



# THE recreation RETREAT

## HQ Update: Important News For You

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

There is A LOT to point out in this issue—here are the highlights:

- There have been a few changes to RecAssessment and CWIFD this year. Those who are a part of the budget process will need to pay attention! Kickoff webinars will be announced soon.
- Tips for obtaining Volunteer Access Cards have been created.
- Sign Mapper is up and running. Webinars are being held and recorded.
- We have a great NRM team and we know it! Check out some of the folks that are recognized in this issue.

### In This Issue:



**BIL Work In Action  
Volunteer Excellence  
Coins**

### EKO

#### EVERY KID OUTDOORS

With another EKO year underway, this is where USACE stands; the following lakes have redeemed vouchers:

- Allatoona Lake
- Bonnevillie Lock & Dam
- Clinton Lake
- Cordell Hull Lake
- Hensley Lake
- Illinois Waterway
- J Percy Priest Lake
- Norfolk Lake
- Philpott Lake
- Stanislaus River Park
- Success Lake (*who is knocking it out of the park and leading USACE so far with 855 passes redeemed!*)
- Walter F. George Lake

*Last year, (September 2023—August 2024) 9,925 passes were reported through the EKO site; however, 22,203 passes were reported through CWBI. See the tips below to ensure that ALL passes are properly recorded!*

Remember: Generating and redeeming a voucher are required steps for proper tracking if teacher generated vouchers are not collected. Instructions on how to create a login and generate and redeem a voucher are provided on the NRM Gateway:

<https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/employees/ekip/ekip.cfm>

Please make sure the passes being issued are logged on the EKO website:

<https://everykidoutdoors.gov/admin/index.htm>

Helpful tip: Create one voucher for all passes issued in a given month. That way, when the voucher is redeemed, it will record all the passes for your location. It is important that the site be updated monthly. This data will then be used for the annual CWBI update.



**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.

**Tara.J.Whitsel@  
usace.army.mil**

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*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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Tara.J.Whitsel@usace.army.mil**

*Campaign Hat Photo Credit:  
Cynthia Mitchell, USACE*

# Navigating Safety: USACE Pittsburg District's River Ranger Program

## POC: Chelsea Jones, LRD National Water Safety Committee Representative

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, known as the Steel City, has transformed from its industrial roots to a vibrant hub centered around its three rivers—especially at “The Point,” where the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongahela Rivers converge. This area attracts diverse crowds for recreational activities like boating, fishing, and scenic cruises, near popular venues like NFL and MLB stadiums and various multi-use land and water trails. These waterways offer countless opportunities and contribute to the local economy and quality of life.

USACE's Pittsburgh District (LRP) manages 16 flood control reservoirs and plays a vital role in overseeing the region's waterways. Pittsburgh's waterways are essential for recreation and commerce. LRP oversees 23 navigation locks and dams that facilitate the movement of goods and supports local industries, making the region a key player in inland navigation. LRP's focus on safe, sustainable water transportation includes a comprehensive water safety program led by River Rangers, who promote safety, protect natural resources, and engage the community.

Through various outreach efforts, including events, programs, signage, and partnerships with local organizations, the River Rangers have significantly increased public awareness of USACE's water safety mission. This past year, a team of one permanent and two seasonal staff supported 22 water safety events, partnered with 18 new water safety organizations that encompass an additional 71 co-partners, and made nearly half of the district's more than 100,000 water safety contacts. Their programs have led to a decline in water-related accidents, enhanced community involvement, and improved recreational experiences for visitors.

A highlight of LRP's water safety efforts was Water Safety Night at PNC Park, held in celebration of National Water Safety Month during the Pittsburgh Pirates' home game on May 11, 2024. The sold-out event showcased the anticipated pitching debut of rookie Paul Skeens and served as a platform to raise water safety awareness, reaching a broad audience beyond usual visitors to USACE projects. A media suite broadcasted stakeholder videos during all 15 home games in May, effectively raising awareness for National Water Safety Month.



