



## Riviera West/Harbor View Bimonthly Newsletter

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Riviera West

Not much on the agenda at the moment. The Board approved the budget for 2025-26, which forecast \$246,300 in revenue and \$239,157 in expenses, This included a \$50,000 contribution to our reserve account. The reserve account had large expenditures this past year due to the replacement of the gangways at the marina and repairs to the clubhouse. For 2025-26 we will bring the reserve up to \$273,808 and make another contribution in the next fiscal year to bring the total to our goal of \$300,000.

We had a fun time at the poolside DISCO party hosted by Susan Lucatorto and Lisa Wentz on July 18. Amazing how many of us remembered the old dance moves. Be sure to watch coming dates for the next social club function. Great time to meet new neighbors and learn more about your community.

Our annual fire prevention program ended with the free chipping day in July. Several residents took advantage of the program which resulted 93 piles of hazardous vegetation being removed. Fine notices have been forwarded to owners who have not yet cleared their lots for fire prevention as required in Riviera West. Owners have 10 days now to appeal the fines (best achieved by quickly getting the clearing done). It is important to note that the fines are based on missing the deadline for action and are not automatically removed if action is taken well beyond the deadlines, e.g., just because you eventually return the library book doesn't release you from having to pay the overdue fine. 😊

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Harbor View Mutual Water Company

#### Welcome to Summer!

Although we've had a mild start, the thermometer will begin to register much higher temperatures soon. When that happens, our Lake's waters change as well as evaporate.

Our state-of-the-art water treatment plant is equipped to handle these changes. But if you notice any non-emergency issues such as taste, smell or color, please call the water treatment plant. Our operators are the ones trained to handle those issues, not the office staff. Sometimes people will post a problem on NextDoor. We don't monitor that social media site, so your call for help will go unanswered.

We recently made some changes to our Board of Directors. Re-elected by acclamation at the June Annual Meeting were Carina DeHerrera, Bob Lucatorto, and Alexandra Milukhin. Chris Lavezzo was appointed to the Secretary position. Alexandra stepped down to a Director position, allowing Tim Keenan to retire. Thank you, Tim, for your volunteer spirit. It's people like you who make our community a great place to live.

#### How to Reach Us with Water Questions:

For water emergencies, call **707-279-4143**

If operators are unavailable to answer, please call the emergency numbers on the recording. For non-emergency problems, call **707-279-4143** and leave a message. Clearly state your name, phone number, property address, and brief description of the problem.

#### For Account Questions:

Regarding billing, change of mailing address, change of email address, or new tenant information, please call the HOA office at **707-279-8544** or email [harborviewwater@gmail.com](mailto:harborviewwater@gmail.com)

**Riviera West Country Club  
Harbor View Mutual Water Company**  
8475 Harbor View Drive  
Kelseyville, CA 95451  
707-279-8544 • fax 707-279-0118  
[rivierawest@gmail.com](mailto:rivierawest@gmail.com)  
[harborviewwater@gmail.com](mailto:harborviewwater@gmail.com)  
website: [www.rivierawesthoa.com](http://www.rivierawesthoa.com)

#### Office Hours:

Monday, Tuesday & Thursday:  
9:00 am – 3:00 pm  
Friday 9:00 am – 3:30 pm  
Wednesday: Closed

#### Riviera West Board:

President: Philip Hartley  
Treasurer: C. Richard Smith  
Secretary: Clelia Baur  
Director: Doug Moore  
Director: Bob Gunion

#### Harbor View Mutual

#### Water Company Board:

President: Carina DeHerrera  
Treasurer: Bob Lucatorto  
Secretary: Chris Lavezzo  
Director: Alexandra Milukhin  
Director: Laura Silva

#### Regular Board Meetings:

Third Wednesday every other month:  
January 15, 2025  
March 19, 2025  
May 21, 2025  
July 16, 2025  
September 17, 2025  
November 19, 2025

Riviera West meeting is 4:30 PM  
Harbor View meeting is 5:30 PM

### WATER COMPANY EMERGENCY?

If you cannot reach the  
office, call  
**707-279-4143**



**Happy Tenth Anniversary to Our Water Plant!**

It was ten years ago this month that we officially unveiled Harbor View Mutual's Thomas R. Smythe Water Treatment Plant. As Board President, Tom led a hard-working group of volunteer Board members who had one goal in mind: a long-term solution to our water delivery system.

