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## Hispanic American Recreation at Two Corps Lakes in Texas and California: A Preliminary Assessment

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**PURPOSE:** Research is being conducted at the U.S. Army Engineer Waterways Experiment Station (WES) on the existing and future use of Corps of Engineers operating projects by ethnic minority customers. The purpose of this research is to obtain information on minority recreation preferences and needs so that Corps decision makers can use this information in project planning and operations. This technical note presents the preliminary findings of research among two groups of Hispanic Americans and discusses the implications of this research for the Corps' working relations with its Hispanic American customers.

**BACKGROUND:** This research effort is a response to Executive Order 12862, Setting Customer Service Standards, and Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. Four ethnic minority groups will be studied during the 3-year period 1997-1999. These groups include Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans.

In 1997, WES conducted six focus groups with fifteen Native American tribes in the Corps' Tulsa and Omaha Districts. The results of that research have been published as *Natural Resources Technical Note REC-09* (Dunn and Feather 1998). In the spring of 1998, extensive fieldwork was conducted at five Corps projects across the United States to study firsthand the outdoor recreational habits and preferences of African, Hispanic, and Asian Americans. This fieldwork included interviewing Corps project personnel and minority visitors, ethnographic observation of visitor recreational behavior, and a series of focus groups with ethnic minority visitors. The results of the research conducted among African American visitors in 1998 has been published as Technical Note REC-10 (Dunn 1998).

The results of similar research conducted among Asian Americans at two Corps projects in California is also scheduled for publication as a technical note in 1999.

This technical note presents the preliminary findings of research conducted among two groups of Hispanic Americans. Two Corps lakes, one in Texas and one in California, with high Hispanic American visitation were the focus of the 1998 investigation: Canyon Lake, located near San Antonio, Texas, and Pine Flat Lake, located near Fresno, California.

**PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON HISPANIC-AMERICAN RECREATION:** The term "Hispanic" is an ethnic rather than a racial category. Unlike Asian, African, and Native Americans, Hispanic Americans can be of any race, although all share the same language and cultural ties to Spain. Black Hispanics like home run hitter Sammy Sosa and white Hispanics like pop singer Gloria Estefan share the same language, culture, and ethnicity. Hutchison (1988:18) defines ethnicity as "membership in a subcultural group on the basis of

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country of origin, language, religion, or cultural traditions different from the dominant society” and notes that “race on the other hand, is based on socially constructed definitions of physical appearances.”

Hispanic Americans, a true multi-racial ethnic group, now represent about 11 percent of the total population of the United States (Frey 1998:41). Of the 70 million persons expected by the U.S. Census Bureau to be added to the country's population between 1980 and 2025, nearly 25 million are projected to be Hispanic, 17 million will be black, and other minority racial and ethnic groups will increase by about 14 million (Gramann 1996:5). Stated another way, 78 percent of the growth of the U.S. population between 1980 and 2025 will result from increases in the country's minority population and Hispanic Americans will be the major component of this growth. For this reason alone it is critical for the Corps to understand how Hispanic Americans recreate and what the management implications are for the Corps' overall recreation program. Hispanic American demographic trends and the implications of these trends for the Corps of Engineers' recreation program are discussed in a later section.

Gramann (1996) presents a detailed review of trends, policy, and research dealing with ethnicity and outdoor recreation. This extensive literature review was funded by HQUSACE and represents the first product of the Corps' work unit on Ethnic Culture and Corps Recreation Participation. While his review deals with all four of the minority groups being studied, only his findings on Hispanic American recreational behavior will be discussed here. Gramann (1996) identified three major recreation research themes: underparticipation and underutilization, outdoor recreation style, and acculturation and recreation. Each of these themes is briefly discussed in the following sections.

### **Hispanic American Recreation Participation**

Research on recreation underparticipation by ethnic minority groups indicates that for some groups, the issue of underparticipation may be less relevant than their style of participation. For Hispanic Americans, the key research question does not appear to be why they underparticipate in outdoor recreation but why they vigorously participate the way they do. Gramann (1996:27-30) indicates that whites (Anglos) and Hispanics seem to be more similar in their recreation participation rates than whites and African Americans. One of several studies he cites to make this generalization is the U.S. Pleasure Travel Market study conducted in 1989 by Longwoods Research Group (Dwyer 1994). In this survey, Anglos and Hispanics exhibited higher rates of participation than African Americans in activities that usually occur in wildland settings.

Another study (Market Opinion Research 1986) reported that the percentage of Anglos and Hispanics who participated frequently in 35 different recreation activities differed by more than 10 percentage points in only three cases: running or jogging (Hispanics 26 percent, Anglos 15 percent), driving for pleasure (Hispanics 54 percent, Anglos 42 percent), and attending zoos or fairs (Hispanics 34 percent, Anglos 16 percent). Gramann (1996:28) notes that these three differences may be due to the generally younger age of the Hispanic population in the United States compared with the Anglo population.

Gramann (1996:29) reports that more Anglo-Hispanic similarities were also found in a regional survey of households in the Phoenix metropolitan area and an adjacent nonmetropolitan area (Gramann and Floyd 1991). This study uncovered no significant differences between Anglos and Mexicans in the percentage who had participated at least twice in 18 of 23 recreation activities during the previous year. Of the five statistically meaningful differences, Anglos were more likely than Mexican Americans to have taken sightseeing trips (75 versus 52 percent), and to have visited archaeological or historic sites (59 versus 42 percent). Mexican Americans were more likely to have fished (52 versus 37 percent), camped in a tent (45 versus 35 percent), and ridden a mountain bike (23 versus 14 percent).

One difference between Anglos and Hispanics that is reported in the leisure research literature relates to travel distances. The tendency for minority-group members to travel shorter distances for recreation is also seen in comparisons between Anglo-Americans and Hispanic Americans. Gramann and Floyd (1991) found that Anglos were significantly more likely than Mexican Americans to have visited national parks, national monuments, and national forests outside the city of Phoenix at least twice during the previous year. Conversely, there were no statistically significant differences in the percentage of each group that had stayed close to home and visited city and neighborhood parks.

Gramann and Floyd (1991) found no differences between Anglo-Americans and Mexican Americans in the number of recreation visits to Canyon Lake, Apache Lake, or Roosevelt Lake in the vicinity of Phoenix. However, Mexican Americans made significantly fewer trips to Saguaro Lake, the closest of the reservoirs to Phoenix. The researchers attributed this to the extremely heavy use by Anglo-Americans, which acted to reduce Mexican American utilization. This instance of Hispanics' underutilization could be clearly linked to perceived discrimination.

Gramann (1996:32) indicates that researchers have only recently seriously investigated the role that perceptions of discrimination might have on recreational travel by minority-group members. For example, based on research in Chicago, Gobster and Delgado (1992) reported that reports of discrimination were highest among blacks (14 percent), and somewhat less among Hispanics (7 percent) and Asians (9 percent). Chavez (1991, 1993) examined perceptions of discrimination among Hispanic and Anglo visitors to a wildland recreation area in southern California. Hispanics were more likely than Anglos to perceive themselves as targets of discrimination. According to Hispanics reporting discrimination, the primary perpetrators were law enforcement officers, followed by other visitors.

