

Reclamation Manual

Policy

Subject:	Visitor Centers
Purpose:	Establishes Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) policy for planning, developing, interpreting, managing, and operating visitor centers at Reclamation projects. The benefit of this Policy is to ensure that visitor centers are planned and developed according to the geographic location and the anticipated visitation.
Authority:	The Reclamation Act (Act of June 17, 1902, ch. 1093, 32 Stat. 388); Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936, Public Law 74-732, as amended ; Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-578); Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965, as amended (Public Law 89-72); National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665); Architectural Barriers Act of 1968; Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-112); National and Community Service Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-610); Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-101-Volunteer Program); American's with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336); Sundry Civil Appropriations Act of 1992 (Public Law 66-389); Reclamation Projects Authorization Act of 1992 (Public Law 102-575); Educate America Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-227); Hoover Dam Miscellaneous Sales Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-461); Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-477); Department of the Interior Volunteer Recruitment Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-125); 43 Code of Federal Regulations 17, subparts B and E; Department of the Interior Manual, Part 471 (Audiovisual Media and Publications), Chapter 3 (Production and Use of Exhibits).
Approving Official:	Commissioner
Contact:	Asset Management Division (86-67200)

1. **Introduction.** Reclamation visitor centers offer a wide array of opportunities including interactive exhibits, guided tours, interpretive displays, educational videos, and scenic backdrops. While recreating at a Reclamation visitor center, visitors are exploring the expansive recreation opportunities; as well as the history, purpose, and construction of Reclamation's projects.
2. **Applicability.** This Policy applies to all Reclamation and partner managed visitor centers regardless of source of funding, size, location, regional significance, or anticipated visitation and includes exhibits, displays, signage, and supporting material (e.g., publications and videos).
3. **Policy.** Reclamation and its managing partners, including nonprofit organizations, will ensure visitor centers are planned, developed, interpreted, managed, and operated in an appropriate and cost-effective manner. As authorized by the authorities above, and based on

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the principles contained in this Policy, Reclamation may develop visitor centers with appropriate facilities, services, and programs for the purposes of:

- A. Informing the public about Reclamation and water projects;
 - B. Educating the public about water resources, water conservation, and water safety;
 - C. Describing other facilities and opportunities available within the project;
 - D. Providing information and interpretation on the recreational, natural, cultural, and historical resources in the project area and regionally;
 - E. Enhancing the quality of recreation and tourism opportunities for all visitors including those with physical, sensory, and cognitive impairments; and
 - F. Providing visitor safety and enjoyment.
4. **Visitor Center Principles.** The following principles must be considered prior to planning, developing, upgrading, managing, and operating visitor centers:
- A. The appropriateness, suitability, and type of visitor center will be assessed through a systematic and comprehensive interpretive planning process which defines the visitor center's messages, interpretive themes, interpretive tools and techniques, displays, programs, and services.
 - B. Visitor centers enhance the public's awareness and understanding of Reclamation's mission and stewardship responsibilities. A visitor center gives Reclamation an opportunity to protect, conserve, and enhance recreational, natural, historical, and cultural resources.
 - C. Visitor center design, construction, and maintenance will integrate the principles of universal and sustainable design and energy conservation.
 - D. Visitor centers will comply with the requirements and accessibility standards in the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968.
 - E. Reclamation will follow current professional interpretive practices, federal accessibility regulations, and Reclamation's Visual Identity Program Online Manual in the design, fabrication, installation, and maintenance of interpretive displays, programs, and services.
 - F. Visitor center staff will work with regional security officers to incorporate security in the design and operation of the visitor center, both inside and on the surrounding grounds, ensuring employees, the visiting public, and any sensitive Reclamation information or property are secure.

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- G. Where feasible, visitor centers will coordinate or integrate with other federal, state, or local agencies in the same geographic area.
- H. Reclamation will integrate authorized income-generating programs and services to sustain and enhance the visitor center's programs, educational and interpretive activities, and operations.
- I. Reclamation and its partners will strive to implement donation activities and a volunteer program to develop and maintain the visitor center's programs and services.
- J. Implement an evaluation process to measure the effectiveness of the visitor center and its displays, programs, and services.

5. **Visitor Center Planning and Administration.**

- A. Reclamation and its managing partners will assess the current and potential recreation opportunities in the region using a formal planning process. The level of planning will correspond to the potential size, location, regional significance, anticipated visitation, or a combination of these factors. This assessment must determine the availability, and possible collaboration, of existing visitor centers, fee systems, and related facilities and programs managed by state and federal agencies, local communities, and the private sector.
- B. Reclamation's level of approval authority and oversight for the planning and administration of visitor centers with federal and non-federal partners will be addressed in a management agreement. The partnership arrangement will be defined in writing and, at a minimum, include:
 - (1) performance specifications for the roles, responsibilities, and activities of all entities;
 - (2) the requirements for an annual program review, independent financial audits, and annual financial reports; and
 - (3) the means and timetable to modify or conclude the partnership arrangement.

6. **Supporting Laws, Regulations, Rules, Policies, and Directives and Standards(D&S).**

- A. Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, Public Law 90-480, 82 Stat. 718, 42 U.S.C. 4151-4157;
- B. Department of the Interior Departmental Manual 411 Museum Property Handbook;
- C. Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936, Public Law 74-732, as amended;
- D. Reclamation 's Visual Identity Program Online Manual;

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E. Reclamation Manual D&S; and

- (1) ADM 02-01 Publication Printing, Publication Distribution and Reprographics Management,
- (2) ADM 02-05 Application of Visual Identity in Corporate Materials,
- (3) ADM 03-01 News Releases and Media Relations,
- (4) ADM 05-01 Audiovisual, Multimedia, Still Photography, and Related Equipment,
- (5) ADM 05-02 Exhibit/Displays and Poster Session Displays,
- (6) ADM 05-03 Incorporation of Visual Identity (VI) into Outdoor Public Use Area Signage,
- (7) ADM 05-04 Incorporation of Visual Identity into Building Signage,
- (8) CMP 03-01 Bureau of Reclamation Web Management,
- (9) LND 01-01 Implementing Cost Sharing Authorities for Recreation and Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Facilities,
- (10) LND 02-01 Cultural Resources Management,
- (11) LND 04-01 Concession Management by the Bureau of Reclamation,
- (12) LND 04-02 Concession Management by Non-Federal Partners,
- (13) LND 13-01 Visitor Centers,
- (14) SAF 01-01 Occupational Safety and Health Directive – General,

F. Reclamation Manual Policy;

- (1) ADM P05 Visual Identity,
- (2) LND P01 Cultural Resources Management,
- (3) LND P02 Concession Management,
- (4) LND P04 Recreation Program Management,
- (5) SAF P01 Safety and Occupational Health Program.

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7. **Supporting Guidelines.** This Policy is supported by the following:
 - A. Accessibility Program Guidance Manual,
 - B. Concession Management Guidelines,
 - C. Recreation Facility Design Guidelines,
 - D. Sign Guidelines, and
 - E. Visitor Center Guidelines.
8. **Definitions.**
 - A. **Visitor Center.** A visitor center is a public educational facility, or dedicated space within a building, for interpretive displays, programs, services, and information. Visitor centers generally have support facilities and conveniences for the traveling public.
 - B. **Interpretation.** Interpretation is a combination of educational activities designed to reveal meanings and relationships using presentations, original objects, firsthand experience, graphic illustrations, activities, or media designed to help people understand, appreciate, and care for the natural and cultural environment.
9. **Review Period.** The originating office will review this release every 4 years.

RECLAMATION MANUAL TRANSMITTAL SHEET

Effective Date: _____

Release No. _____

Ensure all employees needing this information are provided a copy of this release.

Reclamation Manual Release Number and Subject

Summary of Changes

NOTE: This Reclamation Manual release applies to all Reclamation employees. When an exclusive bargaining unit exists, changes to this release may be subject to the provisions of collective bargaining agreements.

Filing instructions

Remove Sheets

Insert Sheets

All Reclamation Manual releases are available at <http://www.usbr.gov/recman/>

Filed by: _____

Date: _____