Since its opening ten years ago, the new treatment plant has operated reliably and the new DAF clarifier has been key in dealing with any high level of algae present in Clear Lake in the summer months. The treatment plant includes a new SCADA system and automated report generation process that is used to develop the monthly monitoring reports which are required to be submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board.

**WE own it! Be proud!**

As we are a mutual water company, each of the approximately 460 properties in Riviera West owns a share. Over the years, we've installed new backup generators for use during a power emergency, upgraded our water meters to provide better usage and leak monitoring, and replaced all the failing redwood water storage tanks with new steel tanks.

**Impressive Water Plant Facts**

- ▶ Our water plant has a maximum treatment capacity of 175 gallons per minute and can produce a net maximum of approximately 220,000 gallons of potable water per day.
- ▶ The Dissolved Air Flootation Device (DAF) uses water saturated with air to float large amounts of organics out of the water for pretreatment. This removes around 80 percent of the turbidity out of the water.
- ▶ Three mixed media filters remove the last twenty percent of fine particles; two large carbon filters then remove any taste and odors left in the finish water.
- ▶ The water then travels up to 822 feet in elevation through three more pump stations and five miles of main pipes to reach our 250 active connections.

**Important Dates**

- ▶ Saturday, August 16, 5:30: TGIS Beach Party at the clubhouse. Bring a dish to share and BYOB.
- ▶ Wednesday, September 17, 4:30: Regular meeting of the Riviera West Board at the clubhouse, 8475 Harbor View Drive, Kelseyville, CA.
- ▶ Wednesday, September 17, 5:30: Regular meeting of the Harbor View Mutual Water Company Board at the Riviera West clubhouse, 8475 Harbor View Drive, Kelseyville, CA

**DYK...****Did You Know? Water Insights from Harbor View Lead Water Operator Jeremiah Fossa**

When I first started to enter the water treatment field in Lake County, I really wanted to put a stop to Yolo County having control of our water. I was ready to form the Lake County water militia to take our rights back. Then on a rainy day 15 years ago I spent several hours researching it and found it was about as fair as possible.

The saga basically starts in 1912 with the Yolo Power and Water company applying for the rights to all of the water in Clear Lake and the surrounding streams entering it. They applied for the rights to the state to use the water for irrigation of food crops. Lake County Supervisors couldn't be bothered with applying for the rights so it passed to Yolo County. At this time, they could take as much water from the lake as possible until it reached 0 Rumsey when no more water would leave. (See the Rumsey Scale article on page 11). They couldn't raise the lake above 7.58 as this had been tried before and created a muddy swamp that made everyone sick. In 1914 the dam was built to both store water and help with flooding. By closing the dam to 90 percent during flooding the water level rises over the top of the natural dam known as the Grigsby Riffle, and allows for a big increase in outflow. It is impossible to stop flooding as up to seven times as much water can flow into the lake as can leave during storm events.

This basic agreement was in place until 1978 when Indian Valley reservoir was proposed. This prompted Lake and Yolo to go back to court in Solano County, and the current agreement was put into place. This states that Yolo County can take its full allotment of water if the lake is full on May 1. If the lake is below 3.22 Rumsey on that date they get nothing that year. We still have to pay Yolo County every month for the water in this community no matter the lake level. Last year the company spent \$2,341 purchasing lake water.

It's hard to argue against the current agreement as the water always went down Cache Creek to Yolo County and millions of people benefit from the food crops grown from that water. I do understand about the frustration of not being in control of the water and it would have been nice to sell that water to Yolo County instead. Lake County has never been particularly good at making investments in our own long-term benefits.





