



# *Civil Works Program Recreation Business Area Action Plan*

*FY 2000 - FY 2004*  
**(12/13 DRAFT)**

## **PURPOSE**

The Corps recreation business area operates in a highly dynamic environment that requires flexibility to adapt to rapidly emerging challenges and opportunities. The purpose of this document is to create an agenda of high priority actions that will guide the execution of the Corps Recreation Program over the next five years in the context of the Civil Works Program Strategic Plan. The plan was developed with significant input from the Recreation Management Support Program (RMSP) Leadership Team (Appendix 1) Input was obtained as part of an internal assessment of the Corps Recreation Program conducted 18-20 October 1999. The assessment a) identified high priority issues affecting the program, b) described desired outcomes associated with each issue, and c) recommended potential actions to address identified issues. This plan is not intended to comprehensively address all aspects of the recreation program or substitute for the recreation component of the Civil Works Strategic Plan. It is designed to address high priority issues determined by the RMSP Team to be key to the future of the program.

## **RECREATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### *Program Summary*

The Corps **recreation mission** entails providing recreation opportunities on over 450 water resource development projects in 42 states annually generating over 380 million visits by over 25 million people; **one in ten Americans**. Excluding the Great Lakes, over 20 percent of freshwater fishing and 15 percent of freshwater boating in the U.S. occurs on Corps projects. Recreation on Corps projects results in over \$12 billion in visitor spending annually and is directly or indirectly associated with 600 thousand U.S. jobs. In 1995, the recreation program was established as one of nine business areas of the Corps Civil Works Program.

Successful execution of the recreation program depends on high quality natural resources as described in the Natural Resources mission statement (Appendix 2). Intensive recreational use of Corps projects creates impacts and demands on natural resources. These must be addressed by proactive natural resource management practices to strike a balance between recreational use of natural resources and environmental considerations.

**Partnerships** with other federal, state and local levels of government, quasi- public agencies and the private sector are an essential component of the Corps recreation program. These partnerships are significant, with over 40 percent of recreation areas on Corps projects operated by non-Corps organizations. This allows the Corps to leverage resources from non-federal sources with appropriated funding to provide recreation opportunities that meet the **increasing** and **dynamic recreation demand** of the American public.

Recreation opportunities on **Corps projects** are at the **nation's doorstep**, with over eighty percent of all Corps projects within 50 miles of a metropolitan area. Proximity to urban populations results in intensive recreational use of water resources where visitors engage in many of the most **rapidly increasing recreational activities**. Corps managers are challenged with serving over 20 percent of federal recreation visitors on only two percent of federal land. **Rapid changes** in visitor needs, expectations and use patterns, conflicts between recreation and other project purposes, and shared jurisdiction with other authorities add complexity to the execution of the recreation mission.

Today's Corps managers are faced with a **complex situation** in which they must achieve **cost-efficient operation** while simultaneously addressing the interests of **stakeholders** and the **competing demands** of recreation user groups in the context of the requirements of **multiple-purpose** water resource management.

### ***Program Assumptions***

The following assumptions about the future (5 to 15 years) were used in the development of this plan:

- The Corps will continue to execute a recreation mission
- Federal funding (in constant dollars) will fluctuate
- User fee revenues will continue to finance a larger share of program costs
- Nationwide, visitation will grow moderately (2-3 percent annually)
- Locally, visitation at many projects will rapidly increase and exceed facility capacity
- Visitors will be more diverse in terms of demographics, activities, and expectations
- Technological and cultural changes in recreation use patterns will evolve more rapidly
- Customers will require an increased emphasis on quality service
- Program partners will have a greater role in providing recreation opportunities
- Stakeholders will demand a greater role in decision making

- Natural resources will be managed to deliver high quality recreation opportunities
- Project managers will be empowered with greater authority to manage for success

### **Where we plan to be in 2005**

In 2005 we expect:

1. That all levels of command within the Corps of Engineers support the concept that recreation is a recognized project purpose and growth area.
2. Corps recreation policies provide lake managers with an environment for success.
3. Recreation use fees are retained for use at the project where collected without appropriation and available in addition to the annual O&M appropriation.
4. Clearly defined facility standards and service levels are in place which effectively provide for the needs of our current and future customers.
5. There is clear legislative authority for recreation at Corps water resource projects.
6. New programs and administrative requirements are initiated only when additional resources for carrying them out accompany the new programs/requirements.
7. The Corps Recreation Program terminology and goals are universally understood within the organization.
8. Annual funding is based on actual need rather than historical funding levels.
9. Managers at all levels are held accountable for expending allocated funds under their direct control on the activities for which those funds were requested.
10. The availability of new technologies and where to obtain assistance to learn the new technologies is available on a Corps web site.
11. The Corps is recognized by the public and within the agency as a significant provider of recreation opportunities to the American public.
12. A reliable and defensible methodology for recreation carrying capacity analysis is available to lake managers.
13. Ranger staffing is based on need and recognizes customer assistance and customer satisfaction as high priority goals.

