



American Recreation Coalition

Dedicated to the protection and enhancement of everyone's right to health and happiness through recreation.

NEWS

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Leaders Embrace New Recreation Strategy

Washington, DC (February 11, 2008) The leadership of the nation's top provider of public outdoor recreation opportunities today expressed solid support for a new recreation strategy for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) that links agency recreation efforts both to the overall mission of the Corps and the U.S. Army to protect the nation's health, safety and security and to special efforts to aid active duty, retirees and reserve military and their families. The strategy seeks to continue the agency's leading role in providing public recreation opportunities in America. It now hosts nearly 400 million recreation visits annually.

The new recreation strategy was developed by a diverse group of recreation and conservation organizations, working in concert with USACE staff and the new Corps of Engineers Natural Resources Education Foundation. The strategy notes that a public health crisis -- caused by lowered levels of physical activity -- threatens the American public's health, safety and security. The strategy further notes that the crisis particularly impacts children, who now face shorter lives and lowered quality of life, and has serious consequences for Army recruitment and costs for training and fitness for duty. The Centers for Disease Control and other health experts report that increases in physical activity during leisure time are essential to overcoming these challenges.

The strategy also notes that USACE, like other federal resource-managing agencies, is directed by Executive Order 13266 to assist the public in boosting physical activity and recommends that USACE undertake a response since its recreational facilities are readily accessible to millions.

The new recreation strategy contains five elements: (1) a new communications effort to build public awareness of USACE-managed recreation opportunities; (2) a program to strengthen and expand USACE partnership efforts; (3) active involvement in national efforts to link American youth to nature; (4) increased cooperation with local communities located near USACE sites to support economic sustainability and vitality; and (5) cooperative research efforts on the social and economic relationships between Corps recreation and environmental resources and public needs.

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The importance of a new strategy is highlighted by intense competition for dollars for all federal programs and within the USACE. In some cases, USACE recreation sites are being closed or cut back. While expressing concerns about these reductions to the USACE leadership, the recreation leaders emphasized the need for a long term, sustainable plan for USACE's recreation program rather than focus on short term fixes.

The presentation to Lt. General Robert Van Antwerp the Chief of Engineers and Commanding General of USACE, was delivered by four recreation community leaders, led by American Recreation Coalition President Derrick Crandall. Other presenters were: Craig Kirby, Vice President and General Counsel of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association; Aubrey King, representing both the Southeast Tourism Policy Council and National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds; and Cindy Squires, Chief Counsel for Public Affairs and Director of Regulatory Affairs of the National Marine Manufacturers Association. Joining Lt. General Van Antwerp for USACE were: Major General Don Riley, Director of Civil Works; Michael Enschede, Chief of Operations, Civil Works; and Mary Coulombe, Chief, Natural Resources Management.

In addition to accepting the recreation strategy in concept, General Van Antwerp approved the creation of a USACE/partners task force to develop an implementation plan by May 1, 2008. The strategy suggests a number of possible actions for consideration in the implementation plan, including using recreation enthusiast publications to reach tens of millions of American households with information about Corps recreation opportunities, securing recreation fee authority and local retention provisions, closer liaison with military basis, a new USACE recreation program summit to address trends and future needs and an active effort to serve military families better at Corps sites.

According to Mary Coulombe, the initial meeting of the task force to develop the implementation plan will be held on February 29, 2008 in Washington, D.C. Those interested in participating in the task force should contact either Derrick Crandall (dcrandall@funoutdoors.com) or Mary Coulombe (mary.j.coulombe@usace.army.mil).

A full copy of the new USACE recreation strategy is available at www.funoutdoors.com.