

# LAKE BERRYESSA BOATER OUTREACH PROGRAM SUMMER 2022



**SOLANO**  
Resource  
Conservation  
District

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# PROGRAM FUNDING



Program Funding: Solano County Water Agency, Napa County, Solano County and Cities of Vallejo, Benicia, Fairfield, Suisun City, Rio Vista and Vacaville, Napa County Flood Control & Water Conservation District and CalRecycle

Program Supplies: Napa County, Solano County and California State Parks/California Coastal Commission

## INTRODUCTION

Because roughly half a million people rely on Lake Berryessa as a key source of water, keeping the lake clean of pollutants is a priority for agencies all over the region. Every summer, the Solano Resource Conservation District conducts the Lake Berryessa Boater Outreach Program, an initiative centered on educating citizens about clean boating practices and giving them the means to employ those practices. This report summarizes the efforts, successes, and potential shortcomings of the 2022 Boater Outreach Program, which ran from late May through early September 2022.

A team of three interns worked together to conduct surveys and distribute clean boating supplies throughout the lake, educating boaters on everything from sewage disposal procedures to the location of oil absorbent disposal facilities. Boater kits for the 2022 season were distributed with each survey, packed with supplies for oil cleanup and clean boating practices. Interns made appearances all around the lake, focusing on the Capell Cove (prior to its closure), Steele Canyon and Markley Cove boat launches with additional visits to Pleasure Cove and Putah Canyon.

Ongoing environmental, economic and societal pressures resulted in lower visitor turnout than in past years. Summer 2022 saw extremely low water levels, a result of the state's long-running drought. Capell Cove Boat Launch was forced to shut down in early June, and as the weeks passed other sites slowly closed off parts of their launches as the water level visibly receded at an alarming rate. Additionally, fuel prices reached historic highs, affecting boater turnout and presumably causing potential visitors to recreate closer to home. Although COVID-19 was less of a concern this year, we don't know what impact it truly had on recreational activity.



*Drop in water levels at Steele Canyon between the start and end of the season*



## BOATER EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Interns ask a variety of questions during their interactions with boaters. Basic demographic information is first collected, including where they are coming from and what type of boat they use. Boaters are asked whether or not they know Lake Berryessa is a water source for roughly 500,000 people, and are asked to identify symbols for oil recycling and sewage pumpouts. Final questions relate to water quality stewardship practices such as how to clean up an oil leak, and what they would do if they saw oil discharge in the water. Boaters learn safe places to dispose of boat sewage and locations where it is forbidden. Upon conclusion of the questions, boaters are prompted to place a bilge pad in their boat's bilge compartment or, if they already have one, exchange their existing bilge pad for a new one.

## BOATER KITS AND PREMIUMS

Interns distributed the free 2022 Boater Kits to boaters upon completion of a survey. This year's kits contained an oil absorbent pillow and oil absorbent sheet, a fueling bib, a California Boating Guide, a guide to Environmental Boating Laws, and a \$30 coupon for a Sirius Signal emergency flare. The packaging of each boater kit is completely recyclable and is labeled with educational messages concerning oil absorbents and safe disposal.

When boaters are encouraged to install an oil absorbent pillow into the bilge of their vessel, they are given an explanation of the positive impacts on Lake Berryessa installation achieves. As an incentive, they are rewarded with a premium of their choice—a ski flag, a metal canteen water bottle, a kid's size Lake Berryessa T-shirt, or a canvas tote bag. Ski flags were the most popular premium by far.



*Boater excitedly installing one of our free bilge pads*

## BOATER SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Boaters were asked for their city of residence and zip code. The following chart shows the distribution of boaters from Solano County and Napa County. Of the boaters surveyed, 30.7% were Solano County residents and 10.2% were Napa county residents. The remaining 59.0% of boaters were residents of a county besides Solano or Napa.

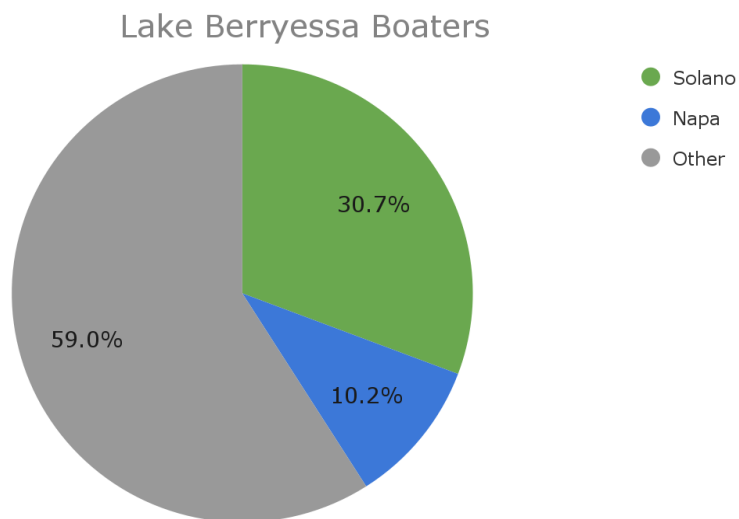


Figure 1: County of residence by percentage in Summer of 2022

The majority of the Solano County resident boaters surveyed came from Fairfield and Elmira, followed by Vacaville and Dixon.

