



THE recreation RETREAT

COVID-19 Impacts to USACE's Recreation Program

POC: Ryan Hartwig, Acting Recreation Business Line and Program Manager

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many local, state, and national leaders have recommended using public lands to get out and embrace the outdoors. As a result, extreme visitation is occurring weekly at many USACE recreation sites as visitors no longer have their usual community activities such as T-ball, soccer, or other leisure events and activities. Our recreation areas provide individuals and families an outlet and the surge in visitation has created significant issues with overcrowding, parking and congestion, excessive trash and sanitation issues, vandalism and property damage, and enforcement issues.

Article continued on
page 2.



US Army Corps
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YOUR Thoughts

We are looking for contributors and ideas!
✦ If you have a topic, success story, lesson learned, or helpful suggestion—let us know.
Send to: Tara.J.Whitsel@usace.army.mil

The Recreation Retreat is an unofficial publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). This online publication is produced quarterly with the purpose of providing its readers information about the USACE Recreation Program. Editorial views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Mention of specific vendors does not constitute endorsement by the Department of the Army or any element thereof.
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Cynthia Mitchell, USACE

This Issue:



NPLD
Economy Act
#USACEeducates

Promoting Water Safety During the COVID-19 Pandemic

POC: Pam Doty, National Water Safety Program Manager

As we all know, this year has been challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Usually, part of the duties of park rangers and other USACE employees include presenting interpretive programs, conducting special events, vessel safety checks, and other face-to-face activities to promote water safety. That all has been drastically reduced or stopped to help keep our employees and visitors safe from COVID-19, but that did not stop us from promoting water safety.

Here are some of the outstanding initiatives that have been done to promote water safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Corps of Engineers Natural Resources Education Foundation (The Corps Foundation) partnered with the National Water Safety Program and purchased high-quality cotton bandanas that have the Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns logo on them. The bandanas were distributed to 176 USACE offices for employees and others to use as optional face coverings.

The Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns logo pavement stencils that were provided by The Corps Foundation, Life Jacket Zone pavement stencils available for purchase from the National Safe Boating Council, and other pavement stencils are being used to provide water safety messages at key locations such as at boat ramps, beaches, and visitor centers.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) that have been developed by the National Water Safety Program, districts, and projects are being aired on local television, radio stations, and gas pump monitors. Employees have been participating in television and radio interviews and podcasts.

Park rangers have used distance learning techniques and tools to conduct water safety interpretive programs for school groups and have created videos to share on social media and YouTube. To see some of the videos that park rangers have created visit the National Water Safety Program's YouTube Channel,

<https://www.youtube.com/user/USACEwatersafety>.

Article continued on page 3.



COVID-19 Impacts

Continued.

We, your Headquarters NRM team, recognize the requirements to safely address the increased visitation is in addition to, or at the expense of, normal O&M programmatic duties.

To our field staff, please know that your Headquarters NRM team is actively investigating options and brainstorming with various groups including the Park Ranger Advisory Board, the OPM CoP,



Photos Above: Impacts to USACE facilities as a result of increased visitation due to COVID-19.



Photo Above: Rend Lake, MVS, Park Rangers wearing bandana provided by The Corps Foundation.

the Interagency Visitor Use Management Team, your MSC and District Business Line Managers, the Corporate Communication Office community and others to provide the best possible support to your management efforts.

While we are hopeful that visitation will return to a more "normal" pattern

as we enter the later months of summer, our inviting outdoor spaces will likely continue experience heavy use conditions, especially in the warmer regions of our Nation. Finally, we want and need to hear about your challenges either in story, photo, or comments.

Please send them to Reece Nelson, NRM CAP, at Reece.E.Nelson@usace.army.mil.

Thank you for all that you have done and for all that you will continue to do to protect our natural resources and mission critical facilities while providing recreational opportunities for our visitors. Your selfless service has not and will not go unnoticed!

