



LAKE LANIER ASSOCIATION, INC.

Lake Sidney Lanier

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THE LAKE LANIER ASSOCIATION'S CONCERNS REGARDING THE LEASING OF FEDERAL LANDS

In the Lake Lanier Association's research on the parameters guiding the leasing of Federal lands the following was revealed:

When the United States Congress authorized Lake Lanier, it appropriated funds for the purchase of properties by the United States Government from individuals and families to create the lake and its environs. Some of these lands were allocated for use as recreation areas to be operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which has the statutory authority to lease these lands for development by other governmental agencies or non-profit organizations. According to Lake Lanier project management, the statute further provides that in the event of competing interest for a recreation area between governmental agencies and other non-government organizations, the leasing preference would be given to Federal, State, or local governmental agencies.

The Lake Lanier Association believes that a park should be first offered in writing to a government entity, and if that body does not act on the offer, that offer should be made again in writing on at least a bi-annual basis since most local officials are elected in two-year intervals. Furthermore, the offer should be revisited again immediately prior to an actual lease to any non-government entity. The members of the duly elected body in service may have a different viewpoint than that of the previous elected group. Additionally, if funding is a consideration, the availability of funds may also change bi-annually. The offer of a park to a non-government entity should only occur after the Corps has followed the above steps.

If extensive development is planned for a park, that park may never be returned to its original environmental uniqueness. The topography may be permanently altered. Any structural development may alter the use of the federal lands making it unacceptable to any governing body that may consider a lease of the land in the future. Since the net effect of long term leases with non-government entities can be the removal of the park lands from the realm of public use for decades and the significant reduction of public-access green space, greater care must be exercised prior to execution.

It may be prudent for the Corps to consider a surety bond in a sufficient amount as a deposit from a potential lessee to cover the expense of restoring public lands when those lands are vacated by the lessee. Since these leases may be granted at below-market rates for extensive periods of time, it is also prudent for the ACOE (Army Corps of Engineers) to control and restrict the rights of a non-government lessee to sub-lease or otherwise assign/convey its interests in the lease to other non-government or private entities during the lease term.

As the issue of leasing the federal parklands progresses, the LLA would respectfully request that the Corps consider the consequences and future of the development on Lake Sidney Lanier. The Lake Lanier Association believes the Corps should consider plans for development of any parks on Lake Lanier to be leased to either governmental agencies or non-government organizations with a view to minimize the impact on a park's natural environment.

*"Dedicated to the Preservation of Lake Sidney Lanier"
Since 1960*