VISITOR CENTER INITIATIVE

Evaluation, Analysis and Recommendations
of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Visitor Center Program

Prepared by:
Visitor Center Initiative Committee
10 October 2002

Executive Summary

On 20 May 2001 the Visitor Center Initiative Team (VCI) was tasked to identify issues confronting Corps visitor centers and develop recommendations to improve the program. The process included conducting surveys, onsite visits, attending conferences, and various other data gathering activities. In addition, the VCI Team began work developing a "state-of-the-art" audio video design concept that could be used at all visitor centers as an educational and entertaining interactive exhibit to communicate the Corps' role in supporting the Army and improving the lives of American citizens.

This report identifies 23 priority issues that are negatively impacting the visitor center program and makes corrective recommendations for HQUSACE consideration. These recommendations are summarized and prioritized into 5 general categories: funding, improving customer services, administration, regulations/policies, and interpretive messages.

FUNDING: Include visitor center maintenance and exhibit rehabilitation plans in OMPs and 5-year work plans. Develop visitor center standards and include them in the new Customer Service Standards to assure visitor center needs get equal budget consideration with recreational items. Prepare plans and specifications in advance to allow capitalization of reprogrammed funds and place exhibit rehabilitation work in out-year budgets. Establish fee demonstration visitor center at select projects and use the funds collected for on-site exhibit rehabilitation or replacement. Community groups and other governmental entities partnerships should be established, where practicable, to generate funds for visitor center programs and facility maintenance.

IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICES: Conduct user surveys that provide a better understanding of visitor wants and needs. The survey data would help decision makers and managers plan, design, construct and manage visitor facilities more effectively. Current guidance should also be revised to allow off-project interpretive activities and facilities.

ADMINISTRATION: Develop job descriptions for visitor center staffs that clearly define disciplines, duties, and job requirements. Review other agency interpretive and visitor center job descriptions and adopt them, if they are applicable, to the Corps needs. Provide visitor center personnel opportunities to network and exchange information by establishing training, meetings, conferences, etc. and keeping the Visitor Center Gateway information current. Evaluate personnel, facility and exhibit needs at all visitor centers to determine staffing and funding needs. Establish an advisory group (interpretive and visitor center experts) that provides assistance to projects on request. Establish a standing committee and champion to implement the HQ approved recommendations in this report.

REGULATIONS/POLICIES: Investigate other agency partnering authorities and adopt those applicable to Corps needs. Develop new policy guidance that allows true cost-shared

partnerships, minimizes legal reviews, establishes partnering support positions, creates "how-to" partnering handbook and consolidates all visitor center guidance into a single regulation. The revised regulation should provide a single definition and standards for a visitor center. A definite link should be made between visitor centers, the Corps' Vision and the Strategic Communication Plan. These recommendations are far reaching and will require constant interaction by a visitor center proponent; therefore, it is recommended that a HQ developmental assignment be considered to accomplish these objectives.

MESSAGE: Integrate the visitor center program into the Strategic Communication Plan to assure the "Corps Story" exhibit efficiently communicates the Corps' Mission. Exportable theme development training should be prepared for visitor center personnel. All new and updated exhibits must include some interactive displays and universal accessibility and non-English speaking visitor needs. Clearly communicate the Army Corps of Engineers, project, community, and partner's stories in all visitor centers.

In addition to the Team's evaluation of the visitor center program, the development of a "Corps Story" audiovisual program was initiated and is in the early stages of development. The aim of this effort is to develop a universally adaptable audiovisual program for a wide variety of audiences that can be used in all visitor centers. The program will tell the Corps' role in improving the lives of Americans and supporting the Army.

The Visitor Center Program's backlogs of exhibit updates and facility repairs were major issues identified in the study. To assess the general scope of these needs, a random sample survey of "A" and "B" centers was conducted at 16 facilities (5 Type A and 11 Type B centers). The results indicate that an average of $1 million is needed for Type A and $519,000 for Type B centers to bring them into compliance with current guidance and to meet visitor needs.

If Corps visitor centers are to serve as an integral part of its Strategic Communication Plan and effectively communicate the Corps' mission a new visitor center definition and vision must be adopted. Chapter V, Conclusions, contains recommended Vision and Mission Statements. This Vision Statement recognizes the importance of visitor centers to the Corps and promotes community participation, educational interests and partners as fundamental parts of the program. Without the implementation of the major changes recommended within this report, the Corps will continue losing opportunities to proactively communicate its message and effectively serve the agency and public needs.

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Chapter I
Introduction

I.   Background: The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers' Vision Statement includes the term "revolutionizing effectiveness" as a goal. Specifically this goal statement is: "dramatic improvement in performance and customer satisfaction will be achieved through best business practices, bold process reengineering and innovative use of technology." The Visitor Center Program was targeted as one of the areas in which this goal could be applied.

II.   HQ Plan of Action: Hans A. Van Winkle, Major General, USA, Deputy Commander for Civil Works, approved a CECW-ON strategy paper (Appendix A) for the Corps Visitor Center Initiative (VCI) on 27 September 2000 and issued a request for each Major Subordinate Command to nominate team members to serve on the task force. This task force consisted of a Visitor Center Initiative Manager (VCIM) and a multidiscipline field team. The VCI Charter proposed the initiative be accomplished in four phases: Phase I – research and data collection; Phase II – managing the VCI Team efforts; Phase III – present recommendations to the VCI Steering Committee; and Phase IV – implementation of approved recommendations. The time allocated to this effort was approximately 18 months.

III.   Visitor Center Initiative Steering Committee: A steering committee composed of HQUSACE staff from PAO, IM, CECW-ON, and CECW-B was established to provide oversight to the VCIM and the VCI Team. A representative from CECW-ON, reporting through the chain of command to the Deputy Commander, chaired the steering committee.

IV.   Visitor Center Initiative Team: The VCI Team was established and operated under the direction of the VCI Manager. The manager assumed the role of project manager and had the latitude to select qualified contractors to support the VCI Team, as needed. The VCI team members were selected for their expertise in interpretation, public affairs, information management, and budget and finance. Each team member had demonstrated interpretive creativity and on the ground successes in related activities. The team included district and field representatives. The team members included two visitor center managers, two visitor center staffers and three district employees with extensive experience in a variety of visitor center program initiatives. The VCI team members are:

Steve Austin, Chair	CECW-ON	NRM Branch, Ranger Services
Bruce Thornton, VCIM	Mobile District	Planning and Environmental Division
Nancy Rogers	San Francisco District	District Interpretive Specialist
Debra Stokes	New Orleans District	Outdoor Recreation Planner, Natural Resources Management
Greg Miller	Kansas City District	Natural Resources Specialist
Joe Bertolini	Louisville District	Park Manager, Caesar Creek Lake

James Pennaz	Honolulu District	Chief, Civil Works Technical Branch
Matt Seavey	Fort Worth District	Park Ranger, Wright Patman Lake
Mark Wade	Savannah District	Park Ranger, Richard B. Russell Lake

IV.   Charter: At the time of this study there were over 300 visitor centers nationwide. The VCI Team was tasked with identifying issues confronting Corps visitor centers and developing recommendations for HQUSACE/ASA approval and assisting CECW-ON in developing draft policy guidance for the Visitor Center Program. In addition, the team was tasked to develop a "state-of-the-art" video design concept that can be utilized to create an educational and entertaining interactive video exhibit that communicates the Corps' role in improving the lives of American citizens.

The study was officially initiated on 16 May 2001 when the team and members of the Steering Committee met in HQ to discuss the study process and information requirements (Appendix B). Key topics discussed were:

A. Resourcing for Visitor Center Program funds.

B. Features of the "Corps Story"
The need for a Corps Story to communicate the agency's' role in improving the lives of American citizens was identified. Although this task is not directly related to the VCI, the Steering Committee and the VCI Team agreed that it is a critical element of the Visitor Center Program and should be addressed by the team. An information call letter was distributed to the Natural Resources Management Offices on 05 April 2002 requesting topics and themes for inclusion in the Corps Story (Appendix C).

C. Questions about:
- What is the worth of the program to the agency?
- Why should recommendations be implemented?
- How does it support the Strategic Plan?

D. Accessibility requirements.

E. Soliciting input from other interpretive organizations for consideration in the VCI evaluation process.

F. Current Visitor center guidance and revision recommendations.

G. Combine VCI efforts with Interpretive Services and Outreach Program (ISOP).

V.   Purpose and Scope: This report summarizes the study effort, incorporates and summarizes survey results, proposes regulation revisions, identifies problems and makes recommendations to HQUSACE for consideration.

Chapter II – Study Process

I.   **Discussion:** The VCI Team used the HQ "Strategy Paper" as guidance in developing a process to study and evaluate issues associated with planning, designing, operating and managing visitor centers. The team also sought, by contract, the assistance and advice of experts in the interpretive and visitor center fields.

The following paragraphs summarize the efforts the team undertook to help identify and evaluate issues, options and recommendations for the Visitor Center Program.

II.   **Data Collection**

    A. Visitor Center Manager Survey

        The team conducted an extensive contract survey of visitor center managers during July-August 2001 to assess the full extent of visitor center issues from an agency viewpoint. Ms. Wendy Meluch of Visitor Studies Services assisted in the development of this survey and analyzed and reported the survey results. The intent of the survey was to:

- Assess current condition of visitor center facilities, programs and operations.
- Assess relevancy of current interpretive themes, media and presentations found throughout the visitor centers.
- Determine level and extent of needed upgrades and remodeling at visitor centers.
- Determine institutional or other barriers to improvement of the visitor center program.
- Solicit field-level input on future management strategies for visitor centers.

This survey was extremely beneficial in obtaining feedback from field level visitor center operators and managers as to where they felt the Visitor Center Program's strengths and weaknesses were. A copy of the report is provided at Appendix D. Survey information of special importance is as follows:

- **Subject areas of interest to managers vs. visitors**

  - Managers rank Corps story related subject areas more highly than visitors.
  - Managers responding on behalf of visitors, feel they are not interested in the Corps story topics.
  - Visitors and managers stress, under "other" subject areas, the importance of information about their locality: local history, events, activities, etc., not just the local Corps project.
  - Both managers and visitors value information that orients visitors to the site.

- **Exhibit renovation**

  - Managers report a need for vast amounts of exhibit renovation or replacement
  - Main reasons for this need: broken and/or obsolete exhibits and technology

- Exhibit development is a multi-year process that does not fit current budgeting process/funding cycles
- A number of visitor centers do have exhibitry for children but it is largely not satisfactory
- All exhibits should be visually exciting and tactile.
- Most visitor centers describe poorly developed themes for their exhibits

- **Visitors profiles**

  - Most common type of visitors is local (from schools or individuals/family groups).
  - Local visitors have little reason to make repeat visits when exhibits are unchanging.
  - Local groups have a need for public space on site.
  - Managers report that they review visitor input from all channels but frequently cannot implement changes due to limited resources — funds, time, staff and space.

- **Partnering**

  - Considering how most visitor centers use/operate with outside partner agencies, it is particularly significant that public meeting spaces receive the lowest scores for facilities at participating visitor centers.
  - Partnering is made very difficult by cumbersome and outdated regulations and a lack of support from Office of Counsel, Contracting Division, Real Estate Division and other elements.

- **Role of Visitor Center's**

  - 71 (75%) to educate the public about the Corps
  - 68 (72%) to support public education system
  - 66 (69%) a project-based center
  - 50 (53%) to serve as a local community-based center

There is much dissatisfaction and resentment among managers that upper management does not value the professionalism of interpretive staff at visitor centers or the visitor center mission.

- Field Survey Recommendations
  - The continued existence of the VCI Team will be very important to visitor center managers
  - The VCI Team is viewed as an advocate for the Visitor Center Program on all fronts: administrative, budgets, procurement, professional career track, etc.
  - Facilitate communication between visitor centers and with upper management
  - Organizational support, including peer review and expertise in interpretive planning, exhibit development and contracting

B. On-site Evaluation of Visitor Centers

From 12 - 17 August 2001 the VCI Team, Mr. John Veverka, John Veverka and Associates, and Mr. Rory Calhoun, Recreation Accessibility Specialist, state of Washington, visited several

Corps and non-Corps visitor centers in an effort to evaluate and observe various approaches to visitor center development and management. Mr. Veverka facilitated and offered an outside perspective during the site visits. Mr. Veverka also assisted in the development of a Visitor Center Evaluation Strategy and evaluation questionnaire (Appendix E) that the team used for each individual visitor center critique and summarized the evaluation process in report form.

Centers visited and critiqued by the team were:

- Bradford Island Visitor Center (at Bonneville Dam) – Corps
- Bonneville Navigation Lock Visitor Center – Corps
- Bonneville Powerhouse #2 – Corps
- Johnston Ridge Visitor Center (Mt. St. Helen's – USDA Forest Service (USFS)
- Coldwater Ridge Visitor Center (Mt. St. Helen's – USFS)
- Lake Washington Ship Canal, Chittenden Locks – Corps
- The Dallas Dam Visitor Center – Corps
- Willamette Falls Locks – Corps
- Charles Bingham Forest Learning Center – Weyerhaeuser Corporation
- Columbia Gorge Discovery Center – USFS & Wasco County Historical Society

Corps visitor center development varies greatly for a multitude of reasons. The team found both strengths and weaknesses at the sites visited. One of the more prevalent needs is the lack of internal support and funding. Existing regulations are outdated and do not provide guidance for current needs such as partnerships. Visitor center maintenance items are generally included in budget packages as routine recreation maintenance. Routine items are reoccurring needs of less than $10,000. Exhibit rehabilitation is usually submitted as a special item that competes with other items in the maintenance backlog. As a result, many exhibits that were installed with CG funding many years ago do not work properly, and are out of date. Unless this current funding process is changed visitor center needs will continue to be partially or totally unfunded.

Strengths of the Corps facilities

- Enthusiastic, skilled and dedicated staff
- Good use of limited resources
- Good programs offered
- Most sites are intrinsically fascinating
- Good relationships with local communities, which are seen as the bedrock of building a successful visitation level and profile

Weaknesses of the visited Corps facilities

- They lack a central and focused theme. As a result, the visitor's experience is often chaotic with an excess of messages.
- They do not suffer from lack of partnering opportunities, however agency policy and legal barriers prohibit or limit implementation of partnering to contribute to funding, staffing and programming.
- Exhibits are outdated, broken and other project priorities prevent funds from being used to renovate exhibits.

- They are not responsive to local visitor needs and level of interest even though locals are the predominant visitor group to use these facilities.
- They are largely non-compliant with regard to universal access design standards.
- They lack interactive, engaging exhibits that are appropriate for children.
- There is often an over-reliance on text and two-dimensional exhibits.
- There is a reasonable level of interactivity, but much of this is very basic in nature, such as quiz flaps. Many exhibits possess an unexciting and somewhat out-dated 'look' (even for the most recent exhibits).
- They are sometimes located in out-of-the-way places and have poor directional signage.
- They generally have an unwelcoming feel to buildings and/or building entrances.
- The staff is limited in numbers.
- A limited staff is preoccupied with maintenance of exhibits/exhibit areas. Consequently, they avoid or dislike any exhibits that require frequent maintenance.
- Limited resources mean a general lack of change and renewal of the exhibits; both in terms of permanent and temporary exhibit spaces.
- Facilities size and space do not always reflect customer demands. (Theaters are too small; exhibit spaces are poorly laid out; congested traffic and flow patterns; lack of space for cooperating associations, display development space, storage space, etc.
- In an attempt to tell everything about the Corps, the presentation is diluted, lacks focus, and has an overwhelming amount of information - "everything but the kitchen sink."
- Classification of visitor centers reflects the Corps' internal organizational structure perhaps more than it does the nature of the site or facility or visitor needs.
- The Corps' non-ability to conduct its own fund-raising is an issue which impacts resources to a large degree. Current revenue from cooperating associations is minimal.

C. National Association of Interpretation (NAI) Conference – Corps Focus Group Meeting

On 06 November 2001, members of the VCI Team held a focus group meeting with twenty-eight representatives from Corps lakes and visitor centers attending the NAI National Conference in Des Moines, Iowa.

The focus group divided into four sub-groups that respond to questions developed by the VCI committee. The results of the discussions with these groups further validated the strengths and weakness information discussed previously. The minutes of the focus group meetings are attached at Appendix F

D. USDA Forest Service Visitor Center Conference

A member of the VCI Team attended the Forest Service conference on "Ensuring the Sustainable Future of Visitor Centers", April 1-5, 2002. The conference was held at Lied Conservation Center, Arbor Day Farm, Nebraska City, Nebraska. Information collected at this meeting was summarized and shared with the team members to evaluate potential impacts on draft policy recommendations. The purpose of the conference was to provide training to Forest Service visitor center managers to improve their operation and management skills and to provide them with the opportunity to exchange information. The trip report is attached at Appendix G.

E. Corps Accessibility Committee and other accessibility professionals

The Corps task force on accessibility in recreation facilities and customer service standards was consulted for input to issues at visitor centers. This group is preparing a draft-engineering manual that addresses Universal Accessibility (UA) issues at Corps facilities. The following are examples from that draft:

- Applicable UA Standards. The term universal accessibility in this document refers to the most stringent current standards that apply. Current Corps policy and access to these standards are posted on the Natural Resources Management Gateway (Gateway) website on Accessibility, Policy and Procedures http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/access/policy.html.
- UA Facilities. In addition to meeting Universal Facility Access Standards, Army policy also requires that the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) be met for recreation facilities by providing equal or greater accessibility than Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS), requirements. These requirements generally address constructed facilities.
- UA Programs. UA also includes programmatic access, so that our visitors have full access to customer services such as interpretive programs and public information postings. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation, Comprehensive Services and Developmental Disabilities Act of 1973 requires that no disabled individual be excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of, any program or activity conducted by an executive agency. Department of Defense Standards for implementing Section 504 are contained in 32 CFR 56. These standards address military museums and museum programs and should be applied to Corps visitor centers. These standards refer the accessibility guidelines published by the Smithsonian. http://www.si.edu/opa/accessibility/exdesign/sectiona.htm
- In addition, the National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center, Accessibility Task Force, provided a document entitled "Special Populations: Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media" which provides guidance for promoting full access to interpretive media to ensure that people with physical and mental disabilities have access to the same information necessary for safe and meaningful visits. This guidance is provided as a ready reference at Appendix H.

F. Partnering with Nonprofits Training for Corps

On 9-10 March 2002, two VCI Team members attended the Association of Partners for Public Lands "Partnering with Nonprofits" training for the Corps. Thirty-six visitor center personnel attended the training with about half of those having existing partnerships. The trip report is attached at Appendix I.

The training covered all aspects of partnering: working with nonprofit partners, what the Corps requires, organizing or enhancing a partnership, educational and outreach programs, operating a sales outlet, marketing your programs and products, fundraising and friend raising, and human resources.

The Corps' ability to enter into visitor center partnering agreements is governed by Public law and engineering regulations that extend beyond the VCI Charter and scope. Therefore, action on partnering recommendations will likely require numerous policy changes and coordination in other

program areas such as cooperating associations, contributions and challenge cost sharing. Many barriers exist to effective use of partnering for visitor center facilities and programs. The VCI Team did devote time and effort in identifying issue areas and recommendations for policy changes. These partnering issues are discussed in Appendix J.

G. Research and Review Existing Visitor Center Regulations

ER 1130-2-550, dated 15 Nov 96, and EP 1130-2-550, dated 15 Nov 96, were researched and studied for applicability, currency, accuracy, and completeness. Based on the data gathered, visitor center manager surveys, on-site evaluations of existing visitor centers, and the experience and knowledge of the VCI Team, current visitor center and partnering guidance revisions are recommended. These are discussed in the conclusions.

Chapter III
Develop a *Corps Story* Exhibit

I.   Background: The VCI Team is tasked in its charter to evaluate the status of how the Corps tells it own story to visitors at its centers. This included method of delivery, content, exhibit architecture and average age of the exhibit. The charter also tasked the team to develop a "Corps Story" exhibit, which would dynamically describe the Corps contribution to the Nation and its support to the Army.

II.   Findings: On average, the ages of Corps message-related exhibits exceed ten years and utilize simple flat-panel exhibits or elementary manual interactives that are generally lowest cost to design and produce. In addition, these exhibits are stand-alone with little or no relationship to the project, modern missions or local interests and issues. Most exhibits are very general in nature and do a fair job of interpreting the Corps' past, but do not do a good job of connecting the past with its present-day missions and local interests. The exhibits suffer from visible wear and tear, broken parts and very dated material, photos, or video.

The NAI focus group recommended the following criteria be built into any new Corps Story exhibit:

1. Flexible integration into existing exhibits
2. Exportable for theater presentations, school use or off-site events.
3. Easily updated on a periodic basis (every 3-5 years).
4. Simple photo/text side panels to complement interactive exhibit on Corps modern missions.
5. Inexpensive to operate and maintain
6. Ability to include local issues and stories
7. Versatile enough to be placed in a variety of venues, from office lobbies to large, regional visitor centers

III.   Research: The VCI team's exhibit evaluation efforts revealed that "agency-related" exhibits are generally not well received by the visiting public. The Team concluded that the public typically sees these types of exhibits as self-serving propaganda that does not provide relevant information about the agency or how it fits into their everyday lives. Since these types of exhibits are generally provided to comply with the Visitor Center Program regulation, ER 1130-2-550, more that to enlighten or educate the public, their message effectiveness is diminished. The Corps has an interesting past and valuable modern mission that should be presented to visitor in a "how does the Corps' mission serve me and affect my quality of life" and not present the agencies message in a sales pitch fashion.

IV.   Development of the Corps Story Exhibit.

The VCI team determined that the Corps could no longer tell its story without showing how our actions and their lives are interwoven. Our messages must relate directly to the visitor and convey

a modern and responsive attitude to everyday issues that affect local communities. In addition, with the advent and popular use of computers, the use of a web-based, digital design will be familiar to most visitors, particularly the younger ones.

Visitor Center Initiative team members were joined by representatives from HQ PAO and Office of History to form the "Corps Story" design team to provide guidance during the design concept phase. The decision was made to use the Strategic vision, spectrum of USACE Operations for the primary themes in "Corps Story" exhibit. See Appendix K for the Scope of Work for this effort.

The study reported a widespread consensus for the need to tell the "Corps Story" in a variety of venues, from the project office lobbies to large regional venues. In recognizing this need for flexibility, the design team recommends the development of a multimedia audiovisual exhibit that takes advantage of state-of-the-art technology to communicate with visitors in an interactive dynamic manner. The exhibit is envisioned as a touch screen interactive video exhibit that uses a web-like design. Menus will allow the user to choose topics of interest. The audiovisuals can also be adapted to use with other audiences such as theaters, classrooms and the Internet.

A design concept consisting of theme and script development is being developed. Concept drawings for an expanded Corps Story exhibit with associated display panels relating to modern missions are also being developed. When completed, these items shall become a part of the design contract and cost estimates for production, Appendix L.

The Corps Story product, as currently envisioned, will provide a quality audiovisual product that can easily be adapted to other communication requirements. Since the product has the potential for widespread application, the VCI Team recommends that all functional elements be made aware of the product to minimize duplication of efforts. Coordination is also needed with on-going visitor center rehab efforts to minimize their activities which may overlap with this initiative.

The VCI Team recommends that the Corps Story be integrated into every visitor center and project office. The design object is to produce a display that can be easily adapted to any visitor center facility. For example project office centers could choose a simple inexpensive version of the display that consists of a touch monitor kiosk. Depending on available space, visitation, budget, etc., a more sophisticated version of the display may be installed which includes static display panels and a large screen monitor. Therefore, the costs of integrating the exhibit into existing facilities can be adjusted to accommodate the available of funds and on-site requirements. To insure all facilities receive the Corps Story display, HQ should fully fund this effort.

Chapter IV
Issues and Recommendations

After the exhaustive data collection process described earlier, the VCI Team identified and synthesized the following most significant issues and recommendations for solutions:

FUNDING

A. Visitor centers cannot realistically compete for scarce funds.

Recommendations: Incorporate visitor center maintenance and exhibit rehabilitation plans into OMP and 5-year work plans. Develop visitor center standards and incorporate them into the new Customer Service Standards. This insures visitor centers needs are included in the planning process on an equal basis with other recreation facility needs.

B. A June/July 2001 survey of visitor center managers indicated 50% or more of their exhibits needed updating. The exhibits were broken or needed expensive maintenance or they contained obsolete technology and information.

Recommendations: Develop special budget items for the backlog of all visitor centers and exhibit needs and include in the budget process. Where possible, use safety and accessibility issues to justify non-deferrable status. Have plans and specifications and procurement research done for important projects to capitalize on reprogramming opportunities at mid-year. Exhibit rehabilitation should be programmed for out-year budgets.

C. There is flat or declining funding for visitor centers.

Recommendations: Establish fee demonstration projects and use funds collected at for visitor center operation and maintenance and not to offset project budget requirements. Use partnerships with community groups and other governmental entities to generate funds for visitor center programs and facilities. Pursue additional authority if necessary

IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE

D. Visitor center managers do not have a mechanism for identifying visitor satisfaction levels of customer service or the effectiveness of exhibits; there is no current data to assess "value added" to the public.

Recommendations: Conduct visitor surveys at each visitor center to provide critical information on visitor preferences, their interest and how they want to receive information. Develop methodologies that utilize focus groups, friends groups, and other ways of encourage community involvement.

The VCI Team submitted, via HQUSACE, survey questions for OMB approval, a series of questions directly related to visitor interest of Corps issues, the history and missions of the Corps, and other specific visitor center related topics. The other survey would gather data to measure visitor needs. A copy of the submitted questions is provided in Appendix M. As of October 2002 OMB had not approved these questions.

E. Visitor facilities are located, resourced and sized with little regard for customer demand and visitor needs.

Recommendation: Research planning criteria developed by other agencies that are used to assess demand for visitor information/orientation facilities, locate visitor facilities, determine information functions that need to be accommodated and space allocation within visitor facilities. Develop planning criteria that will assist decision makers in determining the need for visitor centers, as opposed to other facilities such as kiosks and wayside exhibits, both for new facilities and expansion of existing facilities. These criteria would be utilized to develop project master plans and interpretive plans which prescribe the appropriate media mix. These criteria are important tools for managers to decide the appropriate level of visitor services for their project.

F. The appropriate location for a visitor center is not always on project land. Visitor centers are not always located in accordance with public demand. Current policy and authorities do not support location on non-Corps property.

Recommendations: Review policies and authorities and develop clear guidance to allow off-project interpretive activities and facilities.

ADMINISTRATION

G. There is no recognized career path for visitor center staff.

Recommendations: Career development committee should investigate job descriptions in other agencies for applicability to Corps. Establish and institutionalize visitor center program with clearly defined disciplines, duties, and job descriptions.

H. There is a lack of information exchange between interpretive and visitor center personnel. There is little to no networking with Public Affairs Offices or Offices of History.

Recommendations: Fully implement the Visitor Center program's Gateway site at http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/visitcenter/visitcenter.html. Establish an annual Visitor Center Training/Conference to enhance communications, promote sharing of ideas and solutions, offer opportunities to insure consistency in message and program, content and expression of the Corps vision and missions, and increase networking opportunities. Garner district and division support to place an interpretive/visitor center manager on division outreach and communications committee.

I. Lack of training for visitor center managers and staffs.

> **Recommendations:** Establish periodic workshops for Corps visitor center personnel to cover topics such as partnering, A/V multi-media technology, program and exhibit evaluation, exhibit plans and preparing requests for proposals (RFP's), contracts, etc. Develop exportable interpretive training for temporaries, volunteers, and new Corps personnel (similar to the Safe-Self course).

J. There is no clearly defined visitor center role or authority within the Natural Resources Management Program.

> **Recommendations:** Adopt the recommended vision and mission statements for visitor centers to redefine their roles and importance as corporate communication assets. Visitor centers also have a strong community focus by integrating into local tourism and educational systems. The new vision and mission statements will encourage corporate support and open the door to shared funding with non-profits and other governmental agencies. Interpretive objectives for visitor centers should provide the flexibility to tell both the community story and the partner's story.

> **Vision Statement**

> *Provide visitor center facilities that engage the public in a provocative and educational experience that encourages a broader understanding and appreciation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the project.*

> **Mission Statement**

> ***Insure effective communication between the Corps and the visiting public through the Visitor Center Program. This is accomplished by presenting a focused story that provokes interest, relates to the mission, and reveals why the mission is important to the public.***

K. Visitor Centers are understaffed and are over burdened with non-visitor center tasks. These tasks are hindering them from effectively maintaining facilities and providing quality service to the public.

> **Recommendations**: Visitor centers should be adequately staffed and devoted to operating visitor centers.

L. There is a general in-house shortage of expertise in the disciplines of exhibit design and fabrication, audiovisuals, partnering etc. and no mechanism for sharing the existing expertise, good ideas, or lessons learned.

Recommendations: Establish an advisory group (or Masters program similar to the Forest Service program) that could respond to project requests for assistance. The members of the advisory group will function as technical experts and provide support on an as requested basis. Develop a "How to" manual for visitor centers. The manual will address different operation functions such as exhibit renovations, partnering and volunteers. Post the manual and various contract documents for exhibit development on the Gateway.

M. Corps visitor centers are largely non-compliant with regard to universal design standards.

Recommendations: Design visitor centers and exhibits for maximum universal accessibility, as practical. All new and updated exhibits and interpretive programs will comply with universal design standards.

N. There is no existing structure to implement VCI team recommendations.

Recommendations: Create a standing committee for visitor centers to champion VCI team recommendations. This standing committee would report to the HQUSACE proponent and consist of five subcommittees: Regulation/policy, Message, Administration, Funding, and Improving Customer Service. See Appendix N for organization chart and subcommittee responsibilities.

O. The lack of visitor center funds is creating a backlog in updates and repairs.

Recommendations: Conduct a survey that gathers information on backlogged repairs and updates for visitor center facilities and exhibits. The survey data will provide decision makers an inventory of backlogged work and would assist in prioritizing funding.

REGULATION/POLICY

P. Partnering constraints present barriers to accepting public support in the development and dissemination of information

Recommendations: Investigate other agency partnering authorities to see if they should be applied to us. Develop approved templates and minimize legal review. Define training needs on partnering for employees and managers within Operations Division, Office of Counsel, Real Estate Division and Resources Management Office. Create staff positions where needed to support field with rapid development, review and approval of partnership agreements. Create handbook to address implementation, forms, financial accountability, etc., with regard to any partnerships including challenge cost shares, cooperative agreements, and partnerships with for-profit or non-profit entities. Develop budget and accounting procedures for multi-year partnerships.

Q. Corps visitor centers lack agency guidelines for available partnering opportunities that can contribute funding, staffing and programming.

Recommendations: Develop new policy guidance to encourage true partnerships where costs are shared. Revise policy guidance on cost sharing, cooperating associations, and use and implementation of cooperating agreements to fully integrate these programs with visitor center objectives.

R. Current policies, authorities, guidance, and regulations have not kept pace with the program needs.

Recommendations: Establish a Headquarters developmental assignment to draft authorities.

S. Visitor center types currently define levels of service based on criteria unrelated to visitor needs.

Recommendations: Change current visitor center classification requirements from message based to service based. Evaluate existing Type "A", "B" and "C" centers using the classification criteria below. If the facilities meet these standards, classify them Visitor Center. If they fail the criteria test for visitor center designation reclassify them according to the project office information center criteria. There should be two definitions, one for visitor centers and one for project information centers.
Visitor center evaluation criteria are as follows:

1. Assigned staff, readily available to visitors, knowledgeable about the Corps. This may include cooperative associations, volunteer, contract staff, etc.

2. Open during peak visitation hours,

3. Is an fully accessible facility including restrooms, exhibits and programs

4. Adheres to existing interpretive services regulation

5. Has an interpretive plan that includes a theme and measurable objectives,

6. Has exhibits that effectively communicate the theme and objectives,

7. Interpretive programs are available,

8. Provides detailed project information – both printed and verbal,

9. Not necessarily located on project lands,

10. Has a mechanism for customer feedback.

Project information center standards are as follows:

1. Staff provides information in response to questions,

2. Open during regular business hours,

3. Provides project-related printed materials,

4. Located on project lands,

5. Has a mechanism for customer feedback.

MESSAGE

T. The story of the Corps is delivered inconsistently in Corps visitor centers.

Recommendations: Develop the "Corps Story" exhibit to communicate the Strategic Vision elements; water resources, environmental, infrastructure, disasters and war fighting. Spotlight the "Corps Story" exhibit as an excellent example of how visitor centers can be used to communicate this vision. Stress to corporate leaders the role of visitor centers as the Corps' primary public interface for marketing and outreach.

U. Corps visitor centers lack a central and focused theme and generally contain an excess of messages.

Recommendations: Provide theme development training as part of exportable training package. Visitor Centers should develop themes and objectives that are based on the mission and vision. Communication goals will include the national and regional Corps missions and visitor orientation to recreation opportunities.

V. Corps visitor centers lack interactive, engaging exhibits that are appropriate for children.

Recommendations: As exhibits are updated, design a portion of them to be interactive, age appropriate, with clear learning objectives for a more exciting and memorable experience for children and adults.

W. Corps visitor centers are not responsive to non-English language audiences.

Recommendations: Provide material in appropriate languages, where necessary.

Chapter V
Conclusions

Redefining Visitor Centers for the 21ˢᵗ Century

The visitor centers envisioned and created in the 1970's when the Corps' recreation and interpretive programs were first developed were largely viewed as public information way points where visitors to projects could learn about the recreation opportunities available, something about the local natural and cultural fabric of the area as well as the Corps as an agency. Visitor center exhibits have undergone renovation to varying degrees over the ensuing 30 years The underlying culture of the agency has not kept pace with what the public expects, nor with the realities of managing and funding visitor centers.

We discovered that as other agencies and organizations are moving forward with an integrated approach to visitor center management, the Corps has not. The Corps has built its visitor centers with little thought about their long-term operation. Visitor centers are by their nature and design meant to be dynamic and changing with time. The Corps has failed to understand and embrace this true purpose of visitor centers and so has not provided the tools to manage its centers as they should or could be. As managed today visitor centers are lost opportunities to get the Corps' message out to the public and to serve our customer's needs.

The first step in rectifying these lost opportunities is to incorporate the Visitor Center Program into the Corps' Strategic Communication Plan. The following vision and mission statements were developed to aid the process.

> **Vision Statement**
> *Provide visitor center facilities that engage the public in a provocative and educational experience that encourages a broader understanding and appreciation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the project.*

> **Mission Statement**
> *Insure effective communication between the Corps and the visiting public through the Visitor Center Program. This is accomplished by presenting a focused story that provokes interest, relates to the mission, and reveals why the mission is important to the public.*

In the VCI Charter, "revolutionizing effectiveness" was stated clearly as a goal. During the course of the VCI Team's investigation and evaluation of the Corps' visitor centers, it became evident that to truly revolutionize the Corps' approach to visitor centers and their future, it requires a broader approach to their management, a structural re-thinking and expectation of visitor centers within the Corps' corporate culture. If the facilities we call visitor centers are to accomplish the goals of the above vision and mission statements, they must be integrated into the Corps' corporate communication strategy and while serving local community needs.

Visitor centers provide the opportunity to tell the Corps Story in places we meet the public most often. However, the opportunity to interpret the Corps Story reaches beyond the wall of a visitor center building. If we are to tell the corporate story, every opportunity and location available to us must be used. Visitor centers are more than buildings with informational exhibits; they are representatives of the Corps and the public they serve. The Corps must take steps immediately to capture each opportunity to tell its story and serve public needs. Faced with limited resources and a program of questionable priority, the Corps must decide if visitor centers are worth the investment. If so, the appropriate attention and resources must be dedicated to the program so its potential can be achieved.

Why are visitor centers important to the agency? Visitor centers are the Corps' first line of communication with our visiting public. Where better for the visitor to gain an understanding of our agency and its mission and how it relates to them? Visitor centers are our opportunity to tell our story before others do it for us. A visitor to an exciting, modern, well maintained and staffed center will go away with a new respect for the Corps and become a grass roots supporter. The knowledge he gains from his visit will empower him to filter any bad press he may encounter later.

By integrating our visitor centers into the corporate communications strategy we will provide the foundation for a more detailed communication strategy. Corps visitor centers must:

- Provide a dedicated customer outlet for interpretation
- Support the strategic vision
- Provide a good first impression by assuring uniformed Corps employees are the first faces the public sees
- Tell the Corps story

Why are visitor centers important to the visitor? Visitor centers must meet the needs and expectations of its visitors. Visitors choose to spend their time at a facility whether it is for leisure, education, seeking information or a rest stop. No matter the reason, the Corps must not let a visitor's visit be disappointing one. Therefore, at a minimum, visitor centers must provide for the following visitor needs/expectations:

- Safety, security and convenience
- Information outlet
- Gateway to agency
- Enhance customer enjoyment and satisfaction
- Place to learn and have fun

How are visitor centers funded? While visitor centers are generally thought of as important assets to the Corps, funding has not always been an indicator of that priority. Inherent operational problems with visitor centers are:

- Current funding and staffing is inadequate
- Visitor centers are not always included in backlog of maintenance, or are considered deferrable.
- Baseline funding does not keep pace with increasing operational costs.

Decision-makers who allocate resources often don't believe in the importance of visitor centers because the benefits are intangible and not easily measured. Given this, customer service and satisfaction will continue to decline because we are alienating them by allowing our visitor centers to continue functioning without addressing the needed changes discussed in this report. Steps must be taken that address the funding issues identified in this report to assure that visitor centers are getting the funding and staffing they need to deliver a positive image of the Corps and meet visitor needs.

What is the impact of not taking action? The Corps, like some other Federal agencies, is receiving negative press coverage and receives little or no opportunities to rebuff the reports. Our visitor centers are the primary means of getting the Corps Story to the public. If the Visitor Center Program is not given a priority status, negative public relation experiences could result as we maintain a status quo program emphasis. We will lose valuable opportunities for public exposure. Our visitor centers, as they are now, are becoming obsolete and not connected to the public and local community. If no action is taken to correct these deficiencies, we will contribute to our own public relations demise.

In order for the current visitor center program to evolve into the 21st century the agency culture must also evolve. The recommendations identified in this report must be acted upon. Where authorities are lacking, appropriate action must be taken that enables rather than restricts, empowers rather than confines. The current regulations must be reviewed, revised and consolidated into a comprehensive regulation that addresses all facets of the Visitor Center Program in a single document. Visitor centers must be used as a tool to meet the agency needs to strategically communicate our message to the American people. The Corps Story must be fielded. Managers and staff must be empowered to implement the changes required to insure a successful program. To that end the visitor centers can allow the Corps to demonstrate its value as "the world's premier public engineering organization responding to our nation's needs in peace and war.

