




THE recreation RETREAT


HQ UPDATE: OPERATIONAL STATUS & COMMENT CARD SURVEY CHANGES

POC: Ryan.D.Hartwig@usace.army.mil

As we navigate and remain adaptable to changing nationwide staffing levels, two program efforts are noted below for your attention.


1 Customer Comment Cards.  Guidance regarding implementation of the FY25 Comment Card Survey Program has been revised to change the 2025-2026 year from a mandatory year to an OPTIONAL year. For those projects that have the capability to complete the task, it is highly encouraged to take this opportunity to do so. Receiving comments and feedback from our users through the Customer Comment Cards provides additional information necessary to make operational adjustments and better understand resource requirements.

A memorandum providing additional information about the Comment Card Program and the revised schedule for the next six years has been posted to the NRM Gateway. Procedures for scheduling, conducting, and reporting results of the Comment Card Survey, as well as existing survey results, can be found at <https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/employees/commentcard/commentcard.cfm>

2 Operation Status.  The NRM Technical Support Team and the USACE Common Operating Picture (UCoP) developed the Operational Project Status site several years ago to track and report ALL closures and project status changes.

The importance of maintaining accurate data for this use cannot be stressed enough. Every Tuesday and Friday morning, this data is pulled, processed, and provided to a UCoP dashboard, as well as uploaded to an ArcGIS Online Portal for public viewing, access, and use. Updates made automatically appear on our public page, <https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/visitors/status.cfm>. Many other public websites and portals for data sharing use this information for their own pages and maps, heightening the importance of maintaining current operational status data.

Article continued on Page 8 with more important information! NRM Uniform program updates on Page 8.

 I would like to extend a special farewell to our National Water Safety Program Manager, Ms. Pam Doty. Pam, a very sincere thank you for your unwavering commitment to enhancing the safety of our visiting public. You have made a difference in the lives of so many.



U.S. ARMY
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

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 readers with 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.

Managing Editor:
Tara Whitsel.
Tara.J.Whitsel@usace.army.mil



Fee-Free Days

Day Use Fee-Free Dates in 2025 for All Visitors to USACE Managed Recreation Areas

USACE fee-free days was first instituted on Veteran's Day in 2006 with the intent to support and honor the men and women who have served the Nation in the armed serves.

Remaining Fee-Free Days for 2025

- **USACE Birthday:** Jun. 16, 2025
- **Juneteenth National Independence Day:** Jun. 19, 2025
- **National Public Lands Day:** Sept. 27, 2025
- **Veteran's Day:** Nov. 11, 2025

All day-use fees for all visitors to USACE managed recreation areas will be waived on the dates listed above. This waiver covers boat launch ramp and swim beach fees. This waiver does not apply to camping and camping-related services or fees for specialized facilities such as group picnic shelters.

Other agencies that manage recreation areas located on USACE lands are encouraged, but not required, to comply with this schedule to waive fees in the areas that they manage.



Farwell and Bon Voyage

POC: Pam Doty, National Water Safety Program Manager

I have served as your National Water Safety Program Manager since 2012, and it has been an extreme pleasure of mine to do so. On May 31st of this year, I will be retiring. My career with USACE began as a summer hire park ranger at Lake Shelbyville in the St. Louis District when I was in college. A year after graduating, I was hired as a GS-5 park ranger at Lake Shelbyville where I worked my way up to the GS-11 Lead Ranger position.

Most people don't get to become what they wanted to be when they were a kid, but I did. When I was eight years old my mom asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up and I said a park ranger. I loved being a park ranger, all aspects of it. Whether it was doing timber inventory, prescribed burns, patrolling, trail maintenance, interpretive programs, special events, sign inventory, beach maintenance, or managing summer hires, volunteers, visitor centers, or service contracts, you name it, I loved it.

