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## Lowell plan shapes future

*Fate of recreational uses at lake fuels comments*

CANYON COUNTY — Friday is the deadline for the initial round of public comments on a plan that could restrict boating, swimming and other uses at Lake Lowell. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is in the early stages of developing a congressionally mandated Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, which must be completed by 2012. As of this past week, officials had received about 400 comments, Assistant Refuge Manager Kendra Niemec said.

*James Cagle of Caldwell lifts his daughter, Kelsi, into the boat while Tanner waits on the dock for his turn as his wife, Valerie, hangs on to Riley Friday at Lake Lowell. The Cagle family enjoys using the lake for boating, wakeboarding and tube riding.*



The potential loss of recreation on the lake has drawn a public outcry. Supporters argue restrictions on boating and other uses would be devastating for the local economy and strain other area recreation spots like Lucky Peak.

Nampa, Caldwell and Canyon County officials signed proclamations last week declaring September Lake Lowell month in support of maintaining recreational uses. Sen. Mike Crapo's office has received about 200 comments on the plan, spokesman Lindsay Nothern said Friday.

"About 98 percent of them say they like the lake just as it is now," Nothern said. Many argue that recreation and wildlife have coexisted on the lake for 100 years, and that existing restrictions on boating and other uses provide sufficient protection.



*A group water skis Friday at Lake Lowell. Some recreational uses such as skiing are being examined to determine if they are appropriate and compatible with wildlife conservation at the surrounding Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge.*

"What we have asked is that this process be an open and transparent one," Nothern said. "At this point, we're waiting to see what the Fish and Wildlife Service decides to do with it." Crapo

became involved at the request of county commissioners and residents who use the lake, some of who are wary of federal involvement, Nothern said.

"There's a feeling out there that there will be or could be a decision that will come down from Washington ... that will not take into account that long history of shared use," Nothern said.