

MORROW POINT LAKE



CURECANTI NATIONAL RECREATION AREA





IN REPLY REFER TO:

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
P. O. BOX 1648, HIGHWAY 50 EAST
MONTROSE, COLORADO 81401

Dick Strait
Assoc. Reg. Dir.
Denver

Dear Reader:

The National Park Service, administrator of Curecanti Recreation Area, is interested in managing Morrow Point Lake in a manner compatible with the varied aspects of the lake — protection of the total environment, difficulty of access, preservation of the shoreline, economic impact on surrounding communities, fishery potential, public use possibilities, etc. The management decisions and alternatives confronting the Service are complex and we are asking for ideas and suggestions from interested citizens like yourself.

In the enclosure we have attempted to tell the story of Morrow Point Lake. Remember, however, that words alone do not often suffice. Some of you have been on the lake; others have talked about it with friends, or have heard about it through news media. Some of you have formed conclusions. Please read the attached carefully and let us have your thoughts. If you have questions, please contact me in Montrose, P. O. Box 1648, or telephone 249-9661. Remember, Curecanti Recreation Area and Morrow Point Lake have national significance, otherwise the National Park Service would not be involved. All decisions will be meaningful to people far removed from Montrose, Gunnison, and Delta counties. Please be realistic in your considerations. Think of what you would do if you were responsible for the lake as it is. What would you do with it? Be sure to consider all aspects before coming up with your answers.

Several possible alternatives are listed. Perhaps we have overlooked some. If we have, we would appreciate your input for consideration. If you are attending one of our public meetings you will have been assigned to a team. Each team will be asked for its first two recommendations. If you receive this handout at a civic meeting, through the mail or elsewhere, we ask you for your thoughts by December 15, 1974.

Thank you for your interest in the National Park Service. It is only with input from concerned citizens that we can best administer the public lands within our charge.

Sincerely yours,

Karl T. Gilbert
Karl T. Gilbert
General Superintendent

MORROW POINT LAKE
CURECANTI RECREATION AREA

Introduction

Morrow Point Lake is the middle lake of the three-lake chain of the Curecanti Storage Unit Project. Blue Mesa Lake, the largest body of water in the State of Colorado, is immediately to the east, and Crystal Lake, to be formed by Crystal Dam, (now under construction), will be to the west. The only access to Morrow Point Lake is by trail -- down Pine Creek, Curecanti Creek, or from one other point on State Highway 92. A few people carry boats down the Pine Creek trail.

Morrow Point Lake was created in 1967 with the completion of the 469-foot high Morrow Point Dam. It is a narrow, fiordlike body of water beneath towering canyon walls, and many consider it one of the most beautiful lakes in Colorado. It has a surface area of 817 acres, is 11 miles long, and has a shoreline of only 24 miles. The lake lies deep within the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, above the confluence of the Gunnison and Cimarron Rivers. The shoreline is such that shoreline developments, including trails, are virtually impossible. The canyon walls rise vertically from the water's edge along much of the lake. Potential slide areas also preclude on-shore development in some of the more feasible locations. The entire lake is deep; the water is normally clear.

The easterly two-thirds of the lake is quite narrow, not more than 100-150 feet wide in most places. The westerly section widens out and exceeds a half mile in width in one location. There are no sizable bays

and inlets; four minor shore indentations offer limited shelter in case of severe wind storms. Boat beaching is possible in many locations; however, the shoreline is rough and rocky and boats would suffer severe poundings in even moderate winds. Walk-out possibilities from much of the shoreline are almost impossible because of terrain.

Predominant winds are from both the east and west. During daytime hours winds normally change from east to west about noon. The long axis of the lake is west to east; therefore, a large expanse of unprotected water is ever-present. Rubber raft owners have experienced considerable difficulty in winds on the lake.

History

When public hearings were held relating to the Curecanti Recreation Area Master Plan in late 1969, the National Park Service stated that Round Corral Creek offered the only feasible location for road access to Morrow Point Lake, and site for public boat-launching facilities. This resulted in the proposal for a campground, a ranger station, and necessary support facilities in the area, some distance back from the lake shore. Total cost of planned improvements was to have amounted to approximately \$4,000,000. The keys to this proposed development were funding, the acquisition of private lands for the campground, ranger station, and parking area, and the environmental impact of the development. Later, information and new thoughts pertaining to the carrying capacity of the lake, particularly from a fishery standpoint, suggested to management

that unlimited access to Morrow Point Lake might not be the course to follow. (See attached report from Colorado Division of Wildlife.) This new knowledge resulted in a plan for a small rental-boat marina at Morrow Point Dam.