Then I became your National Water Safety Program Manager, and I loved it just as much as being a park ranger. The main reason I loved this position is because I still got to work with park rangers, natural resources specialists, park managers, etc. at the project level. Before becoming the National Water Safety Program Manager, I served on the National Water Safety Committee in a few different roles including MVD Representative, Seamoar Safety Coordinator, and Special Events Coordinator. It was fun

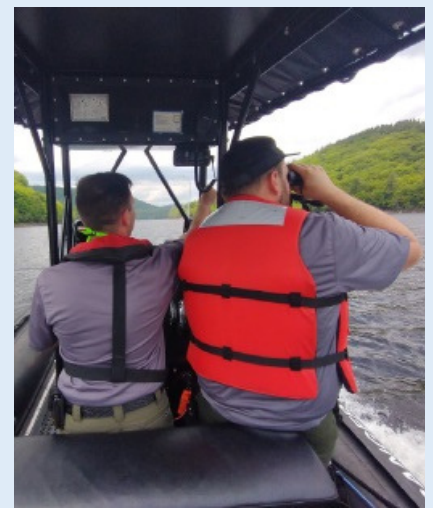
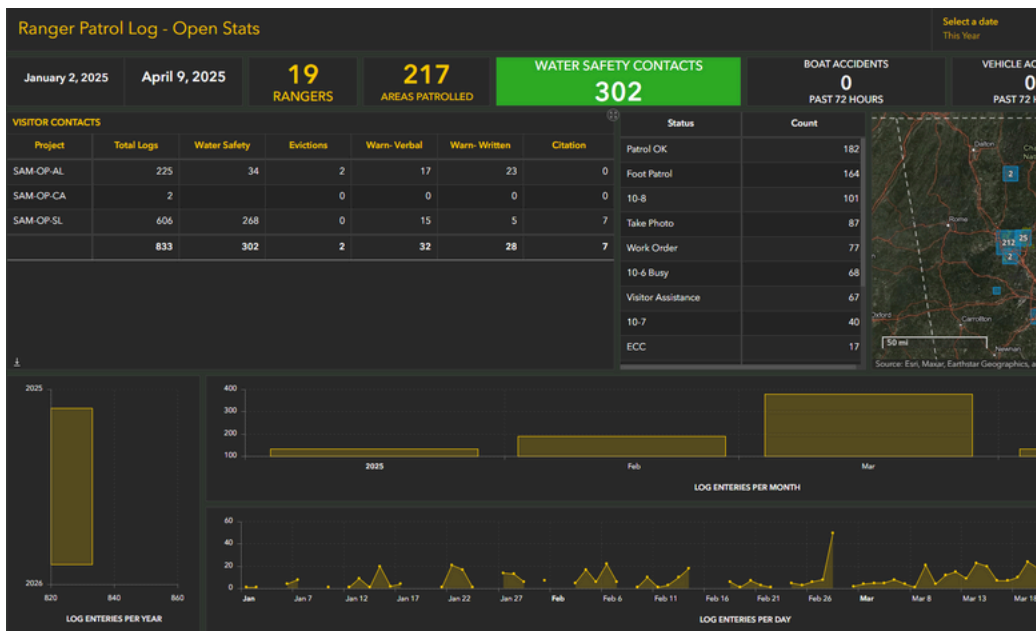
being part of a national committee and it was even better when I got to manage it. I cannot say enough about the current members of the National Water Safety Committee and everyone that has served on the committee during my tenure. Each of you has been amazing and have done an outstanding job serving on the committee and serving USACE.

Now that I've come to the end of my journey working for USACE, I look back and it's been a very good ride. I did my best and I hope I served you well. I will miss working with all of you, but I know that the next chapter in my life will be just as exciting and fun.

Continue the good fight, never give up, and stay persistent in doing everything you can do to promote water safety because what you are doing is making a difference and saving lives. Take Care, Stay Safe, and Have Fun!



Photos: National Water Safety Program Manager, Pam Doty



Field Testing the Digital Ranger Log

For two years, Lake Sidney Lanier and Carters Lake in the South Atlantic Division have piloted the Digital Ranger Log with great success. Allatoona Lake came online this year.