Visitor Centers of the Future Strategy Paper

Strategy

The Corps Vision Statement includes "revolutionizing effectiveness" as a goal. Specifically the goal statement is: "dramatic improvement in performance and customer satisfaction will be achieved through best business practices, bold process reengineering and innovative use of technology". We proposed to apply that goal to the entire Corps system of visitor centers. First we will develop and obtain approval of a clear lay version of the Corps Vision and incorporate it into a public message. Sixty type A and B visitor centers and some of the 242 type C centers will be significantly modified to improve the delivery of the Corps message with modern interactive exhibits. (There are 7 type A regional centers, 53 type B project centers, and 242 type C centers ranging from brochure racks to centers with full exhibits.) At selected key visitor centers, we will place a "Command Brief" exhibit that describes the Corps contribution to the Nation. Regional and local project exhibits will developed locally and replace current outdated exhibits. We will not just install new exhibits, but provide attractive exhibits that will provide "hands on" interactive learning experiences that are both entertaining and educational.

Process

To accomplish the specific tasked listed below, we will establish a multidiscipline field team with expertise in Public Affairs, Information Management, Budget and Finance, and Interpretation. Field team members will be selected for their creativity and on the ground successes in related activities. The team will be led by a project manager and will use qualified contractors as needed. The effort will be launched with a Chief of Engineers memorandum that will explain the initiative and provide overall direction and guidance. This guidance will be incorporated into the appropriate ER/EPs. The "Command Brief" will developed by PAO and will be centrally funded. Budget guidance will provide a process for local funding of regional and local project exhibits.

A steering committee of HQUSACE staff from PAO, IM, CECW-ON, and CECW-B will provide oversight. This steering committee will be chaired by the representative from CECWON and report through the chain of command to the Deputy Chief.

Tasks

To make Corps visitor centers a focal point of outreach efforts to the public, the following tasks must be accomplished:

1. Analyze and evaluate selected major Corps visitor centers as compared to those outside the Corps. The focus of the evaluation should be to determine the current conditions of Corps facilities, messages, and displays as compared to others outside the Corps. Make recommendations for improvements. Specific criteria to be used for the evaluation will be determined later. Other Corps visitor centers will be evaluated locally using these newly developed criteria along with already established evaluation procedures.
2. Select sites for installation of "command brief" exhibits. Develop specific criteria to include

visitation levels and space requirements for the "command brief".

3. Undertake "command brief" exhibit concept development. The concept development will include options which will be used to make decisions on the dollar investments necessary.

4. Design "command brief" exhibit using "off the shelf" equipment. The emphasis here should be on selecting exhibit designers who are creative and use innovative technology concepts in exhibit design.

5. Fabricate exhibit.

6. Install exhibit. (See 8 below)

7. Regional PAO Promotion. A PAO regional promotion package could be assembled to announce the test installation and subsequent opening of each new exhibit which follows.

8. Ribbon cutting. The exhibit should be opened with great fanfare which makes it clear that the Corps is interested in customer feedback which will be used to improve future installations. The DCG could consider unveiling a test exhibit at Headquarters and use the opportunity to promote his initiative to the HQ staff with an opening ceremony. This exhibit could subsequently be relocated to a high traffic location for evaluation and customer feedback.

9. Evaluate exhibit. The idea here should be to install one exhibit in a high traffic location and test its effectiveness. After a suitable evaluation period, the lessons learned should be applied to exhibits to be placed in other locations.

Schedule and Costs

The schedule and costs for this effort will be developed once the concept is approved.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

USACE Visitor Center Initiative Strategy Paper

Visitor Centers of the Future Strategy Paper

Strategy

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Appendix B

Visitor Center Initiative (VCI)
Initial Meeting
16-17 May 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR FILE   5 June 2001

Subject: Visitor Center Initiative (VCI) Committee Kick-off Meeting, 16-17 May 2001

1. Attendees:

        Darrell Lewis* (CECW-ON)
        George Tab* (CECW-ON)
        Steve Austin* (CECW-ON)
        Joe Bertolini (LRL)
        Greg Miller (NWK)
        Jim Pennaz (POH)
        Nancy Rogers (SPD)
        Matt Seavey (SWF)
        Debra Stokes (MVN)
        Mark Wade (SAS)
        Bruce Thornton (SAM)

        *Part time attendees (Steering Committee)

2. The VCI Committee meeting convened in HQ on 16 March at 0800 hrs. and adjourned on 17 March at 1500 hrs. Steve opened the meeting by welcoming each participant and briefly described the selection process used for the committee members. He also acknowledged that each member was there because of their self-motivation, job dedication and expertise in the interpretive and visitor center fields. He then asked each attendee to provide a short description of their involvement and past experience in the visitor center program.

3. Darrell provided the program overview and explained the challenges before the committee. His key points were as follows:

    A. Justification and support for visitor program funds are essential.

    B. The Corps' story must be presented in a passionate and appealing manner.

    C. Static information is ineffective.

    D. Visitor Centers are Corps assets and not solely for the use of any particular organization or program.

    E. Answer questions about:

        a. What is the worth of the program to the agency?
        b. Why should recommendations be implemented?
        c. How does it support the Strategic Plan?

    d. Why is the Visitor Center Program important?

  F. Visitor Center facilities must address Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

  G. Make sure input is solicited from other interpretive organization and considered in the VCI evaluation process.

  H. Evaluate current Visitor Center guidance and provide revision recommendations.

  I. Mesh VCI efforts with Interpretive Services and Outreach Program (ISOP).

4. Following the opening remarks and program overview the Committee convened to develop an implementation plan, schedule and budget. It is anticipated the overall VCI effort will require approximately 18-months to complete. The initial formulation steps, anticipated action dates and associated costs are shown on Attachment 1.

5. The next order of discussion was to determine the best way to evaluate the 8 Type A regional centers, 53 Type B project centers, and 242 Type C centers. A survey of visitor center managers was decided as the first order of importance. It was decided that an email survey would be the most efficient method to reach each manager. All Type A, all Type B and two (2) Type C centers from each district would comprise the survey field, approximately 130 centers. In addition, sample questions were developed and the need for contractor support identified. The anticipated role of the contractor is: add another dimension to the team's content knowledge and finalize the in-house survey questionnaire, distribute and analyze its results and develop an evaluation sheet for the VCI Team to use during their on-site visitor center inspections. Nancy Rogers and Matt Seavey have the lead on this initiative.

6. The VCI guidance indicated a "Command Brief" was needed. Discussion revolved around its potential audiences, content, methods of presentation, applications and potential locations. Contract support was identified as the method in which this initiative could be evaluated. There was group consensus that a widespread need exists to tell the "Corps Story" in all Corps visitor centers, particularly in the Type A & B centers. The group also identified the need to develop an exhibit design for the "Corps Story" that can be integrated into existing visitor centers without appearing to be an add on exhibit. The design would help field personnel add a Corps exhibit without "re-inventing the wheel" at each location. Several goals and objectives emerged from the discussion to guide the development of a design concept to be contracted this FY. Greg Miller and Joe Bertolini have the lead on this initiative. The goals and objectives are:

  A. The purpose of the exhibit would be to provide an interesting and passionate presentation that includes both Corps historical and modern mission sub themes. It would correct erroneous opinions and help to build the Corps constituency.

B. Use interactive audiovisual/interactive media to communicate the detailed messages, allowing the visitor to choose those messages of interest to them.

C. Structure audio visual and structural design so that it can be easily adapted to both simple low cost exhibits for Type B & C centers and a more sophisticated version for Type A centers.

The following actions were identified to guide production of the Corps Story exhibit:

A. Coordinate with HQ Public Affairs, History and ISOP interests.

B. Contract for audiovisual/interactive design concept that defines content, video production, hardware and software development (possibly CD-ROM).

C. Contract for an exhibit design concept that would create an attractive structure/back drop for the audiovisual presentation.

D. Integrate these products into a decision brief that can be used to pitch the product.

E. Secure funding for final design, fabrication and installation at selected Type A centers.

7. Feedback is critical for the success of the program. The Committee evaluated ways in which we could receive maximum results in a timely and economical manner. The National Association of Interpretation (NAI) Conference being held 6 – 10 November 01 in Des Moines, IA was identified as a prime opportunity to interface with resource managers attending the conference. A VCI Focus Group Meeting is proposed prior to this conference in which four VCI Team members will conduct to solicit information. HQ will send letters requesting all Type A facility managers attend this meeting. Joe will prepare a draft letter for HQ to distribute.

8. One function of the initiative is to develop a team of Corps employees who can act as "consultants" for renovation of on-the-ground visitor centers for the use of districts that lack or have limited expertise in this area. Debra informed the group about the development of the Natural Resources Management (NRM) Gateway, a one-stop depository of information and institutional knowledge of the natural resources management and recreation programs to be used by the Corps community. One of the Gateway's focus topics is visitor centers. As a part of the consultant function, she made the suggestion to create a "virtual" visitor center, a place to go when considering the who, what, why, where, when and what of operating a visitor center. This information can also include sections on clauses to consider when writing request for proposals, lessons learned, tools and tips, etc. This effort will tie in nicely with the Interpretive Services and Outreach focus topic that will concentrate on information concerning what to consider when making the decision to create, update, rehabilitate or replace exhibits, interpretative panels, brochures, etc. A Gateway workshop is scheduled for 16-20 July 01 in

Louisville, KY. During this workshop a VCI team member will assist with the placement of information concerning visitor centers on the Gateway. Debra Stokes and Mark Wade have the lead on this initiative.

9. The meeting adjourned at 1500 hrs on 17 May. The following "Taskers" were assigned.

Lead Team Member(s)	Tasker	Anticipated completion date
Nancy Rogers Matt Seavey	Prepare draft list of VCI survey questions, scope of work and cost estimate for VCI survey	15 June
Jim Pennaz	Prepare draft VCI schedule and cost estimate	25 May
Greg Miller Joe Bertolini	Develop draft scope of work cost estimate and schedule for preparation Corps Story.	
Joe Bertolini	Coordinate development of Corps Focus Meeting to be held in conjunction with November NAI Conference in Des Moines, IA.	
Debra Stokes Mark Wade	Identify and collect resource material for inclusion on the VCI Gateway site and develop site design concept.	6 July 01
All	Identify two Type C facilities in each district to receive survey questionnaire.	29 June 01

Copy Furnished:
VCI MFT
Steve Austin (CECW-ON)
Brad Keshlear (SAD-CM-OC)
John Anderson (CESAM-OP-T)
Roger Burke (CESAM-PD-F)
Curtis Flakes (CESAM-PD)

R. Bruce Thornton
VCI Manager

VISITORS CENTER INITIATIVE
PROGRAMMED
COST/SCHEDULE/ACTIVITY
17 May 2001

COST	SCHEDULE	ACTIVITY
**Estimated FY01 Costs**	
$15K	May 01	*Initial Visitor Center Initiative Meeting. Develop questionnaire for all "A", "B", and selected "C" centers (100-140 sample size). Plan how to accomplish mission.
$15K	Jun 01	Contractor to complete visitor center questionnaire and evaluation form/checklist for visitor centers. Team to use form to evaluate selected centers. Send out questionnaire to centers.
$25K	Jul 01	Review responses to questionnaire by e-mail. Responses to be consolidated by contractor and forwarded to team members. Team member to prepare concept plan for "Corps Story".
$40K	Aug 01 thru Sep 01	*Meet (location to be determined) to discuss results of questionnaire and look at selected visitor centers ($30K). Two contractors to attend ($10K). Team members to provide draft recommendations on visitor center improvements. Discuss "Corps Story" concept and send out request for proposals for "Corps Story".
**$95K - $100K Estimated FY01 Total Costs**	

VISITORS CENTER INITIATIVE
PROGRAMMED
COST/SCHEDULE/ACTIVITY
17 May 2001

Estimated FY02 Costs		
$10K	Nov 6-10	National Association of Interpretation Conference in Des Moines. Four team members to attend and make presentation on Visitor Center Initiative. Will invite Type A visitor center managers to attend. Will hold listening session for all Corps personnel attending to obtain additional input on Visitor Center Initiative.
$15K	Dec	*Meeting to discuss survey results, listening session, and site visits. Continue work on visitor center recommendations. Review requests for proposals for "Corps Story". Select contractor. Initiate development of virtual visitor center to include info on what types of exhibits work, requests for proposals and lessons learned. Virtual visitor center to take place of or supplement "consultants".
$15K	2nd qtr.	*Review "Corps Story" draft. Review Web Site development. Initiate review of ER's, EP's that pertain to visitor centers.
$30K	Through FY02 Finish	*Complete "Corps Story", web site development; recommend revisions to ER's, & EP's. Provide specific recommendations for improvements to the visitor center program. Complete all tasks outlined in charter.
$70K Estimated FY02Total Costs		
$170K Estimated FY01 & FY02 Total Costs		
$80K Contingency of the total $250K Available Budget		

Appendix C

USACE Letter Requesting Corps Story Topics

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

CECW-ON

0 5 APR 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDERS, MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS
AND DISTRICT COMMANDS

SUBJECT: Request for *Corps Story* Topics

1. The Visitor Center Initiative (VCI) Taskforce is developing recommendations to enhance the delivery of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers missions and related messages at Corps-operated visitor centers. The VCI Team has been tasked to develop an interactive audiovisual exhibit that tells the story of the Corps of Engineers from a national perspective. The audiovisual exhibit (*"Corps Story"*) will be designed with sufficient flexibility to allow for the incorporation of regional missions and current issues of interest and will be suitable for use most visitor centers.

2. In a recent meeting, the VCI Taskforce learned that Headquarters, Public Affairs Office (PAO) is producing a series of video news stories about the Corps nationally and internationally. PAO encouraged the VCI team to suggest Corps stories that could provide information of interest at visitor centers. Therefore, the VCI Team is compiling a list of appropriate titles or themes that PAO could produce and that we could subsequently use in the planned *Corps Story* exhibit. Examples of vignette themes that illustrate the Corps involvement in regional and local issues are: salmon recovery, endangered species, environmental restoration projects, innovative flood control projects, flood plain management activities, regulatory activities, dredging, habitat development and management, unique interpretive events, historic event/structures w/living history activities, etc. Please e-mail your suggestions to Mr. Greg Miller at gregory.a.miller@nwk02.usace.army.mil or call him at (816) 983-3644) if you need additional information.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

KAREN DURHAM-AGUILERA, P.E.
Acting Chief, Operations Division
Directorate of Civil Works

CECW-ON
SUBJECT: Request for *Corps Story* Topics

DISTRIBUTION:

COMMANDER, GREAT LAKES & OHIO RIVERS DIVISION, ATTN: CELRD-ET-CO-R
COMMANDER, MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DIVISION, ATTN: CEMVD-ET-OO
COMMANDER, NORTH ATLANTIC DIVISION, ATTN: CENAD-ET-O
COMMANDER, NORTHWESTERN DIVISION, ATTN: CENWD-CM-OC - Omaha
COMMANDER, PACIFIC OCEAN DIVISION, ATTN: CEPOD-ET-C
COMMANDER, SOUTH ATLANTIC DIVISION, ATTN: CESAD-CM-OC
COMMANDER, SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION, ATTN: CESPD-CM-O
COMMANDER, SOUTHWESTERN DIVISION, ATTN: CESWD-ETO
COMMANDER, ALASKA DISTRICT, ATTN: CEPOA-CO-OR
COMMANDER, ALBUQUERQUE DISTRICT, ATTN: CESPA-OD-O
COMMANDER, BALTIMORE DISTRICT, ATTN: CENAB-OP-TR
COMMANDER, BUFFALO DISTRICT, ATTN: CELRB-CO-TB
COMMANDER, CHARLESTON DISTRICT, ATTN: CESAC-TS-O
COMMANDER, CHICAGO DISTRICT, ATTN: CELRC-CO
COMMANDER, DETROIT DISTRICT, ATTN: CELRE-CO-L
COMMANDER, FORT WORTH DISTRICT, ATTN: CESWF-OD-R
COMMANDER, GALVESTON DISTRICT, ATTN: CESWG-OD-O
COMMANDER, HONOLULU DISTRICT, ATTN: CEPOH-EC-T
COMMANDER, HUNTINGTON DISTRICT, ATTN: CELRH-OR
COMMANDER, JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT, ATTN: CESAJ-CO-OM
COMMANDER, KANSAS CITY DISTRICT, ATTN: CENWK-OD-TR
COMMANDER, LITTLE ROCK DISTRICT, ATTN: CESWL-OP-ON
COMMANDER, LOS ANGELES DISTRICT, ATTN: CESPL-CO-O
COMMANDER, LOUISVILLE DISTRICT, ATTN: CELRL-OP-TO
COMMANDER, MEMPHIS DISTRICT, ATTN: CEMVM-CO
COMMANDER, MOBILE DISTRICT, ATTN: CESAM-OP-TR
COMMANDER, NASHVILLE DISTRICT, ATTN: CELRN-OP-T-N
COMMANDER, NEW ENGLAND DISTRICT, ATTN: CENAE-CO-TM
COMMANDER, NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT, ATTN: CEMVN-OD-T
COMMANDER, NEW YORK DISTRICT, ATTN: CENAN-OP
COMMANDER, NORFOLK DISTRICT, ATTN: CENAO-TS-O
COMMANDER, NWD – OMAHA OFFICE, ATTN: CENWD-CM-OC
COMMANDER, NWD – PORTLAND OFFICE, ATTN: CENWD-CM-OC
COMMANDER, OMAHA DISTRICT, ATTN: CENWO-OD-TN
COMMANDER, PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT, ATTN: CENAP-OP
COMMANDER, PITTSBURGH DISTRICT, ATTN: CELRP-OR-TR
COMMANDER, PORTLAND DISTRICT, ATTN: CENWP-CO-SR
COMMANDER, ROCK ISLAND DISTRICT, ATTN: CEMVR-OD-T
COMMANDER, SACRAMENTO DISTRICT, ATTN: CESPK-CO-O
COMMANDER, SAN FRANCISCO DISTRICT, ATTN: CESPN-CO-O
COMMANDER, SAVANNAH DISTRICT, ATTN: CESAS-OP-SR
COMMANDER, SEATTLE DISTRICT, ATTN: CENWS-OD-TS-NR
COMMANDER, ST. LOUIS DISTRICT, ATTN: CEMVS-CO-T
COMMANDER, ST. PAUL DISTRICT, ATTN: CEMVP-CO-OP
COMMANDER, TULSA DISTRICT, ATTN: CESWT-OD-R
COMMANDER, VICKSBURG DISTRICT, ATTN: CEMVK-OD
COMMANDER, WALLA WALLA DISTRICT, ATTN: CENWW-OD-TN
COMMANDER, WILMINGTON DISTRICT, ATTN: CESAW-OP-TN
COMMANDER, ENGINEER RESEARCH AND DEV. CENTER, ATTN: CEERD-EE
COMMANDER, ENGINEER RESEARCH AND DEV. CENTER, ATTN: CEWES-EE-R

Appendix D

Visitor Center Manager's Survey
July 2001

Visitor Center Initiative

Army Corps of Engineers

Visitor Center Survey, July 2001

Prepared for the
Army Corps of Engineers
by
Wendy Meluch, MA
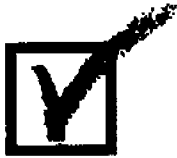Visitor Studies Services
415.897.4051

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Introduction

The Army Corps of Engineers Visitor Center Initiative Committee drafted a survey for Visitor Center managers with the following goals in mind. In June of 2001, the Committee contracted with Wendy Meluch of Visitor Studies Services to refine the survey instrument, receive responses, and analyze and report on the results.

1. Assess current condition of Visitor Center facilities, programs and operations.
2. Assess relevancy of current interpretive themes, media and presentations found throughout the Corps Visitor Centers.
3. Determine level and extent of needed upgrades and remodeling at Corps Visitor Centers.
4. Determine institutional or other barriers to improvement of the Corps' Visitor Center Program.
5. Solicit field-level input on future management strategies for Corps Visitor Centers.

Members of the Visitor Center Initiative Committee identified approximately 135 individual Visitor Center managers to participate in this web-based survey. During June and July of 2001, 95 managers responded and have been included in the sample for this report. The total number of responses per question varies because of accepting multiple answers where appropriate and, in some cases, respondents' incomplete submissions. The nature of this study as a tool to collect and identify qualitative information requires minimal statistical analysis.

Due to technical difficulties with the web site hosted by staff, the survey's original questions 13, 19, 26,27, and 34 are not included in this report. Instead, four text questions which were emailed to participants in August of 2001 are presented below. Fifty managers responded to the August email. In this report, those questions are referred to as Text Questions 1 through 4.

Please see Appendix A for copies of the web-based Survey and related e-mail communications, and Appendix B for the August e-mail Text Questions 1 - 4. For a discussion of Method and Sample, please see Appendix C.

Executive Summary

Visitor Center managers were eager to participate in this survey. Many voiced or stated their appreciation of the effort. Overall, their responses reveal a thoughtful approach to their work and a desire to improve Corps Visitor Centers.

This survey effort did much to answer questions presented by the Committee's five goals as stated above.

1. Assess current condition of Visitor Center facilities, programs and operations.

Apart from exhibits, almost all physical aspects of these Visitor Center facilities were judged by respondents to be "fair" or better. Among the most favorably rated were Staffed Welcome Station, Restrooms, Heating and Air Conditioning, and Condition of Building. Those features with significant negative ratings include office space, public meeting space, vending and sales/bookstore space.

Programs are addressed primarily in the context of Visitor Centers partnering with outside agencies. For those Visitor Centers who do have partners, several benefit from program input. Partner relationships may be helpful to those Visitor Center managers who mention wanting to have a larger role in their local communities. Impediments to partnering include limited resources, remote locations and outdated or cumbersome Corps policies and regulations.

Numerous responses throughout the survey touch on problems with operations. Concerns range from relatively simple issues of communication to annual budgeting procedures that make long term exhibit planning impossible to how the Corps perceives Visitor Centers. Please see comments on Goals 4 and 5 below.

2. Assess relevancy of current interpretive themes, media and presentations found throughout the Corps Visitor Centers.

Both managers and visitors stress the importance of interpreting "Site-specific Project Purposes" and "Physical Orientation to the Site (way finding)." In addition, visitors are believed to want information on "Recreation." "The Corps' Missions" and "The History of the Corps" fall into a mid range of interest for managers and the lowest level of interest for visitors. Should the Committee pursue a Corps-focussed exhibit for installation in numerous Visitor Centers, care should be taken to allow customization of it so it can be integrated properly into existing exhibits on site.

Other interpretive interests that are valued by managers and visitors included issues germane to the local area and community including local history, community events, activities, environment and the like. Note that managers are reporting on visitor interests based primarily on informal input from visitors. A survey of visitors was not done as a part of this effort.

Very few Visitor Center managers report that their exhibits are built around a single, central theme. Many cite a list of subject areas addressed by exhibitry. Current exhibit development practice revolves around identifying and supporting a single "big idea."[1]

Less than half of respondents state that their facility has computer-based interactives among exhibits. Many comments throughout the survey reveal that managers have a need for improved computer-based exhibitry as well as expertise.

Exhibits geared for children are present in a majority of participating Visitor Centers, but less than half of those are felt by managers to be adequate.

As it plans for exhibit renovations throughout the Corps, the Visitor Center Initiative Committee should consider further visitor research studies. Front-end evaluations with visitors, for example, can guide exhibit development from the outset. Front-end and formative evaluation studies are instrumental in helping exhibit developers avoid costly mistakes while helping to ensure an effective exhibit.

3. Determine level and extent of needed upgrades and remodeling at Corps Visitor Centers.

Managers report a need for vast amounts of exhibit renovations. Many of them feel that over 80%, even 100%, of exhibit areas need renovation. By far the two most common reasons for updating exhibits were "Broken/maintenance problem" and "Obsolete computer technology." Much more information about the type of updating or new exhibit creation, and the estimated square footage for same is needed to estimate costs.

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[1] Beverly Serrell, Exhibit Labels and Interpretive Approach (Altamira Press 1996) [and many other works by Serrell]

Remodeling and upgrading of other aspects of Visitor Center buildings is needed, according to respondents, but to a somewhat lesser degree. Office space, vending space and public meeting space are lacking or very limited in several participating facilities. Many also commented on the dated look of the buildings and appointments.

4. Determine institutional or other barriers to improvement of the Corps' Visitor Center Program.
&
5. Solicit field-level input on future management strategies for Corps Visitor Centers.

The most frequently cited barrier to improving Visitor Centers is that of budgetary constraints. In addition to higher levels of funding and other resources, Visitor Centers would benefit from procurement and budgeting procedures that reflect the nature of Visitor Center management, i.e., planning for new exhibits which often requires a multi-year approach.

While nearly all managers report a lack of resources (time, staff, funding and space) a few blame this lack on the apparent low standing of Visitor Centers in the eyes of Corps management. Many respondents want upper management to recognize the value of Visitor Centers as the public face of the Corps. Responses cite unsupportive districts, lack of respect for the Visitor Center mission, and lack of awareness or acknowledgement of interpretive staff as professionals. Real support from the Corps in terms of communication, funding and other resources, programs and partnering will improve Visitor Center staffs' ability to function both by facilitating their efforts and boosting morale.

Increased communication among Visitor Centers, between upper management and Visitor Centers, and with the Visitor Center Initiative Committee figures into most scenarios for improved, future management. Managers would like to know what has succeeded at other Visitor Centers, especially in terms of exhibits and partnerships. A regularly scheduled Visitor Center conference was suggested.

A majority of managers feel that they would be more effective if they had training or access to expertise in areas of importance to them, especially exhibit media technology, exhibit evaluation and exhibit planning.

Recommendations

1. The Visitor Center Initiative Committee should continue to assist Corps Visitor Centers meet interpretive goals of the Corps.

Visitor Center managers have needs for and expectations of the Visitor Center Initiative Committee. It is clear that managers and Visitor Centers would benefit from the Committee as an ongoing source of support and information. Participating managers look to the Committee for help with logistics such as obtaining funding for exhibits and assisting with communications.

Beyond the relatively straightforward questions of logistics, however, the Committee represents to Visitor Center managers a possible change in the way Visitor Centers will be regarded by upper management. Responses throughout the survey reveal frustration and sometimes resentment on the part of many managers about how they feel Visitor Centers are perceived and treated in the Corps. Should the Committee dissolve, Corps upper management will lose credibility in the eyes of Visitor Center staff.

<div align="right">Continued...</div>

Among the tasks that the Committee should consider are

- facilitating communication between Visitor Centers. This may be done, in part, by establishing a regularly scheduled conference of Visitor Center management.
- simplifying or streamlining budget procedures for Visitor Center interpretive and exhibit expenses.
- reviewing a wide range of management procedures around interpretive staff and Visitor Centers. Note that several respondents report that other agencies such as NPS are adept in these areas.
- reviewing upper management policies and regulations that may affect a Visitor Center's ability to partner.
- accessing exhibit-related expertise or training existing staff for same. To this end, the Committee may want to explore the possibility of convening a standing panel of experts.
- participating in and getting more from the American Association of Museums and the National Association of Interpretation.
- conducting a more detailed survey of Visitor Centers targeted at identifying and prioritizing exhibit renovations or replacements.

2. As Visitor Centers renovate or develop new exhibits they should include visitor research and evaluation studies.

Exhibit development has grown to include a scientific approach over the past 10 to 15 years. Effective exhibits are created with scientifically based visitor research from the earliest planning phases. Front-end evaluation done by interviewing visitors about their perceptions of and familiarity with exhibit content helps exhibit developers avoid misleading or incomplete scripts. Formative evaluation, i.e., testing exhibit prototypes with visitors makes exhibit elements easiest to use and understand, and can save large amounts of money during exhibit fabrication. Summative evaluation examines the effectiveness of completed exhibits and points to necessary changes or improvements.

Summary of Findings

The initial web-based survey was difficult to access forcing many respondents to make numerous attempts to log on and, in some cases, contact Nancy Rogers at the San Francisco Bay Model Visitor Center for assistance. In spite of these difficulties, 70% of the managers solicited did participate. This response rate is considered "very good" and is more than adequate for analysis.[2] This **good response rate,** even in the face of great inconvenience, speaks to the enthusiasm of Visitor Center managers to participate. Their actions and written responses, as well as comments voiced to Nancy Rogers, reveal great interest on the part of managers in the success of the Committee's efforts and ensuing improvements to these Army Corps facilities.

Questions 1, 2 and 3 ask respondents to **rank interpretive subject areas** to be presented in visitor centers based on their own priorities and those of visitors. Responding managers emphasize "Site-specific Project Purposes;" and "Physical Orientation to the Site (way finding)" more than any other subject areas. For these respondents, "The Corps' Missions" and "The History of the Corps" fall into a midrange of interest. Managers' sense of what *visitors* prioritize include "Physical Orientation to the Site;" "Recreation;" and "Site-specific Project Purposes." Managers report that their visitors are not interested in "The Corps' Missions" or "The History of the Corps" ranking them among the bottom three subject areas for visitor interest.

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[2] Earl Babbie, Survey Research Methods Second Edition (Wadsworth Publishing Company 1990)

Subject areas suggested under "Other" responses were prioritized highly by many respondents for both managers and visitors. These included issues of the locality such as local community events and activities, history, environment and the like.

In responding to Questions 4, 5 and 6 managers report a need for **vast amounts of exhibit updates**. Sixty-four respondents feel that at least 50% of their exhibit facilities need to be updated. Twenty-eight state that at least 80% need updating. By far the two most common reasons for updating exhibits were "Broken/maintenance problem" and "Obsolete computer technology." Much more information about the type of updating or new exhibit creation, and the estimated square footage for same is needed to estimate costs.

Questions 7 and 8 focus on **exhibits for children**. Twenty-one of 95 respondents state that they have exhibits designed for children and that those are sufficient. Thirty-two who have child-centered exhibits felt that they were not sufficient.

Current methods of exhibit development identify a single theme or "big idea" which is in turn supported by every element and label.[3] Question 9 asks managers if their **facilities are designed around a "central theme."** Fourteen respondents indicated some degree of this. Most others list several topic ideas that their Visitor Centers address. Where Visitor Centers have been developed in various stages, a varied, even disjointed, set of themes can be a natural outcome.

Questions 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 address **broad issues of Visitor Center usability**. Over one third of responding managers felt that their location is not optimal. Most of their concerns focus on the Visitor Center being hard to find, hard to access or without a view of the project. Most responding Visitor Centers experience peak usage during the summer months: June, May and July. About two thirds of respondents feel that the size of their facility is adequate for their current level of visitation. Less than half can confirm that their hours are convenient for visitors, about one third report that visitors find Visitor Center hours of operation to be inconvenient, the rest report insufficient input from visitors to comment.

Issues of **accessibility per ADA** requirements are addressed in Questions 20, 21 and 22. Twenty-eight Visitor Centers have conducted an accessibility study. Seventeen have accessibility plans, 27 do not and 50 are not sure if they have one or not. Sixty-two responding Visitor Centers have wheel chair access facilities. Less than one third cite other types of accommodations.

In responding to Questions 16 and 17, survey participants most commonly identify "local residents," "tourists," and "school groups" as being among their visitors. These three groups are also most commonly identified as comprising one third or more of the **Centers' visitorship**.

Thirty-five out of these 95 responding managers indicate in Question 18 that they conduct controlled studies **to collect input from visitors**. A controlled study for data collection which relies on a probability-based sampling method can produce statistically reliable information that can be considered representative of the population being studied. The Visitor Center Initiative Committee should consider more effort in this regard as they plan for exhibit renovations throughout the Corps. Front-end evaluations with visitors, for example, can guide exhibit development from the outset. Front-end and formative evaluation studies are instrumental in helping exhibit developers avoid costly mistakes while helping to ensure an effective exhibit.

In responding to the August email survey Text Question 1, 33 of the 50 respondents described an active program of **reviewing and acting upon visitor input** gathered by all formal and informal means. Many of them state that changes or improvements are difficult or impossible to do because of limited funds and/or staff and time.

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[3] Beverly Serrell, Exhibit Labels and Interpretive Approach (Altamira Press 1996) [and many other works by Serrell]

Question 23 asks respondents to **rate a list of features at their facility** as "Very Good" down to "Very Poor." Managers are most likely to be satisfied with their "Staffed Welcome Station." Most likely to be rated as "Very Poor" are "public meeting spaces," "vending," and "sales/bookstore space."

Questions 24, 25, and Text Questions 2 and 3 address **Visitor Centers partnering with other organizations**. Fifty out of 95 managers report that their Centers do partner with outside organizations, most commonly some sort of "Friends Group." Partner organizations cited by respondents typically assist the Visitor Center with bookstores, programs, staffing and direct funding. In return, Visitor Centers are most likely to provide partners with space and information dissemination. Managers that cite barriers to partnering for their Visitor Centers list a lack of interested partners; the remoteness of their site, a lack of upper management support for partnering, and a lack of other resources such as staff, funding and space.

The top three types of **training that respondents feel would benefit their ability to manage and plan for their Visitor Centers** are: 1) A/V Multi-media Technology; 2) Program and Exhibit Evaluation; 3) Exhibit Plans and RFP's. Other responses to Question 28 include Developmental Management Plans and Prospectus, Visitor Surveys and general management skills.

The most frequently cited **barrier to improving Visitor Centers** (Question 30) is that of budgetary constraints (76 respondents). In addition to limited funding, restrictions on the time-frame for spending fiscal dollars makes multi-year planning difficult as exhibit development and exhibit production firms require longer planning times. The next-most frequently cited barriers are "Small Staff," (40) and "Lack of Space to Expand" (34). Comments offered in response to this question also address management styles in the Corps, e.g., upper management needs to broaden its focus beyond engineering and recognize that Visitor Center staff meets and deals with the public daily; and Interpreters and Visitor Center Managers need to see themselves and be recognized by management as professionals.

Managers see the **role of Corps Visitor Centers in the future** as public educators regarding the Corps' Activities, project sites, water and environmental issues. They emphasize supporting local educational systems. Many respondents also see Corps Visitor Centers as vital local community-based facilities.

Text Question 4 asks respondents for any **other input for the Visitor Center Initiative Committee**. Those managers who responded to this question had much to write. Several responses are very lengthy. Many responses reveal frustration, even resentment, on the part of managers regarding upper management and budgetary issues. They also reveal commitment to the interpretive mission of Visitor Centers and the ability of their interpretive staff.

Among their concerns are issues of communication and training. There is a need for Visitor Centers to be able to communicate with each other about exhibit and program success and failures. The Visitor Initiative Committee is referred to here and in other questions as a potentially useful body for communications and exhibit development.

Managers are also concerned about renovating, maintaining and developing exhibits. They feel that more expertise and resources should be applied in this area.

Question 1

From _your_ perspective, what subject areas listed below do you think should be included in Corps Visitor Center exhibits? Rank in order of importance to you from 1 (highest priority) to 11 (lowest priority).

Of the ten Subject Areas listed, two lead as highest priorities for a majority of respondents by all measures. They are:

1. Site-specific Project Purposes

Mode (most frequent response)	1
Mean (average of all responses)	2.44
Number of respondents citing this among their top three priorities	74

2. Physical Orientation to the Site (way finding)

Mode (most frequent response)	2
Mean (average of all responses)	3.92
Number of respondents citing this among their top three priorities	63

The middle range of Subject Areas is listed below in order of the number of respondents to cite them in their top three priorities (33 to 21 respondents). The mode for each of these falls in a range of 1 to 10 and the mean from 4.68 to 6.29.

3. The Corps' Missions
4. Recreation
5. Visitor Safety
6. The History of the Corps
7. Natural Resources

Lowest in all measures were:

8. Cultural Resources (archeological, historical, etc.)
9. Cultural Resource Management Relative to the Project
10. Environmental Education

Subject Areas suggested under "Other" were cited as highest priority for 54 respondents. Many "Other" responses address local, community and/or site related issues such as local history, local facilities, history of the site/project, community events. For complete data on all Subject Areas and a full list of "Other" responses, please see Appendix D.

Question 2

Based solely on input you have received from visitors during the previous 12 months, in which of the subject areas listed below have visitors shown the most interest? Rank in order of interest 1 (most interesting to visitors) to 11 (least interesting to visitors).

Nearly all respondents have based their answers to this question on informal and/or anecdotal evidence (see Question 3 below). Data so gathered can suggest useful trends, but cannot be considered statistically representative of the visitorship.

Of the ten Subject Areas listed, three are identified by respondents as most interesting to visitors.

1. Physical Orientation to the Site (way finding)

Mode (most frequent response)	1
Mean (average of all responses)	2.87
Number of respondents citing this among their top three priorities	66

2. Recreation

Mode (most frequent response)	2
Mean (average of all responses)	2.76
Number of respondents citing this among their top three priorities	68

3. Site-specific Project Purposes

Mode (most frequent response)	1
Mean (average of all responses)	3.16
Number of respondents citing this among their top three priorities	57

The middle range of Subject Areas is listed below in order of the number of respondents to cite them in their top three priorities (39 and 20 respondents). For each of these the mode are 3 and 7, and the mean 4.17 and 5.47.

4. Natural Resources
5. Environmental Education

Lowest in all measures were:

6. Cultural Resource Management Relative to the Project
7. Cultural Resources (archeological, historical, etc.)
8. The Corps' Missions
9. Visitor Safety
10. The History of the Corps

Subject Areas suggested under "Other" were cited as highest priority for 62 respondents. Many "Other" responses address local and/or site related issues about recreational opportunities and/or how to proceed with their visit (maps, passes, camping, restrooms). A few cite interest in the local Corps project and related environmental issues. For complete data on all Subject Areas and a full list of "Other" responses, please see Appendix E.

Question 3

On what sort of visitor input have you based your response to Question 2 above? Please check all that apply.

A total of six respondents indicated that their answers to Question 2 were based on a controlled study of visitors. The other 87 respondents relied upon anecdotal information, i.e., casual conversation or observation of visitors, questions from visitors during programs and the like; or input from self selected samples e.g., visitor comment cards or guest books. For a complete data table, please see Appendix F.

While a formal and controlled study of visitors provides statistically reliable data, more casual input as is reflected in most answers to Question 2 can reveal real and useful trends as are seen above. For more information please see Question 18 below.

Question 4

Approximately how many square feet of exhibit space does your visitor center include? Please enter your numerical response on the line below:

A majority of responding visitor centers (54) are 1,500 square feet or less.

Approximate Square Feet	Number of Visitor Centers	% of 87 responses
6 - 100	6	7 %
101 - 500	18	21 %
501 - 1000	16	18 %
1001 - 1500	14	16 %
1501 - 2000	7	8 %
2001 - 2500	5	6 %
2501 - 3000	3	3 %
3001 - 3500	2	<3 %
3501 - 4000	1	<3 %
4001 - 4500	2	<3 %
4501 - 5000	4	5 %
5001 - 5500	0	n/a
5501 - 6000	4	5 %
6001 - 6500	0	n/a
7000	1	<3 %
8,000	1	<3 %
8500	1	<3 %
25,000	1	<3 %
total valid responses:	87 total	

Question 5

About what percentage of your exhibits do you think need to be updated? Please enter your numerical response on the line below:

A large majority of respondents (64) felt that at least 50% of their exhibits needed to be updated. Thirty-eight felt that at least 80% needed updating.