## 2023—2024 National Water Safety Photo Contest

It's never too early to start sending in your entries for the National Water Safety Contest.

The 2023—2024 USACE National Water Safety Photo Contest is open to all USACE employees and volunteers including PAO and ACE-IT employees. The contest deadline is Jan. 31, 2025, but please don't wait until then to send in your entries!

This is an excellent opportunity to showcase your photographic talent. Winning photographers will receive some outstanding items that can be used to promote water safety. Photos taken in 2023 and 2024 can be submitted and must have been taken at a USACE project or off-site at an event/program involving USACE. Photos in all categories except for the non-water related recreation category should depict the promotion of water safety, demonstrate safe water practices, and/or showcase water-based recreation. Photos will be judged for clarity, composition, originality, visual impact, and topic.

### 2023—2024 Categories:

1. USACE Employees in Action (includes water safety mascots)
2. USACE Partners or Volunteers in Action
3. Commercial Boating
4. Water Recreation
5. Non-water Recreation

Contest entries must be sent to your National Water Safety Committee Division Representative. Division Representative contact information can be found on the NRM Gateway in the Water Safety Section under Committee Members. <https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/employees/watersafety/members.cfm>.



[Click here for link!](https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/employees/watersafety/members.cfm)

Contest guidelines can be found on the NRM Gateway water safety section at this link: <https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/employees/watersafety/photos.cfm>.



[Click here for link!](https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/employees/watersafety/photos.cfm)

## Navigating Safety Continued

Throughout the game, a command presence was established with the LRP District Color Guard, park rangers, and Bobber the Water Safety Dog, creating a festive atmosphere. Attendees received water safety-themed shirts that were provided through a partnership with PNC Park, and park rangers provided interactive displays educating fans about life jackets, safe boating, and water safety activities. The event, organized in collaboration with over 20 partner agencies and despite challenging weather conditions, successfully connected with approximately 35,000 fans, promoting water safety.

The LRP's water safety program is exemplified by the "Know, Take, Wear" campaign, which educates the public about essential water safety practices. This campaign emphasizes knowing potential hazards (Know), taking necessary safety equipment like life jackets (Take), and always wearing them while on or near water (Wear).

With 23 navigation locks and dams within LRP's footprint, a significant aspect of the River Rangers water safety efforts is educating the public about dangers associated with fixed crest dams. These structures can pose serious risks, especially during changing water conditions. River Rangers raise awareness about these dangers, ensuring recreational users understand the potential hazards and how to navigate them safely. By informing the public through paddle safety classes, river fests, and lock events, USACE aims to prevent accidents and promote responsible lock use.

Wearing a life jacket is essential, especially for adult males, who account for a significant portion of water-related fatalities. River Rangers target this group to change attitudes toward water safety by promoting the comfort and necessity of modern life jackets. New to their outreach program this year was the "I Got Caught" initiative, to educate the community about life jacket use. In partnership with The Corps Foundation, who received grant funds from the U.S. Coast Guard, insulated lunch bags were given as rewards for adults caught wearing life jackets, effectively encouraging safer behaviors and reducing drowning risks.

These items, along with donated floating keychains and other water safety supplies, quickly became popular along the rivers and drastically improved the life jacket wear rate during the locking through process.

The USACE Pittsburgh District's water safety program, supported by the River Ranger initiative, reflects a strong commitment to community education and safety. Through events like Water Safety Night at PNC Park, the "Know, Take, Wear" campaign, and ongoing efforts targeting adult males, the Pittsburgh District fosters a culture of safety on the water, ensuring that everyone can enjoy the region's waterways safely. These initiatives protect lives and underscore the essential role these waterways play in the community's economy and recreation.



*Images Page 2 and 3: Pittsburgh District's Water Safety Program activities.*



# In Case You Missed It

## Sign Mapper: Ready for Use

### National Sign Program Webinars

The National Sign Program has been conducting monthly webinars for training on various aspects of sign program management.