Promoting Water Safety *Continued.*

Some USACE offices provided National Water Safety promotional products to schools that were still providing lunches to their students even though the schools were closed. The Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns bags were used to put lunches in so that the parents could reuse them again and products like the Bobber the Water Safety Dog fun book, trading cards, and temporary tattoo were placed in the lunch bags for students to enjoy while they learned about water safety.

The Corps Foundation purchased ads promoting the Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns campaign in several state fishing regulation publications this year. Full-page ads are in the Oregon, Louisiana, Nevada, Indiana, Tennessee, Florida, Oklahoma, North Carolina, and South Carolina publications. There is also a half-page ad in Mississippi's publication.

Social media is being used now more than ever to promote water safety. The number of USACE offices following and sharing posts from the National Water Safety Program's Facebook (www.facebook.com/PleaseWearIt) and Instagram (www.instagram.com/PleaseWearIt) pages has increased over the past few months. The National Water Safety Program also has a Twitter page (www.twitter.com/PleaseWearIt) that is used to share water safety information. These social media pages are managed in partnership with The Corps Foundation. The National Water Safety Program also worked with the #USACEduces group to create social media posts that everyone could use during National Safe Boating Week and Outdoor Safety Week. USACE offices have also created numerous water safety posts on their own and are sharing them on their social media pages.

Banners, billboards, vinyl tailgate wraps, floor mats, messages placed on business receipts, changeable message boards and bank envelopes, and stickers being provided to restaurants to place on pizza boxes and take-out bags are just a few of the other things being done to promote water safety.

Some of these initiatives began before the COVID-19 pandemic, but some came about due to the pandemic. There are probably a lot of other things that can be done to promote water safety, so think outside the box and get creative because a water safety message can be placed almost anywhere and shared in nearly everything that we do.

Keep up the great work and thank you for all that you do!!! If you ever need anything related to water safety contact your division representative on the National Water Safety Committee or me, Pam Doty, National Water Safety Program Manager.



Photo Above: Green River Lake Boat Ramp Fee Booth

Value to the Nation Fast Facts

Natural and recreational resources at the 402 USACE lakes provide social, economic and environmental benefits for all Americans. The money spent by visitors to USACE lake and river projects on trip expenses adds to the local and national economies by supporting jobs and generating income. Visitor spending represents a sizable component of the economy in many communities around USACE lake and river projects.

The 260 million visits to Corps Lakes in 2019 resulted in \$11 BILLION in visitor spending to the areas around our lakes.

Updated Value to the Nation data has now been posted for the program (last updated 2016).

The Recreation Fast Facts reports highlight some of the benefits related to USACE's role in managing natural and recreational resources in the U.S.

<https://www.iwr.usace.army.mil/Missions/Value-to-the-Nation/Fast-Facts/Recreation-Fast-Facts/>

i Click here for the site!

Under the Recreation Fast Facts Reports, choose "Select a State and Lake Collection" to find your individual Project/District/MSC information. If you have this information listed on your District's or Project's Websites, you may want to update it.

VALUE TO THE NATION FAST FACTS

USACE RECREATION 2019 NATIONAL REPORT

Natural and recreational resources at the 402 USACE lakes provide social, economic and environmental benefits for all Americans. The following information highlights some of the benefits related to USACE's role in managing natural and recreational resources in the U.S.

SOCIAL BENEFITS

Facilities in FY 2019

- 5,045 recreation areas
- 31,801 picnic sites
- 91,583 camping sites
- 2,129 playgrounds
- 887 swimming areas
- 3,572 trails
- 7,773 trail miles
- 884 fishing docks and piers
- 3,713 boat ramps
- 109,057 marina slips

Public Outreach in FY 2019

- 3,259,241 public outreach contacts

Visits (person-days/nights) in FY 2019

- 262,158,492 in total
- 40,415,133 picnickers
- 33,418,212 campers/overnight visitors
- 57,851,914 swimmers
- 32,702,402 walkers/hikers/joggers
- 72,792,399 boaters
- 67,901,882 sightseers
- 29,112,407 anglers
- 9,128,840 special event attendees
- 9,834,337 others

Benefits in Perspective

By providing opportunities for active recreation, USACE lakes help combat one of the most significant of the nation's health problems: lack of physical activity.

