



US Army Corps of Engineers

Bridging the Gap

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

Important Dates to Remember!

September 30:
FY18 Handshake nomination packages due

October 31:
Partnership data entry due in OMBIL

December 15:
2017 Excellence in Partnerships and National Volunteer award nomination packages due to Taylor Saia

Bridging the Gap is a biannual newsletter that is prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Partnership Advisory Committee intended to highlight accomplishments and the value of recent USACE partnerships with important partners and stakeholders.

Handshake Funding Applications Due September 30th



Over the past fourteen years the Corps has made \$2.7 million in "seed money" available through the Handshake Program. Handshake funds combined with funding from local Corps projects and their partners' contributions benefit the community by improving our environment and providing additional opportunities. The intent of this program is to initiate new or enhance existing recreation and natural resources management opportunities.

The objective is to provide an incentive to Corps projects to utilize partnering initiatives to their fullest potential. In addition, this funding is intended to encourage local organizations to partner with the Corps to construct, operate, and/or maintain local partnering projects. 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.erdc.dren.mil/employees/handshake/handshake.cfm> or contact your division Partnership Advisory Committee member.

2017 NRM Workshop Partnership and Volunteer Training

by Heather Burke



From April 18 – 20, 2017 approximately 350 natural resource management staff gathered in Norman, Oklahoma to strengthen technical competencies, share recreation and NRM best practices, learn about new technologies, and improve knowledge and skills in public safety and management techniques. The Partnership Advisory Committee and the Corps Foundation played a key role in the success of the workshop by providing three days of partnership and volunteer program sessions including topics such as building partnership capacity, partnering trends, applying for grants, cooperative ecosystem studies units program, Handshake program, the Corps Foundation, cooperating association toolkit, Federal Highways grants, partnership roundtable, OMBIL, volunteer management roundtable, special events with partners, and working with youth conservation corps. The Corps Foundation also hosted a booth to share information about how they are helping support the Corps NRM program. For more information, visit www.corpsfoundation.org



Hulah Lake Radio Tower Partnership Improves Communications

by Eric Bonnell



Featured in Pictures: Susan Bayro and Mark Kirk of Osage Innovative Solutions, Eric Bonnell USACE

It has been decades since an old radio tower at the Hulah Lake Project has been used. Many radio towers like this one sit on Corps of Engineers projects and provide no public benefits. That all changed when talks began between Mark Kirk and Susan Bayro from Osage Innovative Solutions, James Lightfoot from ACRS LLC Engineering Firm, and Eric Bonnell from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Hulah Lake Project. OIS and ACRS LLC Engineering Firm applied for a grant after the Osage Nation Congress conducted a feasibility study that determined the area around Hulah Lake would be one of

the best places to pursue grant funds. OIS, ACRS, and the Hulah Lake Project signed an MOU to support this improvement for the surrounding communities.

The grant will provide funds for virtually all aspects of establishing a network to critical community facilities in the area including structural inspections, maintenance, and improvements to the tower. The grant will provide internet access/network to local entities such as emergency responders as well as a public building for the residents in this area to access free internet services.

The Bowring School District will receive grant funds to provide the computers and help maintain the building for public access. This will also allow students to finally have access to internet for improved learning. The Hulah Lake Project is maintained and operated by staff out of the Copan Lake Project. Currently there is no way to access a permanent network if needed at Hulah Lake. This grant will be beneficial to the Corps by giving the ability to access the network and improved cell service, especially in a flood operation.



From left: Mark Kirk, Susan Bayro, Eric Bonnell

Volunteers with a Mission

by Heath Kruger



Voices for Lake Oahe Logo

Voices for Lake Oahe (VFLO), started as a volunteer group founded in February of 2003 to help improve communication with the Corps around the rural expanses surrounding Lake Oahe. Over the last 14 years, VFLO has molded itself as an organization that has been dedicated to providing a unified voice for Lake Oahe, promoting the lake's recreational opportunities and providing recommendations for recreational development. They have helped engage the general public during management plan revisions so the public's recreational interests are fully considered, assisted the Oahe Project Office to develop relationships within the local community, and have provided direct assistance in the improvement of recreational facilities.