Gramann (1996:34) provides this assessment of the impact of perceived discrimination on minority recreation participation:

*Visitors who stop using a particular recreation area because of undesirable changes in social conditions are said to be "displaced" (Schreyer and Knopf 1984). Similarly, potential visitors who never travel to an area in the first place because they expect to encounter negative circumstances onsite or en route are said to engage in "avoidance." That such processes are very real and may affect millions of residents around a recreation area has been demonstrated by recent research (Gramann 1991)....Ethnicity and race may be associated with displacement and avoidance in at least two ways. First, minority groups may avoid certain areas where they expect to*

*experience discrimination, either from other visitors or from managers. Second, a recreation locale may develop a specific identity as a site affording particular types of experiences that are desired by a cultural group (Williams and Carr 1993). For example, Lee (1972) described parks that were thought by their users "to belong to" a particular race, age, or sex grouping. Although members of the "possessing group" were comfortable in such areas, members of other groups avoided them.*

Displacement, avoidance, and establishing "turf" are all social mechanisms affecting Hispanic American recreation participation at Corps of Engineers projects across the United States. Specific examples of these mechanisms will be discussed in the case studies at Canyon Lake, Texas, and Pine Flat Lake, California.

### **Hispanic American Recreation Style**

Most studies of style differences in outdoor recreation have compared Anglo-Americans with Hispanic Americans. The term "recreation style" has been defined as "the unique quality of recreation behavior that arises from variation between ethnic groups in group size, participation motives, spoken language, and attitudes toward natural resources, including facility-development preferences (Gramann, Floyd, and Ewert 1992). Gramann (1996) notes that Federal agencies' concern with ethnic variation in recreation style frequently reflects the pragmatic concerns of resource managers that the behaviors of some minority groups may result in inferior recreation experiences for non-minorities, vandalism of facilities, and the degradation of natural resources.

Research on outdoor recreation style can be subdivided into four major categories. The following synopsis based on Gramann (1996:38-47) focuses solely on Hispanic American recreational style:

**Size and composition of social groups:** Hispanics tend to recreate in larger social groups than most Anglo-Americans. Recent research indicates that associations between group type and activity participation that are typical of Anglo-Americans may not apply to Hispanic Americans (Gramann 1996:38). Hispanics are more likely than Anglos to visit recreational facilities as part of an extended family, while Anglos and African Americans have tended to participate as individuals or as members of single-generation peer groups. Gramann (1996:39) notes that many resource managers are reluctant to deal with large social groups:

*In fact, it is not unusual for recreation areas to regulate group size, either by restricting the size of parties that can enter an area without permission, or by limiting the number of people, groups, or vehicles that are allowed to occupy a single campsite. In their study of campers in New Mexico, Irwin, Gartner, and Phelps (1990) reported that Mexican-American groups exceeded designated campsite capacity by an average of almost 30 percent.*

**Participation motives:** Hispanics place greater emphasis on family-related motives than Anglo-Americans. Shaull (1993) reported that Hispanic Americans living in central and southern California rated "doing something with your family" and "bringing the family together more" as significantly more important to their outdoor recreation enjoyment than did Anglo-Americans. The strong emphasis on the importance of the *extended*

multigenerational) family is a recognized hallmark of Hispanic culture. Hispanics differ culturally from Anglos in their desire to maintain close ties with their large extended families. Most Anglo-American family members are typically satisfied with intermittent meetings (e.g., at Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.) supplemented by telephone calls and letters. Hispanic Americans place much greater value on frequent face-to-face contact. While this kind of close contact is important to nuclear family life among Anglo-Americans, it is less integral to the Anglo extended family (Gramann 1996:39).

Gramann, Floyd, and Saenz (1993) have argued that the pattern of greater importance attached to family-related recreation motives by Hispanic Americans reflects a fundamental sociological function of recreation as a means of preserving core cultural values in an Anglo-dominated society:

*...leisure is often subject to fewer perceived pressures to conform to the expectations of others than is behavior in the workplace or at school. Hence, even though minority group members may adopt those traits of a host culture that have strategic value for advancing their own socioeconomic status, recreation may remain an important social space in which basic cultural values can be maintained and expressed.*

**Language:** Hispanics differ from many other ethnic groups in the United States in that they have maintained many aspects of their cultural heritage through maintenance of the Spanish language. The common pattern among other ethnic groups is a decrease in the use of ancestral languages over time, such that in the third and subsequent generations, English becomes the first language (McLemore 1991). Gramann (1996:40) indicates that the persistence of Spanish among Hispanic populations is related to several factors. One of these is that there is a continuing influx of new immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. Another factor is that many Hispanic Americans tend to settle and remain in geographically concentrated areas where there is no great need to learn English for economic survival.

Another characteristic of Hispanic Americans is that many are bilingual. Leisure researchers report that it is common for postimmigrant generations of Hispanics to speak both English and Spanish fluently. Gramann and Floyd's (1991) telephone survey of Phoenix-area households found that 48 percent of adult Mexican-American respondents preferred to use both Spanish and English, 37 percent preferred mostly English, and 15 percent preferred mostly Spanish. While there is a marked tendency toward bilingualism among the Hispanic American population, exclusive reliance on Spanish varies from place to place within the Southwest, perhaps as a function of the size of the Hispanic population and the need to use English in day-to-day interactions (Gramann 1996:41).

While many Hispanic Americans speak Spanish fluently, it should not be assumed by Corps project managers that they read and write Spanish with equal facility. Gramann (1996:41) reports the following:

*Hispanic-Americans who are educated in U.S. schools often learn to speak Spanish as a young child at home, yet do not receive instruction on how to read or write Spanish in school. For this reason, there is no guarantee that written communication in Spanish will be any more effective at reaching Hispanic visitors with a message than will written communication in English. Simcox and Pfister (1990) recommended*

*that informational services in areas visited by Hispanic users should rely on international symbols. Some resource management agencies (e.g. BLM) have emphasized Spanish-language training for law enforcement personnel and the development of public service announcements in Spanish for broadcast on local Spanish language radio stations (Chavez, Baas, and Winter 1993).*

**Attitudes toward natural resources and facility development:** Many resource managers have observed that Hispanic users seem to be motivated primarily by “social” experiences and are less interested in the natural resources of the area (Gramann, Floyd, and Ewert 1992). Other researchers (e.g., Lynch (1993)) report that Hispanic Americans’ environmental perspectives differ from those of Anglo-Americans in that Hispanic culture does not isolate people from the natural landscape. The ideal Hispanic landscape is “peopled and productive” and does not include the notion of an uninhabited wilderness (Gramann 1996:41). What is the source of this difference in worldview? Gramann (1996:42) observes that it seems to result from historical differences in the development of the Anglo and Hispanic cultures in North America:

*Knowlton (1972) points out that early Hispanic settlers in the New World identified very closely with the land as a means of sustenance. Although very extensive private land holdings existed in the Spanish colonies and postcolonial Mexico, communally owned lands (i.e., ejidos) were regarded as especially important among mestizo and native Indian populations, both for human life and village warfare. The English concepts of private property rights and human domination over nature were not necessarily antithetical to Hispanic culture, but the idea that one could monopolize vast acreages while others went landless was morally repugnant. Indeed, much of the impetus for social revolution in nineteenth-century Mexico was the restoration of communal village lands that had been absorbed into haciendas and other large private landholdings (Parks 1988). Legal battles to achieve this aim still occur in the U.S. in such states as New Mexico (Eastman 1991). This historical stake in the communal land base appears to be reflected in the environmental views of many U.S. Hispanics today.*

The practical importance of this history lesson is that differences between ethnic groups in attitudes toward natural resources can be reflected in the importance of their motives for recreation participation. Hispanic groups tend to rate “talking to and meeting new people” and “doing some eating and drinking” as more important reasons for their recreation than do Anglos. When considering the importance of both social and nature-related motives, Hispanic groups tend to place greater importance than Anglos on both tranquillity and socializing with others in wildland recreation areas (Gramann 1996:43).

