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# Ramp extension approval a victory for Diamond Valley Lake fishers

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**By GAIL WESSON**
**The Press-Enterprise**

Diamond Valley Lake could reopen to private boaters as early as February following Metropolitan Water District directors' authorization Tuesday to extend the lake's boat ramp.

The 11-lane ramp was closed in October when the lake level dropped far enough that the ramp didn't reach the water.

Metropolitan will spend an estimated $1.1 million to extend three lanes by 228 feet. The cost will be recouped by higher parking and launch fees, according to a district news release.

"I'm really pleased about the action today," said Randy Record, who represents Perris-based Eastern Municipal Water District on the Metropolitan board, which oversees the lake.

"What I'm really proud about is people from the community coming down and offering to help," Record said by phone.

Megan Merchant, owner of Last Chance Bait and Tackle in Hemet, started a petition that more than 1,000 people signed, saying they would agree to a reasonable fee increase to get the work started.

She attended board meetings in Los Angeles to share "stories about what fishing means to people," she said by phone. She tried a positive approach and was thankful that the board listened, she said as she returned home from Tuesday's meeting.

Diamond Valley Lake, a huge, man-made reservoir southwest of Hemet, has been tapped amid California's drought, leaving it about 43 percent full.

Anglers can still fish from the shoreline or rent boats at the lake marina that don't need the private ramp.

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