



US Army Corps  
of Engineers

**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:**

- 2017 Handshake Program winners announced
- Soar with the Corps and the Audubon Society
- See a Handshake project at work
- Learn about a nursery for striped bass
- What's buzzing with a Boy Scout pollinator project?
- Okaw Valley School's students gain new skills
- Volunteer recognition
- Paddling trash pickup
- 2016 OMBIL Statistics



# Bridging the Gap

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## Congratulations to Handshake Program Winners!



Congratulations to the FY 17 Handshake Partnership Program funding recipients: Big Hill Lake, Caesar Creek Lake, Coralville Lake, Raystown Lake, Rend Lake, Shelbyville Lake, Surry Mountain Lake, Table Rock Lake and Tioga Hammond / Cowenuesque. These nine projects come from seven Corps districts within four divisions. Collectively, these projects will improve recreation opportunities and facilities for all visitors, providing access for land

and water-based recreation, connecting communities to outdoor opportunities, protecting and conserving natural resources, enhancing our environmental stewardship mission, increasing public awareness of the value of water resources, and engaging federal, state, and local partners in a shared vision. To accomplish these goals, the projects involve 45 partners who have pledged more than \$308,000. These Handshake Partnership Program

funding recipients demonstrate the continued success of our field projects working with their stakeholders and local communities to accomplish great projects. For more information regarding the Handshake Program, please visit the Handshake page on the NRM Gateway at <https://corpslakes.ercd.dren.mil/employees/handshake/handshake.cfm> or contact your division Partnership Advisory Committee member.

## The Yosemite Area Audubon Society Soars with Eastman and Hensley Lakes

By Alyson Strickland

In early 2012, the Yosemite Area Audubon Society, working under the national MOU between the Corps and the National Audubon Society, began a long-term program to build, install, and monitor nest boxes in multiple counties in central California including breathing life into the nest box programs at both Eastman and Hensley Lakes. The first year of the program focused on American Kestrels. Since 2013 the program has expanded to include barn owls, wood ducks, Western bluebirds, tree-swallows and ash-throated flycatchers. Many nests have shown

to be used by multiple species at one time.

One of the big success stories is based on songbird boxes that are



**Baby tree swallows at Hensley Lake (2015)**

along a section of fence line on the Hensley Lake property line. In the Buck Ridge Recreation Area, 12-15 boxes are currently

being used by tree swallows and ash-throated flycatchers. In addition, several other nest boxes located at the Buck Ridge Group Shelter area include 58 tree swallow nests, of which 57 nests were discovered to accommodate 148 fledging birds. In the same location, 10 ash-throated flycatcher nests were home to 22 fledging young. These numbers are essentially a 90% increase in bird activity within that area. The Yosemite Area Audubon Society has played a vital role in increasing the bird activity at both Hensley and Eastman Lakes.

# CORPs Project with Okaw Valley Schools



Okay Valley students working on a field project at Lake Shelbyville (2016)

**Community Occupational Research Partnerships,** The CORPs Project is a partnership between Okaw Valley School District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Lake Shelbyville. The school is seeking to empower their students with work and life skills that will allow them to become responsible citizens in the business and social community. The goal is to maximize student potential and provide them with authentic educational experiences by developing a strong work ethic and the higher-level critical thinking skills needed to solve problems in the real world.

During the school year, students assist USACE staff with hands-on projects bi-monthly. To date, the students have participated in park

cleanup, fence installation, winterizing and de-winterizing buildings, fisheries management, building and repairing accessible hunting blinds, installation of trail signs, invasive species removal and playground improvements. In May 2016, an in-kind agreement was reached and granted Okaw Valley (OV) permission to lease two agricultural areas for four years. The two leases total approximately 40 acres. The group has volunteered a total of 1,863 hours estimated at \$43,892 of service since its inception. This is very impressive considering this partnership is only six months in the making and school was not in session three out of the six months.

In August, a field day to showcase the partnership between OV and the Corps

and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was held at the Lake Shelbyville Visitor's Center. In attendance were forty-five partners and community leaders supporting the project. St. Louis District personnel attended, as well and St. Louis District Commander, Colonel Anthony P. Mitchell who gave a well-received speech before signing the MOU with Okaw Valley CUSD #302 Superintendent Kent Stauder.



