San Diego County
Local Agency Formation Commission
Regional Service Planning | Subdivision of the State of California

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AGENDA REPORT
Business | Discussion

December 2, 2024

TO: Commissioners

FROM: Priscilla Mumpower, Assistant Executive Officer
Joelle Burila, Analyst I

SUBJECT: **Update on Informational Report | Public Recreation at City Owned Reservoirs and Enhancement Opportunities**

SUMMARY

The San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) will receive an update on an informational report on public recreational services at City of San Diego-owned reservoirs in unincorporated San Diego County. The update is in memorandum form and ties to a previously approved workplan project in 2023-2024 to assess public amenities at the City's seven unincorporated reservoirs and explore enhancement options – including forming a special district – to expand accessibility. The project received support from both the County of San Diego and Mayor's Office but unintentionally stalled at LAFCO and consequently left off the current workplan. This update presents the baseline information collected to date with preliminary observations. Should the Commission's discussion support continuing the project, staff will present an amendment at the next meeting.

BACKGROUND

Adopted FY2024 and FY2025 Workplans | Placement and Later Removal of Informational Report on City Owned Reservoirs

San Diego LAFCO's 2023-2024 workplan was adopted at a noticed public hearing in May 2023 outlining 30 specific projects in priority order. One of these projects involved the preparation

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of an informational report on public recreation services at City of San Diego-owned reservoirs in unincorporated San Diego County. The project responded to public interest to assess organizational opportunities – including a special district model – to enhance water-based recreational amenities at the City's seven reservoir sites for all county residents. The project's inclusion in the workplan was accompanied by written support from both the County of San Diego (Supervisors Anderson and Desmond) and City of San Diego (Mayor Gloria's Office). Work on the project, however and for a variety of reasons, stalled and was no longer top of mind towards the end of the fiscal year. Consequently, the project was not retained by the Commission in adopting a new workplan beginning in 2024-2025.

DISCUSSION

This item serves as an update to San Diego LAFCO on an informational report assessing public amenities and related opportunities at the City of San Diego's seven unincorporated reservoirs and related enhancement options consistent with the prior fiscal year workplan. The belated update is provided in the attached memorandum and follows new LAFCO staff reviewing the project file and performing additional analysis necessary to provide a relatively complete baseline accounting of existing conditions along with providing preliminary observations. This includes addressing amenities, fees, and budgets at all seven City-owned reservoirs in the unincorporated area as applicable.

ANALYSIS

See attachment memorandum.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is presented to San Diego LAFCO for information and discussion only – including whether the Commission supports continuing the analysis via a future workplan amendment.

ALTERNATIVES FOR ACTION

None.

(over)

PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERATION

This item has been placed on San Diego LAFCO's agenda for information and discussion as part of the business calendar. The following procedures apply.

1) Receive verbal report from staff unless waived.
2) Initial questions or request for clarifications.
3) Discuss item and provide feedback as requested.

On behalf of staff,

Joelle Burila
Analyst I

Attachment: Memorandum

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MEMORANDUM

November 25, 2024

TO: Priscilla Mumpower, Assistant Executive Officer

FROM: Joelle Burila, Analyst I

SUBJECT: Public Recreation at City-Owned Reservoirs and Opportunities

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As requested, this memorandum represents the information collected to date involving the prior fiscal year's workplan project to assess public recreational services at City of San Diego-owned reservoirs in the unincorporated area and related enhancement opportunities. The memorandum expands on information left in the project file as well as performing basic outreach as detailed. The collective aim of the memorandum is to provide a relatively complete accounting of current reservoir conditions with respect to public amenities, concession fees, and funding and in doing so serve as a pivot point should the Commission want to continue the project. This includes advancing the project to identify and evaluate governance options of these reservoir sites under a City-County special district.

Overview | City of San Diego Reservoirs

The San Diego region has a total of 24 reservoirs with 10 being owned by the City of San Diego. These 10 City-owned reservoirs are Barrett, El Capitan, Hodges, Lower Otay, Miramar, Morena, Murray, San Vicente, Sutherland, and Upper Otay. Seven of these 10 City-owned reservoirs – Barrett, El Capitan, Lower Otay, Morena, San Vincente, Sutherland, Upper Otay – are located in unincorporated areas of San Diego County and are the focus of the proceeding discussion. These reservoirs are primarily managed by the City of San Diego Public Utilities Department, with the exception of Lake Morena, which is managed by the County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation. Additional details on Lake Morena are footnoted.[1]

[1] The City of San Diego sold Morena Reservoir and 3,250 surrounding acres to the County in 1970. Terms includes a 25-year right to repurchase and if exercised a requirement to lease the land to the County for 50 years. In 1985, the City repurchased and adopted a resolution to lease the land to the County for public recreation consistent with the original terms. In 1991, a 99-year lease was executed between the City and County for Morena Reservoir.

Baseline | Public Recreation Offerings

The City of San Diego's Public Utilities Department (PUD) is tasked with overseeing the operations of the reservoirs listed in the preceding section and primarily serve as storage for local drinking water supplies. The PUD, as permitted by the State Water Resources Control Board Division of Drinking Water, also offer public recreational activities – including shore fishing, kayak rentals, and private motorboats, with some reservoirs also offering more specialized activities like standup paddleboarding, water skiing, and waterfowl hunting during certain seasons.[2] Lake Morena is the only City-owned reservoir that provides camping options, allowing 24/7 camping access.

While most reservoirs have regular operating hours from sunrise to sunset, some have seasonal or scheduled closures, with specific days closed each month. Sutherland Reservoir is closed six months a year while the remaining reservoirs are open year-round, though several (Barrett, El Capitan, Lower Otay, San Vicente, and Sutherland) close once a month. Lake Morena stands out as the only reservoir open daily with no monthly closures.

Attachment A provides a table with all 10 reservoirs with respect to location, year built, recreational offerings, hours of operation, and concessionaire. A map showing the location of each reservoir is provided as Attachment B.

