

# Trinity Lake Revitalization Alliance (TLRA) TAMWG Presentation

June 9, 2010 at 2:15pm

Vision. Passion. Community.

## Topic: Trinity Reservoir recreational access

**Goal:** Gain USBR and TRRP support and funding for projects and management changes that improve public recreational access to Trinity Reservoir, especially during periods of low water elevation.

### Why are the public and business owners coming to TAMWG with this issue?

The TRRP ROD flows that started in 2005 have shifted the timing of nearly half of the reservoir annual drawdown from historic higher flows in late summer and early fall to early to mid spring. This early water level change significantly affects recreational access and imposes high costs to marina operators during years of low precipitation with reduced snowpack. In 2008 and 2009, all but one launch ramp were unusable.

The effect of the TRRP Flow Evaluation Alternative on reservoir level was acknowledged in the TRRP EIS/EIR on page 3-284 (emphasis added):

"Mitigation. Implementation of the following mitigation measures would reduce Trinity and Shasta Reservoir water elevation-reacted impacts to less than significant levels.

- All affected boat ramps should be extended a sufficient distance to accommodate the new water elevations.
- Marina owners should be compensated for costs associated with moving their facilities or constructing new facilities as a result of the new water elevations.
- Campground facilities should be modified or funding provided to accommodate the new water elevations."

With the change in USFS logging policy, the area surrounding Trinity Reservoir, and the entire Trinity County, lost its primary economic source. The county is now almost completely dependent on recreational tourism for its revenue. And that tourism is dependent on reservoir and river elevations and health.

TLRA supports the TRRP and USBR efforts to restore the fishery in Trinity River since the project's success is directly linked to county tourism. At the same time, the effect on the economy and communities that were built around the existence of Trinity Dam for nearly 50 years should not be compromised.

Since the TRRP EIS/EIR was never certified for CEQA and therefore the EIS/EIR mitigations are not mandated, we are asking that TRRP and USBR honor the NEPA mitigations and work with Trinity reservoir stakeholders and USFS (the USBR's managing partner) to implement the measures.

## The USBR and Recreation

The USBR has a history of providing quality recreation access and opportunities at its reservoirs. Some reservoirs have Visitor Centers (e.g., San Luis Reservoir) and others highly successful recreation programs (e.g., Whiskeytown Reservoir).

Reclamation plays a major role in meeting the increasing public demands for water-based outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities. The 289 recreation areas developed as a result of Reclamation's water projects are among the Nation's most popular for water-based outdoor recreation.

Recreation opportunities and demand are high at Trinity Reservoir, and there is a growing demand for more services and facilities when there is access to the water.

There are numerous public and USBR policies that support improving recreational access to Trinity Reservoir, for example:

- A) The Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965 (Pub. L. 89-72), as amended, states that "there is a Federal responsibility to provide opportunities for public recreation at Federal water projects."
- B) *USBR Recreation Management Policy* is a guide for implementing "a successful recreation program at Reclamation water resource projects."
- C) There is legislation, federal codes, and policies that acknowledge that the public demand for recreation is growing. For example:
  - Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992, Public Law 102-575, 106 Stat. 4690, Title XXVIII (Reclamation Recreation Management Act)
- D) The Federal Executive Branch Policy on the *Establishment and Administration of National Recreation Areas*, Circular No. 1, March 26, 1963, states "... that greater efforts must be made by Federal, State, local governmental, and private interests to fulfill adequately the steeply mounting outdoor recreation demands of the American people."

*Question: Was jurisdiction permanently transferred to the USFS, or is the USFS a management partner?*

*Question: If a partnership, where can we get a copy of the Interagency Agreement between the USBR and USFS for the management of Trinity Reservoir?*

## The Trinity Reservoir -- Business and Tourism

The communities around Trinity Reservoir, the state's third largest reservoir, depend on water-based tourism for 90% of the economy since the end of USFS logging, closure of a USFS ranger station, and loss of mining.

The remaining economy is from residential construction, which is directly tied to tourists discovering the area and investing.

When tourists cannot access the lake, very few come to the lake area during the summer. Over the last four years, the combination of limited lake access and the

recession are primary contributing factors in the closure of all local restaurants in the area, extreme cutbacks at the marinas, and the loss of construction jobs.

There have been periods of low reservoir water in the past, see Figure 1, but this latest drought is the only period during which the Trinity Lake communities did not have the jobs from USFS logging to reduce the economic impact of loss of lake access.

Trinity Center Marina is a critical component to a new marine maintenance business opportunity for the area. This is the first new, job-producing business for the area in over ten years. The advantage of Trinity Center is that the launch ramp has access to a maintenance yard on private property that eliminates a commercial houseboat transport to Weaverville for \$2,600/round trip. (Due to USFS policy changes, boat maintenance can no longer be performed on USFS land without costly facility improvements.)

TLRA understands the communities' responsibility to market the area and introduce tourists to new activities and has been actively advertising the area this year with a new campaign -- an area website ([www.northtrinitylake.com](http://www.northtrinitylake.com)) and a Facebook presence with 690 followers.