VFLO has been a vital partner for the Omaha District. They are not only able to communicate the public's needs and desires to the Corps for consideration, but also now serve as a trusted and independent voice explaining the Corps' limitations and constraints. Their upstanding reputation in the communities surrounding Lake Oahe has started to pay dividends as their partnership capacity grows and they are able to influence new additional partners in a proactive manner. VFLO has grown its advocacy role to an action driven mission. They have been able to cultivate partnerships with state and local governments as well as businesses and civic organizations to accomplish projects that provide user access to the lake.

They have leveraged funds and new partners to upgrade fishing access points, build low water boat docks, built picnic shelters, expanded and widened roadways to make it safer for vehicles towing boats. This organization brings the public's voice and fresh innovation into the Corps' decision-making process. Their energy, enthusiasm and effort help the Corps execute its natural resources management mission every day. The Voices for Lake Oahe continue to be a valued partner and instrumental in the continued success of the recreation and environmental stewardship programs at Lake Oahe.

A Presidential Partnership

by Stephen Cain

In August 2011, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) Allatoona Lake Project, located near Cartersville, GA, and the Georgia Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation (ACF) signed a Challenge Partnership Agreement with the shared goal of returning the American Chestnut to its lynchpin role in the forests of the United States.

The American Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) once stood among the most important trees of the Eastern Woodlands. Its nuts provided a key food source for countless animal species and its timber contributed thousands of dollars to local economies. This patriarch of the forest was brought down by the introduction of the chestnut blight in the early decades of the 20th century. The virulent fungus from Asia kills not only mature trees, but also the sprouts that re-emerge from the stumps.

As a result of this agreement and partnership, the planting and restoring of approximately 10 acres of chestnut trees at Allatoona is underway and is the first critical step in restoring a lost ecosystem that once played a pivotal role in the nation's woodlands and economy.

The partners have made efforts to publicize this restoration by planting a demonstration site at the Allatoona Lake Operations Project Management Office and placing interpretive signage at this site and the lake's Visitor Center to inform the public about the importance of the chestnut restoration project and of their role in the stewardship of public lands.

A recent testament to the success of these efforts came in July 2017 with a ceremony celebrating the American Chestnut at the Carter Center in Atlanta, GA. Among the guests were former President Jimmy Carter, who offered some brief remarks about his own memories regarding the American Chestnut. Dr. Martin Cipollini, Dana Professor of Biology at Berry College in Rome, GA., also spoke about the importance of these restoration efforts.



President Jimmy Carter was in attendance to show his support for the restoration efforts



Jerry Fulton, Allatoona Lake Operations Project Manager, and Stephen Cain, Chief Ranger represented USACE at the event.

Local Association an Important Partner to Success Lake

by Calvin Foster

The Southern Tulare County Sportsman's Association (STCSA) of Porterville, CA, has been a partner of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Sacramento District's Lake Success project for decades, and its members have been responsible for many improvements and events in their Wildlife Management Area. STCSA was formed in 1943, 18 years before Success Dam was completed. It has since become one of the largest organizations in the community.

In 2016, STCSA established a cooperating association with the Success Lake project and provided over \$36,000 in partnership value. STCSA volunteered to help the Sacramento District develop the Wildlife Management Area in Lake Success by planting hedge rows of atriplex species and installing irrigation lines throughout 1,600 acres of habitat.

Over the years, STCSA received several grants that were used to purchase grain to plant and help upland game, install a large group pavilion, and maintain water supply lines.

Since 1972, STCSA's association has annually received funding from the Tulare County Fish and Game Commission, Friends of the NRA, and California Fish and Wildlife to purchase and raise pheasant chicks.

Throughout the pheasant season, these birds are released in to the Wildlife Management Area during STCSA coordinated hunting events. Among these events is an ADA-accessible Veteran's Hunt, a junior pheasant hunt, and a youth hunter education course. In addition, STCSA provided more than 800 shirts for National Public Lands Day, assisted with park ranger and park manager trainings, and donated an all-terrain vehicle.

They also added a vending machine in the Tule Recreation Area for the convenience of park visitors. STCSA's association plans to open a gift shop to service the public in the near future. Success Lake staff, members of STCSA and its association, and visitors share a common goal of partnering to enhance the visitor experience at the lake and its many resources.



