

THE recreation RETREAT

HQ Update: Important Data Dates!

POC: Ryan Hartwig, Recreation Program and Business
Line Manager

Mark your calendars, set the reminders...here are the important dates **YOU** need to know for this year's recreation data entry. **As always, your attention to quality data is of paramount importance.** Each of these data sets are a key step in developing the recreation budget. Now is the time to prepare, get trained if needed, and be knowledgeable of the data for **YOUR** project! Ask questions if needed and reach out to the experts!



CWBI-OPS

- **Sep. 16, 2024—Oct. 18, 2024:** Field Data Entry for NRM, ENS, and PSA Detail (Only)
- **Sep. 16, 2024—Nov. 1, 2024:** District/Division Review

VERS

- **Oct. 7, 2024:** FY24 Meter Readings DUE
- **Oct. 15, 2024:** District Review Complete
- **Oct. 21, 2024—Nov. 1, 2024:** Q4 QA/QC

RecAssessment

- **Nov. 12, 2024—Nov. 25, 2024:** Field Data Entry
- **Nov. 25, 2024 - Dec. 6, 2024:** District Review
- **Dec. 6, 2024—Dec. 12, 2024:** HQ/Div/Budget CATT
- **Dec. 13, 2024:** Load into CWIFD

OCA's

- **Dec. 1, 2024:** ALL OCAs must be submitted, QA'd, and finalized

Be sure to read the Every Kid Outdoors article on page 10!
By working together, we are confident that we can return to the level of passes that were issued AT USACE facilities in 2019-2020. We need **YOUR** help, enthusiasm, support, and ideas!

This Issue:



Work In Action Volunteer
Excellence Coins



US Army Corps
of Engineers®

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).

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Campaign Hat Photo Credit:
Cynthia Mitchell, USACE



Visitors Get Rewarded for Wearing Life Jackets

POC: Pam Doty, National Water Safety Program Manager

The “I Got Caught” Wearing a Life Jacket initiative that the USACE National Water Safety Program partnered with Corps of Engineers Natural Resources Education Foundation (The Corps Foundation) to enhance has been going strong for four years. This year The Corps Foundation graciously donated insulated lunch bags and neck gaiters that were distributed to USACE lakes and river projects that requested them. In the past The Corps Foundation has donated beach towels, dry bags, vehicle windshield sunshades, and t-shirts. All these products have the “Life Jackets Worn... Nobody Mourns” campaign logo on them, and The Corps Foundation purchased them using grant funds from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, which is administered by the U.S. Coast Guard. USACE is not authorized to purchase products such as the ones donated by The Corps Foundation for public distribution, so the donations are greatly appreciated.

Every year, for the past four years, the USACE National Water Safety Program has asked USACE projects to submit requests for the products The Corps Foundation donated. This year, 114 requests were submitted and all received either the insulated lunch bags or neck gaiters. The products are handed out to adults caught wearing life jackets.

The following projects received insulated lunch bags or neck gaiters to enhance or start an “I Got Caught” initiative: LRH- Grayson, Burnsville, Summersville, John W. Flannagan, Yatesville, Delaware, RD Bailey, Dewey, Paint Creek, Fishtrap; LRL- Barren River, Nolin River, Nimrod, J. Edward Roush, Rough River, Brookville, Carr Creek; LRN- Laurel River, Barkley, Center Hill, Watts Bar Lock, Cumberland, Cheatham, Cordell Hull, J. Percy Priest, Dale Hollow; LRP- Crooked Creek, Youghiogheny River, Michael J. Kirwan, Mahoning Creek, Tygart, Shenango; MVK- Grenada, Enid, Ouachita; MVP- Eau Galle, Leech, Cross, Lock & Dam 9, Lock & Dam 4; MVR- Saylorville, Mississippi River, Illinois Waterway, Coralville; MVS- Rend, Carlyle, Kaskaskia River; NAB- Raystown, Jennings Randolph; NAE – West Hill, Hopkinton Everett, Franklin Falls; NAP- Blue Marsh, ; NWK- Pomme de Terre, Clearwater, Perry, Tuttle Creek, Rathbun, Clinton, Truman, Milford, Stockton, Pomona, Melvern; NWO – Missouri River, Garrison, Gavins Point; NWS- Libby; NWW- Mill Creek, Lower Granite, Dworshak; SAJ – Okeechobee; SAM- West Point, Alabama River, Carters, Holt, Walter F. George, Seminole, Lanier, Allatoona, Tenn-Tom; SAS- Thurmond, Hartwell; SAW- Philpott, John H. Kerr, W. Kerr Scott; SPA- Santa Rosa, Abiquiu, Trinidad; SPK- Stanislaus River, Black Butte, Success; SPN – Somoma; SWG- Wallisville; SWL- Greeson, Beaver, DeQueen; SWF- Proctor, Town Bluff, Belton, Somerville, Hords Creek; and SWT- Oologah, Kaw, Pat Mayse, Skiatook, Canton, Council Grove, Eufaula.

