

Vista Bonita Recreation Association -Baker Lake Water Levels in 2023

The Vista Bonita Recreation Association (VBRA) is only able to influence the level of Baker Lake during the Colorado growing season (May/June through September/October of each year). We can only add water to the lake when the irrigation ditch on the east side of the neighborhood has water running high enough for us to draw from. We are limited in how much water we can draw by the number and type of water shares we own, the amount of water we can swap out of a smaller lake that we own to the east (Replogle Reservoir) and of course, the size of the pipe and weir that we pull water through from the ditch to the wetlands.

Roughly half to two thirds of the water we put into Baker Lake each year has come from Replogle. In 2021, most of the water sources that kept Replogle full “dried up”. Specifically, the landowners to the north of Replogle sold their water shares off, resulting in dry farming replacing irrigated farming, and thus ending the runoff/seepage that kept Replogle full. Replogle is slowly refilling without irrigation runoff, but not quickly enough for us to be able to draw from it any time soon – or every season. For the first time in VBRA’s history, we had to buy water on the open market at the end of the 2022 season to get Baker Lake back to full before going into this past fall/winter.

In 2023, we are going to have a very difficult time with two aspects of keeping Baker Lake Full:

1. We will not be able to fill Baker Lake very quickly at the start of the season (May/June), as we no longer have Replogle to pull water from. The only water that we can get will be “river” water, usually starting sometime in May. We only have rights to about a 0.6” increase in Baker Lake’s level each day that river water is available. That translates into a 12” increase in Baker Lake’s level taking 20 continuous days to achieve. ***It is conceivable that we will NOT be full by the July 4 Brunch.***
2. Once “reservoir water” becomes available, we can speed up the rate at which Baker Lake rises to somewhere around 3.5” a day – but can only maintain that rate for 2 to 4 days before we use up our entire season’s worth of water allocation...after which, we can no longer add water to Baker Lake.

Last season, we were able to mitigate the situation by making an early season draw from Replogle, knowing that it would not refill very rapidly, and then buying five days’ worth of reservoir water through the irrigation company from other shareholders who did not need it at season’s end. That purchase cost us \$1,000.

We have advised the Irrigation company that manages the water exchanges from the ditch that we would like to buy water again this year. We have been advised that this type of water is available most years (19 out of 20 or so) and that it is usually available only late in the season (late July through early September). On occasion, this type of water is available early in the season (river water runs). We intend to buy whatever we need as it becomes available to do all that we can to minimize fluctuations in Baker Lake’s level. This is one of the reasons we are raising irrigation dues along with membership dues this year, to help pay for a new expense – purchased water.

We will do all that we can to keep Baker Lake at a reasonable level...but expect a lower lake for much of the season.