

To all:

The attached memo with enclosures was signed on Friday, 9 January, by Mike White, Chief of Operations, Directorate of Civil Works. I am sending it by email to expedite and facilitate distribution. Hard copies will follow through regular mail channels.

Please do not interpret this as guidance to encourage closing parks. As the memo states, when park closures must be considered as a result of budget constraints, the attached guidance should be followed.

Thank you,
Judy Rice



Park Closure
Letter.pdf



Encl 1.doc



Encl 2.doc



Encl 3.ppt



Encl 4.ppt



Encl 5.doc



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

JAN - 9 2004

CECW-ON

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDERS, MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS AND
DISTRICT COMMANDS; CHIEFS, OPERATIONS DIVISION

SUBJECT: Park Closures During Fiscal Year 2004

1. I am aware that several districts are considering closing parks in 2004. Consideration of park closures is a highly emotional and politically sensitive process that must be handled with deliberate rigor and sensitivity to ensure a defensible decision is made. Every effort should be made to avoid park closures; however, when budget considerations require this option to be evaluated, the following will be adhered to:

- Implement a thoughtful and deliberate exercise that examines all the impacts of potential closures, including those related to nearby communities, other U.S. Army Corps of Engineers areas, areas operated by our partners, and areas under jurisdiction of adjacent Corps districts particularly those in the same State or Congressional district.
- Develop defensible criteria to be used in evaluation and decision-making.
- Examine alternatives to closure such as leases and partnerships. Ensure that options other than closure are understood and documented as to why they are not selected.
- For areas closed, protecting public health and safety must be a prime consideration.
- Ensure that a well thought out communications plan is developed for communicating potential closures to our partners and stakeholders, public, and the Congress. Involve these key groups in your considerations.
- MSCs and HQUSACE must be apprised of potential needs to close parks and coordinated with prior to any decision.

2. Nashville District has recently undergone an exercise to close several of their areas. I have enclosed several documents that they have produced that will be helpful in considering park closures.

3. Plans for park closure will be coordinated with HQUSACE prior to a decision.
Mr. George Tabb is the POC and may be reached at (202) 761-4827.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

MICHAEL B. WHITE
Chief, Operations Division
Directorate of Civil Works

5 Encls

CECW-ON

SUBJECT: Park Closures During Fiscal Year 2004

JAN - 9 2004

DISTRIBUTION:

COMMANDER, GREAT LAKES & OHIO RIVERS DIVISION, ATTN: CELRD-ET-CO-R
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COMMANDER, CHARLESTON DISTRICT, ATTN: CESAC-TS-O
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COMMANDER, ENGINEER RESEARCH AND DEV. CENTER, ATTN: CEERD-EE
COMMANDER, ENGINEER RESEARCH AND DEV. CENTER, ATTN: CEWES-EE-R

Draft
Timeline for Area Closures
Recreation Plan 2004
Nashville District

19 September 2003	Preliminary identification of areas for closure by field managers
2 October 2003	Alert posted with NRRS to prevent further reservations at selected sites
8 October 2003	Brief LRD
31 October 2003	Brief HQUSACE
21 November 2003	Notify congressional staff (DE and DDE-PM)
1 December 2003	Notify local officials (Resource Managers)
15 December 2003	Media release to general public
30 January 2004	Evaluate customer and congressional feedback
13 February 2004	Final decision on 2004 closures
23 February 2004	Begin placing physical measures necessary for closure (gates, removal of signs and attractive nuisances, etc.)
1 March 2004	Deletion of affected areas from NRRS inventory

Program Communication Plan

Project Name: **Nashville District Recreation Plan FY04** Date: 8 October 2003

Program Manager: Avis Kennedy, Operations-Natural Resources Branch

Public Affairs POC: Dave Treadway

Project Synopsis:

Nashville District is a leader in the Corps recreation program and ranks #1 among all Corps Districts with 35 million total visits in 2002. The District has experienced level funding in the Operations & Maintenance budget in recent years and maintenance priorities have dictated that we shift funds among all functions to address current and backlogged maintenance requirements. The Recreation mission will be the most affected by this shifting of funds and will require, among other actions, the closing of some Recreation Areas so that the optimum available funding can be used for upkeep of those Recreation Areas most utilized by the recreating public. While painful to a few, the measures we are taking will be beneficial for the most people.

