

**Environmental Assessment for
Proposed Changes in Park Operations
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District**

May 2005



**U. S. Army Corps
of Engineers
Fort Worth District**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

PROPOSED CHANGES IN PARK OPERATIONS U. S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, FORT WORTH DISTRICT

Description of Action. In Fiscal Year (FY)05, Fort Worth District experienced a decrease in recreation funding. Recreation expenditures in FY04 equaled \$28.9 million while the FY05 recreation work allowance equaled only \$24.8 million. The resulting \$4.1 million short fall in recreation funding has driven the District to explore possible options to reduce expenditures to align with attempted future funding allocations while striving to continue to offer the public functioning facilities that meet Corps standards.

A total of 68 park areas at 11 lakes were identified for consideration to undertake some form of action to gain operational efficiencies. A variety of measures were considered which could provide potential efficiencies on a park area specific basis. The proposed alternative measures discussed in the environmental assessment (EA) include: reduction of services (45 areas), shortening of the season when selected parks are open (8 areas), lease concessionaire to a private party (1 area), closure of a section of a park (6 areas), and full closure (10 areas). The above changes in operations were based on the FY 05 budget and are anticipated to continue for the foreseeable future (3-5 years).

During the 30-day public review period for the EA numerous comments were received regarding adverse effects to the local community if a portion of Walling Bend Park at Whitney Lake were closed. The Corps of Engineers (COE) subsequently reassessed its anticipated operations and maintenance funding and identified sufficient funds to allow Walling Bend Park in its entirety to remain open. This change in the proposed action is noted in this finding only and discussions in the EA were not revised.

Potential concessionaires were identified during the review period who may lease operation of Jackson Hill Park at Sam Rayburn Lake and Overlook Park at Somerville Lake. Although no lessee agreements have been finalized at the time of this finding, the COE is continuing to pursue leasing these and other facilities proposed for closure so they may remain open to the public. COE policy dictates that if operation of a leased park area is returned to the COE the park will remain closed indefinitely.

Other alternative plans identified but not accepted included the elimination of staff positions, fee increases and the "No-Action" alternative.


Anticipated Environmental Effects There will be no significant adverse impacts to the human and natural environment associated with implementation of the proposed action. No significant adverse environmental impacts are anticipated to geology, soil, water, or biological resources, within the subject property. No adverse impact is expected to occur to plant or animal species that are proposed or listed as threatened or endangered according to the Endangered Species Act.

Reduction in services and possible lessee takeover are expected to have minimal impact on visitor experience. Seasonal closures, partial closures and full closures of parks are expected to shift visitation to nearby parks that will remain open. The closed and partially closed areas will remain open to pedestrian use and visitors for continued use of the areas for low density recreation purposes. All parks in the District typically experience peak attendance during four to five weekends throughout the year and visitation is typically higher in parks near major urban areas. During these peak times there is a potential for any park in the district to reach capacity. Since most of the parks identified in the proposed action currently incur fairly low visitor use, the impacts to visitor capacity at other nearby parks is expected to be minimal except during high use periods.

Generally, other parks are located approximately the same or less distance from local businesses as the parks affected by proposed changes. For this reason, visitors displaced from the ten closed areas are expected to traverse and spend recreational money at the existing local businesses as before. Benefits to local or regional economies would likely remain the same or decrease slightly under the proposed alternative. Impacts to local or regional economies where reduction in services, seasonal closures or partial park closures are proposed are expected to be minimal.

Facts and Conclusions. Based on my review of the information contained in this EA, I have concluded that the implementation of the proposed changes in park operations is not a major Federal action, which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

DATE 7/8/05


John R. Minahan
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

INTRODUCTION

Fort Worth District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) oversees nearly 400 sites for recreation and other activities on 25 lakes in Texas. These lakes attract approximately 25 million visitors per year. The District leads the COE in the collection of recreation revenues (\$6.39 million in FY04) and ranks in the top five in visitation (23.3 million in FY04).

In fiscal year (FY) 05, Fort Worth District experienced a large reduction in recreation funding as compared to prior year funding allocations. Recreation expenditures in FY04 totaled \$28.9 million while the FY05 recreation work allowance equaled only \$24.8 million. The resulting \$4.1 million decrease in recreation funding has caused the District to explore possible options reduce expenditures while striving to continue to offer the public with functioning facilities that meet Corps standards. To accommodate this funding shortfall, Fort Worth District investigated a variety of measures which potentially provide operational efficiencies. The proposed measures identified include: reduction of services (45 areas), shortening of the season when some parks are open (8 areas), concessionaire lease (1 area), closure of portions of a park (6 areas), and full park closure (10 areas).

The COE strives to provide a quality recreation experience for the visiting public. To provide a quality experience, basic recreation resource management goals include: 1) preservation of recreational opportunities while providing for health and human safety; 2) protection of natural resources; and 3) management of Corps facilities in the most effective and cost-efficient manner. These basic goals cannot be met at all parks given the recent shortfall in operational budgets. Continued operation of all parks managed by the Fort Worth District under these budget constraints would result in reduction in work force, maintenance, sanitary services and law enforcement to the extent it could potentially jeopardize the health and safety of park visitors.

Planning Objectives

Over the past several years, the COE has performed reductions in work force and in services such as maintenance, sanitary services and law enforcement in order to meet management goals while operating within available budget allocations. Due to further cuts in the FY05 operating budget, the COE was forced to seek additional cost saving measures. Reduction of services at parks and park closures was viewed as the least preferred measure, however, a necessary action to continue to offer safe and acceptable service at the District's parks.

To accommodate budget reductions the COE collected and analyzed data such as current workforce, visitation, facilities use, natural resource degradation, vandalism, operation and maintenance (O&M) costs, and other related issues for each of the 25 lake projects. The information was gathered from each Reservoir Manager and by examining files held in the District Office. An examination of existing data revealed that a large number of parks throughout the District are experiencing various types of operational problems. It was determined that some of these park areas should receive immediate corrective action.

Selected criteria were used to evaluate District parks and identify parks in which closure or partial closure would have the least impact on visitation. The criteria included consideration of the following factors. All the objectives were given equal consideration in selection of parks for corrective action.

- 1) Provide a quality recreation experience for park visitors.
- 2) Meet existing and projected recreation demands efficiently.
- 3) Availability of other nearby facilities to accommodate displaced visitors.
- 4) Minimize adverse impacts on local economies in terms of tourism or visitor expenditures.
- 5) Reduce size and extent of vandalism problems, trouble areas, and safety hazards.
- 6) Reduce O&M costs to conform to projected budgetary constraints.
- 7) Seek an outside party to lease one park.

Based on the evaluation of all parks, the following array of measures were analyzed to ascertain which could offer efficiencies on a park area specific basis.

Full Closure Full closure would require that all vehicular traffic into the park be eliminated by installation of traffic barriers on park access roads. Scheduled maintenance efforts would also be discontinued. These maintenance items include mowing, trash removal, cleaning of facilities, painting, road repair, etc. Full closure would continue to allow walk-in access and low-density public day-use such as hiking, bird watching, and fishing. Natural vegetative succession would be allowed to progress in closed areas.

Partial Closure Partial closures would require that vehicular traffic be restricted from certain areas within the park. Maintenance efforts would be reduced but not eliminated. Maintenance will be continued to meet public health and safety needs. Effects on the resource base and low-density use would be similar to, but on a reduced scale, than those described for full closures.

Seasonal Closures The COE has been operating a seasonal closure program on some of its parks for a number of years. Seasonal closures would be extended upwards to 60 days for some park areas. Two Other parks at Lake O' the Pines currently operated year-round may be closed for up to 7 months during winter.

Leasing Under current rules and regulations, the Corps has the option to lease parks to other governmental and private entities. The District plans to actively pursue lease agreements on all the park areas proposed for closure. Success of a park leasing program is not always guaranteed. Within the Fort Worth District, in previous years, many parks have been leased out only to be turned back over to the district for various reasons. In many of these cases, significant infrastructure and natural resource degradation has occurred. COE policy dictates that if operation of a leased park area is returned to the COE the park will remain closed indefinitely.

Reduction in Services Reduced services would involve reducing cleaning frequency, reducing law enforcement patrols, and reducing mowing frequency

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Proposed Action The above analysis revealed that the 68 park areas would have to undergo changes in operation given the current annual budget. From the Corps perspective all park areas identified are either more costly to operate for the public benefits accrued, are geographically located such that maintenance problems are excessive or visitor control is ineffective. The proposed action includes 10 park closures, 6 partial closures, 8 season reductions, 45 reductions of services and 1 lease takeover. Table 1. details the proposed measures to be undertaken for each of the 68 parks.