There have been very positive responses from the park rangers coordinating the “I Got Caught” initiatives and from the adults caught wearing their life jackets. This is a great way to reach adults and show appreciation to those who wear their life jackets and encourage others to wear them. If you haven’t started an “I Got Caught” initiative at your lake or river project, you are encouraged to start one using products you receive from the National Water Safety Program and local partners.



Photos: Top—Allatoona Lake, Middle—John H Kerr lake, Bottom—Lake Greeson.



Water Safety Around USACE

1 Libby Dam (NWS) - Libby Dam Park Rangers partnered with the Lincoln County Health Department to receive over 100 life jackets.

These life jackets are part of Libby Dam's Water Safety Program and will be matched with those in need of a life jacket throughout the 2024 recreation season.

2 Rend Lake (MVS)

- Pursuing opportunities to further promote water safety, the Rend Lake Project hosted the annual Beach Blast celebration at South Sandusky Beach in June. Despite a rainy morning start, 228 beach goers participated in water safety games throughout the day. The annual event included appearances by local emergency service professionals and Bobber the Water Safety Dog.

3 Northwestern Division (NWD)

- NWD's diverse program has a wide range of recreation features including heavily visited areas in, and near, large cities. The 2nd annual water safety training provided all NWD NRM employees and volunteers an in-depth background of the water safety program, tips to improve communication skills, and outreach strategies from subject matter experts throughout NWD and MVD. This 2-day training was recorded to accommodate busy summer schedules.



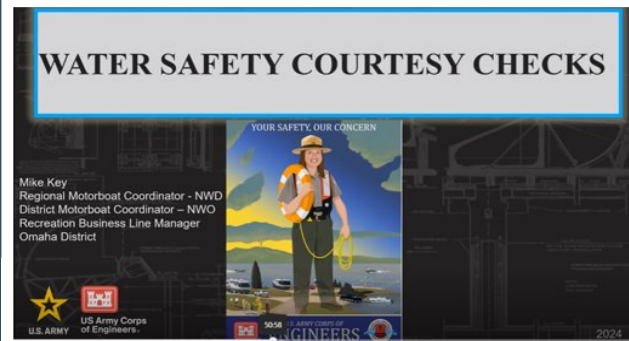
Image Above: Part of the partnership kickoff included a social media campaign to share the water safety message and have an opportunity to win a life jacket.



Left: Beach goers learn the importance of a properly fitted life jacket as they play Musical Life Jackets. Right: Bobber the Water Safety Dog poses with beach goers and the Air Evac Life Team 11 helicopter.



Left: Winning submission of the sand sculpture contest. Middle: Student Interns facilitate Reach, Throw, Go Relay. Right: Student Intern, Olivia Barclay demonstrates the dangers of impairment.



We Need YOUR Help!

We need recent (within the past year or 2) photos that represent the diversity of our work in natural resources management, the diversity of our visiting public, and the diversity of our workforce. We use A LOT of photos in various publications and shared media. Please send any images to tara.j.whitsel@usace.army.mil. Thank You!



Share the Experience

The employee Share the Experience photo contest is open until Dec. 31, 2024! Please encourage employees to enter up to 10 photos taken on federal recreational lands at <https://employees.sharetheexperience.org/>. Rules can be found here: <https://employees.sharetheexperience.org/rules>



Knowledge Management Portal for NRM

The Natural Resources Management Program has several pages on the Civil Work Knowledge management Portal.

Please visit: <https://usace.dps.mil/sites/KMP-CW/SitePages/Natural-Resource-Management.aspx> to access program priorities, metrics, newsletters, and more.



