



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

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

OCT 12 2011

CECW-CO-N

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEFS, OPERATIONS AND NATURAL RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT DIVISIONS AND DISTRICTS, AND OPERATIONS PROJECT
MANAGERS

SUBJECT: Natural Resources Management (NRM) Park Ranger Community of Practice (CoP)
Advisory Board - Visitor Assistance (VA) Program Park Ranger and Manager Survey Results

1. I am pleased to announce that the results (study) provided by Dr. Charles Nelson, Michigan State University (MSU), from data collected as a result of the Park Ranger/Visitor Safety Survey and Visitor Assistance Program Management Survey is now available online at the following link: <http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/visitassist/survey.cfm>. Last summer, we asked MSU to begin its independent and in-depth study of our Visitor Assistance (VA) program so that we could learn more about current on-the-ground conditions and trends regarding visitor and park ranger safety, equipment, law enforcement agreements, training, and other related issues. We also saw it as an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the programmatic changes that resulted from the recommendations in the 1995 Visitor and Ranger Safety Final Report.

2. I've examined the results and it's clear that our VA program is relevant, effective and trending in a positive direction. Managers and rangers perceptions with regard to ranger and visitor safety have improved since 1995 and we can attribute it to the required training, tools and procedures put in place as a result of that survey and to the competence and professionalism of our NRM team members. However, MSU data analysis and recommendations indicate that we could further increase ranger and visitor safety with changes in Corps policy and better adherence to existing regulations and procedures. After reviewing the MSU report, I determined that further analysis of the report's recommendations was needed. To accomplish this, I assembled an Ad Hoc Team with NRM CoP members to review the results and recommendations and develop a response and action plan for my consideration. I've asked USACE Safety and Occupational Health Office and our Security and the Provost Marshall's Offices to review and respond to the study as well. The Ad Hoc Team members are as follows:

Steve Austin, Senior Policy Advisor for Park Ranger Activities, CECW-ON
Freddie Bell, Resource Manager, Chair of Park Ranger CoP, Nashville District
Phillip Brown, Operations Manager, Kansas City District
Charlie Burger, Chief of Operations, Ft. Worth District
Jill Russi, Chief, Operations-Technical Section, Sacramento District
Bill Jackson, Park Ranger, Lead PROSPECT VA Course Instructor, Vicksburg District
Kayl Kite, Conservation Biologist, Nashville District

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Aaron Wahus, Park Operations Manager, Savannah District
Bonnie Bryson, Data Management Specialist, ERDC (Technical Support)

3. After we receive feedback from the offices listed above and the Ad Hoc team has completed its work, we will make decisions regarding any changes in VA policy and operations by the end of December 2011.
4. In the meantime, I'm asking the NRM CoP, specifically program managers, to focus attention on the following directives: (1) be accountable for implementing the VA program within established regulations and policy, (2) continue the use of law enforcement agreements when available and advantageous to the agency, and (3) continue to work with ACE-IT and/or your local communications group to improve communications equipment.
5. I encourage everyone to be steadfast in a unified effort to educate our stakeholders, partners and visiting public about the role of the USACE Park Ranger. Park rangers serve as regulation enforcers and perform duties as specified under ER/EP 1130-2-550, Chapter 6, Visitor Assistance Program. Corps park rangers are not law enforcement officers, nor do they carry weapons, perform searches, or detain individuals.
6. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of and participation in the surveys. I strongly believe that the MSU study, an end product of your responses, will be very beneficial in our continued effort to make improvements within the VA program and enhance our support capabilities at all levels of management within the Park Ranger CoP. Questions related to the Park Ranger CoP Advisory Board should be directed to Mr. Freddie Bell, via email at Frederick.b.bell@usace.army.mil.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

Team - While I know this information is important to you, it has also been of personal interest to me. Keep up the great progress we have made in the Corps most visible program! Be safe out there!
Mina



MICHAEL G. ENSICH
Chief, Operations
Directorate of Civil Works