



Office of the City Manager

Date: October 15, 2021  
To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: ~~Dee~~ Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager  
Subject: Resident Camps Update

Since the 1920s, the City of Berkeley has operated three resident camps: Echo Lake Camp, Berkeley Tuolumne Camp (BTC), and Cazadero Camp. These overnight camps provide the Berkeley community with a wide breadth of outdoor opportunities in some of California's most beautiful natural settings, with Echo Lake Camp overlooking South Lake Tahoe, Berkeley Tuolumne Camp just outside of Yosemite, and Cazadero Camp in the Russian River Valley. The City owns the property at Cazadero and holds 30-year lease agreements with the United States Forest Service (USFS) at Echo Lake and BTC.

To preserve these experiences for Berkeley youth and families, the City has worked to safeguard and restore these camps that have each been subject to natural disasters over the last eight years. Last month's Caldor Fire came within feet of destroying Echo Lake Camp, but was saved with the incredible efforts of Berkeley Fire and Camps staff. The Rim Fire of 2013 destroyed Berkeley Tuolumne Camp; and a 2016 landslide at Cazadero Camp destroyed a dorm building and destabilized nearly a dozen large redwood trees. Additionally, Cazadero has been threatened by fires several times in the last few years. For FY2022, the City Council has allocated \$200,000 of Measure FF to analyze and develop plans for fire safety within the City and at our three resident camps.

This report provides an update on the Caldor Fire, reviews ongoing capital projects at each camp, and reports on recent and planned programming efforts at each camp.

### **Echo Lake Camp**

The City of Berkeley has operated Echo Lake Camp since 1923. Located on a ridge in the El Dorado National Forest a 15-minute walk from Echo Lake, the Camp provides a comfortable experience for family and youth campers boasting a view of Lake Tahoe, a swimming pool, delicious meals, archery, arts and crafts and easy access to miles of hiking trails.

### The Caldor Fire

The Caldor Fire started on August 14, 2021, more than 32 miles away from Echo Lake Camp. On August 17th, the fire grew significantly and all Camp staff living on site were sent home for their safety. On August 24th, City of Berkeley firefighters traveled to Camp to do preplanning, site assessment, vegetation clearing and to make initial contact with Cal Fire in anticipation that the Caldor fire would reach Echo Lake. After four days and three nights of preparation, they returned to Berkeley. On August 29<sup>th</sup> they came back to the site as the fire approached.

On August 30th, the front lines of the Caldor Fire reached Camp, and for several days Berkeley firefighters were engaged in active fire fights. At one point, they were forced to retreat from Camp due to the intensity of the fire approaching the property. Thankfully, they were able to return to defend Camp and continued to engage in active fire fights for several days until the threat had passed.

While no Camp structures were significantly damaged, several neighboring private cabins less than 100 yards away were destroyed, and areas of the surrounding forest were burned. The fire burned on all sides of Camp, up to within feet of the Ridge Cabins, Recreation Lodge, and Camp Office, but when standing in the center of Camp, one might not know that a fire had threatened the property. Since the fire, City staff have assessed the status of trees and structures on the 15-acre property. Some trees have been marked for removal and only small burn spots have been found throughout camp. All structures appear to have avoided smoke and insulation damage. Moving forward, City staff will be working with the USFS and El Dorado County with the goal of running camp programs next summer.

### Capital Projects

In June 2021, Council authorized \$705,000 in American Rescue Plan funding for the construction of Phase 1 ADA improvements at Echo Lake. The City has developed conceptual design of accessible improvements at Echo Lake Camp, including a new restroom building, three accessible tent cabins, and accessible pathways throughout Camp. The first phase of these improvements includes the addition of accessible pathways to connect and serve the dining hall, swimming pool, restroom, first aid cabin, sports court and amphitheater, and the construction of a new accessible tent cabin.

Phase 1 of Echo Lake ADA improvements is in final design. Environmental review for this project by the USFS is underway, although the schedule for them to complete this review may be impacted by the Caldor Fire. The project is expected to be bid in early spring for construction in 2022.

