

Bridging the Gap

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'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 representative.

Your Partnership HQ Update

Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager, HQUSACE

2020 National Volunteer of the Year Award

This year's U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) national volunteer of the year award recipient is James Zueger from the Youghiogheny River Lake in Pittsburgh District. James has spent the past two years removing more than 20,000 gallons of trash, 12,000 cubic feet of Styrofoam, and 7,000 cubic feet of woody debris from the lake using an innovative self-designed trash removal system on his personal kayak. His efforts have inspired other lake users to do their part to clean the lake.

The national volunteer award is sponsored by the Corps Foundation to recognize extraordinary service provided by volunteers, draw attention to their vast skills and contributions, and encourage an attitude of stewardship and responsibility in caring for USACE lands, facilities, and resources.



James Zueger with trash he collected from Youghiogheny River Lake

New National Cooperative Agreement Signed with Student Conservation Association (SCA)

USACE has entered into a new master national cooperative agreement with SCA under the authority of Sec 213(a) of WRDA 2000. This authority allows USACE to enter into cooperative agreements with non-federal public or nonprofit entities for services related to natural resource conservation or recreation management of Civil Works projects to further training and educational opportunities. The new agreement with SCA is set up for one year plus three option years and is being administered by the Fort Worth District.



SCA intern conducting fish surveys

Want to know more about the various types of partnerships featured in this newsletter?

*Visit the NRM Gateway Partnerships page!
corpslakes.erd.dren.mil/partners/partners.cfm*

FY 20 Partnership Program Accomplishments

Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager, HQUSACE

TOTAL VOLUNTEERS

20,437

TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS SERVED

1,069,519

(Equivalent to 593 FTE)

TOTAL VALUE OF VOLUNTEER HOURS

\$21.9 M



71% USACE PROJECTS USING VOLUNTEERS

(301 of 403 Projects)

1,365

USACE ANNUAL PASSES ISSUED

(for 100 hours of volunteer service)



\$113,077,957

TOTAL VALUE OF PARTNERSHIPS

2,528

TOTAL PARTNERS

(6% increase from FY19)

254

USACE PROJECTS WITH PARTNERSHIPS

(63% of USACE Projects)

390

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

RECREATION PARTNERSHIPS

636

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PARTNERSHIPS

502

USACE Investment
\$24.8 M

22%

PARTNER Investment
\$88.2 M

78%

<https://corpslakes.erc.dren.mil/partners.cfm>

Nolin River Lake Bank Stabilization and Fish Habitat Improvement Partnership

Libby Watt, Natural Resource Specialist, Nolin River Lake, Louisville District

As part of a multi-agency partnership, Nolin River Lake was the first reservoir in the Louisville District to install large concrete reef balls as both fish habitat and as a wave break for bank stabilization measures.

The collaboration is part of a larger effort with the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources

fish habitat, USACE also plans to experiment using the larger balls as wave breaks to further protect the shoreline.

To date, accomplishments include over 1,000 feet of bank stabilization structure installed, 2,600 square feet of fish habitat structures deployed, 48 reef balls placed, and 4,500 square feet of native seed planted. Weather permitting, the final step of the project will be to plant over 1,000 live stakes with assistance from Friends of Nolin in the spring.

Nolin plans to continue installation of bank stabilization projects in coordination with the Engineering, Research, and Design Center's Chris Haring. Haring visited in 2019 through a Water Operations Technical Support request and has provided consultation for prioritizing projects and incorporating Engineering with Nature— Natural



(KDFWR), Friends of Nolin, Friends of Reservoirs, and the Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership (RFHP) to complete a \$300,000 bank stabilization project. This included installing rip rap using the longitudinal peak stone toe protection method to promote bank stabilization, planting native seed and shrubs targeting pollinators, and creating more bank fishing opportunities by enhancing fish habitat with various fish attractors.

The concept of using reef balls as fish habitat came about due to a strong partnership with KDFWR fisheries biologist, Jeremy Shiflet, who offered to collaborate on this project and suggested a partnership with RFHP, a nonprofit group that works to improve fish habitat in partnership with government agencies.

The grant awarded through RFHP included \$30,000 for patented fiberglass reef ball molds, supply kits, and training from Reef Innovations to make the reef balls. While the reef balls are primarily for



Site 2 of the Nolin River Lake Bank stabilization project showing pre and post-installation of reef balls, hydroseeded native grasses and wildflowers, and artificial fish attractors

and Nature Based Features (sedimentation and sustainability techniques).