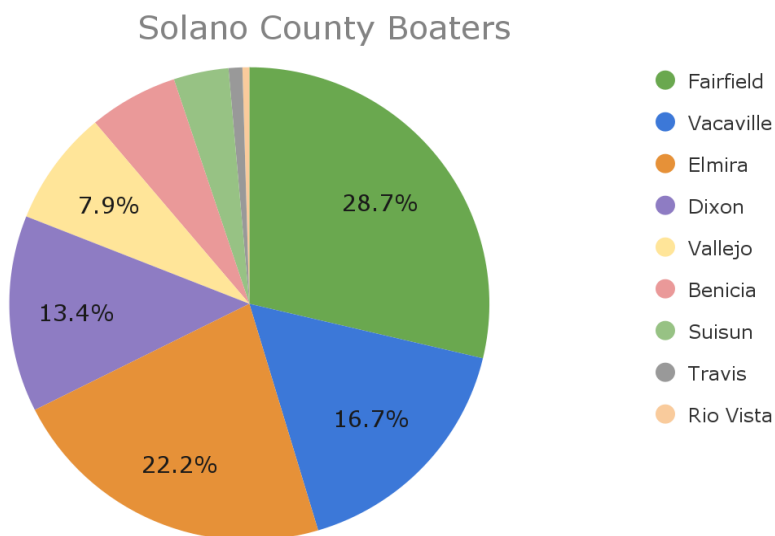


Figure 2: City of residence of Solano County boaters by percentage

The majority of Napa County resident boaters surveyed came from Rutherford, followed by Napa and American Canyon.

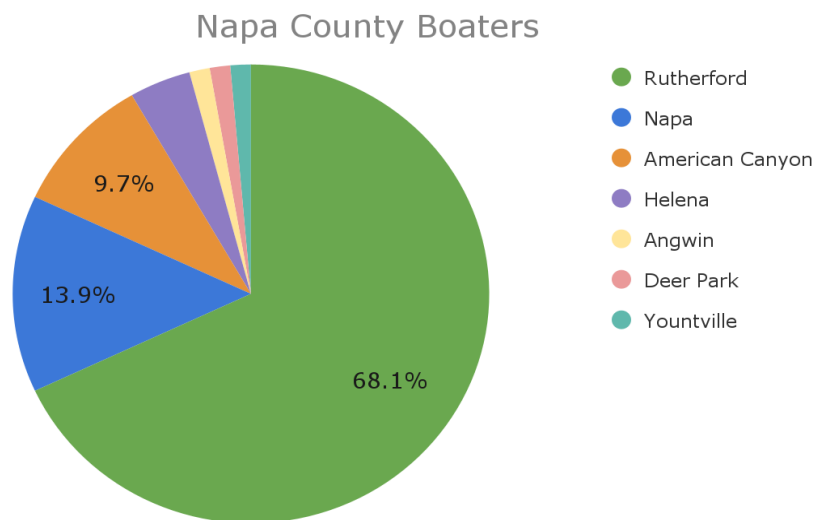


Figure 3: City of residence of Napa County boaters by percentage

When asked the question “Is Lake Berryessa a drinking water source?” 70% of boaters answered “Yes”. This marks a reversal to the trend of gradual decline in awareness that Lake Berryessa is a drinking water source since 2016.

