



Welcome to the Spring 2025 Edition of the Corps Foundation Newsletter.

Have something you want to share? Send us an article!

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Federal Lands Recreation Under Threat!

Are you an avid outdoor enthusiast? The Corps Foundation wants you to be informed about changes that may affect your access to Federal lands. The new administration's emphasis on cost cutting is no doubt welcomed by many however, recent Executive Orders, as well as Office of Personnel Management and Office of Management and Budget propose reorganization and cost-cutting that will result in widespread impacts to all Federal land management agencies. Policies like federal workforce buyouts, firing of probationary employees and the end of remote work will most certainly impact the recreation programs and services the public enjoys.

The Corps Foundation is writing to ask you to take immediate action to reverse the recent staffing cuts to land management agencies like the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), National Park Service (NPS), and Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S Army Corps of Engineers. These agencies play a crucial role in maintaining our public lands and ensuring that they remain accessible, safe, and well-preserved for the millions of Americans who depend on them for recreation, jobs, and community well-being.

What Are the Impacts? These cuts disproportionately impact staff responsible for visitor services, trail maintenance, campground management, access to boat launching, emergency response, and land restoration efforts like reforestation and invasive species removal. As visitation to public lands continues to rise, these cuts will have immediate and lasting consequences for the outdoor recreation economy and public safety, including affecting visitor experiences in the outdoors.

The outdoor recreation economy in the US is \$3.1 trillion. Local regional and gateway communities largely depend on outdoor recreation to their local Federal lands as their driving economic factor. Impacts to parks and other Federal lands also affect the nearby communities.

Why is the Corps Foundation Concerned?

The Corps Foundation is the only nationwide nonprofit organization dedicated exclusively to these lakes, rivers and the lands managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Over 260 million visitors boat, camp, hike and fish on over 400 recreation projects around the US. The Corps Foundation works to connect partners and "Friends" organizations to ensure access to the lakes and waterways. Current efforts to make indiscriminate cuts without evaluating impacts to those programs and services that the public values will likely result in the closing of parks and launching ramps, less public safety, and a deterioration of natural resources. The Corps

Foundation will be monitoring the impacts closely and urging all those affected to make their voices heard.

What can you do to help?

Please contact your Congressional representatives to urge them to reverse course and make it an urgent priority to restore funding and support for Federal land management agencies. Public lands are a national treasure, and the dedicated staff who manage them must be adequately supported to **ensure that these lands remain healthy and accessible for all.**

Partnering for Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns Campaign Ads by Rachel Garren

The Corps Foundation continues work on their 6th grant, funded by the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the US. Coast Guard (USCG). In this final grant year, we have budgeted approximately \$60,000 for Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns campaign advertisement purchases. We like to spread those funds as much as we can by partnering with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) offices who are interested in sharing the cost of ads for convenience stores (gas pump toppers, handles, etc.), billboards, movie theaters, and state fishing guides. These purchases will be made during the recreation season, primarily in USACE areas that have the most recreational water-related fatalities. Since the 4th of July holiday weekend is when most drownings happen, we like to have ads in place by that time. If you have a specific advertising purchase in mind, that you're interested in partnering with the Corps Foundation, email our Special Programs Director Rachel Garren at RachelGarren22@gmail.com with all the details (location, USACE & Advertiser contact information, costs, etc.) for your planned purchase, as soon as possible. Keep in mind, advertisers like scheduling some of these types of ads several months in advance.

This third and final year for USCG grant funds of \$150,000 per year ends in September 2025. By that time, The Corps Foundation will have spent \$1,735,000 on promoting the award-winning Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns campaign targeting high-risk, adult boaters in partnership with USACE.