This effort will help Nolin keep sediment in place and provide a multitude of benefits that include improved water quality, increased habitat for aquatic life, reduced siltation, and protecting and prolonging the function of the flood control structures.

2020 National Excellence in Partnerships Award: Sesser-Valier Outdoorsman Club

Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager, HQUSACE

The Sesser-Valier Outdoorsmen Club (SVOC), partners at Rend Lake in the St. Louis District have been selected as the 2020 Excellence in Partnerships Award recipients for their commitment to protecting natural resources and their dedication to ensuring recreational experiences for all individuals. The SVOC has made the Rend Lake Deer Hunt for Individuals with Disabilities a success for over 40 years, serving more than 1,100 disabled hunters. The SVOC's love for the outdoors and commitment to service and helping others also includes organizing paralyzed veterans and youth fishing/shooting events, leading the annual Christmas tree drop, and hosting an annual banquet where they have engaged numerous community partners to donate money, materials and supplies for their events.

The Excellence in Partnerships Award, sponsored by the Corps Foundation, annually recognizes exceptional contributions by a partner providing substantial support to the USACE Recreation and Environmental Stewardship programs.



SVOC member assisting in a Christmas tree habitat project

Mark Your Calendars!

Have you attended the PROSPECT Partnerships in NRM class yet?

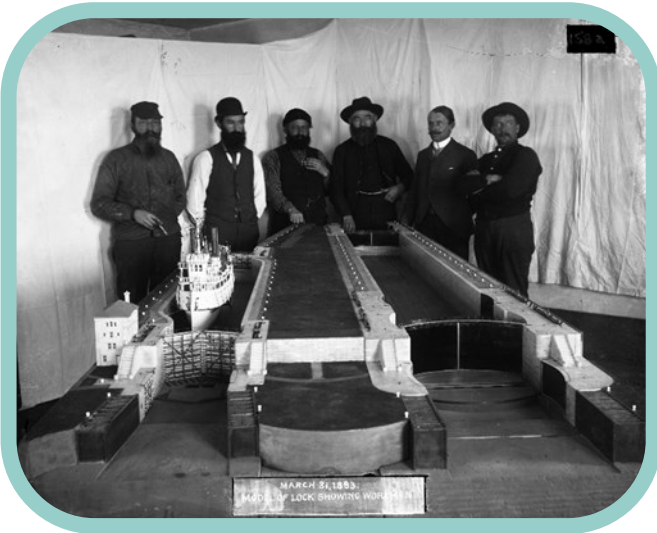
If not, sign up for one of our classes:

- **FY 21 Session 3:** Willamette Valley Project, Eugene, OR
September 13—16, 2021
- **FY 22 Session 1:** Philadelphia District Office, Philadelphia, PA
October 25 – 28, 2021
- **FY 22 Session 2:** Allatoona Lake, Cartersville, GA. May 2 – 5, 2022
- **FY 22 Session 3:** Seattle District Office, Seattle, WA. August 8 – 11, 2022

2021 Handshake Program Funding Recipients

Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager, HQUSACE

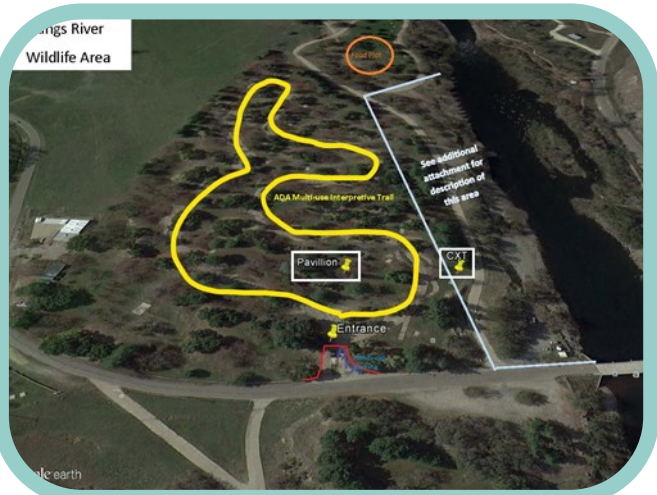
Over the past 18 years, HQUSACE has provided \$3.4 million in “seed money” through the Handshake program to USACE facilities, funding 206 partnership projects. Handshake funds are an incentive to use USACE partnership authorities to engage the local community in mutually beneficial activities. These funds combined with funding from local USACE projects and their partners’ contributions benefit the community by improving the environment and providing additional recreation opportunities.