Colonel Mitchell and Okaw Valley superintendent Stauder signing MOU (August 2016)

## Keystone Lake Volunteers Receive Enduring Service Award

By Lindsey Cooper

On September 22, 2016, Mr. Orville and Pauline Nichols who are long time volunteers at Keystone Lake in the Tulsa District, were presented the 2016 Enduring Service Volunteer Award. The award was

presented by Greg Miller, Corps Foundation Chair and Colonel Christopher Hussin, Tulsa District

Commander. The Nichols received a plaque, a monetary award, and a Bass Pro Shops gift certificate.

The Nichols are the first recipients of this award in the nation. They were selected because of their willingness to help the public and keep the parks safe and presentable on a daily basis. They are knowledgeable of both Corps rules and regulations as well as the local area, and are always available to help inform the public. They contribute to the water safety mission by educating visitors, distributing water safety promotional items, and managing the life jacket

loaner program at Appalachia Bay. The Nichols have dedicated 22 years to volunteer service and are a vital part of the Corps mission. In the days of dwindling budgets and reduced staff, volunteers are a very essential resource. During their tenure they have logged over 26,000 hours of service and have saved the public over a half million dollars.

The Enduring Service Award was established in 2016 by The Corps Foundation, which is the only nationwide non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to supporting our nation's lakes, rivers, and their many resources.

Mr. & Mrs. Nichols receiving an Enduring Service Volunteer Award - Keystone Lake (2016)



# A Nursery for Striped Bass



**Nelson Wert of the PSBA giving a tour of the nursery**

Club augment the state stocking with additional larger size striped bass. Over recent years, the cost and availability for the club to purchase additional fish has become difficult and cost prohibitive.

Therefore, the PSBA in cooperation with the Corps at Raystown Lake and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission have established a nursery to spawn striped bass from Raystown Lake.

Currently, the club is raising fish obtained from a large aquaculture facility in North Carolina. The fish will be grown to various sizes and released into Raystown Lake to improve survivability of the fish and expand upon the population that exists in the lake. The nursery is housed in the maintenance complex of the Corps of Engineers in a building constructed a few years ago by the Friends of Raystown Lake. While

not currently open to the public, the goal is to provide educational tours of the facility so that visitors can understand the biology of the striped bass and the tremendous efforts involved in spawning and raising striped bass.

This nursery was also selected as a Handshake funding recipient for 2017 and is expected to grow in the upcoming year, just like the fish.

The current Pennsylvania State Record for a landlocked striped bass was caught out of Raystown Lake in 1994 weighing 53 lbs, 12 oz by Robert Price of Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

To learn more about or support the efforts of the PSBA visit them online at [www.fishpsba.com](http://www.fishpsba.com)

*The goal of the PSBA is to preserve the landlocked striped bass fisheries of Pennsylvania, primarily Raystown Lake. The PSBA will work to promote, protect, and preserve the quality of stripers in the fresh water lakes of Pennsylvania*

The staff at Raystown Lake has partnered with the Pennsylvania Striped Bass Association (PSBA) to build and operate a nursery. This nursery is not your typical baby blue or pink painted walls with a cozy little crib. This nursery is filled with tanks, aquariums, and water testing kits! "What is going on?" you might ask. The PSBA is embarking on a new challenge in an effort to improve what is perhaps Raystown's most sought after fishery....the striped bass. Each year, the PA Fish and Boat Commission is able to stock approximately 100,000 fry (typically a 1"-2" fish) into Raystown Lake. Additionally, the PSBA and former Raystown Stripper

## Team Green Adventures Paddles to Pick Up Trash

By J. Percy Priest Lake Staff

On a bright July morning, members of Team Green Adventures set out on a kayaking trip with a mission. Team Green Adventures is a Nashville-based outdoor activities group promoting active lifestyles, sustainable practices, and adventure. This day's kayak trip combined all three in a day designated for paddling to an island on J. Percy Priest Lake for a trash pick-up.

Islands on J. Percy Priest Lake can frequently become places where litter accumulates. In addition to lake fluctuations trapping trash on the topography, islands are a hot-

spot for Nashvillians to enjoy a weekend of tent camping. Irresponsible visitors, combined with the hydrology can leave these islands in need of a good clean up.