Supporting USACE Non-Profits: Scholarship Winners Attend the Public Lands Alliance Convention and Trade Show

Nancy Rogers, Board Member for Advocacy and Outreach

The Corps Foundation funded its first initiative to improve its support of non-profit partners that assist recreation projects managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. By joining forces with the Public Lands Alliance (PLA), the Foundation sponsored two scholarships open to any non-profit that has a signed agreement with its local USACE recreation project to attend the annual Public Lands Alliance Convention and Trade Show. www.publiclandsalliance.org This year the convention was held in Las Vegas, NV, February 2-5, 2025.

The Convention and Trade Show is an opportunity for non-profit partners to land management agencies to network, attend educational sessions, field trips and scout a Trade Show- full of education-based sales items for their local sales outlets.

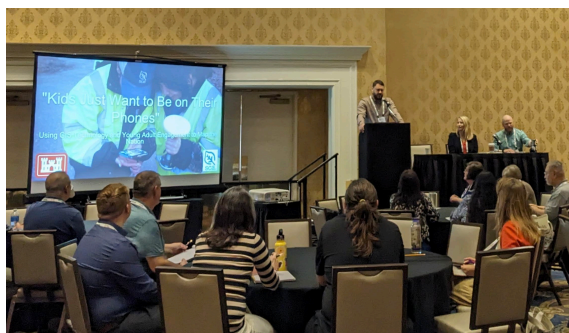
The Corps Foundation selected two non-profits on a competitive basis to the Mark Twain Lake Visitors and Educational Resource Center Committee, represented by Anna Gill, and the Friends of Raystown Lake represented by Hanah Thatcher.



Left to right: Anna Gill, Nancy Rogers, Hanah Thatcher at Las Vegas PLA Convention and Trade Show

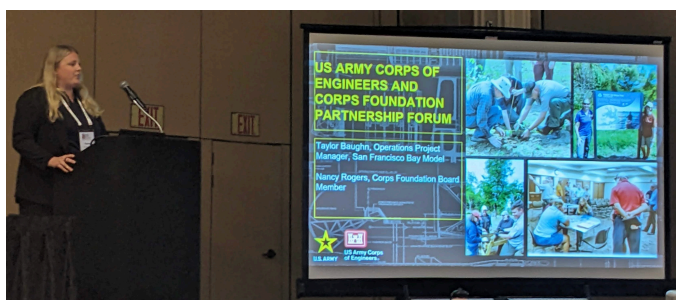
Both women shared that attending the convention was an incredible opportunity to connect with other professionals and volunteers dedicated to preserving and enhancing

the nation's public lands, while the trade show emphasized how education-based sales items can amplify the mission of a park.



Hanah- *"All of the sessions were spectacular, the most impactful were those on technology's role in public lands. It was interesting to see how digital tools are shaping the future of conservation and visitor engagement. Beyond the sessions, the most meaningful experience was networking with other public lands professionals and organizations. It*

was interesting to hear what other USACE projects are doing, but also what other agencies are doing, and connect on shared struggles and brainstorm solutions and ideas."



Hanah is bringing back new ideas for the Friends of Raystown Lake, and initiatives she hopes to launch at the Raystown Lake Project.

Anna attended sessions on advocacy, partnerships, trail networks, and the power of storytelling. The advocacy session reinforced the importance of building relationships with decision-makers, while the USACE Partnership Forum highlighted ways to collaborate with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on incredibly valuable projects.

"I explored how platforms like All Trails can enhance access to outdoor recreation and how effective storytelling can be used to engage communities and inspire action. These takeaways will help strengthen our partnerships, improve outreach, and enhance our efforts to support public lands and the communities that rely on them."

Ken Wilk: A Great Man is Silenced

"Greatness is not from popularity or public adulation. Neither is it from how much wealth one has or how many places one has traveled or seen. Greatness is not to be in the paper or to have a "fan club", or your words quoted in classrooms.

Greatness is what you leave behind when the tasks are done; the ethics one illustrates, the honesty one lives by, the life one changes by living an "honest life".

Greatness is when you give without expecting restitution. Greatness is when others ARE more important than yourself. Greatness come from the heart and soul and not from regulations or rules.