Baseline | Reservoir Budgets and Funding

The City of San Diego funds the operation and maintenance of its reservoirs through the General Fund (Water Production). The total budgeted expenses for nine of the reservoirs – excluding Lake Morena – in FY 2024 is $3.0 million. Lake Morena is operated and maintained by the County of San Diego through its Department of Parks and Recreation. Lake Morena's annual operating budget is $0.986 million, covering staffing, services, and supplies needed to maintain the site and its recreational offerings.

LAFCO staff worked the County of San Diego Assessor's office to evaluate the Tax Rate Areas (TRAs) for the seven reservoirs covered in this report.[3] The total assessed valuation of TRAs overlapping parcels for all the reservoirs amounts to $4.9 million. This results in approximately $0.049 million in property tax revenue, with $0.010 million allocated to various County funds including the General Fund, Library, and several County Service Area's.[4]

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[2] The City's domestic water supply permit was issued in March 1968 by the State Water Resources Control Board and has been amended to allow various reservoir activities consistent with their standards and regulations.

[3] TRAs are designated geographic areas used by local governments to levy property taxes. Each TRA corresponds to a specific area where tax rates are applied to properties, and the collected revenue is allocated to various local funds, such as general government services, libraries, fire protection, and other district services.

[4] The $0.010 million allocated to the County is distributed to the following funds and districts: County General Fund, County Library, San Diego County Street Lighting District, San Diego County Fire Protection District, San Diego County Flood Control District, County Service Area No. 135 Regional Communications, County Service Area No. 83 (San Dieguito Local Parks), and County Service Area No. 17 (San Dieguito Ambulance).

Baseline | Concessionaire Fees

Four of the seven reservoirs – Barrett, El Capitan, Lower Otay and San Vincente – are managed under concessionaire agreements with private companies, including Advenco, LLC and Ticketmaster, while concessions at Lake Morena are operated by the County of San Diego. [5] The pricing structure and amenities offered vary by concessionaire. Five of the reservoirs provide relatively consistent offerings – specifically boat rental and fishing reservations – and are compared in terms of pricing within Attachment C. Key observations follow.

- Lake Morena consistently offers lower prices for both boat fees rentals and fishing reservations when compared to Lake Barrett (Ticketmaster) and the Advenco LLC-managed reservoirs (El Capitan, Lower Otay, and San Vicente). The prices at Advenco-managed reservoirs generally offer lower fees than Lake Barrett but are still come in higher than at Lake Morena.

- Lake Barrett's motorboat rental fees are significantly higher, when compared to Lake Morena, with increases of up to 986% on weekdays and 407% on weekends or holidays for seniors or disabled visitors. Fishing reservation fees at Lake Barrett are also significantly higher – 500% higher for adults and 1400% higher for juniors – on weekdays. These comparisons don't account for the additional costs tied to extra charges imposed by Ticketmaster.

- Lake Morena's motorboat rental fees are also significantly lower than the flat rates at the Advenco-managed reservoirs; with increases of up to 471% on weekdays and 166% lower on weekends or holidays when visiting the latter of the two.

Overall, Lake Morena is the more cost-effective choice for residents when comparing boat rental and fishing reservation fees and offering significant savings when compared to the higher rates at Lake Barrett and the relatively higher rates at Advenco-managed reservoirs. This highlights the difference between publicly managed and privately managed concessions.

Baseline | Stakeholder Outreach

LAFCO staff engaged with various key stakeholders to gather information into the current operations of the reservoirs. Key stakeholders included – among others – the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors (BOS), County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), State Water Resources Control Board Division of Drinking Water (DDW), City of San Diego Public Utilities Department (PUD), City of San Diego Mayor's Office, and Friends of the

[5] Advenco, LLC is a subsidiary of ExplorUS which is a hospitality company managing more than 60 national and state parks throughout the United States.

San Diego Lakes. A key theme that emerged from these discussions was the interest in enhancing recreational amenities and access to the reservoirs.

Relatedly, a survey issued by the BOS District 2 office in June 2022 collected feedback from local constituents in the unincorporated areas. Results from the survey, highlighted three important considerations: (1) fishing, boating and camping were the most preferred activities at the reservoirs; (2) expanding hours and days of operation, as well as facility improvements (i.e., bathrooms, picnic facilities, playgrounds, and other amenities) were top priorities for respondents; and 3) more than one-half of the surveyors answered yes in support of increased user fees to fund various reservoir improvements.

Key Observations

Recreational Activities & Access

The City of San Diego owns and manages 10 reservoirs, with seven – Barrett, El Capitan, Lower Otay, Morena, San Vincente, Sutherland, Upper Otay – located in unincorporated areas of San Diego County. Most of these reservoirs offer a variety of recreational activities, including fishing, kayaking, paddleboarding, and water skiing. Most reservoirs operate from sunrise to sunset, with a few closing monthly or seasonally; Lake Morena stands out as the only City-owned reservoir open daily with no monthly closures.

Concessionaire Agreements

Four of the seven reservoirs are managed under private concessionaire agreements – Ticketmaster and Advenco, LLC – which influence the pricing structure and amenities offered, resulting in varying costs for services like boat rentals and fishing reservations.

Cost Differences in Concessions

Lake Morena is significantly more affordable for boat rentals and fishing reservations compared to other reservoirs, and specifically those managed by private concessionaires (e.g., Lake Barrett via Ticketmaster and Advenco-managed reservoirs). For example, motorboat rental fees at Lake Barrett can be up to 986% higher than at Lake Morena for seniors or disabled visitors.

Budget and Funding

The City of San Diego Public Utilities Department funds the operation and maintenance of its reservoirs primarily through the General Fund (Water Production), with a total of $3.0 million allocated for operating nine reservoirs in FY 2024. In contrast, Lake Morena is funded by the County of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department's General Purpose Fund, with an operating budget of $0.986 million.

