

# Recreation Strategic Plan

April 2011



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

MAR 31 2011

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MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDERS, MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS AND DISTRICT COMMANDS, AND CHIEFS, OPERATIONS, MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS AND DISTRICTS

SUBJECT: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers National Recreation Program Strategic Plan

1. The enclosed USACE National Recreation Program Strategic Plan provides long-term guidance for our recreation program to ensure we continue to provide safe, quality outdoor recreation opportunities for the public in light of current budget realities. The plan recognizes that water-based recreation is the major attraction of USACE recreation areas. The plan represents a framework that can guide field manager decisions to achieve our recreation program strategic goals and objectives. It is effective immediately.
2. Over the past year, a talented, multi-disciplinary team of professionals from the Natural Resources Management, Hydropower, and Planning CoPs developed this plan with input from Divisions, Districts, and field offices. It provides field managers with flexibility and options to make changes necessary to implement sound fiscal operations, pursue new partnerships and leases, promote environmentally sustainable behaviors, and strengthen the workforce.
3. To assure its effectiveness, the plan must be available, understood, supported, and used at all levels of the organization. I expect you to ensure it is widely distributed to all Communities of Practice, and to Operations Project Managers, in particular. To introduce the plan and its intended purposes, a series of field-focused webinars will be conducted in the near future. I strongly encourage you and your staff to participate and learn more.
4. I commend all who actively developed or provided input to this plan, which is essential to proactively guide the future of water-based recreation for the public. My POC for this subject is Pep Persio, (202) 761-0036.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

for

WILLIAM T. GRISOLI  
Major General, USA  
Deputy Commanding General  
for Civil and Emergency Operations

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## Introduction

As the nation's largest federal provider of outdoor recreation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) manages 12 million acres of lands and waters at Corps water resource development projects across the country. The recreation mission of the Corps is to manage and conserve natural resources, while providing quality public outdoor recreation opportunities to serve the needs of present and future generations. As a result of budget realities, it is necessary for the Corps to change the way it delivers recreation services to the American public. While there have been some changes in the recreation program over the last 20 years, beginning in 2008, funding levels necessitate a number of changes in on-the-ground operations at a growing number of recreation areas. Looking ahead, it became evident that the downward trend in funding would continue and that a national strategy was needed to guide future program and operational changes. The first step in the strategic planning process was the identification of a number of actions and activities that were needed to create a foundation of tools and information to build the strategy and adapt the program over both the short and long term. In early 2010, a diverse team of Natural Resources Management professionals and representatives from the Hydropower and Planning Communities of Practice was convened and given the responsibility to develop a long-term strategic plan for the Corps recreation program.

The plan recognizes that a major attraction of Corps recreation areas is water based recreation and incorporates initiatives to link people to water. It provides a framework for local managers to use in making decisions to continue providing public access to the water, while maintaining the Corps role as the nation's leading federal outdoor recreation provider. Local managers will work with the public and their partners in the implementation of the strategy.

The plan includes goals, objectives, and priorities for changes in the program. There are a set of on-going and potential actions that may be undertaken at various organizational levels. On-the ground managers may choose to use these actions to help guide management decisions toward the goals. Implementation of this strategy will occur over time so as to accomplish changes within the context of budgets, staffing, and organizational structure. Through creativity, innovation, strong partnerships, and environmentally sustainable stewardship, quality recreation opportunities will continue to be available to the public.

***“We are proud of the long history of recreation services that the Corps has provided to the public. In order to continue to do that in a quality manner in the future, we must be flexible and adaptable. This plan provides our managers, districts and regions the guidance to move in the right direction”***

-- Mike Enschede,  
Chief of Operations,  
U.S. Army Corps of  
Engineers

## Scope of the Program

Currently, the Corps is the nation's largest provider of water based recreation resources. Due to the role played by Corps projects and their authorized purposes, most of these resources are near metropolitan areas and many of these metro areas are anticipated to experience significant population growth in the next decade. The only island of green for many Americans is a Corps project. Part of the natural resources management program, the Corps recreation program shares responsibility for stewardship of, resource protection for, and visitor assistance on nearly 12 million acres of land and water.



### Facts about the Recreation Program

- 4254 recreation areas at 422 Corps lakes in 43 states
- Hosts about 370 million visits annually
- 90% of Corps lakes/rivers with recreation areas are within 50 miles of a Metropolitan area
- 60, 813 volunteers worked 1.5 million hours providing service to the agency valued at over \$30 million



## **Overarching Strategy & Transformation**

The Corps will continue to deliver a quality recreation program that is resilient in light of today's fiscal realities and responsive to the changing needs of the American People. In order to continue providing safe, high quality outdoor recreation opportunities and manage resources, while simultaneously addressing funding challenges, the Corps recreation program must transform. As a result, the Corps will redefine how it provides services and ultimately will directly deliver fewer recreation services and opportunities with a reshaped workforce in the future. However, this reshaped workforce will continue to integrate recreation service delivery and associated funding requirements into the multipurpose missions performed at Corps projects. The Corps will use performance measures to guide decision making and will focus its resources to provide recreation amenities, services, and opportunities where they are needed most to allow people and water to meet in a safe manner.

Meeting the public's needs and continuing to provide a full range of outdoor recreation opportunities will require collaboration. The Corps will maintain and enhance existing relationships while seeking new and innovative types of relationships with federal, state and local agencies, volunteers, non-government organizations, cooperators and others to provide certain recreation services and opportunities to the public. In order to achieve this, new authorities and revised policies are needed. Recreation opportunities will continue to be provided on Corps projects throughout the country and the Recreation Program will adjust its opportunities and facilities to meet public demand for outdoor recreation while balancing fiscal reality. The Corps will continue to have a direct delivery presence in all geographic areas.

As the recreation program transforms, ultimately, the outcome is to have a program that is sustainable; able to adapt to fiscal challenges, safeguards the environment, and continues providing recreation opportunities. The program will be different in the future. This strategy defines the end state, and the following values and roles describe what is fundamental as the transformation occurs.

