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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers launches life jacket loaner program

CLEWISTON, Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the W.P. Franklin Recreation Area will soon begin a life jacket loaner program for recreational boaters who use the recreation area's boat ramp.

Beginning Thursday, March 30, boaters who don't have life jackets on their vessels may borrow them from the gate attendant. Participants are required to fill out a Life Jacket Loaner Program form and to return the jackets when they are done boating.

Safe boating isn't just the responsibility of the person behind the wheel; it applies to everyone on board. Most boaters do not plan on falling overboard, and when they do, it is often too late for action. Putting on a life jacket when you need it is like trying to put on a seat belt just before a crash.

According to 2003 U.S. Coast Guard statistics, there were 703 boating fatalities in U.S. waters; 576 of which were not wearing life jackets. In the same year, 481 people drowned; 416 (almost 86 percent) were not wearing life jackets. Many had basic swimming skills, yet that was not enough to save their lives.

Boat safe! Boat smart! Wear a life jacket!

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