Stakeholder Engagement & Community Feedback

Stakeholder discussions highlight community support for enhancing recreational amenities and access to the reservoirs and in particular expanding recreational activities, improving facilities, and increasing operating hours.

Respectfully,

Joelle Burila

Joelle Burila
Analyst I

Attachments:

A) Summary Table of City of San Diego-owned Reservoirs
B) Map of City of San Diego-owned Reservoirs in San Diego County
C) Concessionaire Fee Comparison

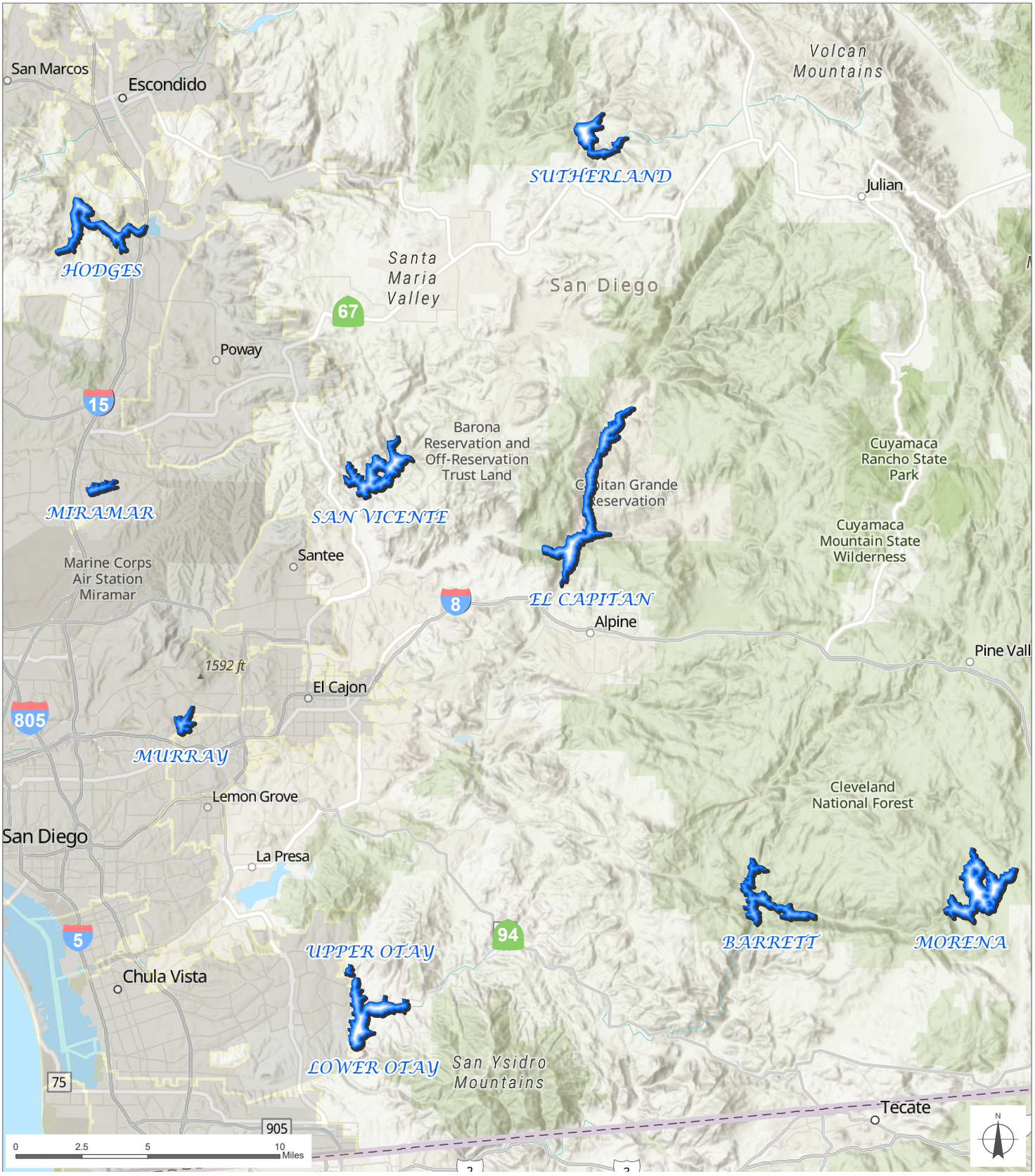
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Reservoir	Location	Built	Storage Capacity (AF)[1]	Depth	Recreation/Hunting	Fishing & Boating	Hours of Operation[2]	Concessionaire
Barrett[3]	Jamul	1922	34,806 acre-ft	161 ft	Picnicking and walking; Waterfowl Season – October-January	Shore fishing, float tubes, kayaks, and rental boats	Open Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays – Entry and departure at various times; Closed the first Wednesday of each month; Fishing Season May-September	Ticketmaster
El Capitan	Lakeside	1935	112,807 acre-feet	197 ft	Picnicking, walking, jogging, biking, and special events,	Shore fishing, float tubes, kayaks, private motorboats & sailboats, and rental boats	Open Friday through Tuesday – 30 minutes before Sunrise to Sunset; Closed the first Friday of each month	Advenco, LLC
Hodges[4]	Escondido	1918	30,632 acre-feet	115 ft	Picnicking, walking, jogging, biking, and special events; Sailboarding, Standup Paddleboards	Shore fishing, float tubes, kayaks, private motorboats & sailboats, and rental boats	Open Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday – Sunrise to Sunset; Open February-October; Closed November-January	Advenco, LLC
Lower Otay	Chula Vista	1919	47,067 acre-feet	138 ft	Picnicking, walking, jogging, biking, and special events	Shore fishing, float tubes, kayaks, private motorboats & sailboats, and rental boats	Open Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday – Sunrise to Sunset; Closed the second Wednesday of each month	Advenco, LLC
Miramar[4]	San Diego	1960	6,682 acre-feet	115 ft	Picnicking, walking, jogging, biking, and special events	Shore fishing, float tubes, kayaks, private motorboats & sailboats, and rental boats	Open Daily – Sunrise to Sunset; Closed the first Tuesday of each month	Advenco, LLC
Morena	Campo	1912	50,694 acre-feet	157 ft	Camping, picnicking, walking, jogging, biking, and special events	Shore fishing, float tubes, kayaks, private motorboats & sailboats, and rental boats	Open Daily – 30 minutes before Sunrise to Sunset; Camping Hours 24/7; Fishing/Boating Hours slightly vary between April-Sept and Oct-March	County of San Diego
Murray[4]	La Mesa	1918	4,684 acre-feet	95 ft	Picnicking, walking, jogging, biking, and special events	Shore fishing, float tubes, kayaks, private motorboats, and rental boats	Open Daily – Sunrise to Sunset; Closed the second Tuesday of each month	Advenco, LLC