Nevertheless, access to the lake water is still the gating factor to drawing tourists, as seen this Memorial Day weekend. Despite the sluggish national economy, Memorial Day 2010 was the best business weekend in two years for most businesses -- water brings tourists.

#### **Ramp and Campground Unavailability from 2000-2010**

TLRA acknowledges that there will always be times of low reservoir water levels. And even in low water times, there is plenty of water in the lake for recreation. Access is the issue.

- A) The Trinity Center ramp was not available at the end of the tourist season in 2001 and 2002 and was not usable from July 30, 2008 until April 20, 2010.
- B) KOA marina has not been usable since August 2008.
- C) Cedar Stock ramp was unavailable the entire season of 2008 and 2009. There is a small finger of dirt to the south of their ramp that prevents use of the ramp whenever the water level drops below 2,308 feet, in contrast to the documented ramp elevation of 2,230 feet.
- D) Trinity Alps Resort - Fairview Ramp was not usable from June 17, 2008 to Monday (June 7, 2010) Ramp unavailable August 2001, 2002, and 2007.
- E) Minersville is available most low water years, but does not meet the needs of most boaters. The distance to overnight lodging and other services, and the lack of a launching dock and adequate parking, makes using Minersville an inconvenience to any multiple-day tourist and local residents.

- F) Estrellita Marina, the best mooring area on the reservoir and a low-water ramp, was closed by the USFS in 2009. Negotiations to reopen Estrellita or open a third marina for year-round houseboaters have gone nowhere.
- G) Alpine Campground, managed by Hodge Management a permittee of the USFS, is not opened if the lake level does not come up to at least 5 feet on the ramp. As of June 8, the water is 10 feet below the ramp.

**Restrictions on Reservoir Recreation Access and Facility Growth**

There continues to be increased interest in Trinity Reservoir as a tourist and second-home destination.

Despite the increase in tourism during high water years, the Shasta-Trinity USFS performed a "demand study" for a new marina after the closure of Estrellita in 2009. The USFS determined that there was no demand for a new marina. 2009 and 2008 were our worst drought years since the early 1990s.

Other issues:

- A) The USFS seems to not be making adjustments to management policies to reflect the new lake levels and releases that started in 2005.
- B) There is a waiting list for marina slips, but USFS is restricting marina growth and new marinas on the lake
- C) There is a waiting list for houseboat permits, but the USFS will not increase or reissue permits. A demand study about 1978 set the available permits at 103, while only 98 are available today. Studies show that each permit equals at least \$12,500 per year spent in Trinity County, and the Trinity County Treasurer estimates that in most cases the revenue in the county is many times that much because houseboat owners travel from outside the county and require additional services for their boat, themselves and their guests.
- D) The Trinity Lake Houseboat Owners Association funds water testing at eight sites on the lake to show that there is no impact to the lake from houseboat gray water.
- E) Cedar Stock cannot increase dock capacity due to the parking requirement of two cars per houseboat slip rental and one per small slip rental. No cars can be parked on dirt below the reservoir high water mark. A site for new parking is limited to the top of the hill near Highway 3, due to USFS policy, therefore requiring a shuttle service.
- F) A \$4 million CalBoating grant to improve Trinity reservoir ramps was allowed to expire in 2009 partly due to an impasse between the USFS and the North Coast Integrated Regional Water Management over the use of asphalt. Alternatives were apparently not considered.

- G) The Trinity Lake Houseboat Owners Association has to finance lake water calcium tests to prevent the implementation of a Quagga and Zebra mussel program. Tests show that such programs are unwarranted on the reservoir.

**Other Requested Changes**

- A) Define a new "mean high water level" for recreational access and marina projects that reflects the reality of reservoir water management
- B) Use a combination of ramp extensions, auxiliary ramps, and dredging to modify KOA's ramp, Trinity Center ramp, Fairview ramp, and Cedar Stock ramp to allow recreational access to the end of the tourist season (Memorial Day to Labor Day) during most dry to extreme wet water years.

Dredging is common on reservoirs and in the San Francisco Bay and Delta for marina access:

- 1) The new Alviso boat ramp in San Jose reopened June 5 on SF Bay requiring the dredging of the 4 mile Alviso Slough
- 2) San Leandro Marina channel is 2.5 miles and dredged to maintain marina access
- 3) Dredging is done at Keswick Reservoir boat ramp (Spring 2010)

Trinity Reservoir is much less environmentally sensitive than the Bay or Delta, so such dredging projects should not be impossible.

C) Improve recreation management

- 1) Shift USBR reservoir management to a partner/partnership structure that promotes and improves the reservoir for recreation and economic benefit.