Over the past two years, 38 rangers have logged 7,726 patrols, which included patrolling 543 areas, writing 60 citations and 297 warnings, and providing over 14,500 water safety contacts. Using the Digital Ranger Log, the information was stored and immediately available for the project and leadership to view and use, making data calls and input more effective and efficient.

The success at Lake Lanier and Carters Lake is only the first step. The Innovations Team needs 3-5 more projects to test the Digital Ranger Log to identify enhancement and test scalability. To use the Digital Ranger Log, rangers must have access to a CAC enabled device (tablet, laptop, or government cell phone with Purebred installed). If you are interested in field testing the Digital Ranger Log at your project, please contact Russell Lundstrum, russell.a.lundstrum@usace.army.mil.

Innovations Team: Digital Ranger Log

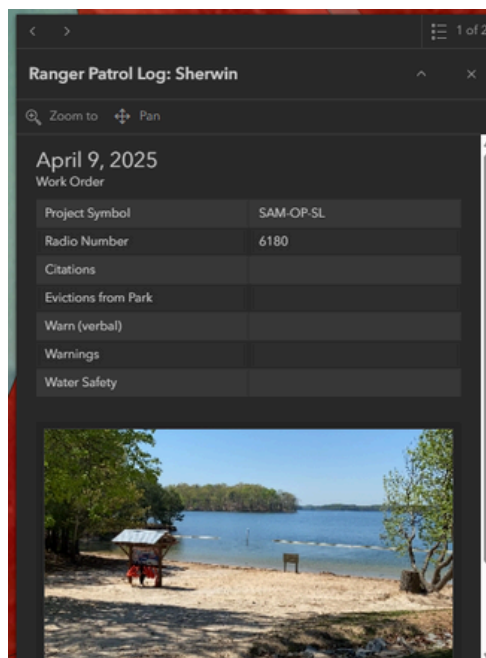
At the end of every shift, every park ranger completes a patrol log. The patrol log is a paper form that documents events that took place during a shift; typically reportable events include warnings/citations written, visitors contacted, when and where an area was patrolled, and water safety contacts. All information submitted in a patrol log is written out, collected, reviewed, tallied, and filed away for record keeping and reference.

Recent technology improvements have enabled the Innovations Team to expand the use of a Digital Ranger Log originally created at Lake Lanier. With the Digital Ranger Log, utilizing the ESRI Survey123 App on the JECOP Portal, all the Patrol Log documentation has been digitized and enhanced with geographic functionality that can be collected and entered in the field. This allows rangers to use a mobile device to log their patrol in real time. In addition, other rangers and leadership can see the location and details of their report. The Digital Ranger Log also allows rangers to add more details than a standard Patrol Log, including items such as a narrative, photo, drawing, line, or polygons. They can also directly input the number of warnings, citations, evictions, and water safety contacts. Using a mobile device for data entry will help increase efficiency, communication,

upward data reporting, and overall park ranger safety. Finally, dashboards and other capabilities available in JECOP will allow for data visualization and summarization. Space will also be saved in the eternal paper file system at every project office!

View the Digital Ranger Log Dashboard at <https://jecop.usace.army.mil/portals/apps/dashboards/59d4f73eb1774dd794d60bcb4572f91>