## Riviera West Social Club Update

### Best Days of Summer

With a few exceptions, the weather has been mercifully mild this summer. Members are walking, jogging and working outside in the mornings and evenings, taking advantage of the pleasant temperature. The swimming pool continues to be the focal point for relaxation, healthy exercise and fun.

Members enjoyed a TGIF Party at our Marina Park on June 13 hosted by Carina DeHerrera and Bob Gunion. Once again, Bobby and Carina organized an excellent lakeside event. Guests enjoyed games and music, and everyone brought a dish to share. The 2025 Community Picnic on June 21 was well-received. Following the Annual Board Meetings, members gathered for a lunch of home-made pulled pork with the classic sides and dessert, as well as free soft drinks, beer and wine. President Phil Hartley conducted a bocce contest at the park. Our winner this year was Karen Magnuson. Social Club volunteers wore their team colors for the occasion. On July 16, Riviera West Bocce League participants met for tournament award ceremony. The second annual Disco Pool Party TGIF was a popular event. It featured food, games, music and merriment on the pool deck on July 18. Guests enjoyed fun, 70s-inspired appetizers, music, décor and dancing.

#### Upcoming events

Saturday, August 16: It's a Hawaiian themed TGIF (S for Saturday!) Meet at the clubhouse at 5:30 for a classic Hawaiian-style party hosted by Norma Simmons and Kerry Moore. As with all TGIFs and TGISs, no RSVP is needed. Just bring a dish to share, BYOB and prepare to have fun!

#### You can host a TGIF

**TGIFs:** Riviera West members will once again be organizing TGIF parties on Friday (or sometimes on Saturday) evenings. Many members like TGIFs best because they are informal and spontaneous. Just bring an appetizer to share, bring your own beverage and relax at the clubhouse, by the pool or at the marina. TGIFs are hosted by one or more members. Anyone can host – it's fun and easy, and Social Club volunteers are happy to walk you through it. We can often assist with decorations and hands-on help.

#### There's a place for you in the Social Club!

As always, the Social Club welcomes new volunteers. You can choose the type of activity and level of involvement that works for you. The best part is teaming up with an active, fun-loving group dedicated to making our community a better place to live. Give us a call if you're interested. For more information, send us an email at [rwccsocialclub@gmail.com](mailto:rwccsocialclub@gmail.com).

## Disco Pool Party TGIF, July 18



### Lakeside TGIF June 13



### 2025 Bocce Tournament Play and Awards Ceremony



Phil Hartley looks on as Doug and Kerry Moore accept the trophy on behalf of their team, "The Winos."

Riviera West Community Picnic, June 21



Phil presided over the annual bocce contest during the Community Picnic; everyone took a turn to see who could get the ball closest to the pallino. The winning bocce athlete was Karen Magnuson, seen at left winding up for the pitch.