Soo Locks model upgrade

A total of 13 projects have been selected for 2021 Handshake funding. These include:

- Allatoona Lake - Pollinator and native habitat restoration project
- Barren River Lake - Mountain bike/hiking trail system
- Berlin Lake - Multipurpose tailwater access
- Carters Lake - Modernizing interpretation
- Cordell Hull Lake - Hiking trail emergency stations
- Fort Randall Lake - Targeted goat grazing of eastern red cedar
- J. Strom Thurmond Lake - ADA fishing pier relocation
- Mark Twain Lake - Environmental adventure trail
- Nolin River Lake - Reef ball shoreline erosion control
- Philpott Lake - River access improvements
- Pine Flat Lake - Kings River wildlife area redevelopment
- Raystown Lake- Disc golf course development
- St. Mary's (Soo Locks) - Lock model upgrades



Pine Flat wildlife area redevelopment



Berlin Lake fishing platform example

For more information about the Handshake Program, please visit the Handshake page on the NRM Gateway or contact your division Partnership Advisory Committee member.

Using Technology to Revamp Interpretation at Carters Lake

George McBroom, Park Ranger, Carters Lake, Mobile District

In the summer of 2019, Carters Lake approached the Kennesaw State University College of Computing and Design (KSU) with a partnership idea to use virtual reality to create immersive educational experiences. KSU immediately latched on to the idea as a means for providing USACE with a new approach to education, while also providing their students with meaningful, real world applications for their computer game design skills. The heart of the partnership revolves around the relationship with KSU and their development of virtual reality digital learning content. However, the body of the program is so much more as we seek to educate about traditional (and not so traditional) natural resource topics in amazing and exciting new ways.

The idea started when Carters Lake staff determined that the current materials and methods for interpretation in the visitor center were not consistent with the learning style of today's youth. Technology rangers and volunteers took it upon themselves to build an augmented reality sand table, one of the first in USACE. The sand table was a huge success and the start of a new way of interpretation. The next step was creating the Carters Lake Summer Series to provide educational opportunities on a range of subjects from beekeeping to photography, focusing on areas of USACE missions from unique perspectives.

To take these interpretive programs into the technological age, Carters Lake rangers decided to purchase a telescope, touch screen panel for the visitor center, VR headsets with custom applications, holographic displays, and digital microscopes, all of which would lead the way into the future of interpretation at Carters Lake. During the COVID shutdown, education did not stop, and a new summer series of weekly educational videos were created on natural resource topics and virtual tours of the Carters Lake project. Currently Carters Lake has completed VR applications, a touch panel with an interface created in-house, and a computerized 14" telescope. The relationship with

KSU has yielded strong benefits to both parties in creating amazing interpretive products and opportunities.

Carters Lake will continue the partnership with KSU, potentially creating a repository of VR applications and 3D animations that can be used at any project across the nation. We will continue to expand the project's astronomy capabilities with the addition of an automated telescope and access to Slooh (a service for the online use of research grade telescopes and online lessons in astronomy), where visitors will be able to access accounts for 2-3 weeks. In January of 2021 we were awarded Handshake Partnership funding which will be used to install HOLOFIL holographic displays, allowing us to provide a unique and eye-catching way to provide new learning opportunities. Of course, it cannot all be detached immersive or gamified learning, so we've purchased several digital telescopes that will allow the reinforcement of fundamental science skills of observation and curiosity along with our more high-tech interpretive offerings.

While these technologies may not be cheap, they are affordable, and Carters Lake is taking advantage of the shrinking technology gap. We are further leveraging those resources by using our local universities and hobbyists to create and teach amazing new things. Lastly, we are fully utilizing our internal team who have contributed their own talents and knowledge to this project.

The only real limit is how far out you're willing to reach for a new and meaningful interpretive experience.



A family tries out the AR sandbox in the Carters Lake Visitor Assistance Center.

NRM Gateway Spotlight: Workamper page

Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager, HQUSACE

Visit the Workamper News page to learn more about how you can recruit contract and volunteer gate attendant/camp host positions at your project. On this page you will find links to past issues of Workamper Magazine, a webinar explaining how to fully utilize the USACE Workamper contract, and an overview of the Workamper site with many tools and resources for NRM staff.