## Values & Roles

**People and Water Meet:** *The recreation program will manage and provide a variety of ways to maintain public access to Corps water resources.* As the nation's largest manager of domestic water resources, including nearly 55 thousand miles of shoreline that provide access to lakes and rivers, the public turns to the Corps for opportunities to connect with the water. Opportunities for people and water to meet include water-based recreation and related activities, physical contact with the water, and viewing the water.

*This value/role is grounded in: 16CFR460I-12; 16USC460I; ER1130-2-550; project congressional authorizations*



**Safe and Accessible:** *Recreation amenities, offered by the Corps, its partners, and lessees, will be managed in a way that protects the safety of the visitor and allows access by all, regardless of ability. The Corps has a responsibility to educate the public on how to access and play in, on, and around the water safely.* With such a substantial water resource base and large number of visits, the Corps is obligated to promote and enforce safe behavior. Facility design, operation, and maintenance will ensure that recreation amenities are safe and in good condition for use by visitors.



*This value/role is grounded in: 36CFR327; ER1130-2-550; ADA Regulations; Water Safety Program Authority; EM 385-1-1; Corps Watch Property Protection Program; ER 1130-2-540*

**Resource Protection:** *As one of the federal agencies managing public land and waters in the U.S., the Corps has the responsibility to protect these resources for present and future generations to use and enjoy.* The Nation's natural and cultural resources are a precious asset. Management of this asset requires a professional team that possesses skills and competencies to balance the needs of the visiting public with conservation of the resource. With over three fourths of the U.S. population living in urban areas, the need exists for educating the public on the natural and manmade systems at Corps projects. By interacting with visitors through interpretive programs and outreach programs in the community, the natural resources program is positioned to be a key information provider on all aspects of the Corps Civil Works Mission.



*This value/role is grounded in: 36CFR327; ER-1130-2-550, EO 13514*

**Healthy Communities:** *The Corps will promote and engage members of the community, military, and public to participate in healthy outdoor activities on Corps lands and waters.* As part of the U.S. Army, the recreation program has an inherent connection with the military and an opportunity to support the wellness and readiness of military personnel and their families. Corps projects also provide recreational opportunities that serve regional communities by being a place for people to pursue active recreation and healthy lifestyles, and for friends and families to spend time together connecting with each other and the natural world. Some areas serve as important tourist destinations attracting visitors from throughout the nation that contribute to regional economies. The natural resource management program's contact with the public creates opportunities for the Corps to participate in Administration initiatives and other national campaigns on health and wellness.



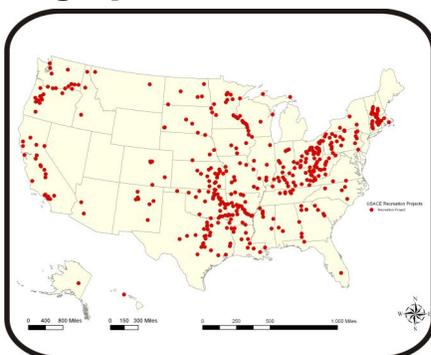
*This value/role is grounded in: 36CFR327.1; American's Great Outdoors Initiative; Let's Move Initiative; Children in Nature; Wounded Warriors*

**Attractive Partner:** *The Corps will work with partners to ensure quality services for the public.* The Corps recognizes its responsibility to provide the public with safe and healthful recreation opportunities. To fulfill that obligation, the recreation program collaborates with individuals and other entities to deliver recreation services to the public. Specific new authorities and revised policies are needed to allow the Corps recreation program to more fully engage current and potential partners, volunteers, and service providers.



*This value/role is grounded in: ER1130-2-550; ER 405-1-12; EP 1130-2-500; PI 89-63*

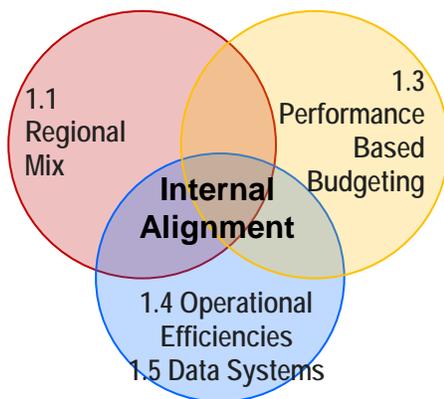
**Geographic Distribution:** *Recreational opportunities will continue to be provided throughout the country, through a variety of operational alternatives that include leases, partnering, and direct delivery.* Recreation opportunities are available at nearly every Corps lake in the U.S. and are valuable regional recreational assets that are part of the federal public lands system. The Corps outstanding legacy of providing quality access to recreation on public lands will continue.



*This value/role is grounded in: 36CFR327.1, Guiding Statements of PDT, America's Great Outdoors Initiative*

## Priorities for Change

While each goal is important and every objective contributes to a transformed and repositioned Corps recreation program, these priorities for change will modify the program most quickly while staying grounded in the program's values and roles. The priorities for change will align the program with current and projected fiscal reality, strengthen the program's ability to partner effectively to ensure access to water recreation for present and future generations, and focus communications with internal and external audiences.



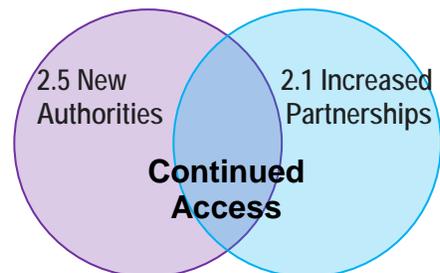
**Internal Alignment**  
*Aligning program with current fiscal reality*

### Internal Alignment (listed in priority order)

- Ensure continued visitor access to water recreation opportunities within a reasonable commuting range.
- Retain unique opportunities, reflecting the spectrum of water recreation opportunity.
- Manage locally and regionally for an appropriate mix of facilities and services from an agency and customer perspective.
- Accelerate use of and expand performance-based budgeting to align the program with current fiscal reality.
- Refine and utilize managerial systems to increase accuracy, credibility, ease of use, transparency, and ability to make national comparisons.
- Align staffing levels to take into account difficult issues (like shoreline management) that require significant recreation funds to administer.
- Utilize existing authorities and partnerships in creative ways to reduce operations and maintenance expenses and to maintain service levels.

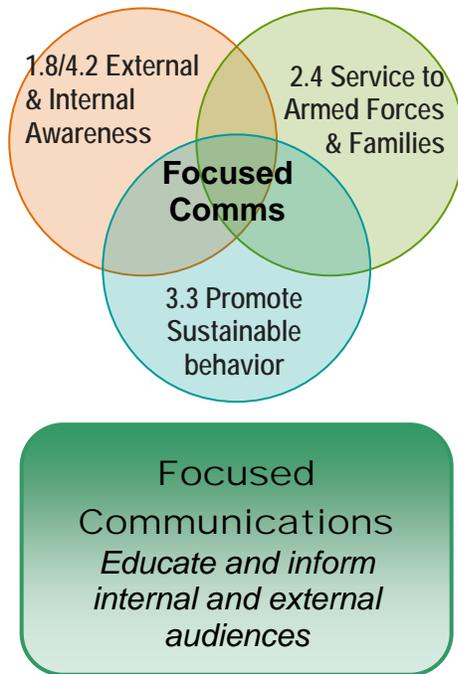
### Continued Access

- Evaluate current authorities to determine comparability to other federal land management agencies such as fee collection and retention, cooperative management, and increased partnership capabilities. Identify needed changes in authorities and policies.
- Balance declining fiscal resources with a corresponding increase in partnerships and outgrants.
- Preserve some level of public access to water resources and recreation opportunities at all projects.



**Continued Access**  
*New authorities and partnerships to ensure access to water resources for present and future generations*

- Enable the Corps recreation program to partner in new ways, more easily, and more productively with outside entities.
- Enable the Corps to supplement appropriated funding with fees in order to maintain public safety, address deferred facility maintenance, invest in site upgrades to meet customer needs, and, ultimately, to sustain local partners and communities.



### **Focused Communications**

- Expand communications and marketing at the national level to more fully engage current and potential partners, volunteers, and service providers. (The Corps is seldom recognized as the largest provider of outdoor recreation in the country though Corps water resource projects are a large part of the outdoor experience in America.)

- Recognize and advocate for Corps recreation personnel. Corps recreation professionals are resourceful and highly skilled in their public interactions making them key assets to an agency like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

- Internally communicate the many ways that the recreation program and recreation professionals support the Corps and its mission.

- Strengthened communications and relationships with military installations and local communities will help meet the recreation needs of

both military families and the general public, thereby increasing use of Corps recreation facilities by the general public and active duty, retired, and reserve military veterans and their families.

- Promote agency and public behavior that minimizes negative environmental impacts.

Taken together, these priorities for change will initialize the transformation and repositioning of the Corps recreation program. They will inform the difficult decisions that will align the program with financial realities, deliver the program through an expanded network of partners and partnerships, and increase awareness of the program to internal and external stakeholders. Finally, they will ensure that present and future generations will have recreational access to Corps water resources.

## Goals & Objectives

At the heart of the Recreation Strategic Plan is the following series of Goals and objectives designed to transform the program for future sustainability. The four goal areas focus the program over several facets. Aligning internally to use our systems and funds wisely to ensure recreation program is sustained and to ensure we provide the services & facilities needed by the public. Balancing reductions in direct delivery with new resources that can be gained through partnerships, grants, authorities, etc. in order to maintain & improve the recreation program, facilities, and opportunities. Addressing our environmental stewardship responsibility and how we will lead by example and encourage others to be good stewards. And building the team to take on new roles they may have as the program is reshaped and repositioned for the future.

### **Goal 1: Implement effective, reliable and adaptive operation and maintenance of resources that provide safe and healthy recreation experiences to meet the needs of current and future generations.**

*When we achieve this goal, we will ensure continued public access to Corps water resources with safe, attractive, and functional facilities that contribute to the vitality of individuals, families, and communities while being cost effective to the agency.*

The primary focus of the Corps recreation mission is to provide safe and healthy outdoor experiences at Corps projects. As competition for funding tightens, the Corps needs to reposition its financial and human resources and seek alternative methods to preserve its public service mission. Recreation resources will be managed in an efficient and adaptive manner, while also being as responsive as practical to changing demographics, user demands, and trends. Unique recreation opportunities can be found at Corps projects across the nation and these recreational resources are a public asset. A range of management options will be developed to enhance efficiency, meet budget goals, maintain a regional geographic presence, and provide a diversity of recreation opportunities for current and future generations. The Corps will provide proactive and open communication that both informs and educates.

#### **1.1 Determine appropriate regional mix of facilities and services to meet the needs of current and future visitors.**

*Inform the strategic provision of recreation resources and opportunities through a variety of management tools, visitor information, and national trends to understand the current and future needs.*

Trends and visitor information should be considered to understand the current and future needs. A variety of methods may then be used to determine the appropriate regional mix of facilities and services. Proposed methods include development of taxonomies or classification systems and peer review of management and operations. Such tools will allow managers, districts, and divisions to analyze/assess the

capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses of existing staffing, facilities, service levels, and risks among projects, while maintaining a recreation program, which has a presence throughout the country, and provides diverse recreation amenities and recreation settings (urban-adjacent to rural).

**1.2 Establish national benchmarks for determining staffing levels at Corps-managed public use facilities that include consideration for non-recreation functions and contracting.**

*Create staffing benchmarks, based on 2009 Recreation Roadmap Staffing Analysis , area characteristics, and service profiles, to better understand program operational variances and required staffing levels.*

Expanding the Staffing Analysis, conducted as part of the 2009 Recreation Roadmap, to better capture the relationships between certain activities and human resource needs. Analysis of non-recreation functions and contracting should not be overlooked. The creation of staffing benchmarks, based on common recreation area characteristics and service profiles, may be used to assess project capabilities, value to the customer, and the continued provision of safe public access.

**1.3 Proactively reallocate recreation budget through development and use of additional/alternate performance based criteria and improved data accuracy to achieve fiscal sustainability while maintaining program viability and appropriate customer service and safety levels on a local, regional, and national scale.**

*Balancing fiscal reality with service provision on a local, regional, and national scale will require improved data accuracy, additional or alternate performance measures, and less reliance on historic average based budgeting.*

Proactively reallocate recreation budget through development and use of additional/alternate performance-based criteria that reflect relevant factors such as the costs of accommodating visitors and operating recreation areas, utilization, etc. to achieve informed decision-making and reduce or eliminate ties to historic average-based budgeting. Improve data accuracy to achieve fiscal sustainability while maintaining program viability and appropriate customer service and safety levels on a local, regional, and national scale.

**1.4 Identify sectors for additional operational efficiencies on the ground and implement changes that improve area or project level efficiency.**

*Address opportunities for continued efficiency improvement, through tools and technologies, resulting in benchmarks and strategies for optimal efficiency gains.*

While flat budgets have required projects and recreation areas to operate more efficiently, there remain areas for additional improvement. Assess existing facilities,

including facility condition, public use patterns, and visitor and stakeholder input to determine what changes are required to support current and future recreational activities and adjust the program to eliminate duplicate or underutilized areas. The program will be required to develop cost-effective strategies and to identify and utilize technologies, tools, and practices to enable the Corps to provide sustainable recreational opportunities.

### **1.5 Improve accuracy, efficiency and effectiveness of management support systems/technology.**

*Managerial decision making support systems will be necessary, transparent, consistent, accurate, and easy for the field to use and maintain.*

There are technologies, tools, and practices that enable the Corps to provide and track recreation operations, but they need to be balanced against the administrative workload they create. Efficiency can be addressed in a variety of ways including better interconnectivity, streamlined data calls, and ensuring that the managerial decision-making support systems are transparent, consistent, accurate, and easier for the field to maintain and use.

### **1.6 Utilize Asset Management Initiative as well as internal assessment systems to develop a national approach to identify and prioritize deferred maintenance items at recreation areas.**

*Address the significant amount of uncompleted, non-recurring, non-routine facility maintenance needs and participate in the Asset Management Initiative by developing a risk-consequence matrix appropriate for recreation areas.*

Continually evaluate facilities and programs to measure use, conditions, and needs with a priority placed on addressing the significant amount of uncompleted, non-recurring, non-routine facility maintenance needs. Meet requirements of the Asset Management initiative through development of risk-consequence matrix appropriate for the scope of recreation services provided by the Corps.

### **1.7 Enhance the ability to attract and utilize volunteer service resulting in an increase in the number of volunteers and total hours of volunteer service used to provide recreation services to the public and support operations and maintenance of recreation areas.**

*Clarified guidance on existing authorities, determination of missing authority, and sharing successful practices will improve the system-wide consistency, attractiveness, and utilization of the volunteer program.*

Lack of authority and inconsistent interpretation of existing authorities across divisions hinders the ability of many projects to take advantage of opportunities to utilize volunteers effectively. Providing clarification and guidance with current authorities will

be an important step in identifying the areas where authority is lacking. Sharing of best practices and volunteer support will improve consistency of the volunteer program system-wide.

**1.8 Increase public awareness of Corps recreation programs and opportunities through expanded communications and marketing at the national level and providing additional tools and opportunities for local communication efforts.**

*A multi-tiered communications and marketing approach, including both national and local initiatives directed at selected internal and external audiences, is critical to increasing awareness of Corps recreation programs and ensuring that current and future customers understand all aspects of the Corps mission.*

The Corps will actively engage individuals, the Department of Defense, and stakeholder organizations to promote awareness of, advocacy for, and involvement in the Corps recreation program. A multi-tiered communications and marketing approach, including both national and local initiatives, is critical to increasing public awareness of Corps recreation programs and ensuring that current and future customers understand all aspects of the Corps mission.

**1.9 Regularly evaluate visitor satisfaction, activity participation, demand, and economic activity related to Corps recreation areas.**

*Align recreation program facilities and resources with public demand using efficiently collected visitor information and evaluation of current and potential use changes related to shifts in demographics, user preferences, and activity trends.*

Use existing recreation use surveys, current customer comment card form, existing data entry and reports and initiate regional visitor surveys to evaluate visitor satisfaction, activity participation/demand, and economic activity related to Corps recreation areas and develop cost-effective strategies to align recreational resources with public demand while addressing changing demographics, user preferences, and emerging activity trends.

**1.10 Implement changes to the shoreline management program that reduce the impact to the recreation program and environment through a focus on cost recovery and fee retention.**

*Reduce adverse impacts to the recreation program and environment through changes to the shoreline management program.*

Assess the shoreline management program and implement changes to reduce the adverse impact to the recreation program and environment through a focus on in-kind services, cost recovery, and fee retention. Evaluate quantity of recreation staff time

being used for shoreline management functions. Update the regulation to require environmental review prior to issuing land use permits.

**1.11 Identify opportunities for better synchronization between environmental stewardship and recreation business lines due to overlapping program activities.**

*Improve synchronization between environmental stewardship and recreation business lines to improve fiscal and programmatic functionality of both programs and make the best use of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of NRM professionals.*

It is common for rangers and other natural resources staff to perform both recreation and environmental stewardship functions. This overlap can make it difficult to isolate fiscal and programmatic functionality for analysis and adjustment. better synchronization between environmental stewardship and recreation business lines may improve funding of both programs and make the best use of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of NRM professionals.

**Goal 2: Secure new resources and identify authorities needed to sustain public access to water resources.**

*When we achieve this goal, the public will have continued recreational access to water resources.*

In response to flat budgets, new resources must be acquired in order to continue to provide safe public access to Corps projects for recreational activities. Opportunities exist internally and externally to develop and implement new collaborative approaches with other business lines and partners to achieve common goals. Authority limitations and inconsistent interpretation of existing authorities across divisions hinders the ability of many projects to take advantage of opportunities to solicit new resources to support the provision of recreation services. Recreation personnel are uniquely positioned within local communities to have an understanding of project capabilities and customer desires on the local level; building and maintaining those critical relationships. These new resources and management challenges can improve overall cost effectiveness of a project while allowing the recreation program staff to perform necessary activities and assume new roles. Modified congressional authorities or new legislation may be needed for achievement of this objective.

**2.1 Increase use of partnerships, including internal and external, with states, counties, communities, private and non-profit organizations, and businesses, to provide recreation services to the public.**

*Incorporate the use of a diverse and flexible system of management strategies that will allow for regional differences in projects and the ability to utilize selected strategies effectively to continue delivery of recreation opportunities to the public.*

The Corps will incorporate the use of a diverse and flexible system of management strategies that will allow for regional differences in projects and the ability to utilize selected strategies effectively. Some park related tasks are inherently governmental, such as enforcing Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations that governs the use of public property. However, there are opportunities to seek the involvement of other non-traditional non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in some aspects of the operation and maintenance of recreation areas. In providing recreational services to the public, the Corps will seek to increase the use of internal and external partnerships with states, counties, communities, private and non-profit organizations, and businesses.

**2.2 Utilize recreation leases and outgrants in a strategic manner as an approach to meet public demand for water recreation at Corps water projects.**

*Clarify and standardize business practices to supplement and enforce lease provisions for both concessionaire and public park and recreation lease/outgrant areas to ensure these areas meet quality standards, provide public benefit, and contribute to Corps operational efficiencies.*

In utilizing recreation leases and outgrants in a strategic manner, the Corps will take into consideration the recommendations of the recreation leases/outgrants Initiative. The Corps will seek to modify and clarify standard lease conditions to include provisions that support Corps operational efficiencies such as visitation monitoring, submission of data, and Corps identity branding onsite in leased/outgrant areas. Standard business practices will be used to enforce lease provisions for both concessionaire and public parks and recreation lease/outgrant areas to ensure lessees continue to provide the public services and benefits currently provided by the Corps.

**2.3 Leverage appropriated dollars through grants, sponsorships and philanthropy.**

*Identify potential alternate funding sources and seek appropriate processes to acquire such funds in order to augment the value of appropriated funds.*

The Corps will seek out and identify available grants, sponsorships, and philanthropy opportunities. Partners will be secured that can provide assistance in grant application and administration. Guidance will be developed for: 1) sponsorships of Corps managed events or amenities, and 2) The use of donations that allow for a broader pool of donors.

**2.4 Strengthen relationships with military installations to meet the needs of both military families and the recreating public to foster use of Corps facilities by active duty, retired, and reserve military veterans and families.**

*Contribute to the readiness and resilience of military members and their families through their participation in activities and programs at Corps lakes and rivers.*

The Corps will strengthen its unique relationship with the U.S. Armed Forces. Recreation programs and services for military members and their families will be expanded. The Corps will promote safe and healthy outdoor recreation opportunities at Corps projects to all U.S. Armed Forces personnel, military families, and veterans.

**2.5 Identify new authorities needed for fee retention and partnerships for mission-related purposes.**

*Continue to identify, analyze and evaluate authorities and policies such as fee collection and retention without budgetary offset and increased partnership capabilities. Identify potential policy and authority needs. Information related to the analysis and recommended solutions will be available to the field as a resource for further use.*

To continue providing recreational opportunities for the public, the Corps needs additional authorities in the following areas: fee retention without budgetary offset and increased capabilities to provide assistance to and cooperate with partners for mission-related purposes.

**Goal 3: Utilize recreation resources to promote environmental sustainability.**

*When we achieve this goal, we will set the standard and educate the public about the importance of resource stewardship through facilities and programs that serve as examples of this message.*

Promote environmental sustainability in all aspects of recreation resources management. Coordination with external and internal elements will result in a shared vision that balances economic, environmental, and social objectives. The Corps will recognize the impacts of operations on others in the region and work to find mutually acceptable outcomes. By serving as an example, recreation areas and personnel (including volunteers and partners) will encourage stewardship and an environmental ethic among visitors.

### **3.1 Maintain a recreation program that is consistent with the Environmental Operating Principles and supports internal environmental initiatives.**

*The Corps will integrate Environmental Operating Principles and other environmental regulations/initiatives in to day-to-day decision making and long range planning.*

The Corps will follow the Environmental Operating Principles and act upon existing and new environmental regulations or initiatives. A key to success will be integrating environmental considerations into day-to-day decision making and long-term planning processes.

### **3.2 Enhance community-based stewardship opportunities at recreation areas.**

*Increase community involvement in and stewardship of Corps recreation areas through leveraging of existing national stewardship opportunities, expanding partner involvement and volunteer program support.*

Stewardship of the resource can be a tool to increase community involvement in the operation and maintenance of recreation areas. Seeking opportunities to leverage resources at all levels to promote and expand regional stewardship opportunities and expand on the existing partnership/volunteer framework will be the foundation to increase community involvement.

### **3.3 Promote sustainable behavior and incorporate environmental sustainability into Corps messages related to recreation areas and activities.**

*Communicate and reward internal management practices and visitor behaviors that result in the environmentally sustainable management and use of recreation areas.*

The recreation program has an opportunity to communicate key messages to the public through interactions with visitors. Increased efforts should be made to communicate and encourage sustainable behaviors by visitors to Corps projects. Efforts should be made to communicate and reward management practices that result in environmental sustainability at recreation areas and projects. .

## **Goal 4: Build and cultivate a competent, disciplined, and resilient team equipped to deliver high quality solutions.**

*When we achieve this goal, the recreation program will be an integral part of a standard-setting agency team.*

The NRM Community of Practice (CoP) contains professionally trained, highly motivated employees who maintain a high degree of technical competence. Cross pollination of these employees into regional business lines will further the Agency's ability to respond to the future demands on our natural resources. Present and future

recreation professionals will be trained to accomplish a wide range of complex and technical tasks that are not currently inherent to the recreation portfolio. Sustainability of this CoP will be enhanced by integrating partners into all training and team-building considerations.

**4.1 Identify, develop, maintain, and strengthen a highly qualified workforce with technical competencies in various Communities of Practice (CoP) to ensure stewardship of the resource.**

*Use existing educational and training resources along with the creation of new incentives and assets to recruit, develop, and maintain the most adaptable workforce in the Corps.*

The NRM CoP will continue to recruit, develop, and maintain a highly adaptable and capable workforce. All existing developmental, educational, and training resources will be used in this process. Along the way, the Corps will identify and leverage new and incentive assets and programs for keeping the workforce one of the most adaptable in the Corps. Program successes and innovative solutions to management challenges will be recognized, shared and rewarded.

**4.2 Communicate the role of the park ranger and other recreation program staff to Commanders, other Corps elements and the public.**

*Increase the awareness of Corps park rangers as valued and vital members of the Corps and as premier stewards of recreation and natural resources.*

The NRM CoP has technical, practical, and personal skills that are adaptable and valuable to a wide range of agency missions, yet remain a relatively unknown and untapped internal asset. Development of key internal and external messages will showcase the diversity of the NRM professional, and their ability to serve in a wide variety of roles within the organization. This will increase the awareness of the CoP internally as a valued and vital member of the Corps and externally as a steward of the nation's recreation and natural resources to the public.

## On-going or Potential Actions

The following material represents the consolidation of input received from several sources resulting in a set of actions relevant to the Goals and Objectives of the Recreation Strategic Plan. These actions are provided as a resource for the individuals or teams that will be implementing or supporting achievement of the plan objectives. The actions are not all inclusive and are not considered mandatory in order to achieve the goals and objectives. Instead they are provided as a menu of options available and represent the types of things that are being done or could be done to support the Goals and Objectives. Goals and Objectives are summarized into a key phrase to reduce space consumption in the document.

### Goal 1 – Effective O&M, meeting customer needs

#### Objective 1 – Regional facility/service mix

- 1.1.a. Develop a taxonomy/spectrum/classification system of Corps water resource projects based on characteristics such as current/future population density, complexity of the resource, available recreation in the area, uniqueness of the opportunity, and other variables.
- 1.1.b. Consider the trends related to needs and preferences of current and anticipated future local and regional visitors to Corps lakes to determine demand and/or adjustment to recreational opportunities for consideration in management decisions.
- 1.1.c. Develop peer review panels that consist of in-house, other MSC, or agency staff to evaluate management consistency and content and to recommend specific management alternatives.

#### Objective 2 - Staffing

- 1.2.a. Expand staffing analysis to include creation of staffing benchmarks based on common recreation area characteristics and services.
- 1.2.b. Evaluate quantity of recreation staff time being used for non-recreation functions (e.g. shoreline, invasive species, flood risk management O&M, environmental stewardship and compliance, etc).
- 1.2.c. Develop method to compare costs of service contracts versus using government employees to perform services.

#### Objective 3 - Proactively reallocate budget

- 1.3.a. Use performance-based criteria that reflect relevant factors such as the costs of accommodating visitors and operating recreation areas (i.e., cost/visit to Corps operated recreation area), utilization, etc. to achieve informed decision-making and reduce or eliminate ties to historic average-based budgeting.
- 1.3.b. Participate in VERS modernization efforts to improve the accuracy of Rec-BEST in budget preparation and decision-making.

- 1.3.c. Refine and utilize nationally developed online management tools such as the NRM Gateway, the Recreation Self-Assessment Online Tool, Rec-BEST, OMBIL, and ES-BEST to manage the recreation business line practices and decisions.
- 1.3.d. Analyze alternatives for a one-time reset/realignment of the Rec-BEST budget allocation criteria to distribute the budget equitably across the country, while reducing or eliminating the ties to historical average-based budgeting.

#### **Objective 4 - Additional operational efficiencies**

- 1.4.a. Ensure that PDT's, consisting of division, district and onsite personnel, conduct periodic evaluations of each project's program operational efficiency and facility conditions at least once every five years as required by EM 1110-1-400.
- 1.4.b. Where cost effective and appropriate, expand NRRS Reservation Program to include kiosks POS system and fee collection operation in lieu of campground attendant and/or park attendant contracts.
- 1.4.c. Determine acceptable levels of campground occupancy, scaled based on certain criteria, and identify areas that fall below acceptable levels to be considered for operational or management adjustments.
- 1.4.d. Utilize RecStatus self-assessment tool to evaluate recreation area service level efficiency, improvement, and comparison of data nationally for decision making.
- 1.4.e. Develop incentive-based system to de-commission or develop alternative management plans for inefficient facilities.
  - SubAction:* Implement a 3-5 year program on a trial basis, where cost savings are retained for modernization or to address backlog maintenance at other recreation areas.
  - SubAction:* Increase flexibilities in closure policy (ER1130-2-550).
- 1.4.f. Increase the number of recreation professionals with \$100K warrants (e.g., authority to contract amounts under \$100K).

#### **Objective 5 - Management support systems/technology**

- 1.5.a. Utilize existing NRRS and CEFMS business data to improve efficiency and accuracy of estimating fee camping visitation. (Note: *part of VERS Modernization*).
- 1.5.b. Identify suite of IT capabilities that are required to perform basic recreation program functions.
- 1.5.c. Ensure that the managerial decision-making support systems (OMBIL, Rec-BEST, Rec Self Assessment, etc) are transparent, consistent, accurate, and easier for the field to maintain.

#### **Objective 6 - Asset management/deferred maintenance**

- 1.6.a. Develop a process to address the accumulation of \$474 Million in uncompleted non-recurring, non-routine facility maintenance needs.

- 1.6.b. Monitor the Asset Management Initiative to determine impacts to the recreation program and ensure that there is appropriate levels of participation.  
  - SubAction:* Develop/Refine tool for using risk & consequence as a ranking factor using data from existing NRM Databases to meet the Asset Management requirements (Risk - political, economic, safety, etc).
- 1.6.c. Assess the value, utility, and costs of all designated visitor centers.
- 1.6.d. Develop a PDT and/or a national approach to identify and prioritize top deferred recreation facility maintenance items and operational programs.
- 1.6.e. Reuse the assets of closed recreation areas, including leased areas returned to the Corps.

### **Objective 7 - Volunteers**

- 1.7.a. Clarify or provide additional guidance for volunteer recognition, expense, and appreciation authorities.
- 1.7.b. Create awareness of the volunteer village concept as a tool for enhancing and growing the volunteer program.
- 1.7.c. Identify, collect, and share best management practices on the NRM Gateway.
- 1.7.d. Improve Corps branding on volunteer or contracted staff uniforms, equipment, and other items.

### **Objective 8 - Public awareness**

- 1.8.a. Capitalize on the unique position of the Corps in water recreation and promote the safe and healthy outdoor opportunities on Corps projects to the public.
- 1.8.b. Assess suitability of communication tactics from American Recreation Coalition Recreation Strategy Group's "A New Strategy for the Recreation Mission of the USACE" for implementation.
- 1.8.c. Establish multi/digital media library of public outreach materials about the Corps for use in visitor center operations, campfire programs, community presentations, and communication products.
- 1.8.d. Utilize new technology platforms (podcasts, social media, GPS) to reach a broader audience. *(Note: this is underway on limited basis at certain locations but should be increased nationally)*
  - SubAction:* Identify and share best practices (e.g. examples in NRM Conference social media session, GETS).
  - SubAction:* Provide guidance to staff on the use of and development of content using new technology including social media, PDA's, wireless, etc.
  - SubAction:* Promote Corps Google Earth application and other innovative technology for the public to obtain recreation information.
- 1.8.e. Update "Value to the Nation" with current recreation program data and verify report outputs for accuracy.
- 1.8.f. Promote economic and environmental values of Corps projects at the local and regional level.

- 1.8.g. Promote health related benefits of recreation participation in activities typical at Corps recreation areas and strengthen ties with the local health community (Ex: USFWS Park Prescription program).

### **Objective 9 - Evaluate visitors**

- 1.9.a. Develop cost effective approach to conduct recreation use surveys and initiate regional visitor surveys.
- 1.9.b. Review current customer comment card form, data entry, and reports for possible adjustment.

### **Objective 10 - Shoreline management**

- 1.10.a. Assess the value of the shoreline management program in relation to other NRM responsibilities.
- 1.10.b. Analyze and implement the recommendations of the shoreline management PDT looking at impacts to the recreation program, environment, cost recovery, and fee retention.
  - SubAction:* Establish limitations on shoreline management permits until shoreline management analysis is completed and approved.
- 1.10.c. Identify appropriate authorizing instrument and opportunities for accepting in-kind services versus payment of shoreline permit fees.
- 1.10.d. Update regulation to require Environmental Assessment prior to issuance of Land Use Permits.

### **Objective 11 - Recreation and environmental stewardship synchronization**

- 1.11.a. Talk early and often with environmental stewardship about management priorities.
- 1.11.b. Investigate the possibility of merging recreation and environmental stewardship into one business line called natural resources management.

## **Goal 2. - New Resources/Authorities**

### **Objective1 - Partnerships**

- 2.1.a. Establish support system for partnering leadership at the national level and legal support for partnering agreements.
  - SubAction:* Clarify/modify existing or develop field-ready partnership templates and resources on a national level with flexibility for adjustment to needs and conditions on a regional or local level.
  - SubAction:* Develop a consistent message from HQ on partnership policies that include Office of Counsel across USACE.
- 2.1.b. Develop “Friends” group framework and strategy that responds to unique Corps water recreation opportunities and challenges.
- 2.1.c. Conduct periodic summit with stakeholders and key constituent groups on national and regional levels.

- 2.1.d. Prepare invitation to partner using handshake statistics and other partnership success stories to encourage/promote partners.
- 2.1.e. Develop advocacy strategy that includes involvement with national level association(s) or foundation(s).
- 2.1.f. Invite Corps Natural Resources Education Foundation or consider establishment of an additional national/regional Corps recreation foundation(s) to assist those projects without non-profit partners to provide operational and management support.
- 2.1.g. Collaborate with colleges/universities and professors to share Corps story and promote opportunities.
- 2.1.h. Improve Corps identity branding onsite in cooperatively managed, partnership and similar areas.

### **Objective 2 - Outgrants**

- 2.2.a. Consider recommendations of the recreation leases/outgrants initiative for implementation.
- 2.2.b. Modify/clarify standard lease conditions and include provisions to support Corps operational efficiencies such as visitation monitoring, submission of data, and Corps identity branding onsite in leased/outgrant areas. Implementation may require adjustment to existing contracts and leases as they are renewed or included in new leases.
- 2.2.c. Develop standard business practices to enforce lease provisions for both concessionaire and public parks and recreation lease/outgrant areas to ensure lessees continue to provide the public services and benefits currently provided by the Corps.

### **Objective 3 - Grants, sponsorships, philanthropy**

- 2.3.a. Identify funding opportunities that are within present authority (federal highway road program), sustainability/environmental grant programs.
- 2.3.b. Find partners (e.g. NRE Foundation, CESUs, Enterprise Teams) to assist in grant writing and administration.
- 2.3.c. Develop guidance for sponsorships of Corps managed events or amenities.
- 2.3.d. Review and revise guidance on donations to allow for a broader pool of donors.

### **Objective 4 - Military relationships and support**

- 2.4.a. Capitalize on the unique relationship between the U.S. Armed Forces and the Corps to promote the safe and healthy outdoor recreation opportunities at Corps projects to armed forces personnel, military families, and veterans.
- 2.4.b. Expand programs and services for military members and their families (ex. Purple Camps operated by NGO's).

## **Objective 5 - New authorities & fee retention**

2.5.a. Continue to identify, analyze, and evaluate authorities and policies such as fee collection and retention and increased partnership capabilities. Information related to the analysis and recommended solutions will be available to the field as a resource for further use. Areas identified for changes to meet the goals and objectives of this Strategy include, but are not limited to:

*SubAction:* Authorities for fee collection and retention without budgetary offset, as well as areas where the Corps could benefit from authorities comparable to other federal land management agencies who use retained fees to address project specific needs.

*SubAction:* Policies that pertain to funding schedules for partnership projects with partners.

*SubAction:* Authorities to partner with lessees and allow these partnerships to be eligible for the Handshake Program, and consider increasing dollar amount for the Handshake Program.

*SubAction:* Authority to expend funds outside project boundaries when it directly benefits the Corps programs.

*SubAction:* Authority for joint funding of interpretation materials.

*SubAction:* Review and update regulations on Visitor Centers.

*SubAction:* Authority to market/promote opportunities at Corps water projects and “tell the Corps story.”

*SubAction:* Authority for *partners to utilize* funds in the execution of partnership agreements on Corps lands.

*SubAction:* Authority to enable partners to be more fully engaged (integrated) in the management and promotion of recreation areas.

