

The story of the west side of the Central Valley has always been about water. In this dry land the native people built their village near an ancient aguaje (water hole) on San Luis Creek, and the Pacheco family used that scarce resource for their cattle. Imagine their surprise if they could see their valley brimming with fresh water behind the massive dam.

Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

GRAY DAVIS
Governor

MARY D. NICHOLS
Secretary for Resources

RUTH COLEMAN
Acting Director, California State Parks



California State Parks does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at the phone number below. To receive this publication in an alternate format, write to the Communications Office at the following address.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS For information call:
800-777-0369
P. O. Box 942896 916-653-6995, outside the U.S.
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001 711, TTY relay service

www.parks.ca.gov

**San Luis Reservoir
State Recreation Area
31426 Gonzaga Road
Gustine, CA 95322-9737
(209) 826-1197**

San Luis Reservoir

State Recreation Area



Nestled in the western San Joaquin Valley

near historic Pacheco Pass, San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area is a popular summer destination for anyone seeking the perfect place to cool off. Following the refreshing winter rains, acres of wildflowers brighten up and decorate the grassy hills at the reservoir. The grasses that blanket these oak-studded hills undergo a short cycle of spring green, followed by a longer period of golden brown.

Summer temperatures in this part of the valley range from the mid-90s to an occasional 100 degrees. Generally, evenings are cool and pleasant. Annual rainfall, between November and April, averages eight to nine inches. Winter temperatures seldom reach freezing, but heavy fogs are common.

PARK HISTORY

For thousands of years, the southern half of California's Central Valley was home to three distinct Yokuts groups—the Southern, the Foothill and the Northern Valley Yokuts. The area that is now San Luis Reservoir was a borderland between the Northern Yokuts people and the Mutsun branch of the Ohlone tribe, whose territory extended to the coast. They lived on salmon and other fish, waterfowl,

large game such as pronghorn antelope and tule elk, seeds, roots of the cattails that grew in the marshes, and a plentiful supply of acorns from groves of valley oaks.



Man and his best friend enjoy a quiet afternoon on the reservoir.

Prior to the late 1700s and early 1800s, only the native people lived in this area. In 1805 Spanish Army Lieutenant Gabriel Moraga and his troops—reportedly the first non-natives to enter this area—came in search of potential mission sites. Regardless of their tribal affiliations, the Yokuts were forcibly brought into the mission system, resulting in drastic changes in their lives. During the early part of the 1800s, Indian resistance to the missions took the form of cattle raids, with Pacheco Pass an escape route into the relative safety of the Central Valley. In 1843 the Mexican government granted El Rancho San Luis Gonzaga—a vast expanse of grasslands that included the present reservoir area—to Juan Perez Pacheco. His men built a small adobe fortress to protect their lands from cattle raiders at the site of an ancient water hole on San Luis Creek.

In 1827 fur trapper Jedediah Smith traveled through the valley, and soon others were trapping in the flourishing streams. Eventually the newcomers depleted the native people's resources, took over their lands, and introduced diseases to which they had no immunity. With the 1848 gold discovery,

California drew scores of thousands who wanted to get rich quickly. The gold rush was the final blow to Indian resistance in the valley. Some of the miners, tired of heavy labor for small reward, settled down and became farmers. However, while the east side of the Central Valley was ideal for farming, the west side was extremely dry.

AGRICULTURE IN THE VALLEY

In the early years after the gold rush, agriculture on the dry side of the valley was limited to sheep and cattle grazing, and to what old-timers called “sky farming.” This precarious dry-land wheat farming depended entirely on the winter rainfall. In 1871 San Joaquin and Kings River Canal Company built an irrigation canal from the Mendota Dam to Los Baños Creek that eventually grew to 180 miles in length. By the mid-1880s, wheat had reached a harvest peak of nearly 18 million bushels. The 1890s brought steam-powered harvesters. Farmers here shipped their wheat to Stockton and San Francisco by river steamers until the railroad came to the west side in 1888. With irrigation came alfalfa and dairying, and a variety of fruit and row crops. Canal building, irrigation and flood control projects proliferated in the Central Valley in the 1900s, culminating in the State Water Project, which included construction of the San Luis Reservoir.

Harvest Brodiaea



THE RESERVOIR

The reservoir stores runoff water from the Delta for the federal Central Valley Project and the California State Water Project. The water arrives through the California Aqueduct and the Delta-Mendota Canal, pumped from the O'Neill Forebay into the main reservoir during winter and spring. The Los Baños Creek Reservoir prevents storm runoff from flooding the canals.