## Defensible Space Zones

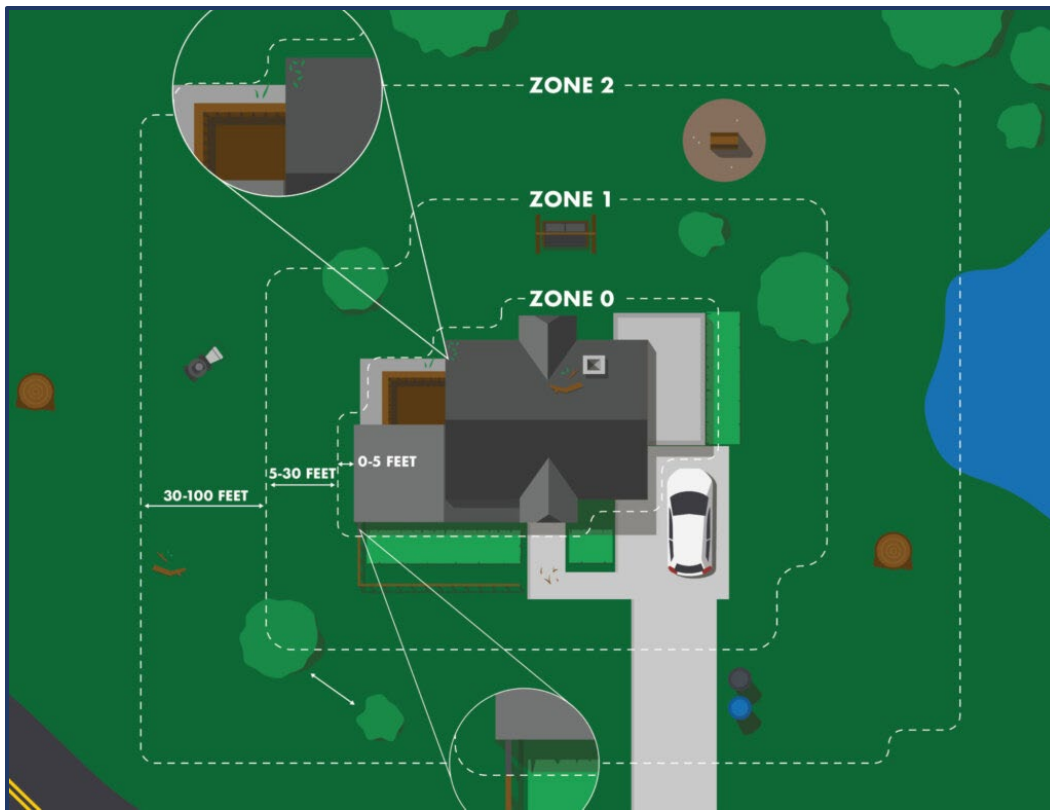
Best practices for home-hardening are always evolving – for the better. **Zone Zero (the five-foot perimeter around your house) has been identified as a first line of defense for your home.**

**The first five feet from your home is the most important.** Keeping the area closest to buildings, structures, and decks clear will prevent embers from igniting materials that can spread the fire to your home.

**Why?** The majority of homes lost to wildfire are ignited by flying embers. Embers can travel miles ahead of the active front of wildfires.

### What to do:

1. **Use hardscape** like gravel, pavers, or concrete. No combustible bark or mulch.
2. **Remove all dead and dying plants**, weeds, and debris (leaves, needles, etc.) from your roof, gutter, deck, porch, stairways, and under any areas of your home.
3. **Remove all branches within 10 feet of any chimney** or stovepipe outlet.
4. **Limit combustible items** (like outdoor furniture and planters) on top of decks.
5. **Relocate firewood and lumber** to Zone 2.
6. **Replace combustible fencing, gates, and arbors** attached to the home with noncombustible alternatives.
7. **Consider relocating garbage and recycling containers** outside this zone.
8. **Consider relocating boats, RVs, vehicles**, and other combustible items outside this zone.



### Understanding how fire prevention zones affect your home's susceptibility to fire

In each zone, the intensity of vegetation management increases as you get closer to your home. The goal is to start at your house and work outward, reaching up to 100 feet or your property line.

- Zone 0: Zone extends 0- 5 feet from your home, focusing on intense fuel reduction to protect against ember attacks.
- Zones 1 & 2: These zones cover up to 100 feet around your home. They're required by law and involve varying levels of vegetation management.
- [Click here](#) for more information from CAL FIRE.

## Plan Ahead for Your Family's Safety. Start by Creating a Wildfire Action Plan and Put Together Your Go-Bag

It's late summer and time to refresh our evacuation planning efforts. The Konocti Fire Safe Council recently published a comprehensive planning guide (see below). Following are some recommended steps covered in the planning guide.

### Create a Family Action Plan:

Your family's Wildfire Action Plan must be carefully prepared and familiar to all members of your household well in advance of a wildfire. Use the checklist below to help create your plan before the need arises. Each family's plan will be different, depending on a variety of issues, needs and situations.

