



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
HUMPHREYS ENGINEER CENTER SUPPORT ACTIVITY
7701 TELEGRAPH ROAD
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22315-3860

March 28, 2023

Office of Counsel

Via Email: 121319-63305525@requests.muckrock.com

Mr. Nicholas Marritz
MuckRock News
Department MR 121319
263 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115

Dear Mr. Marritz,

This is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, dated November 16, 2021, and your follow-ups dated January 28, 2022, and November 20, 2022, for records related to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Water Safety Mascot, Bobber. Your request was assigned tracking number FP-22-004070. In your January 28, 2022 correspondence you clarified your request to the following:

- (1) Whose idea was it to have a water safety mascot in the first place, and what was the thought process behind that?
- (2) Who designed the mascot, and what was the design process like (e.g., were there multiple design concepts submitted? Was the design of the character contracted out? (If so, kindly produce the contract).
- (3) When and how were the other characters in what I'm going to call the "Bobber Extended Universe" created? (e.g., Ranger Buck, Ranger Jane, Ranger Toro, Tackle, Jacques Catsto, Corkey, Sinker)
- (4) Were any Bobber-related promotional items or tchotchkes created (e.g., trading cards, coloring books)? If so, please produce them.
- (5) Were there any life-size Bobber costumes created? If so, please produce records related to the design of the costume (contracts, sketches, etc.) and any guidelines regarding the use of or care for the costume.
- (6) Did anyone in Congress ever object to USCA's use of a mascot? I understand that there have been periodic attempts by lawmakers (e.g., former Oklahoma senator Tom Coburn) to rein in agency spending on mascots. If so, please produce all records related to that.

We reached out to our office of National Water Safety. In response to your question #5 (regarding Bobber costumes), attached please find a copy of "Bobber the Water Safety Dog Costume Care and Use Guidelines." Additionally, below are the responses to your questions.

(1) Bobber the Water Safety Dog and all of the other characters associated with Bobber was the idea of the USACE National Water Safety Program to promote water safety to children.

(2) Bobber the Water Safety Dog and all the characters associated with Bobber were designed by the USACE National Water Safety Program. The design of Bobber or any character associated with Bobber was not contracted out. Design was all made internally within USACE. There are no records regarding the initial creation of the characters.

(3) All characters associated with Bobber were created at the same time as Bobber by the USACE National Water Safety Program.

(4) There are too many products associated with Bobber to provide them all and we do not archive all the Bobber products produced since inception. Current and majority of the promotional products associated with Bobber are on this website, www.Bobber.info, that is managed by the USACE National Water Safety Program.

(5) The only company authorized by the USACE National Water Safety Program to create a Bobber costume for USACE is Robotronics, Inc. No records regarding the design of the costume are available. Guidelines regarding the use and care of the costume are attached.

(6) To our knowledge no one in Congress has ever objected to USACE using Bobber as our water safety mascot.

You may discuss any aspect of your request with, or seek dispute resolution services from, the USACE FOIA Public Liaison at foia-liaison@usace.army.mil or by calling (202) 761-0511. Additionally, you have the right to contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road-OGIS, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001, e-mail at ogis@nara.gov; telephone at 202-741-5770; toll free at 1-877-684-6448; or facsimile at 202-741-5769.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the undersigned at (703) 428-6479 or Catharine.S.Debelle@usace.army.mil.

Sincerely,

Catharine Debelle

Catharine Debelle
Assistant Counsel/FOIA Attorney