[1] AF = acre-foot; 1 acre-foot equals about 326,000 gallons or enough water to cover an acre of land, about the size of a football field, one foot deep.
[2] Subject to change depending on holiday schedule. Holiday schedules are posted on the City of San Diego Reservoir and Lakes webpages.
[3] Access to Barrett Reservoir is by reservation only.
[4] Reservoirs located in the City of San Diego jurisdiction.

San Vincente	Lakeside	1943	249,358 acre-feet	306 ft	Picnicking, walking, jogging, biking, and special events; Personal watercraft, ski boats, and towing activities (water skiing, wake boarding, and ride-on inflatable devices)	Shore fishing, float tubes, kayaks, private motorboats & sailboats, and rental boats	Open Monday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday – 30 minutes before Sunrise to Sunset; Summer and Winter schedule varies activities available; Closed the second Friday of each month	Advenco, LLC
Sutherland	Ramona	1954	29,508 acre-feet	145 ft	Picnicking, walking, jogging, biking, and special events; Turkey Season – March-May	Shore fishing, float tubes, kayaks, private motorboats & sailboats, and rental boats	Open Friday, Saturday and Sunday – Sunrise to Sunset; Closed the third Friday of each month; Closed September-February	City of San Diego
Upper Otay	Chula Vista	1959	Unknown	Unknown	Picnicking, walking, jogging, biking, and special events	Shore fishing and float tubes	Open Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday – Sunrise to Sunset; Closed the second Wednesday of each month; Pedestrian access is allowed on a year-round basis; Gates to vehicles open on a seasonable schedule from February-October	City of San Diego

Reservoirs Owned by the City of San Diego



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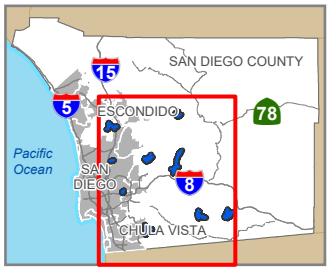
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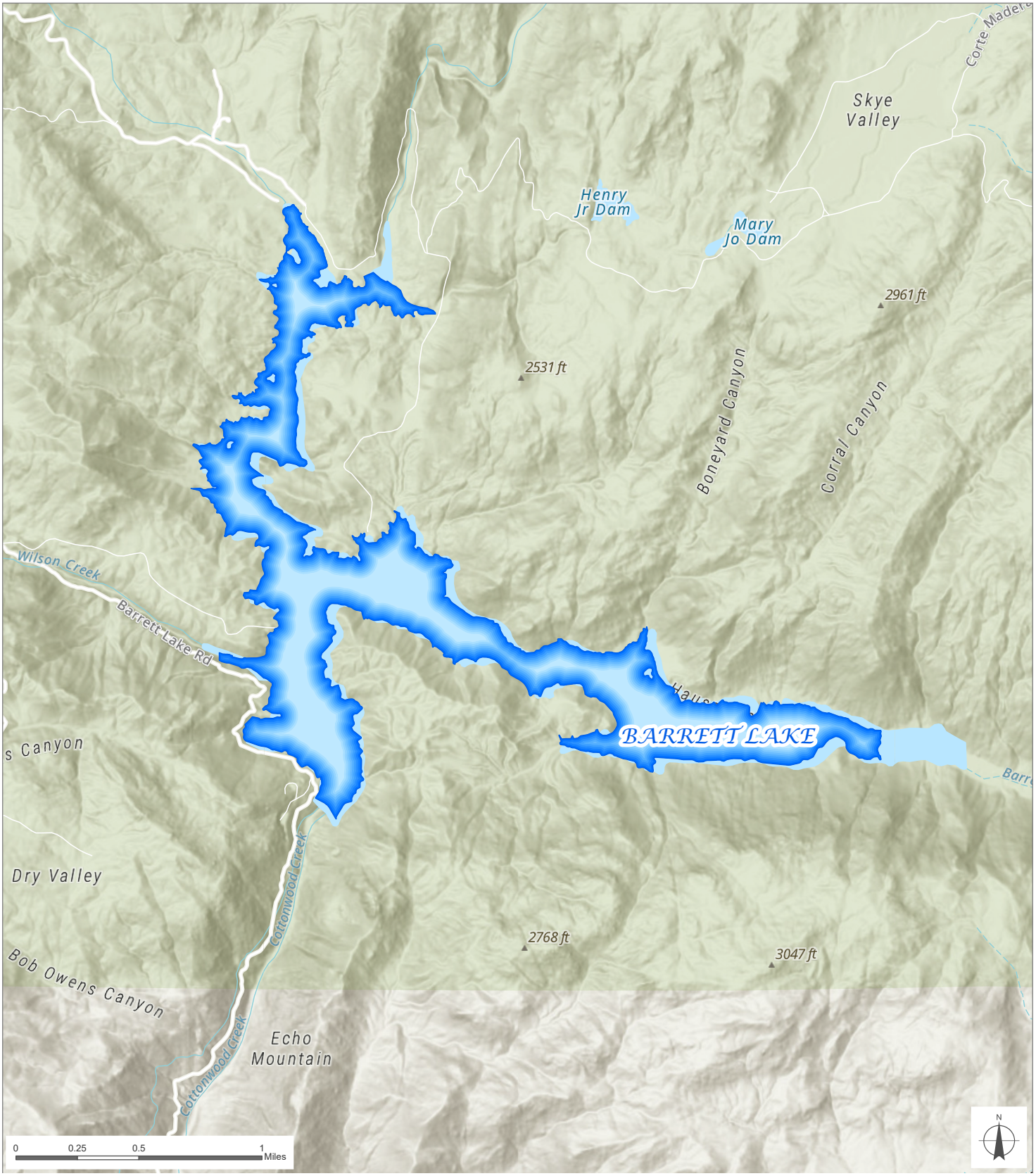
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Reservoir Storage Capacity (acre foot)

