

BOAT RAMP READY FOR USE AT BIG BAR

By *The Record*
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MOKELUMNE HILL - A new parking area for boaters is finished and open for use at Big Bar, where Highway 49 crosses the Mokelumne River, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management announced.

The bureau said the put-in/takeout facility opened Aug. 29.

The Electra Run, upstream from Big Bar, and the Middle Bar Run downstream are popular with kayakers and rafters.

The opening culminates 25 years of efforts to provide public access to the river there. Members of the Luchetti, Zumwalt and Nessler families agreed to lease it for use by the bureau.

"This opens up more recreation opportunities, is safer and avoids trespass on private property," said Jim Eicher, associate manager for the bureau's Mother Lode field office.

Access to that stretch of river has long been the subject of legal battles.

It was only after several kayakers were arrested but local district attorneys refused to prosecute that the East Bay Municipal Utility District relented and installed a public access point at the Middle Bar Bridge.

And litigation will likely continue as EBMUD contemplates a plan to raise Pardee Dam, which would inundate the free-flowing river from Middle Bar to a point east of the Highway 49 bridge. If that happens, the new bureau access point also would be lost.

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