Recreational programs and activities at USACE lakes also help strengthen family ties and friendships; provide opportunities for children to develop personal skills, social values, self-esteem; and...

Interpretive Corner

Virtual Interpretation, How Do I Do It?

The Interpretive Services PROSPECT Team, along with members that are assisting with the #USACEeducates initiative will be offering a two-part webinar training on how to turn your interpretation virtual. We hope you'll join us!

- **Webinar 1** will focus on "How to Build an Effective Virtual Interpretive Program." We will go over the interpretive basics and how to develop a theme, as well as presentation skills and an example program.

Schedule: Tuesday 11 AUG 2020 at 14:30 Eastern and Friday 14 AUG 2020 at 14:30 Eastern

- **Webinar 2** focuses on "Presenting Virtually." We will examine the various virtual platforms in use and the pros, cons, and logistics of each. You'll also have a refresher on how to track your contact in NRM Assessment.

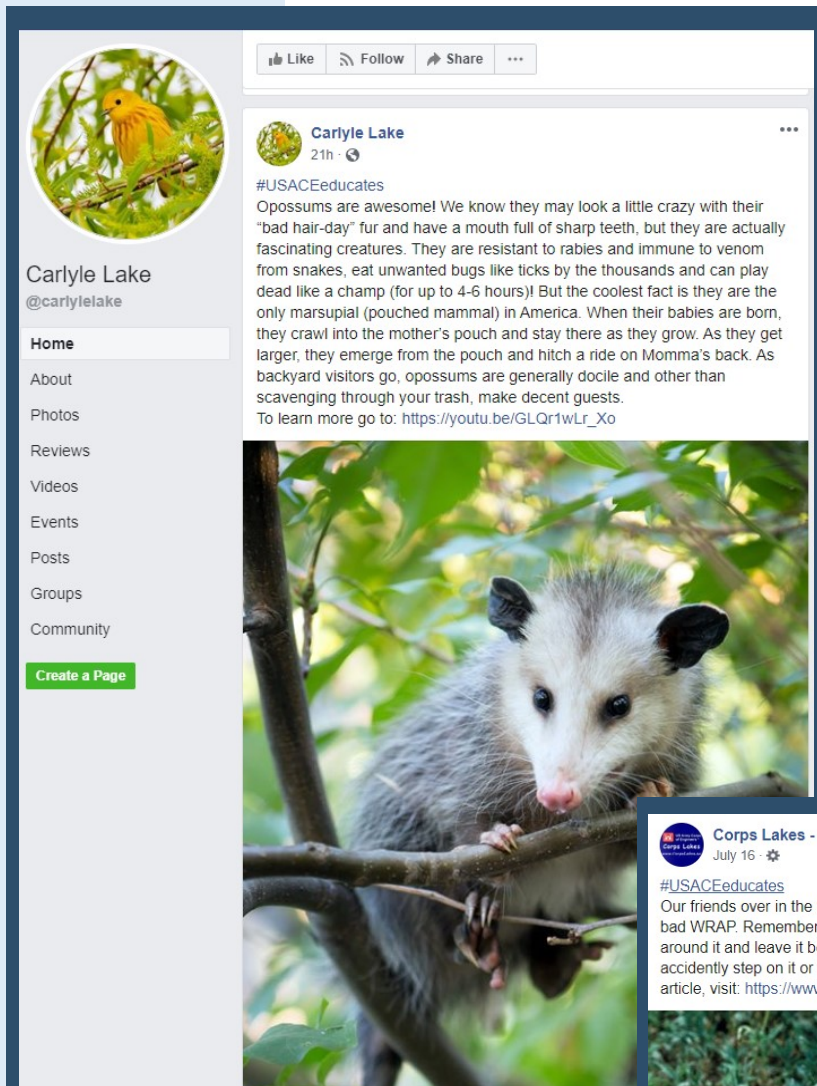
Schedule: TBD

Webinar Information:
<https://usace.webex.com/meet/roseana.m.burick>
Teleconference Information:
Call In: 888-363-4735
Access: 5671640
Passcode: 9615

#USACEeducates!

