

CHAPTER 6

Customer Service Standards

6.1 Purpose. This chapter establishes Customer Service Standards for the USACE recreation program.

6.2 Policy. A Customer Service program shall be established and implemented at each Corps project. This program shall be designed to accomplish the following goals:

6.2.1 Ensure that interactions with our customers project a positive image of the Corps and are responsive to customer needs and expectations.

6.2.2 Provide adequate communications channels for the public.

6.2.3 Provide the customer with timely and accurate information.

6.2.4 Provide the customer with quality facilities and services that ensure a clean, safe, and healthful recreation area environment.

6.2.5 Monitor customer needs and satisfaction levels, and incorporate appropriate organizational responses into annual work plans, budget requests, and future development plans.

6.3 Customer Outreach. Managers and project staff should take advantage of conferences, workshops and other outreach activities to better identify and meet the needs of our customers. It is imperative that we understand our current and potential customers, including emerging and underserved populations such as ethnic groups and persons with disabilities. More information is available on the "Customer Service" page on the NRM Gateway Website.

6.4 Interaction With Our Customers. Park Rangers, Park Managers, maintenance staff, administrative staff, park attendants, visitor center staff, volunteers, and other employees are public relations representatives for the Corps of Engineers. All dealings with the public shall be conducted in a professional manner that presents a positive image. Standards for these interactions include:

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6.4.1 Employees shall not discriminate against any customer for any reason. All customers should feel comfortable in our areas.

6.4.2 Employees shall maintain a professional appearance.

6.4.3 Employees shall greet customers in a friendly, courteous, respectful, professional and appropriate manner in all situations.

6.4.4 All employees shall be responsive to and demonstrate a willingness to promptly help customers. Customers are a part of our job, not an interruption.

6.5 Communication Channels. Project offices will maintain multiple channels of communication with customers. Table 6.1 summarizes the communications channels. Customer inquiries should be handled as soon as possible, with interim replies if a concern cannot be addressed expeditiously. Quick response builds customer loyalty. Locations with multiethnic use should provide language skills training for staff and recruit bilingual staff to ensure effectiveness of communications with customers. Bilingual or multilingual information for the various communication channels should be provided where appropriate.

Table 6.1

Customer Communications Channels for Project Offices	
Maintain regular hours of operation for in-person visits, with office hours posted at prominent locations	Required
Webpage, regularly updated	Required
Email address	Required
After-hours voicemail or answering machine	Required
Fax	Required
Telephone:	
- Avoid automated answering systems during normal business hours	Recommended
- Provide a toll-free telephone number when economically feasible	Recommended
- Call forwarding to cell phones	Optional
- Volunteer office help	Optional

6.6 Customer Feedback. Gathering and analyzing customer feedback is crucial to our ability to provide high-quality services that meet customer expectations. This will allow each

project to establish a baseline of customer satisfaction with facilities and services, and to track trends over time.

6.6.1 Gathering Customer Feedback.

6.6.1.1 Customer Comment Cards. At a minimum, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)-approved customer comment cards developed by the Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) will be utilized to gather customer feedback. The NRM Gateway is the source for the current version of and the instructions for administering customer comment cards (see the "Customer Service" page on the NRM Gateway Website).

6.6.1.2 Surveys. Surveys (excluding the OMB-approved customer comment cards) must be coordinated through ERDC to ensure that appropriate OMB approval is in place for all feedback mechanisms used.

6.6.1.3 Customer Discussions. Casual one-on-one conversations with customers in recreation areas are encouraged to supplement formal surveys. The "Customer Discussion Guide" and procedures (Appendix S) posted on the NRM Gateway provide a tool to gather such information.

6.6.1.4 Listening Sessions. On-site group listening sessions in recreation areas have proved to be extremely successful methods of gaining customer feedback.

6.6.1.5 Project Open Houses. Open houses give customers the opportunity to air their concerns and are an effective tool to gauge how we are doing.

6.6.2 Analyzing Customer Feedback. Customer feedback will be evaluated at the project level to identify customers' current satisfaction levels, the kind and quality of services and facilities desired, and the associated relative importance. Results from customer comment cards and the "Customer Discussion Guide" can be analyzed locally using analysis software packages that are available on the NRM Gateway (see the "Customer Service" page on the NRM Gateway Website). ERDC is available to provide analytical support on customized surveys to meet individualized local needs.

6.6.3 Response. Based on customer feedback, managers should respond to the needs of current users, under-served populations, and predict future trends. This includes incorporating needed facilities and services into annual and

long-range work plans for the project. The goal is improvement in customer satisfaction over time.

6.6.4 Trends Analysis. Annual customer feedback data will be analyzed and compared with previous years' results to identify trends. Long-term survey results will provide the manager with trends in customer satisfaction levels over time. Notable or unusual trends should be shared with others who may be affected through lessons learned posted on the "Customer Service" page on the NRM Gateway Website.

6.7 Local Levels of Services.

6.7.1 Local Determination. Because peak and non-peak operating seasons and customer needs vary from project to project, it is necessary that levels of service be determined locally. Customer feedback should be utilized to establish and refine acceptable levels of service. Feedback must be current to assure local service standards are accurate.

6.7.2 Service Categories. Local service levels meeting customer needs shall be developed for:

- Safety and security
- Cleanliness of facilities
- Appearance and maintenance of grounds and facilities
- Available, friendly, knowledgeable and efficient staff
- Recreation Use Fee collection, e.g., method, type, cycletime, user friendliness

6.7.3 Best Management Practices. The NRM Gateway Website page on "Customer Service" should be referenced for best management practices regarding local levels of services to improve customer satisfaction.