Approximately _____ % of our exhibits need to be updated.	Number of Visitor Centers	% of 86 Valid Responses
0 % (or n/a)	4	5 %
10 – 19 %	5	6 %
20 – 29 %	9	10 %
30 – 39 %	5	6 %
40 – 49 %	3	3 %
50 – 59 %	14	16 %
60 – 69 %	4	5 %
70 – 79 %	8	9 %
80 – 89 %	10	12 %
90 – 99 %	9	10 %
100 %	19	22 %
total valid responses:	86	

Question 6

Why do you think those exhibits need to be changed? Please rank the following list beginning with 1 for the biggest or main problem for exhibits at your facility. Enter numerical digits on the lines preceding each item leaving blank those that do not apply.

Of the nine reasons offered for needing exhibit changes, two stand out as the most prevalent. They are:

1. Broken/maintenance problem

Mode (most frequent response)	2
Mean (average of all responses)	3.19
Number of respondents citing this among their top three priorities	46

2. Obsolete computer technology

Mode (most frequent response)	1
Mean (average of all responses)	3.49
Number of respondents citing this among their top three priorities	34

The middle range of needs for exhibit changes is listed below in order of the number of respondents to cite them in their top three priorities (23 to 16 respondents). For each of these the mode falls in a range of 1 to 4 and the mean from 3.82 to 4.74.

3. Not suitable for current visitor population, e.g., more children vs. retirees now
4. Increased or decreased volume of visitation
5. Do not accomplish the written objectives of the exhibit
6. Inaccurate information

Lowest in all measures were:

7. Inaccessible per ADA requirements
8. Site project mission has changed
9. Increased need for multiple languages

Most "Other" comments described the exhibits' style and content as being old and/or out of date and, in some cases, unappealing or boring. Several "Other" comments specified a need for interactive displays to help engage visitors. Concern for accommodating repeat visitors was also expressed. For complete data on needs for change and a complete list of "Other" comments, please see Appendix G.

Questions 7 & 8

Do you have exhibits that were designed for children?

If you have exhibitry that was designed for children, does it seem to be enough to serve your current visitor population?

Response	Frequency of Resp.	% of 95 Participants
Yes, we have exhibits for children.	53	56 %
Yes, these exhibits seem to be adequate for our visitors	21	22 %
No, these exhibits are not sufficient for our visitors.	32	34 %

General comments on exhibits for children were also solicited with this question. Most comments address a need for more child-oriented, hands-on and interactive exhibitry. One respondent suggests, and museum visitor research agrees, that adults as well as children need to be engaged by tactile and visually attractive exhibits. For a complete list of responses to Question 8, please see Appendix H.

Question 9

Is there a central theme to your visitor center exhibits? If so, what is it?

This question also specified: "A theme is the central or key idea of any exhibit or presentation. Themes should be stated as short, simple, complete sentences, contain only one idea and reveal the overall purpose of the exhibit."

Fifty-three participants responded to this question. Fourteen (15% of 95) appear to get at the idea of themes as described above, though not all are written as complete sentences.

- Power and Play is just a short distance away on the Pend Oreille.
- The role of water in the life cycle of the San Francisco Bay region, state of California
- Preserving the Salmon of the Pacific Northwest.
- The Honolulu Engineer District's regional visitor center is dedicated to Civil Works Water Resource Development. The theme of the presentation is "People, Islands and Water."
- The Living Lake
- The Missouri River; A River through time and change in northeastern Montana.
- The Corps' Missions are varied and serve the world.
- Inland waterway transportation benefits the country and you.
- Lake Lanier Works (for you)
- Maritime history and the Corps of Engineers role in development of Duluth-Superior Harbor, Lake Superior, and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway System.
- Meeting the challenge of Change on the Missouri River
- Oahe, Foundation of Fun.
- Paleontological and cultural resources of the project area were important components of pre-construction planning.
- Water as a Multiple Use Resource
- Thurmond Project/Lake offers an abundance of resources.

Most of the other 39 responses to this question listed one or more topics addressed by their visitor center. Of those, 15 specified the Corps' local and/or broader missions. Topic areas range from local flora/fauna, to details of the local water project, to "the environment."

For a complete list of all responses to this question please see Appendix I.

Question 10

What is your mix of media? Check all that apply.

Media:	No. of Resp.	% of 95 Respondents
Photos	82	86 %
Pamphlets or printed handouts	81	85 %
Videos	50	53 %
Other	42	44 %
Other interactives	37	39 %
Computer-based interactives	36	38 %
Slide shows	29	31 %
Audio tours	17	18 %
Film	10	11 %

"Other" responses include a wide array of models, dioramas, aquaria, maps, animal mounts, etc. "Other Interactives" responses describe a variety of hands-on items and games including mounted animal specimens to touch, question-and-answer doors, touch table, buttons to activate lights or recordings, puzzles, etc.

Highlights of "Computer-based Interactives" responses are listed below. For a complete list of responses to Question 10, please see Appendix J.

- Computer touch screen informative display
- Control the Flow - making decisions on water releases
- Flood Control Game
- information kiosk, Corps history
- Interactive computer program that is part of an regional multi-agency interactive program
- Fish identification game.
- large menu of project history, construction/.engineering of project, Corps missions and history, Project recreation facilities, maps, safety videos, safety messages.
- Locking Through Simulation
- Recreation information where people can select an area and get a print-out with site specific information. We also have a salmon issues interactive computer program where people answer questions about salmon, and are shown the effect of their answers.
- shows photos of all parks, in a comp. slide show with music; contains Corps mission, lake history, videos of trail, wildlife, wildflowers, photos of shelters to assist w reservations; interactive games for kids, ranger profiles of shoreline management rangers...
- water safety computer games
- video disk player
- web site
- World Wide Web connection to Corps on the Internet

Question 11

Do you think your visitor center is in the best possible location in your project area? Consider factors such as visibility, accessibility, views of the site, etc.

Thirty-four, or just over one third of respondents, felt that their location was not optimal. The most common problem cited had to do with accessibility of the visitor center (9). This includes concerns about the visitor center being hard to find from main roads, far from the lake/project or any other attraction, on a hill making it look hard to approach, etc. Lack of a view of the project or lake was a problem for seven respondents.

For a complete list of responses to Question 11, please see Appendix K

Question 12

Based only on input you've received from visitors, are the hours of operation at your visitor center convenient for visitors?

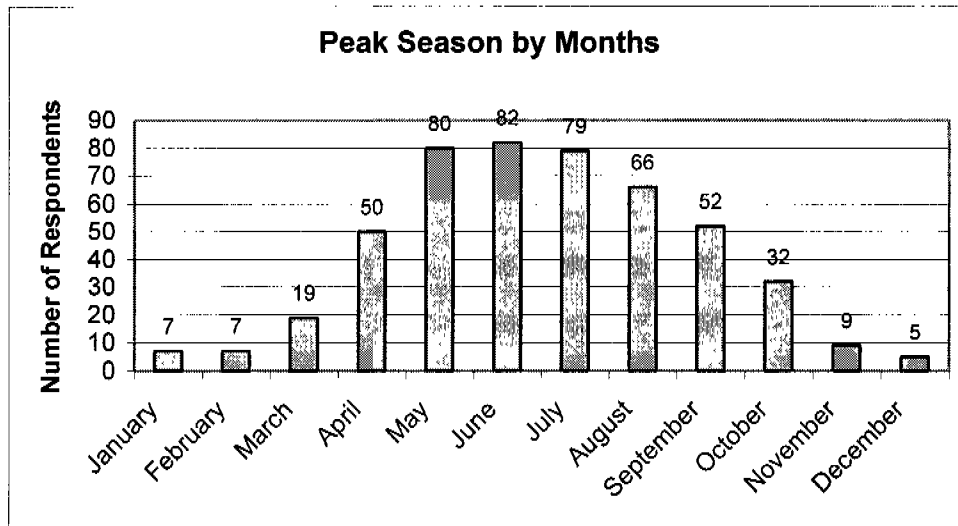| Response	Frequency of Resp.	% of 95
Yes	40	42 %
No	29	31 %
Received little or no input from visitors on this issue	26	27 %
Total:	95	100 %

Question 13

If visitor feedback suggests that hours are not convenient, how could they be improved?

This question has been eliminated from the survey because of technical difficulties referred to above.

Question 14

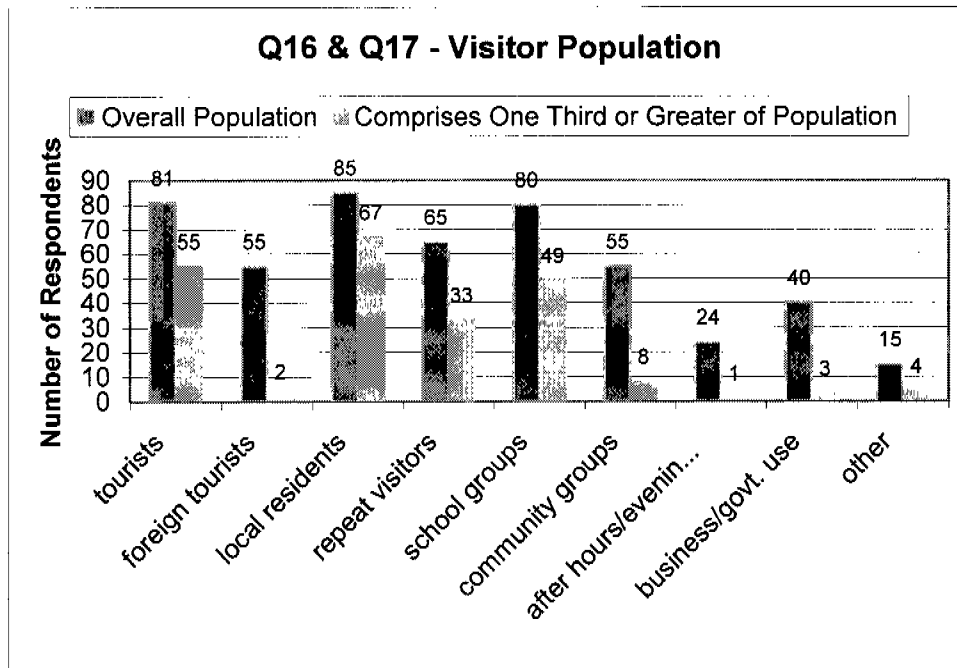**Please identify your peak season months. Check all that apply.**

Peak Season by Months

A bar chart titled "Peak Season by Months" with the y-axis labeled "Number of Respondents" (0 to 90) and the x-axis showing months:

Month	Number of Respondents
January	7
February	7
March	19
April	50
May	80
June	82
July	79
August	66
September	52
October	32
November	9
December	5

Question 15
Is the capacity (size) of your facility adequate to accommodate your current level of visitation?

Response	Frequency of Resp.	%
Yes	64	68 %
No	24	26 %
I'm not sure	6	6 %
Total:	94	100 %

Questions 16 & 17

Describe your visitor population. Check all that apply.

Please indicate which, If any, of these visitor types comprise one third or more of your visitorship. Please check up to three.

Q16 & Q17 - Visitor Population

■ Overall Population ▨ Comprises One Third or Greater of Population

(Bar chart, Number of Respondents on y-axis, visitor types on x-axis)

Visitor type	Overall Population	Comprises One Third or Greater
tourists	81	55
foreign tourists	55	2
local residents	85	67
repeat visitors	65	33
school groups	80	49
community groups	55	8
after hours/evenin...	24	1
business/govt. use	40	3
other	15	4

"Other" visitor populations cited for Question 16, General Population:

- Cruise ship passengers from 4 different cruise lines, dozens of different tour bus companies, 400-500 school groups annually
- Large Fishing Tournaments
- Large scheduled groups & bus tours
- large qty. of 3rd grade school kids & college level students.
- elder hostels
- Upward Bound, Lewis and Clark enthusiasts
- visitors following the Lewis and Clark Trail
- Media--focal point for dam breaching controversy
- Musical Groups performing for visitors to adjacent campground
- training
- Hunters and Bird watchers
- Special events
- boat class students
- district office personnel and guests
- fishermen
- people from campgrounds
- senior citizen group tours
- Paleontology enthusiast

"Other" visitor populations cited for Question 17, One third or greater of visitorship:

- Hunters and Bird watchers
- people from campgrounds
- special events
- Large scheduled groups, tournament attendees and busses as indicated above

Question 18

How do you obtain input from your visitors? Check all that apply.

A total of 35 respondents indicated that they practice some sort of formal study of visitors, i.e., observational study of visitors, focus groups, and public scoping sessions. When done with a probability-based sample data generated by these, and other, types of studies can be relied upon as statistically representative of the visitor population.

Informal studies of visitors in which a sample is not drawn systematically produce data that may be skewed. Casual conversation, guest book comments and correspondence from visitors share the same weakness of working with a self-selected sample of the population. The data will reflect the population of people who like to chat with rangers write In guest books and send letters, but not the visitor population as a whole. Casual observations suffer similarly from non-systematic sampling and data gathering techniques. Questionnaires and comment cards can be used effectively when administered with a probability-based sampling system.

Thirty-five respondents to question 28 indicated that they would benefit from training regarding visitor surveys. Fifty-nine indicated that they would benefit from training regarding program and exhibit evaluation techniques.

No. Resp.	% of 95	Means of Obtaining Visitor Input	Frequency	No. Resp.
82	86 %	Casual observation of visitors	At least once a year Less than once/year Never	69 0 0
53	56 %	Guest book with comments		
48	51 %	Questionnaire or Comment Cards	At least once a year Less than once/year Never	33 10 0
32	34 %	Email or other correspondence from visitors		
31	33 %	Participant evaluations of Educational Programs	Each program At least once a year Less than once/year Never	12 13 3 1
26	27 %	Observational study of visitors	At least once a year Less than once/year Never	23 2 0
13	14 %	Focus Groups	At least once a year Less than once/year Never	5 7 1
13	14 %	Public Scoping Sessions	At least once a year Less than once/year Never	7 5 0
16	17 %	Other	At least once a year Less than once/year Never	13 3 0

Question 19

What do you do with survey results?

This Question was replaced by the following Text Question 1 in the August email.

Text Question 1

In the original survey you were asked to indicate how you obtain input from visitors. Some examples are participant evaluations of programs, formal observational studies, focus groups, casual observational studies, public scoping sessions, comment cards, guest books, etc. How do you use the results of these efforts?

Forty of the 50 managers to respond to the August email describe an active program of reviewing and acting upon visitor input gathered by all formal and informal means. Some make a practice of periodic reviews of visitor input with staff, some look to the input when they are ready to make changes. Many of them state that changes or improvements are difficult or impossible to do because of limited funds and/or staff time.

For a complete list of responses to Text Question 1 please see Appendix L.

Question 20 & 21

Have you conducted a formal accessibility survey?

If you have conducted a formal accessibility survey, do you have an accessibility plan?

Response	Frequency of Resp.	% of 93 Responses
No, we have not conducted an accessibility study.	65	70 %
Yes, we have conducted an accessibility study.	28	30 %
Yes we have an accessibility plan.	17	18 %
No, we do not have an accessibility plan.	27	29 %
I'm not sure if we have an accessibility plan.	50	54 %

Question 22

What features are incorporated into your exhibits to increase visitor accessibility? Check all that apply.

Q 22 - Accessibility Features Currently In Use
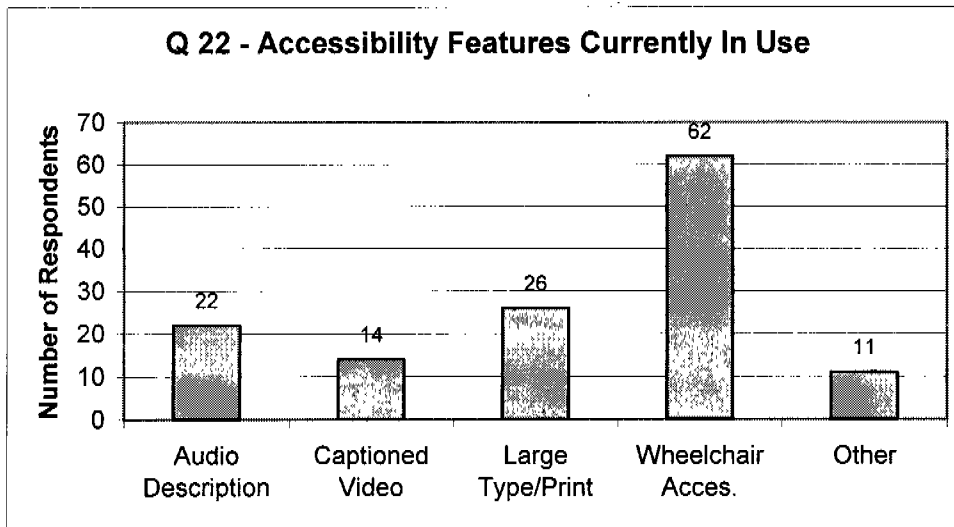
"Other" features and comments cited:

- Accessability standards by professional exhibit vendors must be met in all exhibit contracts and RFPs
- Braille and large print guide to accessible nature trail located near the Center.
- Hearing Impaired brochure for all exhibits
- Phonic ear for blind population
- Spanish language audio and captions.
- Wheelchair, Ramp, Water Fountain, Accessibility conforms to the 1982 standards.
- All parts of VC are accessible but the deck. It has a short step to access it.
- curb cut-outs at drop-off zone in front of the visitor center
- height of desk and exhibits, door weight and ease of operation
- modifications to entry and restroom doors
- photos of view from deck
- Plan completed recently; features to be incorporated in visitor center rehabilitation.
- would like to be able to do it all

Question 23

Please rate the following features of your visitor center. Rate each item on a scale of 1 (very good) to 5 (very poor). Skip any items that are not applicable.

Of the 21 features that respondents were asked to rate, 19 were judged to be "Fair" or better, based on the mode response (most frequent response). Below are listed the 21 features grouped by mode response. Please see Appendix M for complete data on each feature.

Mode Response (most frequent response): 1 "Very Good"

- Staffed "Welcome Station"
- Theater (only one respondent in total)

Mode Response (most frequent response): 2 "Good"

- Restrooms
- Heating and air conditioning
- Electrical
- Lighting
- Condition of building
- Landscaping

- Handicapped accessiblity - Interior
- Handicapped accessibility - Exterior
- Interior design/decor
- Furnishings
- Office space

Mode Response (most frequent response): 3 "Fair"

- Parking (very high response rate of "1," "2" and "3")
- Traffic flow
- Exhibit space (high response rate of "1," 2" and "3")
- Effectiveness of directional signs
- Appropriate languages on signage

Mode Response (most frequent response): 5 "Very Poor"

- Public meeting space
- Vending
- Sales/bookstore space

Question 24

Do you currently partner with a local group? Check all that apply.

Q 24 - Local Partners of Visitor Centers

Number of Respondents

- VC Does Not Partner: 45
- Cooperating/Friends Group: 19
- Civic Groups: 9
- Schools: 6
- Universities: 7
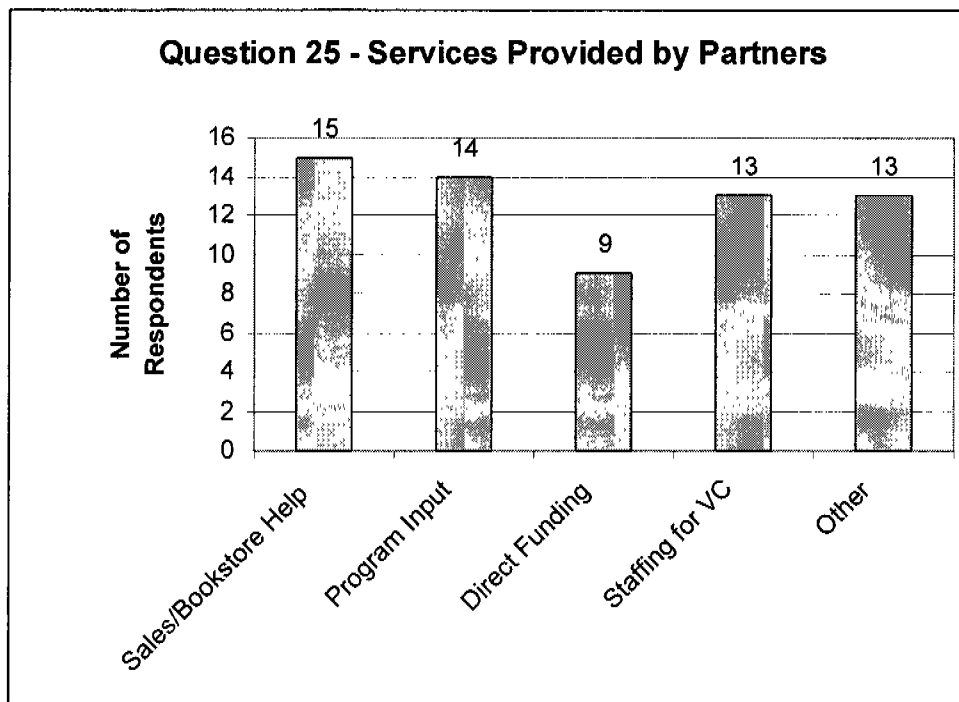- Environmental Org's.: 8
- Recreation Org's.: 8
- Other: 14
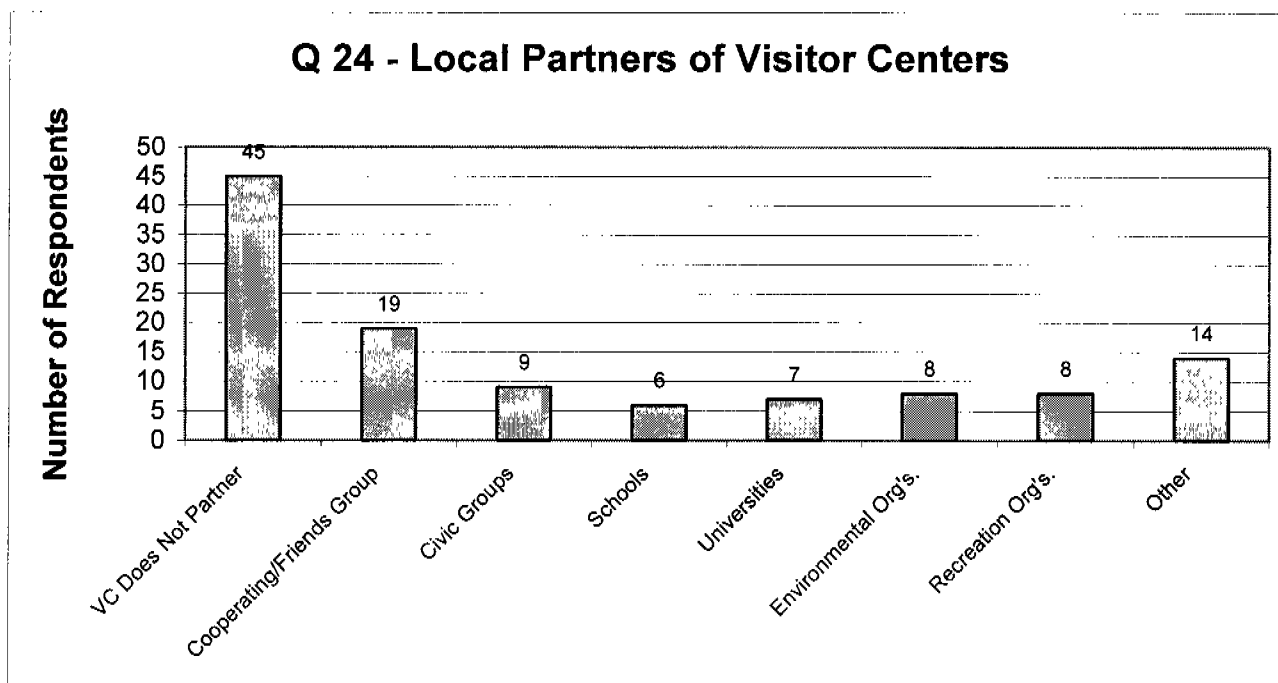
A few responses to "Other" evidence a varied understanding of what "Partnering" is. "Other" responses follow:

- Chamber of Commerce
- Cooperating Agreement with Eastern National County & State
- County Parks Department
- Eastern National - Bookstore
- Eastern National Monument Association
- Green Thumb Inc.
- Kansas Historical Society
- National Park Service
- National Park Service personnel assist in operation of VC
- RSVP- retired senior volunteer program
- U.S Fish and Wildlife Service and other Federal Agencies.
- EE programs & events only
- Paleontology Field Station
- VC is basically run with volunteers
- We had a volunteer prepare many of the exhibits
- We use paid staff and seasonal volunteers.
- Contracted visitor services (is that considered a partner in the sense you are asking this question?)

Question 25

If you are partnering, what types of services do your partners provide? Check all that apply.

Question 25 - Services Provided by Partners

Number of Respondents

- Sales/Bookstore Help: 15
- Program Input: 14
- Direct Funding: 9
- Staffing for VC: 13
- Other: 13

"Other" services from partners cited:

- Cooperative Association only
- Could provide one staff member representing their government agency, and perhaps a volunteer from each group.
- Display describing "Shawnee Hills of the Ohio" provided by the Shawnee National Forest Service
- EE & interpretive programs, events
- Interpretive Materials and goods - Bookstore
- Loan of Archeological artifacts
- Organizes and funds an annual Heritage festival; has provided some interpretive infrastructure
- Program development
- They also develop, fund and present a series of their own programming that enhances our overall interpretive mission. Programs that we could not fund or have staffing to develop.
- brochures, etc
- provision of sales items and related administration - no staffing
- some volunteer staffing
- special event assistance

Question 26

What does your visitor center provide to the partner organization(s)?

This Question was replaced by the following Text Question 2 in the August email.

Text Question 2

If your Visitor Center partners with community groups, what does your Visitor Center provide to the partnering organization?

Nineteen of the 50 responding Visitor Centers describe their partner relationships. What Visitor Centers provide to their partners fall into several categories: access to space, access to visitors for dissemination of information, access to revenue via bookstore sales activities. Some Visitor Centers also support their partners with staff hours. One Visitor Center gives their partner access to Center planning as well. For a complete list of responses to Text Question 2 please see Appendix N.

Question 27

What barriers to partnering do you see at your visitor center?

This Question was replaced by the following Text Question 3 in the August email.

Text Question 3

What barriers do you see to partnering with community organizations?

Lack of resources such as time, funding, staff and space, top the list of barriers to partnering arrangements (15 responses). Concern or difficulty about conflicting missions and/or priorities is problematic for 7 respondents. Lack of possible or willing partners is cited by another 8 managers. Poor or remote physical location, low visitorship or limited season present barriers for 7 respondents. Difficulty with getting potential partners to understand the role of the Corps Visitor Center as a partner is touched on by three respondents. In the context of describing barriers, two respondents mention the value of partnering to enhance public appreciation of the Corps.

Three responses highlight Corps policies and regulations that hinder partnering arrangements, two of them in great detail. Below are several key points that these two managers make regarding policy. For a complete list of responses to Text Question 3, please see Appendix O.

- The authorizing law and regulations, do not allow for the government to do work and be reimbursed by the partner.
- The regulations do not provide for the government to contribute funds to an effort being implemented by the partner.
- They discourage work done by contract under the partner's direction. The regs provide for contributions, but ethics rules discourage proper recognition of the partner.

Continued...

- Out of date, out of step, archaic regulations that worked fine in the 50's and 60's, but not the 21st century! We are WAY behind the curve compared to NPS, FS and BLM in how we approach partnering.
- Still a great deal of distrust from the Corps legal staff from District to Division to HQ on what we are allowed to do...
- The Corps expects the partners to commit to funds, but then turns around and says, " we'll help if Congress appropriates or we have the funds, but no guarantee" – that will kill a partnership faster than anything.
- There has to be a way to commit funds and hold them in an "escrow" or other account, over multi-years to facilitate long-term partnering. It has been done elsewhere and can be done in the Corps.
- Other agencies have HQ staff that do nothing, but help the field with partnering- that has been a driving force in other agencies.

Question 28

What type of training do you feel you could benefit from with regard to managing/planning for a Visitor Center? Check all that apply.

Question 28 - Training to Enhance VC Management
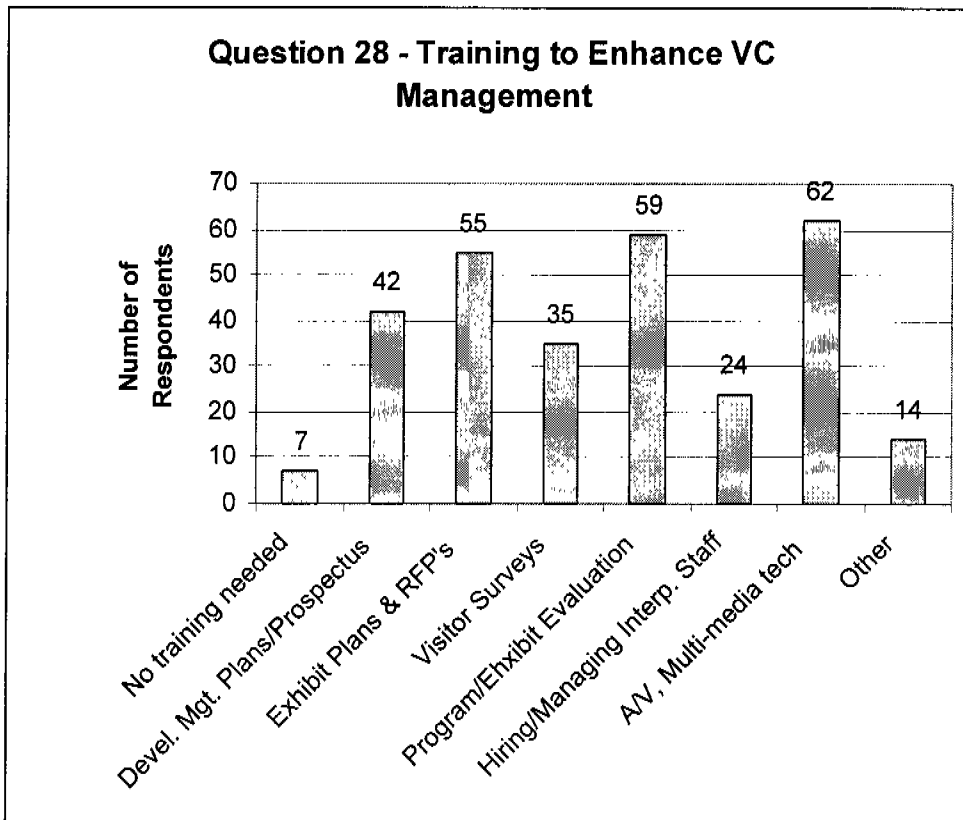
"Other" helpful training cited echoed a need for training and/or expertise in exhibit design and production including staffing and funding issues for same. Several respondents indicated a need for general management skills. Several others offered Corps-specific comments about management and use of skilled personnel.

For a complete list of "Other" comments for Question 28 please see Appendix P.

Question 29

Are your Visitor Center needs integrated into your project Operation Management Plan?

Response	Frequency of Response	% of 81
Yes	52	64 %
No or no answer	29	36 %
Total:	81	100 %

Question 30

What do you think are the barriers to making improvements to your Visitor Center? Check all that apply.
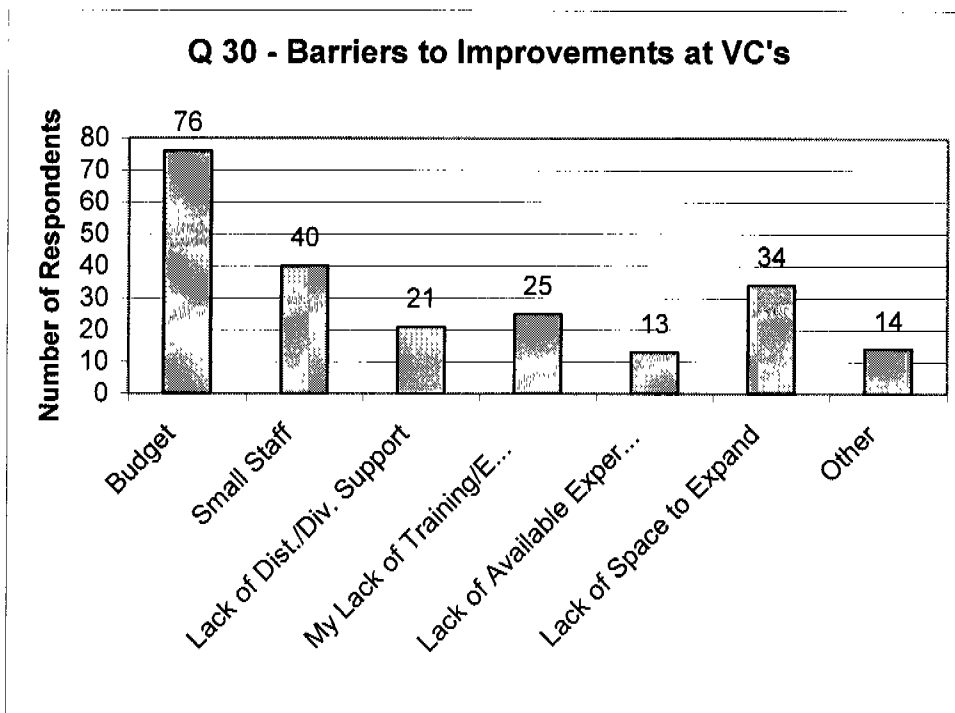
"Other" barriers to improvement cited here include several specific comments about management, budget and staffing issues peculiar to the Corps.

- The Corps needs to think of itself as real professionals like the National Park Service. Upper management wants to think of engineering only, but we meet and deal with everyday people.
- The Visitor Center and Interpretive Manager is not recognized as a manager/professional specialist, in some projects, districts, divisions as part of NRM programs. Yet we are 12-15 years ahead of at least two other agencies with our Interpretive Management
- Restrictions on the timeframe for spending fiscal year dollars- most exhibit/VC planning efforts are multi-year and the funding requirements say you have to have full expenditure (not just obligation) in one year- exhibit firms don't operate that way.
- prohibition to lobby for new facility
- Current laws that prohibit us from being a 1 recreation facility.

Several other respondents blame a severe lack of funding and other resources including time and staff. Visitor center improvements are a low priority for some respondent facilities. Physical limitations of the existing center or site impede improvements as well. Finally, three respondents felt that current levels of visitation could not justify visitor center improvements at their facility. For a complete list of "Other" responses to Question 30 please see Appendix Q.

Question 31

What role do you think Visitor Centers managed by the Corps should play in the future? Check all that apply.

Question 31: Role of Corps VC's in the Future
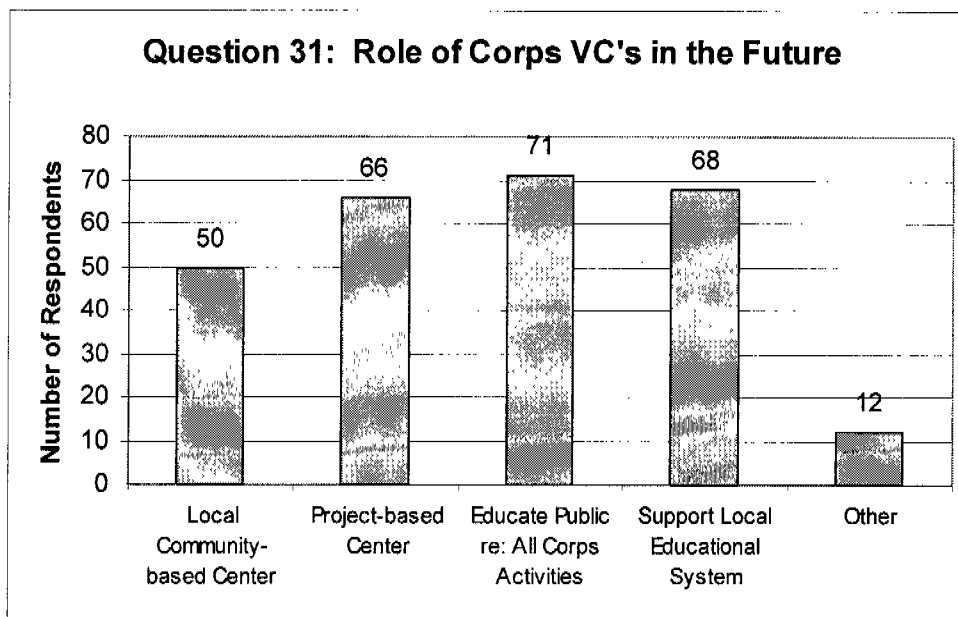
Three respondents underscore the importance of community service.

> *"Corps visitor centers need to be more integrated into the local/regional community to remain relevant and effective. Otherwise, they run the risk of missing critical constituency."*

One respondent wants to see visitor centers become the, "*Center piece of the Project.*" Two more comments address how the Corps might approach visitor centers:

> *"We need to be pro-active with full support of upper management. This includes funding, and staffing."*
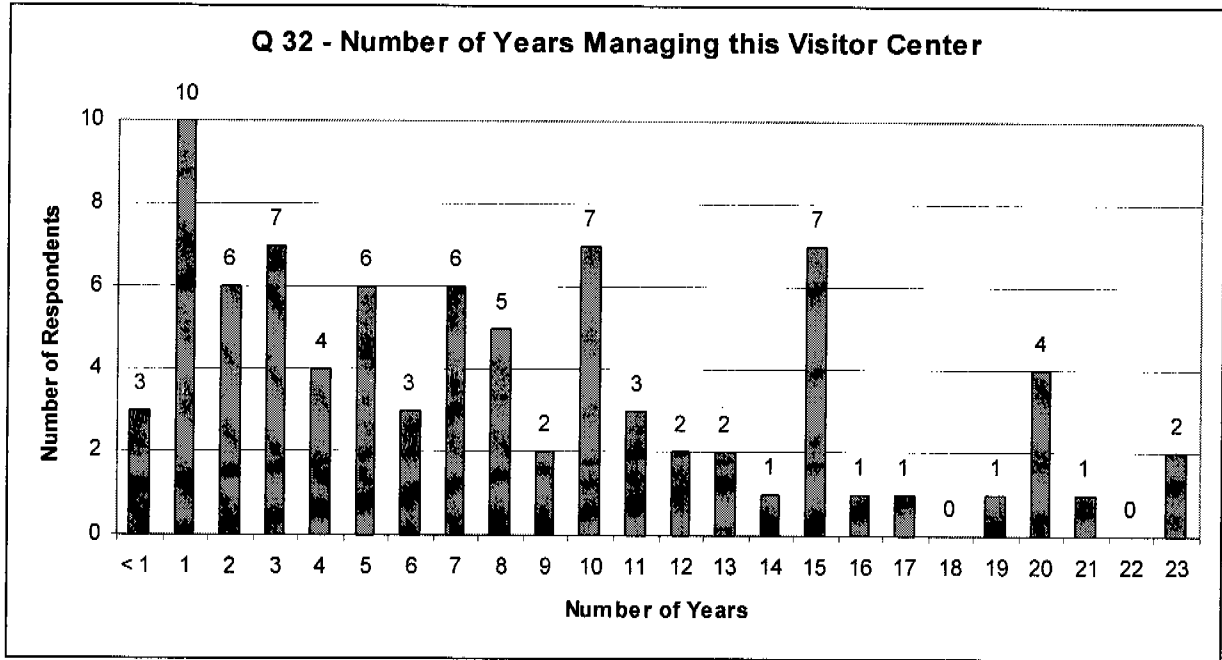
> *"Customer Care and Professional Service through Visitor Center and Interpretive Programming and Management."*

The remaining "Other" comments promote educational goals for visitor centers about the Corps, the project, water and environmental issues. Several of these stress relating this information to the lives of visitors.