Regarding preferences in facilities and services, Hispanic-Americans appear to prefer greater levels of development than do Anglos. In one study Hispanic users evaluated parking spaces, signs, picnic areas, trails, garbage-disposal facilities, and toilets as being more important than did Anglos (Bass, Ewert, and Chavez 1993). Anglo visitors were more concerned about graffiti, vandalism, and water pollution in a stream that ran through the San Gabriel Canyon. Another study (Chavez and Winter 1993) in the San Bernardino National Forest showed that Hispanic visitors wanted more parking spaces and playgrounds to accommodate

their larger extended families. Other studies reviewed by Gramann (1996) show clear cultural differences between Hispanic and Anglo campers. Anglos were more likely to list quiet surroundings, privacy, water, and space between campsites as preferred campsite characteristics, while Hispanic-Americans placed more importance on toilets, camping space at each site, water, and fire rings. While the majority of Anglo campers preferred to be far away from other campers, the majority of Hispanic campers preferred to camp close together, presumably in large family groups. Clearly, the Hispanic American population presents a challenge to the notion that "one size fits all" in the design and fit of recreational facilities. This brief overview of published research on recreation style points a direction for later discussion on the design and maintenance of Corps facilities with high Hispanic American visitation.

### **Hispanic American Acculturation**

One explanatory model for minority recreational behavior that may be of particular interest to the Corps of Engineers is that of selective acculturation. This is an alternative to the strict Anglo-conformity assimilation model, which holds that the distinctive behavior of ethnic minority groups will invariably change with sufficient time, giving up their distinctive cultural characteristics and adopting those of the dominant group (e.g. middle class white Americans). Gramann (1996:48-49) has persuasively argued that the Anglo-conformity model does not fit leisure /recreational behavior because these are areas in which the core cultural values of the ethnic group are maintained and expressed. Consequently, the recreational behavior of ethnic minority groups may be highly resistant to change. The selective acculturation model predicts that while some aspects of socioeconomic behavior may change rapidly within a minority group, expressive leisure behavior that is closely linked to the core values of the group may persist indefinitely. The implication of this model is that the persistent recreational activities of some ethnic minority groups may require changes in management style on the part of the Corps of Engineers as a resource managing agency.

Research among Hispanic Americans suggests that outdoor recreation appears to provide an opportunity for certain central values of Hispanic culture to be maintained (e.g. familism), despite assimilation on other cultural dimensions, such as language (Gramann (1996:50-51). Gramann, Floyd, and Saenz (1993) and Shaul (1993) examined the effect of Hispanic American acculturation on the importance of family-related and nature-related experiences in outdoor recreation. Acculturation in these studies was measured by use and preference for Spanish versus English in everyday situations. Both studies employed statistical cluster analysis to derive three groups of Hispanics who varied by their degree of language acculturation. These were least acculturated, bilingual, and most acculturated. They reported the following results:

*After controlling for age, education, and the number of children in a household, Gramann et al. found that family experiences were most important to the most highly acculturated Mexican Americans. Further, this importance was significantly greater than that among Anglo-Americans. Interestingly, the highly acculturated group also placed more emphasis on family experiences than did the least acculturated Mexican Americans, who were not different from Anglos in this regard. This is opposite to the pattern that would be predicted by an Anglo-conformity model of acculturation. The*

*researchers explained this paradox in terms of selective acculturation and the disrupting effect of immigration on local family ties. The least acculturated Mexican-origin respondents were primarily immigrants and would not be expected to have extensive local family networks. Thus, family experiences in outdoor recreation would be less important to this group. However, over generations, family networks could be rebuilt in the U.S. so that the core Hispanic value of familism could be reexpressed in the recreation styles of subsequent generations. This would explain the greater importance of familism to the most acculturated Mexican-Americans. Thus, outdoor recreation appeared to provide an opportunity for certain central values of Hispanic culture to be maintained, despite assimilation on other cultural dimensions, such as language (Gramann 1996:51).*

Floyd and Gramann (1993) have also examined the effect of language acculturation on the recreation participation of Mexican Americans. After controlling for age and education in a population living in the greater Phoenix area, they found that the least acculturated Mexican Americans took part in significantly fewer activities than Anglos. This proved true for four out of five recreational activities examined: water and snow-based activities, urban activities, consumptive recreation (fishing and hunting), and travel-oriented activities. Bicultural Mexican Americans and the most assimilated group differed from Anglos in only two of the five recreation categories. This appears to support an Anglo-conformity model where the more Anglo-speaking the group is, the more Anglo-acting the group becomes. Other researchers have also found that U.S.-born Hispanics were more similar to Anglos than to Mexican-born visitors in their participation in hiking, walking, and motorcycle riding. However, Gramann (1996:52) reports that even the most acculturated U.S.-born Hispanics were more like immigrants than Anglo-Americans in their participation in other activities, such as group sports, picnicking, and target shooting.

Another acculturation research topic affecting minorities' recreation participation involves the concept of perceived discrimination by minority groups. This issue was addressed in detail in the technical note on Native-American Recreation at Corps projects (Dunn and Feather 1998). Briefly, perceived discrimination has most often been viewed as an "independent variable" where it negatively impacts the participation of the minority group, i.e., people will not recreate where they feel they are not wanted. Gramann (1996:52-53) also has described another line of research in which the perception of discrimination is treated as a "dependent variable" that is influenced by a variety of social and economic factors. Research among Hispanics has tended to support the ethnic enclosure hypothesis, which predicts that greater cultural assimilation will lead to reduced levels of perceived discrimination by minority-group members:

*As members of minority groups acquire greater knowledge of the dominant culture, become more socially integrated, and experience upward social mobility, they should also experience greater acceptance into mainstream society and perceive less discrimination ....in a study by Floyd and Gramann (1995) Mexican Americans perceived less discrimination in recreation areas as their level of education (a measure of social mobility) increased and as their use and preference for English over Spanish increased (Gramann 1996:53).*

Gramann's (1996) synopsis of research on acculturation and recreation suggests that cultural assimilation does play an important role in Hispanic-Americans' outdoor recreational behavior. In some cases, the dominant pattern appears to be one of Anglo conformity, with their recreational behavior and style becoming progressively more Anglo-like as acculturation increases. In other cases, particularly those involving core ethnic values such as familism, the evidence for Anglo-conformity is less conclusive. Gramann (1996:53) suggests that such contradictions in research findings may be due to problems that arise from comparing results of regional household surveys with those of onsite visitor studies and because of differences in the way cultural assimilation is measured (e.g., as generational tenure or language acculturation). In addition, some studies have failed to control for other critical differences between cultural assimilation groups, such as age, income, and education, that could affect recreation style and participation. In general, however, perceptions of discrimination among Hispanic Americans tend to decline with greater levels of assimilation into Anglo-American society. Gramann (1996:53) points out that an important consequence of this is that there may be major differences in opinions regarding the prevalence of discrimination in recreation areas, depending upon Hispanic-Americans' level of cultural and structural assimilation.