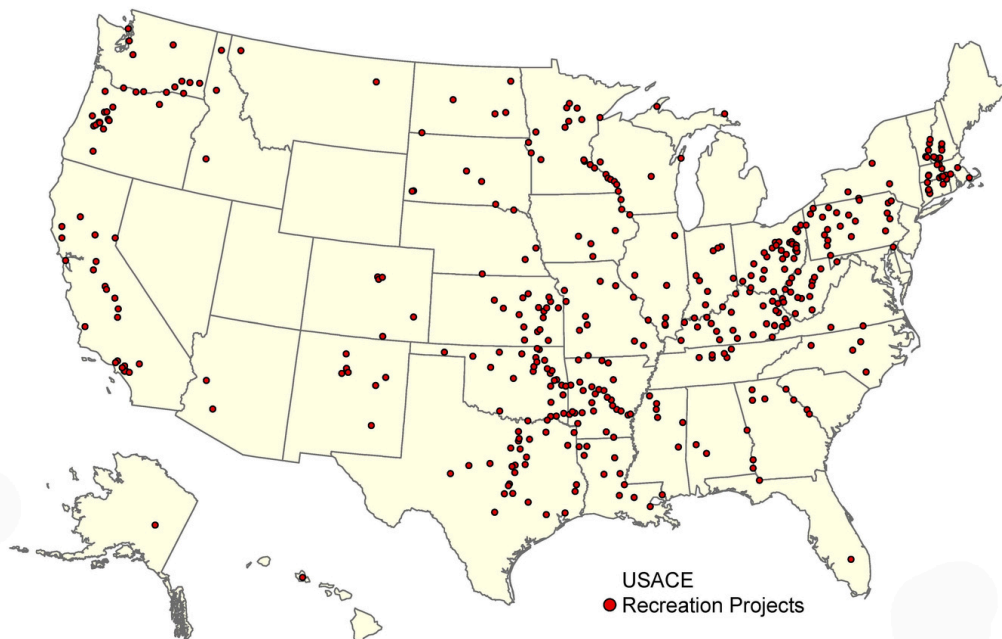
Learn more about the Digital Ranger Log at <https://jecop.usace.army.mil/portals/apps/storymaps/stories/9d643b71bd4e449d97e1ea8263535780>





We Need YOUR Help!

We need recent (within the past year or two) photos that represent our efforts in natural resources management, our visiting public, and 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!



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.

Recreation Around USACE

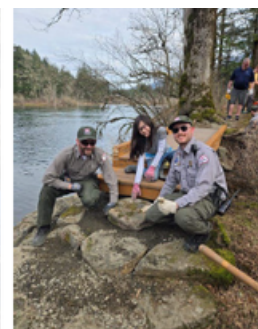
Bonneville Lock and Dam (Portland District, NWD) - In early March, Bonneville Lock and Dam Natural Resource Management staff facilitated a volunteer event with local Scout Troop 282 (of Hood River, OR). A local Eagle Scout candidate facilitated 12 volunteers to complete the demolition and reconstruction of an aged, failing footbridge and trail improvements at Bass Lake Wildlife Management Area in North Bonneville, WA. Reclaimed materials of rock and pavers were used to raise a section of trail impacted by seasonal flooding. New timber and upgraded abutments lent to reconstructing and improving the safety of the footbridge. The facilitation of this project enabled the collaboration between Bonneville and its local community, fostered youth engagement in the management of our nation's natural resources, and improved a natural area for the benefit of the visiting public. ■



 **12**
VOLUNTEERS

 **100**
TOTAL
VOLUNTEER HOURS

 **\$3,350**
ESTIMATED
VALUE TO USACE



Middle and bottom: Repairs to a footbridge in the Bass Lake Wildlife Management Area were completed through the oversight of an Eagle Scout candidate and Scout Troop 282 with the support of USACE's NRM staff at Bonneville Lock and Dam.

Ray Roberts Lake (Fort Worth District, SWD) - The 55th Bassmaster Classic fishing tournament was held at Ray Roberts Lake on Mar. 21-23, 2025. USACE staff at Ray Roberts Lake were involved in the coordination of the event, in conjunction with Texas Parks and Wildlife Division.

Article continued on next page





55th Bassmaster Classic fishing tournament at Ray Roberts Lake.

Several thousand spectators were on-site for the morning launch of the competitors boats. The winning angler, Easton Fothergill, set a new 15-fish weight record for Bassmaster with a total of 76 pounds and 15 ounces. ■



Sam Rayburn Reservoir (Fort Worth District, SWD) - Sam Rayburn NRM staff provided support to other USACE mission areas. Lake Manager Lynden Wood and Park Ranger Rabakukk-Longthorn attended the Rayburn Country Association homeowners meeting. Together, they presented on the overall missions of the lake, an update on the 2024 flood event, and provided a timeline for the repairs from the flood damage. This was a great opportunity to connect with stakeholders and keep everyone informed of current events at the project. ■



Left: NRM staff provided support to USACE missions, providing updates on flood repairs.