### Summer 2021 Programming

This last summer Echo Lake Camp successfully hosted three weeks of Family Camp and six weeks of Youth Camp, for a total of over 1,100 week-long participants. This

was not the norm for many municipally-operated camps, as many chose to just rent out or not operate their camps.

Prior to the summer, City staff made changes to Echo Lake Camp programs to align with COVID-19 public health guidelines. Changes included modified session lengths to improve stable groupings of campers, more outdoor programming, testing and vaccination requirements, increased cleaning and disinfection, and enhanced hygiene requirements for campers and staff. Scheduled summer programs included three sessions of family camp (all ages), six sessions of youth camp (ages 7-14), nine Counselor-In-Training sessions (ages 15-16), an adult (50+) hiking session, and a private group rental program.

All Echo Lake Camp staff were required to be fully vaccinated to work at Camp, and campers were required to be vaccinated or receive a negative COVID test within 72 hours of arrival to attend programs. The City worked with a janitorial services contractor to deep clean the facility between camp sessions, and the Camp made changes to offer most programs outdoors, including creating new outdoor seating options for meals.

Smoke from regional wildfires negatively affected the air quality at Echo Lake Camp this summer. Smoke from the Tamarack Fire, which began on July 4<sup>th</sup> to the southeast of Camp, sporadically impacted air quality at Camp throughout July. By early August smoke from several regional wildfires, including the Beckwourth Complex and Dixie Fires north of Lake Tahoe, began impacting air quality at Camp. Due to poor air quality, City staff ended Youth Camp sessions #5 and #6 one day early for the health and safety of our campers and staff.

In late August, wildfire conditions had worsened, and the City canceled 50 & Better Camp, scheduled August 16-20, and the end of season Friends of Berkeley Tuolumne Camp / BLUES Weekend, scheduled August 20-22.

In a continued effort to enhance equity, this summer the City was able to offer 67 participant scholarships worth over \$60,000. Additionally, we accommodated youth camp scholarship attendees by providing transportation when applicants made us aware it was a barrier, while others were required to be dropped off and picked up because of Covid-19 restrictions.

### **Cazadero Camp**

The City of Berkeley has owned Cazadero Camp in Sonoma County since 1927. The 33-acre Cazadero Camp has been operated as a music camp for the past 60 years. This year, the City worked with the Cazadero Performing Arts Camp (CazPAC) to extend their lease for another 25 years. The Camp provides a dynamic music education program for young musicians ages 10-18 including both summer camp music programs and JumpStart in Music, a low-cost weekend camp for school music programs.

Capital Projects

In April of 2016, a landslide occurred at Cazadero Camp causing irreparable damage to the existing Jensen Dormitory structure, Austin Creek Road and multiple trees. The hazardous trees were removed, Jensen Dormitory demolished and the debris removed, and the permanent landslide repair work (including repair of Austin Creek Road) was completed in 2018. Reconstruction of the Jensen Dormitory is the final step to completing the repairs associated with the landslide.

The City bid and awarded a \$1.329 million construction contract for this work to Murray Building, Inc. in August 2021. Construction began on September 2, 2021, and is anticipated to take about nine months, barring unforeseen conditions or weather impacts. The project is funded by insurance proceeds.

Additionally, as part of the new lease agreement with CazPac, the City has designated \$400,000 of T1 funds towards a \$1,200,000 renovation of the camp facilities that includes significant ADA work, CazPac is funding the remainder.

Summer 2021 Programming

In the summer of 2021, 387 campers attended Cazadero's summer Music Camp, which is about 55% of their pre-COVID average. Though registration was down, the Camp offered scholarships proportional to a typical year, and 79 participants received more than \$64,000 in scholarship assistance.

Cazadero Camp COVID safety modifications to camp this summer included moving activities outdoors, additional ventilation for indoor spaces, modifying ensemble participation to reduce group exposure; no public concerts; masking, including musician masks and instrument bell covers; testing and additional health screenings; and increased cleaning/sanitizing.