These webinars are normally scheduled the third Thursday of each month at 12:00 pm Eastern. A different topic is presented each session by a member of the Sign Advisory Work Group (SAWG), the Sign Program Mandatory Center of Expertise (MCX), or an esteemed guest with knowledge and experience of the Sign Standards Program.

While the NRM Gateway still remains the official site for Sign Program resources, slides and recordings of past training presentations are posted at the Sign Program SharePoint site:

<https://usace.dps.mil/sites/INTRA-HQ/SitePages/Usace-Sign-Standards-Program.aspx>


Sign Mapper is officially ready for you to use.

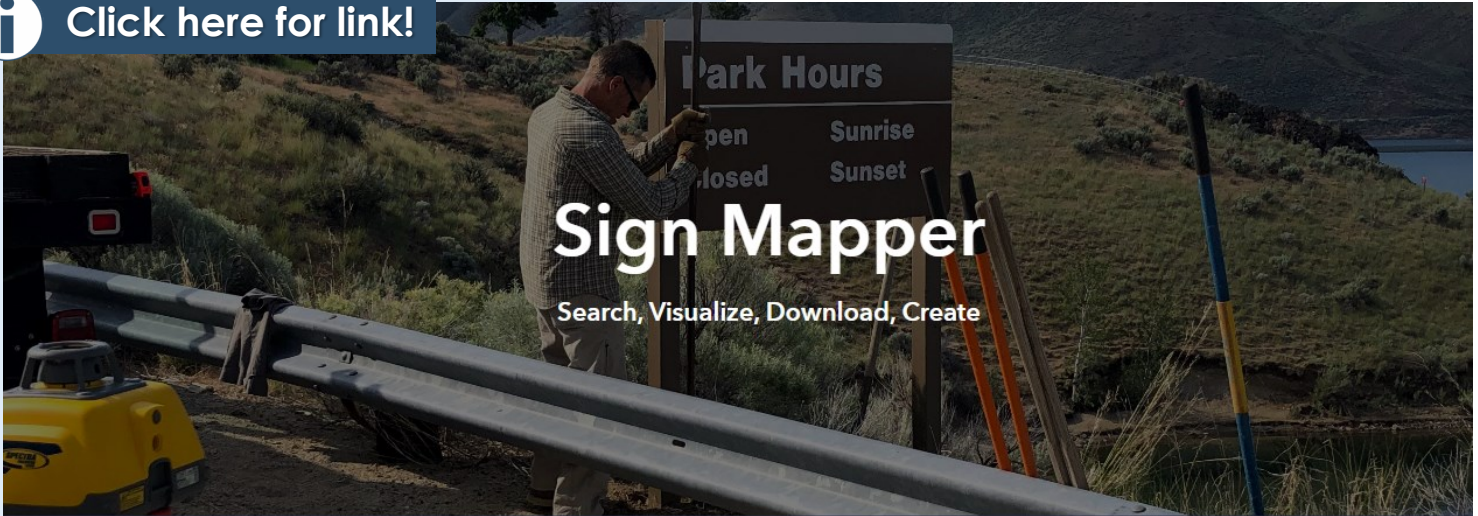
**What is Sign Mapper?** It is a newly designed tool used to document and map signs at each Corps project.

**Sign Mapper is mobile.** That means you can use your phone to access it! Use your portable device to catalog your signs, take photos, set geolocations, and describe the condition of each sign. Then go to your office computer and manage the sign program, make changes, plan for future sign installations, and so forth.

**Dashboard.** Sign Mapper features a dashboard that enables at-a-glance reporting to your supervisor, to the district, and at the Headquarters level. The top Corps leadership periodically asks questions about the Sign Standards Program, including national inventory. Having this information ready to go in a simple form facilitates this reporting. It also strengthens the overall program's ability to justify requesting additional funding at higher levels.

Sign Mapper doesn't have a sign design feature like SignPro had, but Headquarters is exploring options to

 [Click here for link!](#)



The National Sign Inventory is an enterprise tool for the effective management of sign assets across all business lines. It standardizes methodology of condition assessment in alignment with EP 1130-2-553, centralizes data management into the robust CWBI environment, and improves timely program analyses including assessment of compliance with standards, costs, prioritization of requirements based on condition and consequence, and provides source data to inform budget development compliant with Program Development Manual (PDM) guidance.