1. Define the Issues and the Target Audiences.

c. Issues.

1. Closure of selected recreation areas
2. Loss of convenient opportunities for recreation
3. Decline in customer satisfaction at recreation areas

b. Target Audiences. The target audiences are:

- 1) Recreating Public throughout the U.S.
- 2) Congressional Offices, both Tennessee and Kentucky
- 3) Local businesses and residents
- 4) County and community leaders
- 5) Internal Corps audience at Division and HQUSACE
- 6) District employees
- 7) NRRS reservation service

2. Establish Communication Goals and Objectives.

a. Goal: Communicate effectively to our target audiences why we are reducing the number of recreation areas that are open. While painful to a few, the measures we are taking will be beneficial for the most people.

- 1) Objective: By the use of all available media, inform all audiences no later than 15 Dec. 2003.
- 2) Communicate effectively with HQ and Congress so that buy-in is achieved by 30 Nov. 2003.
- 3) Communicate with general public via news release and website, as well as local posting by 15 Dec. 2003.
- 4) Resource managers will meet with selected local elected officials to inform them of our plans after 1 Dec. 2003.
- 5) Continuously communicate plans with NRRS to ensure they are current with our plans.

b. Goal (Loss of opportunity): Communicate to all audiences available alternative sites to offset loss of convenience. Encourage early reservations at alternative sites.

1) Objective: Use NRRS website and local offices to communicate, began 1 Oct. 2003 via NRRS.

c. Goal (Decline in Level of customer satisfaction): Managers recognize the downturn via feedback/comments and strive to provide the highest level of service possible. Optimize use of available resources.

Objective 1: Briefing to LRD and HQ for approval of the plan

Objective 2: Once plan is approved, provide approved Q's & A's to the field for use in communicating the plan

Objective 3: Communicate plan to Cong. Contacts

3. Select Communication Channels.

- a. News Releases and localized news release by each affected Lake Project
- b. Print Articles
- c. Broadcast interviews and reports
- d. Meetings – personal contacts
- e. Email
- f. Website
- g. Briefings to internal audience

4. Identify Coalition Partners.

- 1. NRRS - initial contact with customers
- 2. State Parks – KY and TN
- 3. Concessionaires/Marinas – helping reach general public

5. Strategy for Implementation -- Identify Key Messages, Communication Materials, and Communication Activities

a. Key Messages.

Message	Audience	Issue(s)
1) While this measure is painful for a few, it will be beneficial for the most people. The Corps of Engineers recognizes our role as a key recreation provider and is very concerned with the long-term sustainability of the program.	#1,2,3,4,7	#1, 2
2) Based on their utilization rate, size, etc. the areas selected have been historically underutilized by the public. All campgrounds chosen have less than 30% occupancy rate.	#1,2,3,4	#1, 2
3) Generally speaking many of the facilities being closed are in poor	#1,2,4,7	#1

physical condition, due to age and unfortunately our inability to devote enough resources to keep them within acceptable standards.		
4) There will be other facilities available, although a traditionally used facility may be unavailable.	#1,2,3,4,5,7	#2
5) Closures are part of the solution to sustaining the level of service we provide.	2,3,4,5	1, 3
6) Declining levels of service are not acceptable. We've reached the decision that we are spread too thin with available resources. We want to provide the best product we can. This is not an attempt to gain more funds from Congress. A one-year infusion of funds is not a solution to this problem. This is thoughtful, well-planned effort to prevent declining levels of service.	2,4,6	2,3
7) This is not a localized effort, the entire Cumberland River Basin is affected. You can help if local entities would like to partner with the Corps to help keep an area open.	2,4	1,2
8) Our closure plan was well-thought-out to lessen the local impact. All areas are spread throughout 8 lake projects.	2,3,4	1,2
9) Local message on Project Web sites.	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	1,2,3

b. Communication Materials.

- 1) News Releases
- 2) Website
- 3) Briefings
- 4) Alert Bulletin for NRRS
- 5) Q's & A's for use by Resource Managers
- 6) Talking Points for senior leaders
- 7) Customized Key message on each affected Lake Website.

c. Communication Activities.