Thankfully the members of Team Green Adventures put together the volunteer paddling trip and made their way out to one of the islands. Upon arrival, they were met by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Park Rangers Trey Church, Ben MacIntyre, and Carter Robinson, providing trash bags and gloves. Team Green Volunteers picked up 15 bags of trash plus an assortment of large objects including tires, tent poles,

grills, lawn chairs, and area rugs.

At the end of a morning of hard work, Team Green Adventures members treated themselves to a leisurely paddle back to the mainland while USACE Park Rangers hauled trash to shore on a trash barge for disposal. The day was a tremendous success, with local volunteers providing a great amount of assistance in keeping the lake clean while enjoying the wonderful outdoor recreation opportunities at J. Percy Priest.



**Team Green Adventures Paddlers and some of their clean up endeavors at J. Percy Priest Lake**

# Woodruff-Seminole Installs Pollinator Garden with Boy Scouts



Young volunteers hard at work at Lake Seminole (2015)

By Kelly Bunting

To celebrate National Public Lands Day, on Saturday, September 26, 2015, volunteers came together with the Corps of Engineers to install a pollinator garden at a Corps park on Lake Seminole. Among the volunteers were Boy Scout Troop 502 from nearby Bainbridge, Georgia. This national partnership between the Corps and Boys Scouts of America has been instrumental in accomplishing tasks around the lake during several National Public Lands Day events in the past, including maintenance and repair of bluebird boxes and park cleanups.

For this event, the Boy Scouts, along with volunteer park hosts and several volunteers from the local communities of Chattahoochee and Bainbridge, “dug in” and

planted a variety of native flowering plants in a garden box located in Chattahoochee Park, a popular day use park. The plants were both nectar sources and larval food sources, to provide food sources during the complete butterfly life cycle. To begin the morning, Natural Resource Specialist Kelly Bunting gave a presentation about pollinators, their importance, and how we can aid in their survival. During the discussion, we discovered that one of the Scouts had a father who keeps bees, so he was able to add quite a bit to our talk! A water safety talk was given at the end, and water safety “goody bags” were provided to the attendees. The event was a big success; everyone had fun. A bench and interpretive sign are also planned for installation in the future.

The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America are two groups who have consistently partnered successfully with the Corps at Lake Seminole to do important work at our parks. These partnerships operate under the National Corps MOU to work with these scout troops.



# Corps Foundation Volunteer Coin Spotlight

Patrick Schrock, recipient of the Corps Foundation's Volunteer Coin - Crooked Creek Lake

Mr. Patrick Schrock was awarded the Corps Foundation's Volunteer Coin of Excellence. He has volunteered over 100 hours at Crooked Creek Lake during the 2016 recreation season.

His accomplishments include trail maintenance, refurbishing benches and picnic tables, painting parking lot bumper blocks, beautifying landscape beds

throughout the day use areas of the park, assisting in enhancement of a new project conference room by constructing new office chairs, conducting inspections of geocache sites, aiding in the Crooked Creek Lake Visitor Information Center renovation project by relocating materials throughout the park, refurbishing several horseshoe pits, building owl boxes, constructing shelving and organizing Water Safety materials, and removing and replacing bumpers on multiple boat trailers. Mr. Schrock's actions have improved the aesthetic

appeal of the park and supported the flood damage reduction, recreation, and environmental stewardship missions. Mr. Schrock's efforts have inspired the participation of additional volunteers at the project. Mr. Schrock should be commended for his selfless service and outstanding performance at Crooked Creek Lake.

Contact your PAC Team representative to nominate a volunteer for the Volunteer Coin of Excellence.



# Stockton Lake Handshake Fishing Pond and Trail

By Brian Wright

Thanks to Handshake program funds and a Challenge Partnership agreement between the Kansas City District, and multiple local organiza-



tions and groups, Stockton Lake is now home to a 4.5 acre kids fishing pond and 1.0 mile nature trail.

Located below the Stockton Dam in the Old Mill Area, the kids fishing pond and nature trail were officially opened to the public on July 21, 2015. Since its opening, the area has been popular with youth fishermen, families, bikers, hikers, walkers and nature lovers. The fishing pond and nature trail is nestled within the Old Mill's 214-acre recreation area, which is owned and operated by the Corps.