*Topics have included the following:*

- Signs 101
- Sign Program Manager Essential
- Sign Installation & Maintenance
- Waterway Signs
- Safety Signs
- Top 10 Tips & Tricks
- Open Q&A
- Sign Mapper (Sign Pro's Replacement)

Invitations to the webinars are sent to supervisors and others based on past attendance. If you'd like an invitation to one of these webinars, please contact your supervisor or National Sign Program Manager, AJ Jensen, at [aj.jensen@usace.army.mil](mailto:aj.jensen@usace.army.mil).

meet that need. We understand how vital that is; of course, all developments require funding.

**Helpful webinar.** A webinar entitled "Sign Mapper Kickoff" is available on the SharePoint site. It introduces Sign Mapper and shows what it can do. The same SharePoint site has information on how to setup Sign mapper on your phone and desktop.

So what are you waiting for? Get access to Sign Mapper today!

Links and instructions for Sign Mapper are found on the Sign Program SharePoint site:

<https://usace.dps.mil/sites/INTRA-HQ/SitePages/Usace-Sign-Standards-Program.aspx>

# Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Work In Action

**1 Lake Texoma (SWT).** The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) staff have completed a shoreline stabilization project at the Burns Run Campground on Lake Texoma. This work was a critical aspect of shoreline management and was necessary to protect the shoreline from erosion caused by reservoir flooding and rainfall runoff. The efforts completed as part of this will prevent further damage and allow continued use of the highly visited campground. This project was made possible because of \$4 million in funding from the BIL.



Above: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funded efforts at the Burns Run Campground, Lake Texoma.

**2 Norfolk Lake.** Providing 22,000 surface acres of water and 32,000 acres of public land, Norfolk Lake offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities for its 1,000,000 visitors annually. While the lake is known as a great place for fishing, the wooded and mostly undeveloped shoreline allows for ample room to enjoy the hills and surrounding landscape. Currently, a \$6 million paving repair effort is underway at Norfolk Lake utilizing funding made available through the BIL.



Above: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funded efforts at Norfolk Lake.

## ! BIL Signage Reporting

Sharing a friendly reminder to update and/or post new BIL signage photos before the **monthly** report is generated and provided to the Administration. The reports shared with the Administration will be pulled on the morning of the 5th business day of each month. Please make all updates by the **4th business day** to ensure accurate reporting. Information on BIL Signs can be found on the NRM Gateway at <https://corpsslakes.erd.c.dren.mil/employees/ijja/ijja.cfm>.

## What To Do When Your BIL Project Is Complete

When a BIL project is complete, the expected PROMIS requirements are that:

- The milestone should be actualized when all work is completed, and
- All reported signs should remain in the module, nothing should be deleted from PROMIS.

# Recognizing Excellence

**1 Fort Peck Lake (NWO).** Ms. Sue Dalbey went far beyond her normal duties of operating the Fort Peck Interpretive Center. Sue planned and executed the orientation and training of volunteer staff for both the interpretive center and campground operations. She successfully leveraged several volunteers to provide outstanding indoor and outdoor activities, environmental education, and water safety programs to 19 schools for over 800 students ranging in age from preschool to high school. She hosted four meetings in the facility meeting room for non-USACE entities, adjusting her schedule to accommodate after hours use of the facility. Additionally, she coordinated an outdoor classroom event for regional students at Fort Peck involving multiple other state and federal agencies. Sue has also taken the lead on a partnership with the local tourism board to develop and print an updated project brochure, moving this long-delayed project forward and saving over \$10,000 in printing costs.