- 1) Briefings
- 2) Private meetings
- 3) Media in response to query
- 4) Notification of Congressmen/Senators/other elected officials each time website is updated

6. Determine an Evaluation and Measurement Plan.

Public acceptance is noted by the absence of complaints from customers and Congressional/Senate representatives. Declining media interest. No public outcry.

7. Ensure Feedback.

Ask the Corps Button on District Website

A Comment Page on the Issues Website

Invite comments in the news release

8. Create a Timeline with Communication Milestones.

Date	Communication Milestone
10/01/03	Alert Notice posted with NRRS for selected sites
10/08/03	Communication Plan completed
10/15/03	Brief LRD
11/30/03	Achieve HQ and Congressional Buy-in
12/01/03	Resource Managers begin meeting with local officials
12/15/03	Inform Public via all necessary means

9. Determine Staff and Management

Staff: Resource Managers, Operations Managers, Natural Resources Staff, Public Affairs Officer

The resource managers at appropriate lakes are responsible for communicating the program plan. Queries beyond their scope will be referred to Public Affairs for staffing and response.

10. Create a Communication Budget.

All expenses will be handled in-house by PAO or Operations.



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Recreation Plan FY04 *...and beyond*



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Recreation Plan FY04

Purpose:

Achieve LRD decision on proposed LRN recreation plan.



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Recreation Plan FY04

Agenda:

- Background
- The problem
- Alternatives
- Recommendation
- Impacts to customers
- Communication Plan
- LRD decision



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Recreation Plan FY04

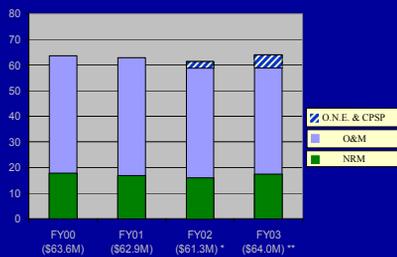
- LRN is a Leader in Corps recreation program.
- 7 LRN lakes in the top 26 for public use among all 467 Corps projects nationwide.
- LRN ranks #1 among all Corps Districts with 35 million total visits in 2002.
- In FY02, the economic impact to the region was \$903M.
- We manage 424,629 acres of land / water and 182 parks in TN and KY with 108 FTE.
- Cost Per Visit LRN = \$0.37 LRD = \$0.66 Corps average = \$1.62



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Recreation Plan FY04

LRN O&M



* Includes \$2.4M Operation Noble Eagle; thus available O&M was only \$58.9M

** Includes \$5.6M for CPSP, \$257k for O.N.E.; thus available O&M was only \$58.1M



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Recreation Plan FY04

FY03 : Initial Alarm

Cumulative Impacts:

- \$1.5M annually to CHI/L
- Hydropower Rehab Commitment
- Training Classes
- \$1.01M from LRE in 02



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Recreation Plan FY04

FY03 : Initial Alarm

FY03 Specific Impacts

- CRA1, CRA2, CRA3...

Guidance – business as usual

- S&S 4.8% (\$3.3M)
- \$650k from LRE (\$1.610M)



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Recreation Plan FY04

- Theme: Sustainability
- Objective: Operate recreation areas in a realistic and cost-effective manner in FY04 and beyond
- Operate facilities visitors value most highly
- Achieve appropriate rate of customer satisfaction
- Ensure visitor safety
- Protect taxpayers' investment in recreation infrastructure
- Meet the changing customer needs and demographics



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Recreation Plan FY04

Options :

- Closure/partial closure of recreation areas
- Curtail season (done in '02)
- Spread the pain across all recreation areas – further degrade service everywhere.
- Reduce Navigation, Hydropower, Flood Damage Reduction and other business functions.