Project	Facility (67 parks)	Closure	Partial Closure	Shortened Season	Reduction in services	Lessee Takeover
Aquilla	Overlook	X				
Aquilla	Aquilla Crk	X				
Aquilla	Hackberry Crk	X				
Belton	All Parks (13)				X	
Lake O' the Pines	Hurricane Park	X				
Lake O' the Pines	Cedar Springs	X				
Lavon	Avalon			X		
Lavon	Brockdale			X		
Lavon	Clearlake			X		
Lavon	Lakeland,			X		
Lavon	Lavonia			X		
Georgetown	All Parks (4)				X	
Sam Rayburn	Twin Dikes			X		
Sam Rayburn	Rayburn		X			
Sam Rayburn	Jackson Hill	X				
Sam Rayburn	Ralph McAlister		X			
Sam Rayburn	Etoile	X				
Sam Rayburn	Monterey		X		X	
Sam Rayburn	Ebenezer		X		X	
Sam Rayburn	Marion Ferry				X	
Sam Rayburn	Powell					X
Somerville	Rocky Park		X			
Somerville	Overlook Park	X				
Stillhouse Hollow	All Parks (5)				X	
Waco	All Parks (8)				X	
Whitney	Walling Bend		X			
Whitney	All Parks (12)				X	
Wright Patman	Intake Hill	X				
Wright Patman	Elliott Bluff	X				
Wright Patman	Oak			X		
Wright Patman	Malden Lake			X		
	TOTAL PARKS	10	6	8	45	1

Table 1. Proposed measures to reduce O&M costs at Fort Worth District Corps of Engineers Lakes in 2005.

At four parks identified for full closure a boat ramp will remain open and accessible to vehicular traffic. At these parks, traffic barriers will be erected to prohibit vehicular access to picnic or camping facilities.

No Action. There is no reason to anticipate that inefficiencies identified at each of the 68 parks will be eliminated under existing park configurations, and observed uses. Such projections are based on the many collective years of experience in park management by Corps reservoir managers, rangers, and recreation planners. Additionally, the prospect of revitalizing these parks through more intensive development is remote since new facilities development would require that a local sponsor commit to 50 percent of the development cost and all operations and maintenance costs. Without adequate maintenance or law enforcement services, all parks could experience possible increases in vandalism and rowdiness. Also, the park facilities would continue to degrade without the presence of a maintenance regime creating a safety and health hazard for park visitors.

Other Alternatives Considered

1. Elimination of staff positions. In recent years, selected staff positions have been terminated to accommodate prior year budgetary constraints. Due to many of the parks operating with smaller staff, elimination of additional staff positions would likely compromise the health and safety of visitors at the parks.
2. Fee increases. Collection of larger park fees would not increase the COE operating budget. All funds generated from collection of recreation use fees at all parks across the nation are required to be returned to a central O&M, General appropriations and is not available to be redistributed to the respective park where the fees were collected.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND EFFECTS

Visitation. Potential visitation affected by the full park closures is 436,372 and 318,518 for partial park closures based on visitation in FY04 (Table 2.). Table 3. displays visitation from FY04 for those parks proposed for seasonal closures. It should be noted that in visitation calculations, one visitor may be counted as several visits in one day or numerous visitors (in one vehicle) may be counted as one visit. Further, calculations do not distinguish between day-use or overnight use. Since a visitor may make several visits per year this number could still give an inflated perception of the total number of different people to be affected.

LAKE	PARK	Oct. 03	Nov. 03	Dec. 03	Jan. 04	Feb. 04	Mar. 04	Apr. 04	4-May	Jun. 04	Jul. 04	Aug. 04	Sep. 04	Visitation Affected
FULL CLOSURE														
Aquilla	Aquilla Creek	190	250	150	100	75	100	125	114	131	124	446	846	2,461
Aquilla	Hackberry Creek	400	480	300	250	200	300	325	297	341	323	1,467	669	5,352
Aquilla	Overlook	387	284	209	237	315	380	411	513	589	559	320	94	4,298
Lake O'the Pines	Hurricane Creek	1,888	3,318	3,834	3,514	3,726	3,735	4,688	2,856	2,812	3,489	3,215	1,854	38,929
Lake O'the Pines	Cedar Springs	2,286	3,036	2,119	2,008	1,998	3,221	4,549	3,394	3,434	3,928	2,853	3,222	36,048
Sam Rayburn	Jackson Hill	6,560	5,780	6,144	6,415	8,303	7,918	8,781	7,500	8,300	8,100	7,925	11,972	93,698
Sam Rayburn	Etoile	1,736	1,445	1,643	1,598	1,875	2,800	3,145	2,925	2,840	2,745	2,356	4,446	29,554
Somerville	Overlook	8,142	5,981	4,953	4,386	5,758	14,400	15,298	15,908	11,339	14,787	10,576	10,968	122,496
Wright Patman	Intake Hill	4,705	2,540	3,058	2,767	3,844	5,908	11,932	10,443	6,045	5,854	4,545	3,023	64,664
Wright Patman	Elliott Bluff	2,813	1,667	1,321	1,443	1,074	3,460	3,529	7,112	4,822	5,318	3,400	2,913	38,872
TOTAL		28,917	24,781	23,731	22,718	27,168	42,222	52,783	51,062	40,653	45,227	37,103	40,007	436,372
PARTIAL CLOSURE														
Sam Rayburn	Powell	8,761	6,163	5,916	4,791	6,888	7,287	9,625	7,452	10,794	9,150	8,250	7,360	71,597
Sam Rayburn	Rayburn	1,592	1,651	1,780	2,168	2,490	3,109	5,721	3,951	3,778	3,058	1,747	1,352	27,374
Sam Rayburn	Ralph McAlister	0	0	0	725	989	1,150	1,250	1,100	1,450	1,300	1,150	1,123	10,237
Sam Rayburn	Monterey	3,620	3,143	3,661	3,964	6,621	4,240	7,721	4,375	5,175	4,950	4,725	2,454	44,225
Sam Rayburn	Ebenezer	1,376	1,125	1,215	4,632	4,716	4,943	5,615	4,733	4,516	4,325	3,645	720	37,845
Somerville	Rocky Creek	5,193	3,479	2,210	1,924	2,624	8,914	8,321	10,593	8,020	10,763	6,598	5,785	63,542
Whitney	Walling Bend	2,000	1,900	2,217	2,676	2,044	6,667	8,333	10,416	11,978	11,379	6,183	4,022	63,698
TOTAL		22,542	17,461	16,999	20,880	26,372	36,310	46,586	42,620	45,711	44,925	32,298	22,816	318,518

Table 2. Monthly visitation from FY '04 at parks where full closure and partial closure are proposed

LAKE	PARK	Oct. 03	Nov. 03	Dec. 03	Jan. 04	Feb. 04	Mar. 04	Apr. 04	May - 04	Jun. 04	Jul. 04	Aug. 04	Sep. 04	Visitation Affected
SEASONAL CHANGE														
Lavon	Avalon	--	--	--	--	--	4,309	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4,309
Lavon	Brockdale	--	--	--	--	--	6,350	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6,350
Lavon	Clearlake	--	--	--	--	--	9,758	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	9,758
Lavon	Lakeland	--	--	--	--	--	5,911	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5,911
Lavon	Lavonia	--	--	--	--	--	4,875	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4,875
Sam Rayburn	Twin Dikes	4,345	5,210	7,230	4,033	8,147	11,734	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	11,764	52,463
Wright Patman	Oak	14,198	9,794	8,401	12,416	11,599	22,054	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	78,462
Wright Patman	Malden Lake	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2,444	1,420	NA	3,864
TOTAL														165,992

Table 3. Monthly visitation from FY '04 at parks where seasonal closures are proposed. Shaded areas show visitation from FY04 for months that parks that are proposed to be closed. NA indicated months in which no change in operations is proposed.

Visitors that would normally use the parks proposed for closure would be expected to shift to nearby alternate sites. Minor impacts to visitor experience and convenience could likely occur due to higher use in those parks remaining open and slightly longer travel times are expected. In some instances the potential visitors have the option to go to areas other than parks operated by the COE. For this reason some losses of revenue to the COE are expected to occur due to the proposed closures. The potential loss of fee collections to the COE from the proposed action is estimated to be approximately \$180,000 if all displaced visitors elected to recreate in parks not operated by the COE. However, since many of those visitors are expected to simply go to other COE parks the actual net loss is likely to be considerably less.

Tables 4, 5 and 6 display the facilities located at the parks proposed for full closure, partial closure and seasonal changes, respectively. For the most part, affected visits are expected to shift to other areas, not closed. Additionally, some of the closures only affect certain parts of the park and will cause no visitor displacements. Closed and partially closed areas will still be open to pedestrian use and those visitors who previously used the areas for low density recreation purposes should not be affected. Opportunities for those visitors who desire high density recreation will still exist within the local area (Table 4.).

Project	Facility	Electric Sites	Non-Electric	Rest-rooms	Boat Ramp	Group Pavillion	Distance to Nearest Open Park
Aquilla	Overlook						Dairy Hill - 2.5 mi.
Aquilla	Aquilla Crk			1			New Road- 1 mi.
Aquilla	Hackberry Crk			1	1		Dairy Hill - 4 mi.
Lake O' the Pines	Hurricane		23				Johnson Crk - 2 mi.
Lake O' the Pines	Cedar Springs		28				Oak Valley - 7.5 mi.
Sam Rayburn	Jackson Hill		60	6		1	Cassells Boykin - 5 mi.
Sam Rayburn	Etoile		9	1			Marion Ferry - 5 mi.
Somerville	Overlook	25	40	3	1	1	Yegua Crk - 2.5 mi.
Wright Patman	Intake Hill		24	1			North Shore - 1 mi.
Wright Patman	Elliott Bluff				1		Piney Point - 2.5 mi.