#### Your Evacuation Plan Should Include:

- A designated emergency meeting location outside the fire area. This is critical to determine who has safely evacuated the affected area.
- Knowledge of several different escape routes from your home and community. Practice these routes before a wildfire threat, so everyone in your family is familiar with them when a crisis arises. Use the form on page 11 to write down your evacuation routes.
- An evacuation plan for pets and large animals such as horses and other livestock.
- A Family Communication Plan that designates an out-of-area friend or relative as a point of contact to act as a single source of communication among family members in case people become separated.
- Cell and internet systems may be overloaded or out of service. It is best for all family members to call or message one key contact person and let that person be responsible for reaching others, rather than try to call each person separately during the crisis.
- Use the Family Communication Plan form on page 11 to identify the key contact person for your family.

### Emergency Supply Kit Contents:

- Face masks or coverings.
- Three-day supply of non-perishable food and three gallons of water per person Don't forget to add water for any pets you are evacuating.
- Paper map marked with at least two evacuation routes (online navigation services may be interrupted during a crisis).
- Change of clothing, including a hat, cotton long-sleeved shirt and pants.
- Extra eyeglasses or contact lenses.
- An extra set of car keys, phone charger, credit cards and cash.
- First aid kit.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Copies of important documents (birth certificates, passports, insurance documents, etc.).
- Food, water and medication for pets.
- Can opener.
- Items to Take if Time Allows:
- Easily carried valuables.
- Family photos and other irreplaceable items.
- Personal computer information on portable drives.
- Laptops, tablets and other devices.

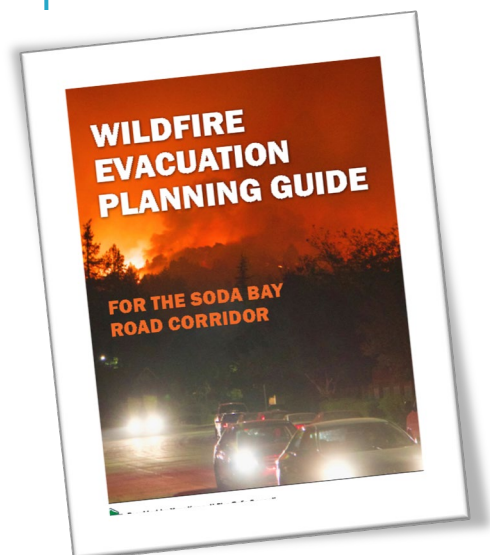


## Check out the Updated CAL FIRE Website

[CAL FIRE website](#): Your source for resources for tracking wildfires, evacuation planning and strengthening your home's resilience to wildfire. Features include:

- Real-time incident reporting. Click on the symbols on the state map for details about nearby fires
- Wildfire Prevention Programs
- Resources, information and guidance to improve your property's wildfire resilience
- Tracking CAL FIRE's progress on fuel reduction programs
- Understanding "Prescribed Fire," the proactive technology used to manage forests and improve ecosystems.
- Advice and common-sense practices that prevent fires from starting. As CAL FIRE states: "95% of wildfires are human-caused."
- Tips on preparing for evacuation.

## [Free Wildfire Evacuation Planning Guide from the Konocti Fire Safe Council](#)



### Clubhouse Committee Update, August 2025

By Chris Lavezzo

With the start of the new fiscal year, the Committee continues working on clubhouse improvements. First on the agenda are miniblinds to cover the new dual-paned office windows. Work on better lighting in the pool bathrooms is in progress. We'll continue working on a budget-friendly landscaping design for the clubhouse entrance, and possibly a fresh coat of paint in the clubhouse bathrooms sometime later this year.

Do you have some ideas you'd like to share? Or maybe you can volunteer with garden cleanup or painting the walls? Call Chris Lavezzo at 707-799-2127 or email [rwccsocialclub@gmail.com](mailto:rwccsocialclub@gmail.com). We'll be tackling projects in all areas as time and budget allow. Volunteers help us keep cost under control and complete more projects sooner, not to mention that we have a lot of fun meeting and working with our neighbors.



#### New Ceiling Fans – Not a Small Thing!

Old, small and slightly wobbly, the 1970s-era ceiling fans failed to adequately do the ventilation job in our large club-room. Technologies and styles have improved since then and it was time to upgrade to something more efficient. After a careful search, the Committee purchased two 44" fans that deliver consistent airflow. They are attractive, efficient and easy to use.

