

CHAPTER 3 - PROJECT MASTER PLANS AND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT PLANS

3-1. Purpose. This chapter establishes guidance for the preparation of master plans and operational management plans for USACE Civil Works projects.

3-2. Background.

a. The master plan (MP) is an essential element in fostering an efficient and cost-effective project for natural resources, recreational, and cultural management programs. The MP provides direction for project development and use and as such is a vital tool for the responsible stewardship of project resources for the benefit of present and future generations; and, the MP promotes the protection, conservation and enhancement of natural, cultural, and man-made resources.

b. The MP is the basic document guiding Corps of Engineers responsibilities pursuant to Federal laws (See Appendix B) to preserve, conserve, restore, maintain, manage, and develop the project lands, waters, and associated resources. The MP is a continuing and dynamic document, unlike the feasibility study and the general design memorandum which also plan for the development of resources. The MP is a planning document anticipating what could and should happen and is flexible based upon changing conditions. Design functions are handled in the feature design memorandums and in contract plans and specifications. The MP deals in concepts, not in details of design or administration. Detailed management and administration functions are handled in the operational management plan (OMP), which translates the concepts of the MP into operational terms.

c. Master plans are required for civil works projects and other fee-owned lands for which the Corps of Engineers has administrative responsibility for management of natural and manmade resources. Lands may be exempted from this requirement where there is no demonstrated need or opportunity to manage them. Master plans may be prepared for projects not managed by the Corps of Engineers, such as local protection projects, at the discretion of the MSC Commander.

d. Master Plan Goals. The primary goals of the MP are to prescribe an overall land and water management plan, resource objectives, and associated design and management concepts, which:

(1) Provide the best possible combination of responses to regional needs, resource capabilities and suitabilities, and expressed public interests and desires consistent with authorized project purposes;

(2) Contribute towards providing a high degree of recreation diversity within the region;

(3) Emphasize the particular qualities, characteristics, and potentials of the project;

(4) Exhibit consistency and compatibility with national objectives and other state and regional goals and programs.

e. Operational Management Plan. Following approval of the MP, preparation of the OMP for natural resources and park management will be initiated by the operations element.

The OMP shall be prepared as a separate document, and will outline in detail the specific operation and administration requirements for natural resources and park management, consistent with the approved MP.

3-3. Guidance.

a. A current, approved MP is necessary before any action can be taken which may restrict the range of future options. All actions by the Corps of Engineers and outgrantees must be consistent with the MP. Prior to facility construction, renovation, or consolidation, whether to be accomplished with O&M General, Construction General, or SRUF accounts, such activities must be included in an approved MP. These activities will not be included in budget submissions unless they are included in an approved MP. Exceptions for special situations may be granted prior to the approval of a MP following full coordination within the district. The resulting changes will be incorporated into the MP.

b. Scope of The Master Plan. The MP shall cover a single project or several projects depending on what is the best for management of the resources involved. The scope, content, and organization of MPs may vary considerably from project to project depending upon a number of factors including the complexity of the project, whether this is a new or updated MP, the particular needs of management personnel, innovations developed to improve utility, and other factors. The MP shall cover all resources, including but not limited to, fish and wildlife, vegetation, cultural, aesthetic, recreational, mineral, commercial, and outgranted lands, easements, and water.

c. Master Plan Preparation. The interoffice/ interdisciplinary team approach will be used for the development, reevaluation, and supplementation or updating of MPs. Teams should consist of representatives from Operations (including project personnel), Planning, Real Estate and/or other elements as appropriate. The team should also be interdisciplinary, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, including representatives of various science and design disciplines depending upon the resources involved. Coordination with other agencies and the public shall be an integral part of the master planning process. The process shall be conducted in a manner which maximizes long-term cost effectiveness of the preparation, maintenance, and implementation.

d. Operational Management Plan Preparation. (See chapter 2, Appendix B of ER 1130-2-550 for policy guidance on preparation of OMPs.) If the MP is not scheduled for completion within one year, operations will proceed with development of the OMP. During OMP development or update, emphasis on achieving economy in planning, design, construction, and managing natural resources and recreation facilities should be considered. Economy and quality are to be given equal attention in the development of new recreation facilities.

(1) The following parts of the OMP will be prepared:

(a) Natural Resources Management

(b) Park Management

(2) Management strategies consistent with authorized project purposes, approved resource use objectives and land use designations will be established for each part. The OMP will be used as a working tool and will include funds, staffing and time frame required to

implement these strategies. As the OMP will be a working tool to be used in the overall management of the project, it should be in loose leaf format and if possible updated every five years. Approval of the OMP and its updates rests with the district commander. Portions of the plan (funding, staffing, and equipment needs) will be updated and submitted for approval to the district commander on a yearly basis. An OMP will be prepared and submitted for all projects. At projects with only small acreages managed by the Corps (i.e., a few hundred acres around the dam), the plan will be prepared in the same general format but on a limited basis commensurate with the degree of management possible. The OMP for outgranted areas will include the outgrantee's management plans for the area and how the management of the outgranted land supports the overall management objectives of the project.

