

WATER-RELATED DEVELOPMENT POLICY FOR FORT WORTH DISTRICT LAKES

CESWF-OD-R/CESWF-RE-M

April 2002

SUBJECT: Enactment of a Policy for Water-Related Recreational Development on Federal Lands and Waters Within the Fort Worth District

1. **PURPOSE:** To establish a development policy for water-related facilities on all Fort Worth District Lakes. This policy applies the criteria and principles gained from the recently completed Water-Related Recreation Use Study (WRRUS) at Lewisville Lake to any lake at which new water-related development is contemplated or planned.
2. **APPLICABILITY:** This policy applies to the Corps of Engineers and all entities and/or leaseholders having rights and responsibilities, now or in the future, for development of Federally-owned land and water areas at any Fort Worth District lake (except Lewisville Lake), as of the date of this policy. Lewisville Lake is currently covered by a water-related development policy in effect since February 1999.
3. **BACKGROUND:** In response to requests for new marina developments on Lewisville Lake, the Corps initiated an effort in the fall of 1997 to facilitate a comprehensive lake use study. The Corps partnered with the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), acting on behalf of eleven governmental entities and several leaseholders agreeing to share half the cost of the lake use study. These governmental entities and leaseholders shared an interest in the future development of the lake and participated both materially and financially in the study effort. The effort consisted of two phases - a water-related recreation use study and a lake-wide programmatic environmental assessment (PEA). The WRRUS provided base level information necessary for the Corps to determine and prudently allocate facilities and services required for new water-related development, including marinas. After completion of the WRRUS, the effort moved into the second phase wherein stakeholders submitted water-related recreation and other land use development plans for inclusion in the PEA. The PEA has now been completed and a water-related development policy for Lewisville Lake has been published. The policy states that the Corps will manage the number of boat slips and boat ramp parking spaces so that on peak-use days, the number of vessels on the lake will rarely exceed 1112. In simple terms, the policy regulates development of facilities which increase boating use of the lake. More information is available on the District website at <http://www.swf.usace.army.mil>.

4. **DISCUSSION:**

a. Lewisville Lake is not alone in the need for prudent allocation of water-related recreation facilities. To some degree, all of the District's lakes experience increasing demand for space on the lake surface. While some lakes do not necessarily have the same boating use characteristics as Lewisville, there are common factors that contribute to water surface congestion at all lakes. These factors include the presence of Corps' and outgranted boat ramp parking spaces, wet slips and dry stack slips at marinas, yacht clubs, private docks, etc. Our main concerns are resource protection, water safety and user enjoyment as affected by the number of vessels on a lake during peak use hours on peak use days.

b. The US Army Corps of Engineers is the steward of the lands and waters at our lakes. Our mission is to manage and conserve those natural resources, consistent with ecosystem management principles, while providing quality public outdoor recreation experiences to serve the needs of present and

future generations. In line with this management responsibility, we have routinely evaluated proposed actions and visitor use patterns for their affect on natural resources and/or the quality of the recreation experience for our visitors. These efforts have resulted in constraints on visitor use such as requiring campers to use only designated sites, or limiting the size of parking lots at beaches and picnic areas to reduce crowding. At some lakes, the numbers of hunters are limited as needed to improve hunter safety and user enjoyment. However, until recently, little consideration had been given to the affect proposed actions might have on use of the lake surface during peak use days. We would be remiss to ignore this factor in future decisions. The absence of a marina on a lake does not negate the potential for lake surface congestion.

5. **POLICY:** Based on the data provided in the WRRUS, dated December 1998, and, in an effort to insure that use of the lake surface is considered in all actions, the Fort Worth District hereby enacts the following policy regarding water-related development:

a. Nothing herein may be inferred to approve development requests or imply future approval of development requests. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance will be required for any new development. The NEPA process could prescribe that this policy be adjusted for environmental reasons.

b. Existing written authorization (as of the date of this policy) for development of water-related recreational facility development issued to leaseholders will be honored, even if actual construction has not yet begun. No authorization(s) will be revoked as a result of issuance of this policy. This policy is not intended to cause removal of any existing, or currently authorized facilities.

c. The Corps, in cooperation with its water purveyor partners and recreational leaseholders, will oversee and monitor water-related development programs involving wet slips, dry stack slips, boat ramps and boat ramp parking spaces. Requests for authorizations for these facilities will be evaluated by the Corps for impacts to use of the lake surface, natural resources, water safety, and user enjoyment.

d. In determining an appropriate physical carrying capacity for the lake surface at Lewisville Lake, the WRRUS designated three levels of resource protection/user enjoyment: maximum, median, and minimum. These levels equate to acres of usable water surface per boat - having a high number of acres of water per boat tends to maximize resource protection/user enjoyment while a low number would tend to threaten the resource and reduce user satisfaction. The formula to determine the level is to divide the number of boatable acres of water surface (at normal pool) by the number of acres required for each type of boat (a figure determined by previous research), then multiply the result by the actual percent of each type of boat on the lake simultaneously (determined by an actual count on 6 high-use weekend days). [NOTE; Boatable acres would not include areas that are densely covered with dead timber, extremely shallow, or restricted.] The WRRUS determined that, at Lewisville, the **maximum** resource protection/user enjoyment level requires 27 acres of water per boat, the **median** level requires 18 acres of water per boat, and the **minimum** level requires approximately 14 acres of water per boat. The Lewisville Lake development policy sets the median protection level of 18 acres of water per boat as its standard. All other lakes in the Fort Worth District will adopt a more conservative standard. **This policy hereby establishes a goal of 22 acres of water per boat during peak use times as the District's standard for resource protection and user enjoyment. This figure was derived from the more conservative (protective) extremity of the median**

range determined in the WRRUS. Some lakes are large enough to have definable zones of use, or are geographically configured in a way that results in distinct zones of boating use. In these cases, the 22 acre-per-boat rule would be applied to each zone. In other words, if a comprehensive boating use study indicates the existence of distinct use zones, each zone would be managed so as not to exceed 22 acres-per-boat. Using zone-based capacities will allow for some latitude when hard decisions about future development must be made.