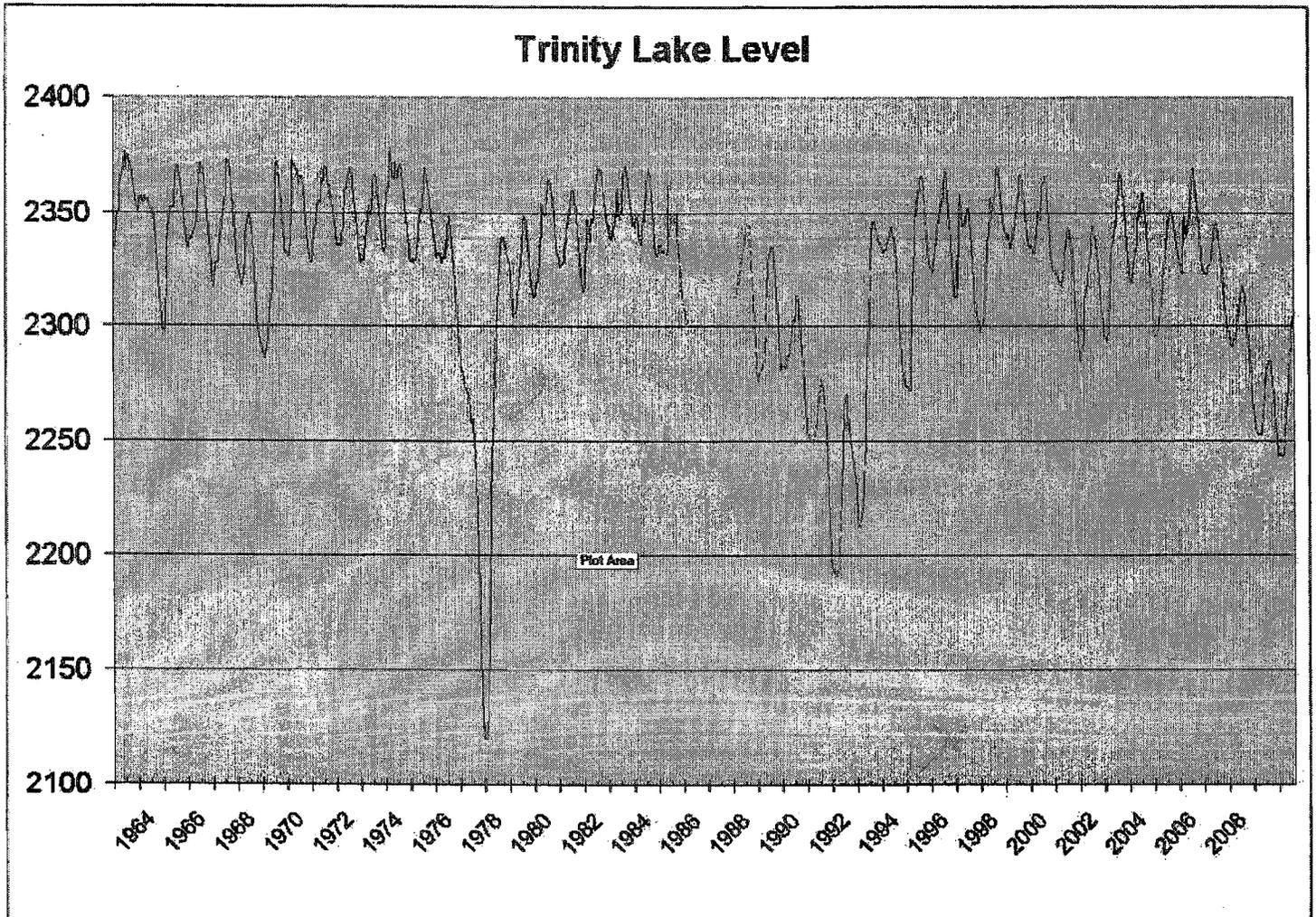
The Trinity Lake Revitalization Alliance highly recommends a co-management partnership between the USFS and Trinity County similar to Keswick Reservoir (BLM and Shasta County)

- 2) Update the Master Interagency Agreement between the USBR and USFS to reflect public input and the new water level realities
- 3) Develop a legislative, project-specific recreation development plan for Trinity Reservoir, similar to the other USBR plans that were implemented after the reservoirs were constructed:
  - Recreation Development, Sanford Reservoir Act of 1964, Public Law 88-536, 78 Stat. 744
  - Reclamation Development Act of 1974, Public Law 93-493, 88 Stat. 1486, Title VI for Lake Berryessa

- D) Help improve fishing opportunities in the reservoir. Early river releases seem to have in impact on small mouth bass.

- E) Implement a reservoir drought recovery plan

Figure 1 -- Historic Trinity Reservoir Water Levels (based on CDEC)



Corresponding acre-feet:

- 2,370' (full lake) 2,447,700 af
- 2,338' (Stuart Fork ramp) 1,957,780 af
- 2,324' (Clark Springs ramp) 1,765,410 af
- 2,323' (Bowerman - Alpine View ramp) 1,751,280 af
- 2,313' (Fairview ramp, 2,321 is safe launch line) 1,621,240 af
- 2,295' (Trinity Center ramp) 1,465,500 af
- 2,242.8' (low water mark Dec 2009) 894,338 af
- 2,230' (Cedar Stock ramp, not usable below 2308') 794,700 af
- 2,170' (Minersville ramp) 424,340 af
- 2,120' (lowest lake level on record) 222,350 af

Figure 2 -- USBR 2010 Trinity Lake Elevation Predictions