### It's a Team Effort

Brian Wright, Natural Resource Manager at Stockton Lake, led the effort on this project in which the Stockton Lake office partnered with multiple groups and agencies including the Missouri Department

of Conservation, Catch a Special Thrill, Stockton Community Foundation, Stockton R-I School District, Stockton American Legion Post # 230, Agape Boarding School, Citizens Memorial Healthcare, and the Stockton Trails Initiative Coalition. These agencies and groups helped with the design and construction of the area, stocking of the pond with channel catfish, hybrid bluegill and largemouth bass and the application for the Handshake program funding.

### Work in Progress

### Information Kiosk Under Construction

In addition to the partners and groups, local lake projects, Harry S. Truman and Pomme de Terre played an important role with their staff assisting in key components of the project.

USACE- Headquarters rated the applications based on several key factors including: Recreational Benefit, Partnership Value, Communication and Educational Value, Sustainability, Innovativeness and Environmental Stewardship Value. The proposed kids fishing pond and multi-use trail exceeded all of the criteria. In May 2014, the Corps Headquarters awarded Stockton Lake \$30,000 in federal funds as a source of seed money to complete the fishing pond and trail. The partner groups and agencies matched the grant by

donating an additional \$23,425 in volunteer efforts and \$9,275 in supplies and materials towards the project.

Volunteers like Marilyn Ellis, President of the Stockton Community Foundation and area resident, helped with the design of the trail. Ellis said "The Corps has been outstanding to work with and did a great job in coordinating the project. It was wonderful to be part of such an exciting partnership that will benefit the entire community and lake."

Other partners like Adam Boman, Missouri Department of Conservation Fisheries Biologist, helped in getting the initiative off the ground. Bowman said, "The area will play a vital role in the community and the lake area to ensure the outdoor recreational vitality of our community for generations to follow."

***"The area will play a vital role in the community"***

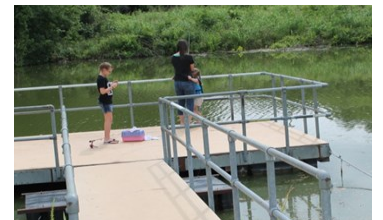
***-Adam Bowman, Missouri Dept of Conservation***



Community Ribbon Cutting (2015)



Finished Information Kiosk



Fishing Platform at the Fishing Pond

## Partnership Advisory Committee

### Team Members

- **Heather Burke - HQ**
- **Miriam Fleming - Chair - SAD (Carters Lake)**
- **Allison Walker - LRD (Nashville District Office)**
- **Stacy Sigman - MVD (Lake Ouachita)**
- **Heath Kruger - NWD (Kansas City District)**
- **Jason Knight - SWD (Tulsa District Office)**
- **Ron Woodall - NAD (West Hill Dam)**
- **Taylor Johnson - SPD (New Hogan Lake)**

In today's financial environment PARTNERING is an essential tool that allows the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to effectively manage recreation and environmental resources. In order to successfully meet our recreation and stewardship missions, and to foster shared values, vision, and a sense of ownership it is imperative that we work together with state governments, tribes, private/public organizations, local communities, and other partners to maintain or advance programs from wildlife protection and habitat improvement to recreation facility enhancements.

Partnering helps to pool scarce resources, to promote coordinated, focused, and consistent mutual efforts to resolve common problems and missions, and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. The NRM Program has embraced this reality and is committed to fully exploring the potential development of new public-private partnerships to leverage limited appropriated funds and human resources.

# FY16 Accomplishments

**Total Value of Partnerships: \$59,846,413**  
(Corps \$10.1 million investment / Partner Leveraged Investment: \$49.7 million )

**Total Partnerships: 1,393**  
(plus an additional 279 co-partners)

**Corps Projects with Partnerships: 293 of 404 (73%)**

**Number of Partner Volunteers: 31,137**  
(of 45,104 total Corps volunteers = 69%)

**Number of Partner Volunteer Hours: 319,652**  
(of 1,562,328 total hours = 20%)

**Value of Partner Volunteer Service: \$7,530,993**  
(of \$36,808,448 total volunteer value)



'Bridging the Gap' is an electronic publication produced biannually by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC). The purpose of this newsletter is to provide information about partnerships and volunteer programs around the country. For more information, or to submit stories for future editions, contact your PAC team representative listed above.