6. POLICY APPLICATION:

a. An inarguably accurate determination of a lake's existing resource protection/user enjoyment level would require an in-depth study similar to the WRRUS wherein actual counts were made on a series of peak use days. (The WRRUS accounted for types of boats, activities, and which sections of the lake were being used and also included face-to-face visitor interviews and mail out surveys.) It is possible to get a thumbnail estimate of a lake's current resource protection/user enjoyment level on peak use days, without performing an in-depth study, by counting "on-water" boats originating from marinas, boat ramps, campsites and any other known significant source. At Lewisville, the WRRUS revealed that marinas contributed 1 boat to the lake surface for every 10 occupied wet slips or dry stack slots in the facility. Dry storage on trailers was found to be negligible in terms of contributing to boats on the lake surface. At boat ramps, each occupied car with trailer parking space (including unauthorized parking) equates to a boat on the lake surface. Boats can originate from other sources such as campsites.

b. It is highly desirable, although not mandatory, that each lake's **current** resource protection/user enjoyment level be estimated to provide a baseline from which this policy can be applied. Operations Managers are responsible for determining which lakes require this estimate. Lakes where an estimation survey should be considered include: a) those which compute to less than 27 acres of water per boat on the Potential Lake Surface Boat Load Table; b) those where major development requests are likely to occur; c) those where there is a current perception of water surface crowding; and/or d) those which are perceived to experience high levels of pleasure boating (as opposed to fishing). The estimation work should be done by a contractor. CESWF-OD-R staff is available to advise on methodology and/or assist in the estimation effort. Requests for major development which would increase the use of the lake surface on any lake which shows less than 27 acres of water per boat on the Potential Lake Surface Boat Load Table will not be processed by CESWF-OD-R until a peak use thumbnail estimate is in hand, unless there are mitigating circumstances.

c. Specific applications of this policy in response to proposed development actions known to increase boating traffic (adding marina slips, expanding boat ramp parking, etc.) are as follows:

(1) At lakes with current estimated resource protection level above 27 acres of water per boat, determine the resulting change in the protection level. [NOTE: 27 surface acres per boat is the threshold for the maximum protection level]. If the protection level estimate remains above 27 acres of water per boat, the proposal is not in opposition to this policy and can be processed accordingly. If the estimate is at or below 27 acres of water per boat, the action **may require** an in-depth water-related recreation use study before approval is issued. The necessity of a study will be determined by the Operations element on a case-by-case basis.

(2) At lakes with current estimated resource protection level at or below 27 acres of water per boat, an in-depth water-related recreation use study and an environmental assessment **will be required** prior to approval of

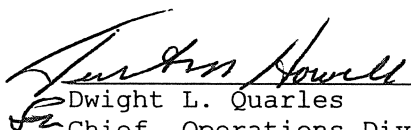
any new development. If the study verifies that the development will cause the protection level to fall **below** 22 acres of water per boat, the development will be disapproved unless it is altered to result in 22 or more acres of water per boat. It may then proceed to the environmental assessment phase.

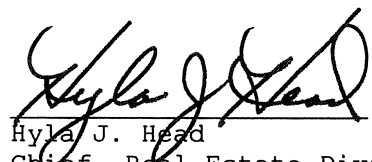
(3) Lakes with current estimated resource protection level at or below 22 acres of water per boat will be considered to have exceeded the District's standard for resource protection/user enjoyment. Generally, no further development actions will be favorably considered. A possible exception would be a relatively large lake that has distinct use zones with some zones being overcrowded while other zones receive only light use. Although it is theoretically possible to remove certain types of facilities to facilitate placement of other types of facilities, such measures are discouraged. A particular concern is that proponents may opt to remove a boat ramp or several parking spaces as a trade-off for an equivalent number of marina slips. An action of this type will most likely require an environmental assessment, to include extensive public involvement, and must be shown to be in the public interest.

d. Requesting entities are responsible for the cost of any study, research effort or NEPA requirement in conjunction with application of this policy.

7. **POLICY EXCEPTIONS:** Approval of water-related development which results in a level of protection below the District standard may be considered at the discretion of the Chief, Operations Division and the Chief, Real Estate Division on a case-by-case basis.

8. **IMPLEMENTATION:** This policy will be implemented by the Operations and Real Estate elements. The term of this policy is indefinite. This policy becomes effective immediately upon the date of signature of the Chief, Operations Division and the Chief, Real Estate Division.

 Date: 4-30-02
Dwight L. Quarles
Chief, Operations Division

 Date: 30 Apr. 02
Hyla J. Head
Chief, Real Estate Division