpretation of resource values;
- Identify possible significant environmental effects of land uses and visitor activities and integrate possible means of mitigation; and
- This programmatic EIR/EIS will be prepared to fulfill the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA).

This process will result in an updated long-range vision for Folsom Lake SRA.

Process and Progress

As shown in the project timeline above, the update process will take about two years. At this time, the project team is nearing the completion of Phase II of the process. As part of this phase, four focus group sessions with key stakeholders were held in early October to identify preliminary issues to be addressed in the update process. About 90 private and public agency stakeholders participated in these sessions. On November 20, about 150 people attended the first public workshop, introducing the larger community to the project. This workshop provided an opportunity to present the findings of the preliminary draft

PHASE III: February to May 2003

DEFINING THE VISION

- Resource Summary/Statement of Park Purpose & Vision
- Develop Alternatives
- Newsletter #3
- **Public Workshop #2--Exploring Alternatives (April '03)**
- Newsletter #4
- Develop Preferred Park Concept

PHASE IV: May 2003- to May 2004

GENERAL PLAN/RMP

- Preliminary General Plan/RMP
- Newsletter #5
- **Public Workshop #3--Preliminary GP/RMP (January '04)**
- Newsletter #6
- Public Review Period and Hearing on GP/RMP DEIR/EIS
- Commission Adoption/Certification Hearing (June '04)

Resource Inventory and gather additional public input on issues and options for the update process.

At this time, planners, scientists, and other technical experts are putting the finishing touches on the final Resource Inventory of the SRA, which documents existing information in the park and vicinity—such as plant and animal life, environmental and cultural resources, geology and soils, and land use and circulation—that will provide the context for subsequent park planning decisions. The Resource Inventory is a dynamic document, a work-in-progress that will be updated as new information becomes available. The final document should be posted to the Folsom Lake SRA Website early in 2003 and the next newsletter will summarize the findings.

Phase III of the process will involve the identification of a long-range vision, the exploration of alternatives, and the selection of a preferred concept for the SRA. This phase will provide opportunities for public involvement, including a public workshop to explore alternatives, and the preparation of two newsletters. Expect this phase to wrap up in April or May 2003. The final phase of the process will involve the preparation of the actual general plan and resource management plan. A third public workshop will be held to gather additional input on the draft plan, and a public review period and hearings are required under CEQA and NEPA.

What We've Heard So Far

The public's response to the planning team's request for input has been great. By attending public workshops, filling in comment sheets, and by writing and e-mailing the planning team, you too can participate in the planning process. Here are some ideas that we've heard from the public that will be considered in the planning process:

- Preserve the differences in character between Folsom Lake and Lake Natoma;
- Establish partnerships with the private sector, neighborhood associations, and other volunteer groups to provide better care and maintenance of facilities;
- Preserve Lake Natoma as a world class rowing facility and provide additional rowing facilities;
- Balance recreation uses within the capacity of the natural environment;
- Provide fire management along park boundaries adjacent to residential neighborhoods;
- Protect important historic and cultural resources and increase opportunities for interpretation;
- Provide an additional multi-use facility similar to the Granite Bay Activity Center;
- Address the impacts of the potential raising of Folsom Dam (a project proposed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency) on public use facilities in the park;
- Expand the existing trails network to improve capacity and reduce conflicts between multiple users; and
- Educate trail users and support trail enforcement to improve the safety of multi-use trails and combat illegal trail use.

Next Steps

As shown in the project timeline above, the planning team is nearing the completion of Phase II of the project. The next step, expected to begin in February 2003, will be to identify a long-range vision for the SRA and select a preferred concept upon which the General Plan/RMP will be based. A public workshop will be held in April 2003 and additional newsletters will be released to keep you informed of the process.

We Want to Hear From You!

There will be other opportunities for public input throughout the planning process. If you are not currently on our mailing list, or if you would like further information, there are several ways you can contact us:

Mail

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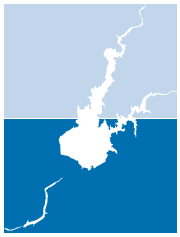
Phone

Jim Micheaels
State Parks Gold Fields District
(916) 988-9116 ext. 202

Web

You can also visit the State Parks web site for the latest information on the General Plan Update at www.parks.ca.gov and clicking on "General Plans" under "Related Links."

FOLSOM/LAKE/NATOMA



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