Table 4. Facilities affected by proposed park closures and distance to nearest open park.

Project	Facility	PROPOSED CLOSURES					REMAINING OPEN					
		Elec. Sites	Non-Elec. Sites	Rest-rooms	Boat Ramp	Group Pavillion	Elec. Sites	Non-Elec. Sites	Rest-rooms	Boat Ramp	Group Pavillion	Dist. to Open Park
Sam Rayburn	Rayburn	--	29	--	--	--	24	24	2	1	--	St. Augustine - 20 mi.
Sam Rayburn	Ralph McAlister	--	--	1	1	--	--	--	--	1	--	Etoile - 8 mi.
Sam Rayburn	Monterey	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	Hanks' Crk - 5 mi.
Sam Rayburn	Ebenezer	--	17	--	--	--	10	3	1	--	--	Twin Dikes - 5 mi.
Somerville	Rocky Creek	--	46	1	--	--	82	75	6	2	--	Yegua - 4 mi.
Whitney	Walling Bend	--	5	--	1	1	--	5	1	1	--	Riverside - 5mi.

Table 5. Facilities affected by proposed partial park closures.

All parks within the District typically experience peak attendance during four to five weekends such as Easter, Labor Day, Independence Day and Memorial Day. During

these peak times there is a potential for any park to reach capacity. Since most of the parks identified in the proposed action currently incur fairly low visitor use, the impacts to other nearby parks is expected to be minimal except during high use periods.

The proposed changes in seasonal openings will reduce the length of time 8 facilities are available to visitors, however, other parks within the lake project would be open to accommodate visitors during normal use periods. Minor impacts to visitor experience and convenience due to higher use in those parks remaining open and slightly longer travel times are expected. These impacts would be expected to reoccur annually until O&M funding allocations were increased.

The number of facilities, such as camp sites that will be affected by reductions in open seasons, is presented in Table 6.

Project	Facility	Electric Sites	Non-Electric	Picnic	Rest-room	Boat Ramp	Group Pavillion	Dump Staion
Lavon	Avalon			56				
Lavon	Brockdale				1		2	
Lavon	Clear Lake	23		18	1	1		
Lavon	Lakeland,		32		1	1	1	
Lavon	Lavonia	38	15	51	1	1	1	
Sam Rayburn	Twin Dikes	65	27		3	2	1	1
Wright Patman	Oak			26	1		1	1
Wright Patman	Malden Lake	39			1	1		1

Table 6. Facilities affected by proposed seasonal changes.

For the 45 parks in which a reduction in services is proposed, the visitor experience may be impacted by less frequent mowing, trash pick-up and reduced law enforcement patrols. The impact from these changes are expected to be minimal.

Local Economies. A number of the businesses in the general proximity to the District’s lake projects benefit from supplying provisions to park visitors. These local businesses generally have expanded their clientele from local residents to include park visitors. A number of these businesses have specialized by stocking supplies used by park visitors such as picnic supplies, bait and tackle may rely on park visitors for the majority of their sales. A few businesses that rely heavily on visitor expenditures would potentially be affected.

Generally, other parks are located approximately the same or less distance from these businesses as the parks affected by proposed changes (Appendix A). For this reason, visitors displaced from these ten closed areas will likely traverse and spend recreational money at the same businesses as before. Benefits to local or regional economies would likely remain the same or decrease slightly under the proposed alternative.

Of the businesses identified in Appendix A.. those nearby Malden Lake at Wright Patman and Cedar Springs at Lake O' the Pines have the longest change in distance to the next nearest open park. Malden Lake is proposed to be closed for two months out of the year (July and August). This park experiences low visitation during these months due to low lake levels and high densities of mosquitoes. Since there are relatively few visitors this time of year and the closure will only occur during two months, it is unlikely that the proposed closure will affect the three nearby businesses.

Although Cedar Springs has 23 campsites these are primarily used for day-use activities. The nearest business to the park is a marina that resides across State Highway 155. The marina possesses the same types of facilities as the park, therefore, marina would be expected to benefit from any visitors displaced from Cedar Springs Park. The marina also attracts business due to the specialized services it provides such as; boat slip rentals, and fishing barge. For these reasons the proposed action is not expected to impact this business significantly.

Some small proportion of visitors may elect to recreate in other ways and would represent a loss in visitation and associated benefits to the local economy. This proportion would not likely cause a great loss to either the COE or the local economies.

Estimated O&M Savings. Anticipated savings will result from reductions in costs associated with mowing, cleaning of restrooms, removal of litter from grounds and facilities, and the hauling of trash removed from the parks. Contracts for law enforcement services can be eliminated for those areas which are proposed for total closure. Contracts for utilities maintenance and other miscellaneous contracts can also be reduced or eliminated. Some of the savings from these reductions can be used for the care taking of the parks which will receive the increased visitation. Savings from the proposed action are estimated at approximately \$1.3 million annually.

Natural Resource Base. Most parks have ample shoreline and undeveloped open space to accommodate normal use periods. The identified parks which are destined to receive increased visitation from the proposed park closures have been determined to have sufficient carrying capacities to accommodate the increased visitation during normal use periods without causing any major deterioration of the natural resources and without overcrowding of existing facilities. Quality of water along the park shoreline will be temporarily but insignificantly degraded from turbidity caused by erosion on existing beaches and shoreline areas due to swimmers stirring up lake bottom sediments. Adequate drinking water is available in all the parks that are to remain open. Increased vehicle traffic is expected but should be easily accommodated by the extensive road systems at park areas receiving increased visitation.

In the higher use recreation areas located near urban areas such as Lakes Lavon, Georgetown and Waco, there will be periods, particularly during the 5 peak weekends of the summer recreation season, in which the high density parks will experience visitation which will stretch or exceed the area's carrying capacity. In past years this condition has been experienced in all high density parks. Impacts to vegetation, water quality and soils

from high use events are generally minor and temporary. There are in most cases, however, areas identified as "overflow" areas to accommodate visitors during the peak periods. Although there could be some increase in visitation during peak use periods from the proposed action, the increase should be relatively minor and the impacts temporary

Cultural Resources There is the potential for unknown archeological resources to exist in all areas. Precautions are routinely exercised to insure that any unknown resources are not damaged by construction activities or land use modification during the operational of all projects. There will not be any changes to land use in the proposed action.

Endangered Species Although no endangered species or critical habitat are known to occur within the subject park areas, several endangered species are known to occur in counties where parks are located. Some species may potentially travel through or temporarily use these areas, however, changes in management strategies at park areas are not expected to have a significant impact on any endangered species.

ENDANGERED SPECIES	Aquilla	Belton	Georgetown	Lake O' the Pines	Lavon	Sam Rayburn	Somerville	Stillhouse Hollow	Waco	Whitney	Wright Patman
Bald Eagle	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Black-Capped Vireo	X	X	X					X	X	X	
Golden-Checked Warbler	X	X	X					X	X	X	
Whooping Crane	X	X	X		X	X		X		X	
Bone Cave Harvestman			X								
Coffin Cave Mold Beetle			X								
Tooth Cave Ground Beetle			X								
Piping Plover						X					
Red Cockaded Woodpecker						X					
Navasota ladies'-tresses						X	X				
White Bladderpod						X					
Attwater's Prairie Chicken							X				
Houston Toad							X				
Least Tern											X

Table 7. Endangered species known from counties in which parks proposed for closure or partial closure are located.

According to information from the United States Fish & Wildlife Service, fourteen endangered species occur in the counties where changes to park operations are proposed (Table 7.) Some park areas lie within migratory routes for endangered species and could be used as temporary resting areas during some seasons. Due to the human activity and disturbed nature of the parks, however, utilization of these areas by those species is minimal. In most cases, the proposed changes would reduce human activity at some parks and allow natural vegetative succession. The reduction in use is not expected to change the utilization of these areas by endangered species.

Vegetation Discontinuance of maintenance at the areas proposed for closure would likely lead to natural re-vegetation with invasive native and non-native plant species and eventually revert to some climax plant community through succession. Since no maintenance of the areas is planned any non native species may persist in those areas.

Summary. Implementation of the proposed action will physically affect the 68 identified park areas in ways previously described. Visitor capacities in nearby parks have been determined to be sufficient to receive subsequent visitor increases without significant adverse impacts to natural resources. Parks or park areas where facilities are closed would increase in natural diversity through succession and natural esthetic values and values to wildlife could also increase. These areas, although closed to vehicular traffic, would remain open to low density public uses such as hiking and photography.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Land use is expected to remain the same for all parks in consideration. For parks proposed for closure, land use will remain as low-density public day-use therefore no changes in land use are expected in the foreseeable future. Private lands near all lake projects are expected to experience continued development. Increased development may have a cumulative effect on visitor experience due to the changed aesthetics and possible increase in day-use.

Changes in water allocation and increases in water use and have had a significant effect on lake levels on all COE projects in recent years. Lowered lake levels reduce the aesthetics of lake projects, impact lake fisheries and at extreme low levels render some facilities such as boat ramps, docks and marinas unusable. A higher frequency and duration of extreme lowered lake levels would be expected at current and projected water use from lake projects. Visitation at parks would be expected to drop in these conditions.