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Recreation Plan FY04

- 182 Recreation areas at 10 LRN lakes operated by Corps:
 - Reviewed each recreation area
 - Applied criteria for complete or partial closure or modifications in operation



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Recreation Plan FY04

- Criteria for campground closure:

1. Occupancy rate	8. Other facilities available in the area
2. Operation cost	9. Feasibility of leasing area
3. Impact on public user	10. Social importance of area
4. Condition of infrastructure	11. Attractiveness for volunteer park
5. Revenue collected	
6. Cost recovery	
7. Impact on local businesses & concessionaires	



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Recreation Plan FY04

- Criteria for day use area closure:

1. Types of facilities	9. Logistical feasibility of closing
2. Visitation	10. Condition of infrastructure
3. Other available facilities	11. Impact on local businesses / concessionaires
4. Revenue	12. Social significance of area
5. Cost recovery	13. Attractiveness for volunteer park hosts
6. Group use / shelter	
7. Cost of operation	
8. Management issues (vandalism, rowdiness, illegal activity)	



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Nashville District

Recreation Plan FY04

- Impacts of closing recreation areas:
 - Areas unavailable for public use
 - Public may contact congressional offices
 - Corps service contractors and employees
 - Importance to local communities
 - Economic impact to local businesses
 - No reduction in force



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Recreation Plan FY04

- '04 Plan Includes:
 - Reductions in frequency of mowing
 - Reductions in cleaning restrooms & showerhouses
 - Fewer hours at some entrance stations
 - Shortened seasons at some areas
 - Conversion to volunteer hosts at some areas

Expanded use of volunteers, reduced service frequencies and shortened seasons have already been implemented at many sites during the last five years, so potential savings using these measures is limited.



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Recreation Plan FY04

- Closures affect 28 areas (13 full; 15 partial)
 - 7 Campgrounds / 6 Multi-use Day Use Areas
 - Partial closure of 1 campground / 3 Multi-use Day Use Areas
 - 10 Launching areas
 - Partial closure of interpretive facilities at Mill Springs Mill
 - Primitive sites
- All other areas remain open



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Nashville District

Recreation Plan FY04

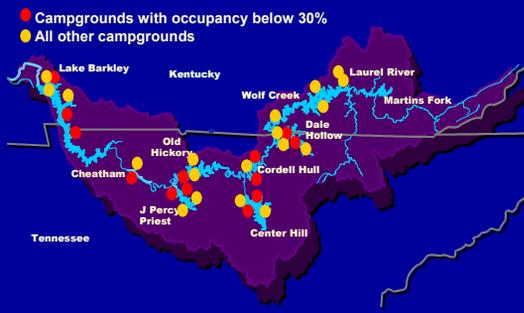
- All campgrounds to be closed have:
 - 30 % or less occupancy rate.
 - Two or more developed campgrounds that will remain open at that project.



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Recreation Plan FY 04

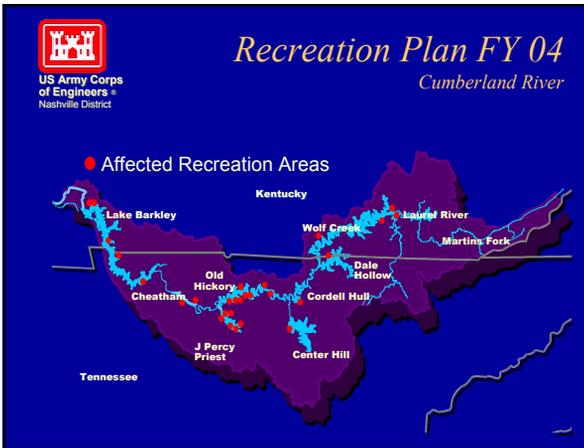
Cumberland River



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Nashville District

Recreation Plan FY04

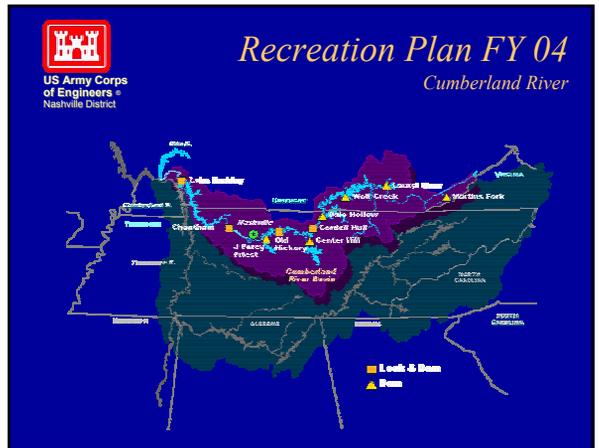
- Anticipated impact on visitation:
 - Most visitors will use another Corps area.
 - Some campers will not have an opportunity to use another Corps campground on holiday or heavily-used weekends when other campgrounds are full.
 - Loss of visitation is anticipated to be less than 1%.



- ### Recreation Plan FY04
- Implementation / Communication Plan:
 - Coordinate with LRD & HQ
 - Coordinate with NRRS (Reservation contractor)
 - Prepare communication plan
 - Notify congressional offices
 - Notify local & state officials
 - Notify Corps staff
 - Notify contractors
 - Issue news release

Recreation Plan FY04

- Comprehensive plan developed as a sound business decision to redirect dollars to areas that provide quality outdoor recreation experiences for our visitors.



Recreation Plan FY04

CLOSURES	WKY	NAS	MCA	EKY	TOTAL
Campgrounds/Day Use*	3	2	3	0	8
Multi-use Day Use Area*	1	8	0	0	9
Launching Only	0	7	0	3	10
Primitive Camping	0	0	9	0	9
Mill Spring Mill *				1	1

- This includes partial closure of 1 campground, 3 day use areas and interpretive facilities at Mill Springs Mill.

Recreation Excellence at Lakes (REAL) Program

Communication Plan

Communication Goals

Reveal areas impacted, & why
Direct customers to alternate sites
Enhance customer satisfaction levels

Intended Audiences

Recreating Public
Elected Officials
Local businesses and residents
Internal Corps audience
NRRS reservation service

Methodologies

News releases to all media
Meetings with local, state &
Federal elected officials
Website
Meetings with internal audience

Messages and Talking Points

Message 1

Measure will benefit the most customers. Corps plays key role as recreation provider and this will ensure long-term sustainability of program, continued high levels of service our customers expect.

- District hosted 34M visitors in 2003
- Corps hosts more visitors than any other recreation provider in the nation
- Corps is concerned with long-term viability of recreation program
- While inconvenient for some, it will benefit the most number of customers
- Our customer surveys indicate high levels of satisfaction are sites that remain open

Message 2

Selected sites carefully chosen. All factors considered including utilization rates/popularity with visitors, present condition of sites, cost to maintain. Alternate sites available at lakes.

- All factors considered in selection of sites
- Only underutilized sites chosen
- Sites chosen in most need of repair/upgrade
- Cost per visitor was more than double at sites selected for closure
- Alternate sites are available at lake where site is closed or restricted
- NRRS always suggests alternate site when customer selects one that is closed

Message 3

Declining levels of service are not acceptable. We consider this a sound business decision that will improve customer satisfaction

- We always listen to what our customers tell us
- District conducts exit surveys of customers at all recreation areas/campgrounds
- Customer satisfaction levels down at most sites chosen for closure or restricted access
- District follows business practices set forth in Baldrige criteria and continually evaluates our methods for improvement

Recreation Excellence at Lakes (REAL) Program

Communication Timeline

Dates

	Oct. 1, 2003	Oct. 8, 2003	Oct. 15, 2003	Nov. 30, 2003	Dec. 1, 2003	Jan. 7, 2004
Activity	Post Alert notice with NRRS	Complete Comm Plan	Brief LRD	Achieve HQ Cong. Buy-in	Resource Managers begin meeting w/local officials	Inform public via all available means
Location	NRRS	District Office	LRD	Congress	At Each Lake	District PA
Senior Leader/ Project Officer	Avis Kennedy	Bill Peoples	LTC Jorns	LTC Jorns	Resource Managers	Bill Peoples

One-voice message for workforce

By initiating the Recreation Excellence at Lakes (REAL) Program, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has made a business decision to restrict and/or close some recreation sites in the Cumberland River basin that are underutilized and more costly to operate. By closing certain sites or restricting use, the Nashville District will be able to increase levels of service at the most popular areas on the same lake.

These measures allow us to continue to provide the high level of service expected by visitors to preferred locations at Corps lakes in Tennessee and part of Kentucky. Although this will inconvenience some visitors now, it will ensure future customers a more pleasurable recreating experience for years to come.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**POC Bill Peoples, Public Affairs
615-736-7161**

Nashville District Initiates Recreation Excellence at Lakes

By Dave Treadway

NASHVILLE, TENN., Jan. 7, 2004 -- The Nashville District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, will initiate 'Recreation Excellence at Lakes, or R.E.A.L. program in 2004, a pioneering concept in recreation management. Under the plan, management of some areas will be placed under different agencies, and some areas, campgrounds, primitive campsites, day use areas, and boat launching areas at lakes managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Cumberland River Basin will be closed.