NATURAL HISTORY

Prior to European settlement, the valley had a diverse and productive natural environment. Once a maze of permanent and seasonal wetlands, its creeks, rivers, vernal pools, tule marshes and sloughs supported large populations of migratory birds, fish and other wildlife. Extensive prairie grasslands and riparian habitat sheltered elk, mule deer, California ground squirrels and kangaroo rats. By the early-to mid-1920s, the California grizzly bear and the San Joaquin Valley pronghorn antelope had been hunted to extinction, and there were 72 tule elk left in California. In the early 1930s, the state and federal governments began to establish reserves and wildlife management areas for the protection of



The San Luis Reservoir stores water for both state and federal water projects.

species under threat of extinction.

Today, though agriculture and other development have significantly changed these habitats, jackrabbits, cottontails, ground squirrels, raccoons, opossums, skunks, gray foxes, coyotes, bobcats, feral pigs, a variety of snakes (including rattlesnakes) and deer are common here. Watch for over-wintering golden eagles, as well as hawks, owls, white-tailed kites and the occasional bald eagle. Migratory waterfowl include geese and several species of ducks.

RECREATION

Camping and Picnicking—Reservations are recommended for developed campsites at Basalt and San Luis Creek Campgrounds on spring and summer weekends and holidays. Call (800) 444-7275. Two other campgrounds are available first come, first served.

- **Basalt Campground**—Each of these 79 non-hookup sites among eucalyptus and pine trees has a table, a cupboard and a fire ring with a barbecue grill. Some sites can accommodate trailers and motor homes up to 30 feet. Water and restrooms with pay showers are nearby.
- **San Luis Creek Area Campground**—The 53 family sites have electric and water hookups, and accommodate motor homes and trailers up to 30 feet. A sanitation station is nearby. To reserve the San Luis Creek Group Camp (for up to 90 people) call (800) 444-7275. The shaded picnic areas have sandy beaches. Reserve group picnic sites by calling (209) 826-

1197 Monday through Friday.

- **Medeiros Campground**—This undeveloped campground on the south shore of O'Neill Forebay accommodates up to 500 campers. Drinking water and chemical toilets are nearby.
- **Los Baños Creek Campground**—Fourteen undeveloped sites have shade ramadas, tables and barbecue grills, with drinking water and chemical toilets nearby. A primitive horse campground has chemical toilets. Water for riders is available at the boat ramp water tank. There is no water on site.

Swimming—On the west shore of O'Neill Forebay, San Luis Creek's North Beach area is roped off for swimming, with lifeguard service available from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Swimming is not restricted to specific areas elsewhere at the park, but swimmers should be cautious about the boats present on the water. Diving is not allowed.



Hikers on the popular "Path of the Padres" along Los Baños Creek

Fishing

• San Luis Reservoir/ O'Neill Forebay—

Fishing experts suggest trolling with lures from fall through early spring, and with anchovies or shad and live minnows the rest of the year. Largemouth black bass, striped bass, crappies, bluegill, shad, perch and occasional salmon and sturgeon are caught here. Overnight fishing is permitted in some parts of the San Luis Creek area (no camping). In the Medeiros area only registered campers may fish all night. Call for details.

• **Los Baños Creek Reservoir**—Crappies, bluegill, largemouth bass, catfish and planted trout are caught in this reservoir.

Trails—Basalt Campground Trail begins to the right off the campground road. The six-mile round trip Lone Oak Trail begins at the parking lot by the boat ramp and goes uphill above the lake, past Quien Sabe Point and around the side of Lone Oak Bay.

Boating and Jet skiing—Boats are required to remain at least 500' away from the dams. All watercraft must carry one life jacket for each passenger. Sudden strong winds are an important factor at San Luis Reservoir; watch for the wind warning lights.

• **San Luis Reservoir**—Boats are allowed on the water from sunrise until sunset. Wind warning lights are located at the Romero Visitor Center, Quien Sabe Point and the Basalt entrance.



• **O'Neill Forebay**—Boats are allowed on the water from sunrise until sunset. The strictly enforced boating pattern here is counter-clockwise. Boaters may beach their boats at South Beach. Strong spring and summer west winds make O'Neill Forebay an excellent spot for board sailing. Wind warning lights are located at Medeiros and above the South Beach picnic area of San Luis Creek.