Trends in visitation at all parks in recent years has suggested that visitation at all parks has remained level or declined despite significant increases in population within the areas of lake projects. Further declines in visitation would impact privately run parks and marinas and preclude the development of additional private parks in any of the lake areas. No development of new parks or campgrounds at any of the affected lake projects are known at this time.

AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A draft of this Environmental Assessment was sent to the following resource agencies for review and comment in accordance with coordination requirements as set forth by NEPA: Texas Parks & Wildlife Department; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Texas Historic Commission, and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The EA was available for 30-day public comment period. All comments received during the comment period were responded to and included in Appendix B of the final document.

During the 30-day public review period for the EA, numerous comments were received regarding adverse effect to the local community near Walling Bend Park and Whitney Lake. The Corps of Engineers (COE) has reassessed its operations and maintenance funding so that Walling Bend Park in its entirety will remain open. This change in the proposed plan is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) document and the discussion in the EA was not revised.

Potential concessionaires were identified during the review period who may lease the operation of Jackson Hill Park at Sam Rayburn Lake and Overlook Park at Somerville Lake. Although no lessee agreements have been finalized at the time of this finding, the COE will pursue leasing these and other facilities proposed for closure so they may remain open to the public.

Appendix A

Lake	Park/Area	Businesses that serve the park/area	Distance to closed/modified park/area	Distance to nearest open park/area
Aquilla	Aquilla Creek Area	1 convenience store	4 miles	4 miles
Aquilla		1 café	4 miles	4 miles
Aquilla	Hackberry Creek Area	1 convenience store	6 miles	4 miles
Aquilla		1 café	6 miles	4 miles
Aquilla	Overlook	1 convenience store	7 miles	6 miles
Lake O'the Pines	Hurricane Creek Park	4 Restraunt/Grill	1.1-1.8miles	0.7-3.6 miles
Lake O'the Pines		Resale Shop	1.1 miles	3.6 miles
Lake O'the Pines		B&J Outpost	1.6 miles	0.9 mile
Lake O'the Pines		1 convenience store	1.7 miles	0.9 mile
Lake O'the Pines		Auto Sales	1.7 miles	0.8 mile
Lake O'the Pines		Welding Shop	1.7 miles	0.8 mile
Lake O'the Pines		Nursery	1.8 miles	0.7 mile
Lake O'the Pines		2 Marina	1.9-2.1 miles	0.4-0.9 mile
Lake O'the Pines	Cedar Springs Park	2 Liquor Store	3.1-4.5 miles	6.5-7.9 miles
Lake O'the Pines		2 Gas/Convenience store	3.2-4.5 miles	6.5-7.8 miles
Lake O'the Pines		Marina	1.7 miles	9.3 miles
Lake O'the Pines		Grocery	1.2 miles	9.8 miles
Lake O'the Pines		Restraunt/Grill	1.4 miles	10.0 miles
Lavon	Avalon	Gas/Convenience store	1 mile	1.5 mile
Lavon		Bait & Tackle Shop	1 mile	1.5 mile
Lavon		Discount/Grocery Store	1 mile	1.5 mile
Lavon	Brockdale	2 Grocery	1 mile	3 miles
Lavon	Clearlake	Grocery	3 miles	5 miles
Lavon		Gas/Convenience store	3 miles	5 miles
Lavon	Lakeland	Gas/Convenience store	2 miles	1 mile
Lavon	Lavonia	2 Gas/Convenience store	1.5 miles	2 miles
Sam Rayburn	Twin Dikes	Marina	adjacent	adjacent
Sam Rayburn		2 Grocery	5 miles	3 miles
Sam Rayburn		3 Restraunt/Grill	0.5 miles	0.5 miles

Lake	Park/Area	Businesses that serve the park/area	Distance to closed/modified park/area	Distance to nearest open park/area
Sam Rayburn		Hotel	0.3 miles	0.3 miles
Sam Rayburn		Gas/Convenience store	0.3 miles	0.3 miles
Sam Rayburn		Boat Rentals	0.3 miles	0.3 miles
Sam Rayburn		Bait and Tackle Shop	0.3 miles	0.3 miles
Sam Rayburn	Powell	Marina	adjacent	adjacent
Sam Rayburn		2 Gas/Convenience store	3 miles	3 miles
Sam Rayburn	Rayburn	Marina	3 miles	adjacent
Sam Rayburn		2 Gas/Convenience store	6 miles	3 miles
Sam Rayburn	Ralph MacAlister	Campground	0.1 miles	0.1 miles
Sam Rayburn	Etoile	Grocery	3 miles	3 miles
Sam Rayburn		Gas/Convenience store	2 miles	2 miles
Sam Rayburn	Marion Ferry	Grocery	3 miles	3 miles
Sam Rayburn	Monterey	2 Gas/Convenience store	6 miles	6 miles
Sam Rayburn	Ebenezer	2 Grocery	3 miles	3 miles
Sam Rayburn		3 Restraunt/Grill	5 miles	0.5 miles
Sam Rayburn		Hotel	5 miles	0.3 miles
Sam Rayburn		2 Gas/Convenience store	5 miles	0.3 miles
Sam Rayburn		Boat Rentals	5 miles	0.3 miles
Sam Rayburn		Bait and Tackle Shop	5 miles	0.3 miles
Sam Rayburn	Jackson Hill	Marina	adjacent	adjacent
Sam Rayburn		Restraunt/Grill	5 miles	5 miles
Sam Rayburn		Grocery	5 miles	5 miles
Sam Rayburn		Bait and Tackle Shop	5 miles	5 miles
Sam Rayburn		Restraunt/Grill	5 miles	5 miles
Sam Rayburn	Mill Creek	Grocery	adjacent	adjacent
Sam Rayburn		2 Gas/Convenience store	2 miles	2 miles
Somerville	Rocky Creek Park	3 Gas/Convenience store	200 ft to 10 miles Feet	200 Ft to 3 Miles
Somerville		2 Convenience store	200 ft to 10 miles Feet	200 Ft to 3 Miles
Somerville		Marina	6 miles	3 miles
Somerville		3 Grocery	6-10 miles	3 miles
Somerville		8 Restraunt/Grill	6-10 miles	3 miles
Somerville		Bar & Grill	10 miles	3 miles
Somerville		3 General Store	10 miles	3 miles
Somerville	Overlook	6 Gas/Convenience store	1/2-6 miles	3 miles
Somerville		Convenience Store	4 miles	3 miles
Somerville		7 Restraunt/Grill	4 miles	3 miles
Somerville		2 Bar & Grill	200 Feet	3 miles
Somerville		2 Grocery	100 ft-4 miles	3 miles
Somerville		Marina	500 Feet	3 miles
Somerville		Hotel	4 miles	3 miles
Somerville		3 General Store	4 miles	3 miles

Lake	Park/Area	Businesses that serve the park/area	Distance to closed/modified park/area	Distance to nearest open park/area
Whitney	Walling Bend	Bed and Breakfast	1 mile	3/4 mile
Whitney		4 convenience Stores	7.5 - 14.5 miles	1/2 - 1.5 miles
Whitney		2 convenience Stores	14.5 miles	1.5 miles
Wright Patman	Intake Hill	Grocery	2 miles	<1 miles.
Wright Patman		Gas/Convenience store	4 miles	<1 miles
Wright Patman	Elliott Bluff	Grocery	2 miles	1.5 mile
Wright Patman		Gas/Convenience store	4 miles	1.5 mile
Wright Patman	Oak	Bait and Tackle Shop	1 mile	2.5 miles
Wright Patman		Grocery	1 mile	2.5 miles
Wright Patman	Malden Lake	Grocery	4 miles	17 miles
Wright Patman		Gas/Convenience store	4 miles	17 miles
Wright Patman		Restraunt/Grill	4 miles	17 miles

Appendix B

Comment Response Matrix			June 2005
Environmental Assessment for Proposed Changes in Park Operations, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Fort Worth District.			
Comments Submitted by	Effected Park	Comment Received	Response to Comment
Tony Mayfield	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	Closing Walling Bend will have a dramatic effect on real estate.	Due to the numerous comments received regarding adverse effect to the local community the COE has reassessed its Operations and Maintenance funding and identified sufficient monies to allow Walling Bend park to remain open.
Tony Mayfield	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	Will the area be accessible from the water?	See Comment Above
Tony Mayfield	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	Closing the park will scatter the kids "partygoers" to other parts of the lake.	See Comment Above
W.D. Utgard	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	Law enforcement problem could be reduced by checking vehicles at the entrance and charging an entrance fee.	See Comment Above
W.D. Utgard	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	Closing the park will transfer the problem to other parts of the lake specifically Three Fingers.	See Comment Above
W.D. Utgard	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	Congressman Chet Edwards obtained \$600,000 dollars for Kimball Bend park. How strange that we close a good park due to money problems and at the same time spend a large amount of money to upgrade another.	Funds allocated for improvements to Kimball Bend are not discretionary funds and cannot be spent maintaining other parks.
John Warren	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	Closing Walling Bend is a bad idea... there is probably no where in Texas or even the country where there is...a fantastic swimming hole with cliffs to jump from.	Due to the numerous comments received regarding adverse effect to the local community the COE has reassessed its Operations and Maintenance funding and identified sufficient monies to allow Walling Bend park to remain open.
John Warren	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	I know there are other measures to offset the budget concerns.	As stated in the EA various cost saving strategies were implemented in past years to accommodate reduced operation and maintenance budgets. The proposed actions are a result of continued budget shortfalls that can not be accommodated any other way.