Barrett.....34,806	Murray.....4,684
El Capitan.....112,807	Lower Otay.....47,067
Hodges.....30,632	Upper Otay.....N/A
Miramar.....6,682	San Vicente...249,358
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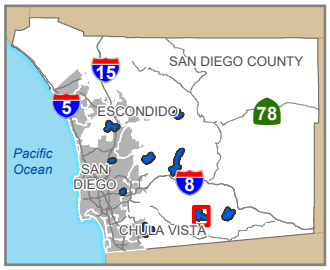
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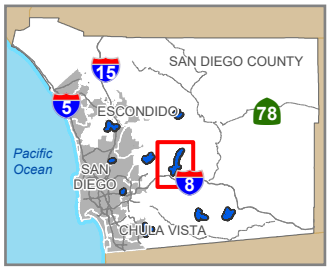
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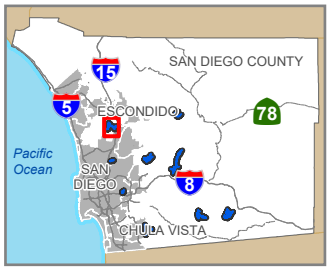
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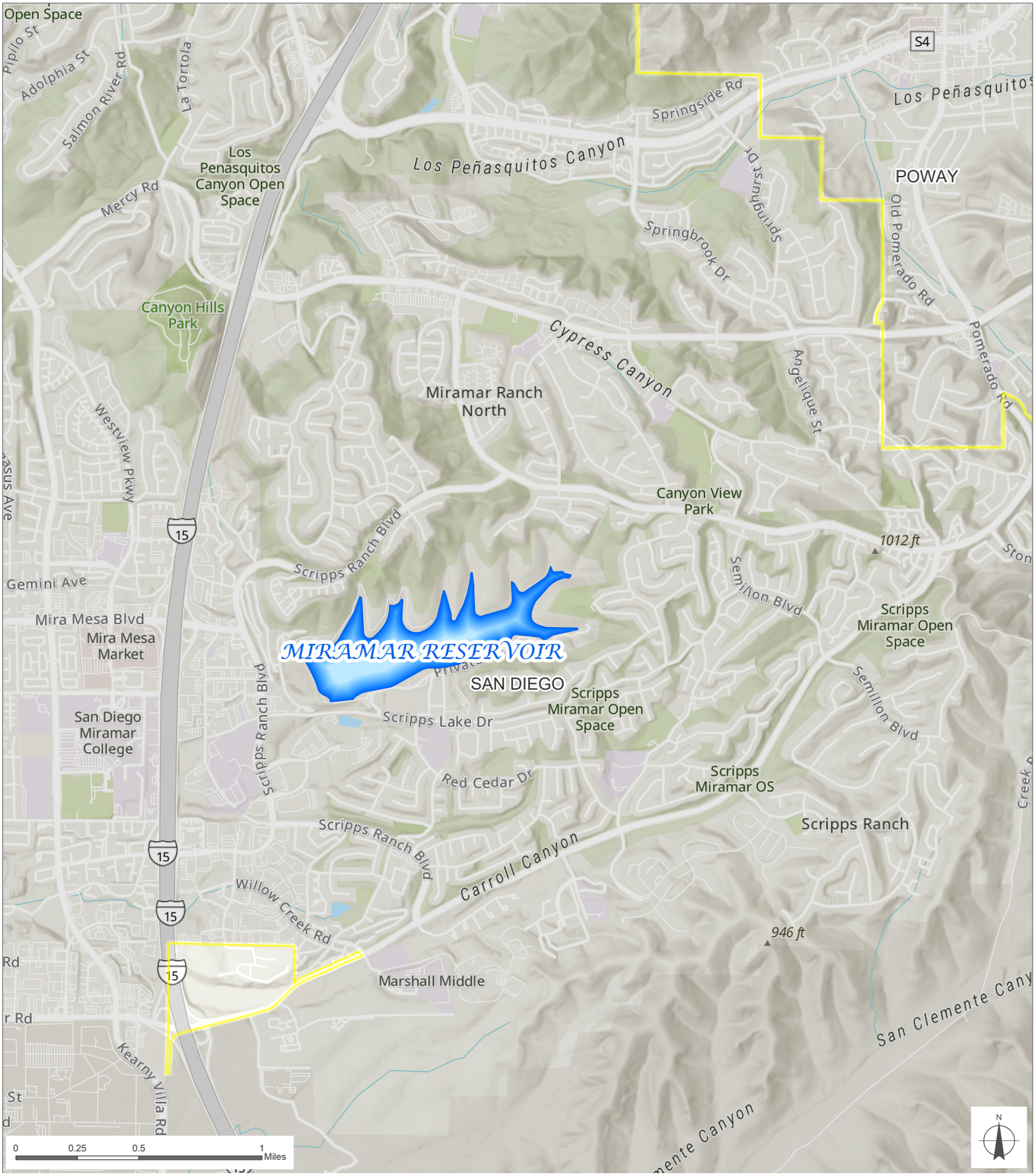
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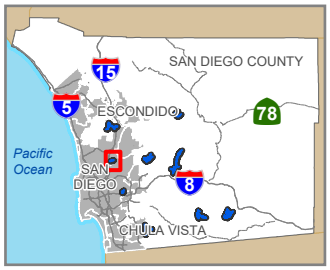
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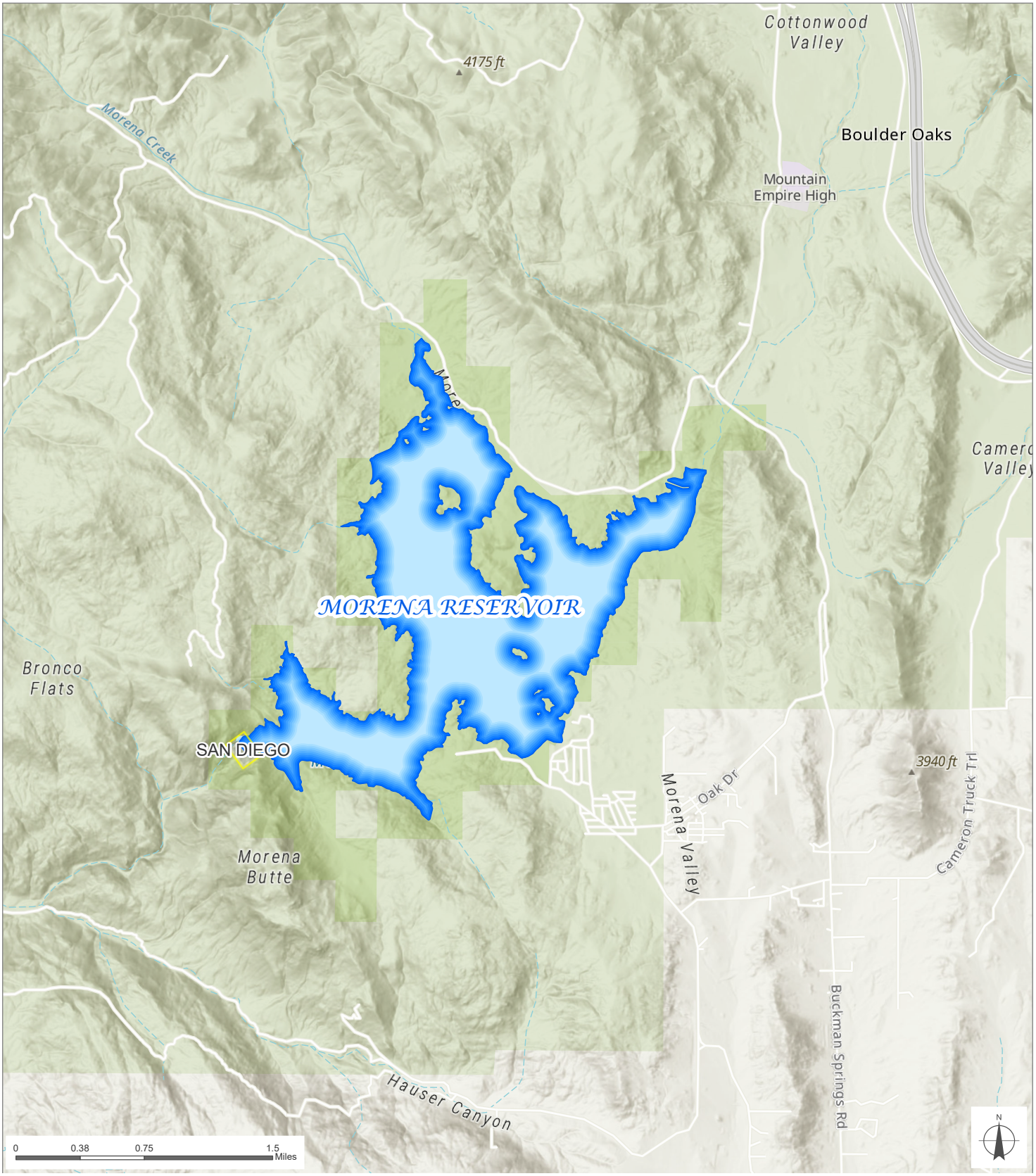
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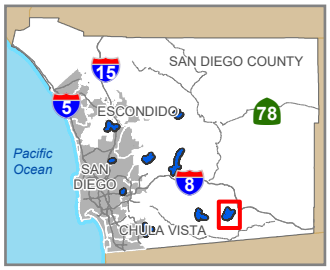