For a complete list of "Other" responses to Question 31 please see Appendix R.

Question 32

How long have you been managing this visitor center? Please enter the number of years in numerical form on the line below.   Partial years may be indicated with a decimal point.

Q 32 - Number of Years Managing this Visitor Center

Number of Respondents (y-axis)
Number of Years (x-axis)

Values by number of years:
< 1: 3
1: 10
2: 6
3: 7
4: 4
5: 6
6: 3
7: 6
8: 5
9: 2
10: 7
11: 3
12: 2
13: 2
14: 1
15: 7
16: 1
17: 1
18: 0
19: 1
20: 4
21: 1
22: 0
23: 2

Question 33
What class is your visitor center?

Class A	15
Class B	37
Class C	32

Question 34
Do you have any other input for the Visitor Center Initiative Committee?

This Question was replaced by the following Text Question 4 in the August email.

Text Question 4

The original survey asked you about the many facets of managing your Visitor Center including the physical condition of the facility, the nature and timeliness of your exhibits, what training or expertise you think would assist you, and so on. Do you have any other input for the Visitor Center Initiative Committee? If so, please elaborate below.

Thirty-three out of 50 managers took this opportunity to share their concerns and ideas. Several responses are quite lengthy. Many responses reveal frustration, even resentment, on the part of managers regarding upper management and budgetary issues. They also reveal commitment to the interpretive mission of Visitor Centers and the ability of their interpretive staff. Please see Appendix S for complete responses to this Question.

At least eight responses to this questions hit on issues of communications and/or training. Comments include general statements about needing more communication and expertise, wanting to know what other Visitor Centers have done as well as suggesting a regularly scheduled Visitor Center conference. More than one respondent recognizes the Visitor Center Initiative Committee as a potentially effective aid to communications as well as exhibit development.

Should the Committee develop an exhibit about the Corps story for use in a variety of Visitor Centers, two managers recommend that it be created with flexibility and options such that it can be customized per site.

Exhibit-related issues appear in at least eight responses. Concerns around exhibits include the lack of a systematic approach to updating and maintaining them, funding for them and expertise for developing them. Two managers point out that visitors spend very little time with exhibits and they are best used as tools or supports for interaction between visitors and interpretive staff.

Several lengthy responses to this question address aspects of how Visitor Centers operate as a part of the Corps and/or Corp management. Some comments reveal frustration on the part of Visitor Center managers regarding their perceived low standing in the eyes and actions of Corps management. Some see low funding for Visitor Centers as symptomatic of their being held in low regard. Several writers hope that upper management will recognize Visitor Centers as critical and useful to the Corps. They feel that interpretive staff expertise and ability is overlooked and not used to full advantage. One points out that they are kept busy by less relevant tasks such as CEFMS, OMBIL, FEMS and NRRS.

Concerns around funding and budget issues include frustration that great amounts of money seem to flow through Corps projects, but rarely to Visitor Centers and exhibits. OMB is cited more than once as being burdensome to the point of preventing even small projects or expenditures.

Original Web-based Survey & Related Email Communications for Participants

First E-mail Announcement

Visitor Center Managers:

The Visitor Center Initiative Committee has been convened to assess current conditions of Corps Visitor Centers. In the next few days, you will be receiving an email message with a link to an on-line survey form. With your input the Committee will be able to identify and recommend improvements to the Corps regarding visitor center buildings, exhibits, interpretive themes and policy.

Your participation in this study is very important as only 135 Type A, B and C centers are being contacted. You and the other Managers we are contacting have been identified as the individuals who are closest to the day-to-day management of your visitor center facility.

Please take the time to complete the survey form completely and honestly when your receive it. Your responses will be sent directly to our Visitor Studies contractor for tabulation and summary and will remain confidential.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at the number below.

Thank you.

-Nancy Rogers
Manager, San Francisco Bay Model Visitor Center, (415) 332-3871
Visitor Center Initiative Committee

E-Mail Message With Link To Survey Form...

Visitor Center Managers:

You recently received a message from the Visitor Center Initiative Committee about a survey that we are asking you to complete. Please use the link below to access the survey form and submit it electronically. Instructions for completing and submitting the survey are included on the form. Thank you for providing your input by July 15, 2001.

To support and improve Corps visitor centers, the Committee needs to hear from you about the condition of visitor center buildings, exhibits and interpretive themes managed by the Corps of Engineers. Results of this survey will provide critical input from the field to identity needed reforms, upgrades and policy changes to make visitor centers responsive to future roles, missions and innovative approaches to management.

All Type A (Regional), Type B (Project) and selected Type C Centers, for a total of about 135, are being invited to participate the survey. You and the other Managers we are contacting have been identified as the individuals who are closest to the day-to-day management of your Visitor Center.

Please take the time to respond completely and honestly. Your responses will be sent directly to our Visitor Studies contractor for tabulation and summary and will remain confidential.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at the number below.

Thank you for your time and quick response.

-Nancy Rogers
 Manager, San Francisco Bay Model Visitor Center, (415)332-3871
 Visitor Center Initiative Committee

Reminder Email Message With Link To Survey Form...

Visitor Center Managers:

You recently received a message from the Visitor Center Initiative Committee about a survey that we are asking you to complete. If you have already done so, thank you very much. If you have not, please take the time to do so today. To be included in the study, your responses must be submitted no later than July 15.

Please use the link below to access the survey form and submit it electronically. Instructions for completing and submitting the survey are included on the form.

This survey was developed to gather information about the condition of visitor center buildings, exhibits and interpretive themes managed by the Corps of Engineers. Results of this survey will provide critical input from the field to identity needed reforms, upgrades and policy changes to make visitor centers responsive to future roles, missions and innovative approaches to management.

All Type A (Regional), Type B (Project) and selected Type C Centers, for a total of about 135, are being invited to participate the survey. You and the other Managers we are contacting have been identified as the individuals who are closest to the day-to-day management of your Visitor Center.

Please take the time to respond completely and honestly. Your responses will be sent directly to our Visitor Studies contractor for tabulation and summary and will remain confidential.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at the number below.

Thank you for your time and quick response.

-Nancy Rogers
 Manager, San Francisco Bay Model Visitor Center, (415)332-3871
 Visitor Center Initiative Committee

Web-based Survey Form

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey form. With your input, the Committee will be able to identify and recommend reforms to benefit Corps visitor center facilities.

Please enter your responses only in the spaces indicated. Numeric responses should be entered in numeric form. When checking boxes, please enter "x" in the box(es) you select. When you have completed the form please **XXXX** . Your input will be submitted directly to our visitor studies contractor and will remain confidential.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at the number below.

Thank you for your time and quick response.

-Nancy Rogers
 Manager, San Francisco Bay Model Visitor Center, (415)332-3871
 Visitor Center Initiative Committee

1. From _your_ perspective, what subject areas listed below do you think should be included in Corps Visitor Center exhibits? Rank in order of importance to you from 1 (highest priority) to 11 (lowest priority). Enter numerical digits on the lines preceding each subject area.

___ Site-specific Project Purposes
___ The History of the Corps
___ The Corps' Missions
___ Physical Orientation to the Site (way finding)
___ Cultural Resources (archeological, historical, etc.)
___ Cultural Resource Management Relative to the Project
___ Natural Resources
___ Visitor Safety
___ Recreation
___ Environmental Education
___ Other; please specify:

2. Based solely on input you have received from visitors during the previous 12 months, in which of the subject areas listed below have visitors shown the most interest? Rank in order of interest 1 (most interesting to visitors) to 11 (least interesting to visitors). Enter numerical digits on the lines preceding each subject area.

___ Site-specific Project Purposes
___ The History of the Corps
___ The Corps' Missions
___ Physical Orientation to the Site (way finding)
___ Cultural Resources (archeological, historical, etc.)
___ Cultural Resource Management Relative to the Project
___ Natural Resources
___ Visitor Safety
___ Recreation
___ Environmental Education
___ Other; please specify:

3. On what sort of visitor input have you based your response to Question 2 above? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ casual observation of visitors
- ☐ casual conversation with visitors
- ☐ visitor input on comment cards
- ☐ visitor input in guest book
- ☐ controlled survey of visitors
- ☐ other; please specify:

4. Approximately how many square feet of exhibit space does your visitor center include? Please enter your numerical response on the line below:

Approximately _____ square feet of exhibit space.

5. About what percentage of your exhibits do you think need to be updated? Please enter your numerical response on the line below:

Approximately _____ % of our exhibits need to be updated.

6. Why do you think those exhibits need to be changed? Please rank the following list beginning with 1 for the biggest or main problem for exhibits at your facility. Enter numerical digits on the lines preceding each item leaving blank those that do not apply.

- _____ Do not accomplish the written objectives of the exhibit
- _____ Site project mission has changed
- _____ Inaccurate information
- _____ Broken/maintenance problem
- _____ Obsolete computer technology
- _____ Increased or decreased volume of visitation
- _____ Not suitable for current visitor population, e.g., more children vs. retirees now
- _____ Increased need for multiple languages
- _____ Inaccessible per ADA requirements
- _____ Other; please specify: _____

7. Do you have exhibits that were designed for children?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. If you have exhibitry that was designed for children, does it seem to be enough to serve your current visitor population?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Comments:

9. Is there a central theme to your visitor center exhibits? If so, what is it? (A theme is the central or key idea of any exhibit or presentation. Themes should be stated as short, simple, complete sentences, contain only one idea and reveal the overall purpose of the exhibit.)

☐ Yes. Please write it here: _____

☐ No

10. What is your mix of media? Check all that apply.

☐ Photos
☐ Audio tours
☐ Slide shows
☐ Videos
☐ Film
☐ Pamphlets or printed handouts
☐ Computer-based interactives; describe: _____
☐ Other interactives; describe: _____
☐ Other; please specify: _____

11. Do you think your visitor center is in the best possible location in your project area? Consider factors such as visibility, accessibility, views of the site, etc.

☐ Yes
☐ No. Please explain: _____

12. Based only on input you've received from visitors, are the hours of operation at your visitor center convenient for visitors?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Received little or no input from visitors on this issue

13. If visitor feedback suggests that hours are not convenient, how could they be improved? _____

14. Please identify your peak season months. Check all that apply.

☐ January
☐ February
☐ March
☐ April
☐ May
☐ June
☐ July
☐ August
☐ September
☐ October
☐ November
☐ December

15. Is the capacity (size) of your facility adequate to accommodate your current level of visitation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I'm not sure

16. Describe your visitor population. Check all that apply.

- ☐ tourists (residing more than 100 miles from your site)
- ☐ tourists from outside the US
- ☐ local residents
- ☐ repeat visitors
- ☐ school groups
- ☐ community groups
- ☐ After hours/ evening use
- ☐ Business/government (use of meeting space)
- ☐ Other; please specify: _____

17. Please indicate which, If any, of these visitor types comprise one third or more of your visitorship. Please check up to three.

- ☐ tourists (residing more than 100 miles from your site)
- ☐ tourists from outside the US
- ☐ local residents
- ☐ repeat visitors
- ☐ school groups
- ☐ community groups
- ☐ After hours/ evening use
- ☐ Business/government (use of meeting space)
- ☐ Other; please specify: _____

18. How do you obtain input from your visitors? Check all that apply.

☐	Participant evaluations of Educational Programs	☐ Each program ☐ At least once a year ☐ Less than once/year (last done in year: ____) ☐ Never
☐	Focus Groups	☐ At least once a year ☐ Less than once/year (last done in year: ____) ☐ Never
☐	Public Scoping Sessions	☐ At least once a year ☐ Less than once/year (last done in year: ____) ☐ Never

□ Questionnaire or Comment Cards	□ At least once a year □ Less than once/year (last done in year: _____) □ Never	
□ Casual observation of visitors	□ At least once a year □ Less than once/year (last done in year: _____) □ Never	
□ Observational study of visitors	□ At least once a year □ Less than once/year (last done in year: _____) □ Never	
□ Email or other correspondence from visitors		
□ Guest book with comments		
□ Other; please specify:	□ At least once a year □ Less than once/year (last done in year: _____) □ Never	

19. What do you do with survey results?

20. Have you conducted a formal accessibility survey?

□ Yes
□ No

21. If you have conducted a formal accessibility survey, do you have an accessibility plan?

□ Yes
□ No
□ not applicable

22. What features are incorporated into your exhibits to increase visitor accessibility? Check all that apply.

□ Audio description
□ Captioned video
□ Large type/print
□ Wheelchair accessible
□ Other; please specify: ___

23. Please rate the following features of your visitor center. Rate each item on a scale of 1 (very good) to 5 (very poor). Skip any items that are not applicable.

Very Good 1	Good 2	Adequate 3	Poor 4	Very Poor 5	
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Effectiveness of directional signs
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Staffed "Welcome Station"
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Handicapped accessibility - Exterior
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Handicapped accessiblity - Interior
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Appropriate languages on signage
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Heating and air conditioning
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Electrical
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Lighting
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Restrooms
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Condition of building
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Furnishings
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Interior design/decor
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Landscaping
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Vending
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Traffic flow
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Parking
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Office space
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Exhibit space
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Public meeting space
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Sales/bookstore space
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Theater

24. Do you currently partner with a local group? Check all that apply.

☐ This visitor center does not partner with local groups
☐ Cooperating or Friends Association
☐ Civic groups
☐ Schools
☐ Universities
☐ Environmental organizations
☐ Recreation organizations
☐ Other; please specify:

25. If you are partnering, what types of services to your partners provide? Check all that apply.

☐ Sales/bookstore help
☐ Programming input/direction
☐ Direct funding for programs, equipment, materials
☐ Staffing for visitor center
☐ Other; please specify: ___

26. What does your visitor center provide to the partner organization(s)?

27. What barriers to partnering do you see at your visitor center?

28. What type of training do you feel you could benefit from with regard to managing/planning for a Visitor Center? Check all that apply.

☐ No training needed
☐ Developing Management Plans/Prospectus
☐ Exhibit Plans (how to write/administer an RFP for exhibits)
☐ Visitor Surveys
☐ Program/Exhibit Evaluation Techniques
☐ Hiring/managing interpretive staff
☐ A/V, multi-media technology
☐ Other; please specify:

29. Are your Visitor Center needs integrated into your project Operation Management Plan?

☐ Yes
☐ No

30. What do you think are the barriers to making improvements to your Visitor Center? Check all that apply.

☐ Budget
☐ Insufficient number of visitor center employees
☐ Lack of District/Division support
☐ Your own lack of training, expertise
☐ Lack of available expertise
☐ Lack of space for expansion
☐ Other; please specify:

31. What role do you think Visitor Centers managed by the Corps should play in the future? Check all that apply.

☐   Local community based center
☐   Project-based center
☐   Educate public concerning all Corps activities
☐   Support local educational systems
☐   Other; please specify:

32. How long have you been managing this visitor center? Please enter the number of years in numerical form on the line below. Partial years may be indicated with a decimal point.

_____ years managing this visitor center.

33. What class is your visitor center?

☐   Class A
☐   Class B
☐   Class C

30. Do you have any other input for the Visitor Center Initiative Committee?

Thank you.

Appendix B

All,

We experienced an unfortunate incident during the collection of the data you submitted for the recent Visitor Center survey in which you participated. We lost the data for several of the questions which requested text-input answers. Acknowledging that your time is very valuable, we ask not that you complete the survey again from the beginning -- but that you respond once again only to the four questions below. We can allow a maximum of two weeks to respond. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause, and thank you in advance for your cooperation!

INSTRUCTIONS: Using your email systems' Reply capability -- click Reply. Answer the questions below in the space provided after each question. When complete, click send. The responses will be returned to the person who sent you this message. They will collect the responses and provide them to the data analysis agency.

QUESTIONS:

1. In the original survey you were asked to indicate how you obtain input from visitors. Some examples are participant evaluations of programs, formal observational studies, focus groups, casual observational studies, public scoping sessions, comment cards, guest books, etc. How do you use the results of these efforts?

2. If your Visitor Center partners with community groups, what does your Visitor Center provide to the partnering organization?

3. What barriers do you see to partnering with community organizations?

4. The original survey asked you about the many facets of managing your Visitor Center including the physical condition of the facility, the nature and timeliness of your exhibits, what training or expertise you think would assist you, and so on. Do you have any other input for the Visitor Center Initiative Committee? If so, please elaborate below.

Once again, thank you very much for taking the time to complete this portion of the survey once again. Your responses will allow the Visitor Center Committee to identify and recommend reforms to benefit Corps Visitor Center facilities.

Gordon Gough,
CESAM-IM-IS

Appendix C

Method & Sample

Members of the Visitor Center Initiative Committee identified approximately 135 individual Visitor Center managers to participate in this web-based survey. Each manager was emailed a message in advance of the study to inform them of the project and invite them to participate. A few days later they received an email message with a link to the web site for the survey form.

During June and July of 2001, 95 managers responded and have been included in the sample for this report. The total number of responses per question varies because of accepting multiple answers where appropriate and, in some cases, respondents' incomplete submissions.

Due to technical difficulties with the web site hosted by staff, the survey's original questions 13, 19, 26,27, and 34 cannot be included in this report. Instead, four text questions which were emailed to participants in August of 2001 are presented in the body of this report. Fifty managers responded to the August email. In this document, those questions are referred to as Text Question 1 through 4.

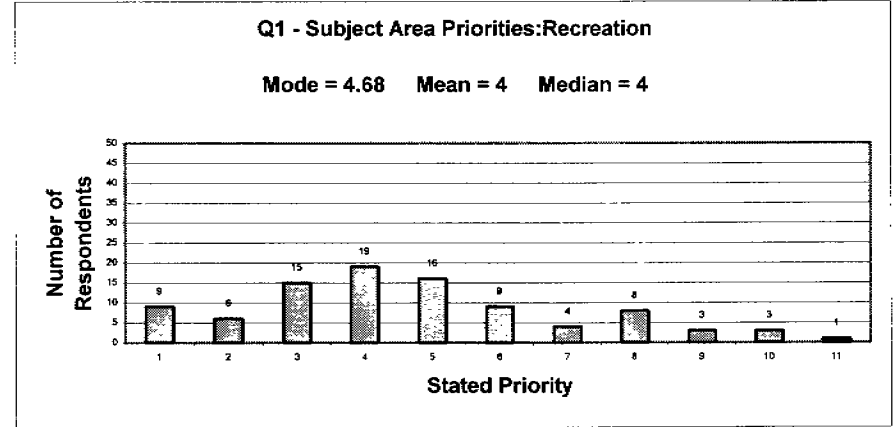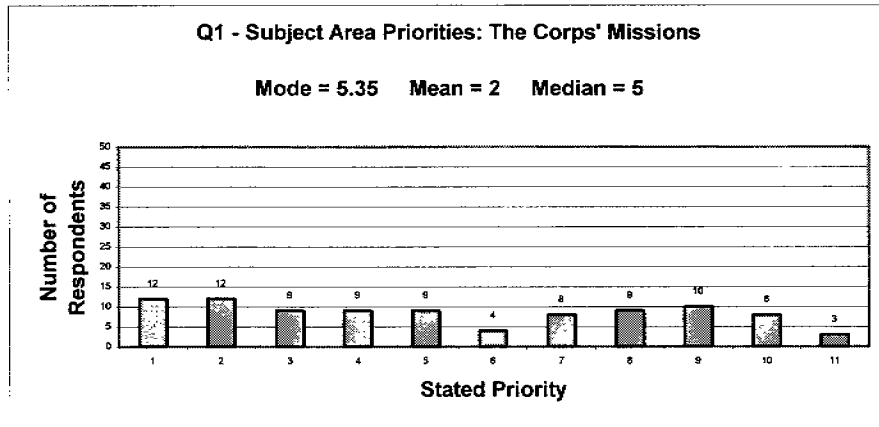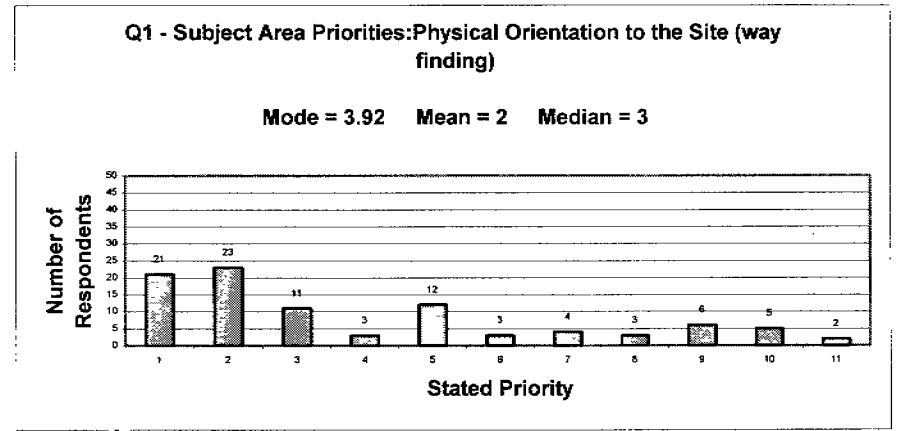This sample can be considered a very knowledgeable and experienced group. Of the 95 respondents to the initial, web-based survey, 54 state that they have been in their current Visitor Center management position for five years or more. Seventeen of those have been on the job for 15 to 23 years.

Responding managers represent 15 Class A Visitor Centers, 37 Class B Visitor Centers and 32 Class C Visitor Centers.

Question 1

From *your* perspective, what subject areas listed below do you think should be included in Corps Visitor Center exhibits? Rank in order of importance to you from 1 (highest priority) to 11 (lowest priority).

Mode = most frequent response;　Mean = average;　Median = half of all responses are above and half are below this point.

Q1 - Subject Area Priorities:
Site-specific Project Purposes

Mode = 2.44　Mean = 1　Median = 2

Q1 - Subject Area Priorities:Physical Orientation to the Site (way finding)

Mode = 3.92　Mean = 2　Median = 3

Q1 - Subject Area Priorities: The Corps' Missions

Mode = 5.35　Mean = 2　Median = 5

Q1 - Subject Area Priorities:Recreation

Mode = 4.68　Mean = 4　Median = 4
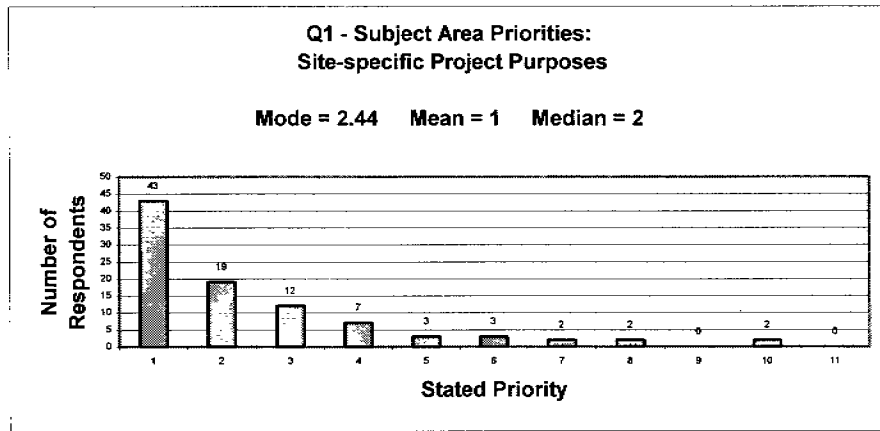
Q1 - Subject Area Priorities: Visitor Safety

Mode = 5.34   Mean = 6   Median = 5
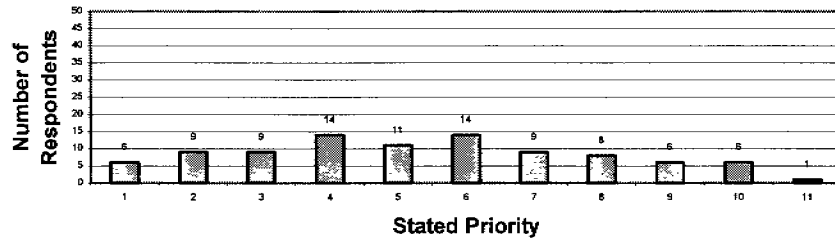
Q1 - Subject Area Priorities: The History of the Corps

Mode = 6.29   Mean = 10   Median = 6
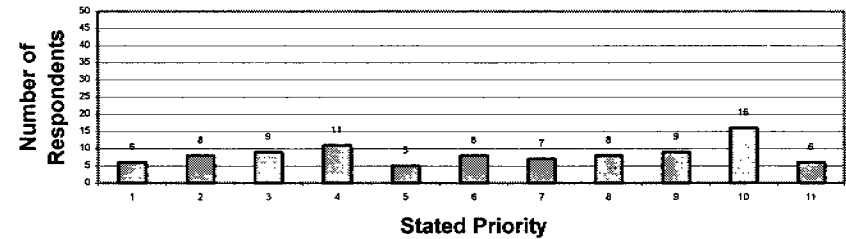
Q1 - Subject Area Priorities: Natural Resources

Mode = 5.44   Mean = 5   Median = 5
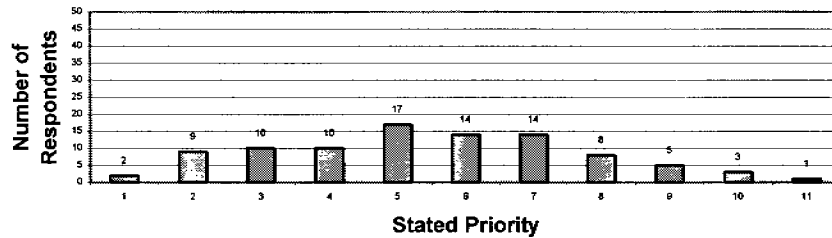
Q1 - Subject Area Priorities: Cultural Resources (archeological, historical, etc.)

Mode = 7.23   Mean = 10   Median = 8
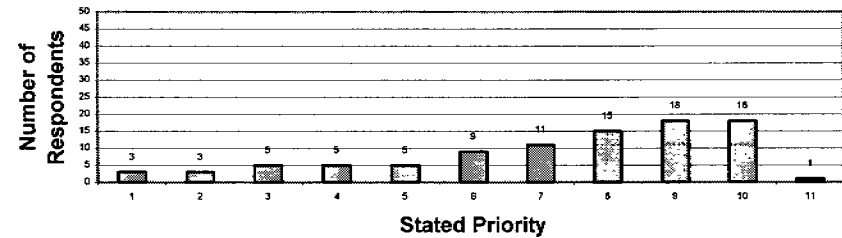
Q1 - Subject Area Priorities: Environmental Education

Mode = 6.57   Mean = 8   Median = 7
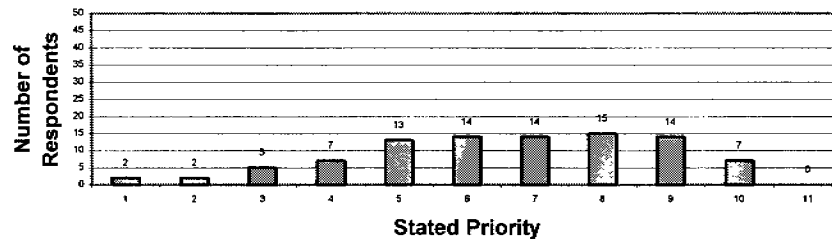
Q1 - Subject Area Priorities: Cultural Resource Management Relative to the Project

Mode = 7.39   Mean = 10   Median = 8
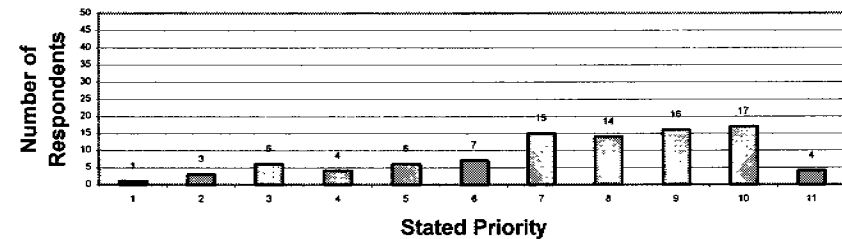
Q1 - Subject Area Priorities:
Other

Mode = 3.49   Mean = 0   Median = 0
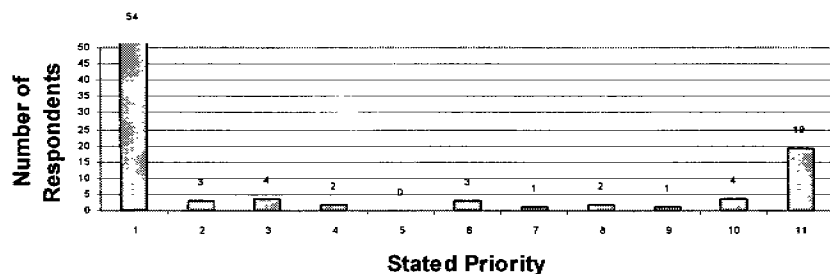
"Other" responses:

- Annual Special Events
- California Water Issues, infrastructure and history
- Community Attractions & Events
- Community Benefits
- Community Relations
- Corps Environmental Efforts- Region or Nation
- Engineering/Construction
- Cooperative agency description,
- History of Corps District
- How does this site relate to lives of most people.
- Importance of the Engineering Profession to the Region
- Interpretation programming
- Listiong and missions of all Corps Visitor Centers
- Local History
- Local History and Resources

- Local points of interest
- No ranking, need combination of all of t hese.e
- Page of hyper links to all other agencies that have simular missions.
- Relationships to Cultural and Natural resources of the region
- Site Specfic Unusal and or Endangered Species of the Area.
- Site specific project history
- Site specific species, unique sites,
- Some Local Interests
- Water Quality
- Water management, site history
- if Building Named for a person some info on that
- other opportunities
- rare plants, ORV problems, cedar glades
- volunteer opportunities

Question 2

Based solely on input you have received from visitors during the previous 12 months, in which of the subject areas listed below have visitors shown the most interest? Rank in order of interest 1 (most interesting to visitors) to 11 (least interesting to visitors).

Mode = most frequent response; Mean = average; Median = half of all responses are above and half are below this point.

Q2 - Subject Areas of Interest to Visitors:
"Physical Orientation to the Site (way finding)"

Mode = 1   Mean = 2.87   Median = 2

Q2 - Subject Areas of Interest to Visitors:
"Recreation"

Mode = 2   Mean = 2.76   Median = 2

Q2 - Subject Areas of Interest to Visitors:
"Site-specific Project Purposes"

Mode = 1   Mean = 3.16   Median = 3

Q2 - Subject Areas of Interest to Visitors:
"Natural Resources"

Mode = 3   Mean = 4.17   Median = 4
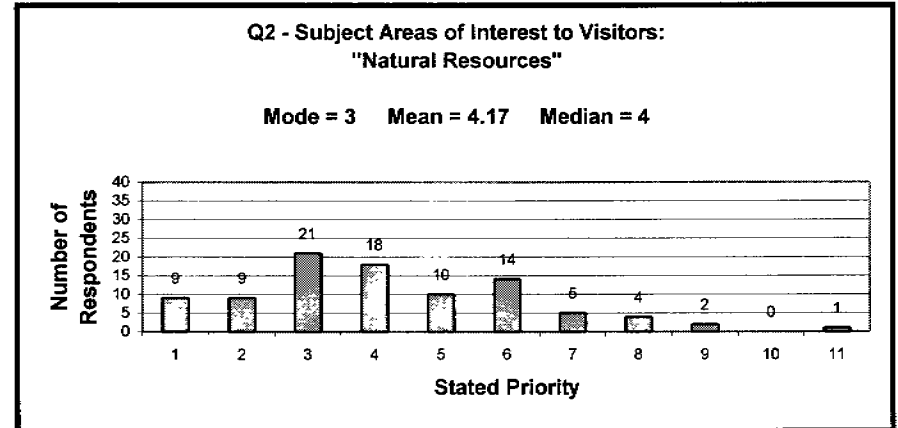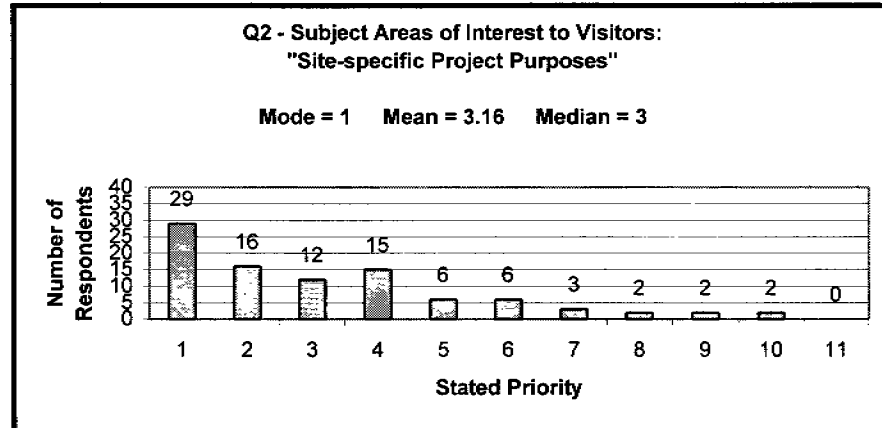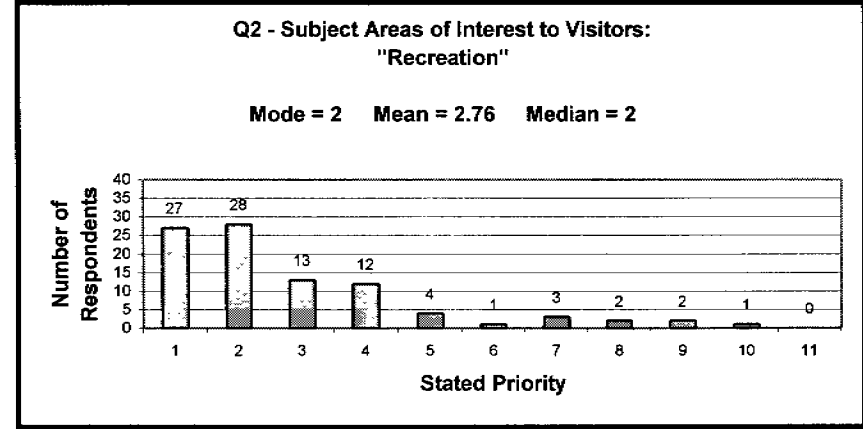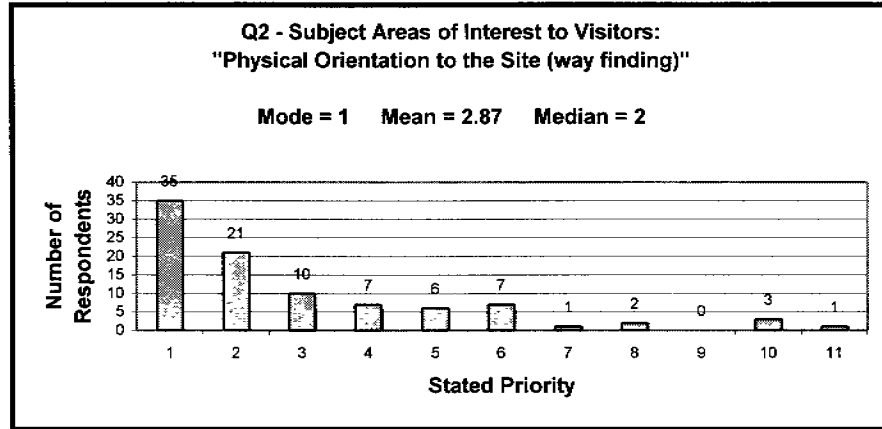
Q2 - Subject Areas of Interest to Visitors: "Environmental Education"

Mode = 7   Mean = 5.47   Median = 6
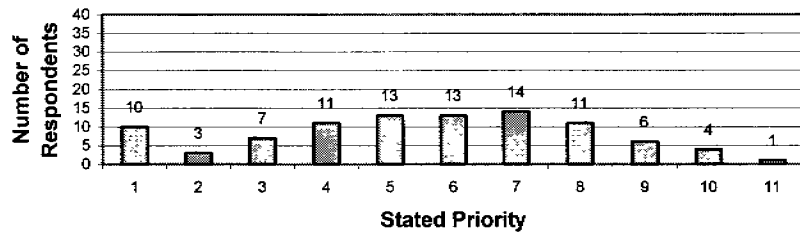
Q2 - Subject Areas of Interest to Visitors: "Cultural Resource Management Relative to the Project"

Mode = 7   Mean = 6.83   Median = 7
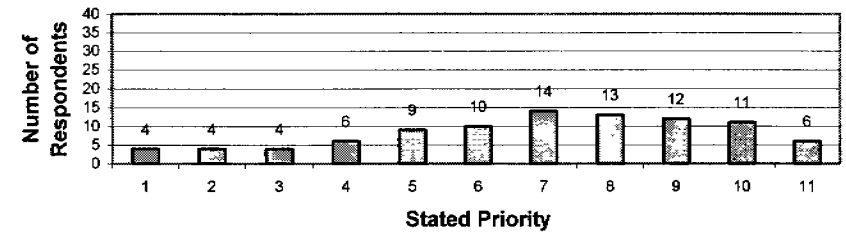
Q2 - Subject Areas of Interest to Visitors: "Cultural Resources (archeological, historical, etc.)"