Did You Know?

On the homepage of the NRM Gateway (<https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/nrm.cfm>), there is a revolving headline located under the "Natural Resources Management Notes". This section is updated as new items become available with past stories being relocated to: <https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/headlines.cfm?List=0>.

The headlines are relevant to opportunities that are available, current news, etc. If you have a story of national importance, this is a great location to spotlight it for the NRM Community! Please submit articles to amanda.palmer@usace.army.mil

Natural Resources Management Gateway

SPD Visitor Assistance Training

The annual SPD Visitor Assistance Training was held in the Sacramento District during the week of Jun 3-7, 2024. Thirteen new park rangers from across SPD (and one from POD) learned vital skills that will assist them in safely and effectively interacting with the public as they enforce rules and regulations in our USACE recreation areas. The instructor cadre consisted of experienced SPD NRM personnel from across the region. Course topics included self defense training, pepper spray training, "verbal judo", and sessions focusing on the enforcement of Title 36.



Photos clockwise: Group photo of course participants and instructors. Park Ranger Eric Steffey practiced enforcing rules with course actors during scenario-based training. Instructor Taylor Saia led a classroom session.

Grant Opportunity

If you have local partners who are members of Friends of Reservoirs, now is a great time to work with them to apply for any of these small grant programs!

- Small Grants: <https://www.friendsofreservoirs.com/grants/submit-a-project/small-grant/> (\$1,500 grants)
- Reef Ball Product Grant: <https://www.friendsofreservoirs.com/grants/submit-a-project/reef-ball-grant/> (\$2,000 worth of reef ball products)
- Mossback Product Grant: <https://www.friendsofreservoirs.com/grants/submit-a-project/mossback-grant/> (\$1,000 grants of Mossback products)

All three grants are due by the end of August, and final decisions regarding funding will be made at the 2024 Annual Meeting in November. USACE lakes that have received these grants include: Cecil Hardin, Cochiti, Carr Creek, Canyon, Barren River, Patoka, Youghiogheny, Lewisville, Tioga Hammond, Red Rock, Table Rock, and Paintsville. You can find examples from some of the USACE locations that have received small grants in the past on: <https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/partners/ground.cfm?Partner=recfish>

Work In Action

1 Walter F. George Lake (SAM)

- Cotton Hill is a Class A Campground at Walter F. George Lake that has 91 sites with electric and water along with 10 primitive sites that provide electric and group water. Amenities within the campground include flush toilets, showers, drinking water, laundry facilities, a dump station, boat ramp, and a fish cleaning station. The existing wastewater treatment system for the campground began to have repeated failures and required constant repair. Utilizing IIJA funding, the lift station pumps, check valves, and control panels were replaced. These repairs now provide a reliable system to ensure services are available for users of the recreation area, increased utility efficiency, and require less maintenance by USACE staff and contractors.

2 Lake Sidney Lanier (SAM)

The shoreline adjacent to 37 lake front campsites at Lake Sidney Lanier's Sawnee Campground was failing due to erosion undermining concrete barriers. Work was performed utilizing funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to establish sustainable shoreline protection with natural base material to prevent further shoreline failure. Site rehabilitation work included grading and re-establishing impact areas and site boundaries to the campsites, improving steps and walkways, extensive bank erosion repair, and erosion repair around the shower house facility.



Photos Above: Efforts the Cotton Hill Campground.



Photos Above: Efforts at the Lake Sidney Lanier.

Volunteer Excellence Coins

USACE has collaborated with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) since 2018 to gather Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) data on USACE recreation and transportation assets through a series of cooperative agreements. This ongoing initiative represents a milestone in USACE asset management history and is scheduled for completion in September 2024.

Albert Yue is the longest serving crew member with over 18 consecutive months of providing substantial support to operations. His work has significantly contributed to improving conditions for USACE resources inventory, park facilities inventory, and the betterment of the recreation GIS inventory. Albert's tireless effort on the SCA team which included long hour coordinating, collecting, and organizing data for USACE Civil Works projects across the Nation.