**2 Louisiana Field Office (MVK).** Mr. Gary Johnson, Lead Natural Resources Specialist at the Louisiana Field Office in Monroe, Louisiana, was recognized as Star of the Month for his efforts in establishing a new outreach program with Bass Pro Shop and for his progress at establishing a new partnership with local law enforcement. Gary has also been assisting in slough sand spillway repairs, water line repairs, and coordinated National Hunting and Fishing Day with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

**3 Mountain Home Project Office (SWL).** Ms. Amy Branscum was recently featured in an article on Army.mil titled “From the Classroom to the Campground” for Ranger Week 2024. Amy is a high school teacher, park ranger, biologist, mother, and so much more to the communities she lives and serves in. If you flip through her yearbooks, you will see that she has volunteered hundreds of hours preparing students for homecomings, pep rallies, and various events that leave lasting impressions on our youth. Her impact as an educator for the last 28 years is evident by the number of hugs she has received from past and present students over the last six years as a summer ranger patrolling campgrounds at Bull Shoals and Norfolk lakes. “I will be walking through a campground on a hot day and hear, ‘Ms. Branscum, is that you?’” said Park Ranger Branscum. “This is almost always followed by a welcomed, sweaty hug.” Many of the students she has impacted have gone on to become doctors, nurse practitioners, dentists, teachers, environmental scientist, biologists, and more. Ms. Branscum plans to continue her career as a teacher until she is no longer needed. After that, she will trade her walks through high school hallways for hugs during campground patrols.

**Be sure to visit USACE’s Human Resources Knowledge Management Portal—USACE Wall of Heroes at: <https://usace.dps.mil/sites/kmp-hr>**

*From top to bottom: Sue Dalbey, Gary Johnson, and Amy Branscum.*



## Recognizing Volunteer Excellence

**1 Kaw Lake (SWT).** Tim and Pam Harrison were awarded the 2023 National Volunteer of the Year. The Harrisons were selected for this award due to their dedicated service to the recreation, flood risk management, and environmental stewardship programs at Kaw Lake. They have donated 6,763 hours over a five year period. This is the first National Volunteer of the Year Award within SWT.



Top: The Harrisons are pictured with COL Hudson and LTC Loftin.  
Bottom: Members of Kaw Lake's dedicated volunteer staff.

**2 Whitney Lake (SWF).** Several volunteers at Whitney Lake were recognized for their exceptional service. Bob and Barb Carr and Ellis Atchison received a certificate of appreciation and a Fort Worth District Commander's challenge coin for their commitment and selfless service to the public. Martin and Sherry Burchard and Betty Bunch received Volunteer Excellence Coins from the Corps Foundation for performing above and beyond expectations. Natural Resource Specialist and Volunteer Coordinator Kathryn Devers authored the nominations and organized the appreciation event. LTC Joshua Haynes and Chief of Operations Tim MacAllister attended and swapped stories with volunteers over tacos provided by the lake staff.

Below from left to right: Ellis Atchison, Betty Bunch, Bob & Barb Carr, and Martin & Sherry Burchard.



## In Case You Missed It

### Volunteer Service Application Form 301

USACE is in the process of getting the 301 forms for volunteer service renewed with OMB. USACE has been alerted that OMB is experiencing a back-up in process form renewals. Since OMB did not complete their final review before the expiration date (10/31/2024), USACE is approved to continue using the current forms until the renewal has been approved.



Above: An Allatoona Lake Volunteer coordinates activities as part of an ACA Paddlesports event.

# Recreation Around USACE

**1 Vicksburg District.** The annual King Kat Fishing Rodeo took place in the River Parishes for the second time on Sep. 20—21, 2024. The anglers were able to utilize the boat launch near the Mississippi River within the Bonnet Carré Spillway. There were 35 teams consisting of 82 anglers representing 18 different states. The agencies involved in the event included St. Charles Parish Department of Recreation, Louisiana River Parishes Tourist Commission, and USACE. King Kat Tournament Trail hosted the tournament. The event went from seven teams in 2023 to 35 teams in 2024. The annual event has continued to be a success and is showing a surge in popularity. Listening to some of the anglers, they say that this area is one of a kind and some of the best catfish fishing in the country.



