

# Equestrian Assembly Area at Lake Natoma — Negro Bar

near Milepost 27.3 along the historic Pioneer Express Trail

Folsom Lake State Recreation Area

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## Introduction

The equestrian assembly area at Lake Natoma — Negro Bar is within the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area, eastern Sacramento County. Horse truck and trailer access is from Madison Avenue, just half-mile west of Auburn-Folsom Road. The annual "Poppy Pass" can be used here, otherwise there is a gate-fee to use the horse assembly area. The main venue for Lake Natoma — Negro Bar is the boat-launch facility for canoes, kayaks, and fishermen, with secondary uses for rowing (=crew) and family picnics. Lake Natoma is a narrow but long reservoir with quiet water that is highly prized for rowing (=crew). Lake Natoma functions as the after-bay for Folsom Dam and it has a near-constant water-level that is carefully regulated by the Bureau of Reclamation. While it is not a principal venue for equestrians, it is likely that more riders would use this horse assembly area if it were better known. That is the purpose of this brief report.



## Horse Assembly Area

From the main entrance sign, proceed on the main paved road through the entrance station (pay daily fee or show Poppy Pass), then turn right (=west) onto the park road. The horse assembly area is not marked with proper signage, but is an open field on the north side of the road. This parking area can accommodate about 30 or 40 horse trailers. There are no facilities, other than one hitching post, one water-trough, and one restroom. This horse-trailer parking area is heavily used each April for the AERC American River Classic, a 50-mile endurance ride up the North Fork of the American River to Auburn.





Horses should stay in the assembly area and not use the adjacent soccer field. The restroom is about 150 yards west of the horse assembly area.

### Pioneer Express Trail near Milepost 27



The Pioneer Express Trail is routed up-and-over the unstable cliffs along Lake Natoma. Do not ride horses down the paved bike path; the photograph clearly shows that there is no lateral-escape for the horse (cliff on one side and lake on the other) with head-on traffic from fast-paced bicycles. The Mehrten Formation has loose cobbles and significant vertical joints that could result in falling blocks of sedimentary rock. The California Department of Parks and Recreation has recently (January 2011) installed a protective block wall along the paved bike trail which is heavily used on a daily basis by hundreds of cyclists. The horse trail proceeding westward (towards Sacramento) is routed above the cliffs. Most equestrians ride northward towards Granite Bay and Auburn.

### History of Negro Bar

Joseph L. Folsom purchased 35,521 acres from William Leidesdorff in 1848 in this area. By 1849 it was a bustling village of placer miners, mostly African-Americans, hence the place-name. By 1851, about 700 placer miners were living and working here. Placer dredges on floating barges were extensively used in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Huge mounds of cobbles can be seen along Auburn-Folsom Road. A complete history of this area is posted at the historic Folsom Powerhouse, across Lake Natoma, with lots of photographs of the history of Folsom. Lake Natoma was created in the early 1950's as a reservoir that serves as an afterbay for Folsom Dam.