The measures are necessary to allow the Corps to provide the high level of service expected by visitors to preferred locations at Corps lakes in Tennessee and part of Kentucky. The closures will prevent valuable resources being expended at little-used areas.

More than 34 million visitors used Nashville District lakes last year and Resource Managers expect the same visitation rates next year.

"We want to provide the best service we can," said Ralph Ownby, acting chief of Operations, "with available resources and we can best do that by concentrating our efforts on those recreation areas with the highest-use rates. This means closing those sites the public seldom reserves and taking resources we normally would spend to keep them open and applying those resources to sites preferred by the public."

While these measures may inconvenience a few, the actions will help ensure the maximum benefit for the most people. Officials have ensured that in each instance where a recreation area is being closed, an alternative site is available nearby that guests may continue to use. When potential visitors call or visit the web site of the National Recreation Reservation System, workers now encourage campers to choose alternative sites when visitors select one that is listed as closed.

Resource Managers at District lakes always strive to provide the highest possible level of service and convenience for visitors. The Corps of Engineers recognizes its role as a key recreation provider and is very concerned with the long-term sustainability of the recreation program. This action is one more measure to help the Nashville District continue to provide first-class recreation services over the long term.

"Generally speaking," said Ownby, "many of the facilities being closed are in poor physical condition, due to age and unfortunately our inability to devote enough resources to keep them within acceptable standards. Declining levels of service are not acceptable, to us or to our visitors. We've reached the decision that we are spread too thin with available resources. We want to provide the best product we can. This is a thoughtful, well-planned effort to prevent declining levels of service."

Closures will affect Corps of Engineers campgrounds and recreation areas at Old Hickory, J. Percy Priest, Cheatham, Cordell Hull, Center Hill and Dale Hollow Lakes in Tennessee and Lake Barkley and Lake Cumberland in Kentucky.

Officials indicated that certain facilities, such as Gregory Mill Recreation Area at J. Percy Priest, may remain open to the public but be managed by a partnering agency or concessionaire.

At Lake Barkley, Boyds Landing Campground, Devils Elbow Campground and Guices Creek Day Use Area will be closed. Only partial closures will be in effect at Bumpus Mills Campground and Old Eddyville Day Use Area.

At Center Hill Lake, Holmes Creek Campground and Day Use Area will be closed, as will primitive campsites at Cove Hollow, Pedigo Point, Boones Branch, Squirrel Tail Point, Britch Creek, Pine Creek, Potato Knob, Crowder Cove and Hickey. The launching ramp will remain open at Holmes Creek; however, services such as trash pickup and mowing will be discontinued.

At Cheatham Lake, the Day Use Areas at Bull Run Creek and Sam's Creek Launching Area will be closed.

At Cordell Hull Lake, only Indian Creek Recreation Area will be closed.

On Lake Cumberland, the boat launching area at Farmers Mill will be closed during fall and winter months. The launching areas at Omega and Cave Creek will remain open under the management of Pulaski County. Mill Springs Mill Historic Park will remain open but will be operated on a reduced schedule.

At Dale Hollow Lake, the island at Pleasant Grove Recreation Area will be closed.

At J. Percy Priest Lake, Cook Campground will be closed, as will as the day use area at Four Corners. One loop of the picnic area will be closed at Fate Sanders Day Use Area and only the beach will be closed at Seven Points Day Use Area. The lease is being processed for Gregory Mill to remain open under the management of the City of Smyrna. Negotiations are underway to include Elm Hill Recreation Area in the adjacent Elm Hill Marina lease area.

At Old Hickory Lake, Shutes Branch Campground will be closed, along with Martha Gallatin Day Use Area and boat launching ramps at Bartons Creek, Cedar Grove, Dickerson Chapel, Goose Creek, Riverview, and Tyree.

"We will make every effort to accommodate visitors to Corps lakes at alternate sites in the event their favorite Campground is affected," said Corps spokesman Bill Peoples.

For more information, and the latest that is available, visit the web site set up for this issue at <http://www.lrn.usace.army.mil/pao/issues/> by clicking on REAL Program.