

Lake Perris marina closed for demolition, new facilities are possible within a year

By JIM MATTHEWS

www.OutdoorNewsService.com

The Lake Perris marina closed permanently as of March 1, and the marina store ended operations a month before that date. Currently, all the facilities – the store, restaurant, and boat docks – are being demolished to pave the way for a completely new facility.

All the marina facilities had become “rickety, if not dangerous,” according to John Rowe, superintendent at the Lake Perris State Recreation Area, where the marina was located. He said the leveling of the old structures and docks was the best option to move forward, and that a new contract for concessionaires would go out to bid by the end of this summer.

Rowe said the contract would be for 30 years and would give concessionaires the opportunity to build a new marina and dock, a store and/or restaurant, with a wide range of options.

In a base case scenario, a new marina and boat dock “could be up and running by next summer, depending on how aggressive they are” in building and opening a facility, said Rowe of whoever wins the bid process. He said if the bid goes out the end of the summer for a 90-day period, that would be followed by a 30-day bid review and awarding process. A construction start date could be approved shortly after that. That would be the first of 2021 in a best case scenario.

Worst case scenario? “No one puts a bid in for it because they simply don’t find the potential project lucrative,” said Rowe. “It could never reopen.”

He doesn’t think that is likely because the bid contract has been written to open up so many options to make it attractive to the companies or individuals who might bid on the facility construction and its long-term operation.

The process to get to this point has been a long, circuitous road for the state park. It has its roots back around 1999 when the marina concessionaire at the time – Canteen Corporation – went bankrupt and walked away from its 20 year lease. Rocky Mountain Enterprises took over the facility on a month-to-month contract and ran it that way until early this year.

In those intervening years, it was found that the marina’s underground fuel tank was leaking into the soil under the parking lot adjacent to the marina store. The clean-up and monitoring took a decade, mostly paid for by the insurance bond that Canteen Corp. had on the facility.

The state parks was going to put out a new bid in 2002, mandating whoever won the bid to repair and or rebuild the facilities. But that was about the time there were “vulnerabilities” found in the dam in the case of a major earthquake, and Parks pulled back the bid when it looked like the dam re-construction and repair was going to take until that work was completed.

But there was even more bad news. During this time, it

was found that both the old restaurant and marina store has asbestos and would need to be completely razed, the site cleaned up, and then new buildings erected.

With the passing of those 15-plus years, the facilities had degraded from bad to worse and things were getting pretty run down. The restaurant was long closed, and the docks were in disrepair and it would cost more to fix them than replace them, especially after being piece-meal patched for the decades.

Once the dam remediation was completed and the lake was brought back up to full pool last year, Parks reissued a bid for a new marina-stock-restaurant concession. The bid included the removal of all the old facilities, a new marina, new building construction, and a 30-year lease.

“No one bid,” said Rowe. “Since the bid included demolition, they were a little afraid of those costs. ‘We don’t know what’s there,’ was what we heard from a couple of companies. The asbestos, the soil around the old fuel tanks – I understood what they were saying.”

Rowe said that there was interest if they had a clean canvas without the demolition. So Rowe said Parks applied for and received money to contract for the demolition work, which has been ongoing since around March 1. This work should be done by mid- to late-summer this year, barring any unforeseen roadblocks or delays.

Perris is one of the most popular fishing lakes in Southern California, with a boat launch that is open daily. At 80 percent full, the lake covers 1,800 surface acres. The largemouth bass, bluegill, and redear fisheries are its day-to-day bread and butter, but the lake is also stocked with rainbow trout in the winter, and it has crappie and channel catfish along with the occasional striped bass or flathead catfish. It was filled to full pool last year for the first time in over 20 years, and it is currently at 83 percent full and expected to continue to rise in March.

In addition to fishing, the lake is open to boating, jet skis, sailing craft, swimming and non-water activities that include seasonal hunting, birdwatching, hiking, rock climbing, and camping. There were nearly a million visitors to the lake in 2019.

END

O.N.S
OUTDOOR NEWS SERVICE

Originally Published:

March 15, 2020

www.OutdoorNewsService.com

