

For a Day in the Sun, Lafayette Reservoir Offers a Full Plate

By Chris Lavin



Amanda Rainey is about to catch her first catfish Photo Andy Scheck

During the school year the Lafayette Reservoir Rim is inhabited by strollers pushed by running mothers wearing headphones who have dropped older children at school and need to get some exercise, but now, in the hot days of summer, anglers, hikers and boaters are using the grounds for summer recreation.

Roller-bladers, skaters and scooter lovers also can use the trails around the reservoir on Tuesdays and Thursdays from noon till closing, and after 11 a.m. on Sundays on the paved trail. A launching area provides a place to put in your own boat, if it fits on top of your car, or else rentals are available. No motorboats are allowed.

"We almost always catch a fish here," said Jose Juarez of Oakland, who brought his family on a recent weekend to try their luck from a dock. "Not today. Maybe it's too hot."

Always an optimist, Juarez grabbed another worm that he had purchased at a nearby bait shop, and baited the hook of a young boy who faithfully cast it into the cool water.

Located off of Mount Diablo Boulevard in Lafayette, the reservoir, managed by East Bay Municipal Utilities District, is a day destination open for recreation but also provides drinking water for EBMUD users, and therefore no swimming is allowed. A playground is provided, however, as well as a native garden area behind the visitor center and picnic areas, two of which may be reserved.

"We have been coming here for years," said Said Muhatma, of Lafayette. "We live in an apartment building so we don't have a yard. This is our yard, sometimes. We like the water."

The reservoir is one of several managed by EBMUD for recreational activities, and officials stock it with a mixture of trout, perch, bass and catfish. A \$4 day use permit is required for casting a line.

And while catching a fish can be fun, officials warn that eating them on a regular basis may not be all that healthy. Fishing advisories have been in place for quite a few years throughout the county and state. Elevated levels of PCB's (polychlorinated biphenyls) and mercury can be found in fish from local water supplies, and fish higher up the food chain like carp or bass can accumulate higher levels of the chemicals. For guidelines on local fish consumption, visit www.oehha.ca.gov/fish.html.

Just as Juarez was talking about how his family never caught enough fish to really worry about chemical levels, the boy with the fishing rod and fresh worm let up a cry. He reeled and reeled, and pulled up a catfish that must have weighed at least 2 pounds.



Steve and Sam at the Lafayette Reservoir

"Well, maybe we'll have to look at what we're eating more closely," Juarez said, laughing and grabbing fish to remove the hook.

For more information, fee schedules and picnic reservations, visit www.ebmud.com, then click on services, and then recreation.

Reporter Cathy Tyson contributed to this story.

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