



BENBOW

STATE RECREATION AREA

WELCOME! Benbow State Recreation Area (SRA), previously Benbow Lake SRA, is comprised of two sections: an easily accessible day-use area right off U.S. Highway 101 and a campground off Benbow Drive. Benbow Dam, and the lake that it created, do not exist anymore, but the park still showcases the Wild and Scenic South Fork Eel River, where visitors can swim, picnic, or watch wildlife.

The Sinkyone and Wailaki people have lived in this area since time immemorial. To preserve their culture, they continue to utilize the riches of the landscape through practices passed down from generations of Indigenous peoples, creating a highly productive environment. Local tribal groups lead conservation and restoration projects that are instrumental in healing the landscape.



Benbow State Recreation Area
445 Lake Benbow Drive
Garberville, CA 95542



Day-Use Areas:
Sunrise to sunset



Day-Use Parking:

\$8 per vehicle per day

Main parking at day-use area past the entrance station off Lake Benbow Drive.



California State Parks

Passes Accepted: Adventure, Golden Poppy, Explorer, Disabled Discount, Veteran, Golden Bear, Golden Bear (Limited Use), State Library



(707) 247-3318

711, TTY Relay Service

parks.ca.gov/Benbow



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at (707) 247-3318. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact interp@parks.ca.gov.

FACTS ABOUT BENBOW SRA

Benbow Dam—In 1931 Benbow Dam was constructed across the South Fork Eel River. The dam provided hydroelectric power for the nearby town of Garberville and created Benbow Lake. Though the lake was a popular recreation spot for visitors, the dam negatively impacted salmon habitat and degraded river banks. Because of this, Benbow Dam was demolished in 2017, which removed the lake that rested behind it.

North American River Otter—If you are lucky, you may catch a glimpse of the elusive North American river otter. Smaller than its ocean counterpart, these semiaquatic mammals can be found throughout the Eel River watershed. They are usually seen chasing each other or hunting for food.

PLEASE REMEMBER

Swimming—Diving in the river is not permitted. No lifeguards are on duty. Children should be supervised at all times.

Campfires—Fires are permitted only in fire rings. No ground fires are allowed.

Algae Blooms—In late summer, harmful algae blooms may appear in the river. Ingesting algae can be harmful to young children and pets. Check for algae warnings.

Parking—There is no day-use parking in Benbow Campground. Parking is available at the day-use area past the entrance station off Lake Benbow Drive.

Practice Leave No Trace—Keep it “crumb clean” to protect plants and wildlife.



Thrap Mill Site

Take Thrap Mill Trail (1.2 miles to site) or Pioneer Trail (1.5 miles to site) from Site 57 in Benbow Campground to reach the remnants of the Thrap Mill. This mill processed coast redwood logs to turn into lumber. Once the mill shut down, much of the machinery was removed. A rusted boiler is all that remains of Thrap Mill.

ACTIVITIES

Fishing—Catch-and-release fishing is allowed on the South Fork Eel River. Visitors 16 years of age and older must have a valid fishing license. Always check current conditions and regulations.

Swimming—June and July are the best months to go swimming in the river. There is river access from both the day-use area and the campground.

Picnicking—There are several picnic tables available in the day-use area. Please throw away all trash in the proper receptacles.

Camping—Benbow SRA offers 75 camping sites. The campground is open seasonally from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Most sites are available for reservation on [ReserveCalifornia.com](https://www.reservecalifornia.com).