Jamie Weleber and Peter Gernsheimer, both pivotal team members, have played a crucial role in supporting operations and significantly enhancing conditions for USACE resources, park facilities, and overall GIS inventory. Jamie and Peter have consistently surpassed expectations, demonstrating exceptional performance, adaptability, and professionalism throughout countless meetings, site visits, and data submissions. Their distinctive skill set has proven invaluable, highlighting both their individual capabilities and the effectiveness the SCA. Beyond the call of duty, Jamie and Peter have generously contributed their expertise, talents, and time, significantly enhancing USACE operations across multiple business lines and missions.

Albert, Jamie, and Peter have played a crucial role in this extensive data collection endeavor which promises enduring benefits that will positively impact the NRM mission for decades. In recognition of their dedication, perseverance, and sacrifice—often away from family—each have been presented with the Volunteer Excellence Award.



Photo: SCA Albert Yue collecting FLTP data.



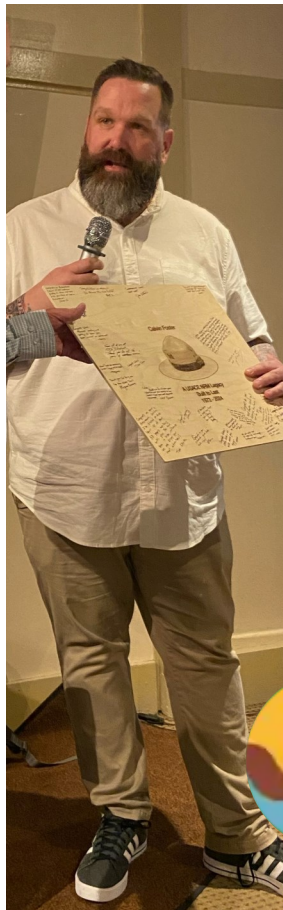
6 *Photo Left: SCA crew in the field. Photo Right: SCA Peter Gernsheimer collecting FLTP data.*

Recognizing Excellence

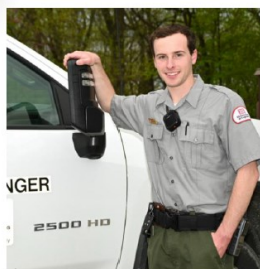
1 PROGRAM MANAGER LEGACY AWARD (SPD) - The Program Manager Legacy Award recognizes a South Pacific Division Headquarters team member whose actions best exemplify the highest qualities of public service in support to the Corps mission.

The 2024 SPD Program Manager Legacy Award is presented to...Mr. Tom Ehrke!

As noted in his recognition: "Tom Ehrke has been a strong advocate for the Natural Resources Management program within SPD since he was hired in July 2022. He fulfills the roles of the Environmental Stewardship and Recreation Business Line Managers in an exemplary fashion, advocating for District projects Nationally and ensuring they are provided needed funds. He also looks for ways to service the public through those programs, including setting a standard of service with the areas where our Operations projects have the most direct contact with the Public". Well deserved Tom and thank you for all that you do!



2 Saylorville Lake (MVR) - In the Cherry Glen Campground, campers faced a medical emergency during a recent storm event. Park Ranger Wesselink, who recently completed CPR and First Aid training, quickly responded by retrieving an AED and taking charge of CPR compressions. Ranger Edwards arrived soon after to confirm the location for emergency medical services and other first responders and assisted in compressions. Rangers Andrew Jones and Maxwell Zimmerman also arrived to provide assistance. The person in need of medical attention was transported to a nearby hospital. **To all rangers involved, thank you for your actions and assistance to our visiting public.**



Zach Wesselink



Justin Edwards



Andrew Jones



Maxwell Zimmerman

Fee Free Days

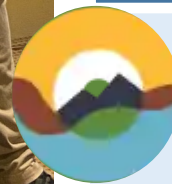
The 2024 fee-free days for the USACE user fee program have been set. This initiative was first instituted on Veteran's Day 2006 with the intent to support and honor the men and women who have served the Nation in the armed services. Including the recurring Veterans Day and National Public Lands Day, USACE will recognize the following five days as the FY24 Day Use Fee Free dates.

The remaining 2024 Fee Free Dates are:

- **National Public Lands Day: Sep. 28, 2024**
- **Veterans Day: Nov. 11, 2024**

For questions, please contact Ryan Hartwig at Ryan.D.Hartwig@usace.army.mil or Jason Owen at Jason.W.Owen@usace.army.mil.

Reminder on SORP!



