

Pool

A white paper for considerations of the pool environment

A pool in a camp can be one of the most important elements on the property. Much in the way of entertainment and learning program can be administered in a pool environment. But, is it right for your camp?

This white paper will explore briefly the pool environment and may help your council decide whether or not to build a new pool, refurbish an existing pool, and may even assist in the decision to demolish an existing pool. This paper also serves as an intro into an expanded Design Guideline to be published by the Outdoor Programs / Properties Department of the National Service Center of the Boy Scouts of America. The guideline will be published in 2016.

While a pool can offer a camp environment a broad range of program, it also will provide the camp property an intensive maintenance issue. Pools are not inexpensive! Neither in constructing nor maintaining. They are a financial burden in most cases. The decision to provide a pool is one for serious consideration by the council and its program and properties committees, if that's who'd oversee its concept, development, and construction. And these are the very considerations briefly explored within this paper.

Concept

To conceptualize a pool the committees need to determine the purposes of the pool and those it'll serve. Is the pool there for simply entertainment? Is the pool intended to serve as a learning environment? Lessons, merit badge requirements, achievements, and training are just some of the purposes a pool may serve. Will the pool be simply for the scouts who attend camp? Is the camp open to other groups to use throughout the calendar year? If so, what influences do those groups bring to the table in conceptualizing this pool and its uses? Additionally, considerations of the leaders, staff, and outside user groups will contribute to the overall solution. Who'll administer the pool and its program offerings? All of these questions and more will need to be addressed in order to fully determine and explore a new or refurbished pool complex needs.

The entertainment feature of a pool has many options available in today's pool environment. Slides, fountains, splash areas, wading, and other swim activities

can be included in the pool complex. Of course, these all come with their price tag and always too, maintenance.

Staffing a pool complex is no easy task these days either. More certifications and training is necessary for a pool staff to be fully compliant. You'll also have a larger female population typically as staff members in the pool environment. That's not to say having females is more unique than a male staff, it's more the planning and foresight necessary to address both genders with adequate facilities for both. This brings up the subject of the associated facilities that go along with a pool, which are as much a part of the pool as the pool itself.

Consider when you build a pool in your backyard at your home, there's already an associated facility, your house! What does it provide the pool environment? Changing areas, restrooms, showers, storage of equipment and chemicals, a place for the operative part of a pool notably its pumps, filters, and lines, and power. So, a pool is not simply, just a pool. The concept has to take into account much in the way of how the pool goes about providing the many possible purposes a pool will serve its broad range of users, as well as the staff who administer the programs and safety aspects of the environment in addition to housing the equipment and materials necessary for the operation of the pool.

Development

The development of a pool is no simple task. Here we get into more detail about the pool and its associated facilities. We have to project the number of users this pool can handle at any one time. Typically, this will not be your backyard-sized pool. An Olympic-sized pool will certainly be closer in scope than the pool in your yard. But, is that all? Do you want a deep-water end so you can offer scuba diving instruction? As the organization does not offer a diving-off-a-board environment, do you need a deep-water area if a scuba component is not part of the offerings?

Today's pools must serve those who're handicapped. How does that influence the pool structure? Do you have a lift or do you provide a zero entry option? Ramp and railing have also been provided.

Knowing the projected number of users will not only help determine the size of the pool, but what about other features this complex could offer? Water slides are popular. Lazy rivers too. Wading pools can serve as a sitting wet area in addition to getting younger people accustomed to being in the element itself.

Should you consider a hot tub area? What size will it be should you want to offer that? And then there's the water park environment to consider.

As you can see, the committee/personnel assembling a program of requirements for a pool project have to project and consider many subjects and issues in order to develop a complex that serves a broad range of uses. A good development plan will take the project from the 40,000 foot level down to the 4 foot level in all its considerations and detail that needs to be addressed/considered. With that in hand construction plans will be much easier to work out. Additionally, a good budget will ride alongside the plans as you should work with a qualified contractor to help you price the project as its being developed.

Budget

So, one can see that a pool can become a huge development in the camp! And this will obviously cost much more than you've probably anticipated, let alone considered. Which raises the budget issue. Pools, as was stated early on in this paper, are not inexpensive! Not only is the concept, development, and construction of this environment typically bring a large price tag to the camp property, it also has an on-going expense in both time, material and labor along with it in order to maintain what's been built. Has the council considered within its budget not only the front-end costs, but also the year-in and year-out expenses the council will go through to continue to offer this popular facility? Will the project be fully funded before turning the first shovel? This is a very smart strategy as cost-savings can be realized along the way. Relying on gifts in kind and donations usually don't serve well. Great intent, not-so-good delivery, and poor result are common with that approach. It's also comforting not having to carry a note in addition to the maintenance expenses the council will require.

One will have to budget for maintaining the pool, its equipment, and associated facilities. Staffing a pool is a huge component. Oh, and they have to be certified in most cases too. The larger the pool environment and the many features you desired to offer require more staff to administer the facility itself, but also all of the program elements the facility brings to the table. While camp is in session this is full-time. Off-season the staff is greatly reduced, but maintenance will need to be a 365-day job!

Health

Keeping a healthy environment is required for a pool facility as there are numerous water-borne diseases and items which afflict the human animal.

Staffing will need to be trained to address this side of the pool facility. Cleanliness cannot be understated! Health department oversight should be welcomed and not viewed as a burden. The cleaner the facility can be maintained, the more popular it will be. This is a critical component which must be addressed and solutions in place for. Various protocols will have to be determined and put in place for when situations arise they can be addressed quickly and professionally. And they will arise!

So, while a pool is a fun environment in which to play and learn, it also requires much in the way of safety and maintenance. They are costly, there's no way around that issue! Expenses can be addressed in more cost-effective means, but the council has to seriously consider ALL that is associated with building this environment for the years it will take to build a pool complex, but also the years it will serve the program of Scouting and others.

If there's anything you've obtained in reading through this white paper on pools in a camp environment, you hopefully have the view of exploring all the subjects and issues regarding a pool before you just dive-in and build or refurbish an existing pool and its associated complex. While a pool can be a very attractive draw for a camp, the council has to consider all of the ramifications that go along with a well-developed, well thought-through and considered environment this complex brings to the council table. Explore all the issues, fund it fully, build it well, and endow the maintenance necessary to fully address this facility for many years to come.

Should you have any questions regarding pools and/or their associated facilities, please inquire of the Outdoor Programs / Properties Department in the National Service Center of the Boy Scouts of America.

Design Guideline to be published in 2016 will contain information addressing all of the above, but also expand upon design considerations, construction issues and materials, maintenance of the facility, staffing, programs, and more. Check back on the website for updates - Scouting.org/properties