2.5.b. When appropriate and within legal authorities, utilize existing policies to jointly manage parks and recreation areas.

*SubAction:* Develop “Pilot Projects” to evaluate the ability of private sector or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to effectively partner at Corps lakes and disseminate the results.

2.5.c. Determine types of amenities available to customers that are considered above the baseline and provide on a cost recovery basis (e.g. Internet connectivity, firewood, ice, etc) within parks.

## **Goal 3 - Environmental Stewardship**

### **Objective 1 - Environmental Operating Principles**

3.1.a. When possible, use LEED certified personnel and products in facility design and maintenance.

3.1.b. Adopt Sustainable Sites criteria where applicable on land-based recreation areas.

3.1.c. Update project master plans to include environmental sustainability elements.

- 3.1.d. Update shoreline management plans to include environmental sustainability elements.
- 3.1.e. Promote Environmental Operating Principles to internal and external audiences.
- 3.1.f. Achieve target objectives of Administration's Sustainability Initiative (EO 13514) with particular emphasis on improving energy, water, and petroleum efficiency and reducing waste generation.

*SubAction:* Reduce fossil fuel energy consumption through increased use of electric and hybrid vehicles throughout projects.

*SubAction:* Analyze and explore the use of solar and wind power to operate recreational facilities.

## **Objective 2 - Community based stewardship**

- 3.2.a. Identify and contact potential partners for environmental stewardship activities and share mission aligned opportunities.

*SubAction:* Review and update partnership on NRM Gateway to include local community stewardship partners.

- 3.2.b. Develop a Corps-wide volunteer/steward recognition system/process specifically related to those who provide support for stewardship of the resource in recreation areas.
- 3.2.c. Build on existing national stewardship events to increase opportunities for community-based stewardship.
- 3.2.d. Research, identify, share, and implement best practices to increase community involvement in resource stewardship.

## **Objective 3 - Promote sustainable behavior**

- 3.3.a. Develop an environmental campaign (similar to the water safety campaign) that promotes resource stewardship in recreation settings and educates the public. (Note: consider utilizing other existing campaigns like Leave No Trace, Tread Lightly, etc. for content and communication/outreach resources.)
- 3.3.b. Create incentives and reward system for environmental sustainability at recreation areas and by projects.
- 3.3.c. Incorporate importance of environmental sustainability into USACE brand.
- 3.3.d. Research, Identify, share, and implement best practices that have resulted in improved internal and external sustainable behaviors.
- 3.3.e. Establish and publish environmental targets for Corps users and partners.

## **Goal 4 - Team**

### **Objective 1 - Workforce and technical competencies**

- 4.1.a Utilize recruiting and employee selection processes and resources that get the right people in the right jobs.

*SubAction:* Participate in USACE recruiting, personnel development, and succession planning programs.

- SubAction:* Evaluate DA intern training model for possible adaptation to NRM.
- 4.1.b. Support professional development and career track enhancement opportunities for the recreation program workforce.
- SubAction:* Review and consider incorporating the NRM Career Development Steering Committee's recommendations.
- SubAction:* Expand CAP to MSC level and incorporate into overall leadership program.
- SubAction:* Continue to support Park Ranger CoP member's participation at Park Ranger conferences at the national, division and district levels.
- 4.1.c. Plan for and develop strategies to address retirement patterns and succession.
- SubAction:* Develop and release a straightforward flowchart/template to NRM CoP for use in succession planning.
- 4.1.d. Identify techniques that can be utilized in efforts to right-size the NRM workforce to meet current and future needs.
- SubAction:* Encourage use of VSIP/VERA to right-size NRM staff.
- SubAction:* Utilize techniques to retain high performing, skilled and valuable members of the recreation program workforce.
- 4.1.e. Develop the resources to enable employees to meet the demands of the new or prioritized roles and functions to be performed by the recreation program.
- SubAction:* Expand partnership training as a prospect course and component to ranger training curriculum, district orientations, and National NRM Conference.
- SubAction:* Develop a new training program for OPM's, natural resource managers, and lead rangers that focuses on community connections, involvement, and constituency building.
- SubAction:* Pre-train workforce for various deployable positions such as QA, contract administration, and emergency response and develop a database of skills.
- 4.1.f. Improve individual staff, as well as collective workforce, performance, efficiency, and safety through training, resources, technology, and other means.
- SubAction:* Expand the NRM recommended training list to include non-NRM prospect courses.
- SubAction:* Invest in technologies to support staff efficiencies and reduce data entry time.
- SubAction:* Continue to develop the NRM Gateway as a platform for professional skill-building and information.
- SubAction:* Review and Implement recommendations resulting from the comprehensive survey to ensure high levels of visitor and ranger safety.
- SubAction:* Develop a "Learning Consortium" that is made up of colleges and universities to address the training needs of various generations within the Corps.

4.1.g. Continue and expand recognition of excellent performance, management successes, and innovative solutions to management challenges.

*SubAction:* Develop a process for rewarding managers/employees that display innovation and develop and implement creative solutions to natural resource and recreation challenges.

*SubAction:* Promote Natural Resources Awards Program and develop additional incentives/categories as a means to provide positive recognition for doing a good job.

*SubAction:* Develop programs to recognize staff that develop or maintain partnerships that achieve improved efficiency in the recreation program.

## **Objective 2 – Communicate roles of Recreation workforce**

4.2.a. Develop new resources that showcase the versatility of the recreation workforce.

*SubAction:* Park ranger/recreation “in-action” photos for use in a continuous-play PowerPoint program to be shown on the HQ close-circuit television system.

*SubAction:* Emphasize recreation staff roles such as first responder, resource monitoring, and supporting, protecting, and managing wildlife, land, cultural, water, and power supply resources.

4.2.b. Communicate the roles of park rangers and the recreation workforce internally and externally.

*SubAction:* Continue annual park ranger participation and presentation at the Pre-Commanders course at HQUSACE.

*SubAction:* Develop plans and tools to communicate the role of the park ranger to Commanders, other Corps elements, and the public.

*SubAction:* Support the Recreation Road Map’s communication plan and assist communications team with efforts to increase external awareness of the recreation program.