

Lake Elsinore & San Jacinto Watersheds Authority



City of Lake Elsinore • City of Canyon Lake • County of Riverside
Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District • Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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This year's rains add six feet of water to Lake Elsinore, raising the lake to its highest water level in eight years

Lake Elsinore, CA – April showers will bring May flowers, and they have also caused the Canyon Lake's Railroad Canyon Dam to spill over and send millions of gallons of water into Lake Elsinore. This overflow, caused by repeated days of heavy rains, has brought Lake Elsinore to a water level of 1244.85', the highest since June 2012.

Lake Elsinore is known to have improved water quality and a healthier ecology for the fishery whenever water levels are at or above the optimal lake level of 1,240'. Last year's wet winter and this year's late rain have helped the lake reach its highest water levels in eight years. Just in the last year, since October, the lake has risen more than six feet.

The Lake Elsinore & San Jacinto Watersheds Authority (LESJWA), an organization formed to improve water quality in the Lake Elsinore and San Jacinto watersheds, closely monitors and provides solutions for water quality for the impaired waterways in the watershed. Part of the monitoring includes preserving stability between runoff nutrients with a healthy water level.

"One of the reasons it's critical to maintain a healthy lake level is due to nutrients and sediment that flow downstream into Lake Elsinore, which can impair water quality," shared Mark Norton, LESJWA administrator. "While the rain and runoff is greatly needed in our local lakes, minimizing the nutrients that enter Canyon Lake and Lake Elsinore is critical."

Lake Elsinore is located at the bottom of the 720 square-mile San Jacinto Watershed. Therefore, rainfall throughout this entire area flows downstream through various tributaries into Canyon Lake before spilling into Lake Elsinore. This "run-off" brings critical water supply for the lakes, but is also susceptible to carrying with it nutrients and sediment that can be detrimental to the lakes' water quality over time by encouraging algae growth. LESJWA is tasked with monitoring and helping to find ways to offset the impacts and reduce the overall nutrients in these lakes through projects such as Alum Treatments in Canyon Lake and the Aeration and Mixing System in Lake Elsinore.

"With the lake nice and full, Lake Elsinore is currently still open for recreational use, despite the COVID-19 outbreak," stated Bob Magee, Treasurer/Secretary of the LESJWA Board of Directors and Mayor Pro-Tem for the City of Lake Elsinore. "Enjoying the lake is an excellent opportunity to get outdoors and take advantage of the beautiful weather we are having, but we also urge anyone coming to visit the lake to stay safe and follow all public health guidelines in place at this time."

City officials stated that the lake is open, but visitors are required to adhere by COVID-19 social distancing guidelines and they must cover their face. The City is closely monitoring all activity and use

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of the lake. If these guidelines are not being upheld and large crowds begin to gather, the City will be forced to close the lake.

Lake Elsinore evaporates by approximately four and a half feet each year. As part of a partnership with the City of Lake Elsinore and Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District (EVMWD), five million gallons of highly treated recycled water are added to Lake Elsinore every single day. This recycled water helps to offset about two and half feet of the water lost due to evaporation. April's heavy rain events have added much-needed water supply to the lake, which will be beneficial during the summer months when fish kills and algae blooms are more probable.

"This is great news for our community and our lake," said Phil Williams, Chair of the LESJWA Board of Directors and Vice President of EVMWD Board of Directors. "The combination of recycled water and recent rain events are exactly what this thirsty lake needed."

EVMWD regularly projects future water levels with and without recycled water. Based on the increased water levels, the District estimates the lake will be able to stay at and above its optimal level of 1240' for the next two years.

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LESJWA is a joint powers authority entrusted with state and local funds to improve water quality and wildlife habitats in Lake Elsinore, Canyon Lake and the surrounding San Jacinto watershed. For more information about LESJWA, please visit www.mywatersheds.com.