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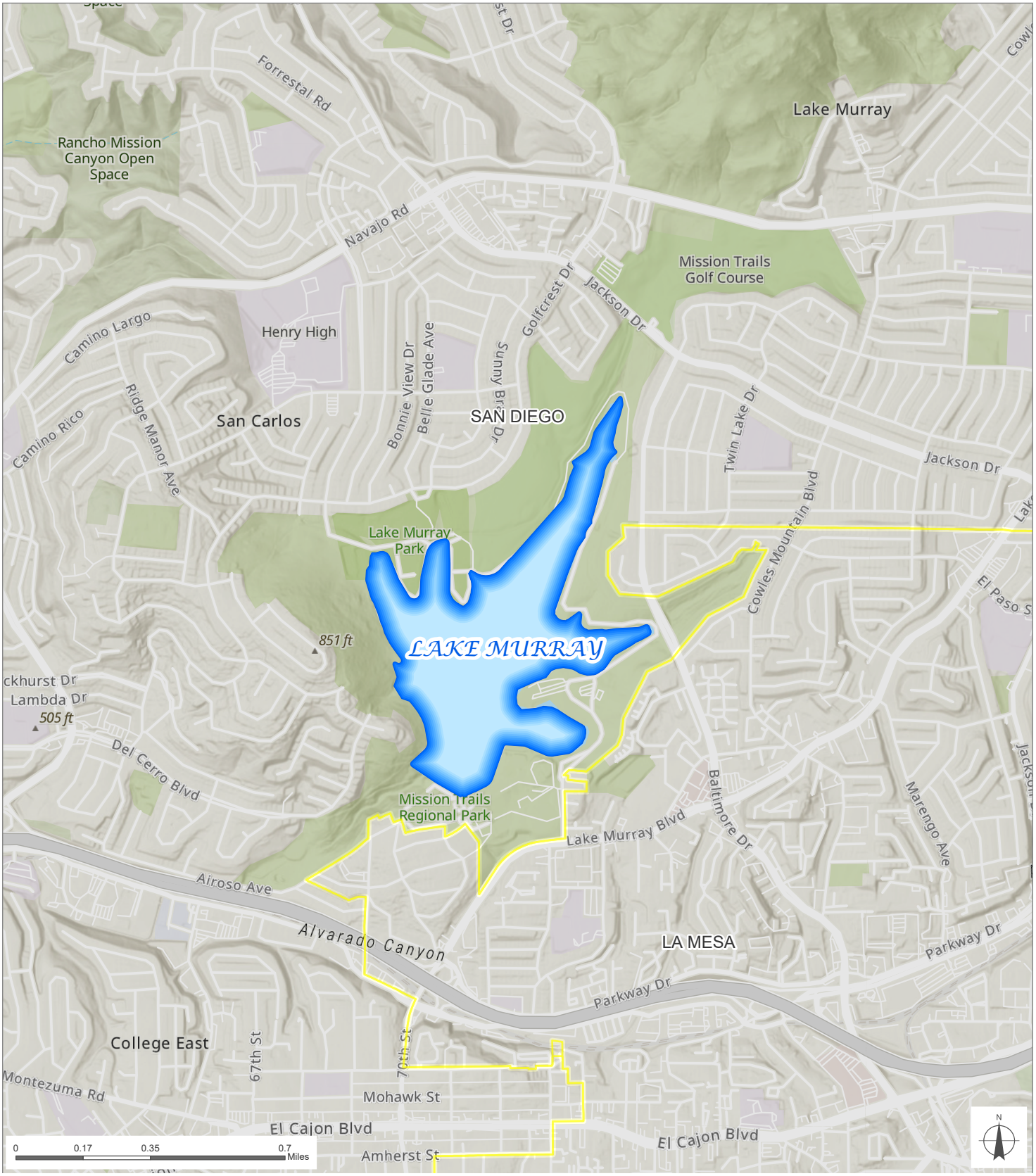
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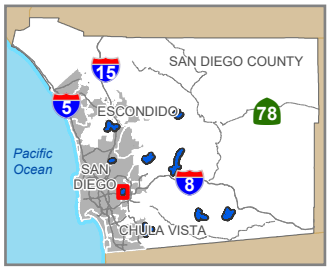
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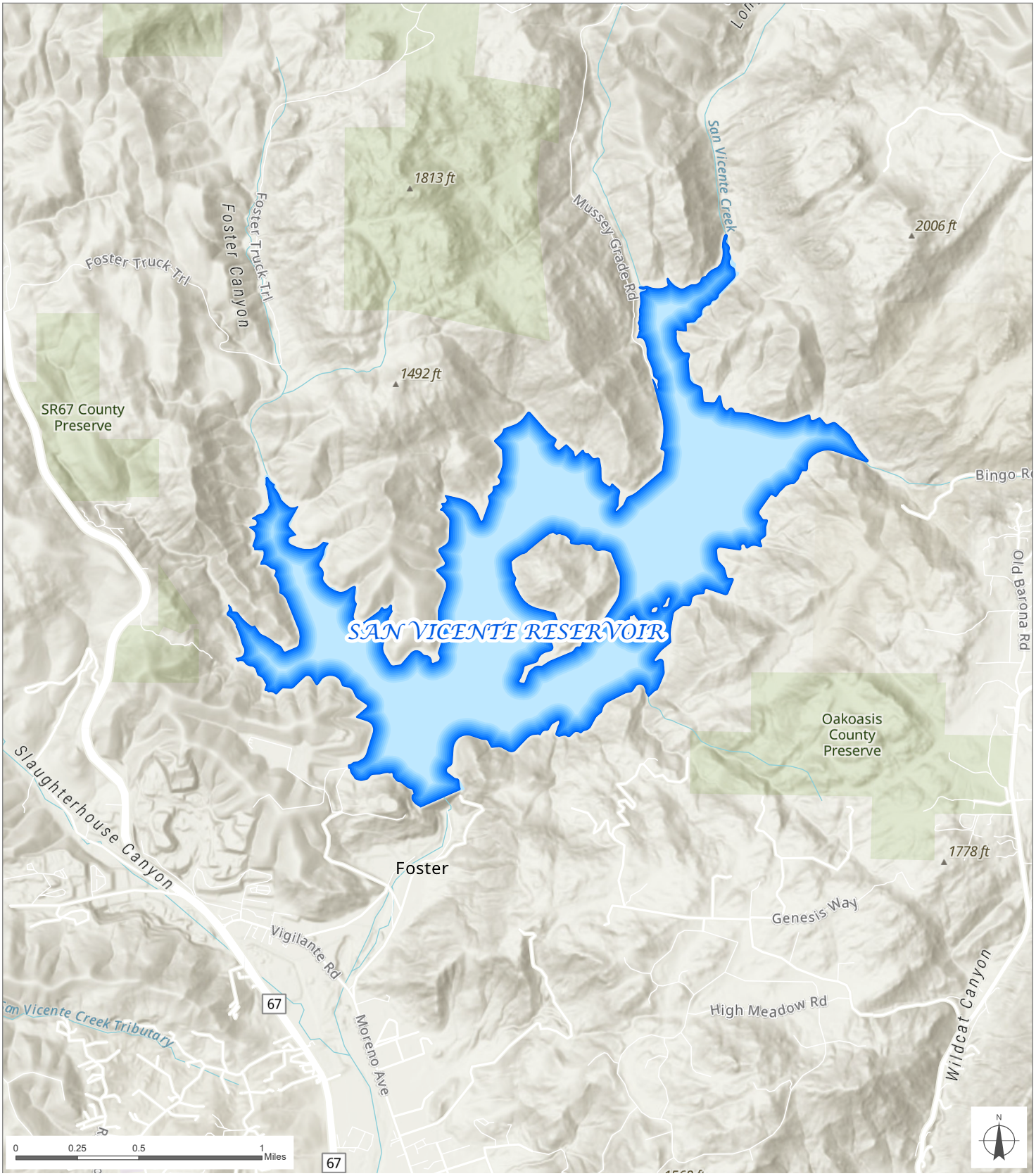
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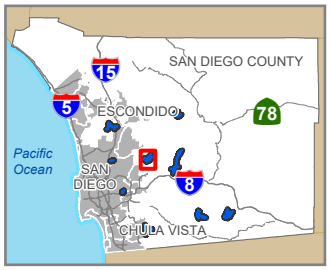
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Reservoir Storage Capacity (acre foot)