On Sep. 21, 2024, there was also a free children's fishing event. The children were given opportunities to catch fish and take home a brand new fishing pole along with other items. There were 37 children that registered. Each child was also entered into a drawing for a \$1,000.00 scholarship to any trade school/college of their choice. Approximately six of those children receive a scholarship.

USACE received a lot of positive feedback from anglers and the event host, noting they are ready to come back next year. Throughout the event, Park Rangers Paige Zeringue and Austin LeRay made approximately 77 interpretive contacts with members of the public. They were able to discuss water safety and the importance of wearing life jackets and safe practices while boating. They were also able to distribute various water safety items to the public. A number of visitors showed interest in hunting and fishing, which was an opportunity for USACE Rangers to hand out hunting and fishing brochures, and discuss the different types of recreational opportunities within the Bonnet Carré Spillway. The annual King Kat fishing rodeo continues to be a great opportunity for outreach to members of the public and generates a positive image for USACE and Bonnet Carré Spillway.

**2 Lake Washington Ship Canal (NWS).** The Lake Washington Ship Canal Fish Ladder Viewing Room received upgrades thanks to the tremendous efforts of USACE partners Discover Your Northwest (DYNW) and The Corps Foundation. Together, they led the charge to pool resources and invite the public to contribute toward the renovation of the Fish Ladder Viewing Room.

Members of the public had the opportunity to make either one-time or monthly donations of \$10, \$25, \$50, or \$100 online through Discover Your Northwest. Those who wanted to donate \$1,000, \$5,000, or \$10,000 could do so through DYNW's Legacy Fish Donation initiative. Between 2019 and 2021, Discover Your Northwest and The Corps Foundation received \$1.2 million toward the project, making it the largest NRM challenge partnership to date. The renovations included HVAC system installation, sound system and video collection upgrades, indoor seating renovations, and the installation of a clear panel for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) visitors to view salmon. A partner recognition event was held in June. The next phase of the fish ladder renovation project entails adding a cultural



*Clockwise: Renovations to the fish ladder viewing room at the Lake Washington Ship Canal, visitors approach the viewing room, and legacy fish donors had their names engraved on metal-shaped salmon plaques that were hung on the wall approaching the fish ladder viewing room known as the "Salmon Donations Display Wall."*

component that recognizes the local Tribal nations, whose traditional fishing grounds are located on either side of the locks. The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and Suquamish Tribe contribute to managing salmon migration at the locks.



# Recreation Around USACE

**3 Waco Lake (SWF).** Waco Lake Park Ranger Matthew Hacker facilitated a flood debris cleanup with local Baylor University Fraternity, Kappa Omega Tao (KOT). The objective was to clear the remaining area covered with flood debris at campsites 9—17 and along the road at Reynolds Creek Park. After two hours of work, approximately one-quarter mile of roadway was cleared, resulting in five dump trailer loads of debris. This service day provided a great opportunity to tell the USACE story and educate fraternity members on USACE missions.



# Rangers in Action



*Above: Ball Mountain Lake (NAE) NRM staff support debris management efforts.*

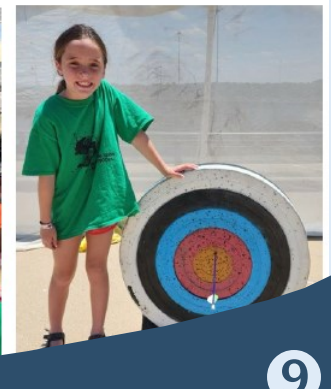
*Left: Baylor University Fraternity, Kappa Omega Tao (KOT), assists in flood debris cleanup at USACE's Waco Lake.*

*Below, top row, left to right: Campers utilize the public lands and waters managed by USACE, providing an opportunity for mentorship in conservation careers, water safety, and proper stewardship.*

*Below, bottom row, left and right: A camper who learned basic archery skills poses with their target, campers tour the greenhouse and learn about basic operations at the Riverlands project, and a camper poses with a bullseye.*

**4 Riverlands Project Office (MVS).** Since 2015, the Riverlands Project Office and the National Great Rivers Museum have been in partnership with the YMCA's Bringing Youth Outdoors Together Summer Camp program. Along with the National Park Service, Missouri State Parks, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this program offers five weeks of fun and educational camp opportunities exploring nature and recreation on public lands.

