

# Copco Lake Proposed As New Park Site

By BILL JENKINS

With the constant growth of the West populationwise the recreational potential has assumed new proportions in the eyes of western administrators.

Not the least of this potential being the development of adequate parks and picnic grounds for the large segment of the population who want their outdoor recreation on the soft and easy side.

The development of such areas must take into consideration such items as natural beauty, easy access, water suitable for some forms of fishing as well as the various water sports, maintenance at an economic level that is not crippling and, wherever possible, extended use.

One of the recent and more interesting proposals has been the purchase by the state of California of the shoreline of Copco Lake for use as a state park. Various surveys have been made and the general consensus of opinion seems to be that the area would be suitable. At least Senator Collier of Yreka has so intimated. It was he who called for and got an authorization by the last session of the Legislature for the State Division of Beaches and Parks to proceed with a survey.

The results of that survey have been reported favorable. Under terms of the authorization and Collier's resolution the matter will be brought before the Legislature sometime early in the 1960 session.

As a matter of interest I went down there one sunny day last summer and toured the area pretty thoroughly with Frank Lathrop, the present owner of the property.

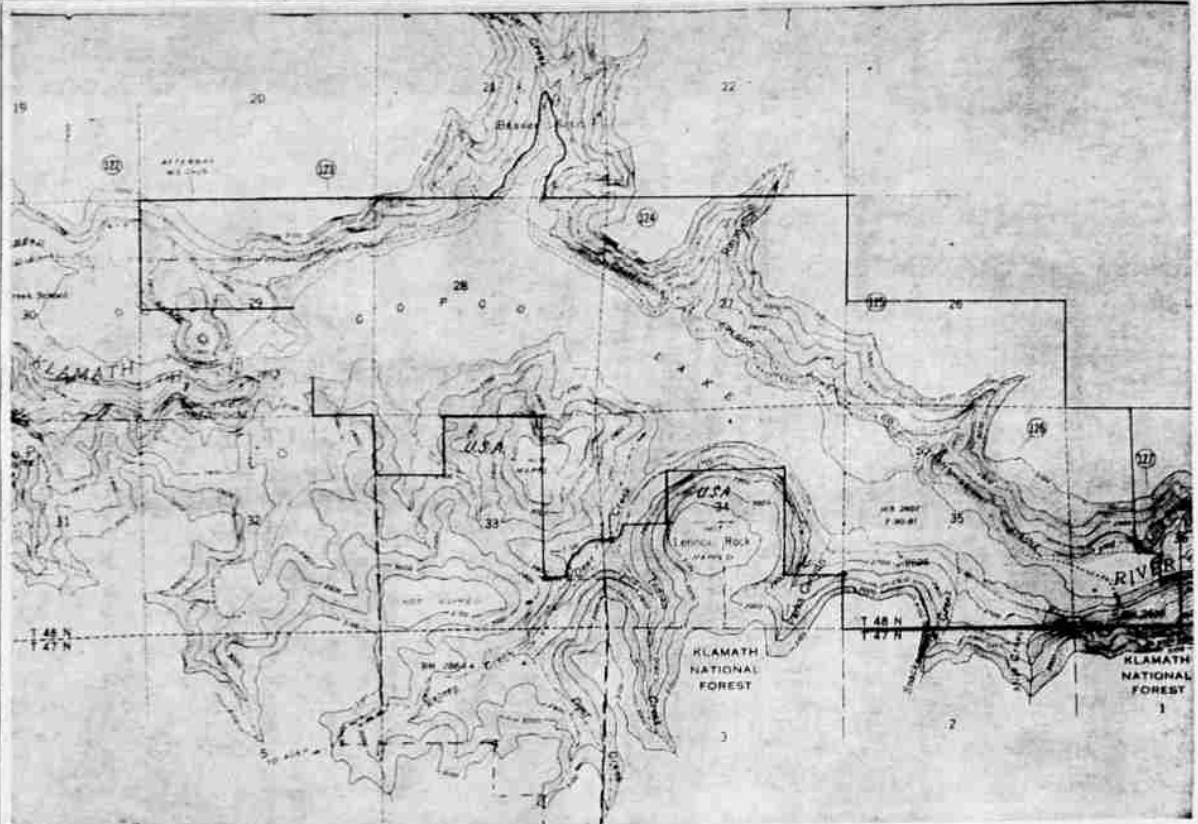
The lake is formed by the Copco power dam at the point where the river boils down out of the canyon. As the map of the shoreline shows it is an intricate lake. There is not the rounded shape of shore, the placid listlessness of so many "park" lakes. This is a virile and vital lake. The very bluffs and hills that surround it reflect this same virility. At points along the lake huge rock outcrops soar up in extrusions shot with color and reflecting their massive might in the clouded waters below.