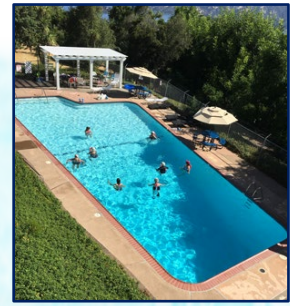
#### Parking Lot Improvements

It seems like yesterday when we last had the parking lot sealed and striped. (it was actually 2016.) As with any parking lot, periodic surface maintenance is necessary for safety and to prevent deterioration of the paving. The new seal should last about another five years, by which time it may be time to consider repaving.



#### Giving Brush the Brush-Off

We are happy to report that the neighborhood is one step safer from wildfire through the efforts of our property owners. This year, a record 93 brush piles were cleared during our free chipping day event. The chipping service was primarily funded through a grant from the Clearlake Environmental Research Center (CLERC). [Click here](#) to learn more about CLERC and their work on behalf of Lake County.



#### Careful with the ROPE!

Why is it so important for kids – and adults – to refrain from leaning on the rope that crosses the pool?

Staying off the rope is not just an arbitrary rule. The polypropylene rope is more delicate than it looks. Though it is resistant to pool chemicals, long exposure to the water and the sun's ultraviolet rays gradually cause the fibers to deteriorate. The weight and movement of people (even little ones) accelerate the process.

Replacing the rope is expensive, and we must keep it in place for safety reasons. New ropes are expensive and as property owners, we all foot the bill. The less often we have to replace a rope, the better for all concerned. Thank you to the parents who remind their children not to play on the rope!

#### Our Elected Officials

**Lake County Supervisorial District 5:**  
[Supervisor Jessica Pyska](#)

**California State Assembly District 4:**  
[Assemblymember Cecilia M. Aguiar-Curry](#)

**California State Senate District 2:**  
[Senate President pro Tempore Mike McGuire](#)

**United States 4th Congressional district of California:**  
Congressmember [Mike Thompson](#)

**United States Senate:**  
Senator Alex Padilla  
Senator Adam Schiff



Photo by Chris Lavezzo

## Rules and Regulations Deep Dive If you didn't know, now you know

The HOA rules apply to all Riviera West property owners. Following our rules maintains neighborhood harmony, enhances our quality of life and protects our property investment. We will feature a few randomly chosen rules in our newsletter from time to time. A complete copy of the Riviera West governing documents is always available at [rivierawesthoa.com](http://rivierawesthoa.com).



### Parking Structures

1. Parking structures
  - a. Carports would not be prohibited if the following conditions exist:
    - i. The property already has a two-car garage currently used for parking, that conforms to the Riviera West Architectural Guidelines to Building.
    - ii. The appearance and construction standards that apply to residential buildings and garages also apply to carport construction.
    - iii. Any required carport building permits from Lake County must be obtained.
    - iv. ACP review and approval is necessary before any construction work begins.

### Bonus: Architectural Control and Planning FAQs

**Q:** I own the lot next door. Can I build a garage or garden shed on my second lot?

**A:** Building on your adjoining lot only an option if the two lots are already merged into one property.

**Q:** I want to repaint my house the same color it was before. Do I need to check with the ACP?

**A:** Yes, we ask that you check with us ahead of time. It only takes a few minutes.

**Q:** Do I need to submit an ACP project approval form if I'm making repairs to my deck?

**A:** You do need approval if you are altering the size or shape of your deck, adding stairs, or making structural changes.

**Q:** Which conifer trees are we encouraged to remove from our properties? Why these particular trees?

**A:** We recommend removing knob cone pines and gray pines. Italian cypress trees are also good candidates for removal. These conifer species ignite quickly and can dramatically increase the spread of a wildfire.

