



Big Bear Municipal Water District

Lake Management

Board of VPs

Steve Ludecke – Division 1
Bob Rehfuß – Division 2
Craig Brewster – Division 3
Mark Lee – Division 4
Tom Bradford – Division 5

Operations Committee Meeting Minutes January 26, 2026

Present: Director Lee
Director Rehfuß
Jared Cheek, General Manager
Elsa Donoho, Board Secretary
Drew Pappas, Lake Ops Manager
Michael Kent, Grants & Data Analyst

Public: Damien Navarro & Johnny Burnham (Hueco Tanks, Event Applicant).

1. Review Special Event Applications

a. Polar Plunge

- i. Applicant requested a date change; no staff input was provided on the change.
- ii. Fire Department and Sheriff's Department support the event.
- iii. The event has a positive 15-year history with the District.
- iv. Committee requested the application be forwarded to the Full Board for approval.

b. US Rowing

- i. Applicant overview:
 1. Hueco Tanks operates as a contractor who now contracts with Visit Big Bear.
 2. New application reflects feedback from prior committee review.
 3. Proposed dates: April 27 through May 20, 2026.
 4. Approximately 30 athletes
- ii. Operations and scheduling:
 1. Training requested seven days per week; with the District's discretion on whether Saturday's can be used or not as it is the busiest anticipated day of the week.
 2. Morning sessions only; afternoon sessions eliminated.
 3. Limited lake use window discussed; initial weekend to serve as proof of concept.
 - a. If lake traffic increases or safety concerns arise, operations may be canceled.
- iii. Course and equipment:
 1. Reduced footprint achieved through use of eight-person boats.
 2. Course footprint remains fixed; only number of boats varies.
 3. Maximum of two 8-person rowing boats side-by-side at one time.
 4. No more than four rowing boats on the water at one time.
 5. Docking to occur at Gray's Marina.
 6. West Ramp will not be open during the event period.
- iv. Safety and patrol staffing:

1. Two no-wake chase/coach boats required by event organizer whenever rowing is occurring.
 2. Additional District patrol boat requested; cost to be reimbursed by event organizer.
 3. In the event of an emergency, the rowing course will be abandoned.
 4. Emergency egress identified as the West Launch Ramp with fire station nearby.
 5. All chase boats to carry PFDs; patrol boat PFD requirements confirmed.
 6. CA Boater Card required for applicable operators.
- v. Visibility and public notification:
1. Patrol boats to act as liaison between rowing operations and anglers.
 2. Request for vessel designation and flag both identifying "US Rowing."
 3. Signage to be posted at launches and marinas by event organizer.
 4. Public outreach emphasized as critical.
- vi. Buoys and inspections:
1. 5 mph buoys identified as the outer perimeter.
 2. Request made to relocate District navigational buoys and leave them in place for event duration with relocation no later than May 21.
 3. Concern noted regarding casting distance for anglers.
 4. Tim Royalty identified as buoy installer, expected to place course marker buoys between the District navigational buoys and shoreline.
 5. Staff requested clarification on buoy spacing.
 6. All equipment entering the water must be inspected prior to launch.
- vii. Staffing, costs, and impacts:
1. Applicant confirmed lake patrol operator and boat cost, as well as actual costs incurred by the District will be reimbursed by Hueco Tanks.
 2. Committee clarified this event will not create a financial burden for the District.
 3. Event includes one team only.
 4. US Rowing is a nonprofit organization; Hueco Tanks operates as a for-profit contractor.
- viii. Social media and communications:
1. Applicant to provide sentiment reporting on social media activity.
 2. District staff and applicant teams will monitor platforms.
 3. Request made for summary feedback to be provided to Directors.
- ix. Schedule adjustments:
1. Committee requested revised dates to avoid proximity to Memorial Day weekend.
 2. Proposal to end the event by May 20 to allow buoy restoration before the holiday.
 3. Course buoys proposed for removal on May 19; District buoys restored May 21.
- x. Committee direction:
1. Applicant to provide a 5–10 minute presentation to the Board.
 2. Committee consensus to forward the application to the Full Board for review and approval on February 5, 2026.

2. Boat Discussion

- a. Follow-up discussion on wakeboard and ballast-equipped boats.

- b. Proposed options discussed:
 - i. No action and revisit next year.
 - ii. Limited-use area between Gilner Point and Eagle Point.
 - iii. Interior buoy line along the entire shoreline.
 - 1. Estimated \$30,000 cost for buoy materials to designate a wake-use area.
 - c. Staff has no documented injuries or property damage attributed to wake boats to date.
 - d. Enforcement considerations would require amendment to Ordinance 51, with initial soft enforcement.
 - e. Shoreline erosion discussed; staff noted difficulty attributing erosion solely to vessel activity.
 - f. Committee confirmed it is the Districts authority to regulate water sports. Director Rehfuss has concern regarding ballast boats causing lakebed and habitat degradation.
 - g. Ballast regulation discussed, including requirement for empty ballast outside designated zones.
 - h. Staff will observe and collect data on ballast boat activity during the upcoming season.
 - i. Discussion regarding other lake's rules and regulations which included:
 - i. Limitation of ballast boats.
 - ii. Concession-only use.
 - iii. Quarantine-only access.
 - 1. Kent stated that a 30-day quarantine for ballast boats is an industry standard length of time.
 - j. Committee asked that the Full Board hold a public workshop via Special Board Meeting. The workshop should include stakeholder participation (Marinas, Concession, Lakefront Homeowners). Committee requested boat counts and usage data.
- 3. Operations Issues & Updates**
- a. None.