14. Standard recreation facility designs available on the recreation web site are used to reduce costs and place facilities on the ground as efficiently and effectively as possible.

15. Partnering with non-Federal partners is an accepted way of doing business.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

### ***Program Components***

The Corps recreation program was divided into 10 major components for ease of presentation. The RMSP team developed recommended actions for eight of the ten identified components. Actions were not identified for program components of Safety and Security and Risk Management. The recreation components were adapted from the “*Self-Assessment Manual for Quality Operation of Park and Recreation Agencies*” (Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies, National Recreation and Park Association 1998).

Recreation Program Components:

1. Authority and Policy
2. Planning
3. Administration, Communication and Marketing
4. Human Resources
5. Financial Policy and Management
6. Programs and Partnerships
7. Facility and Land Use Management
8. Safety and Security
9. Risk Management
10. Evaluation, Research and Technology Transfer

### ***Development of Recommended Actions***

The RMSP Leadership Team described the desired outcome that would define success in terms of each program component. High priority issues affecting each program component were then identified. Finally specific actions were developed that would address identified issues to achieve the desired outcome. Actions were then targeted for implementation in FY00

and out-years. Recommended actions for each Recreation Program component are described below.

***1. Authority and Policy***

DESIRED OUTCOME: Statutory authority and associated policies will adequately reflect the recreation program scope and provide the flexibility to rapidly respond to program challenges and opportunities.			
ISSUE	ACTION	IMPLEMENT	
		FY 00	Outyear
1.1 Provide policies that enhance the capability of managers to develop flexible approaches that rapidly respond to changing customer requirements	a. Promote removal of the administration policy implementing PL 89-72 recreation facility cost sharing requirements for projects authorized after 1965		X
	b. Promote modification of current policy requiring recreation facility cost sharing at projects authorized in 1965 or earlier to make it permissive rather than mandatory.		X
	c. Promote removal of Special Recreation Use Fee (SRUF) funding as a budget offset.		X
	d. Promote policy to pool SRUF funds from more than one project within a district for use at a single project		X
	e. Eliminate the requirement that facilities developed under SRUF funding be limited to a list of approved facilities	X	
	f. Promote the ability of the Corps to gain access to Land and Water Conservation (LAWCON) funding to build new recreation areas		X
	g. Establish Challenge Partnership seed money at the project level		X
	h. Change policy to allow CE to operate “turned back” outgranted recreation areas	X	
	1.2. Develop clear legislative authority for recreation mission	a. Draft and submit organic act legislation for consideration by HQ leadership	

1.3 Respond to stakeholder recommendations for policy changes	a. Submit WRDA section 208a. report to Congress	X	
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## 2. Planning

DESIRED OUTCOME: Major program functions will be formulated to anticipate changing conditions through effective plans based on institutional, recreation and demographic trends.			
ISSUE	ACTION	IMPLEMENT	
		FY 00	Outyears
2.1 Develop coordinated planning efforts	a. Develop and implement process for modernization of recreation areas	X	
	b. Develop a recreation business area strategic plan, integral to the civil works strategic plan	X	
2.2 Program is responsive to institutional, recreation and demographic trends	a. Develop and maintain the capability to monitor recreational use of CE projects to track recreation use trends	X	X

## 3. Administration, Communication and Marketing

DESIRED OUTCOME: Stakeholders, program partners and Corps staff will have an increased awareness and improved recognition of the scope, magnitude and benefits of the Corps Recreation Program.			
ISSUE	ACTION	IMPLEMENT	
		FY 00	Outyears
3.1 Create recognition of the benefits of recreation through internal and external communication	a. Prepare a description of the scope, magnitude and benefits of the Corps recreation program		X
	b. Prepare statement by the Chief that recognizes recreation as a program area and sets out program agenda	X	
	c. Identify and communicate recreation benefits generated by navigation, coastal, and other CE projects administered by other Civil Works business areas		X
3.2 Maintain consistent and timely communications from HQ to the project level and vice versa	a. Identify and implement mechanism to improve two-way communication between headquarters and the field in timely and consistent manner using a variety of methods including a website.		X
3.3 Improve internal communications with new initiatives	a. Prepare communication plan and provide associated resources for implementation of new initiatives, including lead and support elements		X

	b. Prepare an annual report on the status of the program.	X	X
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#### 4. Human Resources

