

## **Partners Outdoors 2012 "Funding Recreation Opportunities"**

The American Recreation Coalition Partner's Outdoors conference was held January 8-11 in Williamsburg, VA. Corps HQ and field staff attended and took advantage of the opportunities to learn about new partnership ideas and opportunities, network with people in the public and private sectors, and hear excellent presentations about recreation fees, innovative uses of technology for recreation information and engagement, visitor trends, and sustainable funding opportunities.

Other participating federal agencies included OMB, Forest Service, Air Force, BLM, BoR, USFWS, and Federal Highways. The private sector was represented by a variety of non-profit groups such as IMBA, CAST for Kids, Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, National Wildlife Federation, and others, as well as two Corps cooperating associations: Our Lands and Waters Foundation and the Friends of Raystown Lake.

Here are some notes from the conference:

### 1. General sessions on the topic of recreation fees included:

- **The Recreation Fee Program Today:** presented by members of the Interagency Fee Working Group (BLM, USFS, NPS, USFWS, USACE), Western Slope No-Fee Coalition, and National Forest Recreation Association. There was much discussion in this session about the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), which expires at the end of 2014. Participating agency representatives presented some of the improvements they have been able to make with retained fees, and potential effects on the agencies should FLREA not be renewed in 2015. Mary Coulombe explained the Corps' system and processing of recreation fees and how it differs from the agencies included in FLREA. The No-Fee Coalition expressed their viewpoint on fees and the need for more efficiency, transparency, and their concern about public lands/parks operating more and more like a commercial business.
- **Creative Strategies for Meeting the Financial Needs of Public Recreation Programs:** presented by the USFWS, Air Force, and Our Lands & Waters Foundation. USFWS provided a presentation on the Federal Duck Stamp program as a successful model/example for generating program revenue used for conservation. USAF discussed their authority for using a NAFE (Non-Appropriated Fund financial Enterprise) system. OLWF explained the authority the Corps is using to cooperatively manage Corps parks with cooperating associations.
- **Update on Recreation.gov:** presented by the NPS fee program manager and Mary Coulombe. Provided an overview of changes to the rec.gov website, as well as some of the other priorities of the FICOR (Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation)

2. Meeting with Jim Owens, Executive Director, C.A.S.T. for Kids: Jim provided an overview of the CAST program from the last 20 years. Traditional events focused on providing a fishing experience for children with special needs. CAST is now looking to branch out to wounded veterans and their families in a new program called "Take a Warrior Fishing" which will partner with the Warrior Transition Battalions to encourage utilization of fishing as a therapeutic element to contribute to a soldier's transition back to military work and the civilian sector. CAST would like to partner with the Corps to host some of these Take a Warrior Fishing events. More information will follow. We will also be working with CAST to develop an MOU between the Corps and their organization. See flyer and article from last year's TAWF event:

<http://76.12.206.213/eventdocs/313/2011%20Take%20a%20Warrior%20Fishing%20Flyer.pdf>

<http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/partners/pdfs/NWS%20Lake%20Washington%20event%202011.pdf>

3. Visitor trends on public lands: The NPS Social Science Division conducted the second comprehensive survey of the American public from April 2008 through March 2009. This survey was designed to be comparable with the first comprehensive survey of the American public, which was conducted in 2000. Both comprehensive surveys obtained information on public attitudes and behaviors related to programs and services provided by national parks, as well as on demographic characteristics of recent visitors and non-visitors to the National Park System. Reports available on NPS website <http://nature.nps.gov/socialscience/products.cfm>

4. Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundations (RBFF) Education Grants program: RBFF's National Youth Fishing & Boating Initiative offers boating and fishing education grants to youth-focused boating, fishing and conservation organizations. While the Corps cannot directly apply for these grants, our friends groups and cooperating associations may. See website for more info: <http://rbff.org/page.cfm?pageID=376> Key requirements of RBFF's grant application guidelines include introducing boating and fishing to minorities and underserved communities.

5. Kids in Parks: Jason Urroz from the Blue Ridge Park Foundation gave a presentation about an innovative program available to the Corps and other agencies: <http://kidsinparks.com/> Kids in Parks is an initiative of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Kids in Parks works with partners throughout the country to increase the physical activity of children and their families, improve nutritional choices and connect kids to nature. Their TRACK Trails program may be of particular interest to Corps lakes, where they take existing trails and turn them into designated hiking TRACK Trails or Nature Trail Disc Golf Course TRACK Trails. TRACK Trail adventures are designed to help kids explore nature through the use of self-guided brochures. Within the pages of each brochure a different story unfolds. From Nature's Relationships to Fern Identification, each adventure will help build connections to the natural world. <http://kidsinparks.com/track/> For as little as \$5,000, Kids in Parks can provide a trailhead kiosk sign, 4 brochure holders, 4 topics of 2,000 brochures for the trailhead, prize dissemination to kids who register, quarterly data reports, and add our participating Corps parks to their webpages. Contact [jurroz@brpfoundation.org](mailto:jurroz@brpfoundation.org) for more information

6. The Hidden Park: The Hidden Park is an iPhone adventure game created especially for young families. The application uses animations mapped over digital photographs to lead children into a fantasy world of trolls, fairies and tree genies. The game is played in parks all around the world. Parents and fans are invited to set up the game in their local park then share the experience with families and friends. Children navigate their way through the park by following a map that lets them know where the magical creatures live. Children must solve puzzles and riddles on their way to the next destination. To learn more, check out their website at <http://www.thehiddenpark.com/about> and their press kit at <http://www.thehiddenpark.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/hidden-park-press-kit-v2.pdf>. This may be a way to connect more tech-dependent children to the outdoors and visiting Corps parks.