• **Los Baños Creek Reservoir**—Boats are allowed on the water from sunrise until sunset. The maximum speed anywhere on this reservoir is five miles per hour.

Bicycling—Part of the California Aqueduct Bikeway begins at San Luis Creek and goes 70 miles north to the Bethany Reservoir State Recreation Area. Rest stops are ten miles apart, and bicyclists can camp overnight in the Bethany Reservoir picnic area. There is no piped water, but chemical toilets are available. Riders under 18 years old must wear bicycle helmets in all state parks.

Hunting—Federal and state game laws apply to seasonal hunting of migratory waterfowl. Hunting from one half hour before sunrise to sunset is allowed daily during hunting season only on certain parts of the Los Baños Creek Reservoir, the San Luis Reservoir, and the O'Neill Forebay. It is not permitted within 300 feet of campgrounds, picnic areas, boat ramp areas, or dam and water structures. Handguns and rifles are not permitted for waterfowl hunting.

EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

- On summer weekends park staff often lead interpretive programs at the campfire center at the Basalt Campground.
- Call for information on scheduled campfire programs, guided walks, Junior Ranger programs and special events.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

- Campsites, picnic tables and restrooms at the Basalt Campground
- Restroom at the Basalt boat launch
- Romero Visitor Center
- Campsites and vault toilets at the San Luis Creek Campground
- Restrooms and picnic sites at the North Beach day-use area
- Fishing Access Trail at San Luis Creek Campground

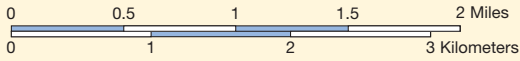
Accessibility is continually improving. Call the park for the latest information.





