Plans for a 40-boat marina, to be anchored to the north upstream face of the dam, were made. This facility was to have been operated by a concessioner, and serviced by a shuttle bus also to have been operated by the concessioner. Other pertinent facts were (a) strictly a rental-boat marina with no provisions for private boats; (b) provisions for a larger marina if conditions warranted; (c) a limitation on size of boats and motors; (d) provision for tour boats and (e) provisions for adequate sanitary facilities, both at the marina and up-lake.

This plan for the marina at the dam was dropped a year ago because of a last minute high-level determination by the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation that such a facility would not be totally compatible with the overall operation at the dam. Human safety, because of the access road, also played a part in the decision to withhold installation of the development at the dam.

Present

The National Park Service is again back at a starting point. It is now the policy of the Service to seek public input into matters relating to public interest. The potential use of Morrow Point Lake is of such magnitude that we urge the participation of all who might be interested in the lake. Please give close consideration to the following alternatives, keeping in mind that additional suggestions are welcome.

1. Leave the lake exactly as is. Maintain existing trail.
2. Realign and improve the trail down Pine Creek. Add nothing else.
3. Realign and improve the Pine Creek trail; provide for a public tour boat at closest practical point along the old railroad grade.
4. Number 3, but add a small rental-boat marina where hand-propelled boats could be rented.
5. Same as Number 4, but change hand-propelled boats to small power boats.
6. Construct an access road from the Blue Mesa powerplant road to connect with the old railroad grade. Provide fee shuttle bus service to a center of operation on the old railroad grade (tour boat dock, rental boat marina, etc.). A public parking area would be necessary at a logical location at start of shuttle bus route.
7. Install chair-lift access at a logical location to a point of operation on the lake shore.
8. Revive the original Master Plan concept with all-out development at Round Corral: land acquisition, road from Highway 50, campground, ranger station, public launching ramp, etc.

9. Construct additional trails from State Route 92.

Note: Traverses along shoreline are extremely limited.

At no place can one travel more than two or three hundred yards.

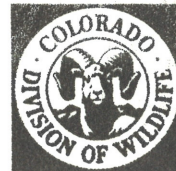
Regardless of the final decision on access or use, the National Park Service will necessarily be responsible for patrol, safety and sanitation. The magnitude of these operations will be totally dependent upon public use.

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

Jack R. Grieb, Director

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~



P. O. Box 788
Montrose, Colorado 81401

September 26, 1974

Mr. Karl T. Gilbert, Superintendent
Curecanti Recreation Area
National Park Service
P. O. Box 1648
Montrose, Colorado 81401

Dear Mr. Gilbert:

Morrow Point Reservoir was not stocked by the Division of Wildlife in 1974. Plans for a kokanee-mackinaw fishery had to be dropped when it was found that mackinaw were moving out of the reservoir and kokanee survival was unsatisfactory. Poor kokanee survival could be attributed to predation and/or movement out of the reservoir.

The problem is presently being studied by a fisheries research team. All of the 1974 Blue Mesa rainbow plants were marked using fluorescent pigment. Rainbow trout movement from Blue Mesa into Morrow Point and its effect on the fishery will be studied by the research team. Supplemental plants of rainbow or other species will be made if the study results indicate that plants should be made.

The oligotrophic nature of Morrow Point Reservoir plus fish movement through the outlet will preclude establishment of a top rate fishery. Sufficient fish will be present, however, to afford some angling opportunity but the catch per man hour is expected to be well below the state average.

The research study team is expected to complete its work in 1977.

Sincerely,

Lloyd K. Hazzard

Lloyd K. Hazzard
Wildlife Biologist II

LKH:jb

cc: C. E. Till

First Suggestion - Open up lake to hand powered boats only, say for 3-5 years at least on experimental basis.
(Local Lawyer - Has been advocating this for several years.) Perhaps a HPS launch or petrol boat powered by electric motor. Objects to sound of outboard motors echoing in the canyon. Feels light craft becoming more popular all time. If, after trial, it proves unsuccessful or too dangerous, can always go to power craft but if start w/ power craft almost impossible to eliminate them.

Don Carroll - Wants hand-powered craft only or limit of 2 h.p. on power-craft. Wants it to be left for the scenery as doubts if fishing will ever amount to much.

Cimarron Ben - Feels that motor boats should be allowed on lake. Old people have right on lake too - many have fought hard to get the dams & lakes. The lake

Ralph Clark - Safety & Sanitation. in other areas, how handled?

Frank La Fave - Recommends tour boat but feels impractical & dangerous for hand powered craft.

Rial Lake - Seconded Frank.

Ron Kaper - Has spent considerable time on M.P. & feels

December 5, 1974

Name _____ Address _____

In the proposed development of Morrow Point Lake I/we favor the
following:

NPS Suggestion No. _____

Other (Please describe):