



2021 ARVC Large Park of the Year & Plan it Green Large/Mega Park of the Year

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Santee Lakes Recreation Preserve Named 2021 ARVC Large Park of the Year and Plan- It Green Park of the Year

Contact: Director of Park & Recreation, Laura Koval

Santee, CA. – Santee Lakes Recreation Preserve has been named Plan-it Green and Large Park of the Year by the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (ARVC). This prominent recognition was awarded during the recent 2021 Outdoor Hospitality Conference & Expo (OHCE).

“Despite the numerous challenges we faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, Santee Lakes still managed to embrace our family-friendly camping culture and create a much needed respite from stressors in the world,” said Koval. “As one guest said, “First campground I’ve been to in a while that feels like home.” “I am so impressed...the customer service we received was great, and I felt like all of the employees were genuinely happy to have us visit. I’m already checking their website for cancellations, as I cannot wait to go back!”

Santee Lakes received the highest honor winning Park of the Year Award in the ‘Large Park’ category. The Park of the Year Awards are a signature part of ARVC’s Awards of Excellence, which are presented annually to the standout parks in the outdoor hospitality industry.

“The ARVC Park of the Year Awards showcase excellence at so many levels and Santee Lakes is a shining star reaching the highest level of recognition,” says ARVC President and CEO Paul Bambei. “To win both Park of the Year and Plan-It Green Park of the Year in 2021 is quite an accomplishment and it shows the high level of excellence Santee Lakes provides its customers, employees and community. We are proud to have Santee Lakes Recreation Preserve as part of the ARVC community!”

Santee Lakes also received the Plan-it Green award in the Large/Mega Category for being an outstanding park committed to sustainability on every level. From new LEED construction utilizing bioswales and solar, a weed harvester to maintain the seven lakes, several restoration projects, and bird rescue programs, guests have reported being impressed with the park’s commitment to Green initiatives, clean facilities, friendly staff and the ability to enjoy a peaceful and beautiful location in the middle of a city.

The year 2021 marks Santee Lakes Recreation Preserve's 60th anniversary of operation. In 1959, the Santee County Water District (now the Padre Dam Municipal Water District) embarked on the unique project of recycling wastewater for irrigation and commercial purposes. At the end of the treatment process a chain of seven recycled water lakes were developed. Boating and fishing were authorized in 1961 and Santee Lakes opened to the public for recreation. The recycled water project and Santee Lakes received worldwide attention and continues to attract visitors in the field of water reuse and reclamation.

Park Director Laura Koval accepted these awards on Thursday evening, November 11. "I would like to thank all of the guests that choose Santee Lakes Recreation Preserve year after year." Koval said. "We are honored to host generations of families and create lasting memories with our campers."

Santee Lakes Recreation Preserve was one of many campgrounds in the running for these awards. "We are humbled to receive these honors, especially during the year of our 60th anniversary," said Koval. "The staff has worked tirelessly to maintain Santee Lakes as an environmentally sustainable and premier destination. These awards will be cherished for many years to come."

The ARVC Plan-It-Green Park of the Year Award honors parks in two categories—Small/Medium and Large/Mega—that show leadership, innovation and commitment to running an environmentally friendly park.

ARVC awards "Park of the Year" in four categories: small, medium, large, and mega. Judges make their decision based on a number of criteria: guest experiences, all-around excellence in operations, professionalism, marketing, customer service, and industry involvement.

Santee Lakes Recreation Preserve hosts over 760,000 visitors annually. The 190-acre Park has seven beautiful recycled water lakes that are stocked with fish year-round. Two million gallons of water each day is recycled at our Ray Stoyer Water Recycling Facility north of Santee Lakes and the water then flows through Santee Lakes to create a unique recreation area. Amenities include camping, cabin rentals, fishing, boating, playgrounds, walking trails, facility rentals, special events and approximately 230 bird species. The Park is owned and operated by Padre Dam Municipal Water District. However, it is self-sustaining and receives no funds from water or wastewater ratepayers. The Park operates from guest user fees, grants and awards, collaborations with community groups and sponsorships. ###