STCSA members and hunters participating in the Annual Pheasant Hunt



A Jr. Hunter shows off his bird at the Youth Pheasant Hunt



Pavilion purchased and installed by the STCSA in the Wildlife Management Area

International Mud Day is a Dirty Success at West Hill Park

by Jess Levenson & Ron Woodall

As part of International Mud Day June 29, 2017, park rangers with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) West Hill Dam Project in Uxbridge, MA, partnered with three local parent groups to organize an event to please all those who enjoy getting muddy.

When it comes to mud, there are two types of people: those who like to get their hands a little dirty and those who like to roll in it.

In a woody clearing at West Hill Dam, the team created a special area where children could experience a creative nature play experience. Rangers prepared the area with pits and pools of thick brown mud.

They cleared brush, excavated and mixed soil, placed slides, set up signs and assembled a truck-mounted water hose for the families who arrived to greet the wet earth with open arms.

Angie Stormont from the parent group Roots in Nature, explained the unusual scene. "International Mud Day is all about spending more time outdoors with your children; getting in nature, playing in the mud and getting dirty," she said.

Some of the excited youngsters molded mud to bake mud cakes while others played catch with mud balls. Others let it drip like paint and ooze down mud slicked slides. Parents were good-natured canvases for budding mud artists. "We enjoyed working with the Roots in Nature, Woodland Adventures and Beginning Bridges parent groups to organize this event," said Ron Woodall, a ranger at West Hill Dam.

"There were about 100 smiling faces as the kids reveled in an opportunity to get down and dirty with their parents' full approval," added Woodall.

"It's not often you can go play in a mud hole with your son," said one happy father. "I love it here and I want to come here every day!" howled one of the participants.

"We were pleased that so many people could enjoy our park through this event," said Woodall. He anticipates that other community partnerships will evolve to utilize the existing play area again in the future. "We hope to transform this area into a nature based play area instead of a traditional playground. Given the huge success of this initial event, it seems that nature based play at West Hill Park is a sure thing," said Woodall.



Two children enjoy a mud slide



Ranger Ron Woodall uses a pressure washer and 100 gallon truck-mounted water tank to aid in clean up



Crowds of children revel in the mud pits at West Hill Dam



Ranger Ron Woodall and SCA intern Donovan Vatelana deliver another 50 gallons of water to feed demand for more mud

Closed Campground Reopens as a Trail, Thanks to Grants

by Sarah Peace

From quaint residences to international stages such as Olympic sites, abandoned facilities are often overgrown and degraded by natural forces the longer they remain that way. For many of these sites, it is easy to feel the loss of fond experiences and glory as they deteriorate. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff at the Center Hill Lake project in Lancaster, TN felt the same way about the Hurricane Bridge Campground. This once popular site was closed in the early nineties, but thanks to a grant from the DeKalb County Tennessee Health Department some restoration of the old campground has been made possible. At one time, Hurricane Bridge Campground offered twenty-five camping sites, but only the picnic areas and two launching ramps remain since its closure. The former campground area had become an equipment storage area. Center Hill Lake’s resource staff knew the campground could still be utilized, but were not sure how or if funding would be a possibility.

The solution came from Mr. Michael Railing, the Public Health County Director for the Upper Cumberland Region of Tennessee. “DeKalb County Health was awarded a \$10,000 Rural Access to Health and Healthy Active Built Environments (RAHHABE) grant,” said Railing. “The grant focuses on improving health outcomes by enhancing access to free physical activity, and we were looking for areas in DeKalb County that meet that qualification.”

“The new trail is proof that great things can happen by working together and creating partnerships,”- Kevin Salvilla, Resource Manager, Center Hill Lake

The lake staff jumped at the chance to create a new community partnership while simultaneously restoring the campground. Approximately \$7,000 of the RAHHABE grant was set aside to clear overgrowth and develop a one-mile long paved trail. The new trail is the lake’s first tobacco free area and was subsequently granted additional funding from the health department, which was used to install two new benches.