Below left: Visitors learn the intricacies of the second powerhouse and how it operates. The tour was lead by USACE Park Ranger Harmon.

Below right: Ranger Friend teaches visitors of all ages how hydropower creates electricity using a hands-on Pelton wheel exhibit.



Bonneville Lock and Dam (Portland District, NWD) - Bonneville Lock and Dam participated in the annual Great Electrifying Event on Feb. 22, 2025. Park Rangers and volunteers supported an immersive educational experience for visitors of all ages to learn about the basics of electricity, the different types of energy, and how Bonneville Dam operates. ■



92
VISITORS



51
VISITORS
PARTICIPATED IN A
TOUR OF THE
POWERHOUSE



Recognizing Excellence

Randi Clifton

Tulsa District presented Mrs. Randi Clifton the Tulsa District Ranger of the Year recognition for 2024. Mrs. Clifton was awarded the Ranger of the Year for her outstanding and ongoing efforts at the Oologah Lake Office. With special note, Randi's mother, the late Glenda Vincent, won this award in 1991.



Handshake Partnership Program

Mr. Stephen L. Hill, Director of Operations and Regulatory Programs, announced the call for proposals for the FY26 Handshake Partnership Program. The program is in its 23rd year and offers an additional funding source (i.e., seed money up to \$25,000 per project) to USACE facilities for worthwhile partnership projects. The Handshake Program provides an excellent opportunity to leverage local partnerships with USACE dollars outside of the usual O&M budget to help complete recreation and environmental stewardship projects that benefits lands, waters, and visitors.

Electronic applications with district and MSC coordination must be sent from the MSCs to Mr. Phil Manhart, Phil.J.Manhart@usace.army.mil, representative on the Partnership Advisory Committee, no later than Aug. 31, 2025.

The memo, application instructions, and a copy of the application are posted on the NRM Gateway Handshake Program page at <https://corpslakes.erd.c.dren.mil/employees/handshake/handshake.cfm>.

FY26 Handshake Program webinars will be conducted:
May 14: 2:00-3:00 Eastern
June 18: 12:00-1:00 Eastern
July 16: 11:00-12:00 Eastern

Please reach out to the Partnership Advisory Committee members with any questions: NAD-Jared Gagnon, SAD-Cassie Cross, MVD-Phil Manhart, LRD-Mike McCoy, SWD-Vacant, SPD-Taylor Baughn, NWD- Keith Hyde.



Rivers Project (St. Louis District, MVD) - In partnership with the Meeting of the Rivers Foundation, the Mississippi River Water Trail Association, and several other local organizations, the Rivers Project presented the fourth annual Ice Jam at the Dam at the National Great Rivers Museum. Attractions included scheduled tours of the Melvin Price Locks and Dam, live animal presentations from the Tree House Wildlife Center, live music, winter-themed educational booths (safe winter paddling, winter bird watching, history of Lewis & Clark/winter survival, and science of road salt) and featured visits from Bobber the Water Safety Dog and mascots Louie of the St. Lewis Blues and Blazer of Lewis & Clark Community College. Open tours of Melvin Price brought visitors to the top of the structure to learn about the navigational channel and how it can change when the Mississippi River freezes. Children could earn a s'more and a water safety bag for completing a Polar Passport by visiting 10 educational booths.



800
VISITORS ENGAGED WITH
WINTER RECREATION



Above: Tour of Melvin Price lock structure.
Top: Ice Jam at the Dam activities.

Mark Twain Lake (St. Louis District, MVD) - NRM staff at Mark Twain Lake in partnership with the Monroe City Whitetails Unlimited Chapter, the Mark Twain Lake Visitors and Educational Resource Center Committee, the Missouri Department of Conservation, and the Mark Twain State Park hosted the annual Ben Sapp Memorial Shed Hunt for Youth. This event took place Feb. 22, 2025 and was a great outdoor adventure for all ages.