All through the area are long reaches of park-like clearings, now filled with cattle or looming green and vivid with carefully irrigated crops. All part of the reclamation program of the Lathrops who have materially improved the land since their original purchase some years ago.

At points the surrounding terrain slopes gently down to the lake and affords beaches and boat launching sites, although these are not so plentiful as to preclude the possibility of more having to be developed by more strenuous efforts.

At the head of the lake where the Klamath River flattens out into oily rolls there is an old steel bridge, built further down the lake and floated into position. Here anglers sit comfortably on the rotting planks of the deck and catch warm water fish by the bucket load and small children scramble about in the nearby grass and lush meadows.

Lying as it does at a considerable elevation the lake offers cool weather even during the warm spells although you can feel the prick of the sun when it reaches zenith. The elevation also offers a wide variety of plant and tree life. You can find oak groves, willow tangles, stately pines, fir and cedar all in conjunction and all scattered more or less around



**THE SHORELINE OF COPCO LAKE.** Proposed site of new state park, the first in Siskiyou County. A preliminary survey by State Division of Beaches and Parks shows area to be ideal for maximum recreation.



**LOOKING UP THE LAKE** from one of the improved beaches one can see the sweep of water and the commanding aspect of the hills surrounding Copco Lake. At this particular spot there is a good spring, with another and larger one lying just above the site.

the entire shoreline. In spots there are wide spaces where the summer grass gleams yellow and the insects rustle loudly as they make their restless moves. Soaring high above these open meadows and wooded glens are the mountain tops, level for the most part but occasionally broken by minor rims and outthrusts. Vultures wheel in the sky above them and look down in airborne disdain. There are old Indian caves and hideaways in those steep hillsides that will bear much exploring should one care to expend the energy to climb to them.

The lake is a haven for waterfowl of all descriptions. In the summer months one will find tall herons and cranes, diving ducks

here and there, eager, swift kingfishers, screaming their calls from the dead snags around the water's edge. As you cruise leisurely around the lake in a boat you spot deer hidden alongside the hills, mostly lying in the sun during the morning hours, creeping into the shade of stunted oaks and manzanita during the heat of the day and feeding in the tiny inlets at evening.

Several creeks flow into the lake from various springs located beneath rocks and on the far side of the lake an ice cold torrent foams from a hillside above the road and spills its cold goodness down through the grass to the lake. Tall, thick trees make a roof over this cooling spot, welcome during the

summer and fall months of heat. It is, as all spots of like type are, a cooling and soothing place. There is much there to calm the fevers of man's indignation at life and send him away a cleansed and better man.

There are also problems. The lake would require, should the state take over, considerable work to come up to the standards set by the various agencies. For one thing there are a plenitude of snags and old stumps in the water that would have to be cleaned out before boating would be a safe matter. Particularly the high speed type of boating called for in the most popular form of water sport today—water skiing. I can also see a potential battle over the skiing

types versus the fishing types.

It cannot be denied that there are fish in the lake. The river upstream is largely under private ownership and stream fishing is a pretty seldom sort of thing there. Fire hazard in the area runs high during the summer. Maintaining roads might or might not be a problem. I am not an engineer and wouldn't know. I see no real difficulty here, but would guess that the lake would get a heavy play only during the short summer months and the golden days of fall.

If it were established such a park would be the only state park in Siskiyou County. In the long

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