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Storrie Lake State Park Status and Future

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State Park Improvements

- The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department has worked, through its State Parks Division, to make improvements to infrastructure and amenities at the Storrie Lake State Park. However, as communities were still recovering from the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, New Mexico was hit with a record-breaking wildfire season. The fires destroyed hundreds of homes, forcing thousands to flee. The extreme fire danger forced full or partial closures of multiple parks in northern New Mexico, some, like Storrie Lake State Park, due to the proximity of the wildfires and others to assist with providing water for firefighting aircraft.
- The comfort station at the recreation area near the park entrance was renovated including plumbing, electrical, finish, and skylight upgrades. The project cost \$153.4 thousand and was funded through the Land Water and Conservation Fund with 50 percent of the funding coming from State match.

State Park Needs and Options

- Ownership of the land the visitor's center sits on continues to be a point of contention for the department. The northern half of the shorefront is owned by the Storrie Project Water Users Association (SPWUA), an organization that has been reluctant to offer more than a year-to-year lease for the property (Currently \$30 thousand for FY24). The SPWUA has only signed one five-year contract in the last decade.
- This ownership issue prevents the State Parks Division from being able to invest money into improving the north side, which, is also the only side of the lake where water levels are deep enough to support a boat ramp.
- The state has not sought to purchase the property, however there has not been an independent appraisal of the property to determine a fair market cost or if owners are interested in selling.

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- Notably, the Visitor’s Center is a historic structure, and would require significant state investment to modernize. Investments which, absent a change in ownership or longer lease, might be difficult to justify in the short-term.

Lake Area Water Needs

- The SPWUA has a junior diversion right and a storage permit on file with the Office of the State Engineer (OSE) dating to 1909. The City of Las Vegas obtained storage rights for up to 2,300 thousand acre-feet of water, however, this storage is currently capped at 800 acre-feet through an agreement with the SPWUA.
- During the Hermit’s Peak/Calf Canyon wildfires of 2022, OSE coordinated with water users and the City to preserve existing water supplies by limiting releases from Storrie Lake and preserving 3,200 acre-feet of water for fire response and as a reserve supply for the city.
- The OSE has funding available from its 2022 ARPA allocation of \$33 million to assist in a short-term emergency supply for an additional 400 acre-feet or more. There is a two-year draft agreement under negotiation between the City and a large shareholder to provide this additional volume for approximately \$1 million per year.
- Long-term, the City, OSE, and SPWUA will be engaging in discussions that will be best for the region. The OSE encouraged SPWUA to apply to the Water Trust Board to improve the delivery canal below Storrie Lake as it now loses 50 percent due to seepage. They were awarded a \$13 million grant for this project.

Replanting the West

- The State Forestry Division’s Conservation Seedling Program provides economically priced tree and shrub seedlings to landowners who own one acre or more of land in New Mexico. Through the program, tens of thousands of seedlings are planted each year for the establishment of windbreaks, erosion control, reforestation, crop and livestock protection, to improve or create wildlife habitat, and provide energy cost savings when trees are planted to shade homes and businesses.
- The Mora Agricultural Experiment Station has provided some of the seedlings for this effort, and the selection of a site for the New Mexico Reforestation Center, which Storrie Lake is a candidate for, will help ramp up seedling production.
- Seedling sales continued at a rapid rate from the Santa Fe tree house, but seedling distribution did not happen at the State Fair in 2022 due to a lack of seedlings available by that time of the season.
- Trees, Water, and People, a non-profit foundation based in Fort Collins, Colorado, purchased 4,500 Ponderosa pine and 2,500 Douglas-fir seedlings that were planted on tribal

lands in the Jemez Mountains. Seedlings were also sold to many landowners who suffered a loss of forest due to the Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon fires.

- New Mexico State University is currently in the middle of conducting a Request for Proposal to select a site for the New Mexico Reforestation Center, which, when complete, will provide up to 5 million seedlings annually for reforestation projects to local, state, and federal partners.