Mode = 9   Mean = 6.20   Median = 7
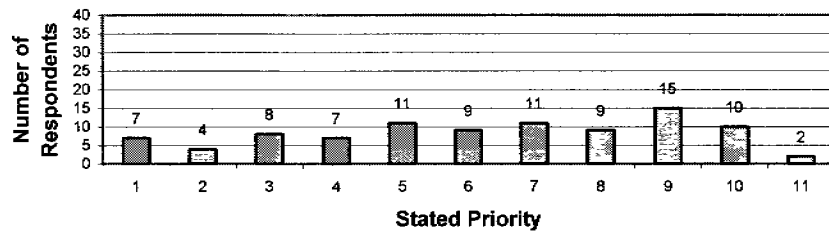
Q2 - Subject Areas of Interest to Visitors: "The Corps' Missions"

Mode = 9   Mean = 7.19   Median = 8
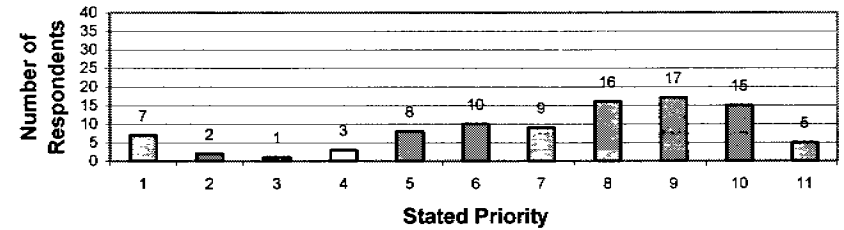
Q2 - Subject Areas of Interest to Visitors: "Visitor Safety"

Mode = 10   Mean = 6.60   Median = 7
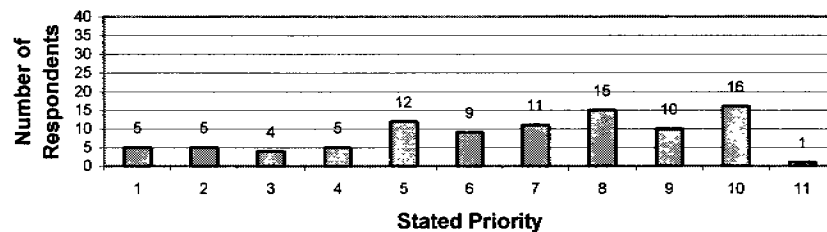
Q2 - Subject Areas of Interest to Visitors: "The History of the Corps"

Mode = 10   Mean = 7.31   Median = 8

Q2 - Subject Areas of Interest to Visitors: "Other"
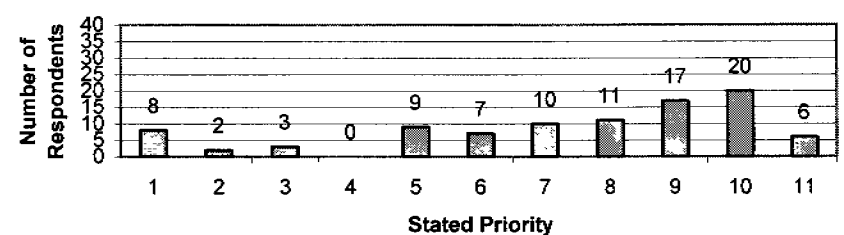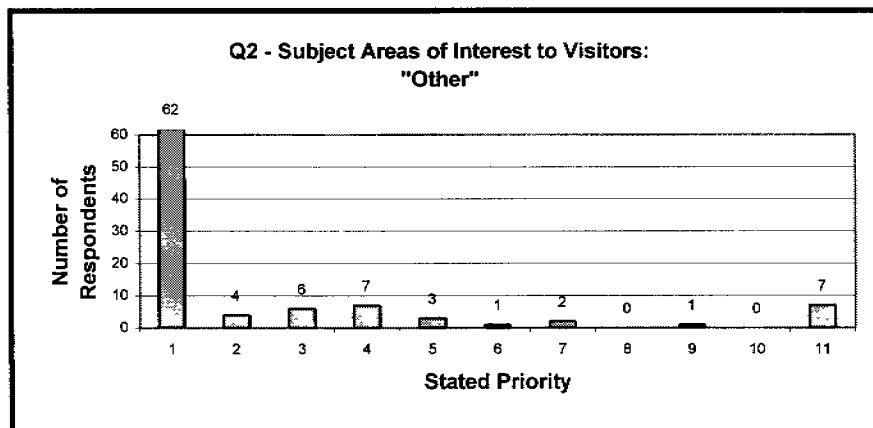
"Other" Subject Areas mentioned:

- Annual Passes, Golden Age Cards etc
- Annual Special Events
- Annual pass purchase and pavilion reservations
- California Water Issues: Water for irrigation vs. recreation vs. wildlife
- Community Attractions & Events
- Directions to facilities and to buy Golden Age cards, etc.
- Great Lakes commerce, Shipping, Connecting Channels, Dredging, and Soo Locks
- How does this site relate to their lives
- Interpretive Exhibits and programming
- Local Interests
- Local environmental issues as they relate to Bay development and use. i.e.: dredging and use of dredged materials, airport expansion, water quality issues, oil spill prevention, etc.

- Local points of interest
- Requests for Local and Surrounding Area Recreation Opportunities
- Restrooms
- Shoreline Management
- Shoreline Management Program
- What can I do or see here at the lake
- camping & shelter reservations, hunting & fishing
- dam construction
- fishing report
- local history
- maps of other regions
- monitv set to monitor a bluebird box.
- multilingual materials

Question 3

On what sort of visitor input have you based your response to Question 2 above? Please check all that apply.

Means of Visitor Input:	Number of Respondents
casual conversation with visitors	87
casual observation of visitors	75
visitor input in guest book	37
visitor input on comment cards	31
other; please specify	20
controlled survey of visitors	6

"Other" means cited:

- Annual Special Events
- direct conservation with our customer
- direct contact
- Direct on-site park ranger and volunteer visitor center host contacts
- Evaluations and follow-ups for interpretive exhibits and programming
- inquiries by visitors, requests for info
- Interpretive Review
- phone calls to District Office
- program presentations
- Programs with Civic and Educational Groups and Local Media Surveys
- Questions
- questions asked
- Questions asked by Visitors
- Questions that visitor ask.
- responding to inquiries, letters, phone and web site questions.
- review of presentation
- Sales of Golden Age cards, Access and other directions to visitors
- Solicitation of questions during formal interpretive programs and informal contacts
- Staff input
- Stakeholders meetings
- telephone calls/e-mail seeking information

Question 6

Why do you think those exhibits need to be changed? Please rank the following list beginning with 1 for the biggest or main problem for exhibits at your facility. Enter numerical digits on the lines preceding each item leaving blank those that do not apply.

Mode = most frequent response;   Mean = average;   Median = half of all responses are above and half are below this point.

Q6 - Reasons for Exhibit Changes:
"Broken/Maintenance Problem"

Mode = 2   Mean = 3.19   Median = 2

Q6 - Reasons for Exhibit Changes:
"Obsolete Computer Technology"

Mode = 1   Mean = 3.49   Median = 3

Q6 - Reasons for Exhibit Changes:
"Not Suitable for Current Visitor Population"

Mode = 1   Mean = 3.82   Median = 3

Q6 - Reasons for Exhibit Changes:
"Change in Volume of Visitation"

Mode = 3   Mean = 4.42   Median = 3
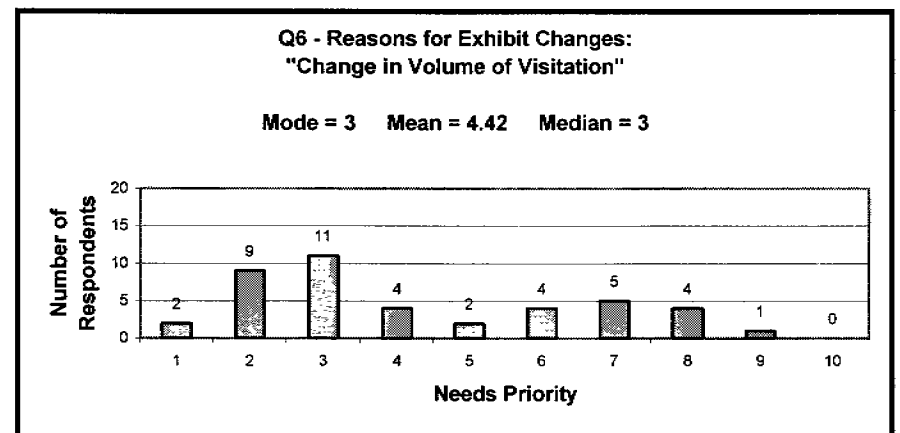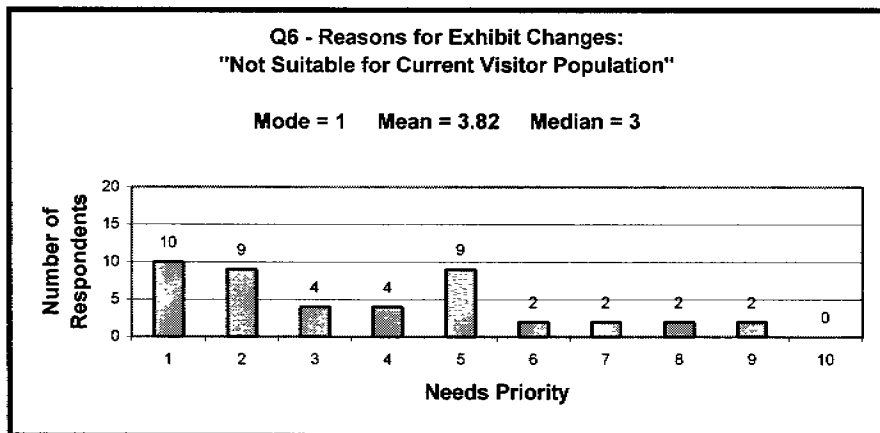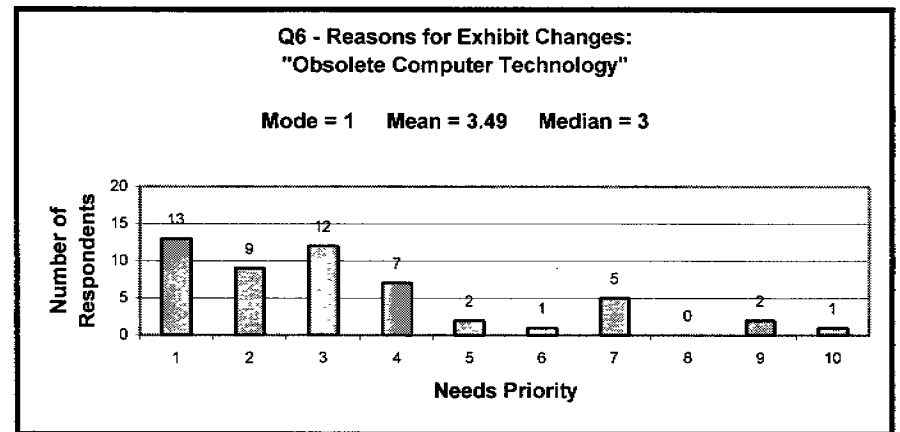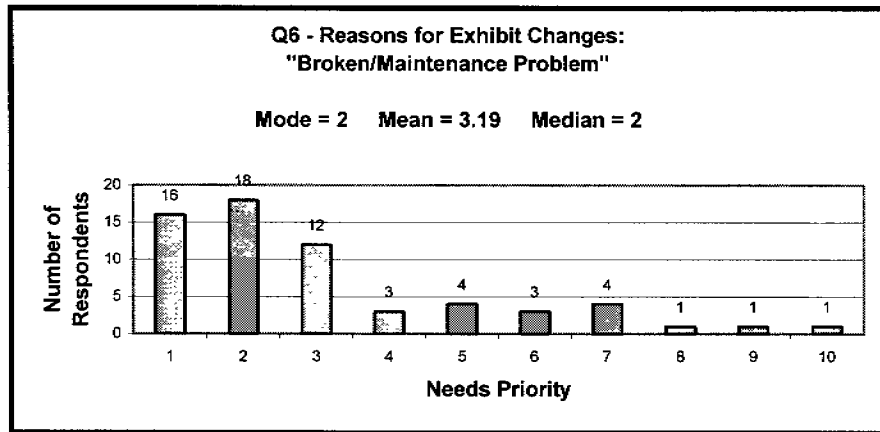
Q6 - Reasons for Exhibit Changes: "Not Accomplish Written Objectives"

Mode = 1   Mean = 3.91   Median = 4

Number of Respondents (vertical axis, 0–20)
Needs Priority (horizontal axis, 1–10)
Values: 1:9, 2:8, 3:5, 4:6, 5:7, 6:5, 7:1, 8:2, 9:2, 10:1
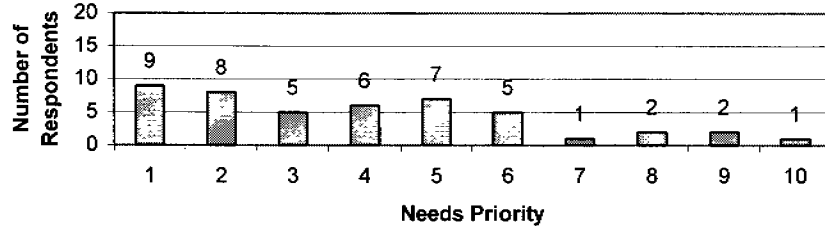
Q6 - Reasons for Exhibit Changes: "Site Project Mission Has Changed"

Mode = 1   Mean = 6.09   Median = 6

Number of Respondents (vertical axis, 0–20)
Needs Priority (horizontal axis, 1–10)
Values: 1:4, 2:1, 3:3, 4:2, 5:3, 6:4, 7:3, 8:4, 9:2, 10:4
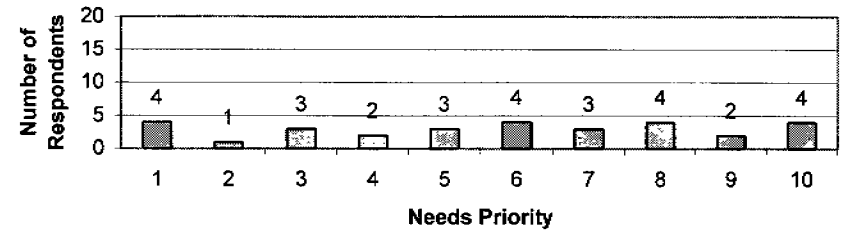
Q6 - Reasons for Exhibit Changes: "Increased Need for Multiple Languages"

Mode = 9   Mean = 6.83   Median = 8

Number of Respondents (vertical axis, 0–20)
Needs Priority (horizontal axis, 1–10)
Values: 1:1, 2:1, 3:2, 4:7, 5:2, 6:2, 7:1, 8:6, 9:7, 10:4
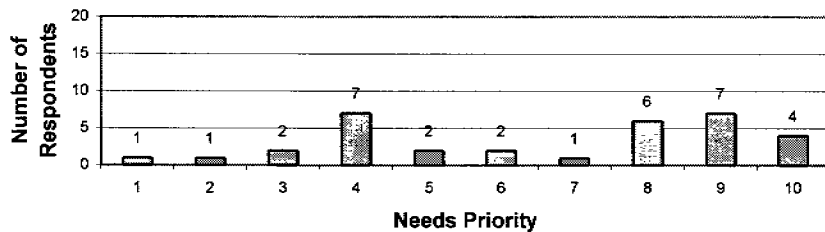
Q6 - Reasons for Exhibit Changes: "Inaccurate Information"

Mode = 4   Mean = 4.74   Median = 4

Number of Respondents (vertical axis, 0–20)
Needs Priority (horizontal axis, 1–10)
Values: 1:5, 2:5, 3:6, 4:7, 5:4, 6:4, 7:3, 8:6, 9:1, 10:1
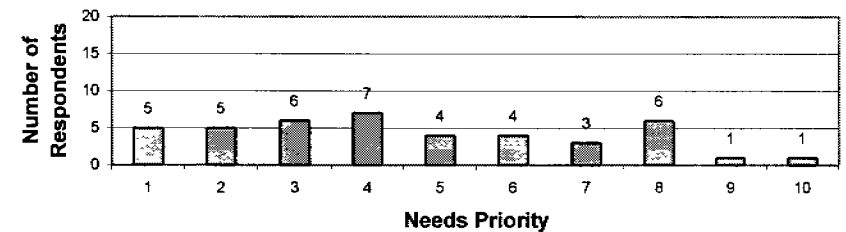
Q6 - Reasons for Exhibit Changes: "Inaccessible Per ADA Requirments"

Mode = 9   Mean = 5.38   Median = 5

Number of Respondents (vertical axis, 0–20)
Needs Priority (horizontal axis, 1–10)
Values: 1:1, 2:6, 3:6, 4:6, 5:2, 6:6, 7:0, 8:3, 9:6, 10:2
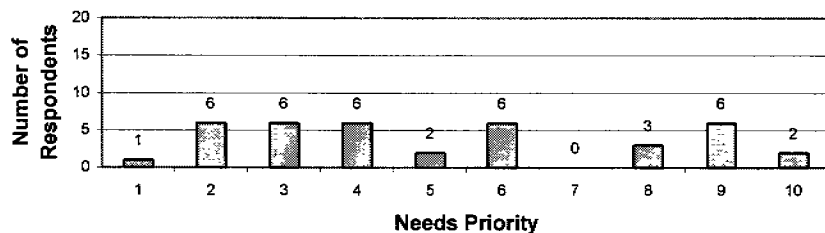
Q6 - Reasons for Exhibit Changes: "Other"

Mode = 1   Mean = 2.75   Median = 1

Number of Respondents (vertical axis, 0–20)
Needs Priority (horizontal axis, 1–10)
Values: 1:23, 2:5, 3:0, 4:6, 5:0, 6:2, 7:0, 8:0, 9:0, 10:3
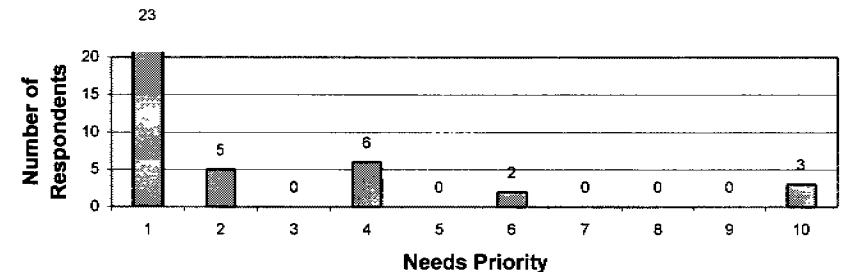
"Other" responses to Question 6:

- Age/fading
- Exhibits are .20 years old
- Old
- Just plain "dated"
- Other than a project video, pictures, a lock and dam model, a few static displays and handouts we have no exhibits that entice or draw people to the visitor center
- Outdated styles/coloring, too much print
- Outdated, look old, can be more modern and appealing
- Stagnated Exhibits
- boring, ugly, not what people wanted
- Outdated media program (Circa 1980s) Maintenance Problems with Exhibits
- outdated
- outdated and no theme
- poor outdated exhibits
- presentation is outdated
- Central theme is outdated and needs to be changed to tell more of Corps story - locally, regionally, and nationally.
- Dated exhibits, many visitors are local who won't come back if new exhibits aren't presented from time to time. In addition, 1/2 of our VC is dedicated to the late Congressman Jerry Litton. Now, 2 generations have come and gone and no one knows who he is.
- Messages are out of date by 10 - 20 years
- Not thematic or very interactive or engaging. Does not pass the "So What?" test. Exhibits still largely date from original installation in the late 1970's.
- Displays need to be changed to just provide change to repeat customers. Lewis and Clark celebration coming up and we should concentrate on providing L&C displays.
- Low interest level
- Accommodate Lewis & Clark visitors

- Too inactive to maintain interest, especially among younger (<25) visitors.
- displays are passive
- lack of interactivity
- static , aged exhibitory that is not interactive
- Exhibits need to be inter-active. Not entertaining but get the visitor involved to learn about who we are and what we do and why we do it.
- Existing displays are static displays and very unimaginative. Need more interactive displays
- Static, need more interactive
- Most people do not want to come here and see the same thing over and over again!
- New exhibits for repeat visitors.
- Variety
- Need to increase technology/update
- Most exhibits have been updated. One needs updated due to maintenance problems.
- It is a point of sale and information station, not a history lesson place
- Money
- Museum is old and is in powerhouse, new visitor center under multi partners is scheduled for construction this summer through 2003 with exhibits 2004
- New exhibits 8/01 without computer interactives
- Not interesting
- Only 50% completed and they were done at minimal cost with volunteers and in-house labor
- This includes Power plant exhibits
- area has been de-emphasized due to space requirements
- lack of ranger personnel

Do you have exhibits that were designed for children?

If you have exhibitry that was designed for children, does it seem to be enough to serve your current visitor population?

Yes, we have exhibits for children.	Yes, these exhibits seem to be adequate for our visitors	No, these exhibits are not sufficient for our visitors.
53	21	32

Comments:

- Very basic, does not hold interest
- Exhibits were not designed with children in mind. Exhibits look good, but require extensive reading of text! Limited interaction! Nothing computer operated!
- It's not just children that want more "challenging" and fast paced information. There is a whole generation of people who have grown up in the "Nintendo" age. We are not meeting their demands at all!
- We are getting more and more children visitors every year and most of our exhibits are designed for adults.
- We have mostly School groups on field trips and need more exhibits for Natural Resources and environmental education.
- We need a broader variety of exhibits for children. Due to lack of budget we've been unable to keep up with the need for children's exhibits.
- outdated and boring
- we would like to develop more hands-on exhibits for our visitor's experience and target our presentation on the jr high sch. aged visitor
- We need more exhibit space devoted to very young children as our facility is difficult for them to understand. In addition, we need to increase overall interactivity of exhibits, better labeling for children.

- No enough hands on exhibits
- More exhibits, computers, etc. are needed
- Computer Kiosk has games children like to play.
- It is not interactive, children are bored by the exhibits.
- Need interactive Exhibits
- Needs more low maintenance interactivity built in, both low tech and hi tech. Needs to be stimulating and memorable.
- Needs to be more challenging/interactive
- Not interactive
- old, poor interactivity
- Exhibits will be new as of 8/01 - data not yet available
- New exhibits will have a children /family discovery zone and exhibit area
- No specific exhibits for children
- Very limited live experience with our VC,s. My job at the District involves updating the NRMS database and providing data to data calls or directing requests for information to the VC managers.
- no exhibits
- We have a video presentation that outlines the history of the Corps and it is played until the parents get through with their business.

Question 9

Is there a central theme to your visitor center exhibits? If so, what is it? (A theme is the central or key idea of any exhibit or presentation. Themes should be stated as short, simple, complete sentences, contain only one idea and reveal the overall purpose of the exhibit.)

- Thurmond Project/Lake offers an abundance of resources.
- The role of water in the life cycle of the San Francisco Bay region, state of California
- Inland waterway transportation benefits the country and you.
- Lake Lanier Works (for you)
- Maritime history and the Corps of Engineers role in development of Duluth-Superior Harbor, Lake Superior, and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway System.
- Meeting the challenge of Change on the Missouri River
- Oahe, Foundation of Fun.
- Paleontological and cultural resources of the project area were important components of pre-construction planning.
- Water as a Multiple Use Resource
- The Corps' Missions are varied and serve the world
- Power and Play is just a short distance away on the Pend Oreille.
- Preserving the Salmon of the Pacific Northwest.
- The Honolulu Engineer District's regional visitor center is dedicated to Civil Works Water Resource Development. The theme of the presentation is "People, Islands and Water."
- The Living Lake
- The Missouri River; A River through time and change in northeastern Montana.
- Project and local area history
- Project construction history, and cultural and historic resources
- Project purpose and benefits
- Resource Office-Recreation/Resources; Powerplant Ctr-power production

- Site Specific Corps Missions; Water Supply, Flood Control, Recreation, Cultural Resources, Natural Resources.
- The History of St. Anthony Falls and how The Corps fits in
- The central theme is the history of the Soo Locks
- from origination to present.
- The nine foot channel on the Upper Mississippi River and it's uses
- The role of Federal Agencies in the Economic Development of Northeast Mississippi
- The theme is history of the Corps. But it is not viewed
- in that context. Most business is the selling of
- golden ages cards and directions to the facilities.
- Occasional questions on fishing and hunting programs.
- To demostrate the Corps role in the managment of the watershed, natural resources and recreational opportunities
- Why the dam was built
- Wicker Dams and History of the Project area prior to making it a lake.
- corps mission
- To show prior use of area, cultural and archelogical history. To show current project purposes; flood control, hydropower, NRM, Recreation.
- Acheological, mounted mammals
- Commercial navigation on the Great Lakes since one VC is at a major port and the other is located at the locks.
- Cultural and Natural Resources and a Theme of Recreational Opportunities (Water Related)
- Different Class B VC each have a different theme - Navigation, Shoreline Managment, Recreation, Wildlife Management, etc.

- Directed by Congress, the Corps of Engineers at Bonneville Lock and Dam provides people with hydropower, navigation, recreation and fish and wildlife management... now and for the future.
- Introduction and orientation to Lake Okeechobee and the Okeechobee Waterway
- Kinzua Dam & Allegheny Reservoir
- Largely based on area historical information. Other information relates to Corps history and missions, and District missions.
- Litton exhibits, Building a Dam, Resource Mgt, Cultural Resources, Water Safety, Past Present and Future (history of the area)
- Man and Nature in the Ozarks
- Native Americans, Regional History, Flood Control, Water Quality, Recreation, Wildlife
- Our theme is to explain the history of the Greers Ferry Lake area and the role the Corps of Engineers has played in that history.
- Pomo Native American Culture

- Representation of naturally occuring wildlife species located around Keystone Lake w/ a special emphasis on snakes; representative anti-drug display w/ variety of illegal items confiscated over the years from visitors.
- River History
- Settling the Ohio River
- The Environment
- This facility is known regionally for Crappie fishing. The theme of the visitor center revolves around Crappie fishing (Wall mounts including a world record catch, wall mounted location maps, brochures, and other fishing information). Other indigenous w

- Three distinctive themes exist in the VC, history, natural resources and the Corps.
- To convey the size and quality of project land and water.
- Tombigbee River Region from 1850 to now
- We only have a Class 'C' visitor center. It consists of replicas of the types of fish in the lake.

Question 10

What is your mix of media? Check all that apply.

Media:	No. of Resp.	Details
Photos	82	
Pamphlets or printed handouts	81	
Videos	50	
Other Media	42	see below
Other interactives	37	see below
Computer-based interactives	36	see below
Slide shows	29	
Audio tours	17	
Film	10	

"Other" media cited:

- 3-D map of the SF estuary, models of ships
- acheological displays
- All of the above will be incorporated into the exhibit mix for the new multi-partnered Interpretive Center scheduled for completion between 2001 through 2004. Currently none of these exist in old museum format in powerhouse.
- All slide shows are broken and the exhibit is on the Corps Mission which most of the visitors aren"t interested in.
- all videos are cd laser disk players
- artifacts (2)
- audio back-lit wall mural
- Cabinet with drawers containing various objects such as antlers, skulls, jaw bones, feathers and skins for kids to touch and play with. A discovery box with various animal puppets for kids.
- Coop Association Activities
- descriptive signs
- Dioramas, static displays, visual displays (7)
- Fish ladder viewing room
- fish replicas
- fish tank (3)

- Hands On Displays
- Kid's Corner
- lighted button map, diaramas, wildlife mounts
- LIVE FISH AND SNAKES AND MOUNDED ANIMALS
- Manipulatives in telescopes
- maps, drawings and text
- mechanized models of lock, hydropower generator, "theater" with sliding scenes
- Model of Fort Site
- Mounted animals (3)
- Multi sensory experiences.
- Operational lock model
- outdated mechanical demonstration & static display
- Park Ranger Tours
- Push button that illuminates a picture
- Push-button devices and games
- spare hydro parts used as exhibit items until needed
- Static displays of control tower
- water safety photo opportunity boat

"Other Interactives" cited:

- A historical photo on sliding blocks that can be assembled.
- Audio Tape and Interactive Light Activated Exhibit
- Digital Audio, spinning wheel
- Displays about how hydropower is generated. Some "push button" and "lift the flap" interactives about a variety of subjects..
- Electronic animal match game. Electronic pond life display.
- Handcranked generator, generator/pumpback model.
- Hands on for kids
- LED, Fiber Optics, flip boxes (not really interactive), fish spinner, fish marble maze, operational lock model, other buttons, bells and whistles
- Lock demonstration and hydropower demonstration
- Puzzles on the wall supporting the management of the projects Natural Resources.
- Small Scale Dam Model
- Stuffed animals that the visitor can touch.
- Stuffed local wildlife
- Terrarium
- Touch Table (2)

- aging recreational activity facts, what fish eat, rainfall vs. lake levels
- feely box
- flip boxes ; flip-lid Q & A (5)
- life-jacket game
- hand crank electricity generator
- hand crank generator and touch table
- lighted demo. of working dam and powerplant (outdated)
- manually interactive exhibits about fish, water level management, wildlife, project information, water safety
- match question with answers
- mounted mammals
- push a button and light come on!
- rolling panels on local wildlife, fibreoptic game showing tidal changes , tide wheel showing the 4 tidal phases of the SF Bay, push button videos vignettes on various topics of the Bay regions, Corps History game
- school age group presentations
- telephones with recorded messages
- touch table
- wildlife "match" games

"Computer-based Interactives" cited:

- Computer touch screen informative display
- Control the Flow - making decisions on water releases
- Educational environmental games
- Flood Control Game
- games (2)
- information kiosk, Corps history
- information/entertainment kiosk
- Interactive computer program that is part of an regional multi-agency interactive program
- kiosk, Fish game identification game.
- large menu of project history, construction/.engineering of project, Corps missions and history, Project recreation facilities, maps, safety videos, safety messages.
- Locking Through Simulation
- web site

- Recreation information where people can select an area and get a print-out with site specific information. We also have a salmon issues interactive computer program where people answer questions about salmon, and are shown the effect of their answers.
- shows photos of all parks, in a comp. slide show with music; contians Corps mission, lake history, videos of trail, wildlife, wildflowers, photos of shelters to assist w reservations; interactive games for kids, ranger profiles of shoreline mgt rangers..
- Touch Screen (15)
- nat. res. mgt, rec. uses, navigation
- water safety computer games
- video disk player
- WWW connection Corps on the Internet

Question 11

Do you think your visitor center is in the best possible location in your project area?
Consider factors such as visibility, accessibility, views of the site, etc.

Yes	61
No	34

Problems with locations:

- Not at Project, in town
- Too far from lake
- On a hill: looks hard to approach
- Our VC was built in the mid 70's and traffic/use patterns have changed in the past 25 years. Our VC is very hard for the public to find off any major thoroughfare.
- Placed in Rural area, low population, no major highway. Placed here due to location of Congressional District. Should have been placed on Corps land South of current location on I-59.
- The center would receive a lot more visitation if it were not so remotely located.
- We are very difficult to find in the local community, not located on a city street and poorly signed- we are off the beaten path.
- accessibility difficult
- good for the view of the dam but access from a main route is 1.5 miles away through a state park to the project which adds to confusing the visitor who is who should have better access and more space
- Admin Building was built too close taking up all the VC parking
- It should be located next to the project office so that it could be staffed.

- Project Office at dam site
- Resource Office has only an entry way. Current building is a modified old house. It does not come close to providing the needs of a visitor center. The power plant visitor center has a nice area for use but is not accessible nor open.
- The current site is not an end destination for recreation users; as such it is virtually unknown.
- few visitors come to office
- Can not view the lake
- Can't see the dam, lake or river from the Center. Could have been sited a short distance away and been better.
- Should have been closer to the lake with a lake view and view of the dam.
- does not have good view
- Something less isolated and overlooking the lake.
- Limited size, Limited Visibility, Non-Existing Aesthetic Setting
- The visitor center should be located in the proximity of the fish ladder viewing windows. All visitors go to the fish viewing windows, but many pass right by the visitor center.

In the original survey you were asked to indicate how you obtain input from visitors. Some examples are participant evaluations of programs, formal observational studies, focus groups, casual observational studies, public scoping sessions, comment cards, guest books, etc. How do you use the results of these efforts?

Systems of Collection and Use of Visitor Input

- I have used focus groups and public scoping sessions to obtain feedback on the effectiveness of existing exhibits and suggestions for new exhibits. Nominal group technique was used to organize and assign values to observations. The values were used to create consensus group recommendations.

- We use comment cards, guest book, direct contact with customers and casual observation. Our district also has a customer survey accessible via the internet. We use results to determine and help prioritize customer needs. As a result we usually find we are under-funded to do most of what the public expects.

- The input we gather has less to do with operation of the VC than it does with other aspects of project operations. A recent example is the review of our shoreline management plan. This turned out to be a contentious issue that is currently ongoing. As far as VC operation goes, customer comment cards have been the most valuable tool. Although the comments we get are not earth-shaking, there are good things we've done because of them. Sometimes the little things mean a lot to folks.

- The hard data is gathered, but as far as I know nothing is actually done with it due to the usual lack of money or any real guidance and direction from my resource manager. I can suggest and suggest, beg and moan but my comments, concerns and recommendations typical fall on deaf ears.

- We refine or develop new programs based on interests, provide additional exhibit elements to address particular interests or alleviate confusion. Provides input into condition of facilities and lets us know what the public expects of us. We have adjusted our hours of operation and provided additional training to staff to address certain interests.

- Occasionally, I will sit down and discuss with VC Ranger staff observations and comments made by public and look at if there are practical ways to improve operations and displays. Have tried to expand or change book store items that the public requests if available from Eastern National.

- As the Senior Park Ranger, I review all comments and even call the person making comments if I need more clarification. Comments/recommendations are discussed with the interpretive rangers and myself to see if we can accomplish or accommodate the request.

- Casual observation of visitors, as we see a need to add or change something we do so, money permitting. The recent budget crunch has not allowed for changes here at our center.

- Complaints are responded to immediately. Constructive criticism is taken into consideration and may result in policy changes, etc.. Suggestions are also considered, but are seldom feasible.

- These results are compiled, and the numbers become part of our FY report. We also review the comments for help in developing customer driven programming/improvements on the facility and display.

- When it becomes time to revise/replace the exhibits, programs, etc., we'll use this information. Also, the information is very useful in other interpretive planning efforts.

- We use a comment book, in the Visitor Center, to get visitor's feedback on services. We use the information to see if there are additional services that we could provide and to see if the services we are providing are lacking in any way.

- We try to incorporate this type of data into our management and operations but it is often pretty informal & I believe we do not get the full value of the info. This is usually a result of the "press of business" not allowing us to focus.

- The comments received on the comment cards and the computerized survey are summarized and studied by the Park Managers, Area Managers and the District to see what if anything can be incorporated into future plans for the parks.

- We use the results of these efforts to improve Visitor Center and Interpretive Programming, training, and improve customer service in all areas of the program, from accessability to accountability.

- We have relocated exhibits and placed a new info desk, added ideas to our proposed new prospectus. If possible, we have implemented program changes.
- Look at the feasibility of implementation, cost vs. benefit, and then if can be used we modify them as necessary for implementation.
- As budget conditions allow, we continue to upgrade the center based on comments and observations.
- Results are used to evaluate the effectiveness of our displays and programs, to plan for changes or improvements and to improve customer service.
- We have made some changes in the visitor center due to customer feedback - mostly minor ones with little to no costs.
- Comment Cards and guest book. It is only used to give us an idea of what the visitor is looking for. No formal activity takes place.
- Comments are read by my manager and myself and if warranted a change is made as soon as budget and or manpower allow.
- We use it to prepare and provide the information (i.e. brochures, pamphlets, etc.) that our customer is looking for.
- We use the results to measure the job we are doing. We use it to determine recreation trends and if possible to assertain needs.
- We use the results of these to make immediate improvements and long-term plans to improve facilities, products and services.
- We use the input to correct problems, better services for the visitors and in future budgeting and planning efforts.
- Comment cards are referred to the program manager to address in planning.
- Make adjustments to programming and exhibits as budgets allow.
- Upgrade exhibits, displays, programs and add or delete information as necessary.
- assistance in conceptual plan development, safety improvements, staffing requirements
- We try and incorporate info into future planning/improvement efforts.
- To determine budget items, program development, and facility enhancements
- Used for planning improved facilities and programs.
- Revisions of displays, modify hours of operations.

- to make improvements to the V.C.
- As a planning tool for making improvements in either service or facilities.
- Results are used to tailor exhibits and presentations to desires of visitors.
- Comment Cards, Guest Book, Casual Observation
- We use these results to make decisions.
- To improve VIC operations, displays and exhibits

Methods of Data Collection

- Primarily Informal observations. Also do comment cards and comments written in register book.
- Formal observation and comment cards.
- Customer comments are all informal and very few offer suggestions on how to improve the Center.
- Comment cards, observation, guest books
- Casual observation of visitors. casual conversation with visitors, visitor input on comment cards, visitor books.
- Our input comes from conversations with visitors and most are compliments concerning the visitor center or indications that one of the displays are not working properly.
- We obtain input from visitors via comment/questionnaire sheets which covers facility, exhibits, programs, and personnel.
- Informally at the Project Office.

Question 23

Please rate the following features of your visitor center. Skip any items that are not applicable.

Q23 - Rating: "Staffed 'Welcome Station'"

Q23 - Rating: "Restrooms"

Q23 - Rating: "Heating and Air Conditioning"

Q23 - Rating: "Electrical"

Q23 - Rating: "Lighting"

Q23 - Rating: "Condition of Building"

Q23 - Rating: "Landscaping"

Q23 - Rating: "Handicapped Accessibility - Interior"

Q23 - Rating: "Handicapped Accessibility - Exterior"

Q23 - Rating: "Interior Design/Decor"

Q23 - Rating: "Furnishings"

Q23 - Rating: "Office Space"

Q23 - Rating: "Parking"

Q23 - Rating: "Traffic Flow"

Q23 - Rating: "Exhibit Space"

Q23 - Rating: "Effectiveness of directional signs"

Q23 - Rating: "Appropriate Languages on Signs"

Q23 - Rating: "Public Meeting Space"

Q23 - Rating: "Vending"

Q23 - Rating: "Sales/Bookstore Space"

Q23 - Rating: "Theater"

If your Visitor Center partners with community groups, what does your Visitor Center provide to the partnering organization?

Provided to Partners...

- We will allow public groups to use the Visitor Center for meetings and other use of the theater. Most use is by the WV Division of Natural Resources for Hunter Education Programs; Div. of Forestry for Firefighting Training; and Healthnet for Helicopter Landing Zone Safety Training. Other than these, we do little with other groups (Audubon Society Chapter, Scout Groups, etc.).

- They are included in all aspects of the decision making process and have space to operate, access to meetings, reports and information that targets multi-partner groups and agencies, we provide resources and volunteer training and share in scheduling special events and working as a team to accomplish the same goals. In our particular situation one of the partners will be responsible for the gift store operation in the center and others will be the catalogers and care-takers of the fossil cleaning station. Buildings have been outgranted, to them by the Corps. The other partner, that is a federal agency, will house one full-time employee in the center, representing the national wildlife refuge.

- We provide office space for our Cooperating Association, space for bookstore, meeting space and pay overtime of staff to accommodate mutually beneficial programs sponsored by the partner. We waive special use fees as necessary to accommodate some groups. We provide staff time to sit on committees, boards and other community efforts that we share an interest. All staff are expected to provide outreach support in their program areas. Partners implies a shared effort and we take it very seriously.

- Currently, we do not have a partnership with a community group. In the past, we had a partnership with the local AARP. They provided over 50 VC Hosts that took turns working in the VC 7 days/wk and we in-turn under the Volunteer Program provided meals, recognition, etc. Unfortunately, this group dissolved due to age, poor health and no new members. Also, for 3 years we partnered with the Aliceville Chamber of Commerce and the Pickens County Historical Society in sponsoring and hosting the annual "Southern Heritage Festival" held in and on the park grounds of the VC.

- Our visitor center has been made available to non-political community groups for public meetings at no cost (after hours or on days when the visitor center is closed during the off-season).

- Free use of a meeting room, tour of dam.
- Infrastructure and site services for special community events
- Office space.
- Mainly staff hours, meeting spaces and ideas.
- The visitor center provides a focal point for activities and special events. The visitor center attracts a diverse audience which is many cases has an interest in the activities and missions of the partner.
- The only partnering is with The Shawnee National Forrest Service. We provide a location in our visitor center for their display.