Comments Submitted by	Effected Park	Comment Received	Response to Comment
William P. Trotter, M.D.	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	Due to budget constraints you must close the park	Due to the numerous comments received regarding adverse effect to the local community the COE has reassessed its Operations and Maintenance funding and identified sufficient monies to allow Walling Bend park to remain open.
William P. Trotter, M.D.	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	Closing Walling Bend is the correct choice. You will close the park with the most drugs, alcohol, crime and dangerous opportunities.	Since Walling Bend Park will not be closed, the COE has assembled a project delivery team to identify further measures to increase safety and reduce criminal activity at the park area. Funding for the existing level of law enforcement will be obtained.
Robert Survil	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	The Corps spent thousands of dollars erecting heavy steel pipe barricades throughout the park. These barricades prevent the public from accessing public lands. We would like these barricades removed...	Vehicle barricades have been erected to prevent vehicular access to park natural areas to reduce impacts to those areas and maintain a single controlled entrance to the park. Continued access by pedestrian traffic to public lands is not impeded or restricted.
Businesses, Families and Friends of Walling Bend Park	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	The Environmental Impact Assessment is flawed in many ways.	The COE has determined the environmental assessment meets all requirements for the National Environmental Policy Act
Businesses, Families and Friends of Walling Bend Park	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	If Walling Bend park is closed, visitors will not just go to another park, they just will not come to Lake Whitney resulting in the loss of tourist dollars.	Due to the numerous comments received regarding adverse effect to the local community the COE has reassessed its Operations and Maintenance funding and identified sufficient monies to allow Walling Bend park to remain open.
Businesses, Families and Friends of Walling Bend Park	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	Surrounding property values will depreciate and county tax revenues will be reduced.	See response above

Comments Submitted by	Effected Park	Comment Received	Response to Comment
Businesses, Families and Friends of Walling Bend Park	Walling Bend, Whitney Lake	Congressman Chet Edwards has obtained funds to improve Ham Creek park and Kimball Bend park while the Corp can't afford to keep Walling Bend open.	Funds allocated for improvements to Kimball Bend and Ham Creek Parks are not discretionary funds and cannot be reallocated to maintain other parks.
Solon & Sherri Carver	Overlook Park, Somerville Lake	We believe the closure will have an economic impact on visitors and nearby businesses such as Freddy's Grocery Store, Mark's Marine Service, Scooter's Bar and Grill, Popeye's, the Shell Station, and Lake Somerville Marina.	As stated in the EA those businesses that may rely on visitors to any of those parks may be impacted by the proposed action. However, it is anticipated that the majority of visitation will shift to other nearby recreational areas in the vicinity of these businesses and the economic impact will be minimal. The Corps is actively pursuing leasing this area, however if that cannot be accomplished Overlook Park will have to be closed.
Solon & Sherri Carver	Overlook Park, Somerville Lake	Please consider Lake Somerville Marina and campground...to lease the park...	During the public review period a potential concessionaire was identified. The Corps will pursue efforts to lease the area to the existing concessionaire, however if that cannot be accomplished Overlook Park will have to be closed.
Solon & Sherri Carver	Overlook Park, Somerville Lake	By closing Overlook Park, the Corps is attracting vandalism, drug trafficking, violence and destruction to the property as well as the lake.	See response above
Jo Ann Lindsey	Overlook Park, Somerville Lake	Closing Overlook Park will certainly hurt Lake Somerville Marina's business as well as the businesses in the town of Somerville.	As stated in the EA those businesses that may rely on visitors to any of those parks may be impacted by the proposed action. However, it is anticipated that the majority of visitation will shift to other nearby recreational areas in the vicinity of these businesses and the economic impact will be minimal. The Corps is actively pursuing leasing this area, however if that cannot be accomplished Overlook Park will have to be closed.

Comments Submitted by	Effected Park	Comment Received	Response to Comment
Jo Ann Lindsey	Overlook Park, Somerville Lake	Please lease it to a private entity (Lake Somerville Marina).	During the public review period a potential concessionaire was identified. The Corps will pursue efforts to lease the area to the existing concessionaire, however if that cannot be accomplished Overlook Park will have to be closed.
Mike & Angie Beene	Overlook Park, Somerville Lake	Please give the owners of Sommerville Marina a chance to run Overlook Park.	See response above
Rick & Carol Hutchens	Overlook Park, Somerville Lake	Please allow Somerville Marina a chance to take over Overlook Park.	See response above
Dave & Deb Lange	Overlook Park, Somerville Lake	Please allow Somerville Marina a chance to take over Overlook Park.	See response above
Kenny & Kathy Campbell	Overlook Park, Somerville Lake	Please do not close the boat ramp and park.	See response above
Shirley Hooten	Overlook Park, Somerville Lake	Find some way to keep the park and boat ramp open.	See response above
G. Ross Parsons	Overlook Park, Somerville Lake	I seriously doubt that the marina operators will be financially able to maintain their facility in the event boaters and anglers who currently use Overlook no longer patronize it.	See response above
G. Ross Parsons	Overlook Park, Somerville Lake	I'm aware that the Marina owners plan to assume operations over the park in September.	See response above
Philip & Kay Yovino	Overlook Park, Somerville Lake	The closing of Overlook Park and boat ramp would be a great loss and eventually effect other campgrounds as well. Please reconsider closing this facility.	See response above
Linda Rushing	Jackson Hill, Sam Rayburn Reservoir	petition with no comment	See response above

Comments Submitted by	Effectuated Park	Comment Received	Response to Comment
Robert Cook - Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.	Aquilla Lake	The proposed closure of the Hackberry Creek portion of Aquilla could have a significantly negative impact on turkey hunting.	There are no plans to close hunting areas at Aquilla Lake. A parking lot will be provided at the entrance to the Hackberry area so hunter access will be available. There is existing alternate parking and access to the Aquilla Creek Access area and closing the Visitor Overlook has no impact on access to the hunting areas.
Robert Cook - Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.	Aquilla Lake	Closing (facilities at) Aquilla would result in the loss of hunting for deer, waterfowl, feral hogs, dove, quail, squirrels and rabbits.	Although hunters using these areas may incur some loss of convenience, parking, walk-in access to the hunting lands will be available. Boat launch facilities also exist within 3-4 miles of the facilities proposed for closure.
Robert Cook - Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.	All Parks	We are further concerned that hunting activities will be affected on other USACE lands in addition to those leased by TPWD.	Although hunters using COE parks to access hunting lands may incur some inconvenience due to additional distances from parking and boat launches, all current hunting lands will remain accessible through closed parks or adjacent access points. Only vehicular access is being restricted from areas proposed for closure.
Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.	All parks	With reduction of law enforcement patrols there is a greater likelihood for illegal take of rare species or disturbance of cultural resource sites.	Reductions in law enforcement and therefore deterrence may result in some increase of criminal activity however, adverse effects to rare species and cultural resource sites are expected to be minimal.
Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.	All parks	We wonder if increased usage might occur on parks remaining open, and whether the additional use might pressure the rare species on those COE lands.	Increased visitation at parks remaining open is anticipated, however, these parks currently have excess capacity to accept the additional visitors. Further, based on the nature of the recreation performed at the parks and lack of suitable habitat within these areas, no significant impacts to rare species are anticipated from the proposed action.



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To Whom it may concern:

It is very limited to say, according to the latest Whitney paper, that the closing of part of Walling Bend Park will only affect a few convenience stores and a bed & breakfast!

I am Tony Mayfield realtor, member of Dallas, Hill & Elise Co. Assoc. of Realtors, Texas Realtors & National Assoc. of Realtors! My only business is real estate here at Lake Whitney, primarily Bosque Co. where Walling Bend Park is located. Also being a resident of that general area, it will have a dramatic influence on Real Estate. Every time I show or sell a home in that general area, I take the time to show all of that beautiful area to buyers or potential buyers; if the corp; continues to close access points and parks here at Lake Whitney, the results can be devastating to many people truly hood, not just a few convenience stores ect. Also as far as party goers; is the whole shore of the cliffs going to be closed so (beaters) can't access this area from the water? why scatter 250-500 kids all over the lake! Thanks.
Tony Mayfield

6/3/05

page 2

Mr. Brandon Wobley

Dear Sir:

Subject-Partial closing of Walling Bend Park:

We know that there has been a substantial reduction in funds available to the Corp of Engineers to maintain & service many lakes and parks including Lake Whitney.


I have a problem in understanding the rational behind choosing a large portion of Walling Bend park for the following reasons.

1. The park road already has a metal barricade its whole length as well as a gate with lock and a park host. This provides a means to control the access and exit from the park.
2. This park is probably the most popular park on the lake for young people. (Part of the problem.) It is well located from Meridian, Whitney and Clifton. The physical aspects of the park appeals to the younger group as opposed to normal swimming areas.

