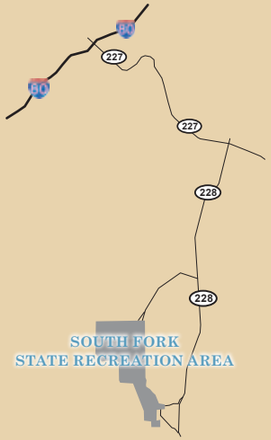
South Fork

State Recreation Area

353 Lower South Fork #8, Spring Creek, Nevada 89815
sfsra@wirelessbeehive.com
(775) 744–4346



South Fork State Reservoir is located by traveling 7 miles south of Elko on State Route 227, 5.5 miles south on State Route 228, and 3.5 miles southwest on Lower South Fork Road.

DIVISION OF STATE PARKS

901 S. Stewart St., Suite 5005
Carson City, Nevada 89701–5248
www.parks.nv.gov • (775) 684–2770

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(775) 744–4346
www.parks.nv.gov/sf.htm

Facilities

ENTRANCE FEES

Park user fees are charged for day-use and camping. Fee schedules are posted at all self-pay fee stations.

BOAT LAUNCHING

Two boat ramps are available. The southwest shore boat launch can accommodate boats up to 15 feet in length. Float tube enthusiasts are encouraged to use this area. The main boat launch has ample parking and a non-flush restroom.

CAMPING

A 25-site campground is located off the north park access road. Facilities include campsite tables, grills and a flush restroom with showers.

The campground is open from early May to mid October, depending on weather conditions. Open camping is also available along the southwest shore. All campsites are first-come, first-served. South Fork does not have a camping reservation system.

DAY-USE

There are no developed day-use facilities at this time. Picnicking is allowed in most areas of the reservoir.

RV DUMP STATION

An RV dump station is available year-round and is just off the main north park entrance road.

PARK OFFICE

The park office is open intermittently depending on staffing levels. Please stop in or call (775) 744-4346 for assistance.

REMINDERS

To make your visit and the visit of others more enjoyable, please observe the following:

- Drive only on established roadways and park only in designated areas.
- Vehicles and operators must be licensed.
- Dogs must be on a leash.
- Please do not disturb the wildlife.
- Please dispose of garbage in appropriate receptacles.
- Hunting is allowed in season with a shotgun or archery only. Hunting is prohibited within a quarter mile of any developed facility such as campgrounds and boat ramps. The discharge of any weapons is prohibited other than for hunting during an established hunting season
- Fishing regulations are in effect. Please be familiar with current regulations.
- A flat-wake boating zone is in effect in the willows area of the reservoir.
- Campfires are only permitted in designated fire rings. Ground fires are prohibited.
- Quiet hours are from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.
- The juvenile curfew is 10 p.m.

HISTORY

The South Fork of the Humboldt River is a main tributary to the Humboldt River drainage basin. and originates along the west slope of the Ruby Mountains, approximately 40 miles south of Elko, Nevada.

The history of the South Fork Dam project goes back to the 1938 Flood Control Act, when the U.S. Congress authorized feasibility studies for building dams and reservoirs on rivers such as the Humboldt. In 1983, the Nevada State Legislature passed Senate Bill 153, which allowed the State to issue State Revenue bonds for the construction of South Fork Dam. The Dam was completed in 1988 using funding from the State of Nevada and Elko County residents.

The South Fork Reservoir operation adopted a "flow-in flow-out" concept, thus protecting downstream water rights and minimizing the impacts to wildlife habitat in the Humboldt Sink.

South Fork Dam is designed as a rolled, earth filled embankment approximately 1,650 feet long, 90 feet high, with a 30-foot crest. A primary and secondary spillway regulates overflow. South Fork Reservoir is approximately three miles long and one to one-half miles wide. The average depth is 30 to 35 feet. Storage capacity is 40,000 acre-feet.

The basic premise of South Fork Reservoir is storage of excess flows of the Upper Humboldt Drainage system to provide a recreational reservoir for water based recreation.

With constant water levels, South Fork Reservoir has become a highly productive fishery. Trophy size Rainbow and Brown Trout, Cutt-bow Trout, Small mouth and Largemouth Black Bass, Wiper hybrid Bass and Channel Catfish are the dominant game fish species in South Fork Reservoir. These species are thriving in what were productive and densely vegetated meadows. Most fish caught are of exceptional girth compared to length. The Nevada Division of State Parks, Nevada Division of Wildlife and Nevada Division of Water Resources share the operations and management of South Fork Reservoir.

TOMERA RANCH HISTORY

South Fork Reservoir is situated on what was once the historic Tomera Ranch. Initial settlement of South Fork Valley occurred in 1867. This area offered a constant supply of water, and good travel routes between thriving mining camps.

