

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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DOLE RELEASES WILSON LAKE FINDINGS:
PARK SERVICE PRAISES LAKE'S POTENTIAL & RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES,
DENIES FEASIBILITY FOR NATIONAL RECREATION AREA STATUS

WASHINGTON -- According to a federal feasibility study requested by Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole (R-Kansas), the National Park Service has determined that Wilson Lake in Central Kansas does not qualify for National Recreation Area status.

The National Park Service's draft report states that "an aggressive land acquisition program", along with \$3-4 million in new facilities would be among the steps necessary to help boost Wilson Lake into NRA status, factors Senator Dole rejects as too high a price to pay. The official report will be released next week.

"I've said from the start that I have absolutely no intention of seeking additional federal land for Wilson Lake," Dole said after reviewing an advance copy of the report. "If that's the price for making it a National Recreation Area, we'll say 'no thanks'. That's why I requested an official feasibility study, to have the real experts review the lake before committing to controversial land expansion and taxpayer dollars. Meanwhile, we'll keep in close touch with the Park Service with respect to Wilson Lake and all our state's great natural resources -- and we'll continue to keep our options open."

Although the report states that Wilson Lake's resources are not of national significance, Senator Dole noted that the official study called the lake "a significant regional recreational resource" with "potential for further enhancement," and praised many of Wilson Lake's features, including its wide range of recreational offerings, fishing, watersports, accessibility, and wildlife habitat.

"Based on this study, Kansas can be very proud of Wilson Lake and all it offers," Dole said. "In fact, the report is a ringing endorsement for our state's entire recreation system -- one reason Wilson Lake doesn't qualify for national status is because Kansans have more water recreation resources at their disposal than people in some other states, particularly Texas and Oklahoma, according to the study. I'm also pleased that the Park Service agrees with me that the lake's attractions have even greater potential, and I'll continue working to help make a visit to Wilson Lake the best outdoor experience we can."

Two weeks ago, Dole won first-round Senate approval for \$900,000 for the Army Corps of Engineers to rehabilitate and upgrade public facilities at the lake, including new electrical and water hookups, rest rooms, an amphitheater, boat ramps, docks, fish cleaning stations, a picnic site, a playground, a new swimming area, and public dressing rooms.

Highlights of the report include:

- ◆ "Wilson Lake, Kansas is of regional (multi-county) and statewide significance as a recreational resource. The site is already professionally managed and made available for public use by the Corps of Engineers and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. The site does not contain nationally significant natural or cultural resources which would support National Park System management. However, it has potential for further enhancement and marketing of existing recreational facilities by current management as well as facilities that may be developed in the future."
- ◆ "Access to Wilson Lake is excellent."
- ◆ "The lake is exceptionally clear. ... The water quality of Wilson Lake is high as evidenced by its excellent sport fishery of striped bass and smallmouth bass." "The lake is well stocked with fish."
- ◆ "Wilson Lake offers excellent water-based recreational opportunities. As part of a state-wide system of reservoirs that puts such opportunities within 100 miles of almost every Kansas citizen, Wilson Lake plays an important role."
- ◆ "Pleasure boating, water-skiing and swimming are also popular activities. The clarity of the water makes Wilson Lake well suited for scuba-diving"
- ◆ "Located in the heart of the central flyway, Wilson Lake provides a resting stop and wintering area for a variety of ducks and geese."
- ◆ "The historic resource sites at Wilson Lake include foundations, historic petroglyphs, walls, fenceposts and bridges."
- ◆ The study also demonstrated that Wilson Lake offers recreational opportunities similar to those available at parks that do enjoy National Recreation status. The study compared Wilson Lake to two "nearby" National Recreation Areas, Chickasaw National Recreation Area (Oklahoma), and Lake Meredith National Recreation Area (Texas).

"Recreational opportunities are quite similar at the three sites, though due to a lack of water-based recreation facilities in Oklahoma and Texas, the two NRAs draw a larger number of visitors than does Wilson Lake. In the case of Wilson Lake, there are many intervening recreation opportunities between the site and major metropolitan areas."

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