(3) Part I. Natural Resources Management replaces the former Master Plan Appendices B (Forest/Range Management), C (Fire Control), and D (Fish and Wildlife Management). This part will be based on a total ecosystem or compartment approach to management of natural resources. Part I will include (a) compartment descriptions (b) management objectives and (c) implementation plans. When determining management objectives, overall project management objectives (including outgranted areas) should be considered and addressed in the plan. A basic outline to be used is presented as Table 3-1 on the following page.

Table 3-1

I. Natural Resources Management

A. Long Term Objectives of Resource Management

B. Compartment Description

(1) Topography (slope, aspect, general soil type, etc.)

(2) Aquatic Resources (type, temperature, turbidity, etc.)

(3) Vegetation (species, size, density, etc.)

(4) Fish and Wildlife (species)

(5) Special Considerations or Problems (protected or rare/ unique habitat, rare and endangered species, national emphasis programs (e.g., watchable wildlife North American Waterfowl Management Program, and Neotropical Migratory Birds, etc.), pollution, forest fire control)

C. Management Objectives (for each compartment)

D. Implementation Plan (for each compartment)

(1) Management Techniques (to meet objectives)

(2) Five-Year Schedule (of management techniques to be applied)

(3) Annual Staffing and Equipment Needs

(4) Annual Costs

(5) Coordination (with other elements/agencies/the public)

(4) Part II. Park Management will replace the former Master Plan Appendices A (Project Resource Management Plan), E (Project Safety Plan), and F (Lakeshore Management Plan). It will be composed of descriptions, management objectives and implementation plans for at least the following, as presented in Table 3-2 below.

Table 3-2

II. Park Management

- A. Safety (employee, contractor and visitor)
 - B. Security
 - C. Visitor Assistance
 - D. Shoreline Management
 - E. Private Exclusive Use (existing approved regional plan may be inserted as is)
 - F. Outgrants (availability of lands, compliance inspections, etc.)
 - G. Maintenance
 - H. Recreation Use Fee Program
 - I. Interpretation
 - J. Cultural Resources
 - K. Project Sign Management Plan
 - L. Special Programs
 - M. Cooperation (with other agencies and/or special interest groups)
 - N. Five-Year Program (for park management)
 - O. Priority List (of annual programs with staffing and funding requirement)
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e. The above subjects must be included in all OMPs if these activities exist at the project. Specific formats and detailed guidance may be determined by the District Commander.

f. Strong consideration should also be given to holding an annual project meeting or open house as a way of providing the public with an opportunity to express their views on the management of the project. This public input can serve as a partial basis for the annual OMP update.

3-4. Master Planning Procedures and Requirements.

a. **Conceptual Framework.** The master planning process encompasses a series of interrelated and overlapping tasks involving the examination and analysis of past, present, and forecasted future environmental and socioeconomic conditions and trends. Within a generalized conceptual framework, the process focuses on three primary components: (1) regional or ecosystem needs, (2) project resource capabilities and suitabilities, and (3) expressed public

interests and desires. The MP shall ensure that economy and quality shall be given equal attention in the development of new recreation facilities.

b. Plan of Study. To ensure that a MP will be developed in an efficient and cost-effective manner, a plan of study will be formalized at the outset by the MP study team. As a minimum, the plan shall identify information needs and means for obtaining, study costs, schedules, tasks, district's quality control plan for the development of the master plan and responsibilities.

c. When to Prepare, Supplement, or Update a Master Plan.

(1) New Projects. Preparation of the MP will be initiated as soon as possible after approval of the general design memorandum (GDM) so that approved recreation and other feature developments will become available as the project becomes operational.

(2) Existing Projects.

(a) Reevaluation. Existing project MPs will be periodically reevaluated by an interoffice/interdisciplinary team to assess the extent to which the document serves its intended purpose. The reevaluation team should examine and assess the MP to determine if it is up-to-date, responsive to current and foreseeable regional needs, public interests and desires, communicates direction and intent, and is actually being used and followed by project management personnel.

(b) Supplementation. Master plans in need of only minor revisions and modifications will be supplemented to include corrected drawings as required. Supplements should be prepared as often as necessary to ensure that the MP continues to serve its intended purpose.

(c) Update. Master plans which no longer serve their purpose will be updated as soon as possible.

d. Coordination and Public Involvement.

(1) In-house. Draft MPs, supplements, and updates shall be coordinated with those elements which have responsibility for planning, design, development and/or management of the project.