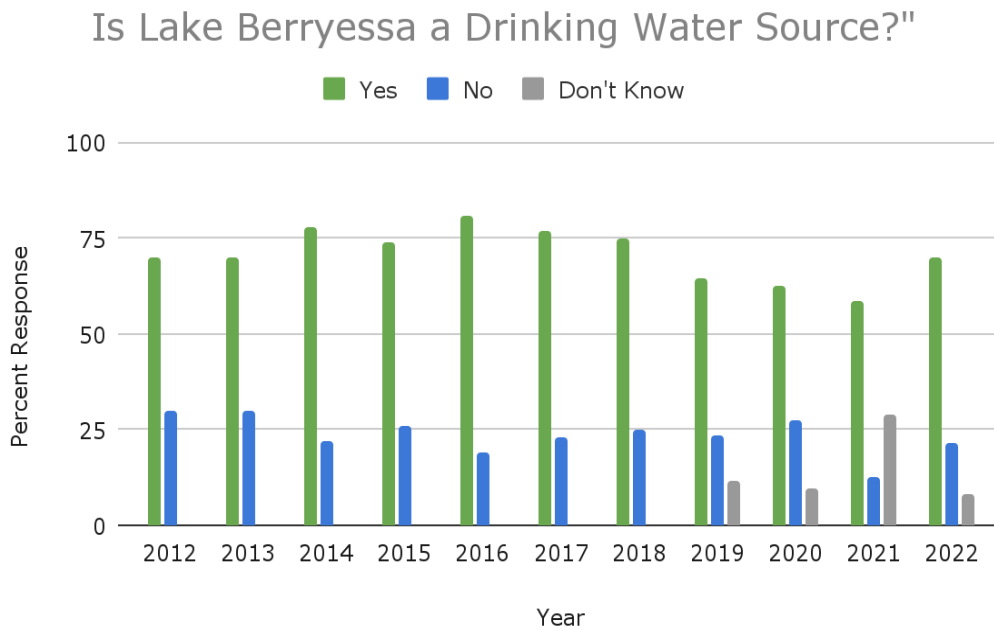


Figure 4: “Do you think Lake Berryessa is a drinking water source?” responses by percentage over the last decade

When asked whether they were familiar with bilge pads and whether they had used bilge pads in the past, 38.4% of boaters answered that they had experience with bilge pads.

"Has boater used a bilge pad in the past?"

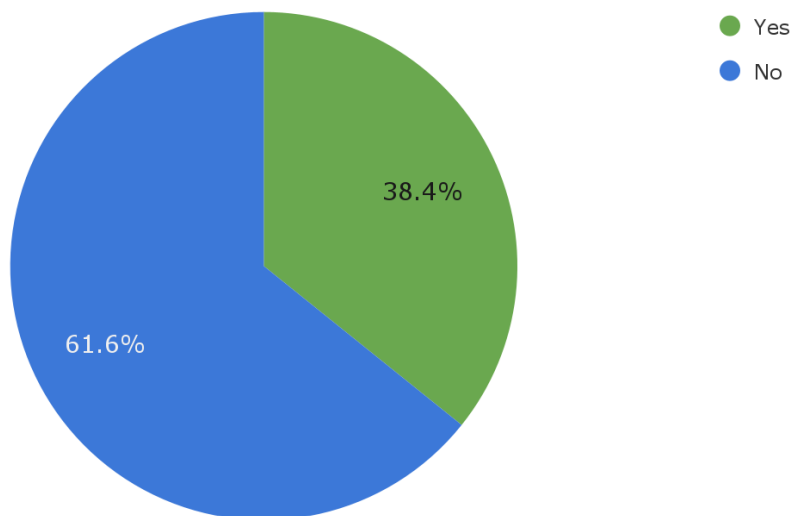


Figure 5: "Have you used a bilge pad in the past?" responses by percentage

## RECREATOR EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Due to the ongoing and unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, Solano RCD made the decision to continue its pause in recreator outreach during Summer 2022. Although, during World Environment Day, Bilgee and team did provide outreach surveys and excite children and adults alike.

## COMMUNITY CLEANUP EVENTS

Solano RCD and the US Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) jointly coordinated cleanup events at Lake Solano and Lake Berryessa in celebration of World Environment Day on June 4, 2022. The day's efforts attracted 82 volunteer participants and resulted in the collection of 353 pounds of trash along the shores of both lakes. After the cleanup, volunteers enjoyed a picnic lunch, wildflower seed bar, and a meet and greet with mascot Bilgee the Bilge Pad. For a post-season cleanup, Solano RCD and BOR joined forces again to coordinate Coastal Cleanup Day. There were 66 volunteers and staff who gathered at Markley Cove, Steele Canyon and under Pope Creek Bridge. Combined, volunteers cleared 1,500 pounds of trash and recyclables from our shorelines with steel cable making up the majority of the weight from Steele Canyon.



*Bilgee making an appearance at World Environment Day guided by intern Marco*



*Monticello Ski Club posing for a photo after removing over 1,000 pounds of steel from Steele Canyon.*

## CONCLUSION

The 2022 Lake Berryessa Boater Outreach Program continued the long-standing effort educating and surveying boaters. Interns conducted 703 surveys throughout the season and educated 1,595 people concerning water quality and clean boating practices. Of the boaters who participated in surveys, 162 were inspired to install a bilge pad on the spot. The number of surveys completed has waned since 2021, and we believe this may have been caused by high fuel prices and inflation impacts on overall boater activity.

## PROGRAM TOTALS

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
# of interns	6	6	14	12	16	3	2	3	3	3
Total boater surveys	1568	1670	1195	1210	1115	825	878	391	970	703
Total recreator surveys	325	300	392	265	224	107	86	0	0	0
Oil absorbents distributed at exchange stations	646	521	653	1100	606	822	778	257	499	267
Install rate*	51%	50%	57%	50%	41%	48%	58%	28%	37%	23%

*Table 1: Outreach program achievements by year (install rates based on compatible boats only)*



## PHOTOS



*Scott gives a ski flag for installing a bilge pad*



*Marco surveys boaters at Capell Cove boat launch*



*Scott refills a bilge pad canister at Putah Canyon*



*Father guides his daughter on bilge pad installation*



*Program coordinator Sierra Cecchini poses with Bilgee on World Environment Day*



*Family posing with their new 2022 boater kit*