

Water for Recreation

Millions of Americans enjoy their day in the sun at Corps multiple-purpose projects

When working people labored 10 hours a day, seven days a week, no one had time for outdoor recreation as we know it today. Now, an estimated one-third of the lifetime of most Americans is free, unoccupied time. Add to this the facts that current US population is estimated to grow about 50 percent from the present 215 million by year 2000; that per capita leisure time is estimated to increase an additional 12 percent by the year 2000; that real income, per capita, has increased 150 percent over the last three decades; and finally that 50 percent of *all* highway travel is for social and recreational purposes today and will probably increase in percentage in the future.

Thus, the need for public outdoor recreation facilities is a fact of life. With its 350-plus lakes, the Corps of Engineers will play an ever increasing role in providing space for swimming, boating, camping, hiking, picnicking, and scenic appreciation for American citizens. At present, the Corps finds itself as the primary Federal agency serving the American public in terms of recreation-day visits to outdoor recreational facilities. During 1969, 255 million recreation days of visitors were recorded at Corps lakes,

as contrasted to 109 million recreation days of visitors in 1960. Corps personnel administer more than 600 swimming beaches, 4,500 boat launching lanes, 2,900 picnic grounds and 7,500 camp grounds.

To accommodate the accelerating public interest in outdoor recreation new concepts have been employed in Corps planning and execution of public works responsibilities. Prior to World War II the Corps exercised national responsibility for flood control and navigation, with a marginal view to serving public outdoor recreation needs. Major project planning consideration involved primarily economic and engineering factors. Since 1944, Congress has directed the Corps to serve an increasingly prominent role in providing public outdoor recreation opportunities.

Specific legislation directing the Corps' involvement in recreation, as well as fish and wildlife enhancement, started with the Flood Control Act of 1944. Other similar legislation since that time includes the Flood Control Act of 1962, Federal Water Project Recreation Act, and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.

To fulfill the requirements of the legislation and



A Corps ranger pauses during his rounds to chat with two young campers at the Rising Star Public Use Area east of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. About 70 such areas are planned along the Arkansas River navigation project.