(2) Interagency. Coordination with some agencies is required by law, executive order, or memoranda of agreement. Some of the common requirements are listed in Appendix C. Early and thorough coordination with other Federal, state, regional, and local agencies is encouraged. Master plans should be coordinated with a committed or most likely local sponsor for recreation or other aspects that require cost-sharing.

(3) Public. Coordination with the general public is required in some circumstances and can be very important in identifying resources and determining public needs and desires. Public involvement and coordination should be included in the plan of study (see para. 3-4.b). Consideration should be given not only to formal public meetings but to informal workshops, mailed brochures, and other techniques to achieve maximum coordination with a reasonable expenditure of time and funds.

(4) Congressional. Notification of congressional interests is an important part of public coordination and public involvement. They should be given early notification of formal and informal meetings related to the MP as well as the availability of draft and final MPs and other master planning documents.

e. Cost Effectiveness.

(1) The Master Plan. The master planning process will be implemented in a manner which maximizes cost effectiveness in the preparation and maintenance of MPs. Toward this end the MP should be concise and designed for easy preparation, supplementation, and update. Project field personnel, in addition to serving as team members, will be fully utilized for data collection and recommendations. Materials previously assembled for feasibility reports, environmental impact statement, the OMP or other documents will be used to the maximum extent possible to minimize effort and redundancy.

(2) The Master Plan Document. The finished MP will be a usable document. The text should be typewritten on 8 1/2 x 11" white paper, when feasible, with all maps, aerial photographs, or plates folded to the 8 1/2 x 11" size. The document will be assembled in a looseleaf format with the title on the front cover and the binding. Data, aerial photographs, maps, or other exhibits used in development of the MP should be available for development of the OMP. Pages and plates changed as a result of supplementation shall be marked with the date of the revision and distributed to all holders of the MP.

3-5. Master Plan Content. The following elements, at a minimum, will be included in each MP.

a. Introduction. Short introductory paragraphs or sections shall provide information on project authorization, land allocations, project purposes, purpose and scope of the master planning action, a project description, and a listing of prior and proposed design memorandums. A tabular listing of pertinent project information should be provided to assist in the evaluation of future decisions concerning management of project resources. Items which may be included in the project description, if applicable, are project location, climatological data, drainage area, water storage pools, hydropower facilities, main dam, spillways, outlet works, subimpoundments, lake regulation, project visitation, summary of recreation development, etc. A description of regional influences shall be provided, including a discussion of the relationship of the project to other projects and programs of other agencies.

b. Resource Objectives. Resource objectives are developed to guide future design, development and management of the resource base, natural and manmade, to obtain the greatest possible benefit through meeting the needs of the public and protecting and enhancing environmental quality. Resource objectives shall, at a minimum, consider authorized project purposes, applicable Federal laws and directives, regional needs, resource capabilities and expressed public desires.

c. Resource Analysis. Project resource analysis shall provide a review of natural resource data to determine the suitability of project lands and waters for significant natural resource related management activities. Inventories for development of MPs, through land satellite images or other means, should identify broad categories of natural features. The features will be further defined in the OMP process. The inventories may include forest or vegetative covers, rangelands, water, environmentally sensitive areas or species and cultural, historic or archeological conditions. Only a summary of resource suitability for potential uses will be

presented. Care should be taken not to violate public disclosure restrictions on archeological resources. The analysis shall provide sufficient detail to serve as the basis for subsequent land classification decisions and the development of resource objectives consistent with resource capabilities. The use of automated geographic information systems is encouraged to perform resource analysis and mapping tasks as a method of increasing efficiency and reducing long term costs.

d. Recreation Program Analysis. The evaluation of recreation on project land should consist of both an analysis of recreation use and an evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness in which recreation opportunities are or will be provided. It is important that this analysis include both consumptive and non-consumptive use of the resources. The delineation of market area and the projection of future recreation use and facility requirements shall be based on an evaluation of historic and current use at existing projects. Areas of consideration to meet this objective may include consolidating small recreation areas, carrying capacity analysis of project lands and waters, and new technologies.

e. Public Involvement and Coordination. A summary of results from public meetings, workshops and other methods used to solicit input and the impacts on the resource objectives will be included.

f. Land Allocation. All lands will be allocated in accordance with the authorized purposes for which they were or are to be acquired. A project map delineating land according to land allocation will be provided. Land will be allocated into one of the following categories:

(1) Operations. Lands acquired in accordance with the authorizing documents for operation of the project, i.e., flood control, hydropower, navigation, water supply, etc.

(2) Recreation. Separable lands acquired in accordance with authorizing documents for public recreation.

(3) Fish and Wildlife. Separable land acquired in accordance with authorizing documents for fish and wildlife management.