Workamper News

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a contract with Workamper News to provide Gold membership status to advertise contract and volunteer positions at USACE projects. This allows USACE projects that create a free account on Workamper.com to:

- Be included in a special USACE feature issue of Workamper News in Sep/Oct each year.
- Place Help Wanted ads in any of the bi-monthly issues of Workamper News, which has a readership of 8,000 per print version and 30,000+ per digital version. Workamper Opportunity ads are organized by state. The text ad will be printed with the USACE logo. USACE can run ads in each of the six issues per year. The ad can be up to 100 words and can advertise volunteer or paid contract positions.
- Place Hotline Email and Website ads to receive immediate inquiries. The highly successful Hotline was created to give employers immediate access to Workampers in order to fill immediate openings but can also be used to assist with future season recruiting. The Hotline is updated each weekday (Monday through Friday). A Hotline ad will run for two weeks at a time. When a Hotline ad is scheduled, it is sent in the daily Hotline email to thousands of Workamper members on the first day of the 14-day schedule. It is also posted on the Hotline page for 14 days. Workampers also have the option of receiving job alert emails, so many Workampers may receive the ad in their email inbox right after it is posted! Each USACE site can run four 2-week Hotline ads per year. The ad can have up to 100 words and can advertise volunteer or paid contract positions. You can run one ad for eight weeks or submit your ad at different times during the year.
- Receive 6 issues of Workamper News per year. In the Classifieds section of each issue there are Situations Wanted ads submitted by Workampers looking for opportunities.
- View current and past issues of the magazine online.
- Access the Awesome Applicants Resume database. This online resume database is filled with great Workampers looking for opportunities. The site allows you to run an advanced search, save resumes of interest, and rate them.
- Create/Edit an Employer Tour. This is a mini profile to show off your Workamping environment.
- Access the Media Library. Find videos on hiring Workampers and maintaining a Workamper program.

Contact Workamper News to take advantage of these benefits.

Website: www.workamper.com

Phone: 800-446-5627

Email: support@workamper.com

• [Workamper webinar, January 2021](#)

• [Workamper Magazine Issues](#) 

• [Workamper Annual USACE Survey](#)

• [Workamper.com Website Overview](#)

Meet Your PAC Team Members!

- Heather Burke: HQUSACE
- Scott Sunderland – Chair: NAD (Blue Marsh Lake)
- Francis Ferrell: SAD (Falls Lake)
- Allison Walker: LRD (Nashville District Office)
- Phil Manhart: MVD (Lake Shelbyville)
- Taylor Baughn: SPD (Lake Mendocino)
- Heath Kruger: NWD (Omaha District Office)
- Rob Jordan: SWD (Lewisville/Ray Roberts)
- Tennille Hammonds: Emeritus (RPEC)

Thank You to Stacy Sigman and Taylor Saia who recently completed their terms on the PAC, representing MVD and SPD!

What's in a Visitor Center?

Sue Dalbey, Natural Resources Specialist, Fort Peck Interpretive Center, Omaha District

Want to know more about the various types of partnerships featured in this newsletter?

*Visit the NRM Gateway Partnerships page!
corplakes.erc.dren.mil/partners/
partners.cfm*

What's in a USACE Visitor Center? It is more than brochures, historical artifacts, stuffed animals and dinosaur bones. These things alone are fabulous resources at the Fort Peck Interpretive Center (FPIC) in northeast Montana. But "to have is to hold," and it means nothing to have these things if people do not "hold" them, figuratively and literally.

How do we get people to a VC that is 2 1/2 hours away from the closest Walmart? Partnerships! Missouri River Country Tourism (MRCT) works closely with Montana Office of Tourism to promote the FPIC using bed tax funds and grants. On our behalf, they can hire professional advertising and publishing

companies such as National Geographic to produce beautiful, glossy hard-copy and digital works available for free distribution. MRCT can leverage publications, billboards, brochures, and even social media influencers. Board members attend multiple travel and trade shows annually, resulting in nonresidents seeking out FPIC, extending their stay and benefiting the region's economy.

Any dinosaur museum in the world worth its dirt highlights fossils from Montana. Fourteen museums teamed up over 14 years ago to create the Montana Dinosaur Trail and the \$5 passport. The Trail helps kids and adults find cool dinosaur museums to receive a special stamp, and earn a groovy t-shirt.

