

Visitation Estimation & Reporting System - Coach, Assist, & Train Team (VERS-CATT)

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Introduction

The Visitation Estimation and Reporting System (VERS) consists of a set of guidance, procedures, and tools that are employed by Corps Projects to document visitation and other visitor statistics at recreation areas and elsewhere on a Project. VERS was introduced by ERDC about 1990 and implemented on each Corps Project by the Project staff. Projects implementing VERS were encouraged to monitor visitation using automated traffic meters and conduct periodic visitor exit surveys to obtain the load-factors needed to convert traffic meter counts to estimated visitation. VERS requires Projects to enter total monthly traffic volume for each traffic meter or recreation area into WebVERS, an automated data entry and visitation reporting system. In this component of the VERS system, archived load-factors obtained from surveys or other sources are applied to the monthly traffic meter counts to produce estimated visitation, which can then be reported in any of several standardized reports.

VERS is being updated and expanded to meet a number of goals. Three new features are intended to achieve a sustainable improvement in the consistency of visitation estimates from Project to Project. They include 1) an agency-transparent inventory of recreation area and visitation monitoring features to document current monitoring practices at every PSA reporting visitation into VERS, 2) an explicit set of VERS Best Practices describing the range of preferred monitoring protocols and procedures, and 3) a Coach, Assist, and Train Team (CATT) to help Projects achieve and maintain a high level of compliance with Best Practices. This document describes the composition and roles of the VERS-CATT in the operation of VERS.

Purpose and Organization

The VERS-CATT is a team of teams whose purpose is to ensure that an appropriate level of visitation monitoring occurs at Corps projects using methods that are consistent with VERS Best Practices.

The VERS-CATT consists of:

- The VERS-CATT Chair. ERDC Team
- A VERS-CATT Leader from each District.
- VERS-CATT members from the District, as appropriate (usually 1 or 2), to assist the VERS-CATT Leader. District and Project staff may serve in this capacity.

Responsibilities

Major responsibilities of VERS-CATT members are as follows:

VERS-CATT Chair:

1. **Communication.** Facilitates communication among the Division Recreation Program Managers, District VERS-CATT Leaders, ERDC, and Headquarters on policy matters, functional requirements, and other issues relating to the development or operation of VERS.
2. **Coordination.** Coordinates VERS oversight and other activities of VERS-CATT Leaders to ensure uniform implementation of VERS across Districts. Takes lead on working with ERDC, VERS-CATT Leaders and Division Recreation Program Managers to identify VERS requirements. Arranges meetings, training, and other activities needed address policy issues, functional requirements, or other issues relating to the development and uniform operation of VERS.
3. **Guidance.** Works closely with VERS development and operations team from ERDC to ensure that needs identified by projects and VERS-CATT members are addressed in the procedures, tools, or systems that are developed to support the Corps visitation monitoring program..

District VERS-CATT Leaders:

1. **Knowledge.** Acquires and maintains a high level of expertise in visitation monitoring procedures and VERS Best Practices. Develops an extensive knowledge of the visitation monitoring procedures and practices used at projects in the District.
2. **Oversight.** Exercises oversight of visitation monitoring at Projects ensure that VERS Best Practices in visitation monitoring setup and practices are used at all recreation areas.
3. **Training / Mentoring.** Ensures that all visitation-monitoring staff at Projects receives appropriate instruction in VERS procedures and Best Practices and ongoing guidance on performing VERS-related functions.

4. **Assistance.** Provides VERS technical expertise to projects, as needed, and work with project personnel to resolve visitation monitoring issues arising from changes at the recreation area or the desire to improve the existing visitation monitoring setup.
5. **Area/Meter Inventory.** Ensures that projects maintain accurate area/meter inventory data and maps (future) of the visitation monitoring setup at each recreation area. Ensures that inventory data and/or maps are updated whenever changes in recreation area characteristics, visitation monitoring setup, or monitoring/metering procedures occur.
6. **Monthly Data.** Ensures that Projects provide all meter readings and other monthly visitation data within the required timeframe. Works with Projects to implement procedures for obtaining timely visitation data from outgrant partners who contribute visitation statistics to VERS.
7. **Project POC's.** Ensures the Project person responsible for visitation monitoring is identified as the Project POC on the VERS SmartBook page of the NRM Gateway.
8. **Annual Status Report.** Submits a brief annual report to ERDC and the Division Recreation Program Manager summarizing the status of the visitation monitoring program in the District. The report should address the completeness and accuracy of recreation area and meter inventory data at each Project; it should identify recreation areas where changes in visitation monitoring occurred during the year, it should identify Corps-managed recreation areas whose visitation is not monitored or is monitored using methods that do not comply with VERS Best Practices; and it should describe continuing or emerging issues and challenges affecting visitation monitoring in the District.

District VERS-CATT Members:

1. **Knowledge.** Acquires and maintains an appropriate level of familiarity of recreation areas in the District and VERS procedures and Best Practices.
2. **Duties.** Performs VERS-related oversight, training, and other duties under the direction of the District VERS-CATT Leader.

ERDC VERS-CATT Member(s)

- 1) **VERS System.** Develops, maintains, and operates VERS tools and system components for monitoring, calculating, and reporting of visitation at Project recreation areas.
- 2) **VERS Procedures and Practices.** Prepares and communicates guidance and standardized practices and procedures, including Best Practices, used for monitoring visitation at recreation areas on Corps Projects. Develops tools and procedures for efficient and effective operation of VERS.
- 3) **Training / Mentoring.** Provides formal and informal opportunities for District VERS-CATT Leaders to develop and maintain expertise in visitation monitoring and VERS procedures and Best Practices. Participates in District-sponsored training and mentoring of Project VERS personnel.

- 4) **Assistance.** Provides consulting or other direct assistance to the District VERS-CATT Leader to help resolve visitation monitoring or VERS system issues.

Integration of VERS-CATT into VERS Operations

Project personnel will continue to monitor and report visitation at their own recreation areas. By following VERS Best Practices, Projects increase the likelihood of producing reasonable visitation estimates, and by demonstrating compliance with VERS Best Practices, they help assure others that their visitation estimates are reasonable. In cooperation with ERDC, the VERS-CATT will help projects achieve these goals.

The Division Recreation Program Manager should ensure that each District has a VERS-CATT Leader who has the knowledge, time, and resources needed to provide VERS oversight and technical support to the projects. The Division Recreation Program Manager should also monitor the status of VERS activities within the Division and recommend policies and actions needed to achieve and maintain an effective monitoring program.

The VERS-CATT will operate at two levels. Within a District, the District VERS-CATT Leader and members will oversee and guide VERS activities at the Projects, helping projects achieve, maintain, and demonstrate compliance with VERS Best Practices. Among Districts, the VERS-CATT Leaders and Division Recreation Program Managers will work closely with Headquarters, the RLAT, and ERDC to ensure that recreation program policies, VERS functional requirements, and VERS tools and procedures are adequate to meet the visitation estimation and reporting requirements of the Corps' recreation program.

Funding

Salaries and travel-related expenses associated with VERS-CATT activities are the responsibility of the local duty station.