- We partner with 2 local chambers of commerce and 2 visitor associations. We help spread the word about one another mostly by brochure distribution.
- Opportunity and access to visitors.
- An outlet for their information.
- High visibility and an opportunity to "advertise" their participation via posters near the work area.
- profits from the gift shop.
- The only partnering we have is with the Coop Assn. We provide sales location for their merchandise.
- We have a cooperative agreement to operate our VC with a local county recreation department. We provide some operating expenses and salary.
- We have a formal agreement with the Wapapello Lions Club to sell interpretive and educational materials at the visitor center. We provide them the space and assistance in selling these items.

Other Comments

- At the present time we are not partnering with any groups. We will be trying to partner with some groups on our next Lake Map revision/update to see if we can split some of the costs with other organizations.
- At this time we are not partnering with any organization, we solicit for volunteers and provide them with a campsite.
- We have just started our partnership and do not have details worked out yet.
- We have no formal partnering agreements. In the case of Upper St. Anthony Falls, we are in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (NPS) and work with all the other agencies to coordinate and share information.

Not Partnering or Not Applicable

- "Not Applicable" (9)
- We are not partnering at this time (13)

What barriers do you see to partnering with community organizations?

Corps Policies and Regulations

- The authorizing law and regulations, do not allow for the government to do work and be reimbursed by the partner. The regulations also do not provide for the government to contribute funds to an effort being implemented by the partner. They also discourage work done by contract under the partner's direction. The regs provide for contributions, but ethics rules discourage proper recognition of the partner.

- From the community side- lack of understanding of what we can or can't do according to our mission, regulations, staffing restrictions. We are sometimes thought of a "community center" where anything goes and we have to say "no" at times depending on the nature of the request. Our mission and focus drive our decisions and that has been very helpful in explaining our position- From the Corps side- Out of date, out of step, archaic regulations that worked fine in the 50's and 60's, but not the 21st century! We are WAY behind the curve compared to NPS, FS and BLM in how we approach partnering. Still a great deal of distrust from the Corps legal staff from District to Division to HQ on what we are allowed to do... their position is usually "no" and then they expend great effort to find regulations to support their decision. We lose out time and time again... Also- the way funding is handled with shared costs...the Corps expects the partners to commit to funds, but then turns around and says, " we'll help if Congress appropriates or we have the funds, but no guarantee" – that will kill a partnership faster than anything. There has to be a way to commit funds and hold them in an "escrow" or other account, over multi-years to facilitate long-term partnering. It has been done elsewhere and can be done in the Corps. The Corps has to figure out that partnering is a two-way street- you don't get something for nothing, you have to give too. Also- other agencies have HQ staff that do nothing, but help the field with partnering- that has been a driving force in other agencies.

- Policy issues and prohibitions

Limited Resources (funding, time, staff, space) (15)

- Can be very VC ranger time and energy consuming. Especially if your VC lies in a very rural area. Often the local community groups are small and have little resources. Therefore, it takes a dedicated ranger to spend a lot of time taking the group by the hand and leading them into action, etc.

- Little, other than requiring that one Corps NRM employee must work the hours that the visitor center is made available. We do much within the community, but often the costs of going to meetings (many are lunches, breakfasts or dinners that the individuals must pay the way) is often too much, because of the number of community organizations in the local area.

- Many organizations hold meetings outside our normal Visitor Center hours of operation. We will adjust work schedules to accommodate such groups if time permits but usually do not receive such requests. Most are "repeat customers" listed above. A shortage of manpower prohibits us from soliciting community organizations although this would promote a more positive image of the Corps.

- Lack of time and personnel to do what we want.

- Limited space within the VC
- Funding issues, both theirs and ours.
- Time, space, staffing, budget
- Lack of space.
- Mostly just time on our part.
- Most of the local groups do not have the funding necessary to embark on such a mission.
- Budget, Insufficient number of VC Employees
- Space and staffing levels (not enough of either).
- Time on our part to make and grow these relationships.
- As with any organization there are only a few people that do the work - limited resources. Also in our case the group is not a 5013c.
- Have not partnered yet, but a big concern is always - will we be able to provide enough time/manpower to work with the partner.

Lack of Willing Partners   (8)

- There appears to be a general lack of interest on the part of the community with regards to what is going on at McNary Dam. I tried several years in a row to launch a volunteer program and could find no one willing to spend a few hours with us. I need to take it upon myself to find new approaches to creating community interest in McNary Dam.
- current lack of willing partner,
- lack of partner groups in our area.
- No interested partners
- From speaking with various groups they have shown no interest in partnering in the center.
- lack of organizations in our area
- Again, we have no community group partners.
- Intangible barrier is the apparent lack of interest within the community to develop and execute a partnership for VIC operations

Differing Priorities or Missions   (7)

- They usually do not have the same goals in mind. Our other problem is that we have to operate using goals and objectives, they often just want to do something without the pre-planning that we do.
- Different motivation's or missions.
- possible conflicts of interest, possible competition
- There's always the chance of conflicting goals and missions between the Corps project and the community organization.
- other priorities.
- Finding mutual, common goals . . . and management that "doesn't think it would be a good partnership."
- Loss of close control. Partner tends to put their spin on our product.

Remote Location   (7)

- Our Visitor Center is located approximately 8 miles from the nearest community (Warren, PA). This doesn't seem like that far to travel, but we've had past experiences with primarily high school students and seniors whose transportation "challenges" have impacted their availability to work.
- Physical location is not good
- Remote location
- Remote location low visitor traffic.
- Short recreation season and low visitation.

- Lack of volume of visitors and remoteness to site.
- The size of our center is not very large and would not be conductive to a partnering organization.

Other Barriers   (6)

- I do not think we have any barriers, that can not be overcome. When you have a group of enthusiastic community volunteers, it takes time and energy to educate and keep everyone on task and schedule. For example they may not understand the professional' role representing a multi-million dollar interpretive center and the exhibit planning and expertise that is essential to get an outstanding and professional vendor quality product for an exhibit, vs. an old piece of Family Farm Equipment. Sometimes it is very challenging to keep everyone on the same page and focused on the objectives and goals. The one area that we have struggled, is a state agency has a hard transferring money to a Federal Agency. This is one area we could use some standardized procedures as multi-agency (not just Federal, become part of these partnering teams).

- The most frequent and difficult part of partnering is making the locals understand that just because we are the Federal government we do not have unlimited resources and that they need to do their part.

- difficulty in establishing any partnerships
- Locating and keeping the partner active in the center.
- everybody thinks they are an expert in managing the V.C.
- Knowledge training and reliability.

Recommendation

- Would recommend that the COE pursue a nation wide partnership if possible. This would significantly help VC personnel with establishing this!

None & Not Applicable

- We see no barriers partnering with community organizations because that was one of the selling points on getting the approval for having the visitor center established. Working with local/community organizations help improve public relations between the Corps of Engineers and the residents of the community which in turn establishes mutual respect and appreciation for the public services that each provides.

- I don't see any barriers, more of a lack of opportunities.
- None - wide open opportunity
- None (2)
- n/a (2)
- Unknown

Question 28

What type of training do you feel you could benefit from with regard to managing/planning for a Visitor Center? Check all that apply.

"Other" helpful training cited:

- Exhibit Designs
- Exhibit and print media design and layout
- Display Development and Design
- Public Outreach Techniques
- methods to acquire grants and outside funding--political support
- Recruiting a partner/cooperating association for alternate funding for exhibit construction
- getting funding for this area
- Time Management & Effective Delegation
- Volunteer/docent visitor center staffing programs
- Contract Representative (COR Training), because of all the contracts that will need to be initiated for the Visitor Center, Exhibits, Equipment etc.
- We need more Management training for accounts, funding, budgets and human resource training.
- This is a small center and is designed for self interpretation and should remain like that as we do not have the visitation to justify expanding the Center.
- Corps employee (trained in Interpretive Services) should manage the Visitor Center vs Contract personnel.
- Have a supervisor who has experience in the Corps NRMS Program/not an Engineer

Question 30

What do you think are the barriers to making improvements to your Visitor Center? Check all that apply.

- The Corps needs to think of itself as real professionals like the National Park Service. Upper management wants to think of engineering only, but we meet and deal with everyday people.
- The Visitor Center and Interpretive Manager is not recognized as a manager/professional specialist, in some projects, districts, divisions as part of NRM programs. Yet we are12-15 years ahead of at least two other agencies with our Interpretive Management
- prohibition to lobby for new facility
- Current laws that prohibit us from being a 1 recreation facility.
- Cannot overstate the importance of adequate funding.
- Restrictions on the timeframe for spending FY dollars- most exhibit/VC planning efforts are multi-year and the funding requirements say you have to have full expenditure (not just obligation) in one year- exhibit firms don't operate that way.
- Number of visitors
- Lack of demonstrable need by project visitors and local community
- Lack of visitor volume.
- Low priority compared to other budget items such as hydropower, fish bypass work, navigation lock work, etc. The original design of the visitor center buildings was flawed to begin with. We need to design visitor facilities with interpreters input.
- not a priority in the project
- Division level resource personnel available nationally, not out of Washington HQ
- The inability to keep quality people at the visitor center because of low grade levels
- Contracted visitor services...
- Physical location
- Power plant exhibits will be limited due to accessibility issues at the site
- Resources Available
- lack of time; time and manpower
- The facility is totally inadequate

Question 31

What role do you think Visitor Centers managed by the Corps should play in the future? Check all that apply.

"Other" responses:

Approach:
- Center piece of the Project
- We need to be pro-active with full support of upper management. This includes funding, and staffing.
- Customer Care and Professional Service through Visitor Center and Interpretive Programming and Management.

Community Service:
- Corps visitor centers need to be more integrated into the local/regional community to remain relevant and effective. Otherwise, they run the risk of missing critical constituency.
- Goal: Be considered a resource of value to the local community.
- Increase outreach programming.

Educational Goals:
- Educate public about project resources.
- Educate public concerning Corps activities that relate to our mission.
- Educate the public concerning environmental consequences of certain actions.
- Support broad understanding of water resources and man's interaction with each in the region.
- Provide information to public about the nature of the project.
- Provide brochures and information.
- Recreation Safety, agency awareness: local Corps activities, insight to Corps environmental stewardship.
- Tell the Corps story and relate it to lives of visitors.

● **The original survey asked you about the many facets of managing your Visitor Center including the physical condition of the facility, the nature and timeliness of your exhibits, what training or expertise you think would assist you, and so on. Do you have any other input for the Visitor Center Initiative Committee? If so, please elaborate below.**

Combined Issues of Training, Communications, Exhibits, Management, Budget

• I would like to see more training for Visitor Center and Interpretive Managers, for staffing opportunities, trainings etc. for our Visitor Center employees (volunteers, temporaries, seasonals), since very few of us have full staffs at our Visitor Centers. These could all be accomplished through Video and activity hand books, with demonstrations etc. Presentation workshops on video, conflict resolution training etc. I would also like to see more of the professional level manager classes, for developing MOU's with large museum foundations and working with a schedule of traveling national Museum Quality exhibits scheduled at our facilities, in support of our sites theme. I think as Interpreters we have many opportunities through our individual and agency memberships with The National Association of Interpretation and the Association of American Museums, but we need to get the management and headquarters to recognize the support and networking and training that we acquire at these workshops, and try to work to hurdle the obstacles in our procedure language, which keeps us from being recognized as a major contributor and sponsor for these organizations. The other Federal Agencies have no problem contributing $1000.00 to $10,000.00 per year to these Associations and recognized as a major sponsor, but the Corps can not or chooses not to. We need headquarters to pursue this with a dedication and support of our many field rangers, historians and interpreters and Visitor Center Managers, that contribute and care for the customers that visit our sites, projects and Visitor Centers. Sometimes I feel like I have to interpret what we do at visitor center facilities to our own agency's employees. This area of management should be recognized and appreciated as professional employees; a tremendous workforce with high energy on the front line of public relations and customer service. I would like to see a COR at each district office that is only responsible for Interpretive, Exhibit and Visitor Center Contracts. We need representatives in this area, that understand Interpretive Vocabulary, Exhibit Vendors, have the expertise to process professionally and timely the needs of the Visitor Center Manager's RFP's, Task Orders and Contracts that are over the $25,000.00 amount. We need that support and expertise greatly, to continue to upgrade and purchase interpretive equipment, products and exhibits, and work effectively with interpretive and exhibit and audio visual professional private vendors to support our visitor centers, and our Interpretive and Visitor Center Managers. I would also like to see us Visitor Center managers have a visa card for interpretive programming purchases. As an interpreter we need to purchase educational materials, training videos, natural history books, campfire stories, wildlife puppets etc. However, because we still rely on District Libraries for purchase requests of books and videos etc. It is another hoop we have to go through, which usually delays product delivery by weeks or months. If we as Visitor Center Managers could purchase, for example: up to $2,500.00 each year for Interpretive, education and outreach programming products, It would simplify the process considerably. It would allow us to purchase products while attending interpretive workshops, trade shows etc. We could order over the internet, at an interpretive vendor or even a local vendor, if we needed an item within days. The Park Service and other Agencies have been authorizing this process for 5-7 years, for their Interpretive and Visitor Center Managers. This would also allow us as mangers to write a visa check for an employee's registration, to attend an interpretive workshop or conference. We need to recognize that Interpretive and Visitor Center Managers are no different in responsibilities and capabilities, as any of our other Corps managers. Thank you, for allowing me to resubmit these answers to the above four questions.

Issues of Communications & Training

- Issues related to computer programs, public internet access, Web-based visitor information with the dual purpose of providing on-site info and remote info for anyone on-line, and NRRS reservation access in the visitor center - There is a need for guidance

- We need to share information better than we do. (I think that's a valid statement for our whole NRM program and am hoping that the Gateway will address it.)

- It would be nice to have a V.C. conference held every couple of years that would have some speakers/educators in the fields of V.C. design.

- Learning about what other visitor centers have, types of exhibits, AV equipment, etc - especially ones that are new or have been renovated recently.

- Employees VC management training is needed for displays and exhibits, and various interpretive work such as programs, brochures, etc.

- If you are asking these kind of dippy questions you are beyond the likelihood of accepting advice.

- Training in exhibit and print media design and layout

Issues of Exhibits

- Our center is 25 years old and has had one major exhibit rehab. It is done on a hit and miss basis when funds become available. There is no district oversight or assistance (for that matter talent). A nationwide network of VC staff would be very helpful to help us know what problems others have experienced and overcome. Guidance and direction (and monetary) help from USACE would be grateful. There should be a network expecially for Class A centers so that we all tell the same Corps history & mission stories.

- I believe this committee has potential to make the necessary changes in Corps visitor centers that will help assist the visitors in the recognition of our agency. It is my thinking that you would also be the task force to develop exhibits that all visitor centers should have ("Command Brief" on Corps missions and the Army, Lewis and Clark, etc.)...I hope you make that one of your items to address and soon.

- Our visitor center is presently in the first year of a multi-year rehabilitation effort. In that respect, we are probably different than most other centers, because many of our most pressing needs are being met, or will be met. Our only concern is that funding is made available in the out-years to complete the work and produce a completed product. Continued emphasis at the HQ level to modernize and update visitor centers, especially the Class A centers, is much appreciated and should continue.

- Concentrate on the sharing of expertise, create a team of consultants, elevate the status of visitor centers as a communication tool for the Corps. Exhibits are viewed by audiences with a high return rate and need to be changed periodically. Exhibits are only one of the interpretive media at the projects disposal and may not be the best media for all messages. They shouldn't be expected to comprise the entire interpretive program and communicate all the needed stories to visitor. Why? Because the average visitor views them for about 15 minutes max. They do however provide a focal point for interaction and communication with the visitor and need to be done well. Visitor Centers that have been ignored and are outdated and ineffective can be an embarrassment to the agency and should improved or closed.

- Some of our exhibits are outdated and we would like to "tell the story" with equipment (displays) that are not so old.

- We realize that interactive displays are what people want but you also have to have the expertise and $ to keep them operating; Both are in short supply. Visitor Centers are competing with other recreation functions for $$$. Money is short all around.

- When you develop this Corps Story for us be sure to include real options on how we can use it and integrate it into our facilities. Act as a clearinghouse for other good ideas. If someone has a particularly good product they are using buy 50 of them and distribute them to selected facilities. Examples would be our lock simulator or a flood control simulator game.

Visitor Centers as a Part of the Corps & Corps Management Issues

- Get the time robbing activities of our back - i.e. CEFMS, OMBIL, FEMS, NRRS. Everybody's pushing their responsibilities off to lower levels. We are the lower level and it's affecting our ability to do the jobs we were hired, trained and educated to do. Being an expert interpreter or VC Manager is a dead end. It's tough to get promoted or get higher-grade levels or to be taken seriously when you're perceived as being into birds and bunnies. We need pre-approved GS-05 through GS-11 PD's in the PD Library, COREDOC and/or FASSCLASS for our folks to use when classification reviews or opportunities for promotions do exist. Everybody's afraid to ask for new space - most Corps VC's are grossly undersized when compared to what other agencies and the private sector facilities call a class "A". We should down grade just about every facility we call a class "A" to class "B", most of our "B's" to "C's" and admit our "C's" are nothing more than glorified lobbies. The Corps needs to get serious about bringing our facilities in line with what the standard is.   Why don't you do a survey of the Chief's of Operations and the District Commanders and find out what they think? This will give you a better idea of who supports and who doesn't support the program. Since they're the ones who are making most of the budgeting decisions wouldn't it be smart to include them?   You have a bunch of professional people who want to do a good job but the leadership (HQ and the green suiters) i.e. perceived as the biggest barrier. They need to put their money where their mouth is.

- For the most part, visitor centers have been viewed in the Corps more as architectural and design achievements rather than a people/learning focused facility where the Corps meets it's public. There is a general feeling that you build this center, fill it with exhibits (once) and than say, "that's it, we're done..." Then they don't staff it, let the exhibits age into oblivion and eternity and tell ranger staff to develop programming along with 50 other staff duties. The Corps spends a great deal of money building them, the Corps needs to nurture that investment and think of visitor centers as a program area with dedicated staff and duties. Visitor centers ARE the face of the Corps to the public and staff can multiply that good effort many fold if its allowed to develop. Visitor centers have to be thought of as essential rather than expendable- The agency gives great lip service to "telling our story", "outreach", etc, who else to do it but visitor centers? Time to put the money their mouth is... As a visitor center manager, I am distracted daily by issues other than running a visitor center- I wear too many hats and am required to complete work for which I'm not trained- mainly engineering/maintenance/facility/property management. It takes about 40-50% of my time. Supervision of staff takes another 20% at least (which is really not enough) and about 30% for being a VC manager...

- VC's are, apparently, low priority in the Corps because of the apparent absence of funding for us. We are as much Corps as is flood control, navigation, recreation (camping), and everything else, I would like to be treated that way. Money is available to hire new

engineers, remodel district facilities, purchase electronic toys, etc., but not to update display or provide appropriate office/staff areas. My facility has an 8X10 office area, one desk top, one notebook computer, and 5' high walls in a corner of the VC for up to 6 staff. There is no area for me to do personal reviews with staff or for anyone to work undisturbed. Now they want to remodel, from what I hear, we all have a similar display and appearance without meeting other needs first???? Give me a break, every project is different, we have different stories and different needs! Provide funding and let the project, within existing guidelines, do the work. We do know what we can and can't do. Our visitors praise this facility, it's staff, and (outdated) displays for telling the story with excellence. If we have to insert material unrelated to the project in our limited space it will risk damaging our good reviews. We tell the Corps story (for this project) at this location, give the Corps a positive face in a time when that is very badly needed. We need support for the work being done by project, district, and regional management. Don't impose, enable.

- I would point out that VC's are one of those nice things to have. Although I'm very proud of ours, when services have to be cut due to stagnant or decreasing budgets, VC services will be the first to go.

- Procurement procedures has been a major obstacle - it is getting better as more contractors are getting on GSA listings. It is much easier to use GSA contractors.

- District stonewalling on improvements is a problem

Issues of Funding and Budget Management

- The Visitor Center is approximately 15 years old and in need of major exhibit updates. In addition the building itself needs a new roof and concrete sidewalk. We have found it difficult to come up with the money for these major repair update items with our current shrinking budget.

- We have some serious infrastructure problems because the O&M budget is woefully insufficient. It will literally take millions to get this facility repaired and up-to-date. Problems include leaky buildings, old heating/air conditioning systems, elevator and escalator maintenance needed, access for disabled, out-of-date displays, and short staff.

- Over the past 3 years, I've requested $160,000 to replace existing exhibits, our district has had more than $1,000,000 each year in excess money to spend. I know that not all of this money has even been expended, yet no one see the need to waste money on replacing exhibits! As long as we have this type of mind set within our district, we will never update any VC exhibits.

- Be great if funding was made available to handicapped access, expansion of areas instead of having to dip into annual O&M budgets. Could get much more accomplished.

- Get us products we can use and the funds to develop our own. We are told that significant dollars for improvements aren't available or not a priority. Well if we can spend millions on products like OMBIL, FEMS, NRRS, etc then why cant we get the financial support of our agency and it's leadership to meet this important mission.

- From an exhibit comment above: Our only concern is that funding is made available in the out-years to complete the work and produce a completed product.

Issues of Partnering

- We are looking at partnering with Illinois Department of Natural Resources for a visitor center. Where possible, partnerships should be encouraged with local, state or other federal entities.

- Provide information on how other visitor centers have established partnerships. This should also include information on our regulations on partnering and cooperating associations.

Misc. comments

- It would be beneficial to be able to keep the Visitor Center open on weekends, particularly during the recreation season. We are currently looking into constructing a few volunteer campsites to allow us to solicit volunteer help for this (we do not have a campground). The Visitor Center is in very good condition but most exhibits should be updated to reflect the Corps Mission. Our Visitor Center utilizes active and passive solar heat and some exhibits pertain to solar energy. There seems to be little interest in solar energy.

- None at this time. On 24 July 2001 the our district Visitor Center Evaluation Review Team visited our project and made an assessment of the facility, exhibits, grounds and personnel. The final results of the evaluation will be made known in September or October.

- As stated before our center is small and the main part of customer interaction is answering questions about the lake and surrounding public land.

- We would welcome your committee to visit our visitor center to provide input/suggestions for improvement.

Appendix E

On-site Evaluation Form

Visitor/Interpretive Center
Assumptive Evaluation Form

Introduction

In conducting *scientifically valid* evaluations for visitor centers or interpretive centers for any agency or organization, the evaluation team must first have an understanding of the specific objectives, outcomes, or managerial realities of that facility (available budget, time constraints, etc.). In addition it would be required to know the target market groups the center was designed for as well (local repeat visitors, one-time tourists, school groups, bus tour groups, etc.) to see if the facility design, services and exhibits are indeed effective in serving and communicating with those target market groups. If this information is not available then a formal evaluation against stated outcomes cannot be done. The next option is called an "**assumptive evaluation**" or *auditing by an expert*.

The Assumptive Evaluation is conducted against evaluation criteria where the expert or team of experts, not knowing what the original planning and design objectives were, **assume** what the intent of the design was, and do an evaluation against these assumptions. In addition, the team would critique the facility and exhibits against a general criteria of professionally accepted standards, such as for interpretive exhibit design or handicapped accessibility.

While not scientifically valid, the assumptive evaluation does have benefits for the agency managing the visitor or interpretive center being critiqued. Ideally, the conclusions that the team "assumes" were the main interpretive theme, messages or concepts are indeed very close or "right on" to what the visitor or interpretive center "intended" the main "take-away" messages to be. That would illustrate that the Center is indeed communicating its mission and story effectively to visitors. However, if the main interpretive theme, concepts or messages the evaluation team assumes were the main focus or outcome were NOT what the visitor or interpretive centers main exportable theme or concepts were – then the center is NOT effectively communicating its mission and stories to visitors. If that is the case, then a more formal scientifically valid evaluation would be needed to isolate the problems and recommend changes to make the center more effective in communicating with visitors for that particular facility.

Visitor Center
Assessment Form

Introduction: This Visitor Center Assessment form is used for conducting *Assumptive Evaluations* – where evaluating against stated objectives or outcomes are not possible. It is designed to critique the Visitor Center against a list of generally accepted professional planning, design, and interpretive communication criteria and standards. The completed evaluation can serve as a tool to both support or validate visitor center and exhibit success or strong points, or note areas in visitor center and exhibit design that could use improvement. Note that the results are *subjective* and based on the background and professional training of the evaluator or evaluation team.

Instructions: Each evaluator should answer each question in the survey based on their personal understanding of professional standards for the subject, site or facility being critiqued. Space is provided (or use the back of this form) for additional written comments you might have about a particular question.

Facility Name: _____

Location: _____

Agency (COE, USDAFS, etc): _____

Pre visit and facility exterior assessment:

1. Was the highway signage providing directions to this site:
   a. Poor   b. Adequate   c. Very Good

2. What improvements to the visitor directional signage would you recommend?

3. What were your first impressions upon arriving at the facility?

   a. looks well designed, landscaped and inviting.
   b. Looks like an average visitor center.
   c. Looks like an average government building.
   d. Looks like an office – hard to tell there was a visitor center in there.
   e. Other _____

4. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your first impression of this facility before going into it?

   Poor First Impression   Good or Average   Looks Great/Inviting

   1 ------------2-------------3-------------4-------------5

5. How would you rate the facility grounds and landscaping:

    1. Poor – looks in kept.
    2. Average – grass is cut, looks OK
    3. Very Good – good or appropriate landscaping, well maintained.
    4. Other: _____

6. How would you rate the building appearance:

    1. In poor shape in need of obvious repair.
    2. In average shape, some repair work needed (painting, etc.).
    3. In good shape, looks well maintained.
    4. Other: _____

7. Agency identification – is it clear as to which agency manages this facility via logos or other outside identification:

    Yes_____   No_____   Other_____

8. Is there an outdoor orientation board, panel or kiosk that visitor can use prior to entering the facility that tells them about the site, facility, resource locations, or other orientation information:

    Yes_____   No_____

9. Are there any outdoor interpretive panels or experiences that visitors might encounter before they enter the visitor center:

    Yes_____   No _____

    If yes, do these interpretive materials help introduce the main theme or mission of this particular facility?
    _____
    _____

10. Is there an obvious handicap accessibility route from the parking area into the visitor center?   Yes_____ No _____.

11. In general, given all of the above considerations, how would you rate the your total exterior impression of this facility:

    Generally Poor,   Needs Work   About Average   Very Good to Excellent.

    1 ----------------2-----------------3--------------------4--------------------5
    You may add additional comments to the back of this page.

Visitor Center Internal Assessment:

1. Upon first entering this facility, what were your general first impressions (did you like it, not like it, didn't know where to go, etc.)_____

    _____

2. What do you think that the visitor's **first impressions** or feelings about this facility might be? _____

    _____

3. Was there a receptionist or "greeter" when you entered? Yes_____ No_____
    If yes, how was your welcome? _____

    _____

4. When you entered, was it clear as to where restrooms, exhibit rooms, etc. were located?   Yes____ No_____

5. What is the mix of interpretive programs or services available (circle all that apply)
    a. Exhibit room
    b. Outdoor viewing area
    c. Theater production/AV show
    d. Live interpretive programs
    e. Other_____

6. Was it clear at the beginning what the main objectives or mission of this center was?

    Yes_____ No _____

The exhibit room

7. When you first entered the exhibit room, was there an orientation exhibit that told you the main interpretive theme or purpose for this exhibit area and visitor center?
    Yes___ No____

8. What do you think the main interpretive theme or message for this visitor center is?
    _____
    _____

9. How would you rate your *first impression* of the exhibit room:

    1. Visually poor, didn't look very inviting or stimulating.
    2. Exhibits looked OK, not a lot of sparkle or draw.
    3. Looks like typical exhibit room – average
    4. Looks above average – inviting, visually well done.
    5. Excellent – looks like fun, visually draws me in.
    6. Other: _____

10. Does the exhibit room appear to be handicap accessible (room for wheelchairs between exhibit elements, etc.   Yes_____ Somewhat____ No

11. Are the exhibits visually accessible to visitors in a wheelchair (proper sight lines or access to interactive exhibit elements? Yes____ Somewhat_____ No _____

12. Are there hands on or tactile exhibits appropriate for visually impaired or blind visitors? Yes____ Somewhat____ No___

13. Are there any exhibit materials, exhibit label copy, or other educational materials that relate to the exhibits that are available in braille? Yes____ No _____

14. What is the age of the current exhibits (installed in….) _____.

15. Is the information dated or out-of-date? Yes_____ Somewhat_____ No_____

16. What is the current condition of the exhibits in general:

    a. In poor shape, old, and in need of replacement.
    b. In fair shape, will need some rehab work to update some of the exhibits ASAP.
    c. In good condition, need some update work in next year or two?
    d. In excellent condition.

Answer the following questions *after* you have had a chance to look at the exhibits.

17. In general, did you feel that the exhibits successfully communicated to visitors the main interpretive theme of the visitor center?   Yes___ Somewhat____ No_____
18. In general, did you feel that the majority of the exhibits effectively illustrated the main mission, story or theme of this visitor center?   Yes__ Somewhat____ No____ (feel free to comment on the back of this page).

19. In general, did you feel that the text or content level presentation of the exhibits were:

    a. Written to simply or needed more information
    b. Written at the correct content level (5th grade vocabulary).
    c. Written at to technical off a content level
    d. Other: _____

20. In general, did you feel that the point size of the main label text copy:

    a. Was two small and hard to read.
    b. Was OK or about average
    c.   Met professional museum standards of about 30 point size or larger.

21. In general, how would you rate the Attraction Power of the exhibits (their ability to draw you to them and hold your attention).

    a. Poor – most did not look interesting.
    b. About average – about ½ looked interesting.
    c. Excellent – most exhibits looked inviting

22. Of all of the exhibits you looked at in this center, how many exhibits out of the total did you look at and read **all the exhibit label copy**?

    a. Only a few of the exhibits.
    b. About ½ of the exhibits.
    c. Most of the exhibits.

23. In general, what do you think the **average time** you spent interacting with (reading the label copy, doing interactive activities) the exhibits in this exhibit room or gallery?

    a. Under 15 seconds per exhibit.
    b. Between 15 seconds and 1 minute per exhibit.
    c. Over 1 minute per exhibit.

Media mix and exhibit load.

Exhibits are rated by their "load factors", that being the amount of energy (cognitive, physical or both) that the exhibits requires a visitor to expend in order to interact with the exhibit. There are basically three kinds of exhibits:

Type 1 – Interactive exhibits: visitor is active, exhibit is active.
Type 2 – Exhibit where either the visitor is active (touch table) or the exhibit
         is active (watching a video).
Type 3 – Visitor does nothing, exhibit does nothing (graphic flatwork, display cases).

The type 1 exhibit has the highest load, the type 3 the lowest load. Visitors have the highest intrinsic interest in Type 1 exhibits and the lowest interest in Type 3 exhibits. In general we like visitor center exhibits to have a exhibit load mix of:

        Type 1 exhibits 20%
        Type 2 exhibits 60%
        Type 3 exhibits 20%

24. Based on the above ideal load mix, what do you think in the exhibit load mix for this visitor center exhibit room?   Type1 _____ Type 2 _____ Type 3 _____

Interpretive exhibits are different from purely "informational" exhibits in that interpretive exhibits must translate information into terms and analogies that every day people can relate to and understand. The following critique questions will focus on the perceived interpretive level of exhibit design and presentation.

25. In general, how well do you think that the exhibits used the interpretive design concept of "provocation" to get your attention?
    a. Not at all
    b. Somewhat
    c. Very well

26. In general, how well do you think that the exhibits "related" to the every day lives of visitors (via analogies, metaphors, or other ways for the visitor to better understand technical concepts)?
    a. Not at all
    b. Somewhat
    c. Very well

27. In general, how well do you think that the exhibits "revealed" their stories and key concepts to visitors (using surprise endings or other design/text strategies to have the visitors "guess" what the answer might be before revealing the answer to them)?
    a. Not at all
    b. Somewhat
    c. Very well

28. In general, and based on Tilden's Interpretive Principles, how would you rate the exhibits for their interpretive communication use:

    a. Very poor – mostly information, not interpretation.
    b. Somewhat interpretive – use of interpretive principles in about ½ of the exhibits.
    c. Very Interpretive – use of all interpretive principles in most exhibits.

29. An important part of the total exhibit experience is what you remember most by the time the exhibit room visit is over. What do you think were the three most important concepts or ideas that you personally gained from this visitor center exhibit experience:

    1. _____
    2. _____
    3. _____
30. Do you think that these were the three main concepts that the visitor center managers/agency wanted you to leave the visitor center knowing or feeling?
    Yes___ No_____ Not sure_____

31. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest rating you can give a visitor center or interpretive center in being able to **effectively present and interpret its mission and story to visitors so that visitors will REMEMBER** the main theme or messages after leaving the center, how well do you think this center did:

Poor Success   Average Success Above Average   Far above average

1---------------2--------------------3-----------------4---------------5

General Evaluation Discussion

1. What recommendations for visitor center improvements (exterior and interior) can you suggest (if needed).

2. What barriers or issues could possibly hinder putting the recommended improvements in place? (in consultation with site staff)

3. What would you consider to be the key or priority recommendations that should be done first (if any)? (in consultation with site staff).

Appendix F

National Association for Interpretation Conference
November 2001
Trip Report

NAI Focus Group Report

On 06 November 2001 members of the Visitor Center Initiative Committee held a focus group meeting with representatives from Corps Lakes and Visitor Centers representatives attending the NAI National Conference in Des Moines,IA. A listing of attendee is attached. VCI committee members involved were:

Nancy Rogers
Greg Miller
Debra Stokes
Joe Bertolini

The focus group meeting was held in Pella, IA in conjunction with a tour of Lake Red Rock and Saylorville Lake, COE projects located in the Rock Island District. A copy of the meeting agenda is attached.

28 Corps employees participated in the focus group session. A list of participants, their project represented and phone numbers address is attached.

The group was broken down into four sub-groups. Each sub-group was asked to respond to questions developed by the committee. Below are the categories and questions asked within each sub-group:

Validate Team Charter

1. What is the role of visitor centers in the Corps, the NRM program and at your project?

2. What can field projects expect to gain from the visitor center initiative?

3. Should all Corps visitor centers present national Corps missions?

4. How can the Corps story be presented in a passionate and appealing manner?

5. Could a standardized national Corps missions exhibit be developed that could be integrated into existing visitor centers? If so what type of media would be effective?

Visitor Center regulations/publications

1. Are the objectives of the visitor center program as stated in the ER valid?

2. Do the existing regulations and publications provide adequate policy guidance?

3. Should interpretive objectives for visitor centers be the same regardless of the size and type?

4. Should visitor center classifications be redefined? Are they needed at all?

5. Under what conditions and locations should the Corps' national and/or regional story be told?

6. Should Districts be encouraged to build new visitor centers where none exist if resources can be found through partnerships and congressional funding?

7. How does the visitor center program relate to the overall interpretive program?

8. What are the appropriate planning documents for visitor centers? (Master Plan, OMP, Design memorandum, interpretive prospectus, objectives).

Resourcing for Visitor Centers

1. Should allocation of resources for visitor centers be based on visitation, size of the project, location or other criteria?

2. Are visitor centers program adequately resourced (funding & staff)?

    A. What are the barriers to funding the visitor center program and how should they be addressed?

    B. Is visitor center staffing adequate? Why or why not? What needs to be done to change this?

    C. Should contract staffing be used? Why or why not?

3. What innovative approaches can be used to resource visitor centers (partnerships, friends groups, cooperating associations, development of national lakes foundation, fee demonstration)?

4. Should fee demonstration be pursued?

5. What role should partners play in the development and operation of visitor centers?

Training and Field Support

1. What kinds of training are needed for park manages and rangers to support the visitor center program?

2. How can the NRM Gateway be used to support the visitor center program?

3. Does the Corps need in-house consultants to assist visitor center and exhibit development?

4. What other support would you like to see?

NAI Visitor Center Initiative
Workshop Agenda 07 November 2001

10:00 am   Welcome, Introduction and General Info

10:20   Breakout sessions with focus groups

12:00 noon   Lunch

12:45 pm   Focus Group presentations

1:45   Wrap-up and Close

2:00   Adjourn

NOTES:

The following are the responses from each sub-group to the questions posed. Responses are in no particular order and only minor editing was done to add clarity to the group's response.

Validate Team Charter
Facilitator – Debra Stokes

1. What is the role of visitor centers in the Corps, the NRM program and at your project?

- Inform the public and defend the Corps, even to the point of explaining our failures.
- First stop for onsite visitors.
- It becomes the dumping ground for everything (NRRS, walk-in reservations, etc.) at the project. Staff has to deal with things that have nothing to do with the visitor center.
- A meeting place for committees from local surrounding area.

1. What can field projects expect to gain from the visitor center initiative?

- Stop district/division from reprogramming monies earmarked for the visitor center and/or interpretation.
- Raise the importance of visitor centers so line items get above the cutoff mark.
- Regulation is too restrictive. This program requires budgetary equal footing. This needs to be considered a priority, not fluff.
- Educate other Corps elements on why visitor centers are so important.
- Ensure that the field offices understand how important partnering will be to the future of this program.
- Fix the cooperative association and cost sharing regulations so we don't have to go to Office of Counsel and fight the battle all over again.
- Explain how the national perspective should fit into the local visitor center.

3. Should all Corps visitor centers present national Corps missions?

- Would like to see one small exhibit on the national perspective.
- Must be able to mold this exhibit into local exhibits (no "cow heads").
- Educate the local staff to what the Corps does nationwide.
- Field personnel fell they have to cover everything including "the kitchen sink" in their exhibits. They do not feel they have permission to focus on the local mission(s).

4. How can the Corps story be presented in a passionate and appealing manner?

- Clothes, music, etc cannot date this exhibit.
- We want high quality images.

- Would like this downloadable from the Internet.
- Tell what the Corps **does**, not what the Corps **is**.
- Provoke, relate, reveal!

5. Could a standardized national Corps missions exhibit be developed that could be integrated into existing visitor centers? If so what type of media would be effective?

- The video needs to be exportable for many media.
- Consider making this video available in varying lengths.
- Look at this exhibit as the Corps "commercial."
- There is a need for a panel exhibit.
- Define the "Corps Story." Is it our history, our current activities, our future or all the above?
- Would like to see the exhibit updated every 3 – 5 years.

Visitor Center regulations/publications
Facilitator – Greg Miller

1. Are the objectives of the visitor center program as stated in the ER valid?

- The interpretive objectives should be revised. Objectives are usually measurable. Because evaluation may be difficult with existing resources, the focus group preferred the term, "communication goals". All visitor centers regardless of size should strive to accomplish the following goals:
  ➢ Communicate Army Corps missions from a national, regional, and project perspective.
  ➢ Provide environmental education/interpretation relating to Corps missions.
  ➢ Provide orientation to project recreational opportunities and safe use.
  ➢ Foster stewardship of public lands and waters.
  ➢ Interpret natural and cultural features and points of interest (this goal is customer driven, the other goals are agency driven).