(4) Mitigation. Land acquired or designated in accordance with authorizing documents to offset losses associated with development of the project.

g. Land Classification. Allocated project lands will be further classified to provide for development and resource management consistent with authorized project purposes and the provisions of NEPA and other Federal laws (see Appendix B). The classification process refines the land allocations to fully utilize project lands and must consider public desires, legislative authority, regional and project specific resource requirements and suitability. This allocated use takes precedent over any of the following classification categories. Agricultural or grazing use of project land is not a land classification but may be an interim or corollary use to meet management objectives. Land identified as potentially excess should be identified. Operational impact, environmental assessments and impact, cultural, historic, wetlands, and endangered species review are a part of the determination of excess process. If the property is recommended as excess by the district, a Report of Excess will be forwarded to the MSC commander for submission to HQUSACE for completion of a Determination of Excess, in accordance with ER 405-1-12, so that the area may be deleted from the master plan. A project map delineating land

according to classification categories shall be provided and supported by narrative. Land shall be classified into one of the following categories:

(1) Project Operations. In many cases the majority of lands (rim lands etc.) on Corps projects will be allocated to project operations. This classification category should include those lands required for the structure, operations center, office, maintenance compound and other areas that are used solely for project operations.

(2) Recreation. Land developed for intensive recreational activities by the visiting public, including developed recreation areas and areas for concession, resort, and quasi-public development. At new projects, recreation areas planned for initial development will be included in this classification. Future areas will be classified as multiple resource management until initiation of the development.

(3) Mitigation. This will only include land acquired or designated specifically for mitigation. Land classified in this category should be evaluated for consideration for lease or license to the Department of the Interior or the state.

(4) Environmental Sensitive Areas. Areas where scientific, ecological, cultural or aesthetic features have been identified. The identification of these areas on the map must be supported by narrative explaining the rationale for the classification. These areas, normally within one of the other classification categories, must be considered by management to ensure the sensitive areas are not adversely impacted. Normally limited or no development of public use is contemplated on land in this classification. No agricultural or grazing uses are permitted on this land.

(5) Multiple Resource Management. Lands managed for one or more of, but not limited to, these activities to the extent that they are compatible with the primary allocation(s). The activities should be fully explained in the narrative portion of the MP.

(a) Recreation - Low Density. Low density recreation activities such as hiking, primitive camping, wildlife observation, hunting, or similar low density recreational activities.

(b) Wildlife Management General. Fish and wildlife management activities. Lands in this sub-category shall be evaluated for consideration for lease or license to the Department of the Interior or the state or shall be designated for direct management by the Corps.

(c) Vegetative Management. Management activities for the protection and development of forest and vegetative cover.

(d) Inactive and/or Future Recreation Areas. Recreation areas planned for the future or that have been temporarily closed. These lands will be classified as multiple resource management in the interim.

(6) Easement lands. All lands for which the Corps holds an easement interest but not fee title. Planned use and management of easement lands will be in strict accordance with the terms and conditions of the easement estate acquired for the project.

h. Resource Plan. A brief description of resource characteristics and the rationale for the resource objectives will be provided for each classification category. In addition, site plans will be

provided identifying existing development at each area. Facilities proposed for development within five years will be described and a general cost estimate provided. A conceptual diagram identifying the general location of proposed facilities will also be provided. Planning and management problems related to current recreation development and use will be evaluated and recommendations made. A narrative description of future recreation development expected to occur beyond five years will be provided, and bubble diagrams identifying general locations without cost estimates will be included. A section should address alternative means for development of future recreation areas. It should include results of preliminary economic feasibility investigations to determine the appropriateness and potential for success of the alternatives identified.

i. Special Programs. Programs or situations not covered in other parts of the plan such as off-road vehicle use or feasibility studies for future concession developments may be identified and discussed.

3-6. Responsibilities.

a. Schedules. District commanders shall be responsible for ensuring that MPs and operational management plans are completed for all projects and for assuring that they are current. Master plans will be completed for all projects which do not have an approved MP or for which the MP is in need of revision within five years of the date of this regulation.

(1) Master plans will be reevaluated on a continuing basis to avoid costly future updates. Each MP shall be reviewed on a periodic basis, such as five years, and shall be revised as required.

(2) District 5-year schedules for MPs, supplements, and updates will be included in the annual update of the Natural Resource Management System which begins 1 December each year (ER 1130-2-550, Chapter 12). Each annual report will include the status of plans scheduled.

(3) Operational Management Plans will be prepared for each project within three years of the date of this regulation (where they do not already exist) and will be updated annually.

b. Approval. District commanders shall be responsible for approving MPs, supplements, updates and operational management plans. One copy of the approved document will be submitted to both the appropriate division and CDR, USACE (CECW-ON) WASH DC 20314-1000.