This is a friendly reminder about USACE's organizational membership in the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals (SORP). Last year, USACE became part of SORP's new federal agency membership initiative to help ensure our NRM professionals in the field have the skills and resources necessary to manage and provide safe, high-quality, and inclusive outdoor recreation opportunities.

About SORP: The Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals (SORP) provides leadership for the outdoor recreation profession through skill development, networking, and technical guidance.

Under this membership structure, agency recreation employees can:

- Participate in virtual and in-person training and workshops, networking, and collaboration such as webinars, communities of practice, and gatherings or events about relevant and timely outdoor recreation topics, destination stewardship, and outdoor recreation, public health, community engagement, and visitor use management.
- Agency employees will receive the member rate for any fee-based training or events.

Please help by further sharing and disseminating SORP information across the agency through your internal networks. The goal is to ensure recreation employees are aware of this membership and their ability to access the trainings and resources that SORP provides. We also welcome ideas and contributors to future SORP presentations and professional development opportunities for others.

Recreation Around USACE

1 Carlyle Lake (MVS) - The Carlyle Lake Project Office hosted the 28th Annual Celebrate the Earth event in April with 2,200 students from 24 local schools in attendance. The students experienced five different 30-minute environmental education presentations. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources, University of Illinois Extension, Riverbend Astronomy Club, St. Louis Aquarium, and Bayer were just a few of the 47 partners and presenters that made this annual educational event successful. This event continues to communicate both USACE and partner missions, while getting local students outdoors.



Top Left: Natural Resources Specialists interpret clues left behind by nature.
Top Right: Students engage in Babaloo's exciting musical presentation.
Bottom Left: IDNR fisheries biologist demonstrates fish characteristics.
Bottom Right: The Butterfly House demonstrates the importance of pollinators.

2 Libby Dam (NWS) - Since 2012, Libby Dam has hosted an annual STEM Day event in partnership with Libby area schools "Gear up for Graduation" program. Over 100 8th grade students experienced hands-on activities leading to STEM careers related to USACE mission. Libby Dam engineers, electricians, mechanics, maintenance staff, rangers, volunteers, and SCA interns all participated in the event.



3 Whitney Lake (SWF) - In June, Whitney Lake Park Ranger Kathryn Devers attended the Fort Cavazos Career Fair along with other USACE team members. The USACE team spoke to approximately 150 active and retired military personnel about the diverse career opportunities offered by USACE. Overall, it was a successful event with many resumes submitted for upcoming positions.



NRM Trainings & Workshops

St. Louis District (MVS) Hosts Spring Interpretation Workshop - Newly hired MVS student park rangers and park aids from across the St. Louis District gathered at the Carlyle Lake Visitor Center in May for an Interpretive Services and Outreach Program (ISOP) Workshop. The ISOP is an integral component of USACE's Civil Works program and one of the most effective tools utilized to connect with various user groups, diverse audiences, and stakeholders. Through this program, USACE missions and accomplishments are communicated which fosters environmental stewardship, improves safety, build team cohesiveness, and enhances visitors' experiences. Overall, this workshop increased the knowledge of the district's student rangers and park aides allowing them to perform their duties more effectively and benefitting the agency.



Photos clockwise: Group photo of the workshop participants and facilitators. Students present a 10-minute program to the class. Roving interpretation is taught to the students.

! CWBI-Ops Interpretive Contacts Update / Tracking

Starting in FY24, reporting Interpretive Contacts will now focus on the message communicated no matter when or where the contact takes place. A webinar to explain the changes was presented in June and is available on the NRM Gateway at the link below. In addition, an Interpretive Contacts Tracking sheet has been developed to help projects easily and accurately track their Interpretive Contacts. If you have any questions or need more information please contact Amanda Kruse, Amanda.L.Kruse@usace.army.mil.

<https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/employees/learning/exchange.cfm?Option=Webinar&Type=Past&CoP=nrm&Id=792>

In Case You Missed It

Our partners at Leave No Trace (LNT) have now opened their request for nominations for the 2025 Spotlight program: <https://lnt.org/nominate-a-spotlight/>

Spotlights are designed to energize local Leave No Trace efforts by rallying the community, connecting partners, and inspiring continued action. This free program provides opportunities for Leave No Trace training, community outreach, and volunteer stewardship.