DESIRED OUTCOME: Natural Resource Management (NRM) Staff will be adequate to effectively meet total program requirements, deployed based on need, focused on high priority program functions, provided with the tools to improve and expand their capabilities and leverage the capabilities of program partners to meet the challenges of the future. Career paths will be enhanced to encourage professional development, retain current staff and attract top quality professionals to the program.			
ISSUE	ACTION	IMPLEMENT	
		FY 00	Outyears
4.1 Optimize personnel staffing to effectively execute program requirements	a. Perform assessment of ranger duties for each lake		X
	b. Solicit information from customers to identify desired service	X	X
	c. Identify methods to increase effectiveness in recruiting volunteers to assist with routine activities	X	X
	d. Create informal regional teams to execute functions that support infrequent requirements (e.g. recreation facility design)		X
	e. Develop NRM staffing model		X
4.2 Improve access by NRM staff to new technologies	a. Create a clearinghouse for emerging technologies/ models/ automated systems		X
	b. Provide effective technical support to NRM staff for the application of technology	X	X
	c. Develop standing section in RECNOTES on new technologies	X	
4.3 Improve ranger recruitment and retention	a. Establish a marketing authority to recruit rangers		X
	b. Develop marketing plan and resources for ranger recruitment		X
4.4. Maintain institutional knowledge from aging workforce for new employees	a. Develop knowledge management system for recreation program		X

**5. Financial Policy and Management**

DESIRED OUTCOME: Program is financially supplemented through a wide range of funding sources which encourage involvement by program cost share partners, users, volunteers, friends, groups, and the private sector. Managers will have the tools necessary to identify and communicate budget required to sustain program goals, increase accountability, improve efficiency, and increasingly move toward user fee based programs.			
ISSUE	ACTION	IMPLEMENT	
		FY 00	Outyears
5.1 Improve funding allocations to match need	a. Create management team to improve funding allocations		X
	b. Use General Expense (GE) funding for “CORE” district personnel		X
	c. Study present configuration of manpower workload		X
	d. Establish protocol that does not use historic budget levels as the sole basis for funding allocations		X
	e. Use shoreline use permit fee revenues to fund administrative costs of the program		X
	f. Increase shoreline use permit fees to cover administrative costs of program		X
5.2 Improve accountability of expenditures	a. Develop system to track expenditures of monies allocated for NRM activities		X
	c. Develop an O&M requirements program to establish work priorities and inform leadership of funding status		X

**6. Programs and Partnerships**

DESIRED OUTCOME: Program initiatives are formulated to clearly support internal goals, and the needs and priorities of program partners and stakeholders. Initiatives are continuously monitored for relevance and clearly communicated to all affected parties.		
ISSUE	ACTION	IMPLEMENT

		FY 00	Outyear s
6.1 Improve alignment of program and resources	a. Review all current programs and institute sunset dates for applicable programs		X
	b. Increase emphasis on comprehensive Operational Management Plans (OMPs)		X
	c. Provide earmarked funding for high priority programs		X
6.2 Improve understanding of programs and partnerships	a. Develop definition of program terms and applications, e.g. describe difference in modernization and maintenance back log. Consider other ongoing actions, (e.g. Operations and Maintenance Business Information Link, National Recreation Reservation Service) and incorporate in Budget Engineer Circular	X	
6.3 Improve partnership opportunities	a. Simplify real estate policy to allow cooperating associations to have space in Corps facilities		X
	b. Simplify challenge partnering procedures	X	
6.4 Improve utilization and effectiveness of task forces	a. Create customer feed back mechanism to evaluate task force and center of expertise performance		X
	b. Put sunset dates on appropriate task forces		X
	c. Require task force annual reports to HQ	X	
	d. Review all task force goals and time frames to ensure they are realistic	X	

### ***7. Facility and Land Use Management***

DESIRED OUTCOME: Recreation facilities and associated natural resources are managed to cost effectively meet current customer service expectations and under-served populations. Future trends in customer needs are anticipated and managers adapt to changing requirements.			
ISSUE	ACTION	IMPLEMENT	
		FY 00	Outyear s
7.1 Develop customer based facility and service standards	a. Form a facility standards task force	X	
	b. Review literature and available industry standards	X	

	c. Identify customer-based facility and service needs/trends/demographics	X	X
	d. Identify equipment/industry trends	X	X
	e. Consider needs of diverse populations	X	X
	f. Establish acceptable range for facility and service levels	X	
	g. Ground-truth standards at selected districts or projects		X
	h. Incorporate standards into budget guidance		X
7.2 Develop effective modernization program	a. Develop a modernization proposal and business process task force	X	
	b. Develop mechanism to evaluate both in-house and external design options		X
	c. Develop a library of recreation facility designs, construction contracts, specifications and other related materials and post on the website		X
	d. Develop a clearinghouse for CE staff with recreation design capabilities		X
	e. Conduct pre and post evaluation of a small number of modernization projects to “showcase” the impacts to the customer and community		X
	f. Exchange “lessons learned” associated with modernization projects	X	X
	g. Develop recreation modernization “road		X
	h. Prepare modernization evaluation process and distribute to NRM staff		X