**HISPANIC-AMERICAN DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS:** The demographic profile of the United States is changing toward a more ethnically and geographically diverse population (Gramann 1996:10). While Asian American and African American groups will increase significantly in numbers over the next 25 years, the transformation of the United States into a truly multi-ethnic society is being driven primarily by the rapid growth of its Hispanic population. To understand how this predicted surge in Hispanic population might affect the Corps' recreation program, it is necessary to review some intriguing new demographic data pertaining to Hispanics.

The United States as a whole is becoming more and more ethnically regionalized as minority populations increase. Population shifts during the 1990s show the continued geographic concentration of minority groups into specific regions and a handful of metropolitan areas. Frey (1998) argues that the majority of America's cities and towns lack true racial and ethnic diversity even while the observed increases in ethnic minority populations would lead the casual observer to believe otherwise. There are relatively few counties and metropolitan areas with a significant presence of two or more minority groups. Frey (1998) identifies just 21 true "melting-pot metros" including the three largest gateway cities for new immigrants: Los Angeles, New York City, and San Francisco.

The first point to be made about the Hispanic American population distribution is that it is strongly regionalized around major "gateway" cities. Frey (1998:39) reports that the importance of immigrant "gateways" in both attracting and maintaining large Hispanic populations is evident in the rankings of the top metros for numerical gains in Hispanics during the 1990s. The ten metro areas with the largest Hispanic populations were also the ten largest gainers. Together they attracted more than half (52 percent) of new Hispanic residents between 1990 and 1996. The top ten metros collectively contain 58 percent of the nation's Hispanic population. Los Angeles is home to fully one-fifth of the entire U.S. Hispanic population. It also ranks first in total growth, claiming 18 percent of all Hispanic population gains in the United States between 1990 and 1996. Its growth comes largely from Mexican and Latin-American immigrants, but also from sustained high fertility rates among long-term

Hispanic residents (Frey 1998:39). Other important gateway metros include Miami, which attracts and holds large numbers of Cubans; New York City, which attracts a large number of Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and other Hispanic groups from the Caribbean; and Chicago, which has historically attracted large numbers of Mexicans. Frey (1998:39) reports that the rest of the ten Hispanic metros lie close to the Mexican border and continue to build on large, existing Latin-American populations. One of the few exceptions he reports to the size-begets-growth phenomenon is Las Vegas. It has benefited from spillover migration from California, and also was an initial destination for some Latin-American immigrants, thanks to its booming economy and strong job market.

Frey (1998:42) reports that nationwide, there are 226 counties where whites represent the minority population. Most of these were smaller counties in Texas and other parts of the Southwest where Hispanics are in the majority, or rural counties in the South where blacks are in the majority. Between 1990 and 1996, 43 counties turned from "majority white" to majority minority and this trend is expected to continue in certain regions. Frey (1998:43) discusses two distinct situations where "minority majorities" are predicted in the near future. The first situation are the inner counties of older metropolitan areas in the Midwest and Northeast where African-Americans comprise the bulk of the minority population. The second is more pertinent to our concerns here, counties in the Southwest and in California such as Alameda, Fresno, Tulare, Monterey and Merced, which are receiving a large influx of both Hispanic and Asian immigration. In the Southwest and in California, the already large Hispanic population is expected to grow even more through a combination of natural increase (high fertility) and the continuing immigration of Hispanics to these areas.

One important characteristic of all minority populations in the United States including Hispanic Americans, is that most minorities reside in metropolitan areas. They are much more likely to live in cities and metro counties. Frey (1998:43) reports that more than 91 percent of Hispanics reside in metropolitan areas with populations exceeding 1 million:

*For consumer markets, this means that both large numbers of minorities and fast-growing populations will continue to be found in large urban areas. The lifestyles, tastes, and voting patterns of residents in these areas are likely to change dramatically. But for the rest of America change will come more slowly.*

This means the Corps' outdoor recreation management in the Southwest and in California will increasingly be providing services and maintaining facilities for a rapidly growing Hispanic population with a distinctively different recreation style and with considerable diversity in socio-economic status. Corps projects in the Northeast adjacent to "gateway metros" such as New York City will also be providing services and maintaining facilities to meet the recreational needs of an expanding Hispanic population.

**DESCRIPTION OF SITE VISITS:** During the fall of 1997 a number of Corps of Engineers project managers were contacted to ascertain if their projects were suitable locations for conducting focus groups with ethnic minority visitors on their recreational experiences at Corps operating projects. The managers were also informed that subsequent to each focus group a survey instrument dealing with minority recreation preferences and experiences would be tested at their project. As a result of these contacts, two Corps projects with high Hispanic American visitation were selected in the spring of 1998 for the Hispanic-American

component of the work unit: Canyon Lake, located in the Texas hill country of the Fort Worth District and Pine Flat Lake, located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains within the Sacramento District. Canyon Lake was visited on May 29-30, 1998; Pine Flat Lake on June 10-13, 1998.

During each visit, facilities frequented by Hispanic American visitors were inspected and recreational behavior was observed. Project managers and rangers at Canyon Lake and Pine Flat Lake were interviewed. Rangers on patrol were observed in their interaction with Hispanic American visitors. Several of the interviews with Corps rangers regarding their own observations and experiences with minority visitors were videotaped. Finally, a focus group discussion dealing with Hispanic American recreation was conducted with a small group of Hispanic visitors at the Canyon Lake project office. The participants were invited by ranger Dave Quebedeaux, who had been assigned by the project manager at Canyon Lake.

**THE CANYON LAKE SITE VISIT:** Canyon Lake is located on the Guadalupe River in the rugged Texas hill country about 15 miles northwest of New Braunfels, Texas. The area around New Braunfels was settled by German immigrants prior to the U.S. Civil War and retains a curious blend of Old World Germanic and New World Hispanic cultural influences. The project, located approximately halfway between the cities of San Antonio and Austin, receives heavy visitation from Hispanic-Americans and Mexican nationals throughout the year. Both cities have large Hispanic populations. According to the project manager, Mr. Jerry Brite, who was interviewed on May 29, 1998, normal visitation is about 50-75 percent Hispanic-American throughout the year. This figure swells to about 95 percent during the Easter Sunday weekend, when Canyon Lake becomes the center of a massive Hispanic-American campout and celebration. According to its project manager, Hispanic-American visitation at Canyon Lake (in absolute numbers) may well be the highest of any Corps project in the United States.

There are also numerous military installations around San Antonio and military personnel of all ethnic backgrounds routinely visit the project. Both the U.S. Army and Air Force lease and maintain their own recreational facilities (e.g. marinas ) at the project. Much of the area around the lake has been commercially developed and there are numerous condominiums and private residences located around the lake and in the adjacent tourist town of Canyon City. Canyon Lake is reported to be the southernmost Corps project in the United States and the high temperatures in the summer reflect this. At the time of the site visit in late May, temperatures were already hovering around 100 °F.

Mr. David Quebedeaux, a ranger at Canyon Lake, proved to be a most valuable source of information on Hispanic American recreation at this project. He also organized and participated in the focus group held at the project office on Saturday, May 30, 1998, which is described in a later section. Following the interview with Mr. Brite, Ranger Quebedeaux conducted a tour of the project's facilities beginning with Jacob's Creek Park, the site of the heaviest Hispanic visitation at this time. His detailed discussions of Hispanic American recreation at the various public use areas were videotaped and are synopsized below.

With the exception of two recently renovated public use areas, Potters Creek and Comal, the project's staff strive to make do with outmoded deteriorating facilities originally constructed in the late 1960s. The large number of extended Hispanic families that visit this project

routinely overwhelm the available facilities and hundreds are turned away every weekend when all available camping and parking facilities are occupied. When asked what was the single greatest need of the Hispanic-Americans recreating at Canyon Lake, Ranger Quebedeaux quipped: "to get in with the rest of their family." In general, the facilities at Canyon Lake will require a great deal of work to adequately meet the needs of its Hispanic-American customers.

### **Jacob's Creek Park**

According to Ranger Quebedeaux, Hispanic gang activity is very pronounced at Canyon Lake and since the redesign of Comal Park in 1995, Jacob's Creek public use area now receives much of this unwelcome activity. Violent encounters between rival gangs coming from San Antonio constitute most of the problem. Gang members project an attitude that "you can't take anything away from me, even my life." Many gang members do not feel they will live very long so they have nothing to lose and quite a bit to gain by acting aggressively "macho." Vandalism of Corps facilities by gang members is one way they can gain prestige within the gang. Two forms of vandalism apparent at Jacob's Creek Park include marking restrooms with gang graffiti and using cars to pull out fire rings in picnic areas.

Corps rangers must tread lightly when dealing with armed gang members and "there are times when the rangers on patrol here feel that they are the only ones who are not armed." Calls for backup from the local sheriff's department are quite routine. The excellent support of the local sheriff's department, both on routine after-hours patrols and in response to emergency calls for assistance, is the one thing "that enables us to come back to work every day after one of these incidents." The recent attempt by HQUSACE to issue body armor to Corps rangers is due in large part to past incidents with Hispanic gang members at Canyon Lake and several other lakes in SWD.

Large Hispanic extended families (up to 40 members or more) enjoy picnicking and camping out together and will indulge in "wagon train" camping when allowed. Cars park in a circle with tents, grills, and tables located within that circle. This kind of activity is discouraged most of the year except at the Easter Sunday celebration when visitation is allowed to exceed the capacity of the facilities. Title 36 citations issued to Hispanics are typically ignored and there has been no attempt to enforce them through court appearances. The rangers believe that the best approach to use is friendly persuasion and a process of education.

According to Ranger Quebedeaux, Hispanic family get-togethers will typically involve radio or taped music, alcohol (beer), and food cooked onsite. Swimming is usually an important part of any family outing, but drownings may occur when family members drink too much in an effort to offset the very high temperatures during the summer months. Boating by Hispanics appeared to the rangers to be limited to small fishing boats or older pleasure boats. Most Hispanic families do not have the large expensive pleasure boats used by the Anglos who seasonally live on or visit the lake and maintain their boats at several large marinas around the project.

## **Canyon Park**

This is a combination camping and day-use park that has not been upgraded in over 30 years, yet still receives very high visitation from Hispanics. Ranger Quebedeaux estimated that during peak visitation at the beach area, there is one restroom (vault toilet) per thousand people and waiting lines are not uncommon, especially for women. The park is full every weekend and some members of a large Hispanic extended family may already be in the park when late-arriving family members are denied access. When Hispanic family members are turned away due to the park's limited capacity, hard feelings are created toward the gate attendants and Corps rangers trying to control the crowding. Picnic tables and shelters designed for the typical Anglo nuclear family are woefully inadequate for the larger Hispanic extended families that use this park so extensively.

According to Ranger Quebedeaux, about 70 percent of the visitors who use this park for camping are Hispanic-American tent campers. During the peak summer months, camping areas may be so congested that the tie-down ropes of one tent may cross those of another. Due to the very hot conditions, shade is extremely important and campsites under the trees are usually taken first. Past high-water conditions during floods have killed many trees closest to the lake and reduced the number of shaded campsites. Congestion in the shaded areas is a fact of life at this site.

Hispanic Americans have not complained about these conditions to their congressmen or to the Corps' Fort Worth District and consequently little has been done to improve the situation. Several years ago, Canyon Lake was included in a WES study dealing with visitors' willingness to pay user fees. Canyon Lake was shown to have the worst facilities but the highest willingness to pay of any Corps project included in the study. The reason for this is the willingness of Hispanic-American visitors at this project to put up with conditions that many Anglo visitors would not tolerate. The combination of the natural beauty of the project and the relatively low cost compared to nearby Texas state parks apparently offsets the many negatives in the minds of the Hispanic visitors.

## **Potter Creek Park**

This is one of two parks that has been renovated in recent years at Canyon Lake. This visually attractive camping area combines well-spaced campsites with numerous shade trees and electrical hookups. The park was renovated to appeal to Anglo visitors with large recreational vehicles and the financial resources to pay higher camping fees. Complaints from Anglo "well-off-old-folks" or "WOOFs" about the lack of facilities at Canyon Lake helped to secure sufficient funding to design and build a facility that would appeal to middle-class white Americans. This upgrade was geared toward a specific and important component of the Corps' customer base in the region and it has been very successful in meeting that need.

When asked if Hispanic American visitors camped at this site, Ranger Quebedeaux indicated that they did only rarely. He believed that there are two reasons for this. First the camping fees are higher, which discourages many working-class Hispanic families on a very limited budget. Second, "wagon train" camping associated with large Hispanic families is strongly discouraged by the Corps staff as being too disruptive to other campers. There is no official

policy of keeping Hispanics out, just a desire to maintain a facility that would continue to attract the white middle-class family.

## **Comal Park**

This is the second park that has been renovated in recent years and its transformation is the major success story at Canyon Lake. The camping, day-use area, and swim beach used to be a haven for drug-related criminal activity. Comal Park used to be a place where drugs and alcohol could be abused with little consequence and violent confrontations between park visitors were commonplace. It was, in Ranger Quebedeaux's words, a "tough place to be a ranger and an even tougher place to be a visitor." It is now a recreational resource that both Anglo and Hispanic families enjoy. The design of the new park represents the future of recreation at this project.

According to Ranger Quebedeaux, looping roads ideal for "cruising" and an asphalt parking lot adjacent to the swim beach made it easy for a rough crowd of Anglos and gangs of Hispanics to spend their afternoons and evenings cruising, drinking, and drug dealing from the safety of their cars. Intoxicated swimmers "had the habit of drowning while attempting to swim to an offshore island." Violent confrontations between park visitors required the assistance of the local sheriff's department almost daily. Middle-class families stayed away from the place. Something had to be done.

In 1995, the park was shut down for 18 months and completely reconstructed. A Fort Worth District task force was used to redesign the new park. The task force included Canyon Lake rangers who had an intimate knowledge of the park and some clear ideas on how to fix it. A new larger gatehouse was constructed. The looping roads were torn up and replaced with new ones that discouraged cruising. The asphalt parking lot was removed and a large grassy area was installed next to the swim beach where children could play in safety. New playground equipment for children was installed. More new restrooms with flush toilets were installed throughout the park. Newspaper articles and flyers prepared by the Canyon Lake staff made it known to the public that "the bad old days were over" at Comal Park.

The beautiful and very functional design of the new park did most of the work. The cruising, the drug dealing, and the drunken brawls stopped. Families, both Anglo and Hispanic, came back to the park. It is now one of the easiest parks to be a ranger and a visitor. Regional "Ironman" competitions are held at the park annually and the large numbers of Anglo and Hispanic children and their families laughing and playing make it the kind of place any Corps project manager would be proud of.

The tour conducted by Ranger Quebedeaux on May 29 painted a vivid picture of Hispanic recreation from the Corps ranger's perspective. Yet it is not the whole story. The focus group held at the Canyon Lake project office on May 30 completed the picture. A discussion of the views and experiences of Hispanic-Americans at this Texas project will be presented after another picture is presented, at a California project called Pine Flat Lake.

**THE PINE FLAT LAKE SITE VISIT:** Pine Flat Lake is the oldest flood control project within the Sacramento District. Construction of the 429-ft-tall dam nestled in the Sierra Nevada foothills east of Fresno was completed in 1954. Pine Flat Dam is an impressive structure that impounds the waters of the Kings River and provides flood control and

irrigation benefits to the San Joaquin Valley, one of the country's most productive agricultural areas. A hydroelectric plant was completed in 1984. At maximum capacity, the lake holds 1,000,000 acre feet of water (U.S. Army Engineer District, Sacramento 1998). There are a total of six public campgrounds at Pine Flat Lake. These are operated by Fresno County, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Corps of Engineers. The Corps maintains the Island Park and Sycamore campgrounds on a first-come, first-served basis. These campgrounds are suitable for recreational vehicle and tent camping (U.S. Army Engineer District, Sacramento 1998). At the time of the field visit the Sycamore campground was closed due to budgetary constraints.

The project was visited June 10-13, 1998. Additional time was allocated at this project to collect data on Hispanic as well as Asian American recreation, which was the primary focus of the visit (see Dunn, in preparation). Initial interviews were conducted with the project manager, Mr. Charles Parnell, and senior ranger Frank Fonseca. Interviews with the other rangers on staff were conducted later in the week. One of the more extended interviews was conducted while accompanying Ranger Will Grove on routine patrol around the lake. Based on these interviews the following impressions were obtained.

Unlike Canyon Lake, Pine Flat Lake receives an equal mix of Hispanic American and Asian American visitation from the city of Fresno and the surrounding area. While there is some gang activity from both of these minority groups, the relatively serious problems of gang violence and vandalism are not present here to the same degree as at Canyon Lake. Hispanic visitation at this project primarily takes the form of weekend visitation that focuses on camping and picnicking. The great majority of these Hispanic visitors are bilingual and appear to be quite acculturated to mainstream American culture. This may be related to the fact that, unlike Canyon Lake, there are fewer Mexican families coming to recreate at the project. Hispanic-American children in this part of California are usually fluent in English and Spanish and most Hispanic-American family members work, recreate, or have had long-term experience with Anglos. In general, the rangers at Pine Flat have little trouble communicating with their Hispanic visitors. This is not the case with the numerous Asian groups who visit the lake.

Group sizes of Hispanic weekend campers appeared to the author to be somewhat smaller than those observed at Canyon Lake, Texas. Nuclear families with six or seven children are the norm for most Hispanic campers according to the rangers interviewed. When multi-generation Hispanic extended families come to camp or picnic, the numbers will swell into the 40 to 50 range. The rangers' impression was that this occurs several times a year for most families around the big holiday weekends. The extremely large Easter Sunday Hispanic visitation observed at Canyon Lake was also not found here.

From the rangers' perspective, fishing is the second favorite activity of their Hispanic visitors. Unlike the Southeast Asian visitors to Pine Flat Lake, fishing is just a part of the total recreational experience for most Hispanic family groups and not the primary reason for coming. Most Hispanics bankfish, but it is not uncommon for them to rent small fishing boats available at several marinas around the lake. Much of the Hispanic visitation takes place at the Island Park public use area, which has 52 campsites. Most of these campers use tents but some Hispanic visitors will use "pop-up campers" and a few have recreational vehicles. Shoreline camping is prohibited at Pine Flat Lake, which lies in an extreme fire hazard zone

in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada between the Sierra and Sequoia National Forests. In its place, houseboat camping in designated mooring areas is extremely popular and Hispanic-Americans are beginning to participate in this activity, which heretofore has been almost exclusively an Anglo activity. The use of personal water craft (PWCs) and larger powerboats is still predominantly an Anglo activity.

As might be anticipated, Hispanic visitation is very family-oriented. The visiting Hispanic families seem to interact well with Anglo families in the campground. Since most Asian visitors to this project do not camp, there is little interaction between Hispanic and Asian groups for the rangers to observe. The most serious problems rangers encountered tend to be related to alcohol abuse. In an interview conducted at the project office, ranger Robert Baker indicated that recently 16 drunk and disorderly Hispanic visitors were arrested by the local sheriff at the Island Park campground. Apart from sporadic Hispanic gang activity (e.g., stolen cars) this was the most common problem the rangers encountered with this minority group. Alcohol abuse is also a problem with some local Anglo visitors.

When asked what kinds of improvements to Corps facilities would increase Hispanic visitation to Pine Flat Lake, Ranger Baker indicated more picnic tables and more larger group shelters would be at the top of the list. It was also his impression that Hispanic visitors would appreciate more developed campgrounds. In making the 45-min drive from Fresno, Hispanic visitors were not seeking a "wilderness experience" so much as an opportunity to recreate in a beautiful outdoor setting with family members. Ranger Baker identified himself as an experienced mountain climber and actively sought out such wilderness experiences himself. He had found few kindred spirits among the Hispanic visitors he routinely interacted with at this project. In conversations the author had with Hispanic visitors at Pine Flat Lake, more swim beaches, more parking facilities, and restrooms closer to the dam where bank fishing took place were also identified as highly desirable. Since there was not an opportunity to conduct a focus group discussion with Hispanic visitors at Pine Flat Lake, additional data will have to come from an ethnic minority user survey to be conducted there in the spring and early summer of 1999.

**THE CANYON LAKE FOCUS GROUP:** On May 30, 1998, a focus group discussion was held with a group of Hispanic Americans from the San Antonio region. The meeting was organized by Mr. David Quebedeaux, a park ranger at Canyon Lake. While ten people had been invited to participate, five adults and one child actually attended the meeting held at the project office on a Saturday afternoon. The participants included two middle-aged married couples, a teenager, and the young daughter of one of the couples (see Figure 1). All the participants were middle-class and fluent in English and Spanish. The meeting followed the usual format of introductions, discussion of research goals, administration of a draft survey instrument and an open discussion of the participants' responses. The tone of the meeting was enthusiastic and the participants were extremely cooperative and helpful in explaining their responses. Ranger Quebedeaux participated in the focus group discussions.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections each containing 15 questions. The first section dealt with outdoor recreation style in general, including a series of questions on favorite forms of recreation, the average size of the recreating group, preferences for recreating with family members, preferences for types of camping facilities, forms of outdoor recreation they might wish to try in the future, experience recreating with members of other ethnic/



**Figure 1. Hispanic-American focus group participants at Canyon Lake, Texas**

racial groups, and a series of questions on language skills and ability to understand signs and verbal instructions at Corps projects. The second section of the questionnaire focused on recreation participation at Corps Projects. Questions sought to elicit information on frequency of visits, hindrances to visiting the Corps facility, such as transportation problems, preferences for water-based recreation at Corps lakes, desired facilities that are not currently available, safety while visiting the project, preferences for interpretive displays about natural and cultural resources, level of comfort with other ethnic/racial groups recreating at the project, experiences with discriminatory behavior at Corps projects, and general questions dealing with the Corps' overall efforts to provide a quality recreation experience to its minority visitors and how the Corps could improve its facilities and services to increase family enjoyment in the future.

### **Outdoor Recreation Style**

When asked in general for their favorite forms of recreation, the participants responded with the following: baseball, volleyball, fishing, swimming, camping, hiking, camp cooking, boating, hunting, and driving. Discussion on these responses indicated that picnicking and camping that involved food preparation outdoors was the favorite of the two married couples of the group. All the participants believed that most Americans would enjoy these kinds of activities and listed no other recreational activities that could be described as distinctively Hispanic or ethnic, e.g., jai alai, attending a bullfight, etc. When asked whether they preferred to take their families along when they went out to recreate, all members of the group responded affirmatively.

The participants were asked about the average size of the group that usually came with them when they visited at a Corps project. Their responses ranged from a low of four to as many as fifteen. Two individuals indicated that usually 8 to 15 family members came on overnight camping trips. Later discussion on the subject of average group size indicated that

when the entire extended family came to recreate on major holidays, group size would increase by a factor of 3 or 4. When asked whether they preferred primitive camping areas or campgrounds with developed facilities, all four adults preferred developed facilities most of the time. The men indicated that primitive camping had a place, particularly when hunting or fishing. The teenager responded that he had no preference since he usually came for day-use only. All the participants felt that the Corps should attempt to preserve wild/undeveloped areas around its lakes primarily for aesthetic reasons but also for the education of the younger generation. When asked what forms of outdoor recreation they might wish to try in the future the participants responded with the following: riding a jet ski, rafting, camping in the mountains, water skiing, deep-sea fishing, boating, skydiving, and baseball. Discussion on this point indicated that the major reason for their previous nonparticipation was not economics, but the fact that few members of their family engaged in these activities.

The participants were asked a series of questions dealing with the level of interaction they had with members of other ethnic or racial groups. All five participants indicated that they had friends or associates with different racial or ethnic backgrounds. All five indicated that they had worked or currently worked with members of other ethnic groups. Discussion indicated that in addition to many Anglo friends, one woman had a close friend who was Native American. The others indicated that they had Anglo friends or work associates. When asked if they enjoyed recreating with people from different racial or ethnic backgrounds, all five participants responded affirmatively. Discussion on this point indicated that for these middle-class Hispanic Americans, it was not a question of race or ethnic background but of attitude on the part of the other person that made the critical difference.

The participants were then asked a series of questions relating to language ability and whether they had any difficulty in understanding signs or verbal directions when they visited a Corps project. All the participants indicated that they spoke both English and Spanish and considered themselves bilingual. In spite of this, one respondent indicated that she had difficulty sometimes understanding the verbal instructions of Corps rangers when she visited a Corps lake. Another respondent indicated that while she was bilingual, her children were not. Presumably they spoke only Spanish because of their young age. All the participants felt it would be worthwhile to keep the questions about language ability as part of any survey instrument which would be administered to Hispanic visitors, since many did have difficulty with English signs and in some cases with spoken English. Discussion on this point revealed that there is considerable diversity in Hispanics' ability to use and comprehend English because of the continuing immigration from Mexico and other Latin American countries. New immigrants or those without children in the public schools will typically have greater difficulty understanding both written and spoken English.

### **Recreation Participation at Corps Projects**

When asked how often they go to Corps projects, the participants' responses ranged from once a year to fifteen or more times a year. One married couple indicated that they usually went twice a month during the summer and once a month during the winter. Another respondent indicated about three times a year usually during the summer months. Most of the focus group members expressed a desire to go more frequently. The average travel time to Canyon Lake for all the participants was about 1 hr. All of the group members but one

indicated they had no real transportation problem other than very heavy traffic to Canyon Lake, which can greatly increase travel time at certain times of the year, such as Easter.

Specific recreational activities that the focus group members enjoyed at Canyon Lake included fishing, volleyball, swimming, boating, and camping. When participants were asked what activities could be added at Corps of Engineers lakes, they responded with the following list: trail riding on horseback, more walking trails, kids' shallow water lagoon, playgrounds with large sandboxes, and a small swimming pool for young children. Discussion on this point indicated considerable interest on the part of the adults in horses and trail riding. The teenager felt that having places where young Hispanic people could show off their cars would be a lot more interesting.

Facilities that do not exist now that the group members felt were especially desirable included better cooking facilities in the campgrounds and day-use areas, larger group shelters for family reunions, telephones for emergency use in the campgrounds, fishing piers, dancing platforms or gazebos, and showers at camping sites. With the exception of the teen-aged boy, the group also expressed interest in visiting interpretive displays about natural and cultural resources at Corps lakes. The adults expressed only a moderate interest in developing more nature trails at Corps lakes.

The group members were then asked a series of questions about their perceptions of discriminatory behavior by Corps personnel and other visitors, their level of comfort with visitors from other racial and ethnic groups, and whether they felt safe at the Corps lake they visited. When asked if they felt welcome at Corps projects like Canyon Lake by the rangers and staff, four members responded affirmatively and one with a cautious "sometimes." When asked if they have ever felt discriminated against at a Corps of Engineers' project because of their ethnic background, all responded negatively. Group discussion on this point indicated that the focus group members had no trouble with the way they had been treated by Corps personnel, but only with other visitors. When asked if they felt comfortable with people from other racial or ethnic groups who were also recreating at the Corps lake, the four adults said yes and the teenager said no. Discussion with the group members on their responses indicated that there was always a concern that young intoxicated Anglos might start trouble. While this was a generally rare event for the adults, it was less so for the teenager. When asked if they felt safe, one respondent wrote "not really—there are no emergency phones and too few officials (rangers)." Another participant indicated there was a need for more officials (rangers) to enforce safety rules.

When asked the question "Do you think the Corps is doing all it can in providing a quality recreation experience for minorities?" the group was divided in its opinion. One respondent indicated that the Corps should have signs in English and Spanish to assist the many Hispanic visitors who did not know or were just learning English. Another respondent indicated that more money should be spent on upgrading the public use areas. The remaining members were generally satisfied. When asked the question "How could the Corps improve its recreational facilities for your family's enjoyment in the future?" the group provided the following responses:

- Construct more and better restroom facilities (not vault toilets) and install more water fountains.

- Provide more picnic tables and trash cans to accommodate the heavy visitation by large Hispanic families.
- Repair boat ramps and provide better access to these ramps; fix potholes on roads and ramps.
- Provide emergency telephones in campgrounds and day-use areas.
- Hire more rangers to increase the safety of visitors.
- Improve lighting around the campgrounds.
- Post signs in English and Spanish for the benefit of the more recent immigrants and to those visitors coming from Mexico.

Later discussion revealed that the focus group participants were well aware that Canyon Lake was in need of a facilities upgrade, since many of the public-use areas had not been improved in 30 years or more, but there was uncertainty about how this could be accomplished. They seemed surprised when informed that contacting their local Congressman was one approach routinely taken by disgruntled Anglo visitors. The group as a whole felt that the Corps should make every effort to take into account the real needs of its minority visitors in designing facilities in the future and that surveys and focus groups were an excellent way to begin this process. At the conclusion of the meeting, a group picture was taken with ranger Dave Quebedeaux and each person was individually thanked (see Figure 1).

**MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CORPS:** Executive Order 12862 issued on September 11, 1993 requires Federal Agencies to (a) identify the customers who are, or should be, served by the agency, and (b) survey customers to determine the kind and quality of services they want and their level of satisfaction with existing services. The purpose of developing information on customer satisfaction is to set standards that will allow Federal agencies to “provide service to the public that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector.” Executive Order 12898 issued on February 11, 1994 directs Federal agencies to “identify differential patterns of consumption of natural resources among minority populations and low-income populations” and ensure that programs, policies, or activities that substantially affect human health or the environment (including presumably outdoor recreation operations) do not exclude persons from receiving the benefits of such programs as a result of race, color, or national origin. Furthermore, each Federal agency is ordered to, whenever practicable, collect, maintain, and analyze information on the race and national origin of residents of areas surrounding Federal facilities or sites that have substantial environmental, human-health, or economic effects on nearby populations (Gramann 1996:14).

With the creation and continued funding of the work unit on Ethnic Culture and Corps Recreation Participation, the Corps of Engineers has set in motion an effort to comply with the requirements of these Executive Orders. Full compliance will involve some changes in the way the Corps currently interacts with its ethnic minority customers. Recommended changes to make Corps operational projects more user-friendly to Hispanic Americans can be grouped into three general areas consisting of facilities, management, and policy. The following preliminary recommendations include those proposed by Hispanic Americans and project personnel at two Corps lakes who interact with Hispanic American visitors on a daily basis.

## Facilities

Project managers are strongly encouraged to upgrade their facilities to match the needs of their specific Hispanic American customers. Since Hispanic Americans display great diversity in their national origin and their recreational preferences, treating them as a culturally homogenous block would be a serious mistake. Communication with the Hispanic American customer base is the answer. User survey instruments, such as the one under development at WES, as well as public meetings and focus groups, are highly recommended methods to determine the kinds of improvements desired by minority customers. Facility improvements recommended by the Hispanic American discussants at Canyon Lake and by the rangers at the two lakes visited included the following:

- Construct more and better restroom facilities (not vault toilets) and install more water fountains in public use areas with heavy visitation.
- Provide more picnic tables and trash cans to accommodate the heavy visitation by large Hispanic families; use more trash cans and fewer dumpsters in campgrounds.
- Construct more large group shelters for extended family picnics and reunions.
- Construct open-air pavilions and gazebos where social and community events could be held.
- Provide emergency telephones in campgrounds and day-use areas.
- Improve lighting around the campgrounds.
- Post signs in English and Spanish for the benefit of the more recent immigrants and to those visitors coming from Mexico.
- Design public-use areas in the future to accommodate both Anglo and Hispanic recreation needs (e.g. Comal Park at Canyon Lake).

## Services

Improvements in Corps services seen as highly desirable by the Hispanic Americans interviewed include the following:

- Hire more minority-friendly rangers to increase the safety of minority visitors; provide first-aid and emergency services (EMS) training to rangers so they can deal with injuries to visitors as quickly as possible (Note: many Hispanic migrant workers fear authority figures in certain areas of the United States).
- Provide rangers with training in basic Spanish language skills to ensure their effective communication with Hispanic visitors.
- Increase ranger and sheriff patrols in areas with heavy gang activity.
- Repair facilities defaced by gang activity (e.g. spray-painted gang graffiti) to prevent future problems.
- Emphasize visitor safety in all areas (e.g., boating, swimming, and recreation on land); provide water safety instruction in Spanish when there is a clear need to do so.

## Policy

The following recommendations based on the focus group findings may be appropriate for consideration by Corps policy makers:

- Adopt a proactive stance toward cost-sharing with Hispanic American communities in the construction of new facilities at Corps projects with high Hispanic American visitation.
- Make more aggressive attempts to hire Hispanic American rangers at projects with high Hispanic American visitation.
- Hire rangers and gate attendant contractors with good people skills; provide specific language training to match the minority visitor customer base.
- Increase coordination and involvement with the Hispanic American communities located near Corps projects; expand this coordination and involvement to visitor source areas, such as San Antonio and Fresno, where large numbers of Hispanic American visitors reside.
- Increase flexibility in allowing Hispanic American community and cultural events to take place at the Corps project.
- Place greater emphasis on effective law enforcement at projects with gang activity.

**FUTURE RESEARCH:** In 1996 Gramman (1996:60) made the following recommendations to WES, and the entire Corps of Engineers, for the plan of study for the Ethnic Culture work unit:

*Recommended development of a process or methodology to obtain information on the recreation preference, styles, and values of ethnic group....The methodology would likely be made up of a core of questions with optional questions to be used as appropriate for each project.*

*Recommended development of information describing what is known about the recreation styles, expectation, and values of different ethnic groups, for use in educating project personnel about the groups that use a project.*

This technical note and those that have preceded it have attempted to address Gramman's second recommendation. The development of a process or methodology that can be used by project managers to obtain information on minority recreation for future use is the goal of the last year of research for this work unit. To accomplish this, the draft survey instrument will be field-tested at the five Corps projects that were first visited in 1998.

What about the Corps' current relationship with its Hispanic customers? Based on this very preliminary study of Hispanic American recreation, it is essential to gather more data on the full range of their recreation style and participation. To accomplish this, the draft version of the survey instrument used as a focus of discussion at Canyon Lake will be revised and tested through its administration to a large number of Hispanic American visitors at both Canyon and Pine Flat Lakes during the spring and early summer of 1999. A technical report encompassing the results of this survey and similar research results on the other minority groups being studied is scheduled for completion by the fall of 1999. A final version of the ethnic minority user survey will also be delivered as a final product of the work unit.

Future academic research among Hispanic Americans is expected to increase as this ethnic group continues to grow at an astounding rate. Much of this work will be funded by Federal land-managing agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service, which maintains an ongoing research program on minority recreation. Past academic research on acculturation and recreation suggests that cultural assimilation may play a critical role in shaping Hispanic Americans' outdoor recreation behaviors and styles:

*From an operations standpoint research on acculturation and its relationship to outdoor recreation style and behavior is important. It may be that some sources of difficulty in the relationships between recreation resource managers and some immigrant groups may be less of an issue in subsequent years as the cultural assimilation of these groups progresses (Gramann 1996:53).*

This may indeed be true of Hispanic American families who have resided in this country for several generations. Yet this is not the whole story. The continuing wave of immigration to the United States of Hispanics from Puerto Rico and other Caribbean islands, Mexico, and other countries of Central and South America ensures that the cultural assimilation of these Spanish-speaking peoples will progress very slowly indeed. For the present, understanding the acculturation process through further research and dealing with the reality of diverse Hispanic groups, speaking a different language, and keeping a distinctively different recreational style, will present a challenge to the Corps of Engineers and other land-managing agencies far into the future. However, we truly believe the Corps is up to the challenge. ESSAYONS!

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