



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

OCT 31 1972

General F. J. Clarke
Chief of Engineers
Department of the Army
Corps of Engineers
Washington, D.C. 20314

Dear General Clarke:

We have completed our review of the Corps' program for the surveillance and inspection of domestic water supply systems at recreation sites in the North Pacific Division. The review was performed under assignment code 08742.

The purpose of our review was to evaluate the Corps' program for monitoring the quality of drinking water provided at Corps-developed public recreation sites. We reviewed pertinent records and discussed the water quality monitoring programs with Corps staff in the Portland and Walla Walla Districts and with cognizant employees of lessees operating recreation sites which were leased from the Corps. Our review covered 17 water supply systems under the administration of four project offices.

Corps District officials advised us that the policy at both Districts was to apply the applicable State water quality standards to their water supply systems, but that personnel at project sites probably were not fully aware of the requirements and limits in these standards, particularly the limits for chemical content. Likewise, neither District had established a District-wide program for monitoring the quality of drinking water provided at public recreation sites. The responsibility for such monitoring had been delegated to project engineers and was not handled uniformly at the four projects we visited. Only one of the projects (McLary) had any written guidance regarding water quality monitoring.

We found that water samples were taken regularly for some of the water systems reviewed and sporadically or not at all for others. The sampling frequency for the 17 water systems reviewed is shown on attachment I. In addition to the 17 systems reviewed, we were informed that samples were not being taken at several other recreation sites administered by other project offices.

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When taken, samples were analyzed for coliform bacteria by State or county health agencies. Chemical analyses and pesticides tests were not being made on a periodic basis for any of the 17 water systems reviewed. In some instances, limited chemical tests had been made at the time the systems were constructed, but tests were not made for such elements as arsenic, barium, cyanide, and lead which are potential health hazards.

The Public Health Service recommends that water system facilities be inspected to identify any existing unsanitary conditions such as unclean equipment, buildings, and surroundings. We found that these sanitary inspections were not being performed at any of the sites we visited. However, operating staffs were generally aware of sanitary conditions.

Staff at all levels in the North Pacific Division agreed on the need for a systematic water quality monitoring program. Divisional staff advised us that they would develop a Division-wide program, and we understand the Ohio River Division issued a regulation (ORDR 1130-2-14, dated March 1, 1972) providing guidance for operating and monitoring potable water systems. We believe that the Corps should develop a Corps-wide program for monitoring the quality of drinking water provided to the public. The Corps should

- ensure that operating personnel are aware of the water quality standards applicable to Corps water supply systems,
- specify the water sampling frequencies for bacteriological and chemical tests, and
- ensure that sanitary inspections are made of its water supply systems.

Without such a monitoring program, the Corps does not have adequate assurance that the quality of drinking water available to the public is of acceptable quality.

We plan to include the results of our review of the Corps' program in a report to the Congress regarding the water hygiene programs of various States and Federal agencies. We would appreciate being advised of any water quality monitoring actions taken by the Corps.

Sincerely yours,

WILBUR D. CAMPBELL

Wilbur D. Campbell
Assistant Director

Attachment

LIST OF CORPS SITES VISITED BY GAO

<u>CORPS PROJECTS VISITED</u>	<u>SITES VISITED</u>	<u>WATER SYSTEM OPERATED BY</u>	<u>FREQUENCY OF WATER SAMPLES TAKEN</u>
Bonneville	Dam and Locks, Bradford Island, and Tanner Creek (note a)	Corps	Semimonthly until 7/71; monthly thereafter
Fern Ridge	Kruger Park (note b)	Corps	None during last 2 years
McNary	Dam and Locks	Corps	Varied from 2 a month to quarterly
	McNary Beach	Corps	Varied from 2 a month to quarterly
	Hat Rock State Park	State of Oregon	Varied from weekly to quarterly
Ice Harbor	Dam and Locks	Corps	Irregularly, but at least 4 times in last 2 years
	Levey Park	Corps	Irregularly, but at least 6 times in last 2 years
	Fishhook Park	Corps	Irregularly, but at least 7 times in last 2 years
	Sacajawea State Park	State of Washington	Irregularly, but at least 5 times in last 2 years
	Hood Park	Walla Walla County, Wash.	Irregularly, but about 6 times a year
	Columbia Park (note c)	Benton- Franklin County, Wash.	About once a year

^aOne water supply system

^bTwo water supply systems

^cSix water supply systems