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# Geographic setting of the Bear Lake Basin

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## GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

Bear Lake is one of Rich County's most striking geographic vistas. The lake is used as a resource for irrigation and power generation, recreation and reflection, and functions as a unique fisheries habitat. It is located within an elongated basin between 2 active fault systems at the boundary between the Basin and Range Province and the Colorado Plateau. The lake covers more than 112 square miles and straddles the Idaho-Utah border. Approximately 20 miles long and 8 miles wide, it sits at an elevation of 5,924 feet along the northeast side of the Wasatch Range and on the east side of the Bear River Mountains. It is 208 feet at its deepest point with an average depth of 94 feet. A steep mountain face that begins its climb nearly from the water's edge mostly defines the eastern shore. The western shore rises more gradually through foothills to a high ridge. The north and south shores are natural beach bars. Beyond the bar at the north end is Dingle Swamp, whose open-water portion is called Mud Lake and is the home of the Bear Lake Wildlife Refuge. Figure 1 details the approximate location.

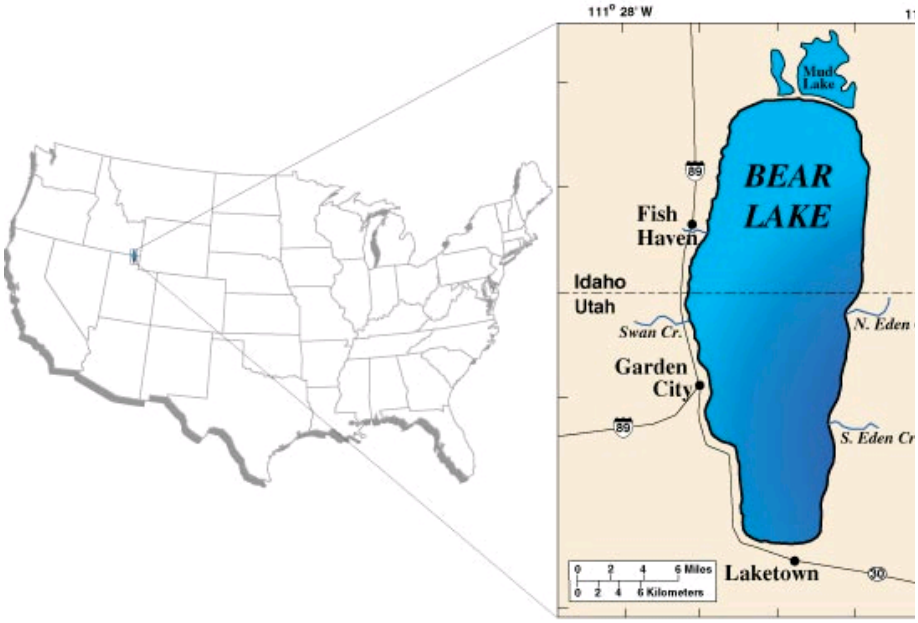


*Figure 1. Geographic Setting for Bear Lake (Denny, 2002).*

Land use in and around Bear Lake is composed of three basic types. First, the high mountain lands which are used primarily for grazing, watershed protection and some recreation. Second, the foothills which are used for grazing, dry farm crops and recreational home sites; and third, the valley lands used for irrigated croplands, pasture for native grass, hay or cattle grazing, and major residential areas.

The lake is often noted for its deep blue color resulting from high concentrations of calcium carbonate in the water, and is a popular summer tourist destination and holds some of the best beaches in the intermountain west. The lake has three marinas, several campsites, and two small tourist towns known as Garden City and Laketown.