

Issues &



Insights

Ventura County's
supply of water news



Worth The Trek: Adventure and Conservation at Lake Piru

Home to lakeside picnicking, camping, fishing, boating and water sports, Lake Piru has provided a vital escape from city life since 1955. It also works in tandem with the Santa Felicia Dam to support Ventura County's water supply.

With a storied history and a bright future, Lake Piru is an important part of the regional water landscape. Learn more about the reservoir below.



LAKE PIRU AT A GLANCE



**82,000
acre-feet**
of reservoir storage



58,000 visitors
annually



236 sites
for RVs, campers,

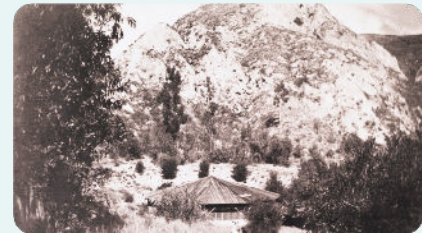


66 boat slips
and a launch ramp



HISTORY

Lake Piru was originally constructed in 1955 to accompany the Santa Felicia Dam, the first dam ever designed solely to recharge groundwater. The project, which was locally funded without State or Federal subsidies, loans, or grants, recharged downstream groundwater basins depleted due to substantial over-pumping and combated seawater intrusion in the nearby coastal groundwater aquifers.



The history of Lake Piru is distinct. The area around Lake Piru was originally inhabited by the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, in a region traditionally occupied by Ventureño Chumash. These hunter-gatherers subsisted on small game, acorns, yucca, juniper berries and sage seeds. The name Piru is derived from the Indian word for the reeds they used to make baskets.



Juan Fustero, a descendant of the Tataviam, is recognized to be one of the earliest modern-day inhabitants of Piru Canyon. He and his family developed the area starting in 1880, establishing Temescal Grammar School on the site where the dam is today.

The town of Piru was founded in 1887 by David C. Cook, who purchased 14,000 acres of the canyon. He proclaimed it to be “Another Eden” and planted 900 acres of oranges, apricots and English walnuts. Cook transformed the canyon into a self-reliant farm by building miles of roads and irrigation ditches. A town soon followed.

While all that remains of Cook’s “Eden” are a few historical buildings and olive trees, Lake Piru Reservoir and the Santa Felicia Dam today play an integral role in protecting the water resources of the Santa Clara Valley and the coastal Oxnard Plain.



CONSERVATION RELEASES

UWCD uses conservation releases from the Santa Felicia Dam to recharge local groundwater basins with water that is eventually made available to cities, industry and farms. Runoff from the Piru Creek Watershed is stored in Lake Piru in winter and spring when downstream groundwater basins are at their fullest. The water is released from the dam when the downstream groundwater basins are at their seasonal lows. The conservation releases are designed to

maximize the amount of water that reaches the Freeman Diversion, located downstream on the Santa Clara River.



LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Lake Piru is more than an important fixture in UWCD's water portfolio. It is also a vibrant recreation destination for more than 58,000 visitors annually. That is why the District has developed a long-term vision to revitalize the Lake Piru Recreation Area

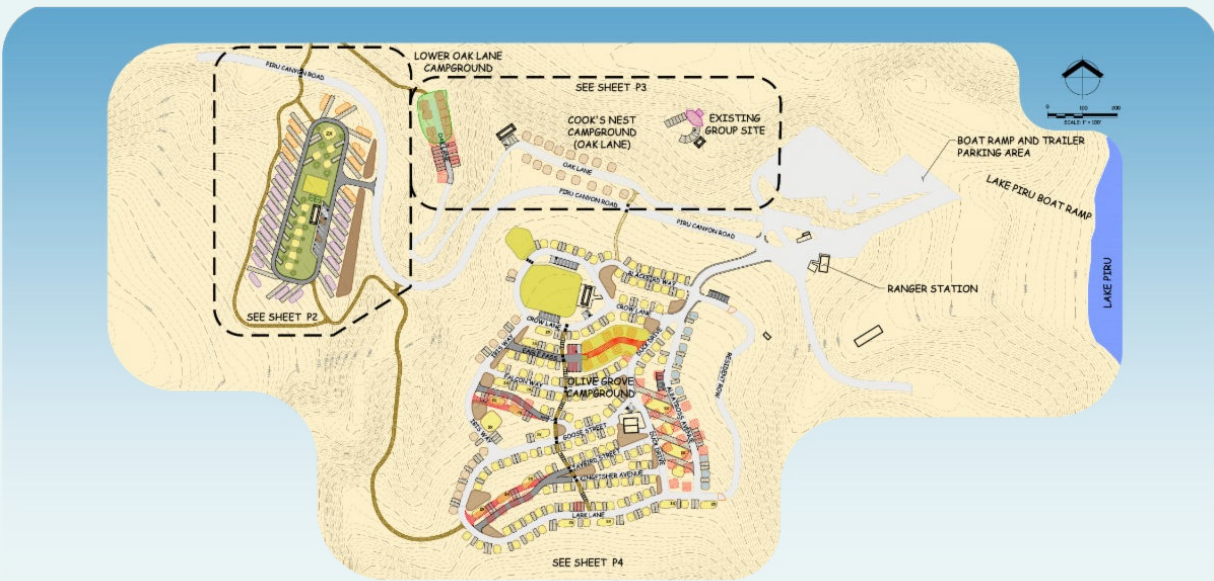
The campground currently offers 236 campsites with full water and sewer hookups, along with access to Lake Piru's endless adventures. UWCD will enhance the visitor experience through a series of cost-effective improvements that prioritize safety and comfort.