The primary reason for choosing to close Walling Bend appears to be its above normal expense for law enforcement officers to control the area. It would appear this problem could be reduced by checking the cars and occupants at the entrance and perhaps requiring an entrance fee as is required at most other parks.

The main concern I have is that closing the park does nothing to solve the real problem. It will just transfer the problem to some other area. I am sure a large number of these people will move to the Three Finger area to swim, party and jump off the bluffs in this area. This area is not a park and the crowd will create a real problem to the private homes adjacent to this area.

In summary, I feel the closing of Walling Bend is ill advised and question if it is a real meaningful relief to the cost cutting efforts of the Corp.
I note that Congressman Chet Edwards has just obtained \$600,000 to spend of Kemball Bend park here on Lake Whitney. How strange that we close a good, popular park due to money problems and at the same time spend a large amount of money to upgrade another park.

Sincerely

W.D. Utgard
215 CR 1747
Clifton, TX 76634

6-2-05

Dear Brandon,

The proposed closing of Walling Bend Park is indeed a very bad idea. That park is a true gem which anyone who goes there or ever went there would acknowledge as such. There's probably nowhere in Texas or even the country where there is access to such a fantastic swimming hole with cliffs to jump from. Any kid who ever experienced that knows that ~~it~~ is a thrill.

I camped there for years & I even bought a house in Lakeline Acres because I wanted to be near Walling Bend Park.

I know there are other measures that can be taken to offset budget concerns. Nobody wants to see any parks close and I don't understand why anyone would choose the best one to close.

The guardrails that were put up all around the lake are bad enough and all the money that went into those was wasted in my opinion.

It seems that the Corps is just trying to systematically deny access to the whole lake.

Lake Whitney is the best lake in Texas. You should make it better, not worse. Personally I don't think you even care what people think because I heard that ~~the~~ the last public

talk about the closure was one sided. No one wants this park closed. The speaker didn't care.

Someone didn't do a good job budgeting money if that is really the reason for the proposed closings. Why should hundreds of people have to have a great park close because someone did a poor job & is still in charge.

I wrote this letter because I am mad about the proposed change.

There are lots of people who would volunteer their time to help clean the park weekly. Lots of area residents have been discussing that.

Please reconsider this action for the sake of everyone who enjoys Walling Bend park or will in the future.

Thank You,

John Warren
Clifton, Tx.

WILLIAM P. TROTTER, M.D., D.A.B.R.
236 P. R. 1610 • Clifton, Texas 76634

May 31, 2005

Mr. R. L. Bruggman
Corps of Engineers
H. Worth District

Dear Sir,

I attended the "Bosque Side" meeting in reference to closing Walling Bend Park. I was most annoyed at the negative comments; all of which reeked of self interest. No one noted the overall effect of closing the park on our community and area of the lake. One woman even complained that her walking path would be affected. It should have been obvious the year budget was altered and changes had to be made.

I live in a gated area about three minutes from Walling Bend. We bought the gate ourselves to protect our homes from the frequent visitors at the park.

WILLIAM P. TROTTER, M.D., D.A.B.R.
236 P. R. 1610 • Clifton, Texas 76634

Walling Bend is a magnet for nut cases who want to inflict damage to themselves and others. As a physician at the Clifton hospital I can attest that at least 90% of the serious injuries we saw were from that park. Pot smokers, junkies, heavy drinkers and derelicts called that park home. I have talked with at least six D.P.S. Troopers and they assure me that over 70% of their calls and arrests are from Walling Bend. The cliff from which they jump is dangerous. One serious injury occurred last Saturday. The visitors speed and endanger all of us. Most are drinking. Trooper Callaway stated that two out of three cars contain alcohol or dope and are arrested.

WILLIAM P. TROTTER, M.D., D.A.B.R.
236 P. R. 1610 • Clifton, Texas 76634

So here is the bottom line.
Due to budget constructions you must
close a park. Closing Walling Bend is
the correct Choice. You will close
the park with the most drugs, alcohol,
crime and dangerous opportunities.

You will be doing all of us a great
favor and help drop our crime rate.

All of us here in the Highlands
applaud your decision and thank you
as well.

Many thanks,

W.P. Trotter

YAHOO! MAIL

Print - Close Window

Date: Mon, 13 Jun 2005 09:39:42 -0700 (PDT)
From: "Robert Survil" <rjsurvil@sbcglobal.net>
Subject: RE: Walling Bend Park - Lake Whitney, TX

To: U.S.Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
: U.S.Senator John Cornyn
: U.S.Congressman Chet Edwards
→ : Brandon Mobley, U.S.Army Corps of Engineers

RE: Walling Bend Park - Lake Whitney, Texas

My wife and I have property adjoining Walling Bend Park. We pay a lot of federal, state, and local taxes and want the park to stay open.

On a related matter, the current Corps of Engineers Manager has spent many thousands of dollars erecting heavy steel-pipe barricades throughout the park. These barricades prevent the public from accessing public land. We would like these barricades removed so that we can once again enjoy our favorite recreation area.

The Corps of Engineers should be reminded that they are custodians, not owners, of this public land.

Sincerely,

Faith E. Survil
1014 Green Valley Lane
Duncanville, TX 75137
Phone 972.298.5383

Robert J. Survil
E Mail: rjsurvil@sbcglobal.net

Monday, June 13, 2005

petition with
1283 signature
received

FAX TRANSMITTAL COVER

June 14, 2005

Total number of pages transmitted including cover: **63**

FROM: BUSINESSES, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF WALLING BEND PARK

TO: Corp of Engineers/Ft. Worth District – Public Affairs Office - Fax: 817-886-6451

RE: Petition opposing the partial closing of Walling Bend Park, Bosque County, TX

MESSAGE:

BUSINESSES, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF WALLING BEND PARK, a newly formed organization opposed to the Corp's plan to close the major portion of Walling Bend Park, submits the following fax copies of a PETITION TO KEEP WALLING BEND PARK OPEN.

The Petition was circulated over this past weekend in the Clifton, Meridian and Laguna Park communities and **contains 1283 signature** of citizens who are representative of a much larger constituency of citizens who are opposed to the park closure. In addition to the standing room only crowds at the public meetings held on the matter, the Chamber of Commerce of both Clifton and Whitney, TX, the West Shore Civic Association in Laguna Park and property owners adjoining the park are just a few of the entities who have previously written letters to the Corp expressing their opposition to the park closure.

BUSINESSES, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF WALLING BEND PARK challenges the Corp's "in-house" Environmental Impact Assessment as being flawed in many ways. In the report, the Corp states that there are 63,600+ visitations to the park each year. They also claim that when the park is closed these visitors will just go to other parks on the lake. This claim is just ludicrous. Visitors to Walling Bend Park come from all over the state because Walling Bend offers something unique... the bluffs. If Walling Bend Park is closed these visitors won't just go to another park on the lake; they just won't come to Lake Whitney! Just as important, if the park is closed our community will lose its' most unique and historic recreational site.

The report's unsupported claim that the park closure will not hurt the local economy is also ludicrous. The park closure will result in a substantial loss of tourism dollars to our local economy, an immediate depreciation of surrounding property values and a reduction in tax revenues to support our county government and schools.

In public meetings held on the matter the lake manager defended the park closure by stating that it would result in savings of approximately \$28,000 in maintenance costs. This is outrageously ludicrous when our Congressman Chet Edwards is bragging about getting \$900,000 to improve Ham Creek Park and another \$300,000 to improve Kimball Bend Park, both on Lake Whitney. This is at the same time that we are being told that the Corp can't afford to keep Walling Bend Park open— A PARK THAT WE TAXPAYERS HAVE ALREADY PAID FOR!

BUSINESSES, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF WALLING BEND PARK believes the proposed closing of the major portion of Walling Bend Park to be ill-advised and respectfully petitions the Corp to keep ALL of Walling Bend Park open.

Businesses, Families and Friends of Walling Bend Park

Contacts:

Tom Schenck
E-mail: schenck44@yahoo.com
Phone: 254-622-2067

Jo Ann Mulhausen
E-mail: mulhausen@brun.net
Phone: 254-622-3449

Lake Somerville Marina & Campground Inc.

P.O. Box 845
Somerville, TX 77879
Phone # 979-289-2321
Fax # 979-289-5112
Lakesomervillemarina.com

June 2, 2005
U.S. Army Corps. Of Engineers
Attention: Mr. Brandon Mobley
P.O. Box 17300
819 Tavior Street
Rm. 3A14
Fort Worth, TX 76102-0300

Dr. Sir:

We wish to bring to your attention your proposed changes of park operations. By closing Overlook Park at Lake Somerville, we believe that it will have an economic impact on visitors, nearby businesses such as Freddy's Grocery Store, Mark's Marine Service, Scooter's Bar and Grill, Popeye's, the Shell Station, and most of all our marina, Lake Somerville Marina.

