PART I
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Chapters 2 and 3 provided insights into two major groups who use the Chicago River corridor: nearby neighborhood residents and on-site recreational users. By studying how these groups perceived and used the river and how they would like to see it enhanced for recreation, we were able to understand the current and future ***demand*** for recreation opportunities. To provide realistic strategies for river planning, design, and management, however, we must also have an idea of the current and potential ***supply*** of opportunities. The information needed to complete the picture of demand and supply is presented in this chapter, which reports on a study of Chicago River resource experts.

The purpose of this study was to understand what types and range of recreation opportunities are available along the river and how these activities relate to physical and social characteristics of the resource. Specific study objectives were:

1. To identify key and representative groups and individuals who influence the recreational use of the corridor, and describe their impacts on current and future opportunities;
2. To obtain information about the current supply of recreation opportunities, as well as plans for future development of land and water resources for recreation and related values;
3. To summarize the perceptions of these key groups and individuals on current recreation use-related issues and the prospects for increasing and/or enhancing recreational use;
4. To suggest how study findings might be used to develop planning, design, and management strategies for the river corridor.

STUDY METHODS

IDENTIFICATION OF RESOURCE EXPERTS

We defined resource experts as those individuals who, because of their own interests and experience or as representatives of an agency, organization, or business, could provide key information relating to the study objectives. With the assistance of ChicagoRivers project staff from the Friends of the Chicago River and the National Park Service, we developed a preliminary list of resource experts to include in the study. Four major groups of resource experts were identified: public land managers, non-profit recreation and environmental interest groups, private commercial recreation providers, and commercial and industrial land and water interests.

From these broad categories, we began to select specific agencies, organizations, and businesses that were prominent in the corridor. Many of these choices were obvious; for example, major public land holders in the corridor include the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Lake County Forest Preserves, and the Chicago Park District. In other cases, where there were many agencies, groups, or companies to select from, we chose those that had key projects or issues of special importance or that otherwise represented the interests of the wider population. Finally, we identified individuals within each agency, group, and company with whom we could schedule a formal, face-to-face interview. If we did not already know the appropriate individuals to interview, we asked to interview those most closely involved in activities related to the Chicago River corridor, whether land or business management, property leasing or development, or regulation and enforcement.

We conducted 27 formal interviews with 44 people, representing 25 agencies, organizations, and companies. We also contacted several additional individuals and groups to fill in the gaps on topics that had not been sufficiently covered through the formal interview process. These informal interviews were usually targeted toward specific information needs about current facilities, programs, and activities. Groups formally and informally interviewed are listed in Table 4.3; the names and titles of specific contacts are listed in the Information Sources section at the end of this chapter.

INTERVIEW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Based on the study objectives, we developed an outline of questions to guide the formal interviews. This outline included three basic sets of questions aimed at profiling the groups interviewed and obtaining specific information about current use and perceptions. These questions were modified for each of the four group types we interviewed; some questions were emphasized or de-emphasized and others were added or deleted as appropriate. Copies of the outlines can be found in Appendix 4.1.

To characterize resource experts (Objective 1), all interviews began with a set of introductory questions to help profile the agency, organization, or company as well as to understand the position and role of the individual(s) being interviewed. For public land managers, this section solicited specific information on land holdings in the corridor and on activities, policies, and programs for managing that land for recreation and other uses. For commercial and industrial interests, this section focused on how companies used and managed the riverfront area where they were located. For commercial recreation and non-profit groups, this section included questions about their customers or members and the programs and services the groups provide.

The next major part of the interview focused on the supply of current and potential recreation opportunities (Objective 2). The interview included questions about existing sites and facilities and about plans for future development of land and

TABLE 4.3
Groups and individuals interviewed

Group	Interviews n interviews	Interviews n people
PUBLIC LAND MANAGERS	**16**	**20**
Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago	1	3
Forest Preserve District of Cook County	3	5
Lake County Forest Preserves	1	1
Chicago Park District	2	2
Village of Glenview	1	1
City of Evanston Parks and Recreation	1	1
Village of Palos Heights	1	1
Informal interviews	6	6
NON-PROFIT GROUPS	**8**	**8**
Friends of the Chicago River and Cook County Clean Streams Committee	1	1
North Branch Restoration Project	1	1
Chicago Audubon Society	1	1
Chicago River Aquatic Center	1	1
Chicago Riverwalk Corporation	1	1
Informal interviews	3	3
PRIVATE COMMERCIAL RECREATION PROVIDERS	**5**	**9**
Wendella Sightseeing Boats	1	1
Chicagoland Canoe Base, Inc.	1	3
Marina City Marina	1	1
Windjammer Enterprises (marina)	1	3
North Pier Chicago	1	1
COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL INTERESTS	**7**	**15**
CSX Real Property, Inc.	1	1
Tribune Properties, Inc.	1	2
Commonwealth Edison Co.	1	2
Chicago Union Station Co.	1	2
Illinois River Carriers Association[1]	1	6
Farley Candy Co.	1	1
Informal interviews	1	1
MISCELLANEOUS	**2**	**3**
Chicago Police Dept.—Marine Unit	1	2
Informal interviews	1	1
TOTAL	**38**	**55**

[1]This was a group interview with six principal participants.

water resources for recreation and related values. This discussion was quite detailed for some of the public land managers who oversaw many acres of river corridor. For commercial and industrial interests, the section was oriented toward public access to and use of their property; for those groups that did not allow access, this section of the interview was very brief.