The intent of this event is to introduce youth to the outdoors outside of the traditional recreation season and during a season when most are eager to get outdoors. Visitors were also welcomed into the M.W. Boudreaux Memorial Visitor Center to explore informational booths highlighting deer and other related outdoor topics.



Participants in the annual Ben Sapp Memorial Shed Hunt for Youth.



NRM staff at Sam Rayburn Reservoir connected with park visitors to fulfill a wish.

Granting Wishes and Saving Lives

Sam Rayburn Reservoir Park Rangers Emily Laperriere and Tyler Slovacsek were able to fulfill a young girl's wish of meeting a Park Ranger. During that visit, they shared similar stories of health challenges they've faced and their goal to overcome them. In 2025, the Bailey family returned to Sam Rayburn and donated life jackets for the life jacket loaner board program. Ranger Fiona Rabakukk-Langthorn received 15 life jackets of varying sizes to add to loaner boards across the lake. While at the office, the family asked to see the Park Rangers again to share their health success stories and aspirations to be a Park Ranger one day.

SPD Park Ranger Training

The annual South Pacific Division Park Ranger Training was conducted at the Navy Base on Coronado Island from Feb. 24-28, 2025. Approximately 70 employees from across all four districts of the SPD Operations Community of Practice gathered to receive mission essential annual training.

The week began with a special video featuring SPD Commander Colonel Handura who recognized the group for their efforts to protect the visiting public. Participants gained knowledge in a variety of topics, including self-defense, pepper spray, water safety, interpretation, blood-borne pathogens, tactical communications, and partnerships.

The training was a resounding success and will directly prepare this critical group of field personnel to assist our visitors in the upcoming recreation season.

SPD Park Ranger Training: group photo of participants, peer presentations, and self defense training.



Recognizing Excellence

Jesse Westphal

Jesse Westphal, a Supervisory Park Ranger at Lake Red Rock, has been deeply engaged in all aspects of the Recreation, Environmental Stewardship, and Flood Risk Management business lines throughout his career. He serves as an OCAT (Oleoresin Capsicum Aerosol Training) instructor for the MVR Visitor Assistance training and has completed the MVR Leadership Development Programs 1 and 2. Jesse brings exceptional leadership abilities and extensive field knowledge to his position.

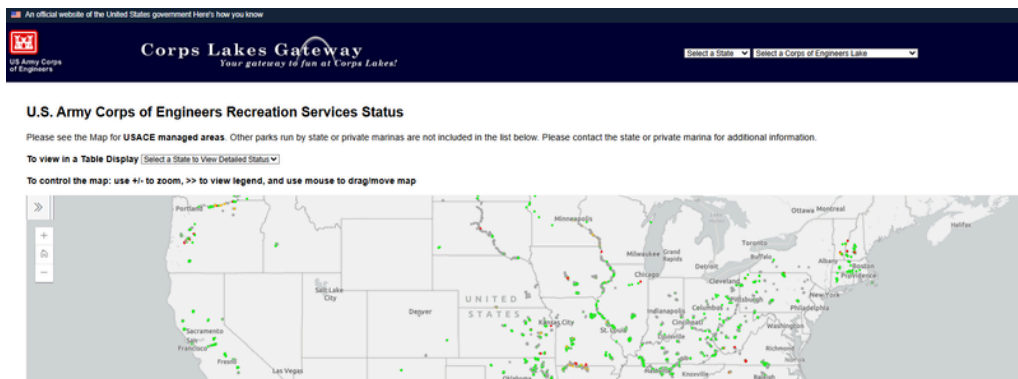
Congratulations Jesse!



Tulsa District: Ranger Trainee Graduation

On Jan. 21, 2025, four Park Rangers were recognized for graduating from the Tulsa District's 2-year ranger training program.