USACE Park Rangers play a significant role in teaching portions of the camp, including outdoor skills and team building. As part of the curriculum campers, often from underserved backgrounds, are introduced to archery, macro netting, fishing, canoeing, greenhouse operations, water safety principles, and the USACE mission. The camp provides an optimal opportunity to mentor the younger generation in the safe and proper stewardship of public lands.



# In Case You Missed It

## Helpful Tips for Volunteer Cards

Earlier this year, NRM advised that volunteers would no longer be issued a VOLAC (Volunteer Common Access Card) because the VOLAC process is no longer supported by the Mission Partner Identity, Credentialing, and Access Management (MP ICAM) system (where volunteers are sponsored).

Volunteers and other non-CAC personnel now receive a NIPRNet Enterprise Alternate Token System (NEATS) token instead. (NEATS is a centralized token management system for DoD PKI certificates on NEATS tokens, also known as Alternate Logon Tokens (ALTs), for individuals not authorized to receive a CAC.)

Please visit the NRM Gateway to learn the process for obtaining the new NEATS tokens for our dedicated USACE volunteers. Additionally, please share any lessons learned, so that together, we can advise others of

<https://corpslakes.ercd.dren.mil/employees/volunteer/check.cfm>



**Click here for link!**

## Traveling Miss T

Our partners at the Corps Foundation have teamed up with Traveling Miss T (Natalie Teboul), a middle school teacher who started a math mapping program online. <https://corpsfoundation.org/partnerships/>

Miss T's Math Maps are a way for children from kindergarten through high school to learn about the coordinate plane while engaging with public lands. Miss T's maps offer the opportunity to spread awareness of the USACE recreation program and missions—including our water safety mission, which is crucial to deliver to our nation's youth—in a fun, interactive way.

The USACE math map activities can be found here: <https://www.travelingmisst.com/product/usace-watershed-math-map>. The main map is targeted for middle school and the second map is for elementary school.

**Click here for link!**

In the activity, students will practice identifying and plotting points in a coordinate plane while learning geography. All coordinates accurately represent real USACE locations around the country.

Please feel free to share with your local schools and through social media, websites, and other channels.

# Outdoor Recreation Accessibility

*POC: Megan Parsons, NRM Specialist, SAD CoP Rep.*

Outdoor recreation provides a multitude of benefits, from physical fitness to mental health improvements and community connection. However, for many individuals, outdoor spaces have historically been inaccessible due to physical, economic, and social barriers. Fortunately, there is a growing movement dedicated to increasing accessibility and inclusivity in outdoor recreation, ensuring that everyone can enjoy the benefits and beauty of nature!

Physical accessibility is one of the most visible challenges in outdoor recreation. Trails, parks, and other outdoor facilities often lack the necessary accommodations for people with disabilities. Many organizations are advocating for accessible trails, adaptive equipment, inclusive programming, and clear signage. Simple changes such as installing ramps, accessible bathrooms, and ADA compliant trails can make a world of difference for those with mobility challenges.

The costs associated with outdoor activities including equipment, travel, and entry fees can be prohibitive for many families. To combat this, initiatives have been developed to provide low-cost or free equipment rentals, offer scholarships for outdoor programs, and host community events that are open to all. Many recreation areas participate in fee-free days and passes for specific groups, such as fourth graders and veterans, making recreation areas more accessible to a greater number of people.

Education and advocacy play a crucial role in making outdoor spaces accessible to all. Programs that teach outdoor skills and environmental stewardship can empower people from all backgrounds to feel confident in nature. Also, advocacy efforts are pushing for policy changes at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure public lands and outdoor spaces are equitably maintained and accessible for everyone.