Since early April a group of rangers from across USACE have teamed together to "up" our NRM community's online interpretive game. This informal team has been designing interpretive/educational content to keep our visitors engaged, and hopefully, enlightened on who USACE is and what we have to offer. These posts are geared toward family and youth education and have been shared on the Corps Lakes Facebook page. Projects have been encouraged to post on their own pages as well.

The #USACEeducates group decided to extend this virtual programming effort through the end of the fiscal year. The topics for the next several weeks' postings are already being developed.



Above: Screenshot of Carlyle Lake and Corps Lakes Facebook pages with #USACEeducates content posted.

- **August 10-14:** Insects/ Honey Bee Awareness
- **August 17-21:** Night Sky/ Space Exploration
- **August 24-28:** "Back to School with the Corps"/Every Kid Outdoors
- **August 31-September 4:** Water Safety
- **September 8-September 11:** Hunting Season
- **September 14-18:** Biotic Communities
- **September 21-25:** National Public Lands Day
- **September 28- October 2:** Trees!



If you have additional ideas or activities we can use please share with Tim Bischoff and Amanda Kruse (Tim.Bischoff@usace.army.mil) & (Amanda.L.Kruse@usace.army.mil). Content will be distributed via the NRM Community Forum and can also be found on the ISOP SharePoint site: <https://cops.usace.army.mil/sites/NRM/ISO/Online%20Resource%20Group/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

USACE, DOI, and the Economy Act

USACE and the Department of the Interior have signed an updated Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to continue to provide a framework for both agencies to offer a range of reimbursable services to each other under the authority of the Economy Act (31 USC 1535). USACE and DOI have had a two-way MOA in place since 2016, which was set to expire in early 2021. The MOA has been used extensively to support USACE work with multiple DOI bureaus including the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and the Bureau of Reclamation.

All USACE entities including HQUSACE, divisions, districts, field operating activities, labs, and directorates are authorized to provide and receive assistance under this MOA.

Goods and services that may be provided under this MOA include, but are not limited to:

- Investigations in earth sciences, biological and environmental sciences
- Remote sensing and geospatial data applications
- Research and development
- Environmental restoration and management
- Water supply management
- Dam safety and hydropower assessments
- Engineering and construction/demolition
- Fish and wildlife resource management
- Fire management
- Recreation and park planning and management
- Information and data management systems
- Mitigation
- Preservation and interpretation of historical, cultural, and natural resources
- Environmental collaboration and conflict resolution support
- Training and professional development
- Emergency management.

This MOA is in effect until June 5, 2029 and has been posted on the NRM Gateway MOU/MOA page! The principle representative for the MOA for USACE is John Daley, USACE Agreements Manager who may be reached at 202-761-5844 or John.G.Daley@usace.army.mil. For our NRM Community, POC is Jeremy Crossland at 202-761-4259 or Jeremy.M.Crossland@usace.army.mil

 [Click here!](#)



The banner for the 2020 Amateur Photo Contest features a central smartphone displaying a vibrant sunset over a body of water. Surrounding the phone are several smaller photo thumbnails showing various natural and historical scenes. Text on the banner includes 'Share the Experience', '2020 OFFICIAL FEDERAL RECREATION LANDS AMATEUR PHOTO CONTEST', and 'GRAND PRIZE \$10,000 Plus other great prizes!'. Logos for Recreation.gov, USACE, and various federal agencies are at the bottom.

