

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 1, 2022

Charles F. Sams III
Director
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Sams:

I write regarding the continued closure of the majority of the boat launch ramps at Lake Mead National Recreation Area and the negative impact these closures have on many of my constituents. As you know, on May 11, 2022, the Echo Bay boat launch ramp was closed due to low water levels in Lake Mead, leaving Hemenway Harbor as the only launch ramp remaining open. These closures have created a number of recreation access issues, while also harming small businesses and local economies that depend on tourism and visitation.


The Lake Mead National Recreation Area includes over 1.5 million acres of brilliant landscapes, with opportunities to hike, swim, boat, and fish. Lake Mead alone has over 750 miles of shoreline and six boat ramps. However, five of the six boat ramps are currently closed due to low water levels caused by severe drought. Because only one ramp is currently open, Nevadans and other visitors to Lake Mead are experiencing multiple-hour waits to launch boats, sometimes in extreme heat conditions. The prolonged closure of these boat ramps through prime fishing season leaves many recreationists cut off from access to the lake at the time of highest demand. In addition, local outdoor recreation small businesses and nearby communities are experiencing significant economic losses because they depend on fishing and boating tourism from around the region for their livelihoods.

I fully understand that Lake Mead is facing challenges with fast-dropping water levels. Over 70 percent of the West is currently experiencing severe or extreme drought conditions, and as a result, Lake Mead has dropped to less than 30 percent of its full water capacity. My focus is first and foremost on addressing drought conditions in Nevada and mitigating their effects. However, while I greatly appreciate the work that the National Park Service (NPS) is doing to accommodate lowering lake levels and ensure public safety during this period of historically severe drought, I urge NPS to find a speedy resolution to resulting boat launch ramp closures and restore equitable access to outdoor recreation opportunities at Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

I request that you provide me with information about the actions you are taking to re-open launch ramps; and if there are no plans to re-open the launch ramps, please share NPS' reasoning and justification for the continued closures. Given that we are approaching the end of the summer season, I ask that you provide me with this information no later than August 12, 2022.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator