DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

CECW-OD

08 JUN 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Lock, Dam and Waterway Signs Guidance

1. This is to clarify aspects of the Corps sign standards program as it pertains to lock, dam and waterway signs, Chapter 14 of EP 310-1-6a.

2. Questions have been raised in some districts regarding the applicability of the current program and the status of sign placement deadlines. All requirements of the sign standards program are (and will continue to be) in full force. The sign standards program remains an important part of the Corps effort to increase the safety of visitors and employees at all of our projects. In addition, compliance with the program standards should assist in minimizing the liability of the Corps if mishaps do occur.

3. The sign standards program includes the requirement that <u>every</u> project have a sign plan in place. The program also specifies the following deadlines for the installation of lock, dam, and waterway signs:

1 January 2001 - Safety-critical signs;

1 January 2003 - Safety-critical signs where a site-specific deferral has been granted by the National Sign Program Manager; and,

1 January 2006 - All other standard lock, dam and waterway signs.

4. There is concern among some districts (those containing large [wide] rivers) that adherence to the Sign Standards Manual will require lock, dam and waterway signs that are very large. In addition to the question of expense, these large signs also raise legitimate issues about engineering feasibility and land acquisition for placement. Remember that the manual provides guidance on sign placement and that the diagrams show ideal sign placement in standardized situations. The sign program allows for flexibility in sign placement at actual project sites, provided that the choices made are based on sound and reasonable professional judgment and that there is written justification in the sign plan.

5. The sign program is intended to complement, rather than replace, the use of U.S. Coast Guard Aids to Navigation (AToN) safety marking devices such as buoys and daymarks (in accordance with the Uniform State Waterway Marking System). For example, using a prominent line of appropriately marked buoys to block a restricted area may lessen or eliminate the need for large signs warning boaters to keep out. (HQUSACE recently received USCG approval to use its marking system within Corps project limits. Guidance will soon be sent to the field illustrating how buoys and daymarks can be used in safety-critical locations to significantly reduce the cost and other problems pertaining to signage.) **It is critical to the safety of the boating public, if the District decides to go with buoying and daymarking of a <u>submerged/fixed dam with lock</u>, that the District also develop an aggressive educational program, as the danger associated with this type of structure is not readily apparent. A district committed to this type of signage must also be committed to expending the required resources to provide the necessary public education.**

6. As districts work to bring their waterway signs into compliance, there may be concerns about the best way to prioritize sign installation for the most effective use of available funds, including "end-of-year" funds. A study of Corps accident statistics shows that most mishaps have occurred <u>downstream</u> from gated structures. These sites should, therefore, receive first priority for safety sign installation. The next most frequent location for mishaps is upstream from ungated, fixed-crest structures. The fewest number of mishaps have occurred upstream from gated structures.

7. In order for waterway sign funding to be provided, districts must prepare and include signage packages in their annual budget submittals for Major Subordinate Command and HQUSACE review and approval. Without budget package submittal, there can be no sign funding even if Congress provides supplemental funding.

8. If you have questions regarding lock, dam and waterway signs, please call Henrik Strandskov, National Sign Program Manager, at (651) 290-5578 or Michael Kidby at (202) 761-8835.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

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