

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDERS, MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS,
ATTN: DEPUTIES FOR ENGINEERING AND
TECHNICAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: Status of the National Recreation Reservation Service

1. Reference CECW-ON memorandum, subject as above, dated 1 Apr 1999. (Encl 1)
The referenced memorandum provided a status report of the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS) as we entered the 1999 recreation season. This memorandum is provided as a status update following our first implementation year of NRRS operation.
2. The current U.S. Army Corps of Engineers NRRS inventory includes 30,800 reserveable facilities at 624 recreation areas. Almost 240,000 reservations were made at Corps facilities through the NRRS in FY 99, with total associated net revenue of over \$10 million. Total gross recreation revenues in FY 99, NRRS related and other, amounted to \$36.5 million, an increase of 2 percent over total revenues in FY 98. Total net revenues, reflecting payments to the NRRS contractor, amounted to \$32.5 million, a decrease of 9 percent from FY 98.
3. The NRRS use and revenue statistics are good news. This first year of operation was a difficult one, with numerous start-up issues and a steep learning curve for our customers, our staff and our contractor. Despite these difficulties, however, our gross revenues were not severely impacted. We had expected a decrease in net revenues, due to contractor payment. This net decrease was within an acceptable range for the first year and is expected to disappear in the next several years. The NRRS is a long-term project, with contract duration of 10 years, including options. A favorable rate of return on investment is expected over the life of the contract.
4. Several issues were identified in the 1 Apr 99 memorandum as critical to first year NRRS operation. These were a) purchase and deployment of computer equipment for field use, b) replacement of failed equipment, c) busy-out situation at the NRRS Call Center, d) information exchange, e) public relations, and f) contractor performance. Following is a discussion of the resolution and current status of each of these issues.
5. Purchase and Deployment of Computer Equipment. The computer equipment for field use is all now located at the projects where it will be used. More than 80 percent of these systems have been tested and are operable. A few of the systems have been tested and require replacement equipment or reconfiguration. These corrections are in process.

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6. Replacement of Failed Equipment. Procedures are in place for replacement of failed equipment. These procedures are documented in the Interim Operating Procedures Manual, which was provided by formal memorandum from the undersigned and is posted on the team home web site for reference purposes.

7. Busy Out Situation at the NRRS Call Center. The NRRS Call Center was overwhelmed with demand when the majority of NRRS inventory became available for reservations on 1 March 1999. As a result, many of our customers had difficulty reaching an operator for much of the spring and early summer. When it became apparent this was not a short term phenomenon, the NRRS contractor, ReserveAmerica, increased the capacity of the New York call center significantly. Additional agent stations were constructed; additional agents were trained; and telephone line capacity was increased. As a result, the number of busy outs was reduced substantially. Although our customers may still not reach an operator the first try every time, extended periods of busy outs are not occurring.

8. Information exchange. Although the 1 April 1999 memorandum described a variety of communication tools in place, the field still reports current information is not available. This memorandum is intended, in part, to respond to this expressed need for updated information. Teleconferences for Division and District points of contact are now held every 2 weeks, rather than weekly. Notes from each teleconference are provided by Email to all NRRS points of contact, normally by the afternoon of the teleconference. The NRRS Team Home Web Site, <http://team-nrrs.usace.army.mil>, has been expanded and provides a wide variety of information. This includes "NRRS At A Glance", a bi-weekly summary of reservation statistics, compiled by ReserveAmerica. To assure reliable communication, the NRRS POC at each level must conscientiously assure information is dispersed to all involved parties regularly and routinely. Any additional suggestions to improve communications would be helpful and appreciated.

9. Public Relations. A marketing plan has been developed and approved for the NRRS, which includes strategies to serve both internal and external customers. Corps staff at the local level have done an outstanding job of serving our customers during this difficult first year of NRRS operation. Communications with Congressional offices have been of an informational nature for the most part. Exceptions have been localized and are being handled on an individual basis.

10. Contractor Performance. As described in the 1 Apr 1999 memorandum, the NRRS contract is a partnership between the agencies and the contractor, ReserveAmerica. This first year was difficult for a number of reasons; however, ReserveAmerica has worked diligently with the agencies to identify and correct problem areas. The Contracting Officer's Representative has been conscientious in providing performance oversight for this contract, bringing in the Contracting Officer when necessary to emphasize any need

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for improved performance. The undersigned visited the ReserveAmerica offices in New York on 2 occasions this year to discuss progress with the company's officers. The Forest Service counterpart has made similar visits for the same purpose. Another visit is planned this winter to discuss readiness for the 2000 recreation season.

11. Several major efforts must be completed prior to NRRS operations in 2000. These will require a major investment of staff time and effort to accomplish timely and successfully, but will significantly enhance the NRRS service we provide next year. These efforts include:

a. Development of contract performance measurements. This includes both a customer survey process, as well as technical measurements on ReserveAmerica's overall performance. Once these measures are in place, they will be used to "adjust" the contractor's payments on a quarterly basis (anywhere from a - 10% to a + 5% for each Contract Line Item).

b. Development and implementation of the NRRS Business Center. This is a virtual business center, operated through a secured Internet web site. It will provide increased field capability to include access to reports; the ability to make advance reservation sales across the whole contract; the ability to record point of sale items at a management office; the ability to access Inventory data; and an information reference source.

c. Enhancement of the Internet sales channel. This is a major revision of the existing web programming to add capability. It will include an enhanced "availability" query capability, complete implementation of accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities, and revision of the map icons to show reservable and non reservable sites.

d. Modifications to Park Office and telecommunications functionality. This includes the annual revision to the Park Office software, as well as a major reevaluation of agency-provided telecommunications and improvements to ReserveAmerica's handling of data queries. A meeting, with Corps and ReserveAmerica representatives in attendance, was held the week of 4 October to discuss recommended modifications to Park Office for next year. A meeting was held the week of 12 October, with representatives from the Corps, the Forest Service, ReserveAmerica and MCI, the Federal Government's telecommunications contractor, to discuss improvements to connectivity.

