



Foundation Document Overview

Lake Meredith National Recreation Area

Texas



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of Lake Meredith National Recreation Area is to provide public access to diverse land- and water-based recreational opportunities in the Canadian River breaks of the Texas panhandle, consistent with the protection of the area's scenic, scientific, and cultural resources and with other values that contribute to public enjoyment.



Significance

Significance statements express why Lake Meredith National Recreation Area resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Lake Meredith National Recreation Area is the largest area of public lands in the Texas panhandle, providing opportunities for access to diverse, affordable, outdoor, land- and water-based recreation activities.
- Lake Meredith and the Canadian River basin within the national recreation area feature aquatic, wetland, and riparian habitats, as well as one of the few areas in the region with trees. These habitats and the surrounding landscape support diverse plant and animal species, including migratory waterfowl.
- The natural and geologic resources of the national recreation area have enabled human survival, subsistence, and adaptation resulting in a continuum of human presence in the Texas panhandle for more than 13,000 years. Cultural sites in Lake Meredith National Recreation Area and the adjacent Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument offer pathways to past cultures.
- The exposed geologic features of the Canadian River breaks in the national recreation area reveal active geologic processes that are easily visible to an extent not present elsewhere in the region. The topography and geography of the Canadian River breaks create a divergence from the surrounding landscape that offers scenic values and opportunities not found elsewhere in the region.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. Below are the fundamental resources and values of Lake Meredith National Recreation Area including the ones shared with Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument.

- **Public Land.** Lake Meredith National Recreation Area is the largest area of public land in the region. In a state where there is very little public land, citizens can engage in activities such as camping, hiking, biking on trails, nature study, horseback riding, cultural resource interpretation, and hunting.
- **Recreation Opportunities.** Opportunities at the national recreation area provide diverse, affordable experiences for visitors of different interests and abilities.
- **Exposed Geological Features of the Canadian River Breaks.** The active geologic processes provide value in the topographic and scenic variety they create.
- **Diverse Habitats and Ecological Transition Zones.** The parks have an unusually high diversity of flora and fauna for the region. The parks can be divided into 12 communities that have supported indigenous peoples for 13,000 years.
- **Wide Range of Sites and Artifacts.** The sites and artifacts in both parks document cultural use of the area from Paleoindian hunters and gatherers approximately 13,000 years ago to early ranching operations.
- **Opportunity for Scientific Research.** The unique natural and cultural resources present at both parks provide an opportunity for research.



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Sanford Dam was built by a consortium of 11 Texas panhandle cities to provide a water source for the long-term sustainability of urban life on the Texas high plains and it provides a variety of recreational activities.
- The Canadian River and its tributaries, which are the water sources for Lake Meredith, have long provided a critical resource to sustain human existence and success in the Texas panhandle.
- Lake Meredith National Recreation Area provides rare public access to landscapes that have been the stage for dramatic events in the history of the American southwest.
- The variety of habitats found at Lake Meredith National Recreation Area weaves a rich tapestry of biodiversity, affording opportunities for discovery and understanding.
- The exposed geologic features of the Canadian River breaks tell the story of ongoing geologic processes that continue to shape life in the panhandle.
- The confluence of the oasis environment of the Canadian River breaks with the semiarid grasslands of the high plains has attracted people and wildlife for thousands of years and exemplifies how landscapes shape and influence human societies.



Description

Lake Meredith National Recreation Area is just east of U.S. Highway 287 approximately 40 miles north of Amarillo, Texas. It consists of 44,978 acres of federally owned land. The Canadian River carved a narrow, steep-walled canyon from 200 to 300 feet deep and up to 2 miles wide. The resulting exposed geologic features, known as the Canadian River breaks, are a dominant landscape feature in the national recreation area. Construction of Sanford Dam, which began in 1962 on the Canadian River between the canyon walls, created Lake Meredith, which began to fill in 1965.

The Canadian River Municipal Water Authority operates and maintains the dam and water supply infrastructure in addition to managing lake levels. Because Lake Meredith is primarily a water supply reservoir, its water levels fluctuate according

to municipal and industrial water demands, rainfall in the watershed, and releases from upstream reservoirs. Recreation is one of the other intended uses listed in its establishing legislation.

Popular recreation activities include boating, fishing, camping, hunting, off-road vehicle driving, hiking, swimming, and sightseeing. Peak visitor use occurs from May through August.

Nonfederal oil and gas production occurs within the national recreation area. Currently, there are 168 active well sites and associated infrastructure.

Natural resources of special interest include wetland and riparian areas associated with the floodplains of the Canadian River and its tributaries. In addition, the Arkansas River

shiner, a small fish that is federally listed as threatened, is present in the Canadian River near Rosita. Several other species of federal or state concern also are known or are likely to be present in the national recreation area.

A cultural resource of special interest is the McBride Ranch House, which was built in the early 1900s. This house represents the early ranching era in the panhandle and is believed to be the oldest standing home in Potter County, Texas. The house is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the NPS List of Classified Structures and it is a Texas historic site.