## Clear Lake's Unique Water Level: It's All About the Grigsby Riffle and the Rumsey Gauge

In September 2021, the Lake level dropped to almost -2 feet on the Rumsey Gauge as a result of drought conditions. The Lake level can fluctuate significantly each year, sometimes dropping from 3 to 6.5 feet during the summer months due to evaporation and water withdrawal. So even though the Lake is up this year, we always need to be mindful of conservation.

### Some things you should know:

#### Grigsby Riffle

If you're driving east to Walmart on Hwy 53, you'll pass over a concrete bridge just before you get to Dam Road. This is where the Grigsby Riffle is located.

The Grigsby Riffle is a natural geologic feature about three miles upstream of the Cache Creek Dam. It's a rock formation that acts as a bottleneck and restricts the amount of water that can flow over it. The channel, restricted by the Riffle, is too small to allow floodwater to leave the Lake as fast as it enters. In 1890, prior to the construction of the Cache Creek Dam, the Lake reached 13.66 feet, the highest level recorded.

#### Rumsey Gauge

Most often, water elevation in a lake is compared to mean sea level (MSL), the average elevation of the ocean's surface. But Clear Lake is different.

In 1873, a cattle drive captain named DeWitt Clinton Rumsey decided that when water ceased to flow over the Grigsby Riffle, that would be zero on the Rumsey Gauge. It took many years to determine the elevation that constituted a full lake. The average high-water level between 1873 and 1920 was recorded and a full Lake was set at 7.56 Rumsey. Zero Rumsey is 20.01 feet below the center of the large concrete star at the northeast corner of the courthouse yard in Lakeport, which is equivalent to 1316.26 feet mean sea level. (MSL).

Three important court decrees determine how much and when water is released from the Lake: The Gopcevic Decree in 1920, the Bemmerly Decree in 1938, and the Solano Decree in 1978. To learn more, check out <https://ycfcwcd.org/the-importance-of-the-grigsby-riffly-and-the-rumsey-gauge/>

Photo credit: Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District



Seen near the center of this picture (YCFWCD website), the Grigsby Riffle is rock formation located in a narrow spot in Cache Creek. At left is the Route 53 bridge over Cache Creek.

## Soda Bay: Our Scenic Neighbor – Effervescent Waters and Mysterious Volcanic Plumbing

We know and love Soda Bay. We drive alongside it every day. Some of us spend time on the water in kayaks or boats, or enjoy bird-watching or fishing from the dock. The Bay is our portal to Clear Lake and defines miles of nearby shoreline.

It is called Soda Bay because of the carbonated water that bubbles up to the surface from deep geothermal vents on the lakebed. This unusual phenomenon has been part of Lake County lore since antiquity.

Soda Bay also has a sinister side (for those who aren't careful) on a small island close to Buckingham. It is a strange, warm water alcove known as Soda Springs. The *Visit Kelseyville* facebook page explains the mysteries of Soda Springs:



“Soda Springs sits at the edge of a small island about 200 feet off the shore of Clear Lake, about 120 miles north of San Francisco. The water in the rectangular 6-by-8-foot pool smells vaguely of rotten eggs and the basin’s natural back walls are encrusted with a multicolored patina of chemicals.

Carbon dioxide comes up through inactive volcanic vents, making the water bubble like a hot tub, or a bottle of soda.

The waters of Soda Springs have long been prized for their supposed medicinal qualities. Locals have bathed in the waters for generations. Pomo Indians gathered at the spot, teenagers met there for romance, and families soaked together in the steaming mineral water.

The pool is encircled by a natural rock border, but a few years ago someone built up the wall with bricks and concrete, making it about 2 feet higher. The higher wall made the basin cozier, but it also apparently trapped the poisonous gases close to the surface of the water.

Without proper air flow, dangerous levels of carbon dioxide hover over the surface, said Cathy Janik, a U.S. Geological Survey geochemist. “I’ll tell you, I wouldn’t want to sit in the spring, just because there’s so much gas,” she said.

As many as a dozen people luxuriating in the bubbling warm waters of Northern California’s Soda Springs may have been asphyxiated over the years by the carbon dioxide that rises out of the Earth.