This development has brought new life to the community. Visitors and community members will now have a free, safe, paved trail to enjoy. Local volunteers will join lake staff on National Public Lands Day, Sept. 30, to install bulletin boards, trash cans, mile markers, and trail signage along the trail. National Public Lands Day will also serve as the official grand opening and trail name revealing.

“We wanted this to be a trail for the community, and the best way was to get their involvement in the beginning,” said Kevin Salvilla, Resource Manager for Center Hill Lake. “One way of getting interest was through our Facebook contest, ‘Name that Trail.’ This contest allowed the public to vote for the name of the trail. Another way to create interest was including it in National Public Lands Day. These volunteers will be able to say that they helped make this trail possible.”

Rejuvenating the forgotten Hurricane Bridge Campground into a trail would have only been a dream if not for the partnership with the Tennessee Health Department,” added Salvilla. “The new trail is proof that great things can happen by working together and creating partnerships,” said Salvilla.



Before



After

**New Trail at Hurricane Bridge
(previously a campground)**

New Trail at Hurricane Bridge



Lake Ouachita Grab-A-Bag Partnership is Anything but Rubbish

by Amy Shultz

Island camping is a popular pastime on Lake Ouachita in Royal, Arkansas. With more than 200 islands, nature enthusiasts swarm to this lake managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to claim ideal island spots for the summer weekends to enjoy the secluded natural island beaches, beautiful sunsets, and star gazing on cool, clear nights. While most visitors do not litter, some leave their trash behind.



Litter can easily wash into the water, and can be detrimental to the wildlife who ingest it, to boat propellers that get tangled or damaged by it, and to the visitors who swim in the contaminated water. Two local groups, Lake Ouachita Citizen's Focus Committee (LOCFC) and their non profit counterpart Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO), started seeking methods to reduce the litter problem on the islands to maintain Lake Ouachita's pristine status.

In the past, LOCFC/ FOLO have hosted large "trash bash" yearly events and sponsored an Adopt-A-Shoreline program similar to the Adopt-A-Highway program. While these programs helped remove litter, more needed to be done to keep Lake Ouachita beautiful. LOCFC/FOLO proposed a plan to construct trash bag dispensers from PVC pipe and place them at all major boat ramps and marinas so

visitors can take a bag before they begin their trip on the water. Lake staff agreed to install the sign posts and distribute trash bags to the marinas. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and several marinas also partnered with LOCFC/FOLO and lake staff by installing trash bag dispensers.

Several LOCFC members contributed to this project. They include Phillip Carr, who came up with the idea, Tom Butler, who led the project and manufactured the bag dispensers, Rex Regan, who donated approximately \$880 worth of materials and labor, and Jerry Shields, who designed the sign graphics. The entire project consists of 17 dispensers and signs, at a total cost of \$765 (\$45 per dispenser.) Lake staff are hopeful visitors will take advantage of the program as they become familiar with the location of the dispensers.



Bag dispenser located at the Spillway Recreation Area boat ramp

With the support of LOCFC and FOLO, the "Grab-A-Bag" program will provide trash bags for recreation users for years to come, and hopefully enhance environmental stewardship of the lake's lands and waters.



Boater taking advantage of "Grab-A-Bag" program

Partnership Advisory Committee Team Members

- Heather Burke - HQUSACE
- 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 Saia - SPD (New Hogan Lake)

What Does the PAC Team Do For You??

by Heather Burke

The NRM Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC) exists to encourage a partnership culture and to assist districts and projects in developing that culture. The PAC works tirelessly to support the efforts of all NRM personnel. Check out a few of their accomplishments:

- Host two PROSPECT courses annually and numerous webinars
- Created a Cooperating Association Toolkit with Corps Foundation
- Created a partnership agreement flow chart and signature 'cheat sheet' to assist in development of partnership agreements
- Developed the Corps volunteer coin program sponsored by the Corps Foundation
- Created the partners speaker webinar series
- Developed implementation guidance and policy for WRRDA 2014 and WRRDA 2016 legislation
- Created a Corps partner video, volunteer brochure, partnership handout, and this newsletter
- Facilitate and select Handshake program, Excellence in Partnerships, and National Volunteer program winners annually
- Continually assist field projects with partnership project development and volunteer program issues

For further information: <https://corpslakes.erc.dren.mil/partners/pdt.cfm>