The final portion of the interview focused on issues related to recreational use of the corridor (Objective 3). The interview here included questions about resource experts' and/or their constituents' perceptions of river recreation problems and opportunities and their prospects and recommendations for increasing and/or improving recreational use. Again, for those who were closely involved in providing recreation opportunities, this part of the interview was quite involved, but for others it was brief.

INTERVIEW PROCEDURES

Both principal investigators were present during the first 10 interviews, which covered each of the group types. Interview outlines were discussed after each interview and were improved for succeeding interviews. When we were comfortable with the outline and routine, we split up to be more efficient in our use of time.

The actual interviews ranged between 20 minutes and 2 hours in length. The shortest interviews were with individuals from companies that had little recreational interest in the corridor, and the longest were with public land managers that had major property holdings, recreational facilities, and programs. All 27 formal interviews were tape recorded, except in two cases where interviewees requested otherwise (and one where the recorder's batteries failed), and notes were taken to emphasize key points. Where no tape was available, we wrote summaries of the interviews immediately afterwards.

Informal interviews were conducted mostly by phone and ranged from short inquiries on specific topics to hour-long interviews. These were not tape recorded, but comprehensive notes were taken and summaries were written up immediately after the interviews.

SECONDARY DATA SOURCES

Although our interviews supplied the primary information needed to address study objectives, some data we required were more effectively obtained through secondary sources. Specifically, these data included statistics on land holdings, programs, facilities, and related information. This information was compiled from more than 100 maps, brochures, plans, reports, newsletters, newspaper articles, and scientific and popular papers. It was used in conjunction with the interview data to profile groups and to understand the current and potential supplies of recreation opportunities. A full listing of secondary data sources can be found at the end of this chapter.

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Our data collection efforts resulted in 320 pages of interview transcripts, over 100 pages of interview notes, and thousands

of pages of published documents. The following strategy was used to analyze and present our study findings:

To characterize resource experts (Objective 1), we developed profiles for each of the groups we interviewed formally. The most detailed of these were the major land management agencies, but each profile included a summary of the group's background, its land management activities (if any), and key current and proposed programs, policies, and plans aimed at recreation in the corridor. This information provides a context for examining questions about recreation perception and use, and forms Part II of this chapter.

To address the supply of recreation opportunities (Objective 2), we compiled information about current and potential recreation and open space opportunities on a reach-by-reach basis. For existing opportunities, we relied heavily on secondary data sources, particularly maps and land and facility inventories provided by the major public agencies in the corridor. The Map of Greenway Opportunities compiled by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and Openlands Project for their 1992 Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan was especially useful in this respect which indicated locations of existing public land, proposed greenways, existing and proposed trails, and designated Illinois Nature Preserves and Natural Area Inventory sites. For proposed opportunities, we relied on planning documents and information obtained through our interviews with resource experts. For each reach, we first described the landscape, land use, and channel characteristics present. Secondly, current and potential recreation and open space opportunities were identified and listed in tables that describe each site, the municipality in which it is located and its owner, and characteristics of the site such as acreage (when available), facilities, use or purpose, and public access. Sites listed in the tables were keyed to maps showing their location within the reach. Finally, principal land and water recreation opportunities were summarized for the reach. These opportunities were grouped into five main activity categories: boating, fishing, trails, natural and cultural resource-based recreation and education, and "other" recreation opportunities such as picnicking and golfing. These findings are presented in Part III.

To address the important issues related to recreation in the corridor (Objective 3), we synthesized information on current and potential recreation opportunities from Objective 2 to show what was happening over the entire corridor. Interview and secondary data sources were used to provide a historical context for understanding present and future use. We used the same five activity groupings for this synthesis, but detailed results by specific activities:

Recreational boating

1. Canoeing and kayaking
2. Rowing
3. Motorboating
4. Excursion boating

Fishing (no further breakdowns)

Trails

1. Foot paths
2. Developed trails (unpaved—horse, hiking)
3. Multiple-use bicycle-grade trails (paved)

Resource-based recreation and education

1. Natural and cultural resource appreciation
2. Education
3. Volunteer stewardship
4. Consumptive nature activities (e.g., hunting, foraging)

Other activities

1. Picnicking and related passive uses
2. Active sports
3. Golfing

This activity differentiation was also a good way to identify and address key problems and opportunities, as well as prospects and recommendations for increased recreation use. For many of the resource experts we interviewed, perceptions of such issues as safety, access, use conflict, and potential for increased use hinged on whether recreation was land or water based, motorized or non-motorized, active or passive, and so forth. Using the activity focus, we re-ordered each transcript and set of notes to combine all comments related to a given activity category. Within these activity categories, we then re-ordered comments by topics of current use, problems and opportunities, prospects for increased use, and recommendations. Relevant interview comments were summarized and illustrative quotes were included for each topic area. Findings for this objective are presented in Part IV.

Finally, in Part V we draw conclusions for developing planning, design, and management strategies for the river corridor.

PART II
PROFILES OF RESOURCE EXPERTS

PUBLIC LAND MANAGERS

METROPOLITAN WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT OF GREATER CHICAGO

AGENCY BACKGROUND

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is a regional government agency charged with the primary responsibility for wastewater management. The district includes 125 member communities in a planning area of more than 870 square miles (primarily in Cook County) and serves more than 5 million residents. The MWRD owns more than 8,000 acres of waterway property, primarily along Reaches 4, 8, 9, and 10 (see Figure 4.1). Much of this property is highly contiguous, and it is leased to private and public entities for various water-dependent and non-water-dependent uses.