Kids' Fishing Day on the O'Neill Forebay

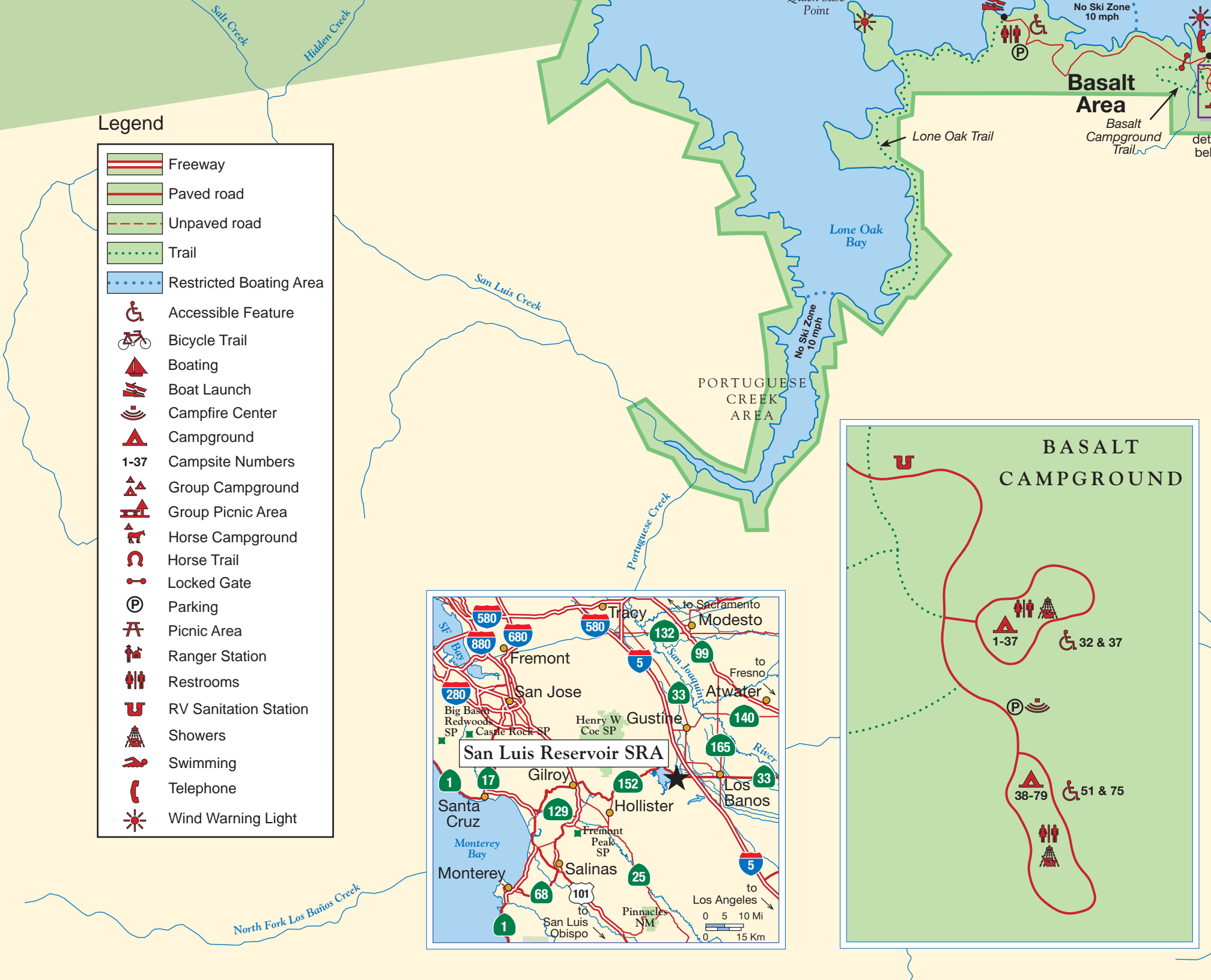
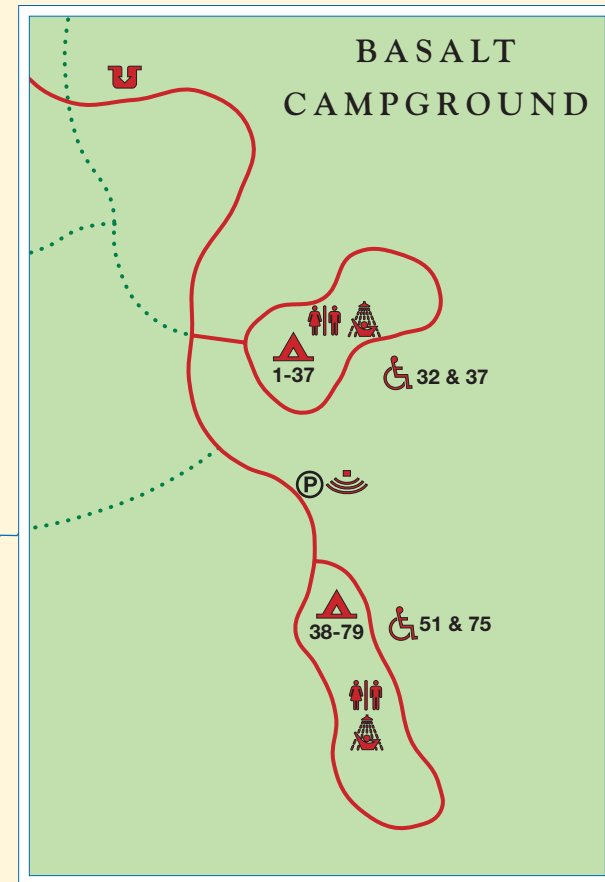
San Luis Reservoir