In a normal year, Cazadero Camp hosts weekend programs during the Fall, including weekends specifically reserved for BUSD students. All Fall programs were cancelled this year, due to the Delta variant and COVID-restrictions imposed by school districts. Their only sublease program this year was Family Camp.

Cazadero Camp was pleased to provide a safe camp experience to hundreds of young musicians in 2021, as well as safe employment opportunities for dozens of musicians and support staff. With support from the federal government's Paycheck Protection Program, grants, and individual donors, and significant efforts of staff and leadership, CazPac was able to shoulder the costs and strain of reopening.

**Berkeley Tuolumne Camp**

Berkeley Tuolumne Camp (BTC), located in Tuolumne County just outside of Yosemite National Park and has been operated by the City of Berkeley since 1922. It was

destroyed by the Rim Fire in August, 2013. Since that time, the City has been working diligently to reconstruct the Camp. Prior to the fire, BTC served about 4,000 campers per year. Primarily operated as a family camp, BTC also offered programs for teen leadership, special needs populations, seniors and private group rental opportunities. Berkeley Tuolumne Camp was the largest source of revenue for the City's Camps Fund, which funds all Berkeley camp programming.

*Reconstruction Project*

With over 100 structures spread across 30-acres the Berkeley Tuolumne Camp Project is one of the largest and most complex construction projects ever undertaken by the City of Berkeley.

Construction began in May of 2020 and is still on schedule with an anticipated re-opening in the summer of 2022. There remains uncertainty regarding how the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may impact material and worker availability and project sequencing. It is possible that these impacts will lead to a longer construction duration.

The total project budget is \$54.5 million. The primary source of funding is insurance coverage and the City's public assistance disaster recovery grant from the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In April 2017, City Council allocated the estimated shortfall of \$3.3 million not covered by insurance, FEMA and CalOES by using the City's Catastrophic Reserve Fund.

Multiple volunteer tree planting events have been held at Camp in the past year. The next volunteer tree planting event is scheduled for December 11, 2021. Additional details will be provided to Council regarding this event.

*Summer 2022 Programming*

Staff are currently evaluating the Camp programs that will best serve City of Berkeley residents next summer, with an emphasis on ensuring equitable access to inclusive programs that appeal to a diverse audience. Initial plans include offering a wide variety of Family Camp, Youth Camp, and other programs at both Echo Lake and Berkeley Tuolumne Camp facilities. The impact of COVID-19 on summer 2022 programs is still uncertain, and staff will continue to monitor the potential impacts and adapt program plans to adhere to public health guidelines as necessary.

Next year will mark the 99<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Echo Lake Camp and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Berkeley Tuolumne Camp. City staff are excited about the opportunity to resume programs at Berkeley Tuolumne Camp for the first time in nine years, and to celebrate this incredible milestone for the City by welcoming new campers who have never experienced Tuolumne or Echo Lake Camp programs before to take part in this wonderful Berkeley tradition.

Registration for Summer 2022 Echo Lake and Tuolumne Camp programs is tentatively scheduled for January 2022.

### **Insurance at Resident Camps**

In the last 10 years, the City has endured catastrophic events at all three resident Camps.

Echo Lake – 2011-12, 2015-2016 Snow Damage (\$550,000)

Berkeley Tuolumne Camp – 2013 Fire Damage (\$55 million)

Cazadero Camp – 2017 Landslide (\$3.2 million)

Insurance has covered the majority of these costs at all four events. In the last two years, as insurance rates have sky rocketed in California forested areas, our insurance policy carriers have limited our coverage to a maximum \$5 million per incident at all three of our resident camps. This is a significant change from covering up to a "\$1 billion limit". Purchasing additional insurance for just another \$5 million worth of coverage at each camp is over \$100,000 per year and is not affordable by the Camps Fund. The City Council has allocated \$200,000 of Measure FF to develop a Wildfire Fuel Mitigation Plan for the City and all three resident camps.

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