How it Works:

1. Sites nominate themselves for the program.
2. LNT hand-selects nominated outdoor spaces that need the community's care and attention.
3. LNT and selected sites work together closely to plan and promote the Spotlight.
4. The LNT Subaru/Leave No Trace team (s) travel to Spotlight locations to host free educational workshops, community cleanups, restoration projects, and more!
5. USACE attends the Spotlight to support conservation efforts in your community.

These Spotlight locations benefit from LNT education, awareness, and community engagement, leading to a better-than-we-found-it outdoors where preservation and conservation are in full force.

Nominations will be accepted through August 23rd.

USACE had four Spotlight locations selected in 2024. Three have completed their events (Rend Lake, Hodges Village, Beaver Lake). To learn more about what took place, go to: <https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/partners/ground.cfm?Partner=leave> and select the Spotlight event links. One more event will be taking place this year at Skiatook in November.

If you have any questions about the program, please feel free to contact JD Tanner jd@lnt.org or Erin Collier erin@lnt.org.

Every Kid Outdoors

For many, the 2024-2025 school year has already kicked off, while for others it is just around the corner! To make sure we are ready, USACE is sharing instructions on how to create an Every Kid Outdoors account and how to log the vouchers on the EKO site.

The EKO program was developed to help ensure every child in the United States would have the opportunity to visit and enjoy public lands and waters, fostering the next generation of stewards.

Thank you to all USACE projects listed in the 2022-2023 EKO Report, for your hard work and dedication ensuring that this opportunity is shared to a wide audience. Proctor Lake led USACE with 5,892 EKO passes distributed this last school year with 13,157 passes distributed agency wide. **Let's put our ranger hats together and try to beat that total in the 2024-2025 school year!**

Further information on the EKO program can be found on the gateway here: <https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/employees/ekip/ekip.cfm>

 **Click here for link!**



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Location	Passes
Alum Creek Lake Visitor Center	9
B. Everett Jordan Dam and Lake (Corps Office Only)	4
Bonneville Lock and Dam- Bradford Island Visitor Center	49
Clinton Lake Project	3
Coralville Lake	93
DeQueen Lake	153
Englebright Lake	221
Eufaula Lake	13
Fort Gibson Lake	79
Green River Lake	2
Hopkinton-Everett Lake	2
Illinois Waterway	332
John H. Kerr Dam and Reservoir	56
Keystone Lake	2
Leech Lake Recreation Area	134
Marion Reservoir	155
Mississippi River Visitor Center	4,506
National Great Rivers	1
Nolin River Lake	1
Philpott Lake	725
Proctor lake	5,892
Smithville Lake Project	1
Stanislaus River Parks	40
Stillhouse-Hollow Lake	2
Success Lake	87
Summersville Lake	265
Table Rock Lake	29
West Hill Dam	2
West Point	299
Grand Total	13,157

Agency	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Δ YoY
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	7,909	7,882	8,154	3,671	716	1,055	1,929	83%
U.S. Forest Service	11,856	9,206	10,138	9,193	5,160	1,850	7,068	282%
Bureau of Land Management	11,474	13,304	15,191	11,309	15,437	2,284	2,814	23%
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	10,607	15,944	37,325	23,638	9,926	11,630	13,157	13%
National Park Service	156,678	153,308	132,880	95,175	74,638	94,391	118,958	26%
Total	198,524	199,644	203,688	142,986	105,877	111,210	143,926	29%

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation issued 0 passes in years 2017-2023.

The tables above were extracted from the Every Kid Outdoors Report 2022-2023.

From the Innovations Team

The Innovations Team will be kicking off Season 9 with a meeting at the National Great Rivers Museum in Alton Illinois Sep. 17-19, 2024. The team welcomes suggestions for innovations and new team members. An email address is provided below to send suggestions or inquire about being a part of the team!



USACE NATIONAL NRM INNOVATIONS TEAM

We are an inclusive team that provides resources to get innovations from the field off the ground. The Innovations Team is a conduit for individuals to develop a better way of accomplishing USACE missions. The team gives them a forum where like-minded people can collaborate and develop strategies for transitioning to the future.

Do you have ideas that could make our work easier?

Do you have the desire to be a part of innovation?

Would you like to work with national partners?

Can you help us, help you?

WE WANT YOU!

Scan the QR Code or email us at email@innovations.com for more information or to join the team.

