

America's State Parks

Arkansas's Lake Catherine State Park

Lake Catherine State Park in southwest Arkansas provides access to fishing, water sports, and lakeside recreation while conserving natural features representative of the Ouachita Mountains, such as waterfalls, mountain streams, and rock outcroppings. Three stone-and-wood cabins, a former concessions building, and a bridge located within the park are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as examples of the rustic architecture style used by the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which built the park.

In August 1935, Harvey Couch, founder of the Arkansas Power and Light Company, donated to the state 2,048 acres of his land along the shore of Lake Catherine. The 1,940-acre lake had been created by Rammel Dam, the state's first major hydroelectric project, in 1924. The donated land was officially designated a state park on August 22, 1935, making it the first among a number of state parks that would be located beside major man-made lakes built for hydropower and flood-control purposes.

The Civilian Conservation Corps began park construction in 1937. The park opened that year after construction of a road to the then-remote site. From 1942 to 1945, the park was used as a rest-and-recreation satellite facility for wounded servicemen in the Army-Navy Hospital in nearby Hot Springs (Garland County).

Current park facilities include a visitor center, a store, cabins, campsites, a marina with rental boats, a horseback riding stable, picnic areas, pavilions, playgrounds, a swimming area with sand beach and bathhouse, and more than ten miles of hiking trails. Interpretive nature and recreational programs are offered. [<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=1228>]