Greatness is when one passes how well loved and remembered one was and not by official dictates.

Greatness truly cannot be set in stone, but is in the memories and the changes one brought the world." John Luzader, Founding member of the Corps Foundation



The Corps Foundation would like to pay tribute to Kenneth Stephen Wilk who recently passed away. Ken had a successful a 34-year career with the Corps of Engineers as a Park Ranger and played a significant role in the origination of the Corps Foundation.

From 2000 to 2008, Ken accepted an assignment as the Assistant National Coordinator for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Celebration. In that role, he had the honor and pleasure of coordinating with other federal, state, and private organizations to tell the story of the Lewis & Clark Expedition of 1803-1806.

Peter Lewis, Founding Chairperson of the Corps Foundation's Board of Directors first met Ken Wilk on a bus tour along the Lewis and Clark Trail in 1999. Peter's company, Car Tours Foundation, was preparing to produce the "Lewis and Clark Trail of Discovery," the Official Driving Tour for the Bicentennial Council. Peter recalls Ken Wilk tapped him on the shoulder and asked, "Do you know the Lewis and Clark expedition was a U. S. Army mission?" "No," I replied, "tell me more." He introduced himself and his co-traveler Jean Nauss, National Coordinator for the US Army Corps efforts to support the Bicentennial. During the course of the next couple years, we became friends and, as our work on the Bicentennial planning drew to a close, it was Ken Wilk who suggested I consider forming the Corps of Engineers Foundation. Ken had many good plans for the organization and I could see that the Corp's Natural Resources Management (NRM) program was an important asset for campers and other outdoors types so I agreed to help set it up. Today, the Corps Foundation supports the NRM in several ways and I'm grateful to have helped get this organization underway".

The Corps Foundation and its Board of Directors are grateful for the contributions that Ken made to the forming of the Foundation and would like to pay tribute to his role in helping the Foundation to become a reality. If you would like to learn more about his career, service, and dedication to the Corps of Engineers, you can read a reprint of Ken's contribution to the book, *Park Ranger Stories of the US Army Corps of Engineers*. Follow the link to his obituary: [Kenneth Stephen Wilk Obituary \(2025\) - Lyndon, KS - Feltner Funeral Home - Lyndon](#)

"I Got Caught" Initiative Dry Bag Giveaway by Rachel Garren

The Corps Foundation made our final USCG grant-funded promotional product purchase for distribution in the summer of 2025. The giveaway product is a waterproof dry bag, which was one of our most popular Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns campaign promotional giveaway items in the past. The plan is to distribute these dry bags to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) locations that have "I Got Caught" initiatives so they can give them to adults caught wearing a life jacket while boating or swimming. The USACE National Water Safety Program plans to handle distribution of the dry bags.

Membership Renewal: Your Support Makes a Difference!

Please enter your contact information in the space below.

Name:

Address:

Email:

ZIP:

Phone number:



Contribution Level Payment

Please return this form with your check payable to CNREF, c/o Dave Wahus, 422 Silver Fox Lane, Pisgah Forest, NC 28768. If you prefer, you can renew your membership online by visiting the Foundation's website at www.corpsfoundation.org
Please indicate your contribution level:

<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: \$_____
<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$100		

Your Support Makes a Difference!

Corps of Engineers Natural Resources Education Foundation is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization, tax ID #20-5545091, doing business as The Corps Foundation.

Your donation may be tax-deductible for you as permitted by Federal law for nonprofit organizations. Your support of the Corps Foundation helps U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) projects and friend's groups connect, grow, and increase their capacity to fulfill USACE's natural resource education mission on lakes and waterways

across the United States. Find out more at the Foundation's website:
www.CorpsFoundation.org

Contact Information:

Greg Miller, Chairperson,
Corps Foundation
Phone: 816-651-4895
Mail: MillerGa50@gmail.com
Corps of Engineers Natural Resource Education Foundation
404 E. 30th Avenue, North Kansas City, Missouri 64116

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