A grand, three-campground plan — Olive Grove, Cook's Nest, and Kittanemuk — will meet overflow demand. UWCD is increasing full hook-up campsites to provide a modern, relaxing experience for RV guests.

Here is what overnight visitors can look forward to:

- Charming nature trail, amphitheater for gathering, and pristine community areas
- Group campsite for retreats and large excursions
- Upgraded restrooms, holding tanks, and roadways
- 17 full hook-up RV campsites, plus 9 electric hook-up RV campsites
- Total electric hook-up campsites increase from 96 to 119
- Addition of 34 double electric hook-up campsites and 3 triple electric hook-up campsites

Learn more [HERE](#)



SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES



UWCD welcomes opportunities to connect with the community and discuss water supply, groundwater resources and current threats to our system. If you would like to book a presentation from one of our staff, please contact:

**Murray McEachron Email: murraym@unitedwater.org
Principal Hydrologist Phone: (805) 695-3716**



BOARD UPDATES

New Board Member Dedicated to Local Agriculture

Keith Ford joins the UWCD Board of Directors for Division 6, representing most of Port Hueneme and portions of Oxnard and Camarillo. Appointed in April 2024, Director Ford demonstrates a lifelong passion and commitment to agriculture. Director Ford's journey into farming began in 1977 under the tutelage of Donald F. Driscoll in Watsonville, California. In 1989, Keith stepped into entrepreneurship through a partnership to cultivate 14 acres in Watsonville. By 1990, he expanded his operations, adding another partnership and planting his first 25 acres in Oxnard.

As the CEO of Ocean Breeze Ag Management LLC, he currently oversees the management of this vast expanse of berry farms in Oxnard, along with an additional 200 acres in Santa Maria. Throughout his tenure in Oxnard, he has been deeply involved in navigating the complexities of water and irrigation on the Oxnard Plain. Whether utilizing PTP water, drawing from Pleasant Valley Water, or relying on pumped well water, Keith possesses a nuanced understanding of the intricate water issues facing the agricultural community.



GLOSSARY

Boat Slip – Akin to a parking space for a boat, a boat slip offers one open end to allow boats to “slip” into it. They protect vehicles from the bumps that can occur when docking traditionally.

Conservation Releases – UWCD uses the Santa Felicia Dam to release stored water from Lake Piru when downstream groundwater basins are at their seasonal lows. The conservation releases maximize the water that reaches the Freeman Diversion, located downstream on the Santa Clara River. Ultimately, this process helps replenish groundwater basins with water that benefits ecosystems, cities, industry and farms.

Hook-up Campsites – Hook-ups at a campsite provide modern amenities to create a comfortable camping experience. They can include hook-ups to the local water supply, electricity, and sewage connections for recreational vehicles.

Reservoir –When a dam restricts water flow and raises its level, it creates a reservoir used as a source of water supply or to generate electricity. Reservoirs manage flood

control and supply irrigation, drinking water, industry, aquaculture and more.

Runoff - The unconfined flow of water over the ground surface; occurs when excess rainwater, stormwater, meltwater, or other water sources can no longer rapidly infiltrate in the soil.

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