12. A policy and procedures review was conducted this fall. All field locations were encouraged to provide suggestions for modifications and improvements to NRRS policy and procedures for next year. A team is currently reviewing suggestions received and will be providing a report of recommendations to the NRRS leadership team. A summary

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report of recommendations and resulting actions will be provided to all field locations when complete.

13. The annual inventory update and verification process began on 12 October 1999 and will continue through 30 November 1999. Guidance for conducting the update was provided to all NRRS POCs on 8 October 1999. (Encl 2)

14 This has been a difficult year for our customers and our field staff. I believe, however, that many of the implementation problems have been resolved and that operation of the NRRS in the coming year will show great improvement. I want to express my most sincere appreciation to all the field staff who provided high quality public service while dealing with problematic start-up issues. My thanks, as well, go to all the leaders and managers who made available the resources necessary to implement this major initiative. I believe someday we will look back at the NRRS as the beginning of a new era of conducting the business of recreation in the Corps, and I believe we will all be proud of having been involved.

/s/

2 Encls

Charles M. Hess
Chief, Operations Division
Directorate of Civil Works

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDERS, MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS AND
DISTRICT COMMANDS, ATTN: CHIEFS, CONSTRUCTION-
OPERATIONS DIVISIONS

SUBJECT: National Recreation Reservation Service™ Inventory Update and Verification

1. An inventory update and verification process will occur each fall for the National Recreation Reservation Service™ (NRRS™). Enclosed are specific instructions provided by the NRRS™ Contracting Officer's Representative for the conduct of the 1999 NRRS™ inventory update and verification process. The update will begin on 12 October 1999 and will continue through 30 November 1999. Field locations must request changes in accordance with the enclosed guidance not later than 30 November 1999.
2. This first year of operation for the NRRS™ has been a learning and adjusting period for all involved parties. The NRRS™ is an innovative project and although a great deal of research was done during its conceptual development, available data pertinent to some aspects of the service was limited or non-existent. Although the NRRS™ has now completed its first year of operation, this was an implementation year rather than a year of typical operation. Many of the problems we experienced this year were due to the delay in the Internet becoming operational, as well as the longer delay in the implementation of Park Office.
3. The operation of Park Office is a critical element in the overall success of the service as conceived. Operating Park Office provides the local manager the capability to provide service to local customers as in the past, while the NRRS™ provides globally enhanced service to both local and non-local customers. With all Park Office locations functioning properly for the 2000 recreation season, the more problematic issues regarding the NRRS™ should disappear.
4. "Proper functioning" of Park Office includes making advance reservations for walk-up customers at the local campground. This very important utility of Park Office permits the local manager to make reservations for customers as in the past, without requiring the customer to call the NRRS™ Call Center or visit the Web site. Accommodating the campground customer in this fashion has several benefits for the overall service. It takes pressure off the Call Center, thus reducing the "busy out" problems we experienced this year. It provides improved customer service for those campers accustomed to making reservations locally. Reservations taken through Park Office cost the Corps less than reservations taken through the Call Center. Using the full range of capabilities available through Park Office permits increased local control of NRRS™ sites and facilities. This local control was significantly diminished this past year without Park Office functioning properly at many locations.

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5. Agency policies, such as those regarding the reserveable/non-reserveable percentages for facilities at NRRS™ areas and the cutoff window, are intended to provide optimum functioning during the operational phase of the service. The contractor's overall price structure was developed based upon these parameters. Inventory changes outside these parameters could compromise the conceptual integrity of the operational NRRS™, as well as affect the contract by changing the basis for pricing. For these reasons, you are requested to make all inventory updates for 2000 within the parameters of existing agency policy. Should experience in full operation during 2000 indicate the policy parameters should be changed for the future, those changes will be considered during the 2000 inventory update and validation process.

6. Current guidance in ER1130-2-550, paragraph 9-2.c., governs review of districts' recreation use fee schedules. This policy states: "The district commander will provide the established schedule of use fees to the major subordinate commands (MSC) not later than 30 December each year." Due to the 240-day NRRS™ reservation window, fees for reserveable facilities must be established at the district and entered into inventory a year further in advance than existing policy envisioned. This policy, however, does not preclude the district from establishing fees and entering them in the inventory earlier than 30 December of the preceding year. It merely states they will be provided to the MSC for review *not later than* 30 December. The MSC may supplement this policy to require earlier review and/or approval, at its discretion.

7. As the enclosed memorandum states, there are now four available inventory-pricing options for group shelters. These options were not available for the 1999 recreation season, so many reserveable shelters were not included in the inventory last year. If the current pricing options meet your needs, you may include group shelters as new inventory for 2000. Although including reserveable shelters in the NRRS™ simplifies funds processing and accounting, it will not be mandatory for all reserveable shelters to be included for 2000.

8. The NRRS™ point of contact in CECW-ON is Judy Rice, (202) 761-1795. The Corps Inventory Team Leader is Mr. Larry Bogue, (214) 767-2432. The Interagency Inventory Team Leader and Contracting Officer's Technical Representative is Greg Webb, (817) 978-4641. Please contact these individuals if you have questions about the 1999 NRRS™ inventory update or about the guidance in this memorandum.

/s/

Encl

CHARLES M. HESS
Chief, Operations Division
Directorate of Civil Works