Requirements include completion of several PROSPECT and in-house training courses, three 30-day TDY details, shadowing of senior leadership, CP-18 requirements, and mentor meetings. The most recent graduates are Audrey Erwin (Lake Texoma), Conner Rychlik (Lake Texoma), Beth Stevenson (Keystone Lake), and Josh English (Lake Texoma).



HQ Update Continued

Federal land management agencies are required to provide accurate and accessible geospatial data to improve public access with the recent passing of the MAPLands Act (PL 117-114).

Projects are required to log in at <https://gateway.erd.cdrn.mil/nrm/opstatus/> and **IMMEDIATELY** update or report closures and project status changes. Additionally, project staff should regularly review and update statuses as needed. Even if the status currently listed for your PSAs is accurate, please hit the "update" button to refresh the last entry date so that those working to disseminate this data to the public know it is up to date. We are tracking over 2,700 USACE recreation areas on this site. That's 2,700 opportunities to get it right! ■

NRM Uniform Program Update

POC: Heath Kruger, HQUSACE Senior Policy Advisor

The contract for the NRM uniforms is still undergoing additional reviews by the Department of the Interior. While these delays are ongoing, we are hopeful that approval will be granted soon, and we expect the program to reopen in the near future. While the ordering website has been unavailable since December, USACE has worked with the contractor to reconstruct the site, giving it a fresh look with the goal of improving user experience. We hope this upgrade will provide uniform wearers with a more streamlined and effective platform for future orders.



Since the early 1980s, USACE has collaborated with the Department of the Interior to provide NRM uniforms under a centralized allowance-based contract administered by the National Park Service. Over the years, we've established five multiyear interagency contracts, allowing us to share many uniform items under an "economy-of-scale" arrangement. This collaboration has led to reduced costs and improved service, ensuring that we continue to meet the diverse needs of our workforce.

The NRM uniform program and ordering website have evolved over time, benefiting from years of program and product improvements. Updates to the website have been shaped by feedback from Park Rangers across USACE. The website's new look will reflect some of these advancements and efficiencies.

Looking ahead, we will continue to make updates to the Uniform Program and the ordering website. Future updates will include photos and better detailed descriptions of uniform items, so users can easily make informed choices. If you have any suggestions or would like to see specific improvements, we encourage you to reach out to your Uniform Committee representative. More information about the uniform program can be found on the NRM gateway. Thank you for your continued excellence in serving the USACE Park Ranger Program. ■

NRM Uniform Committee

- Holly Meyers, LRD
- Connie Gunter, SAD
- Michele Fromdahl, NWD
- Jill Davis, POH
- Sara Jernigan, CHAIR
- Amanda Palmer, SWD
- Coty Thompson, MVD
- Carrie Richardson, SPD
- Scott Graham, NAD



ER 1130-2-500

The updated ER 1130-2-500 Partners and Support (a multifunctional O&M ER) was recently published, with an effective date of Apr. 10, 2025. This version replaces the Dec. 1996 ER and EP, combining them into one document and updating former policy, as needed.

The ER can be found online at

https://www.publications.usace.army.mil/Portals/76/Publications/EngineerRegulations/ER%201130-2-500_FINAL%2013Mar2025.pdf

This ER establishes the policy for the management of operation and maintenance activities of USACE personnel performing civil works functions related to flood control, navigation, dredging, hydroelectric power generation, environmental stewardship, and recreation services at water resource, waterway, and other related projects.

Changes to the programs directly related to NRM include the following:

- Chapter 5: Sign Standards Program for CW Projects
- Chapter 7: Energy Program (formerly Ch. 8)
- Chapter 8: Cooperating Associations Program (formerly Ch. 9)
- Chapter 9: Volunteer Program (formerly Ch. 10)
- Chapter 10: Contributions Program (formerly Ch. 11)
- Chapter 11: Challenge Partnerships Program (formerly Ch. 12, titled Challenge Cost-Sharing Program)
- Chapter 12: CW Housing Program
- Chapter 13: Aquatic Plant Control Program
- Chapter 14: Challenge Cost-Sharing Cooperative Management Agreements