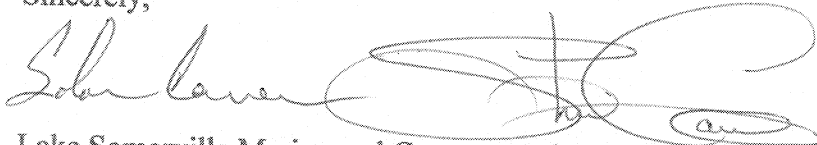
We have always supported the Army Corp. of Engineers and helped with security, cleaning of the parks and lake, and any safety issues, etc. First and foremost it is important that Overlook Park remain open under the control of Army Corp. management. If the FY05 budget can not help this park then please consider Lake Somerville Marina and Campground which neighbors Overlook Park to lease the park and keep it operational.

By our past history, we have gone beyond the call of duty to clean and maintain this park. If offered the lease of Overlook Park, we will continue a clean and safe environment for all those involved in recreational activities.

By closing Overlook Park, the Corp. is attracting vandalism, drug trafficking, violence and destruction to the property as well as the lake. We are too close to the colleges and it would bring mischief and unlawful behavior.

In conclusion, please consider keeping Overlook Park open by whatever means necessary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Solon Carver" followed by a large, stylized flourish that loops back and ends with a small "an" or similar mark.

Lake Somerville Marina and Campground Owners, Solon and Sherri Carver

To: Army Corps of Engineers,

We would like to voice our opinion about closing the park at Overlook on Lake Somerville.

We have leased the land with the Marina from the Army Corp just across the lake from the boat ramp at Overlook. My family has worked so hard to clean and fix up what the past owners have let go. We have took our life saving and put back into this park everything just to get it into operation. My concern is that closing the park would be a loss to the community and to our business.

When you drive across the dam you first see Overlook Park which is very visible and by closing the park this would be an eye sore for the whole town of Somerville.

We have agreed to lease this property not just for the business but for this community! If you do not have the funds to give to keep this park open, or let us keep up with the park, please reconsider and do something that is right for everyone concerned. Thank you for your time!


Solon and Sherri Carver

Jo Ann Lindsey
P.O. Box 627
Somerville, Texas 77879

June 1, 2005

Mr. Brandon Mobley
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 17300
819 Taylor Street
Room 3A14
Fort Worth, Texas 76102-0300

Dear Mr. Brandon:

Overlook Park is an asset to Somerville and the lake area. Being the nicest and closest boat ramp to the town brings an economic boost to Somerville. If the Corps of Engineers can no longer afford to keep it open and kept up to standard, which is very understandable, leasing it to a private entity would certainly make sense.

The management of Lake Somerville Marina would certainly do a wonderful job of running Overlook Park. My husband and I have been fishing at the Lake Somerville Marina, and the other names it has had, for the last ten years. It is amazing what the present management has done to improve the marina and surrounding area. The marina and campground area has gone from being almost deserted to overflowing with people practically every weekend. The family running the marina are extremely friendly and helpful to everyone. They have worked very hard to make it a family oriented camping and fishing area, including the annual Kid Fish.

Closing Overlook Park would certainly hurt Lake Somerville Marina's business, as well as the businesses in the town of Somerville. If the Corps of Engineers can keep Overlook Park open and operational, that would be great. If you cannot keep the park open, please lease it to someone who will keep it up. Please do not close it down completely.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jo Ann Lindsey
Somerville resident, school teacher and fishing person.

June 3, 2005

Mr. Brandon Mobley
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 17300
819 Taylor Street
Room 3A14
Fort Worth, Texas 76102-0300

Dear Mr. Mobley:

We have lived in Somerville for 10 years and we've checked out all of the parks around the lake. We love launching our boat at Overlook Park the best because it's the best and largest and safest boat launch on the lake. We also love the Lake Somerville Marina the best for the gas, food, and the most important is the customer relations that the owners give us. They make us feel important even tho we are among thousands that visit them weekly.

Please take all of this in consideration before you close Overlook. Please give the owners of Somerville Marina a chance to run Overlook before you consider to close it. It would put a lot of Somerville residents at a bigger loss if we had to choose to go further down the road to launch our boats.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike Beene Angie Beene

Mike and Angie Beene
P.O. Box 575
Somerville, TX 77879

June 3, 2005

Mr. Brandon Mobley
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 17300
819 Taylor Street
Room 3A14
Fort Worth, Texas 76102-0300

Dear Mr. Mobley:

Overlook Park is such an asset to Somerville Lake because of it's nice large boat dock. I come from Brenham, and I appreciate the location and also the closest gas and food and anything else I need from Lake Somerville Marina and the personal touch that Sherry and her husband and also from Bruce her brother, and all of their family that I get when I go there on a daily basis.

Please allow them to take over this park instead of closing it off because it would greatly hurt the locals that depend on this being open and access to the lake on a daily basis.

Thank you for you consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Rick Hutchins

Rick and Carol Hutchins

June 3, 2005

Mr. Brandon Mobley
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 17300
819 Taylor Street
Room 3A14
Fort Worth, Texas 76102-0300


Dear Mr. Mobley:

Overlook Park is such an asset to Somerville Lake because of its nice large boat dock. I am from the Brenham area, and I appreciate the location and also the availability of gas, food and anything else I may need from Lake Somerville Marina. You can't beat the personal touch that Sherry (her husband and family), and Bruce (her brother), give when I go there on a daily basis!

Please allow them to take over this park instead of closing it off because it would greatly hurt the locals that depend on this being open and access to the lake on a daily basis.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,



Deb and Dave Lange

505 Batdorf Lane
Brenham, Tx 77833

June 1, 2005

Mr. Brandon Mobley
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Dear Mr. Mobley;

I am writing in regards to Overlook Park at Somerville Lake, please do not close that boat ramp& park. We, like hundreds of other boaters use that boat ramp and camp out a lot at the park, not to mention the convenience of the marina right by it. That is the friendlier side of the lake; we need that boat ramp& park.

Respectfully,

Kenny & Kathy Campbell
Smithville, TX

May 31, 2005

Mr. Brandon Mobley
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 17300
819 Taylor Street Room 3A14
Fort Worth, Texas 76102-0300
Fax 817-886-6499

Dear Mr. Mobley:

My husband and I have a trailer at Lake Somerville Marina. We were at the Lake this last weekend and saw the news report on the closing of Overlook Park. This would be a great loss to us and the friends, and family we take on our weekends to the Lake. We use the Boat Ramp nearly every time we are there and to close the Park would close the boat ramp and in turn we would lose the things we love to do while at the Lake.

This letter is a plea to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to find some way to keep the park and the boat ramp opened so we may continue our love of spending time at the camp ground and enjoying the beautiful lake.

Sincerely,



Shirley Hooton
281 380 2203

ROSS PARSONS

PO Box 626
Giddings, TX. 78942

Phone: 979-542-6087

EMAIL

ROSSPAR@TCONLINE.NET

May 30, 2005

PUBLISHED

IN:

Miami (FL)

Herald;

Palm

Beach(FL)

Post

Tampa (FL)

Tribune;

Savannah(GA)

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State/Record

Houston (TX)

Chronicle

Texas

Outdoors

Journal;

Sports Afield

Game & Fish

Publications

Bassin

Saltwater

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Motorhome;

Alabama

Living

Western

Horseman;

Bassin' Gal;

Florida

Wildlife

Florida

Sportsman;

Trailer Boats;

Heartland

Boating

Mr. Brandon Mobley
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
PO Box 17300
819 Taylor St.-Room 3A14
Fort Worth, TX 76102

Dear Mr. Mobley:

I recently was advised the Corps of Engineers are planning to close Overlook Park and the attached boat ramp On June 14th, 2005.

Based on my frequent use of the facility on Lake Somerville, and my equally constant use of the Lake Somerville Marina and Campground, I would like to request that you reconsider this decision. My request for reconsideration is both personal and business-oriented.

On a personal basis, I currently trailer my boat, from my home in Giddings to the Overlook Park ramps. Overlook is obviously the most convenient facility near my home, and offers the boating public one of the best ramp and parking facilities on Lake Somerville.

As to a business-oriented situation, the marina and campground across from the ramp offers the only convenient site to utilize fuel pumps, dockage, live

bait and extensive grocery, marine and tackle sales. I join most boat owners who currently use the Overlook ramp site in spending a fair amount of time and money in the retail establishment located across the bay from the Corps of Engineer ramp.

I seriously doubt the marina operators will be able to financially maintain this facility in the event boaters and anglers who currently use the Overlook facilities are no longer patronizing their facility.

I am aware the owners of the marina plan to assume operation of Overlook Park in September. The summer period between June 14th and September 1st is obviously the major "season" for boating and fishing-oriented customer base. If the marina owners are no longer in business, due to a lack of customers utilizing the marina, caused by a closure of the Overlook Park ramp, this plan could also fail to develop.

As a boater, angler and camper, I once again ask that you reconsider any plans the Corps may have regarding closing the Overlook ramp facility, at least prior to the date Marina personnel plan to adopt full operation of Overlook Park and the expansive parking facility and the ramp.