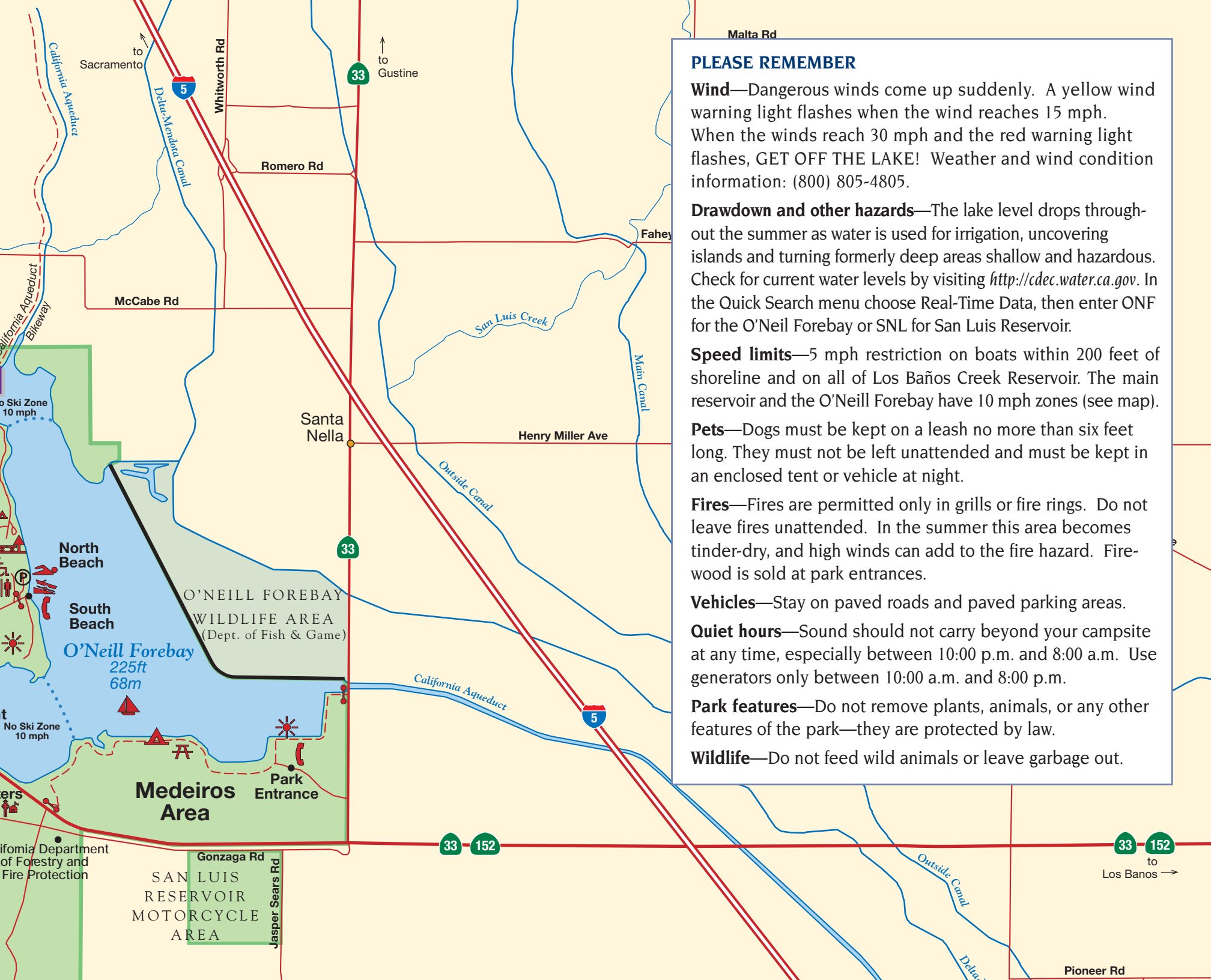
State Recreation Area



Legend

-  Freeway
-  Paved road
-  Unpaved road
-  Trail
-  Restricted Boating Area
-  Accessible Feature
-  Bicycle Trail
-  Boating
-  Boat Launch
-  Campfire Center
-  Campground
-  Campsite Numbers
-  Group Campground
-  Group Picnic Area
-  Horse Campground
-  Horse Trail
-  Locked Gate
-  Parking
-  Picnic Area
-  Ranger Station
-  Restrooms
-  RV Sanitation Station
-  Showers
-  Swimming
-  Telephone
-  Wind Warning Light





PLEASE REMEMBER

Wind—Dangerous winds come up suddenly. A yellow wind warning light flashes when the wind reaches 15 mph. When the winds reach 30 mph and the red warning light flashes, GET OFF THE LAKE! Weather and wind condition information: (800) 805-4805.

Drawdown and other hazards—The lake level drops throughout the summer as water is used for irrigation, uncovering islands and turning formerly deep areas shallow and hazardous. Check for current water levels by visiting <http://cdec.water.ca.gov>. In the Quick Search menu choose Real-Time Data, then enter ONF for the O'Neil Forebay or SNL for San Luis Reservoir.

Speed limits—5 mph restriction on boats within 200 feet of shoreline and on all of Los Baños Creek Reservoir. The main reservoir and the O'Neill Forebay have 10 mph zones (see map).

Pets—Dogs must be kept on a leash no more than six feet long. They must not be left unattended and must be kept in an enclosed tent or vehicle at night.

Fires—Fires are permitted only in grills or fire rings. Do not leave fires unattended. In the summer this area becomes tinder-dry, and high winds can add to the fire hazard. Firewood is sold at park entrances.

Vehicles—Stay on paved roads and paved parking areas.

Quiet hours—Sound should not carry beyond your campsite at any time, especially between 10:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. Use generators only between 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

Park features—Do not remove plants, animals, or any other features of the park—they are protected by law.

Wildlife—Do not feed wild animals or leave garbage out.