Facebook @USACEFortPeck and self-directed social media reviews also direct new visitors off Highway 2 to the fifth largest reservoir in the U.S. Fort Peck Ranger Sanders donated personal equipment and technical savvy to create interior 360 views that spark the interest of Google Maps users.

Visitors are still enamored with Lewis and Clark on the Missouri River, which also helps lure people into FPIC.

Once visitors are at FPIC, how do we provide staff to orient visitors? Partnerships! The FPIC opened in 2005 with a collaborative effort from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge (CMR) surrounding Fort Peck Reservoir. CMR helps with some level of staffing, depending on budget. For 2020 and 2021, CMR has partnered with the American Conservation Experience to provide one full time employee. This is a tremendous help to the USACE Natural Resource Specialist assigned to FPIC. The CMR/ACE position helps with of program continuity, visitor services and some volunteer oversight.

The CMR will actively recruit volunteers this year to greet visitors and assist with



T-shirt received after stamping the Passport at all 14 Montana Dinosaur Trail museums

programs. Local volunteers are particularly helpful in orienting visitors, interpreting natural and cultural history, and visitor trip planning. USACE partnerships with Volunteer.gov and Workamper.com help recruit full-time RV volunteers.

How do we maintain attractive facilities and grounds? Partnerships! The CMR/ACE position helps maintain live amphibian exhibits and two huge freshwater fish aquariums. The Fort Peck Senior Citizens pick up litter in 16 miles of roadside ditches above and below the dam annually in exchange for a picnic shelter rental several times a year. Volunteers have accomplished many specific projects. A girls service group cleaned rust out of an old dredge pipe exhibit, washed walls, and swept walks. An individual volunteer maintained and repaired landscape irrigation in exchange for a camp site and the opportunity to fish all summer.

How do we offer interpretive programs that allow visitors to see, smell and hold the public resources in our charge? Partnerships! Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP), USACE and volunteers teach kayak



Viewing the solar eclipse in front of the Fort Peck Interpretive Center

accurately display 69 Elasmosaur vertebrae and the donated triceratops horn that visitors can now lift. FPIC hosts a Water Carnival annually that relies on partners to help kids and adults find aquatic invasive species, see wiggly macroinvertebrates, cast a fishing line, wear the right lifejacket and drive a (mini)boat. Partners like MFWP Fisheries Technicians, Information Officer and Game Wardens, County Health Department, CMR, Big Sky Watershed Corps and local volunteers make this event successful.

Most of the partnerships mentioned have no formal document. They are built on relationships. As budgets become tighter, it will be more important to build relationships that also expand our partnerships if the public is to continue safely holding what they have. Literally.

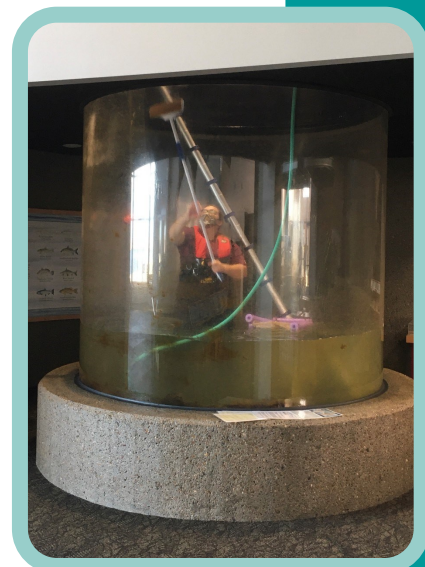
(Note that events and volunteer projects have been and will be contingent upon safety amid the pandemic. Most photos are from pre-pandemic events.)



Partners from the Big Sky Watershed share the impacts of aquatic invasive species at the annual Water Carnival in Fort Peck

classes through the Becoming an Outdoors Woman program. The County Extension supports FPIC's observation beehive and offers backyard beekeeper programs annually. Paleontologists within the Montana Dinosaur Trail share their expertise to

USFWS fulfills their partnership commitment to USACE by hiring Katie Aiello through American Conservation Experience



North Marcum Improvement Project at Rend Lake: Partnership Success Story

Cassie Magsig, Natural Resource Specialist, Rend Lake, St. Louis District

During the 2018 Rend Lake Master Plan update, the majority of public comments consisted of improving the wildlife management and outdoor recreation opportunities. Specific requests for an area to promote competitive archery, mountain bike riding, and cross-country running were made by groups from the local community. The team at Rend Lake had been looking for the best way to add value to the North Marcum low density recreation area, making this area perfect to fulfill these requests.

