



The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

NEWS RELEASE

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LOW STORAGE LEVELS CAUSE METROPOLITAN TO SUSPEND PUBLIC BOAT LAUNCHES AT DIAMOND VALLEY LAKE AFTER OCT. 13

Lake to remain open to fishing from shoreline, rental boats

Clearly demonstrating the need for water conservation throughout Southern California due to the statewide drought and supply challenges, Metropolitan Water District announced plans today to indefinitely suspend private boat launches at the region's largest reservoir—Diamond Valley Lake—at the close of business Monday, Oct. 13, because of low lake levels.

With storage levels receding at the lake near Hemet in southwest Riverside County as water is drawn to meet the region's supply needs, Metropolitan projects the reservoir's water levels will reach the end of the existing boat ramp at the lake's marina by Oct. 13.

“This action speaks volumes about the seriousness of the water-supply situation Southern California faces next year, particularly should we not rise to meet the water-saving challenge that's before us,” said Metropolitan General Manager Jeff Kightlinger, cautioning that the lake's boat launch lanes could close earlier if conditions warrant.

Metropolitan's Board of Directors will discuss possible options for extending the ramp at its regularly scheduled monthly meeting Oct. 14.

“We understand the public recreation impacts this action will have at the lake, recognized as one of the premier fishing spots in Southern California,” Kightlinger said. “While we all remain proud of Diamond Valley and the recreation it provides, the reservoir's primary purpose is to help maintain water supply reliability for Metropolitan, our 26 member public agencies and nearly 19 million Southern Californians.”

During the suspension, Diamond Valley Lake will remain open to the public. Starting this weekend, about five additional miles of shoreline will be opened for fishing, for a total of 6 ½ miles of public shoreline fishing. In addition, rental boats at the lake will remain available until it becomes impractical or unsafe to operate and maintain the rental fleet. Kayaks and canoes that meet guidelines will be allowed to launch as long as boarding docks are serviceable.

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Nearly doubling the region's surface water storage capacity when it was dedicated in 2000, Diamond Valley Lake has a storage capacity of 810,000 acre-feet of water, with a surface water elevation of 1,756 feet above sea level. Since last January when the 4,500-surface-acre lake held nearly 597,000 acre-feet, Metropolitan has withdrawn 107,000 acre-feet to meet member agency needs, dropping lake levels 24 feet.

The lake currently holds about 490,000 acre-feet, with plans to draw it down to about 400,000 acre-feet by year's end. An acre-foot of water is nearly 326,000 gallons, about the amount used by five to seven people in a year.

"Diamond Valley Lake's exposed shoreline and dry boat ramp serves as a reminder to Southland consumers about the importance of saving water during this drought," Kightlinger said.

Southern Californians can do their part to help local agencies build and maintain reserves for 2009 by dramatically reducing water use, particularly outdoors, where up to 70 percent of residential use occurs, Kightlinger said. In addition to Metropolitan's actions, record dry conditions have caused many local water agencies to draw down reservoirs and groundwater supplies.

To help preserve the region's water reserves, Metropolitan's board last June accelerated the regional water-saving call by declaring a Water Supply Alert. Metropolitan's board urged cities, counties, local public water agencies and retailers to achieve extraordinary conservation by adopting and enforcing drought ordinances, accelerating public outreach and messaging, and developing additional local supplies.

Following today's announcement, Metropolitan is working with Urban Park Concessionaires, the district's contracted marina operator, to notify annual pass holders and dry storage renters. The California Department of Fish and Game will contact the organizers of scheduled fishing tournaments that will be impacted by the suspension. In addition, Metropolitan will distribute fliers at the marina, DVL Visitor Center and local fishing shops.

Despite the closure of the boat ramp, Diamond Valley's Lake View Trail will remain open to the public for hiking and biking, as will the North Hills Trail for hiking and horseback riding. The community OctoberFish event will take place at the lake this weekend, Oct. 4-5, in partnership with Urban Parks and Valley-Wide Recreation and Park District.

At the same time, Valley-Wide's aquatic center will celebrate the closing of its third season. The Western Center for Archaeology and Paleontology also will host its second Science Saturday, drawing elementary and middle school children to the Western Center and Diamond Valley Lake Visitor Center.

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The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a cooperative of 26 cities and water agencies serving nearly 19 million people in six counties. The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps its members to develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs.