

Tulsa District lake projects today include nearly 30,000 acres of developed parklands with 12,800 campsites, 720 picnic areas, 425 boat ramps, and more than 100 recreation trails that stretch nearly 200 miles in total length. The lakes' shorelines stretch nearly 5,000 miles — roughly equal to a round trip between Los Angeles and New York.

Pick a project, any project, and you will find that the reach of recreation opportunities exceeds the grasp of even the most frequent visitor.

For example, Elk City Lake, one of the smaller projects, was completed in 1966 on the upper Verdigris in southeastern Kansas near Independence. The reservoir was built primarily for flood control but also for water supply, recreation, and wildlife purposes. Tableland rock bluffs on the north give way to rolling meadows and clusters of ash, birch, elm, hickory, oak, walnut, sycamore, dogwood, hawthorn, redbud, holly, sumac . . .

What can you do at Elk City? Swim, boat, water ski, camp, picnic. Hike in the fall woods. Fish for crappie, channel catfish, white bass, largemouth bass, sunfish.

Would you rather hunt somewhere on the 12,000-plus acres of game preserve? Look for bobwhite quail, cottontail rabbit, mourning dove, greater prairie chicken, fox squirrel, deer . . .

You can have your choice of four parks for picnicking and camping, with swimming beaches, boat ramps, water wells, bathhouses, fireplaces, and shelters.⁶

What is the value of a day on the water, an afternoon in the woods? The answer, multiplied by the 1.2 billion visitor-days logged at Tulsa District projects over the past 50 years, lays bare the significant value of the Corps' recreation program.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT. Other project purposes protect various critical resources that help sustain the web of life. For example, storage in a lake may include reserve water that can be used to regulate stream flows and maintain high water quality. Land may be set aside for carefully managed wildlife preserves; the District places a high priority on improving fish habitat at Corps projects.

300,000 MALLARDS

"A small flock of a dozen or so mallards swung over the decoys . . .

"As they side-slipped down, their long necks craned forward and their orange, webbed landing gear came down. Just three hens in the bunch, they settled in among the bobbing decoys nearly 15 yards from our camouflaged boat pulled up into the tall cattails.

"Beautiful," I whispered to Conrad, but neither of us reached for our shotguns . . . [W]e didn't want the day's shooting to end before sunrise. With 300,000 mallards cranking around the Sequoyah National Wildfowl Refuge, we wanted to squeeze in every drop of enjoyment possible by sampling the variety of duck hunting here.

"It would be no trouble to fill our limits, it was just a matter of when . . ." ⁷

A prototype of the Corps' wildlife management areas, Sequoyah Refuge is located southwest of Sallisaw in eastern Oklahoma. The Corps bought the 20,800 acres to help mitigate the loss of wildlife habitat when the Arkansas River waterway was built.

The Tulsa District has some three dozen projects in which 600,000 acres of fish and wildlife management areas are maintained — a treasure-trove for sportsmen and outdoor lovers. The primary goal of this program is to provide enjoyment and recreation opportunities while improving habitat for fish and wildlife, thus protecting the species diversity necessary to preserve life on this earth.