2. Do the existing regulations and publications provide adequate policy guidance?

- There are inadequacies relating to visitor center classifications, process and common understanding of terminology.
- The regulation is particularly weak with regard to visitor centers that are partnership efforts. The current definition does not always accommodate the partner's interests.
- Visitor centers should be redefined for the next decade. The definition should be flexible, relevant and stress the importance of the program.
- The planning and evaluation process in the EP needs to be better defined including a definition of the terms to better reflect accepted industry terminology and procedures.

- The group recommends a definition section in the EP to promote common understanding of the visitor center program and its development.
- Terms defined might include:

  ➢ Partnership
  ➢ Visitor center
  ➢ Interpretive sign
  ➢ Exhibit
  ➢ Display
  ➢ Exhibit concept plan
  ➢ Interpretive plan
  ➢ Prospectus
  ➢ Master plan
  ➢ Cooperative assoc.
  ➢ Theme
  ➢ Kiosk

3. Should interpretive objectives for visitor centers be the same regardless of size and type?

- The simple answer is yes. All visitor centers regardless of size should strive to meet the communication goals. The group consensus was that some visitor centers are resourced improperly because of the classifications that were given them and that classifications also influence the content they have. Not all centers will meet the objectives, however they should operate at a level, which is commensurate with visitor need.

4. Should visitor center classifications be redefined?

- Yes. The regulation defines visitor centers in terms of content that should be communicated. Class A-National and regional, Class B, Project level information, Class C, Office that dispenses information. The focus group consensus was that all visitor centers regardless of size should have the same communication goals, including the National and regional Corps missions. The ER/EP should define Corps operated visitor center as an interpretive facility that has the following features:
  ➢ Structure not necessarily limited to project lands
  ➢ Restrooms
  ➢ Publications are available
  ➢ Staff available to provide information (customer service for the Corps)
  ➢ Exhibits (ranging form posters to dioramas, AV) displays are developed at a level commensurate with perceived need.

    - This definition would include most of the facilities currently defined as Class C Information Centers. So the term information center may not be needed. Other visitor contact points should be

defined in the EP to show their relationship and connection with the visitor center (overlooks, gate houses, ranger stations, kiosks). Are they needed at all? No!

5. Under what conditions and locations should the Corps' national and/or regional story be told?

- In all visitor centers.

6. Should Districts be encouraged to build new visitors centers where none exist if resources can be found through partnerships and congressional funding?

- Yes, current restrictions on building facilities seem to relate to CG funding and congressional authorization of the project rather than need. If visitor centers can be justified through the budget process and partnerships created to build facilities where they are needed, the regulation should not create additional hurdles.

7. How does the visitor center program relate to the overall interpretive program?

- The visitor center is one component. This relationship is defined in the overall interpretive plan.

8. What are the appropriate planning documents for visitor centers? (Master Plan, OMP, Design memorandum, interpretive prospectus, objectives).

- Much confusion here, need better definitions and step-by-step process.

<u>Resourcing Visitor Centers: Ideas</u>
Facilitator – Nancy Rogers

1.   Develop a formula that is specific to the market area of the Visitor Center- the boundary of that area should not go beyond where budget decisions are made. I.e.: Division area vs. District.
- Age of Center
- Visitation
- Location
- Condition
- Outreach area
- Population
- Significance
- Potential for positive PR

It was thought that taking these elements into consideration it would equalize the imbalance of some VC's that receive high profile visitation and programming but are not being adequately resourced.

2. All Visitor Centers should become integral element in the Division Strategic Communications – Business Plan.

3.   Funding:
- M.A.P.- Museum Assessment Program
- Cooperating Associations
- Community Development Grants
- O&M Funds
- NEETF Grants
- Special Congressional "adds"

Barriers to Resourcing:

1) Competing Priorities/ Backlog Maintenance
2) Legal Mandates take money away
- Endangered Species
- Cultural Resources
- ADA
3) Attitudes toward VCs and Interpretive Programs in general (i.e.: not important)
4) Baseline Budget is too low for project to operate- this creates a downward spiral of funding shortfalls.

Solutions

1) Legal Mandate to fund VCs.
2) Network Congress
3) Work with local constituency/ Stakeholders/ Volunteers

Staffing:

A. **COE: Problems**

1) Staffing levels have decreased over time
2) Visitor Centers are being operated by volunteers, students, other agencies
3) Low visibility of program among Natural Resource Program
4) Other rangers don't want to work in VC and don't know how
- Not seen as "real work"
- Don't see value of interpretive work
5) Other workload- interpretation just one of many duties
6) VC Prospectus calls for unrealistic staffing levels
7) Training issues

8) High turnover
9) Cost of living in area

B. <u>COE: Solutions</u>

1) More people, budget, training, volunteers
2) Budget needs to keep up with COLA's and grade increases
3) Contracting in VC
4) SCA volunteers
5) Cooperating Associations
6) AmeriCorps
7) AARP Senior Employment
8) Joining with other Federal, State, local agencies to staff VC

C. <u>Contracting: Problems</u>

1) ***Overwhelming negative response to contracting VCs***
   - Agency ID gets lost with Contractors wearing their own uniforms
   - Inadequate quality control of information being disseminated
   - Does not save money in the long run
   - Diminishes the importance of the VC Program- reflects poorly on professionalism of rangers
   - Lack of flexibility of what the employee can do; i.e.: non-standard work
   - Contractors do minimal amount of technical work
   - Contracts are difficult to get thru Contracting that reflect all aspects of the job and oversight of quality interpretation

D. <u>Contracting: Solutions</u>

Contract staff needs on-site supervision on a regular basis

<u>**Innovative Approaches**</u>

1. **Fee Demonstration Program**- *overwhelming support of this idea! BUT only if it's used at Visitor Centers that can support charging fees (a local public that doesn't oppose), money goes back to VC not just the project, and does not reduce the amount of money already budgeted.*
2. Cooperating Associations
3. Partnerships
4. Friends Groups
5. Fee-for-profit groups, fee for school group use

There was a question on how the National Lakes Program would affect visitor centers?

Training and Field Support
Facilitator – Joe Bertolini

1. What kinds of training are needed for park manages and rangers to support the visitor center program?
   - Volunteer recruitment and management
   - ADA related issues – Facility & Display improvements and standards.
   - ADA regulations & how they relate to VC operation.
   - Basic Orientation training for temp staff (exportable, web based, etc.)
   - Assist OM's, PM's, OP chiefs and higher with stressing importance of VC in Corps mission.
   - Train OM's, PM's OP Chiefs & higher about importance of Cooperating Associations and their impact on VC's.
   - Have Interp Services advanced level course for VC staff.
   - Provide grant writing and funding training.
   - Revise, revisit or rescind policy on number of Corps employees allowed to attend workshops/trainings/conferences. This is a huge impediment to the exchange of information, knowledge and networking.
   - Develop training on how to do effective WEB site searches.
   - Include in professional development committee flow chart and training standards for professional level VC managers.
   - Train us on how to identify and encourage local advocates, i.e. congressional and other levels of support.

2. How can the NRM Gateway be used to support the visitor center program?
   - Develop list of USACE VC contacts from across the nation and post. Keep it up to date and add links to e-mail and VC WEB pages.
   - Develop a message board (list server?) for VC issues where questions and answers can be posted.
   - Keep an archive of previously asked questions (FAQ?).
   - Post success stories and pictures of good ideas.
   - Highlight new regulations or changes to regs.
   - Link to HQ publications page. Add or improve the search engine.
   - Provide a subscription option for folks to get messages about changes to the page.
   - Keep in mind everyone doesn't have a DSL or high speed connection. (Keep it simple, frames vs. text versions).

3. Does the Corps need in-house consultants to assist visitor center and exhibit development?
   - NO!
   - Would prefer an optional Center of Expertise, maybe something like the Harpers Ferry NPS program?

- Want greater local input from the ground up on the design, layout, location, flow, etc. of facilities. Want to be involved and not just told by engineers what they will get.

4. What other support would you like to see?
- VC's should be <u>more</u> important to the agency than OMBIL, NRRS, FEMS/MAXIMO, etc. Give use the same level of support and funding!
- Make marketing the Corps not be a bad word. <u>ADVERTISE!</u>
- Include advertising, marketing, public relations responsibilities in MOU's (Bass Pro, NWTF, DU, BSA, NRC, etc.).
- Implement these suggestion don't let the VCI be a dead end.
- Army Corps needs to be willing to support NAI, NRPA with financial contributions. If we can support the National Water Safety Congress why not others?
- Be sure to get public involvement in VC development.
- Why has RAMP failed?
- Do away with PAO and let Natural Resources handle the Corps public relations.

Attendance List

Name	Location	Phone #
Debra Stokes*	New Orleans Dist	(504) 862-1344
Donald Bardole	Upper Miss River Proj	(309) 796-5338
Leon Hodges	Upper Miss River Proj	(309) 794-4527
Toni Westland	JAX Dist, Lake Okeechobee	(863) 983-8101x245
Greg Miller*	Kansas City Dist	(816) 983-3644
Dee Flower	Seattle Dist	(208) 437-7224
Vicky Silcox	Fort Peck Lake	(406) 526-3411
Carol Ryan	Gavins Point	(402) 667-7873
Rachel Garren	St Louis Dist	(314) 331-8624
Pam Doty	Lake Shelbyville	(217) 774-3951
Corrine Hudapp	Blackhawk Park	(608) 648-3314
Maria Shafer	Lake Shelbyville	(217) 774-3313
Mary Ann Heitmeyer	Mark Twain Lake	(573) 735-4097
Kevin Ewbank	Illinois Waterway VC	(815) 667-4054
Thom Holden	Lake Superior Maritime VC	218) 720-5271
Laura Bainbridge	Lake Red Rock	(641) 828-7522
Kelly Ulrick	Saylorville Lake	(515) 276-4656
Nancy Rogers*	Bay Model VC	(415) 332-3871
Susan Kline	Pittsburgh Dist	(412) 395-7179
Heather Burke	Dworshak Dam	(208) 476-1279
Sue Clevinstine	Rock Island Dist	(309) 794-5839
Douglas R. Bailey	Cochiti Lake	(505) 465-0307
Robert W. Esperson	Mississippi Headwaters	(218) 829-3334
Charolotte Lister	Lookout Point Dam	(541) 937-2131x142
Sue Layden	Lake Sonoma	(707) 433-9483x27
Don Wadleigh	Chicago Dist	(312) 353-6400x4015
Patrick Berry	Bonneville L&D	(541) 374-8820
Robin C. Norris	Bonneville L&D	(541) 374-8820
Tracy Spry	Lake Red Rock	(641) 828-7522
Joe Bertolini*	Caesar Creek Lake	(513) 897-1050
Leane Cruitt	MVS	No Phone # given
Danny Sandersfeld	MVS	No phone # given

   * VCI committee member & workshop facilitator.

Appendix G

United State Forest Service
Ensuring the Sustainable Future of Visitor Centers Conference
April 2002

Summary
Ensuring the Sustainable Future of Visitor Centers

United State Forest Service
Lied Conservation Center, Arbor Day Farm
Nebraska City, NE
April 1-5, 2002

This report summarizes the meeting and is intended to provide information to the Corps Engineers Visitor Center Initiative Team to evaluate for potential impact on draft policy recommendations. The purpose of the meeting was to provide training to Forest Service visitor center managers to improve their operation and management skills and to provide them with the opportunity to exchange information. An agenda for the entire meeting is attached as a pdf file. A variety of handouts were distributed. A few are listed below. Please contact me for copies.

1. Grant Resources and Information, Bob Loudon, FS Grant Strategies Enterprise Team, see attached pdf file.
2. Participating Agreement Between USDA, Bureau of Reclamation, NPS, BLM, Utah DNR, Ducks unlimited, and Salt Lake Convention and Tourism Bureau regarding I-80 West Visitor Information Center and Exhibits Project
3. Participating Agreement Between USDA and Sinclair Oil Corp regarding Snowbasin Discovery Center Exhibits
4. Challenge Cost-Share Agreement between Kaibab NF and the City of Williams for the Williams/ USDA FS Visitor Center
5. PowerPoint entitled, "Integrating Accessibility into Visitor Center Facilities and Programs by Janet Zeller, Accessibility Program manager for the USDA Forest Service, ph. 202-205-9597, e-mail jzeller@fs.fed.us
6. Exhibition Accessibility Checklist, Smithsonian Institute
7. Developing Effective Partnerships, Don Howlett, Hiawatha NF

Opening Remarks
Gail van der Bie, Assistant Director, Facilities and Services, Recreation, Heritage and Wilderness Staff, Washington Office, ph. 202-205-1756 e-mail gvanderbie@fs.fed.us

Gail participated in a Partnership Authority working group to evaluate partnership authorities and to define processes for the future. The task force finished the draft report and will present to FS Leadership April 18, 2002. The task force has identified 13 legislative fixes. The following list was taken from here explanation of the executive summary:

1. Statement from Congress to clarify their support of partnerships with non-profits.
2. Definition of mutually beneficial agreements. Better define the difference between grants and procurements.

3. Provide the flexibility to use Challenge cost share agreements at any share level and provide authority for the government to enter into re-imbursement agreements.
4. Expand Cooperative Association authorities to broaden scope (similar to NPS authorities).
5. Amend Forest Foundation authority to allow local units.
6. Define employee role in fund raising efforts of non-profits (use NPS model).
7. Clarify authority to deliver conservation education using appropriated funds and to work with partners to deliver programs.
8. Allow partners credit for volunteer hours in calculating credit for cost share.
9. Allow partnerships with colleges and universities not currently allowed.

In addition to identification of problems with existing legislative authorities, the working group has a number of policy recommendations:

1. Form task force to work 2-5 years to re-engineer partnering process and policy
2. Develop handbook for partnering
3. Simplify processes
4. Provide more field level tools such as standardized agreements
5. Provide better accounting of partners $
6. Provide flexibility for multi-year partnerships
7. Training of field level personnel
8. Develop a partnership resource center
9. Identify partnership contact/mentors
10. Work with regions to identify staffing needs

Gail indicated that the FS has a sponsor in the house to work the legislation. The Forest Service's draft report *Partnership Authorities Workgroup Report, Partnerships,* 12 April 2002 is available at
http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/boise/pt/presentations/Draft_PAW_Report_04.12.02.pdf#xml=http://www.fs.fed.us/cgi-bin/texis/searchallsites/search.allsites/xml.txt?query=partnership+guide&db=allsites&id=3d7fdf9a0/ganda/. The report summarizes the Forest Service's findings of previous partnership reviews, input from agency practitioners, input from partners, and analyzed existing regulations, policy memos, agency manuals and directives.
a partnership guide, templates for agreements, clauses and links to other resources

Opening Remarks
Tom Thompson
Deputy Chief, National Forest System, Washington Office
 Tom focused his remarks on focused partnerships and community connections for Forest Service Visitor Centers. He stressed improvement of visitor services, joint ownership of Forest Service programs by all business functions, and reconnection to the field and the real customers. He gave his definition of leadership as the capacity to translate intention into reality. He asked managers to embrace corridor planning and think about recreation planning from the tourism perspective.

Keynote: Regional Tourism and Visitor Centers
Ted Eubanks, President, Fermata Inc., P.O. Box 5485, Austin TX 78763, ph. 512-472-0052

Ted discussed at length demographic trends and the economic transformation that is taking place throughout the U.S. Travel and tourism generates $541 billion and 7.8 million jobs each year. Five of the top 10 travel related activities are park related. 46% of all Americans participate in "soft adventure" (camping, hiking, biking, water skiing, wildlife viewing). The top three recreation activities gaining in popularity are bird watching, hiking and primitive camping. The number 1 marketing tool for travel is the web. Visitor centers are portals to engage visitors with causal outdoor interests. They provide the nexus between the resource and the community. The future of visitor centers lie in targeting the rapidly increasing number of visitors who seek soft adventure such as wildlife viewing. Visitor centers should provide the orientation and education to engage the visitors with the resource.

Note: Ted Eubanks in a nationally recognized expert on experimental tourism. He has been active in Texas working with the State legislature on Birding Feasibility Studies and sustainable economic development.

Panel: Linking Centers to Regional Tourism Efforts

Gordon Williams discussed partnerships between the Forest Service, BLM, Utah State Parks, NPS and others in connection with the winter Olympics. An example was the addition of a new Discovery center at Snow Basin ski resort. An organization was formed called VIS (Visitor Information Services) to provide comprehensive information to visitors about public lands in Utah. This effort has grown to include most western states the web address is http://www.publiclands.org/html/home.html.

Steve Hoeker discussed the partnerships, which provide the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center. Here the USDA, NPS, USFW, Wisconsin Historical Society and the University of Wisconsin Extension provide a visitor center whose mission is to provide a gateway to the Northern Great Lakes. The center is a primary stop on the tour bus circuit and the lake cruise circuit.

Jose Ortega discussed the El Portal Rain Forest Center in Puerto Rica. It is the premier interpretive facility to introduce cruise visitors to the natural environment of Puerto Rica.

Keynote: "Friend Raising"
Curt Burkhholtz, Executive Director, Rocky Mountain Nature Assoc., ph 970-586-0108, e-mail curtb@rmna.org

Curt's talk focused on "Friend Raising", the identification of our park's true friends. These are the people who come to our parks frequently, year after year or each month. They are the park groupies. He advocates targeting this audience for the key members of

your "friends" group or Assoc. During his session we played the game, "Non-Profit-opoly". This is a real game where government managers learn how to partner with non-profits.

Note: Curt helped establish the RMNPA in 1986. He serves as co-trustee of a non-profit trust and has acted as advisor for more than two dozen "friends groups" .He has initiated fund raising projects that have resulted in 3 visitor centers, five accessible trails, one museum renovation, four land purchases and an endowed fellowship.

Panel: How to Operate a Visitor Center in Partnership with Others

See attached agenda for list of panel members. The panel discussed the role of Cooperative Associations in actively managing the visitor centers. The role of the Association examples ranged from business partnerships for sales to sites that were managed by the Assoc. Director and staffed by the Assoc. Ideas for success included fee-based programs, dedicated fundraisers, active and committed board members.

Keynote: Best Practices for Visitor Center Operations
Pat Barry, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Pat emphasized Customer Service as the cornerstone of a successful visitor center program. Pat teaches his staff to do daily "random acts of exceptional customer service". These acts are done deliberately to demonstrate to visitors that staff care and are willing to go the extra mile. The results are far reaching.

Understanding BFES and How to Use It

Dave Hackett, Program Manager for Developed Sites, Recreation, Heritage and Wilderness Resources, Washington Office

Dave discussed the FS performance based budget system and how to make the most of it. He stressed matching outputs to production costs. He indicated that one outcome of BFES has been to shift target levels in the regions. Some regions gained and some lost $. He emphasized that managers need to talk about what you are doing with the $ you have instead of saying that you want/need more $. He indicated that managers should emphasize what they can do if they get more $ and what will happen if the get less $. In order to do this you will have to have a detailed program of work the list tasks, training, hours of operation, products produce, maintenance work/schedule, value of leveraged funds. All tasks should be prioritized to demonstrate what would happen at different funding levels.

Know Your Volunteers
Dr. James Abshire, Pacific Southwest Research Station

Dr. Abshire is a researcher for the FS and recently conducted a study of California State Parks Volunteers. The volunteer profile is older, female, educated and retired. 69% of volunteers travel 30 miles or less to the work site. They usually volunteer less than five years and less that 100 hours per year. The most important reasons for volunteering are to interact with visitors and become part of a work family. There is much competition between Volunteer sectors. Factors that help to recruit and retain volunteers include training, amount of staff interaction, opportunities to use past skills.

Panel-Honing Your Volunteer Management Skills

See attached agenda for list of panel members. This panel emphasized treating volunteers as unpaid employees and connecting the volunteer work to the regular program of staff work. Committed management support must be evident.

Panel-Nurturing Your Staff-Coaching, Training, Retaining

See attached agenda for list of panel members. This panel emphasized training as a primary factor in retaining good volunteers. Here are some tips:

1. Provide at least one week of training
2. Meet and eat monthly
3. Shadow paid staff
4. 250 hours is awarded with new shirt or vest
5. Provide mentors
6. Tourism hospitality training
7. Volunteer newsletter
8. Award 500 hours with gift certificate from book store
9. Quarterly social

Panel-Working with Alternative Workforces
See attached agenda for list of panel members. This panel discussed Enterprise teams that were formed as part of Al Gore's re-invention of government initiative. Enterprise teams work nationwide as consultants, but are FS employees. Services are non-competitive. They work full time in their area of expertise. They operate as a business and the requesting site funds all work. Examples of enterprise teams include: exhibit design, interpretive planning, grant writing, marketing, and meeting planning/coordination.

Breakout Sessions

Track One- The Value of a Business Plan, Tom Christensen

Track Two-Refurbishing Your Center, Terry Wong, Director Center for Design and Interpretation, Region 2

I attended track two. It discussed in detail the following topics:

1. The interpretive planning process
2. FS Built Environment Image Guide
3. Project Development Process and Interpretive Master Plan
4. Integrating Accessibility
5. Case Studies: USDA Forest Service Information Center, Washington D.C. and Begich Boggs VC, Chugach NF
6. Dialog with Participants

Strategic Next Steps- Priorities for Washington Office

This was an action planning session to identify priorities for the Washington Office. Participants divided into work groups and were asked to identify program needs and priorities. They were to report on their top 2 priorities. These lists were compared and the problems that appeared the most frequently were given a priority rating in the overall list. The number one priority that was identified for attention of Washington staff was to deal with partnership issues. Other issues identified were:

1. Streamline approval processes
2. Provide tools for partnering success
3. Review position descriptions
4. Provide professional career ladder
5. Provide training on budget performance measures
6. Elevate education and interpretation to equal level with other core FS business functions
7. One stop shopping visitor information intranet site
8. National meetings biannually and regional meetings in off year
9. Standards for visitor centers
10. Update forest service manual
11. Elevate visitor center staff grades

Appendix H

Special Populations: Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media

National Park Service
Harpers Ferry Center

June 1999

Special Populations:
Programmatic Accessibility
Guidelines for Interpretive Media

National Park Service
Harpers Ferry Center

June 1999

Prepared by
Harpers Ferry Center
Accessibility Task Force

Statement of Purpose

This document is a guide for promoting full access to interpretive media to ensure that people with physical and mental disabilities have access to the same information necessary for safe and meaningful visits to National Parks. Just as the needs and abilities of individuals cannot be reduced to simple statements, it is impossible to construct guidelines for interpretive media that can apply to every situation in the National Park System.

These guidelines define a high level of programmatic access which can be met in most situations. They articulate key areas of concern and note generally accepted solutions.
Due to the diversity of park resources and the variety of interpretive situations, flexibility and versatility are important.

Each interpretive medium contributes to the total park program. All media have inherent strengths and weaknesses, and it is our intent to capitalize on their strengths and provide alternatives where they are deficient. It should also be understood that any interpretive medium is just one component of the overall park experience. in some instances, especially with regard to learning disabilities, personal services, that is one-on-one interaction, may be the most appropriate and versatile interpretive approach.

In the final analysis, interpretive design is subjective, and dependent on both aesthetic considerations as well a the particular characteristics and resources available for a specific program. Success or failure should be evaluated by examining all interpretive offerings of a park. Due to the unique characteristics of each situation, parks should be evaluated on a case by case basis. Nonetheless, the goal is to fully comply with NPS policy:

"...To provide the highest level of accessibility possible and feasible for persons with visual, hearing, mobility, and mental impairments, consistent with the obligation to conserve park resources and preserve the quality of the park experience for everyone."
NPS Special Directive 83-3, Accessibility for Disabled Persons

Audiovisual Programs

Audiovisual programs include video programs, and audio and interactive programs. As a matter of policy, all audiovisual programs produced by the Harpers Ferry Center will include some method of captioning.   The Approach used will vary according to the conditions of the installation area and the media format used, and will be selected in consultation with the parks and regions.

The captioning method will be identified as early as possible in the planning process and will be presented in an integrated setting where possible. To the extent possible, visitors will be offered a choice in viewing captioned or uncaptioned versions, but in situations where a choice is not possible or feasible, a captioned version of all programs will be made available.   Park management will decide on the most appropriate operational approach for the particular site.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

1. The theater, auditorium, or viewing area should be accessible and free of architectural barriers, or alternative accommodations will be provided.   UFAS 4.1.

2. Wheelchair locations will be provided according to ratios outlined in UFAS 4.1.2(18a).

3. Viewing heights and angles will be favorable for those in designated wheelchair locations.

4. In designing video or interactive components, control mechanisms will be placed in accessible location, usually between 9" and 48" from the ground and no more than 24" deep.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

Simultaneous audio description will be considered for installations where the equipment can be
properly installed and maintained.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

1. All audiovisual programs will be produced with appropriate captions.

2. Copies of scripts will be provided to the parks as a standard procedure.

3. Audio amplification and listening systems will be provided in accordance with UFAS 4.1.2(18b).

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. Unnecessarily complex and confusing concepts will be avoided.

2. Graphic elements will be chosen to communicate without reliance on the verbal component.

3. Narration will be concise and free of unnecessary jargon and technical information.

Exhibits

Numerous factors affect the design of exhibits, reflecting the unique circumstances of the specific space and the nature of the materials to be interpreted. It is clear that thoughtful, sensitive design can go a long way in producing exhibits that can be enjoyed by a broad range of people. Yet, due to the diversity of situations encountered, it is impossible to articulate guidelines that can be applied universally.

In some situations, the exhibit designer has little or no control over the space. Often exhibits are placed in areas ill suited for that purpose, they may incorporate large or unyielding specimens, may incorporate sensitive artifacts which require special environmental controls, and room decor or architectural features may dictate certain solutions. All in all, exhibit design is an art which defies simple description. However, one central concern is to communicate the message to the largest audience possible. Every reasonable effort will be made to eliminate any factors limiting communication through physical modification or by providing an alternate means of communication.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

Note: The **Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)** is the standard followed by the National Park Service and is therefore the basis for the accessibility standards for exhibits, where applicable.

1. Height/position of labels: Body copy on vertical exhibit walls should be placed at between **36"** and **60"** from the floor.

2. Artifact Cases:

   a. Maximum height of floor of artifact case display area shall be no higher than **30"** from the floor of the room. This includes vitrines that are recessed into an exhibit wall.

   b. Artifact labels should be placed so as to be visible to a person within a **43"** to **51"** eye level. This includes mounting labels within the case at an angle to maximize its visibility to all viewers.

3. Touchable Exhibits: Touchable exhibits positioned horizontally should be placed no higher than **30"** from the floor. Also, if the exhibit is approachable only on one side, it should be no deeper than **31"**.

4. Railings/barriers: Railings around any horizontal model or exhibit element shall have a maximum height of **36"** from the floor.

5. Information desks: Information desks and sales counters shall include a section made to accommodate both a visitor in a wheelchair and an employee in a wheelchair working on the other side. A section of the desk/counter shall have the following dimensions:

    a. Height from the floor to the top: **28** to **34** inches. (ADAAG 4.32.4)

    b. Minimum knee clearance space: **27" high**, **30" wide** and **19" deep** of clearance underneath the desk is the minimum space required under ADAAG 4.32.3, but a space **30" high**, **36" wide** and **24" deep** is recommended.

    c. Width of top surface of section: at least **36 inches**. Additional space must be provided for any equipment such as a cash register.

    d. Area underneath desk: Since both sides of the desk may have to accommodate a wheelchair, this area should be open all the way through to the other side. In addition, there should be no sharp or abrasive surfaces underneath the desk. The floor space behind the counter shall be free of obstructions.

6. Circulation Space:

    a. Passageways through exhibits shall be at least **36" wide**.

    b. If an exhibit passageway reaches a dead-end, an area **60" by 78"** should be provided at the end for turning around.

    c. Objects projecting from walls with their leading edges between **27"** and **80"** above the floor shall protrude no more than **4"** in passageways or aisles. Objects projecting from walls with their leading edges at or below **27"** above the floor can protrude any amount.

    d. Free-standing objects mounted on posts or pylons may overhang a maximum of **12"** from **27"** to **80"** above the floor. (ADAAG 4.4.1)

    e. Protruding objects shall not reduce the clear width of an accessible route to less than the minimum required amount. (ADAAG 4.4.1)

    f. Passageways or other circulation spaces shall have a minimum clear head room of **80"**. For example, signage hanging from the ceiling must have at least 80" from the floor to the bottom edge of the sign. (ADAAG 4.4.2)

7. Floors:

   a. Floors and ramps shall be stable, level, firm and slip-resistant.

   b. Changes in level between **1/4"** and **1/2"** shall be beveled with a slope no greater than **1:2**. Changes in level greater than **1/2"** shall be accomplished by means of a ramp that complies with ADAAG 4.7 or 4.8. (ADAAG 4.5.2)

   c. Carpet in exhibit areas shall comply with ADAAG 4.5.3 for pile height, texture, pad thickness, and trim.

8. Seating - Interactive Stations/Work Areas: The minimum knee space underneath a work desk is **27" high**, **30" wide** and **19" deep**, with a clear floor space of at least **30" by 30"** in front. The top of the desk or work surface shall be between **28"** and **34"** from the floor. (ADAAG 4.32, Fig.45)

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

1. Tactile models and other touchable exhibit items should be used whenever possible. Examples of touchable exhibit elements include relief maps, scale models, raised images of simple graphics, reproduction objects, and replaceable objects (such as natural history or geological specimens, cultural history items, etc.).

2. Typography - Readability of exhibit labels by visitors with various degrees of visual impairment shall be
   maximized by using the following guidelines:

   a. Type size - **No** type in the exhibit shall be smaller than **24 point**.

   b. Typeface - The most readable typefaces should be used whenever possible, particularly for body copy. They are: Times Roman, Palatino, Century, Helvetica and Universe.

   c. Styles, Spacing - Text set in both caps and lower case is easier to read than all caps. Choose letter spacing and word spacing for maximum readability. Avoid too much italic type.

   d. Line Length - Limit the line length for body copy to no more than **45 to 50 characters per line**.

   e. Amount of Text - Each unit of body copy should have a maximum of **45-60 words**.

   f. Margins - Flush left, ragged right margins are easiest to read.

3. Color:

   a. Type/Background Contrast - Percentage of contrast between the type and the background should be a **minimum of 70%** .

   b. Red/Green - Do not use red on green or green on red as the type/background color combination.

   c. Do not place body copy on top of graphic images that impair readability.

4. Samples: During the design process, it is recommended that samples be made for review of all size, typeface and color combinations for labels in that exhibit.

5. Exhibit Lighting:

   a. All labels shall receive sufficient, even light for good readability. Exhibit text in areas where light levels have been reduced for conservation purposes should have a minimum of 10 footcandles of illumination.

   b. Harsh reflections and glare should be avoided.

   c. The lighting system shall be flexible enough to allow adjustments on-site.

   d. Transitions between the floor and walls, columns or other structures should be made clearly visible. Finishes for vertical surfaces should contrast clearly with the floor finish. Floor circulation routes should have a minimum of 10 footcandles of illumination.

6. Signage: When permanent building signage is required as a part of an exhibit project, the ADAAG guidelines shall be consulted. Signs which designate permanent rooms and spaces shall comply with ADAAG 4.30.1, 4.30.4, 4.30.5, and 4.30.6. Other signs which provide direction to or information about functional spaces of the building shall comply with ADAAG 4.30.1, 4.30.2, 4.30.3, and 4.30.5. Note: When the International Symbol of Accessibility (wheelchair symbol) is used, **the word "Handicapped" shall not be used** beneath the symbol. Instead, use the word "Accessible".

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

1. Information presented via audio formats will be duplicated in a visual medium, such as in the exhibit label copy or by captioning. All video programs incorporated into the exhibit which contain audio shall be open captioned.

2. Amplification systems and volume controls should be incorporated with audio equipment used individually by the visitor, such as audio handsets.

3. Information desks shall allow for Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDD) equipment.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. The exhibits will present the main interpretive themes on a variety of levels of complexity, so they can be understood by people with varying abilities and interests.

2. The exhibits should avoid unnecessarily complex and confusing topics, technical terms, and unfamiliar expressions. Pronunciation aids should be provided where appropriate.

3. Graphic elements shall be used to communicate non-verbally.

4. The exhibits shall be a multi-sensory experience. Techniques to maximize the number of senses used in the exhibits should be encouraged.

5. Exhibit design shall use color and other creative approaches to facilitate comprehension of maps by visitors with directional impairments.

Historic Furnishings

Historically refurnished rooms offer the public a unique interpretive experience by placing visitors within historic spaces. Surrounded by historic artifacts visitors can feel the spaces "come alive" and relate more directly to the historic events or personalities commemorated by the park.

Accessibility is problematical in many NPS furnished sites because of the very nature of historic architecture. Buildings were erected with a functional point of view that is many times at odds with our modern views of accessibility.

The approach used to convey the experience of historically furnished spaces will vary from site to site. The goals, however, will remain the same, to give the public as rich an interpretive experience as possible given the nature of the structure.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

1. The exhibit space should be free of architectural barriers or a method of alternate accommodation should be provided, such as slide programs, videotaped tours, visual aids, dioramas, etc.

2. All pathways, aisles, and clearances shall (when possible) meet standards set forth in UFAS 4.3 to provide adequate clearance for wheelchair routes.

3. Ramps shall be as gradual as possible and not exceed a 1" rise in 12" run, and conform with UFAS 4.8.

4. Railings and room barriers will be constructed in such a way as to provide unobstructed viewing by persons in wheelchairs.

5. In the planning and design process, furnishing inaccessible areas, such as upper floors of historic buildings, will be discouraged unless essential for interpretation.

6. Lighting will be designed to reduce glare or reflections when viewed from a wheelchair.

7. Alternative methods of interpretation, such as audiovisual programs, audio description, photo albums, and personal services will be used in areas which present difficulty for visitors with physical impairments.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

1. Exhibit typefaces will be selected for readability and legibility, and conform with good industry practice.

2. Audio description will be used to describe furnished rooms, where appropriate.

3. Windows will be treated with film to provide balanced light levels and minimize glare.

4. Where appropriate, visitor-controlled rheostat-type lighting will be provided to augment general room lighting.

5. Where appropriate and when proper clearance has been approved, surplus artifacts or reproductions will be utilized as "hands-on" tactile interpretive devices.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

1. Information about room interiors will be presented in a visual medium such as exhibit copy, text, pamphlets, etc.

2. Captions will be provided for all AV programs relating to historic furnishings.

Guidelines Affecting the Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. Where appropriate, hands-on participatory elements geared to the level of visitor capabilities will be used.

2. Living history activities and demonstrations which utilize the physical space as a method of providing multi-sensory experiences will be encouraged.

Publications

A variety of publications are offered to visitors, ranging from park folders which provide an overview and orientation to a park to more comprehensive handbooks. Each park folder should give a brief description of services available to visitors with disabilities, list significant barriers, and note the existence of TDD phone numbers, if available.

In addition, informal site bulletins are often produced to provide more specialized information about a specific site or topic. It is recommended that each park produce an easily updatable "Accessibility Site Bulletin" which could include detailed information about the specific programs, services, and opportunities available for visitors with disabilities and to describe barriers which are present in the park.   A template for this site bulletin will be on the Division of Publications website for parks to create with ease, a consistent look throughout the park service. These bulletins should be in large type, 16 points minimum and follow the large-print criteria below.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

1. Park folders, site bulletins, and sales literature will be distributed from accessible locations and heights.

2. Park folders and Accessibility Site Bulletins should endeavor to carry information on the accessibility of buildings, trails, and programs visitors with disabilities.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

1. Publications for the general public:

   a. Text
      (1) Size: the largest type size appropriate for the format.
           (preferred main body of text should be 10pt)
      (2) Leading should be at least 20% greater than the font size used.
      (3) Proportional letterspacing
      (4) Main body of text set in caps and lower case.
      (5) Margins are flush left and ragged right
      (6) Little or no hyphenation is used at ends of lines.
      (7) Ink coverage is dense
      (8) Underlining does not connect with the letters being underlined.
      (9) Contrast of typeface and illustrations to background is high (70% contrast is recommended)
      (10) Photographs have a wide range of gray scale variation.
      (11) Line drawings or floor plans are clear and bold, with limited detail and minimum 8 pt type.
      (12) No extreme extended or compressed typefaces are used for main text.

(13) Reversal type should be minimum of 11 point medium or bold
    sans serif type.

  b. The paper:
    (1) Surface preferred is a matte finish. Dull coated stock is acceptable.
    (2) Has sufficient weight to avoid "show-through" on pages printed on both sides.

2. Large-print version publications:

  a. Text
    (1) Size: minimum16 point type.
    (2) Leading is 16 on 20pt.
    (3) Proportional letterspacing
    (4) Main body of text set in caps and lower case.
    (5) Margins are flush left and ragged right.
    (6) Little or no hyphenation is used at ends of lines.
    (7) Ink coverage is dense.
    (8) Underlining does not connect with the letters being underlined.
    (9) Contrast of typeface and illustrations to background is high (70% contrast is
      recommended)
    (10) Photographs have a wide range of gray scale variation.
    (11) Line drawings or floor plans are clear and bold, with limited detail and minimum
      14 pt type.
    (12) No extreme extended or compressed typefaces are used for main text.
    (13) Sans-serif or simple-serif typeface
    (14) No oblique or italic typefaces
    (15) Maximum of 50 characters (average) per line.
    (16) No type is printed over other designs.
    (17) Document has a flexible binding, preferably one that allows the publication to lie
      flat.
    (18) Gutter margins are a minimum of 22mm; outside margin smaller but not less than
      13mm.

  b. Paper:
    (1) Surface is off-white or natural with matte finish.
    (2) Has sufficient weight to avoid "show-through" on pages printed on both sides.

3. Maps:

  a. The less clutter the map, the more visitors that can use it.
  b. The ultimate is one map that is large-print and tactile.
  c. Raised line/tactile maps are something that could be developed in future, using our
    present digital files and a thermaform machine. Lines are distinguished by
lineweight,
    color and height. Areas are distinguished by color, height, and texture.

d. The digital maps are on an accessible web site.
e. Same paper guides as above.
f. Contrast of typeface background is high. (70% contrast is recommended)
g. Proportional letterspacing
h. Labels set in caps and lower case
i. Map notes are flush left and ragged right.
j. Little or no hyphenation is used as ends of lines.
k. No extreme extended or compressed typefaces are used for main text.
l. Sans-serif or simple-serif typeface.

4. The text contained in the park folder should also be available on audio cassette, CD and accessible web site. Handbooks, accessibility guides, and other publications should be similarly recorded where possible.

5. The official park publication is available in a word processing format. This could be translated into Braille as needed.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

Park site bulletins will note the availability of such special services as sign language interpretation
and captioned programs.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. The park site bulletin should list any special services available to these visitors.