Share The Experience

The winning images in the 2019 Share the Experience photo contest have been announced. View the complete collection of winning photos <https://www.sharetheexperience.org/home> by clicking on the 2019 Winners tab. Over 9,000 photos were submitted to the contest. This annual contest invites amateur photographers to submit their favorite views, moments, and adventures from America's public lands. The grand prize winner receives \$10,000 and their winning photo on the America the Beautiful pass.

The 2020 contest is now open through December 31 and invites amateur photographers from the public to submit their favorite shots from a decade of adventures, from 2010 to 2020, while keeping the #RecreateResponsibly, <https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/recreate-responsibly.htm> and Keep Safety in the Picture, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/safepicture.htm> principles top of mind this year. For a full listing of prizes and rules, please visit www.sharetheexperience.org

Three grand prize winners are chosen for the top prizes of \$10,000, \$5,000, and \$3,000 respectively, a voucher to stay in a Historic Hotel of America® and an Annual Pass, among other sponsored prizes. There are also honorable mention prizes for two fan favorites and one for each of the six categories. Each of these participants receive vouchers for a stay in a Historic Hotel of America®, an annual pass and, other great prizes.

The 2020 categories are:

- Adventure and Outdoor Recreation
- From fishing to hiking to skating and more, highlighting the diversity of exhilarating moments for all that can be experienced on public lands and waters.
- Family, Friends, and Fun
- Featuring people, of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, who you love to adventure with on public lands and waters.
- Historical and Cultural
- Spotlighting the multi-faceted and multi-cultural stories of the United States, both struggles and triumphs, through the lens of public lands and waters.
- Scenic, Seasons, and Landscapes
- Showcasing the natural wonders, in every season, that take our breath away.
- Urban Playgrounds
- Featuring the community treasures and outdoor experiences for all that can be found close to home when you're living in or near a city.
- Wildlife
- Sharing glimpses, from a safe distance, of the incredibly diverse array of plants and animals that call public lands and waters home.

This photo contest is open to the public. Employees of any of the participating agencies, sponsors or their family members are not eligible to participate. Please share this opportunity widely through your partner organizations, volunteers, visitor centers, recreation areas, social media channels, etc. We're hoping to reach as wide and diverse of an audience as possible to let them know about this contest and highlight USACE lands and waters!

2020 Park Ranger Safety Survey!


The 2020 Park Ranger Safety Survey is now open through September 15th. The survey should only take 10-20 minutes of your time to complete. The feedback from all Park Rangers, Natural Resource Specialists, and Natural Resource Managers (who wear the NRM uniform) provides critical insight used in determining policy and procedures at the Headquarters level. Every year at our in-person meeting, your representatives personally review the responses from your division and communicate them directly to decision makers. The survey can be accessed at <https://cfapps.mvr.usace.army.mil/rangerapp/default.cfm>.

This year, comments and data from the previous years' survey were utilized in addressing the concerns of our national community in response to the unique challenges we have faced in 2020. The Board conducted a WebEx meeting on 15 July covering the results of last year's survey and highlighting program improvements in response to the surveys. A video of the meeting and the PowerPoint are available on the NRM Gateway.

 **Click here for 2019 Park Ranger Safety Survey Results!**

When you are filling out the survey, we ask that you be specific about the changes needed for you to operate safely so we can help get you



 **Click here for the survey link!**

RANGER SAFETY SURVEY 2019 RESULTS

Presented by Scott Tichy, Chelsea Tyler, and Justin Kerwin

Introduction by Jeff Krause, NRM Chief and Steve Austin, Sr. Policy Advisor for Park Ranger Activities USACE

Park Ranger Community of Practice (CoP) Advisory Board

July 2020




the tools needed to get your job done.

Change is slow to come, and we appreciate you taking the time every year (even if it is to provide the same comments!), because consistent feedback supports our efforts towards needed change.

