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OUTDOOR RECREATION IN SMALL WATERSHED PROJECTS



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
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SMALL WATERSHED PROJECTS FILL NEED FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

THE NEED

The demand for outdoor recreation has never been greater. From all indications it will continue to grow at a rapid pace. With more leisure time, more spendable income, and increased mobility, people will seek the out of doors in increasing numbers.

The Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, in its report to the President and Congress, said, "Not only will there be more people, they will want to do more, and they will have more money and time to do it with. By 2000 the population should double; the demand for recreation should triple."

Much of the demand in the out of doors is for water-based recreation. People enjoy swimming, fishing, canoeing, boating, water skiing, hunting, and skin diving. They also want to go picnicking, camping, hiking, and sightseeing.

Interest in outdoor recreation in the last 15 years has far outstripped population trends. Recreational visits to the national forests have increased tenfold since 1945.

Federal and State recreational lands and waters in most areas are already overcrowded. Existing public recreation grounds cannot keep pace with the growing demand. Fortunately, we have much land ideally suited for outdoor recreation. There are many new avenues opening up for developing local public recreation. One such approach is through small watershed projects.

WATERSHED PROJECTS AND RECREATION

Small watershed projects, authorized by Public Law 566, offer an excellent opportunity for the development of water-based recreational facilities. Most watershed projects include one or more reservoirs designed to retard the peak runoff water from heavy rains and release it slowly over a period of time.

The permanent pools for sediment retention behind these dams form small lakes ranging in size from a few acres to several hundred acres. These dams can be raised and the reservoir areas enlarged to serve multiple purposes. In addition to flood prevention, the reservoirs can be developed for recreation and fish and wildlife uses. They can also be enlarged for irrigation and municipal and industrial water supply.

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, Public Law 566, was passed by Congress in 1954. Few conservation acts have created as much popular interest and activity in such a short time. By March 1, 1962, local organizations had prepared applications for assistance under its provisions in some 1,700 watersheds. A total of 720 have been approved for planning and 370 are in actual operation. Watersheds range in size from 10,000 acres to 250,000 acres. They average about 60,000 acres in size and have about 6 reservoirs. There are nearly 13,000 small watersheds in the United States of which some 8,300 need project action. Most of these have recreation potentials.

Watershed projects must be initiated and sponsored by local units of government or the State. The Department of Agriculture provides technical and financial assistance and loans for development through the Soil Conservation Service, Forest Service, and Farmers Home Administration.

Small watershed projects offer opportunities for bringing needed recreational facilities closer to most people. Land not now needed to grow crops can be put to a more desirable and often more profitable use. New business opportunities can be provided in rural areas. New small industries attracted by watershed development can provide a new source of income for many farmers and ranchers.

The Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission report to the President says, "The broad scope of the small watershed program places it in a particularly favorable position to contribute to public recreation opportunities. Most of the Nation's small watersheds, including many adjacent to metropolitan areas, are eligible for treatment. The program has already brought opportunities for water-based recreation to many 'water scarce' areas. . . ."

It is the policy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that "fish and wildlife and recreational development must be greatly accelerated on small watersheds if the need for such development is to be brought within reasonable distance and cost to the average citizen."

This folder describes some of the outdoor recreational areas already developed in watershed projects. The opportunities for others are endless. The only limitation is imagination.

SMALL WATERSHEDS OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUN AND RELAXATION



WATERSHED LAKES FILLING NEEDS THROUGHOUT THE NATION

Many watershed lakes are already bringing the excitement and pleasure of water-based recreation to areas denied these opportunities in the past.

For example the 80-acre lake in the Mountain Run Watershed in Virginia is presently being used by 3,000 people, many of whom never had the chance to go boating and fishing before. Fifteen acres adjoining the lake have been developed as a picnic area. Building sites for cabins and homes are being sold in the area surrounding the lake. The recreational facilities were installed by the town and county of Culpeper, Va., for public use.

A total of 15,000 visitors a year are expected at one 80-acre lake in the Washita River Watershed in Oklahoma. Many travel 90 to 120 miles from the Texas Panhandle for swimming, fishing, and boating activities.

Members of the Mennonite Church of Illinois searched long and hard for an ideal summer campsite for church members. They found it when the Tiskilwa Watershed Project was completed. The church purchased a 280-acre tract on which a dam and a 12-acre lake were

located. Facilities constructed include a dining room, administration building, two bathhouses, five cabins, paths, and a parking lot. Trees have been planted and land formerly tilled has been seeded to grass. Funds for developing the area are being raised by renting space for cabins for 25 years at \$50 a year.

The people of Plain Dealing, La., and vicinity built three reservoirs in 1961 for flood protection for the town and fertile valley lands. One was enlarged to give 104 surface acres for fish production and recreation. Another was enlarged to store water for the town and future industry, and it also provides 98 acres of water for recreation. The town has purchased 60 acres of land around the two reservoirs for access and public recreation use. The town's mayor said it was the best thing that has ever happened in the community.

