

A loader joins the army

While the Army Corps of Engineers makes every effort to allow maximum public use while protecting the environment, most of the 13 million visitors to Hartwell Lake don't think in terms of flood control and hydroelectric power. They come seeking relaxation in the outdoors.

The lake is the Army Corps of Engineers' second-most-popular recreation area in the United States, according to the Corps. Available activities include swimming, camping, waterskiing and boating in various combinations at over 80 public recreation areas, 56 of which are managed by the Corps.

Located along the Georgia and South Carolina border in the Piedmont region of the Appalachians, the lake's northern-most fingers stretch into the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

The Corps' four Bobcat loaders are ideal for the creation and maintenance of campsites and playgrounds and the paths running between them, the lake and other public facilities. The Bobcats maneuver well in small areas.

Railroad ties used extensively as steps and borders around walkways, campsites, picnic areas and playgrounds contribute to the area's natural appearance.

The ties also help to curb erosion. With a fork attachment, Bobcat loaders can maneuver the ties into place.

"They really save a lot on manpower," says assistant foreman Joe C. Higginbotham. "It would take several men all day to do what the Bobcat does in a few hours."

When hill-climbing is necessary, Bobcat loaders, unlike larger equipment, are very handy. Backing into a bank, Higginbotham demonstrates how by planting the bucket into the ground and pushing the Bobcat loader backwards up the mound of dirt a few feet. Then he repeats the process until he has maneuvered to where he wants to be.

"Here's one of the best you'll find," says foreman Dale Byrum. Smaller and more agile than larger bulldozers, Bobcat loaders can level awkwardly shaped camping pads quickly and easily. They also are useful when grading small parking lots.

"It took me just a few hours to do that," says Higginbotham, pointing to a small freshly graded parking lot near the entrance booth to Paynes Creek



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Campground. "And you can see how the edges slope down there. I smoothed them by dragging my bucket," he explains.

The loaders are useful on larger projects because they can do fine work around the edges, smoothing the surface and pulling rocks and debris from beneath the underbrush without damaging it. Unlike larger machines,

they can clear dirt from the mouth of a drainage pipe easily and without damage to the pipe or road.

Higginbotham and his crew are installing a vehicle pull-off area and telephone on the Paynes Creek Campground road. They'll use a loader to grade the pull-off. To preserve the forest's natural appearance, the telephone lines will be put underground, making it necessary to cut a narrow trench through the forest ground.

"When we get the line in, I'll take the Bobcat in there," said Higginbotham, pointing into the woods. "I can level it and clear the trees out without damaging the others."

The Corps also removes any dead or sick trees that may fall and cause damage or injury. Again, equipped with a fork attachment, a loader can remove the previously cut trees without harming surrounding growth.

In 1986, a small tornado whipped through Paynes Creek, twisting and breaking many trees. The loaders were useful in removing mangled trees from campgrounds and woods.

"Now I'm not bragging," says Higginbotham with a straight face, "but the Bobcats do have their place." **LM**



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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers uses a variety of machinery to accomplish its maintenance work at Hartwell Lake. The Corps does not endorse any particular product over another.