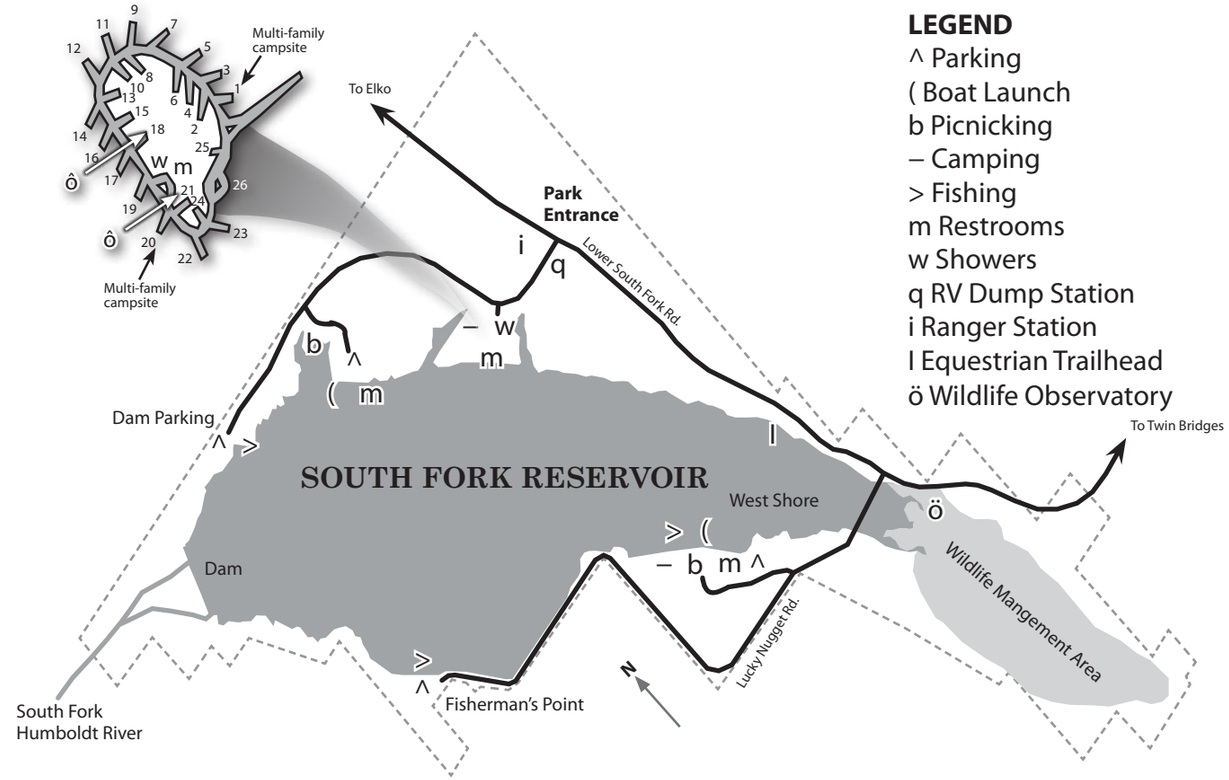
In 1983, the Tomera Ranch was sold to the State of Nevada by the Tomera family.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND WILDLIFE

South Fork Reservoir occupies what was once a wide river valley covered with fertile meadows that were used for grass cover, hay production and grazing pasture. With the filling of South Fork Reservoir in 1995, these meadows were flooded and what are left for the visitors to see are older river terraces with gentle to steeply sloping bluffs.

Plants along these bluffs are abundant and include big sagebrush, black sagebrush, rabbit-brush, willow, grasses, sedges, rushes and forbs.

Noxious weeks have invaded many portions of South Fork Reservoir and efforts to eradicate weeds are continually undergone by park staff. These efforts are complicated, time-consuming and will take many years to be successful.



Native trees are limited to narrow-leaf cottonwood, single-leaf pinyon pine and Utah juniper in the southern portion of the park. Efforts are under way to plant native trees throughout South Fork.

Waterfowl are common at South Fork, including mallard ducks, pintail ducks, green-winged teal, American widgeon, northern shoveler and common coots. Canada geese are also year-round residents.

Mammals include Rocky Mountain mule deer, badgers, coyote, beavers and kit foxes.

FISHING AND HUNTING

The South Fork of the Humboldt River portion, from the Lucky Nugget Subdivision access causeway to the upstream Gauging Station, is open for public use. Fishing and hunting in season with only a shotgun is allowed. This area of South Fork is designed as a trophy fishery with a one trout limit. Only artificial lures with single barb-fewer hooks may be used.

The downstream portion of the South Fork of the Humboldt, below the dam, is also open to fishing and hunting in season with shotgun only, one quarter mile past the spill way. The South Fork canyon area west of the park boundary is managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

CLIMATE

The Ruby Mountains are 10-15 miles to the east and provide a scenic backdrop for the park, rising to 11,387 feet at Ruby Dome.

The area is typical of northeastern Nevada with arid, hot summers and cold winters. Temperatures are variable with highs in the 90s in the summers with lows of minus zero possible during the winter.