2. Publications:

a. Use language that appropriately describes persons with disabilities.
b. Topics will be specific and of general interest. Unnecessary complexity will be avoided.
c. Whenever possible, easy to understand graphics will be used to convey ideas, rather than text alone.
d. Unfamiliar expressions, technical terms, and jargon will be avoided.   Pronunciation aids and definitions will be provided where needed.
e. Text will be concise and free of long paragraphs and wordy language.

Wayside Exhibits

Wayside exhibits, which include outdoor interpretive exhibits and signs, orientation shelter exhibits, trailhead exhibits, and bulletin boards, offer special advantages to visitors with disabilities. The liberal use of photographs, artwork, diagrams, and maps, combined with highly readable type, make wayside exhibits an excellent medium for visitors with hearing and learning

impairments. For visitors with sight impairments, waysides offer large type and high legibility.

Although a limited number of NPS wayside exhibits will always be inaccessible to visitors with mobility impairments, the great majority are placed at accessible pullouts, viewpoints, parking areas, and trailheads.

The NPS accessibility guidelines for wayside exhibits help insure a standard of quality that will be appreciated by all visitors. Nearly everyone benefits from high quality graphics, readable type, comfortable base designs, accessible locations, hard-surfaced exhibit pads, and well-landscaped exhibit sites.

While waysides are valuable on-site "interpreters," it should be remembered that the park resources themselves are the primary things visitors come to experience. Good waysides focus attention on the features they interpret, and not on themselves. A wayside exhibit is only one of the many interpretive tools which visitors can use to enhance their appreciation of a park.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

1. Wayside exhibits will be installed at accessible locations whenever possible.

2. Wayside exhibits will be installed at heights and angles favorable for viewing by most visitors including those in wheelchairs. For standard NPS low-profile units the recommended height is 30 inches from the bottom edge of the exhibit panel to the finished grade; for vertical exhibits the height of 6-28 inches.

3. Trailhead exhibits will include information on trail conditions which affect accessibility.

4. Wayside exhibits sites will have level, hard surfaced exhibit pads.

5. Exhibit sites will offer clear, unrestricted views of park features described in exhibits.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

1. Exhibit type will be as legible and readable as possible.

2. Panel colors will be selected to reduce eye strain and glare, and to provide excellent readability under field conditions. White should not be used as a background color.

3. Selected wayside exhibits may incorporate audio stations or tactile elements such as models, texture blocks, and relief maps.

4. For all major features interpreted by wayside exhibits, the park should offer non-visual interpretation covering the same subject matter. Examples include cassette tape tours, radio messages, and ranger talks.

5. Appropriate tactile cues should be provided to help visually impaired visitors locate exhibits.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

1. Wayside exhibits will communicate visually, and will rely heavily on graphics to interpret park resources.

2. Essential information included in audio station messages will be duplicated in written form, either as part of the exhibit text or with printed material.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. Topics for wayside exhibits will be specific and of general interest. Unnecessary complexity will be avoided.

2. Whenever possible, easy to understand graphics will be used to convey ideas, rather than text alone.

3. Unfamiliar expressions, technical terms, and jargon will be avoided. Pronunciation aids and definitions will be provided where needed.

4. Text will be concise and free of long paragraphs and wordy language.

Appendix I

Association of Partners
For Public Lands

Partnering with Nonprofits
Training for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
March 2002

Association of Partners
For Public Lands

Partnering with Nonprofits
Training for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
March 9-10, 2002
Charleston, SC

This report summarizes the training session, for the Corps, presented by the Association of Partners for Public Lands. The course was designed to increase the effectiveness of Corps Recreation and Environmental Stewardship programs through partnerships. Sessions covered many aspects of partnering. The following is a summary with contact information for the person conducting the secession.

Session 1: To partner or not to partner.
Chris Gallagher, COE, San Francisco Bay Model (415) 332-3871.

Ms. Gallagher presented an overview on how partnerships work. She covered organizational structure, activities, and benefits to the organization and customer. She also touched on the institutional barriers to making a partnership work. This session also included a handout titled, "Cooperating Associations, Ten Little Questions...You Should Answer". The list contained questions an agency should consider and answer before establishing a partnership.

Session 2: What the Corps requires in working with nonprofit partnerships.
George Tabb, COE, HQ (202) 761-4821.

Mr. Tabb presented an overview of ER 1130-2-500, Chapter 9, Cooperating Associations Program. He discussed considerations not covered in the ER and highlighted certain sections of the ER. He emphasized that partnerships are not free and involve a large up front investment. He stated that a need must exist for a partnership, the local manager must be willing to support the partnership and you must have a willing partner. He emphasized these important sections in the regulation: Follow all local, state and Federal laws and regulations. Include provisions for termination in any partnership agreement. Consider the liability associated with a partnership. Don't allow the partner to sell original/authentic artifacts at the centers. Partners may conduct programs to assist the Corps. The DE must approve activities, programs, events and items for sale. Establish clear roles between the agency and partner. A Real Estate License/Lease must be issued to the partner for use of public facilities.

Session 3: Developing your interpretive and strategic business plan.
Paige Cruz, COE, Huntington District, Paintsville Project (304) 529-6992

Ms. Cruz emphasized the importance of strategic planning with community, partners, and visitors. Planning is critical to developing an effective partnership. It will provide direction for both the agency and the partner. Both agency and partner roles and responsibilities will be determined during the planning process. It establishes a benchmark for success.

Session 4: Building agency and community support.
Richard Millett, President, APPL (435) 789-8807

Mr. Millett discussed these primary parts of building support: Relationships of board, staff, volunteers and agency employees; Recruiting and working with board members; Identifying and involving community leaders. Each section provided valuable insight into developing the community support needed to start a successful non-profit partnership. Community leaders, existing cooperating association, state/regional tourism offices, and community foundations are critical to recruiting leaders and volunteers for new partnerships.

Session 5: Organizing a nonprofit organization or enhancing an existing organization or partnerships.
Richard Millett, President, APPL (435) 789-8807

Mr. Millet discussed the following guidelines for developing a nonprofit organization. A checklist for evaluating your existing operation must be developed. A budget and plan to fund the partnership is critical. Review the partnership periodically to determine if and when to expand. The presentation included a timeline and checklist for starting a non-profit. It provided the basic questions to ask when you are considering growth within the non-profit. This included basic questions such as: Who suggested the growth? What is the base of support? Do you have Agency and Board support? Developing a business plan and identifying the key aspects for success were also identified as important in expanding the non-profit.

Session 6: Creating public educational and outreach programs.
Debra Stokes, HQ, Phone not available at this time.

Ms. Stokes developed the following. Ways to identifying target audiences. Is the your program information, education, or interpretation? Ways to determining objectives and desired outcomes. Are your programs on or off site? Ways to bring the public to your site or take the message to the community. She discussed ways to develop a customer base, of working with the educational community, and identifying topics to interest the customer.

Session 7: Operating a sales outlet.
Mary Quackenbush, Northwest Interpretive Association, (206) 220-4140

Ms. Quackenbush discussed the following. Writing and financing your business plan; Developing startup and timeline strategies; How to work with your partner and Managing the interpretive themes. Strategies for preparing your merchandise plan. She keyed in on two major topics during her session. 1) It is important to identify your theme. 2) You must develop your mission statement for the sales outlet. The following ideas were highlighted. Use a business plan checklist and develop a criteria checklist for products sold. She suggested the establishment of a buying committee to help decide what items are bought for resale. She also touched on the inventory control, inventory turnover and managing the sales area.

Session 8: Marketing your program and products

This session developed four primary sections: Principles of marketing; Creating your own marketing plan; Advertising and promotional ideas that work; Identifying, reaching, and involving diverse audiences. The following marketing concept was introduced. The letters in **M-A-R-K-E-T** will help remember key aspects of the marketing process.

Manage customer relationships (keep customers satisfied).

Analyze products and services.

Respond to under-served and un-served audiences.

Know the competitive environment in which you organization operates.

Educate outside and inside the organization's membership.

Talk to your customers and the public (and be willing to listen).

Session 9: Fundraising and friend raising
Donna Asbury, Executive Director, Association of Partners for Public Lands. (301) 946-9475

In this session Ms. Asbury developed the following: Why people give, don't give, and don't like to ask for money. Diversifying your revenue streams. Identify community connections and sources of funding. Matching the message to the prospect. She noted that $200 Billion is given away annually with 76% of this coming from individual donors. She said that two organizations provided valuable resources for raising funds. These are Give.org at give.org and GuideStar at guidestar.org.

Session 10: Human resources
Wally Elton, Student Conservation Association, (603) 543-1700

     Mr. Elton introduced the Student Conservation Association to the group. He told the group how to tap into their labor force. This may be a way for the Corps to obtain valuable staffing for its mission.

     The training was a success and provided much needed information to those interested in starting and continuing partnerships. APPL has planned to conduct another prior to its next annual convention. These will be February 14-15, 2003 in Albuquerque, NM and followed by our APPL convention and trade show, February 16-18, 2003

If anyone would like a copy of the training manual please contact me and I will make a copy. Please contact Mark Wade at (706) 213-3407.

Appendix J

Issue Paper – Partnerships
April 2002

Issue Paper – Partnerships
Prepared: 18 April 2002

Issues:

1. The Corps has clear authority (Sec 203 of WRDA 99) to accept contributions and enter into challenge partnerships when private or non-profits contribute dollars for the Corps to spend on fee title lands. However, the Corps lacks clear authority to partner with non-profit groups in a mutually beneficial agreement where funds are transferred to the non-profit with the intent for them to provide services or products. This is often viewed as a procurement rather than partnership. Many times, the Corps is required to go out for a competitive contract for these services or products.

2. The Corps has used cooperative agreements in the past to work with other state and local governments and transfer funds to that agency. However, questions arise about signatures, approvals, and competition (procurement) requirements. For example, the Corps routinely enters into Cooperative Agreements with local law enforcement agencies. This action is authorized in accordance with Sec. 120, PL 94-587 and WRDA 1976 as amended by PL 96-536. ER 1130-2-550, Chapter 7 specifically states that Commanders are able to enter into cooperative agreements with states and their political subdivisions to obtain increased law enforcement services at civil works water resource projects. However, there is some questions being raised in HQ OC as to whether this action is really authorized and whether law enforcement should be done by contract and at what level these contracts should be signed.

3. Current authority allows partnerships, but does not provide matching dollars for funding these important partnerships. The Corps needs funding sources for challenge grants with any share level and should allow all partners to use volunteer labor in calculating their cost share.

4. The Corps lacks clear authority to co-locate facilities with other governmental agencies and non-profits, especially if the non-profits have concessions, fees, and other revenue generators. For example, visitor centers, staffed by several agencies, usually have the operations and maintenance dollars shared; with associations operating the concessions and fee based programs. Currently, licenses and leases are used with requirements for rental payments to the Corps. This limits the flexibility that the Corps has to partner on co-locations.

5. The Corps needs authority to establish a supporting "foundation" with clear rules for fund raising (not unlike the "National Parks Foundation" is the fund raising arm of the National Park Service). The "foundation" should operate close to the field level with the Corps and "foundation" employee's role in fund raising efforts defined.

6. Environmental education, conservation education, and interpretation/outreach although authorized and discussed in ER1130-2-550, are often questioned as not related

to Corps missions. The Corps needs clear authority to use appropriated funds to deliver environmental education and work with partners to deliver such programs.

7. The challenge cost share regulation is written to require up-front financing from partners. Because states and other agencies have similar requirements, this limits the number of partnerships that can occur. This requirement needs to be changed and the authority revised to provide flexibility in who accomplishes the work, allow partners to administer contracts and construct facilities.

8. The Corps needs to investigate authorities for partnerships with profit-making companies. Contributions are discussed in ER 1130-2-500. Although the Corps can accept such contributions, there are inherent problems seen by some. In order to accept such donations, the project activity must be in the Corps budget system. However, because it is in the budget system (even if it falls below the funding level), some consider this to be either an augmentation of funds or that the district allowance should be reduced by the donation amount.

Needed changes:

1. Establish task force to investigate other agency (NPS, FS, etc) partnering authorities.

2. Develop templates for standardized agreements and minimize the legal review for use of approved templates.

3. Define training needs on partnering for employees and managers within the OPs, OC, RE, RM realms.

4. Create staff positions to support field with rapid development, review and approval of partnership agreements.

5. Create handbook to address implementation, forms, financial accountability, etc with regard to any partnerships including challenge cost shares, cooperative agreements, and partnerships with for-profit or non-profit entities.

6. Develop budget and accounting procedures for multi-year partnerships.

Appendix K

Scope of Work
Corps Story Interactive Video Exhibit

Section C
Scope of Work
Corps Story Interactive Video Exhibit
Visitor Center Initiative Committee, US Army Corps of Engineers

1. **General**

   1.1 <u>Scope of Work.</u> Contractor shall provide all labor, equipment, materials required to provide a final concept design plan, final scripts and sample scenarios for a Corps of Engineers Interactive Exhibit. All work shall be done in accordance with specifications stated herein.

   1.2 <u>Contracting Officer.</u> The term "Contracting Officer" means the person executing this contract on behalf of the Government and any other officer or civilian employee who is properly designated Contracting Officer. This term includes the authorized representative of a Contracting Officer acting within the limits of his/her authority.

   1.3 <u>Contractor.</u> The term "Contractor" shall mean the person whose bid is accepted by the US Army Corps of Engineers and who has gained the responsibility of performing the duties governed by the specifications of this contract, the authorized representative of a Contractor acting within the limits of this authority.

2. **Work To Be Performed by the Contractor**

   ### 2.1 Phase I: Exhibit Schematic Development

   <u>Key Objective:</u> Agreement on the interactive approach of exhibit, i.e.—define the way in which the visitor will experience the content.

   Note: The existing outline of Corps Story topics and historic milestones (See attached Appendix A: Objectives for Interpretive Content) will be used for guiding schematic development in this phase.

2.1.1 <u>Deliverables:</u>

2.1.1.1 <u>Planning Teleconference with Exhibit Field Team</u>

Discuss the range of interactive exhibit approaches available (game, website mimic, standard informational, etc.). Facilitate determination of which approach(s) would best serve the needs of the Corps and all of the various visitor centers that will use the exhibit. Contractor shall record discussions and decisions in a Planning Teleconference Report.

2.1.1.2 <u>Concept Exploration</u>

Based on decisions made in the Planning Teleconference, Contractor will develop preliminary treatments for up-to-three possible interactive approaches to the exhibit.
Each treatment will consist of:

- Written description of the visitor experience (one-page narrative)
- Rough flowchart sketch of a representative visitor interaction
- Rough sketch of two or more key screens in the interaction

2.1.1.3 <u>Concept Finalization</u>

Based on feedback from the Exhibit Field Team on the concept treatments, Contractor will submit a final treatment for one preferred exhibit approach. This treatment will consist of:

- Written description of the visitor experience (two-page narrative)
- Preliminary flowchart of the basic interactive elements of the exhibit
- Preliminary sketches of key representative screens in the interaction
- Examples of key text elements from a representative visitor interaction

2.2 Phase II: Exhibit Content Development

Key Objectives: Agreement on the topics, themes and depth of information to be presented in the exhibit. Development of a final content outline from which final scripts and scenarios shall be written.

2.2.1 Deliverables:

2.2.1.1 Planning Teleconference with Exhibit Field Team

Discuss the existing outline of Corps Story topics and historic milestones (See attached Appendix A: Objectives for Interpretive Content) versus the informational opportunities and limitations of the finalized exhibit concept. Facilitate agreement on the optimal "depth of information" for the various types of interactive segments and identify any needed additions and/or revisions in the existing outline. Review available reference materials and identify sources of additional materials available to the contractor.

2.2.1.2 Content Development Research

The Contractor shall conduct subject matter research, including telephone interviews with Corps information sources and review of Corps provided reference materials, sufficient to develop the exhibit content.

2.2.1.3 Draft Content Outline & Exhibit Flowchart

Using the approved treatment of the finalized exhibit concept as a framework, the contractor will develop a content outline demonstrating what themes; topics, events, milestones and stories will be covered in the exhibit. A written description (approximately one paragraph) will define the content to be covered in each stand-alone segment of the interactive framework. The preliminary exhibit flowchart from Phase I will be revised to show how the proposed content will be presented.

2.2.1.4 Revised Content Outline & Exhibit Flowchart

Based on comments from the Corps Exhibit Team on the draft content outline and exhibit flowchart, revised drafts of both the outline and flowchart will be developed by the contractor and submitted for Corps review.

2.2.1.5   Final Content Outline & Exhibit Flowchart

Based on comments from the Corps Exhibit Team on the revised content outline and exhibit flowchart, final drafts will be developed by the contractor and submitted for Corps approval.

2.3   Phase III: Final Scripts and Interactive Scenarios

Key Objective: Produce the final scripts and interactive scenario descriptions that will be the basis for the exhibit production contract.

2.3.1 Deliverables:

2.3.1.1   First Draft Script and Interactive Scenario Descriptions

Guided by the final content outline and exhibit flowchart, the contractor will produce draft text for the following:

- Narrative description of the visitor experience and the various interactive scenarios possible with the exhibit.
- On-screen text elements: titles, headlines, subheads, segment copy
- Audio-visual elements of the exhibit. (Note: these audio-visual scripts will suggest appropriate visuals but identification and acquisition of specific images—photos, drawings, etc—shall be the responsibility of the exhibit production contractor.)

2.3.1.2   Revised Script and Interactive Scenario Descriptions

Based on comments from the Corps Exhibit Team on the draft text elements and scripts, revised drafts will be developed by the contractor and submitted for Corps review.

2.3.1.3   Final Content Outline & Exhibit Flowchart

Based on comments from the Corps Exhibit Team on the revised text elements and scripts content outline and exhibit flowchart, final drafts will be developed by the contractor and submitted for Corps approval.

3 **Technical Point of Contact.** Ms. Nancy L. Rogers, 2100 Bridgeway Boulevard, Sausalito, CA 94965, phone number (415) 332-3871.

Performance and Payment Schedule

Phase I:

Exhibit Schematic Development	45 days after Notice to Proceed	20%
Corps Review of Phase I submittal	14 days after receipt	

Phase II:

Exhibit Content Development	60 days after approval of Phase I	45%
Corps Review of Phase II	21 days after receipt	

Phase III:

Final Scripts and Interactive Scenarios	45 days after approval of Phase II	35%
Corps Review of Phase III	14 days after receipt	

Appendix A
Objectives for Interpretive Content

The Contractor shall present themes and story elements with the overall guiding goal of enhancing public understanding of the missions of the Corps, past and present. At a minimum, the following interpretive objectives and topics will be addressed:

A. Communicate the beginnings of the Corps as Army engineers and orient visitor to the contributions of the early army engineers to the nation

   a. Revolutionary War
   b. Coastal fortifications
   c. Artillerists
   d. West Point
   e. War of 1812

B. Communicate to visitors that role of the topographical engineers in westward expansion

   a. Exploration and Survey
   b. Lewis and Clark
   c. National Road
   d. Lighthouses

C. Communicate the accomplishments of the Corps in supporting the Nation's wartime endeavors

   a. Civil War
   b. World War 1
   c. World War 2
   d. Korea and Vietnam

D. Communicate the role of the Corps in building the nation, infrastructure and civil works development

    a. Panama canal
    b. Yellowstone
    c. Washington monuments
    d. Inland and coastal waterway development
    e. Flood Control
    f. Hydropower
    g. Recreation

E. Communicate the modern missions of the Corps of Engineers

    a. War fighting
    b. Disasters
    c. Infrastructure
    d. Environment
    e. Water resources

F. Communicate the role of the Corps in providing Interagency and International Services

    f. Federal Agencies
    g. State, Local, Tribal and Territorial Governments
    h. U.S. Private Firms
    i. Foreign Governments and Organizations

G. Communicate current issues and regional stories of public interest that involve the Corps.

Appendix L

SCOPE OF WORK
Final Design and Production
Corps Story Audiovisual Exhibit

SECTION C

SCOPE OF WORK

Final Design and Production
Corps Story Audiovisual Exhibit

SPECIFICATIONS

1. General
Scope of Work: Contractor shall furnish all labor, equipment and materials necessary to provide the final design, production, and installation of a Corps Story Audiovisual Exhibit. The Contractor shall write scripts, prepare storyboards for each proposed AV program. The Contractor shall develop a comprehensive AV production proposal for each AV exhibit component including detailed treatments with sufficient scope and description to assure a good understanding of how the finished program shall look, feel, and sound. The Contractor shall plan, design, furnish and/or construct all required AV enclosures, AV input/output devices, AV equipment, and AV electrical requirements, insuring attention to ventilation, sound-spill, and glare issues.

2. Safety
   Adhere to all requirements of the Corps of Engineers Safety Manual, EM 385-1-1, October 1992

3. Contract Period
   The contract period shall be completed 6 months from Contractor's Notice-To-Proceed

4. Government Will Provide
   a. Access to appropriate Government publications for background information and all available historic documents.
   b. Periodic review of materials, script and exhibits by Corps of Engineers employees to guide the Contractor in providing the finished interpretive elements
   c. Beta-format tape of existing video from which to extract useable images.
   d. Concept Design for exhibit.
   e. The Government will provide access to photographs and photo archives containing still images (photos and drawings).
   f. The Government will provide list of other public and private sources.
   g. The Government will furnish a sample VHS video of a past similar project that will serve as a model to assist bidders in determining the degree of sophistication and quality expected in the final product. Bidders will submit a sample of their work with their bid that demonstrates their capability to deliver a product of equal quality to the Government furnished sample.

5. Video Production Specifications

a. Produce video and other audiovisuals including narration, music, sound effects, editing and mastering for all audiovisual treatments.

b. Develop script and storyboard for the audiovisual components. The Contractor will furnish an edited draft script, which will communicate both audio and video sequences and contain notations for any special effects. The government will review and return with any correction(s). The Contractor will make corrections and submit for final approval.

c. After approval of the final storyboard, the Contractor shall provide a rough-cut edit with sound and script. The length of the rough-cut edit shall be at least as long as the final edit. The government shall review the edit and recommend changes that shall be incorporated prior to final production.

d. Shooting and editing must use a broadcast quality format such as Beta SP, M2, DV Cam, D2, which is approved by the COR.

e. The contractor shall research, locate, document, write and produce all material, including, but not limited to: illustrations, photographs, computer generated graphics, animation, stock footage and diagrams to be used in the production.

f. It is the Contractor's responsibility to furnish all photographs, graphics or artwork for the production.

g. The Contractor is encouraged to accomplish production of audiovisuals through the use of actors, interviews, aerial photography, computer generated animation, music, narration and other creative production techniques.

h. Samples of music (if needed), narrator(s) voice and sound effects will be submitted to the government for approval prior to production.

i. The contractor shall use original footage, existing footage, music, sound effects, and special effects. All video production shall be prepared and presented in a professional manner, avoiding "home-made" shows or other amateur presentations. The Contractor shall allow for the purchase of stock footage for use in the programs. All stock footage shall be pre-approved by the Corps of Engineers.

j. Any footage shot on location for the videotape will be provided to the government as part of the contract.

k. Any release needed for talent, models, music or actors will be the responsibility of the contractor. Contractor is responsible for fulfilling all copyright requirements for music or other sound imagery

l. The Government will furnish a sample VHS video of a past similar project that will serve as a model to assist bidders in determining the degree of sophistication and quality expected in the final product. Bidders will submit a sample of their work with their bid that demonstrates their capability to deliver a product of equal quality to the Government furnished sample. The bidder will submit a list of personnel who will work on the project.

m. Contract payment will be withheld until such time that all Government supplied photos, graphics, and videotape have been returned.

6. Computer Interactive Design
    a. Visual Appearance. The first screen shall attract attention, set the tone, and initiate expectation of what user will do.

b. Orientation. User shall always know where they are within the program, where they can go and how to quit. The program shall have an anchoring point that is clearly identified as a starting point and is always accessible.

c. User Interaction. Return all elements to default position or status after use without reliance on user to quit "correctly."

d. Navigation Paths. Program shall return to initial screen when left unused or when accessed by new user.

7. Computer Interactive System

a. The system will be designed to use computer based interactive presentation with video, text, and computer graphic capabilities.

b. All software must be commercially available, and on the open market. No software will be used which is proprietary to the Contractor.

c. The program must be capable of being updated by another contractor at a future date should the need for a major program update arise.

d. Development of the program in such a fashion that all information, i.e., text, sounds, video, and graphics are in the public domain.

e. The contractor will be responsible for the design, preparation, and input of all computer text screens.

f. The contractor will be responsible for integrating all information elements and inputting the information into the software.

g. The Contractor will submit a CD and/or DVD with digitized video segments for quality review prior to programming.

h. Provide the master copy of each computer program, which can be used to reinstall the program in the computer in the event of failure.

8. Design Considerations for Visitors with Impairments

a. Proposed design shall insure access for viewing.

b. All audio information presented in the interpretive exhibits shall also be presented in open caption format on the screen to enable comprehension by the hearing impaired. Users will have an option to view an uncaptioned version at the beginning to the program.

c. The Contractor shall design the exhibit/production to meet Universal Accessibility Requirements. Open captioning shall be at the bottom of the existing display screen. All captioning must be white letters inside a black box.

9. Exhibit Design and Production

a. Exhibit Plans. A detailed narrative description of the exhibit and intended visitor experience, equipment, materials, special requirements, dimensions, and construction techniques.

b. The drawings shall conform to the specifications listed below:

   1) Cover Sheet
- Indication of the document type (i.e. "Design Control Drawings")
- Name of the Project and the project location (e.g. Lake Mendocino, Ukiah CA")
- Listing of the project team members

- Date of submission of the drawings
- Table of contents for the entire drawing set

c. Plan and elevation view drawings (identified by title and number) precisely indicating the location of all exhibit artifacts, graphics, and typography. Views of each exhibit structure showing dimensions, methods of fabrication, all materials, colors, and finishes, and all lighting equipment.

d. Supplemental drawings showing typical or unique fabrication details necessary to describe exhibit fabrication or installation. Individual detail drawings shall clearly indicate which exhibit the detail applies to. Conversely, each exhibit layout drawing shall make explicit reference to any detail that applies to it.

e. Listing of all colors (including ink colors for typography), materials, and finishes to be used in the exhibits, referenced by code to any relevant detail drawings. Name, address, and telephone number of the supplier or manufacturer of each item specified.

f. The color, materials, and finish schedule sheet shall also include a listing of all furnishings or other "off-the-shelf" items required (seating, etc.) with the name, address, and telephone number of the supplier or manufacturer of each.

g. Actual size samples of each typeface, weight, style, and size to be used in the exhibit.

h. Indications of the letter spacing, word spacing, leading, and line length.

i. Code references to correlate all text appearing in the exhibits to one of the type samples provided. Code references to correlate all text appearing in the exhibits to the color in which it shall be rendered.

j. All drawings prepared by the use of a computer shall conform to the same standards of clarity and quality required of hand-drafted drawings.

k. In addition to any required paper copies, computer disks shall be provided for all computer-generated drawings. Each disk provided shall be identified with the name of the project, the name of the project, and the name and release number of the program used to produce the drawings.

l. A graphic scale shall be included on each drawing sheet.

m. AV Equipment Proposal. The Contractor shall provide a list of all required hardware, and exhibit fabrication drawings showing how all AV elements are to be incorporated into the exhibits.

n. The Contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that audiovisual equipment will fit and operate within the exhibit structures.

o. The Contractor shall ensure that all audiovisual equipment has adequate heat ventilation while operating in the exhibits, and there is easy access to the equipment for Government staff to perform maintenance or repairs.

p. The Contractor shall install pushbuttons in the exhibit structures and wire them to be fully operational at the time of final inspection. The Contractor shall label the attached wiring to clearly identify what component it activates when pushed.

10. Delivery
   a. Deliverables for exhibit include:
      1) Delivery and installation of computer interactive exhibit-hardware, software (2 masters and 4 copies) and cabinetry.

2) Delivery of Final Production masters in Beta or Beta Cam Format (4)

3) Delivery of Final Productions in VHS Format (4)

4) Delivery of original video footage used in productions provided on Beta or Beta Cam.

5) Delivery of audiotapes - voice, music, sound effects used in video and interactive exhibit.

6) Delivery of one (1) copy of complete final script with description of audio and visual images for each video produced. A total of three (3) final scripts.

7) Delivery of one (1) set of text, graphic screen files, authored program, etc. for each computer interactive exhibit. A total of four (4) sets.

8) Two complete preliminary sets of all final, "as-built" drawings.

9) Delivery of two (2) O&M Manuals, as required by contract.

10) Delivery of warranty certificates as required.

11) Provide hands-on training for Project staff on computer interactive systems.

12) Provide telephone number and point of contact for Telephone support for the Projects staff.

11. Use Rights Documentation

a. The Contractor shall acquire use rights for reproducing photographs, illustrations, and other graphics to be used in the exhibits.

b. The Contractor shall prepare and submit all documents necessary for documenting the rights granted to the Government for reproducing photos and graphics in the production. The package identifies the persons who were responsible for the work, and their addresses and phone numbers.

c. It shall be the responsibility of the Contractor to determine which graphics in the project legally require use rights acquisition, and to acquire such rights as part of this package.

d. For each graphic that requires the acquisition of use rights, the Contractor shall provide a set of letter size pages in the order listed:

1) A. A signed letter of permission from the graphic source individual or organization.

2) A statement of the source's Terms and Conditions for reproduction.

3) A black and white copy of the image (high resolution not required).

4) A copy of purchase orders, invoices, or receipts.

5) Copies of any other documents relevant to the graphic and its use in the exhibit.

12. Installation

a. Installed equipment shall be easily accessible for cleaning, adjustment, replacement, and routine maintenance.

b. Switches, connectors, jacks, receptacles, outlets, cables, and cable terminations shall be logically and permanently marked as to their function

c. Cables shall be free of splices between terminations at the specified equipment.

d. Wires and cables shall be formed into harnesses that are tied and supported in accordance with accepted engineering practice.

13. System Equipment
   a. Submit for review any custom designs and manufacturer's technical literature regarding the system.
   b. Schematic drawings on circuitry for custom equipment modifications.
   c. All equipment manufacturers' technical literature. Catalog cuts and technical data for all Contractor-Purchased electrical, mechanical, and audiovisual equipment, including lighting fixtures and accessories, lamps, power supplies, connectors, switches, controls, pushbuttons, and other equipment.
   d. A listing of all equipment furnished with serial numbers.

14. Operation and Maintenance Manual
   a. The Contractor shall prepare an Operation and Maintenance Manual (O&M Manual) for the exhibit resulting from this contract. The O&M Manual shall be formatted on 8 1/2" wide by 11" high sheets bound on the left margin. Drawing shall be folded to fit the format and bound for easy reference without removal from the binder. Each sheet in the binder shall be numbered. A table of contents and an index shall be provided for ready reference to data. Complete technical data, instructions catalogs shall be included for all mechanical, electrical and electronic equipment furnished.
   b. The operation section shall describe all typical procedures necessary to start, operate and shut down each system.
   c. The maintenance section shall provide a recommended maintenance checklist and schedule, referring to applicable pages in the manufacturer's maintenance manuals. If this information is inadequate, the Contractor shall provide the information necessary for proper maintenance.
   d. The trouble-shooting section will provide a checklist and instructions directed at readers assumed to have a basic knowledge of AV systems but not at the level of an equipment technician. The manual shall address specific elements of the system(s) provided and focus on user level operation and maintenance.

14. Training

   a. The Contractor shall train on-site project staff in operating, maintaining and "trouble-shooting" the audiovisual exhibits included in this contract.
   b. Training shall take place after acceptance tests and system(s) are operational.

15. Sub-Contract Information
   The contractor shall identify sub-contractors and their responsibilities and qualifications in the bid submission.

16. Key Personnel
   The Contractor shall provide information on the Project Manager, Field Installation Supervisor and other relevant personnel who shall be assigned to the project.

17. Warranty Service

a. For (1) one year from the date of the Government's final acceptance of the interpretive exhibits, media and equipment provided by this contract; the Contractor, at their expense, shall repair or replace any deficiencies or defects whether warranted by a manufacturer or by the Contractor.

b. The Contractor shall submit a statement of warranty on entire system and on individual pieces of equipment. System warranty shall be for a minimum of one year from date of system acceptance by the Government.

c. All manufacturers' equipment warranties shall be started in the Governments name and shall commence from date of system acceptance. For modified equipment, the manufacturer's warranty is normally voided. In such cases, the Contractor shall provide the Government with a warranty equivalent to that of the original manufacturer.

18. Telephonic Support

For (2) two years from the date of the Government's final acceptance of the interpretive exhibits, media and equipment provided by this contract; the Contractor, at their expense, shall provide a telephone number and point of contact for Technical Support Services

19. Government Acceptance

Contractor shall perform a system checkout. This work shall include the following

a. Test all audio, video and remote systems.

b. Check all control functions, from all controlling devices to all controlled devices, for proper operation.

c. Adjust, balance and align all equipment for optimum quality and to meet manufacturer's published specifications. Establish and mark normal settings for all level controls, and record these settings in the "Operation and Maintenance Manual".

d. Check all optical images for light level and glare issues. Check to determine that all equipment is rigid and free of vibration in operation.

e. A physical inventory shall be taken of all equipment on site and shall be compared to equipment lists in contract documents. The operation and performance of all equipment, connections, and systems shall be demonstrated.

Appendix M

Visitor Center Survey
Questions Submitted for OMB Approval

Visitor Center Survey
Questions Submitted for OMB Approval

FOR ENTRANCE SURVEYS:

Have you ever visited this site before?

Have you ever visited this visitor center before?

How did you find out about this place?

Did you find this center easily?

Can you tell me what agency operates this site?

Have you ever heard of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)?

What are your impressions of the agency on the whole?

Do you think most people feel that way?

What have you heard about USACE?

Where did you hear about that? i.e., the newspaper, radio...

Who works for/at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers?

What do you think that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers does?

There are several aspects to the mission of the Army Corps of Engineers.
I'd like you to tell me how interesting you think each of these might be
using a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is "very interesting" and 7 is "not at all
interesting."
- Water Resources (water resource development and management.)
- Environment (Restoring, managing and enhancing ecosystems locally
  and regionally.)
- Infra-structure (Building and sustaining the critical facilities for
  military installations and the public.)
- Disasters (Responding to local, national and global disasters.)
- War fighting (Providing a full spectrum of engineering and
  construction support.)
- History (How the USACE began, its successes and failures.)
- Recreation at Corps Operated Lakes

If possible, the visitor's interest level is needed in different topics to guide the development of the storyline. The story ideas are not defined at this time. The preference is to fill in the blanks at a later date. If this approach is not possible, the questions in the preceding text block are needed on the survey form.

We are developing an exhibit about the main missions of the USACE. For each mission there are many stories to use as examples. I'd like you to tell me how interesting you think each of the following story ideas might be using a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is "very interesting" and 7 is "not at all interesting."

- Water Resources (water resource development and management)
    - Story Idea 1: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 2: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 3: _____ *(one sentence description)*

- Environment (Restoring, managing and enhancing ecosystems locally and regionally.)
    - Story Idea 1: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 2: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 3: _____ *(one sentence description)*

- Infra-structure (Building and sustaining the critical facilities for military installations and the public.)
    - Story Idea 1: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 2: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 3: _____ *(one sentence description)*

- Disasters (Responding to local, national and global disasters.)
    - Story Idea 1: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 2: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 3: _____ *(one sentence description)*

- War fighting (Providing a full spectrum engineering and construction support.)
    - Story Idea 1: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 2: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 3: _____ *(one sentence description)*

- History (How the ACE began, its successes and failures.)
    - Story Idea 1: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 2: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 3: _____ *(one sentence description)*

- Recreation
    - Story Idea 1: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 2: _____ *(one sentence description)*
    - Story Idea 3: _____ *(one sentence description)*

Do you have any other comments or questions about the USACE?

FOR EXIT SURVEYS:

Have you ever visited this site before?
      If yes, when did you last visit?

Have you ever visited this visitor center before?
      If no: What did you expect to see and do here?

How did you find out about this site?

Did you find this center easily?

Can you tell me what agency operates this site?

Did you have any questions about this Site or the USACE before arriving here today?
      If yes: What was your question?
             Did you find an answer?

What would you say the exhibits in the visitor center are about?

Do you feel like you learned something at the VC today?
      If yes: can you tell me what you learned?
             Where did you read/see that? i.e., video, panel, diorama...

Did you discover anything that surprised you about this *site*?
      If yes: what was it?
             Where did you read/see that? i.e., video, panel, diorama...

Did you discover anything that surprised you about the *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*?
      If yes: what was it?
             Where did you read/see that? i.e., video, panel, diorama...

Was there an exhibit that you especially liked in the VC?
      If yes: Which one?
             What did you like about it?

Was there an exhibit that you especially disliked in the VC?
      If yes: Which one?
             Why didn't you like it?

Overall, how did you enjoy your visit to this visitor center?
      Using a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is "very enjoyable" and 7 is "not at enjoyable."

What did you enjoy about your visit here today?

What will you tell your friends about your visit here today?

The following questions relate to interpretive programs or field trips offered at the site:

Overall, how satisfied were you with your field trip?

What did you like the most about your field trip?

What were the goals of your field trip
Fun & entertainment
Strictly educational
Both fun & educational
Part of my regular lesson plan
Other

Did we meet your goals?

Is there anything you would like to have done differently?

What other activities would you like see us offer?

Was the information sent to you adequate for planning your field trip?
If no, how could it be improved?

Would you like to receive post-trip activities suggestions?

Please rate the facilities at this site using a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is "excellent" and 7 is "poor."
- Directional Signs to this site
- Parking
- Visitor Reception Area
- Visitor Center Exhibits
- Audiovisual Exhibits
- Outdoor Exhibits
- Trails
- Bookstore
- Picnic Area
- Restrooms
- Water access
- Staff

- Water safety programs
- Interpretive or educational programs
- Other (please specify)
- Other site specific facilities (to be identified by VC staff at site)
- Comments

Would you be willing to pay a fee to tour this facility?

If yes, how much?
$1 $2 $3 $4

Would you recommend this center to others?

Do you have any other input for staff at this site?

BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS

Where is your home city and state?

Are you a member of any museums at home?

How frequently do you visit museums?

How frequently do you visit USACE visitor centers?

What is/are the age(s) of your children?

Appendix N

Visitor Center Standing Committee Flow Diagram

Appendix N

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │     HQUSACE         │
                    │    PROPONENT        │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                               │
              ┌────────────────────────────────────┐
              │   STANDING COMMITTEE FOR           │
              │       VISITOR CENTERS              │
              └────────────────────────────────────┘
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The Standing Committee will continue to refine and implement recommendations proposed by the VCI Team. The Standing committee will consist of five subcommittees to champion items identified in Chapter IV, Issues and Recommendations of the VCI Committee's Final Report.

POLICY/ REGULATION	MESSAGE	ADMINISTRATION	FINANCE FUNDING ISSUES	IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE
Guides changes to ER, EP, handles legislation for Partnering	Gateway Corps Story Exhibit Design Theme development training	Set up annual workshops Develops job descriptions Works on career development Staffing issues Gateway input Advisory group to assist visitor center development	Fee demonstration. Budget guidance	"Value added" survey Develop visitor center planning criteria