The Boy Scouts in Kansas' Sekan Council now have a permanent camp with a 35-acre lake as the result of the Aiken Creek Watershed Project. The area has been developed for camping, swimming, canoeing, nature, and plant study.

SMALL WATERSHEDS OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUN AND RELAXATION



TENN 010-28

Youth enjoys water skiing on the Johnson Creek Watershed in Tennessee.



PA 945

Picnicking and relaxation are favored outdoor pursuits.



NC 07-315

Swimmers, boaters have fun in North Carolina watershed lake.



UT 1476

Ducks rise from waterfowl development in Utah. Area was planted to millet.



ILL 2047

Watershed lakes, like this one in Illinois, offer unlimited recreational opportunities.



ARK 62201



NEB 2063

Enterprising farmer opens watershed lake to public.

Boy Scouts hold camporee in Nebraska watershed.

Outdoor recreation isn't limited to the summer. Both ice skating and ice fishing are popular sports.



MASS 198

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In Virginia the Waynesboro Kiwanis Club purchased 235 acres of land with a 7-acre lake on it for \$8,000 and developed a camp for underprivileged children of the community. A modern kitchen, dining hall, barracks for boys and girls, administration building, and a large recreation area surrounding the lake were constructed at a cost of \$15,000. There are facilities for 120 children at several camping periods during the summer.

Watershed projects have already added thousands of acres of surface water throughout the countryside. Many of these small lakes have been developed for fish and wildlife.

Recreational developments have been sponsored by State game commissions, sportsmen's clubs, civic and religious groups, and individuals.

For example, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission sponsored and administers the 645-acre lake in the Flat Creek Watershed. It paid \$100,000 for the property and expects 75,000 visitors a year. A diversion from one of the dam sites carries water to a 10,000-acre hunting area. In 1961, a total of 30,000 hunters made use of these grounds.

In Kentucky, the Rocky Creek Sportsmen's Club and the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources will manage an 826-acre lake in the Mud Creek Watershed. The sportsmen's club has erected a \$50,000 clubhouse on the shore of the lake.

A 204-acre watershed lake is being developed by the city of Cavalier and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department. Plans have been made for a boat ramp, sanitary facilities, and a picnic area. The lake will be used for boating, fishing, swimming, and water skiing for an estimated 2,500 man-days each year.

All watershed lake projects are not large-scale ventures. With a small amount of capital and their own labor, farmers and ranchers have developed the recreational facilities around some smaller reservoirs and opened them to the public on a fee or membership basis.

A 7-acre lake in the Elm Fork Watershed in Texas was developed by the owner for \$500 as a fishing and recreational club and is operated in conjunction with the farming business. The farmer sold memberships to 25 select families for \$25 a year. Camping, fishing, boating, and picnicking are available.

Another landowner developed the recreational facilities around a reservoir in the South Creek Watershed in Virginia and created a highly successful vacation area—so successful, in fact, that he has started promoting the area around a second reservoir. After roads, water supply, and electricity were brought into the area, he sold off part of the land for cottages. He also built a camping area, beaches, piers, docks, and rafts. He charges a daily camping fee which includes swimming, fishing, and hunting privileges. A total of 14,000 man-days were spent by campers at the site in 1961.

HOW IT'S DONE

Recreational opportunities on the small lakes created in watershed projects are virtually unlimited. Even the single-purpose reservoirs—those engineered solely for flood prevention—offer some recreational-development possibilities.

However, the watershed reservoirs will have more lasting benefits if planned for public recreation and for fish and wildlife development in the beginning. The additional costs of these developments, to be shared by the sponsoring local governments and the Federal Government, amount to only a fraction of the cost of the entire project.

The Department of Agriculture pays all reservoir-construction costs connected with flood prevention. If the lake is to be opened to the public and has public access, the Department of Agriculture will share the cost of modifying the structure and improving the streams for fish and wildlife development.

The Department has recommended amendments to Public Law 566 to permit Federal cost sharing for land and basic facilities for recreation as well as enlargement of the reservoirs.

The Department of Agriculture has delegated responsibility for administering the small watershed program to the Soil Conservation Service. The SCS will assist local project sponsors in adding fish and wildlife development into the watershed work plans.

There is pending legislation that would authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to . . .

. . . share in the cost of enlarging a reservoir to make it more suitable for recreation.

. . . share in the cost of land, easements, and rights-of-way that must be acquired by the local organization for reservoirs or other sites or areas to be dedicated to recreation within a watershed project.

. . . share in the cost of basic facilities needed for public safety and access to and use of the area.

. . . advance funds to local organizations for immediate acquisition of lands, easements, and rights-of-way to prevent encroachment of other developments with such funds to be repaid prior to construction—provided the local organization will guarantee to operate and maintain the recreational reservoir for public use.

The long-range goal is to develop at least one recreational area in nearly every watershed project where surveys indicate a need and desire for public recreational facilities and local or State governments are willing to sponsor them.