**10. Evaluation, Research and Technology Transfer**

DESIRED OUTCOME: NRM staff utilize information tools to evaluate current program effectiveness in meeting customer expectations, effectively respond to anticipated changes in customer and stakeholder needs with innovative programs and communicate program benefits to current and potential partners and stakeholders.			
ISSUE	ACTION	IMPLEMENT	
		FY 00	Outyears

10.1 Increase the capability of NRM staff to monitor use patterns, needs and satisfaction of existing customers and anticipate the effects of changes in recreation opportunities on current and future customers.	a. Update VERS to take advantage of current technology and improved (user fee) information sources.		X
	b. Maintain flexible tool to provide project managers with the capability to monitor customer satisfaction for a variety of locally defined applications	X	X
	c. Develop and implement formal procedures for monitoring customer satisfaction at a regional and agency level		X
	d. Develop guidelines to address carrying capacity considerations for major user groups and facility types.		X
10.2 Increase the capability of NRM staff to adapt programs in response to institutional, recreation, and demographic trends	a. Monitor national, institutional, recreation and demographic trends and effectively communicate to managers	X	X
10.3 Increase the capability of NRM staff to formulate and promote programs based on a working knowledge of the requirements and priorities of current and potential partners and stakeholders.	a. Identify the requirements and priorities of current and potential program partners and an ongoing dialogue established to detect changes over time.		X
	b. Identify and effectively communicate CE recreation program benefits to partners and stakeholders.	X	X
10.4 Effectively communicate Information tools and research results to NRM staff	a. Develop a website to facilitate distribution of information tools, enhance communication among NRM staff and support other action items in this plan.		X

### **APPLYING AND UPDATING RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

The actions identified in this plan will be used to guide the future direction of the CE recreation program. This plan will be updated annually by CECW-ON staff with input from the RMSPL Leadership Team. Actions identified in the plan have been divided into two categories; those recommended for implementation in FY00 and those intended for implemented in out-years. In some cases, the action will be implemented in FY00 and continued through outyears. FY 00 actions may be performed internally within Headquarters or assigned to existing task

forces or other CE elements. Recommended actions will also be used to identify activities to be performed under the RMSP.

The RMSP Leadership Team will meet in the fall of each year to a) review the current action plan, b) evaluate existing recommended outcomes, issues and actions, c) identify new issues and actions and d) revise the recommended timeframe for implementing recommended actions as appropriate.

## **APPENDIX 1**

Participants  
Recreation Management Support Program  
Fall Meeting  
Nashville TN  
October 18-20 1999

### **Program Manager:**

Dave Wahus CECW-ON-R

### **Leadership Team:**

Sandra Campbell CESAS-OP-H \*  
Jimmy Carver CEMVK-OD-MG-E  
Don Dunwoody CENWD-MR-ET-C  
Brad Keshlear CESAD-ET-CO-N  
Mike Lee CEPOD-ET-C\*  
Mike Loesch CELRD-OR  
John Marnell CESWT-OD-TR  
Tom Peek CELRN-CO-CEN-R  
Elisa Pellicciotto CESWD-ETO-R  
Joe Sigrest CEMVD-ET-CO  
Susan Shampine CESP-OD-O  
Dan Troglin CENWP-OP-SR  
Phil Turner CESP-ET-CO

\* not present

**Engineer Research and Development (ERDC) Staff:**

Roger Hamilton CERDC-EN-R  
Jim Henderson CERDC-EN-R  
Richard Kasul CERDC-EN-R  
Kathleen Perales CERDC-EN-R  
Scott Jackson CERDC-EN-R

**APPENDIX 2**

**Mission Statement**

*The Army Corps of Engineers is the steward of the lands and waters at Corps water resource projects. Its Natural Resource Management Mission is to manage and conserve those natural resources consistent with ecosystem management principles, while providing quality public outdoor recreation experiences, to serve the needs of present and future generations.*

*In all aspects of natural and cultural resources management, the Corps promotes awareness of environmental values and adheres to sound environmental stewardship, protection, compliance and restoration practices.*

*The Corps manages for long term public access to, and use of natural resources in cooperation with other Federal, State, and local agencies as well as the private sector.*

*The Corps integrates the management of diverse natural resources components such as fish, wildlife, forests, wetlands, grasslands, soil, air, and water with the provision of public recreation opportunities that contribute to the quality of American life.*