Sincerely,



G. Ross Parsons

PO Box 626

Giddings, Tx 78942

Cc: Lake Somerville Marina and Campground

*Philip & Kay Yovino
9011 Rocky Lane
Houston, TX 77040
713-896-8573*

June 3, 2005

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
ATTN: Mr. Brandon Mobley
819 Taylor Street Room 3A14
Fort Worth, Texas 76102-0300

VIA FAX: 817-886-6499

Dear Mr. Mobley:

My name is Kay Yovino, I have been camping at Lake Somerville for almost 30 years. I met my husband, Philip, at Overlook Park in 1980, we have since been attempting to raise 3 boys and still have time for fun! Our oldest son is 20, our middle son is 16, and our youngest is 12. We have camped with them over the years at Lake Somerville. We have spent time at Birch Creek, Rocky Creek, Nails Creek and for the most years at Overlook Park. Over all these years my husband and I have met many people and made many friends, not to mention all the many interesting people our boys have met and the friends they've made at Lake Somerville.

After many years of pitching a tent at Overlook Park, we finally purchased a trailer which rests at Lake Somerville Marina. Since we bought our trailer, we made our "home away from home" Lake Somerville. We have utilized Overlook Boat Ramp for many years and have brought many other families with boats that also utilized your boat ramp. I was astonished and extremely saddened last weekend when I heard the news that the Army Corps of Engineers was actually considering closing Overlook Park and Boat Ramp. If this was to occur, it would be an unfortunate loss to many families and we (along with many others) would probably have to sell our trailer and say "Goodbye" to our "home away from home".

The closing of Overlook Park and Boat ramp would be a great loss and will eventually affect other camp grounds as well. It will not only affect my family but all the hundreds of other families that have utilized these facilities for many, many years just as we have to camp, fish and play on Lake Somerville.

I pray to the Army Corps of Engineers that you would please reconsider the closing of this facility, as it means so much to my family and many, many, many other families as well.

Sincerely,

Kay Yovino & Family

petition with
1695 signatures
received.

TO Whom THIS MAY CONCERN:
MR. William Fickel, Jr.

This is just a partial lists
of Concerned Citizens on Closure
of Boat.-

The Report that I have
been preparing for Mrs. Hyla
Head, will soon be complete.

The Radio Commercials will
begin within the next few
days. My Congressmen/Senators
are in the loop as of 30 days
ago. The Report will also be
going to President Bush.-

Please call me at your
convenience. I believe the Report
that ~~I~~ am preparing will
spread more light on the subject.
Thank you,
Linda Rushing-
owner of Jackson Hill Marina- 976-872-9000

URGENT

Jackson Hill Swimming Area needs your immediate attention. The Corp of Engineers, in charge of all facilities in and around the marina, has immediate plans to abandon/close swimming area. If this is accomplished there will never be another swimming area again at Jackson Hill. Your help is needed now.

Please print your name and phone number:

Address

NOV 1985

Billy Attaway	15 12 FM 706 Lufkin
Ben McIntyre	5103 1/2 Easted. Baytown, Tx 77521
MICHAEL A. THORSON	5103 EAST ROAD BAYTOWN 77521
Richard Oehler	1422 FM 706 #40 Lufkin Tx 75940
Brandi Oehler	
Margaret Duncan	2615 Glenwood Trail Cedar Park, TX 78613
Jessica Rasberry	1078 CR 2050 Center TX 75935
Carlos Rasberry	son
Tessie Bass	222 CR 4671 Etoile TX 75944
Donnie R. Bass	232 CR 6101 Nacogdoches TX
Glynn Rhame	329 CR 2081 Nacogdoches TX
Samuel G. Vasquez	110 Louis Bayan Highway TX
BRAD LATHROP	5734 F.M. 843. Tipton, TX.
Dakoda Lee	349 Kimberly lane Lufkin TX
Brandon Lee	349 Kimberly Ln Lufkin TX
Jana Slater	344 Dena Dunn RD Lufkin TX
Alicia Moore	P.O. Box 75 Chiniao 75937
DEUSE ALLEMANG	P.O. Box 302 ETOILE, TX 75944
B.D MEADOWS	1242 CR #475 ETOILE TX 75944

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1



June 21, 2005

Mr. William Fickel, Jr.
Chief, Planning, Environmental and Regulatory Division
Department of the Army
P.O. Box 17300
Fort Worth, Texas 76102-0300

Dear Mr. Fickel:

Thank you for requesting our comments on proposed actions on 11 lakes in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Fort Worth District. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) is concerned about several recommendations.

TPWD is a major provider of public hunting and other outdoor recreational opportunity in Texas. Much of this opportunity occurs on lands owned by the USACE and leased/licensed by TPWD for the distinct purpose of hunting. The Aquilla Public Hunting Area is one of the areas currently proposed by the USACE for closure, and this area is of primary concern.

Aquilla provides a significant amount of hunting opportunity for public users. According to our surveys, it is estimated that during the 2004-2005 hunting season more than 1,000 people spent over 6,000 hunting days at Aquilla. Closing Aquilla would result in the loss of hunting for deer, waterfowl, feral hogs, dove, quail, squirrels and rabbits. Aquilla is likely the only public hunting opportunity for hunters in that part of the state. For example, the proposed closure of the Hackberry Creek portion of Aquilla could have a significantly negative impact on public turkey hunting. Aquilla is the only TPWD public hunting area providing spring Rio Grande turkey hunting in the Cross Timbers and Prairies ecological region of Texas and the only public hunting area providing hunting for Rio Grande turkey by Annual Public Hunting Permit. Aquilla is the only public hunting area in the state specifically proposed for special youth hunts for Rio Grande turkey by Annual Public Hunting Permit in the coming season.

We are further concerned that hunting activities will be affected on other USACE lands in addition to those leased by TPWD. Closures or reduction in services at Belton Lake, Lake Georgetown, Lake O' The Pines, Lavon Lake, Sam Rayburn Reservoir, Lake Somerville,

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Take a kid
hunting or fishing



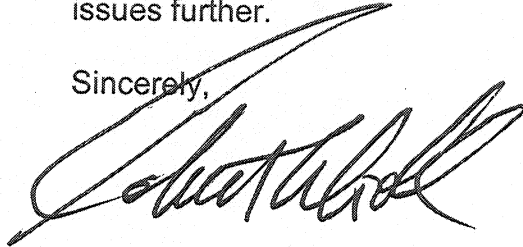
Visit a state park
or historic site

Mr. William Fickel, Jr.
Page Two
June 21, 2005

Stillhouse Hollow Lake, Waco Lake, Lake Whitney and Wright Patman Lake could all have negative impacts on public hunting.

We request an opportunity to work with you and your staff to resolve these issues and to continue to provide meaningful hunting opportunities to the public. Please contact our Director of Public Hunting, Linda Campbell, at 512-389-4395 if you wish to discuss these issues further.

Sincerely,



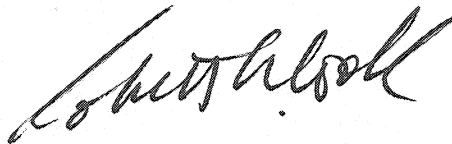
Robert L. Cook
Executive Director

RLC:DG:ne

cc: Mr. Brandon Mobley

Mr. Fickel -

We are experiencing budget reductions ourselves. It is important that COE and TPWD leadership meet on these matters and our entire partnership soon.



Mobley, Brandon W SWF

From: Dennis Gissell [Dennis.Gissell@tpwd.state.tx.us]
Sent: Wednesday, June 22, 2005 4:38 PM
To: Mobley, Brandon W SWF
Cc: Mike Berger; Ron George; Linda Campbell; Vernon Bevill; Kathy Boydston; Celeste Brancel; Michael Strutt
Subject: RE: additional comments on proposed COE closures

Brandon,

These are the remainder of our comments addressing resource issues such as endangered/threatened species, habitat and cultural resources on COE lands. Our comments address the possible reduction in enforcement or patrols on the COE lands such that cultural resources and endangered/threatened species of wildlife might be at greater risk of disturbance.

Our main concern for threatened/endangered species and habitat as well as with cultural resources are that with possible reductions of law enforcement patrols, the greater is the likelihood for illegal take of rare species or disturbance of cultural resource sites.

As an example, we understood that it was on a COE lake (though not one of those identified in the EA) that the Whooping Crane was taken last year, the individual apprehended, and had it not been for the presence of your law enforcement, we never would have known about it. This type of apprehension case goes a long way to keep folks honest, as well as in this case to bring to forefront the need for our agency to prioritize a public awareness campaign to help distinguish Whoopers from Sandhill Cranes.

We wonder if increased usage might occur on parks remaining open, and whether the additional use might pressure the rare species on those COE lands? Some extra interpretive signage and perhaps some added restricted access away from areas supporting rare species specifically on the high use weekends, could possibly provide additional protection for the rare species at the parks receiving the additional public presence.

We have some data showing some of these facilities do have rare species on the property. In particular, we most recently received some updated data from the COE for Lake Georgetown's rare species. There appear to be Golden-Cheeked Warblers at Whitney, Belton, and Georgetown; Black-capped Vireos at Georgetown and adjacent to Belton; Bald Eagles at Sam Rayburn (lots) and Wright-Pattman; Red-cockaded Woodpeckers at Sam Rayburn; and Navasota's ladies'-tresses at Somerville. We don't have the exact location of the eagle nests, just the nesting territories. The records vary with most of the rare species occurring on COE property based on the GIS data for the boundaries we recently received, but mostly not within the parks facing the reductions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments and please let us know if we may assist.

Thank you
Dennis Gissell

6/27/2005