The BLM tore down the wall, and the springs are now off limits. Warning signs sit in the effervescent waters, strung together by a chain.”<sup>1</sup>

Kayak loop maps are available from the Lake County Tourist Improvement District. “With nearly a hundred miles of shoreline, Clear Lake is ideal for paddlers and wildlife enthusiasts to explore the sloughs or take on a rigorous workout in the open water. A series of water trails were thus developed to help orient new paddlers and visitors to the lake, as well as provide interesting natural and historical information of these areas.”<sup>2</sup> [Click here](#) to view the *District’s Clear Lake Water Loop 5: Volcanic Vents of Soda Bay* web page.

1. Text credit: Visit Kelseyville facebook page. [Click here](#) for the facebook post
2. Photo and text credit above: Lake County Tourist Improvement District website. [Click here](#) to view the *District’s Clear Lake Water Loop 5: Volcanic Vents of Soda Bay* web page.

## Wildlife of Riviera West

### Gray Fox

Recent social media posts in the Soda Bay area have put the spotlight on *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*, otherwise known as the gray fox. These agile and curious natives are more active – and therefore more visible – during the day in summer. They are mostly active in the evening and at night, when we hear their high-pitched barks. Their summer days are also busy, as parent foxes search for food and teach their pups how to hunt and forage. They are omnivores, preferring a diet of beetles and grasshoppers, bird eggs, mice, rats and rabbits, as well as berries, fruits and plants.

With the abundant population of ground squirrels in Riviera West, we can assume the foxes are hard at work keeping the rodent population in check!

The gray fox's habitat spreads throughout North America and the northernmost parts of South America. The species appeared in North America during the mid-Pliocene epoch 3.6 million years ago, along with the giant sloth and early small horses.<sup>1</sup> Foxes have adapted to all kinds of environments, including agricultural lands, and rocky, wooded and chaparral areas. They routinely share space with humans, whether the humans know it or not.

Most of us are familiar with the classic red fox, hero of many a folk tale. Red foxes are a European import to the US. Though they are both in the canid family, red foxes and gray foxes comprise two separate genera. The gray fox is distinguished by its larger size, silvery-gray coat and the black stripe extending down the spine to the tip of the tail. It also lacks the "black stockings" seen on the red fox.

Gray foxes are monogamous (as opposed to red foxes), with parents mating for life and working together to raise their pups.

#### Wikipedia provides some interesting background:

"The gray fox is specifically adapted to climb trees. Its strong, hooked claws allow it to scramble up trees to escape many predators, such as the domestic dog or the coyote, or to reach tree-bound or arboreal food sources. It can climb branchless, vertical trunks to heights of 18 meters (59 ft) and jump from branch to branch. It descends primarily by jumping from branch to branch, or by descending slowly backwards like a domestic cat. The gray fox is primarily nocturnal or crepuscular and makes its den in hollow trees, stumps or appropriated burrows during the day. Such gray fox tree dens may be located 30 ft (9 m) above the ground. For the most part, they rest on the ground rather than higher up in trees.

Prior to European colonization of North America, the red fox was found primarily in boreal forest and the gray fox in deciduous forest. With the increase in human populations in North America, their habitat selection has adapted: Gray foxes that live near human populations tend to choose areas near hardwood trees, locations used primarily by humans, or roads to utilize as their habitat.

The increase of coyote populations around North America has reduced certain fox populations, so gray foxes choose habitats that will allow escape from coyotes, therefore the fox's tendency to live nearer to areas where humans are active. The larger predators of the gray fox, like coyotes and bobcats, tend to avoid human-use areas and paved roads. They heavily utilize the edges of forests as a travel corridor, which is used for primary movement from place to place. Their choices do not change based on sex, the season, or the time of day. They also do the majority of their hunting in edges, and use them to escape from predators as well. Gray foxes are thus known as an "edge species."



Gray Fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*)  
Photo credit: Orange County Outdoors



Gray fox kits  
Photo credit: Zion National Park

1 Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gray\\_fox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gray_fox)