As the movement to increase outdoor recreation accessibility grows, it is important for everyone to play a role. The great outdoors belongs to all of us, and we must work together to ensure that it is open and welcoming to everyone regardless of ability, race, gender, or economic status.

For more information regarding why and how we make our USACE recreation areas accessible, check out: <https://corpslakes.ercd.dren.mil/employees/access/access.cfm>

**Natural Resources Management Gateway**

*to the future . . .*

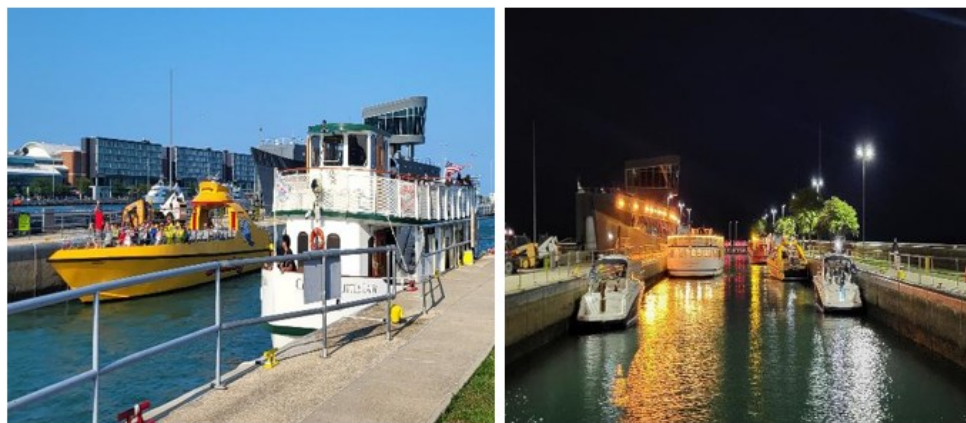


**Click here for link!**

# Water Safety Around USACE

**1 Chicago District.** Illinois Waterway (ILWW) Park Rangers assisted Chicago District to ensure safety was on the forefront at the Chicago Harbor Lock during the 2024 Democratic National Convention. During the convention:

- ILWW Rangers were at the lock all four nights of the convention to increase visibility and promote safe use of the lock by recreation boaters.
- Rangers interacted with recreation boats and people on commercial tour boats to increase visitor safety.
- Rangers were provided opportunities to educate the public about the USACE NRM program.



Above: USACE Illinois Waterway Park Rangers providing water safety education support during the Democratic National Convention at the Chicago Harbor Lock.

**2 Progressive Insurance Life Jacket Donation.** Partnering with the American Park Network and The Corps Foundation, Progressive Insurance donated 5,496 adult vest type life jackets to USACE lake projects nationwide. Of those, 612 were provided to nine lakes in USACE's Fort Worth District: Lewisville, Grapevine, Benbrook, Belton, Somerville, Lake O' the Pines, Stillhouse Hollow, Proctor, and Whitney Lakes. The life jackets were divided equally and delivered to the project offices where Park Rangers worked diligently to stock multiple life jacket loaner stations ahead of the Labor Day weekend.



Above: USACE Life Jacket Loaner Stations were stocked ahead of the busy Labor Day weekend with life jackets donated by Progressive Insurance.

## We Need YOUR Help!

We need recent (within the past year or two) 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](mailto: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.





## ERDC University applications now open through 13 December 2024



[ERDC University] directly served my professional goals and that of my work unit. We recognized the focus of this project as a risk, and this opportunity provided avenues for us to address these issues. The reach of this project also rippled throughout our district bringing both visibility to the issue, but also my role in our organization, and the role ERDC provides to USACE.

Jake Edwards, Jacksonville District

ERDC University offers six-month sessions beginning in March 2025. Division and district selectees are paired with ERDC subject matter experts at one of our seven world-class laboratories to apply and implement technical solutions.

**For applications open through 13 Dec., visit:**  
[https://wiki.erdcdren.mil/index.php?title=ERDC\\_University](https://wiki.erdcdren.mil/index.php?title=ERDC_University)