Barrett.....34,806	Murray.....4,684
El Capitan.....112,807	Lower Otay.....47,067
Hodges.....30,632	Upper Otay.....N/A
Miramar.....6,682	San Vicente...249,358
Morena.....50,694	Sutherland.....29,508



Reservoirs Owned by the City of San Diego



San Diego County
Local Agency Formation Commission
Regional Service Planning | Subdivision of the State of California

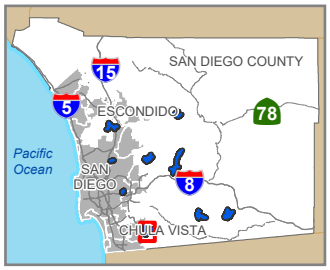
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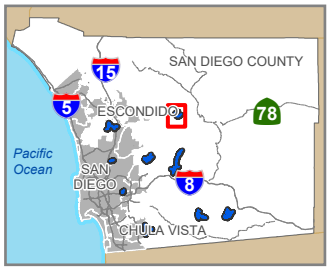
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City of San Diego-owned Reservoirs | Concessionaire Fees

Attachment C

Daily Fee Comparison of Boat Use: Ticketmaster

Boat Type (compared to Ticketmaster)	Lake Morena (County of SD)		Lake Barrett (Ticket Master)	Weekend/Holiday Rate Trend	Weekday Rate Trend
	Weekend/Holiday Flat Rate*	Weekday Flat Rate*	Flat Rate* **		
Motor Boat Daily Fees	$50.00	$30.00	$190.00	280.0%	533.3%
Motor Boat Senior/Disabled	$37.50	$17.50	$190.00	406.7%	985.7%
Row Boat/Full-Day Fees	$25.00	$15.00	$70.00	180.0%	366.7%
Row Boat/Full-Day Senior/Disabled	$21.00	$11.00	$70.00	233.3%	536.4%
Row Boat/Half-Day Adults	$15.00	$15.00	$70.00	366.7%	366.7%
Row Boat/Half-Day Senior/Disabled	$12.00	$12.00	$70.00	483.3%	483.3%
Private Boat	$8.00	$8.00	N/A	N/A	N/A

** Fee includes up to 4 persons per boat ** Plus Ticketmaster fees*

Daily Fee Comparison of Boat Use: Advenco, LLC

Boat Type (compared to Advenco, LLC)	Lake Morena (County of SD)		Other Reservoirs (Advenco, LLC)**	Weekend/Holiday Rate Trend	Weekday Rate Trend
	Weekend/Holiday Flat Rate*	Weekday Flat Rate*	All Day Rate*		
Motor Boat Daily Fees	$50.00	$30.00	$100.00	100.0%	233.3%
Motor Boat Senior/Disabled	$37.50	$17.50	$100.00	166.7%	471.4%
Row Boat/Full-Day Fees	$25.00	$15.00	$30.00	20.0%	100.0%
Row Boat/Full-Day Senior/Disabled	$21.00	$11.00	$30.00	42.9%	172.7%
Row Boat/Half-Day Adults	$15.00	$15.00	$30.00	100.0%	100.0%
Row Boat/Half-Day Senior/Disabled	$12.00	$12.00	$30.00	150.0%	150.0%
Private Boat	$8.00	$8.00	$11.00	37.5%	37.5%

** Fee includes up to 4 persons per boat ** El Capitan, Lower Otay, and San Vicente*

Daily Fee Comparison of Fishing Reservation: Ticketmaster

Fishing (compared to Ticketmaster)	Lake Morena (County of SD)		Lake Barrett (Ticketmaster)	Weekend/Holiday Rate Trend	Weekday Rate Trend
	Weekend/Holiday Flat Rate	Weekday Flat Rate	Flat Rate*		
Adults	$7.00	$5.00	$30.00	328.6%	500.0%
Juniors	$3.00	$2.00	$30.00	900.0%	1400.0%
Children	Free	Free	$30.00	N/A	N/A
Seniors	$5.50	$3.50	$30.00	445.5%	757.1%

** Plus Ticketmaster fees*

Daily Fee Comparison of Fishing Reservation: Advenco, LLC

Fishing Type (compared to Advenco, LLC)	Lake Morena (County of SD)		Other Reservoirs (Advenco LLC)*	Weekend/Holiday Rate Trend	Weekday Rate Trend
	Weekend/Holiday Flat Rate	Weekday Flat Rate	Flat Rate		
Adults	$7.00	$5.00	$11.00	57.1%	120.0%
Juniors	$3.00	$2.00	$4.00	33.3%	100.0%
Children	Free	Free	Free	N/A	N/A
Seniors	$5.50	$3.50	$6.00	9.1%	71.4%

**El Capitan, Lower Otay, and San Vicente*

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