

STATEMENT OF NEED

Title: The Status of Recreation Facilities at CE Projects

Current Situation

Recreation facilities have been developed and maintained at Corps reservoirs for over six decades. The state of repair of those facilities has varied geographically and through time. Cost sharing with nonfederal agencies for development of new recreation facilities has been required since 1965. The sponsoring agency is responsible for maintenance and replacement of those facilities, but many facilities remain the responsibility of the Corps at areas where cost sharing agreements have not been consummated. Those facilities have not been the subject of a major rehabilitation program and need to be evaluated to determine if they are adequate for current public use. Several studies have identified the need to examine the status of recreation facilities but no national effort has been conducted (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1968, 1990; Crafts 1970; Coastal Zone Resources Corp. 1975; Jahn et al. 1984).

Why Current Situation is a Problem

Four dynamic issues cause the need to evaluate the current status of recreation facilities. First, recreation use has continually increased since the Corps entered the water resources arena. The Corps is now the largest provider of water-oriented outdoor recreation in the nation. The trend is expected to continue. Second, no new recreation facilities have been provided since 1965 unless nonfederal sponsorship has been available. Recreation sponsors have not been forthcoming at all projects, resulting in provision of only minimal facilities to satisfy growing numbers of recreation users in several cases. Third, technological advances in recreation equipment have made some older recreation facilities obsolete. For example, larger recreational camping vehicles will not fit on the older, smaller camp pads in some Corps camp areas. Modern campers also require electrical and water hookups, which are not available at all sites. Fourth, the clientele of recreation visitors at Corps projects is changing. Recent research indicates that growing numbers of minority groups, e.g., African-Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans, are using Corps projects for recreation. Cultural preferences of these groups call for different facilities than have been conventionally provided. For example, several minority groups recreate in larger numbers per group than current facilities can accommodate.

The GAO Transition Series Report, Natural Resources Management Issues (U.S. General Accounting Office 1992), stated:

The management of the nation's natural resources is at a crossroads. While the infrastructure on federal lands that is associated with natural resources is expanding yearly, the existing infrastructure and lands, approaching \$200 billion in value, are in a growing state of

disrepair. At the same time, agency staff are being asked to assume increasing responsibilities and to perform more duties. As a result, existing maintenance and reconstruction standards are being compromised and trade-offs are being made among important, yet competing, work priorities.

By the turn of the century, many of the structures in the Corps of Engineers' vital, but aging, \$125-billion inventory of water resources projects will have reached their design life, according to the Corps. The major structures have an average age of 33 years, and 12 percent of the projects are over 50 years old. As a result, major rehabilitation projects will become increasingly important and costly in the near future.

Recreational facilities are 40 - 50 years old in many cases. Recent customer satisfaction surveys of 496 recreation visitors revealed that 83 percent of the respondents rated the condition of facilities as good or better, indicating that there is some room for improvement. The surveys were conducted at 17 projects, and the return rate was 46.2 percent (Titre et al. 1997). An opportunity was provided in the survey for written comments. A sample of comments is:

- * Need boat dock in the park.
- * Another boat ramp.
- * Need fish-cleaning station.
- * Trashcans at beach.
- * Need sewer hookups for all motor homes.
- * Level the parking for RVs.
- * Trail walkway needs work.
- * Ladies restroom has a leaky toilet.

Extent, Frequency, and Immediacy of the Problem

The problem is national in scope and is potentially present at all Corps water resources development projects. While the immediate impacts of the problem accrue to the Resource Manager and project staff who must compensate for aging and obsolete facilities with aggressive maintenance programs, other elements are also affected. Design engineers, planners, operations and real estate personnel form the core team to address the issue. Demands have outstripped supply of recreation facilities at several projects for a number of years. Recently the budgetary retrenchments have reduced funding below the level required to adequately maintain existing facilities. An immediate evaluation of the situation is warranted to avoid a large and increasing maintenance deficiency.

Capability Required to Solve the Problem

The research will result in a statement of the condition, functionality, and adequacy of recreation facilities at Corps lakes. That information will enable resource managers at all levels

of the organization to assess the quantity and quality of available facilities vis-a-vis the current and projected public demands. Resource managers will have information upon which sound maintenance and replacement programs can be developed. The proposed work will include a survey of existing and potential cost-sharing partners to determine the status of their facilities and maintenance standards. This information will assist resource managers in identification of institutional barriers to cost sharing and development of alternatives for funding facility cost-sharing arrangements. The proposed work will also result in the development or refinement of recreation facility maintenance standards.

Future Desired Situation after Implementation of the Capability Developed Through the Research

Successful conclusion of the research will provide the resource managers with a means of continually evaluating the status of recreation facilities. Currently, no standards are in place to judge the status of these facilities relative to public user requirements. Standards will be developed and tested so that the research results can be applied uniformly throughout the organization. A procedure will also be developed that will allow field resource managers to assess the status of recreation facilities and determine the need for repairs and maintenance. By using the procedures to be developed, resource managers will be able to devise short- and long-range maintenance and replacement programs that will enable them to provide high-quality recreation facilities to meet the growing demands.

Other Relevant Information

This problem is not unique to the Corps of Engineers. Other federal agencies with outdoor recreation responsibilities also face the same issue. For example, Satchell (1997) in an article regarding the need to upgrade facilities at the national parks, states, "Throughout the park system, reduced budgets have spurred the steady deterioration of roads, buildings, sewers, and other infrastructure." He goes on to say that Yellowstone's annual operating budget of around \$20 million was cut by \$2.2 million in 1996 and by \$3 million in 1997, creating a backlog in infrastructure repair and construction of \$600 million "...now visible in everything from gaping potholes to rangers housed in World War II trailers." The US Forest Service and the National Park Service have started efforts to assess the status of their recreation facilities. Other agencies, including the Bureau of Reclamation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Tennessee Valley Authority have the same problem. These and other agencies will be canvassed to learn of their approaches to resolving the issue. Researchers at the Construction Engineering Research Laboratory have developed a computer software program that permits the analysis of buildings and their component parts, e.g., roofs, walls, etc., to determine the maintenance status and possible repair procedures. This system and any others like it will be investigated for potential application to recreation structures. Any information learned from the experiences of others will be adapted and applied to the Corps' problem as appropriate.

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