This year, the additional 5 questions at the end of the survey will address new uniform items and ask for your valuable feedback on operations under COVID 19 and working in an environment of general public unrest.

Please reach out directly to your local Division Representative if you have any questions or concerns survey-related or otherwise. You can find your division representative here <https://corpslakes.ercd.dren.mil/rangers/advisory.cfm?Option=Main>.

 **Click here for the Park Ranger Advisory Board!**

A big thanks to you all for your continued support of our grassroots efforts and for continuing to deliver our program no matter the challenges we face.

National Public Lands Day

POC: Heather Burke, National Partnership and Volunteer Program Manager

Many may be wondering what will happen with National Public Lands Day (NPLD) this year. COVID-19 has made it extremely difficult - if not impossible - for many locations to host large in-person events on public lands. With this in mind, the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), host organization of NPLD has decided to include virtual events designed to connect the public to public lands sites. These online events will serve as an alternative for NPLD site managers who are uncomfortable with or are not allowed to host in-person events due to local social distancing requirements.

This does not mean NEEF is abandoning in-person events. Public land sites that wish to host small in-person events—in accordance with local rules and regulations regarding COVID-19 and MSC/ District guidelines—will still be able to register their event on the NEEF website. If you wish to hold a small in-person event, please check with your District leadership for the latest COVID policies and plans on in-person gatherings. Remember that safety of the workforce, volunteers and the public come first. Also recognize that with changing conditions, in person events may have to be adjusted or even canceled pending changes in conditions as well as state and local orders.

Here are some helpful resources:

- 2020 NPLD Registration – Site manager information and online registration for in-person and virtual NPLD events. <https://www.neefusa.org/npld/site-managers>
- What is Virtual Volunteering? – Overview of NPLD 2020 and definition of “virtual volunteering” on public lands. <https://www.neefusa.org/npld/virtual/volunteers>
- Examples of Virtual Events – Examples of innovative virtual volunteer activities on public lands. <https://www.neefusa.org/npld/virtual/event-examples>
- NPLD 2020 Virtual Event Sponsorship – Information about the NPLD 2020 Virtual Event Sponsorship. Selected site can win up to \$1000 to support their virtual NPLD event. <https://www.neefusa.org/npld/virtual/site-sponsorship>

Fee free coupons will be available again this year for sites that conduct in-person events. Fee free coupons will not be available for virtual events. Members of the public participating in virtual events will not be signed up on the OF 301a Volunteer Agreement forms.

 **Click here for the site!**

 **Click here for the site!**

 **Click here for the site!**

 **Click here for the site!**

Congratulations!

LTG Semonite has selected Mr. Matthew H. Palmer (LRL), Natural Resources Project Manager, as this year's NRM Employee of the Year, and Ms. Amanda L. Kruse (MVS), Natural Resources Specialist, as this year's winner of the Hiram M. Chittenden Award for Interpretive Excellence!

The Chief of Engineer's NRM Employee of the Year program recognizes outstanding achievements in the field of natural resources management exemplifying USACEs commitment to natural resources stewardship, environmental compliance, and recreation management, as well as demonstrated leadership and commitment to the natural resources management community.

The Chief of Engineer's Hiram M. Chittenden Award for Interpretive Excellence program recognizes outstanding achievement using interpretation to enhance public understanding of USACE, prompting positive experiences and attitudes, and encouraging voluntary stewardship of natural, cultural and created resources.

The other nominees for the NRM Employee of the Year included: Randall Bordelon (MVD), Mason Scharfe (NWD), Rocky Millenbine (SAD), and James Bloxham (SWD). The other nominees for the Hiram M. Chittenden Award for Interpretive Excellence included: George I. McBroom (SAD), John Thibodeaux (NAD), and Robert Buck (LRD).



NEEF  National Public Lands Day

Please let me (Heather Burke) know if you have any questions about any NPLD 2020. The POC from NEEF is Tony Richardson, TRichardson@neefusa.org.