Meetings were held between the USACE team at Rend Lake and local organizations. A formal partnership was quickly formed through a Challenge Partnership Agreement. This was the beginning of bringing the vision of improving outdoor recreation to life at Rend Lake.

After the start of construction, the 7 formal partners quickly grew to 16 groups working alongside USACE to complete the first phase of the project. This consisted of constructing an archery complex and mountain bike trails along with the expanding and upgrading existing parking areas. The archery complex is now complete and includes an accessible archery trail of 20 shooting lanes with targets, caution fencing, signage, an accessible archery range including a 240 foot concrete sidewalk,

10' x 80' shooting shelter with concrete floor, concrete target lanes, permanent targets with covers, elevated shooting platform with targets, and signage for target lengths and rules.

The mountain bike trail is half complete with 6 of the 12+ miles of trail constructed, and directional signage installed. An old parking area has also been expanded and given an upgrade to accommodate large crowds.

This improvement project has been enjoyed by the public, brought new visitors to Rend Lake, and prompted several regional and national organizations to request the use of this area for future large events. There is ample parking within the day use area, but there is currently no electricity to support food vendors,



Archery animal target



Volunteers from Union Sportsmen's Alliance United Ironworkers Union



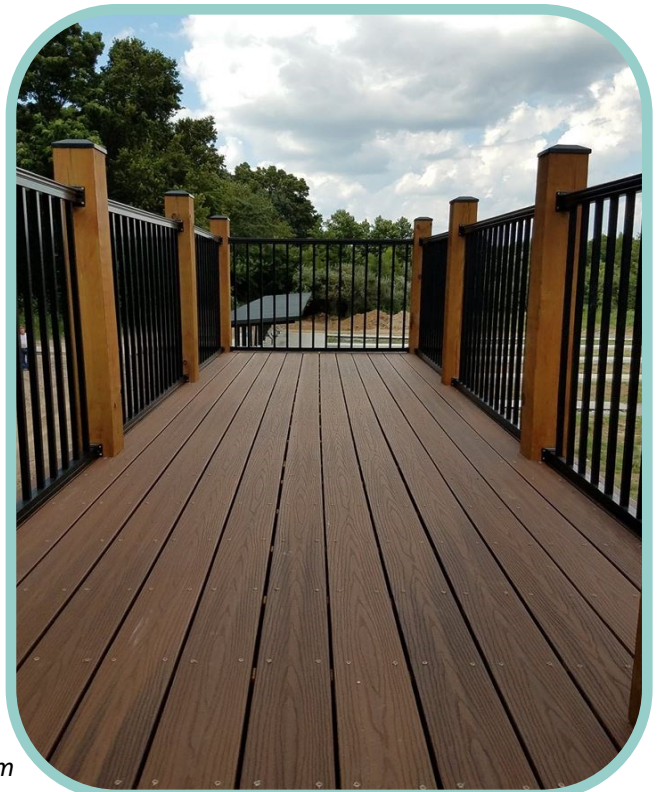
Elevated archery shooting platform

tournament award ceremonies, and announcement broadcasting. Handshake funds received will upgrade the electric service. This work is scheduled to happen in early 2021. These upgrades will fulfill the requirements of the event contracts to improve tourism opportunities and economic benefits to the Rend Lake area.

The largest event scheduled for the North Marcum area is the Scholastic 3-D Archery (S3DA) national archery tournament, which will bring 6,000 visitors from over 30 states and multiple countries to Rend Lake for a minimum of 3 nights. The S3DA estimates this 3 day tournament will provide a \$3 to \$4 million economic benefit to the Rend Lake area. The first annual S3DA tournament will be held at Rend Lake in June of 2022. The Rend Lake team is also working with local groups to host Xterra Triathlons, Cross Country Events, and several local scholastic archery tournaments.

This project would not be possible without the support of our partners and the opportunity to host these large, impactful events would have never happened without the investment and loyalty that our partners have in the Rend Lake area. The total project cost so far is \$315,000. More than half was contributed by the partners (56%) through donations of equipment, materials, and labor.

Top deck of elevated archery shooting platform



Participating partners are listed below:

- Rend Lake College
- Rend Lake Conservancy District
- Scholastic 3-D Archery
- Union Sportsmen's Alliance
- Rend Lake Bike Club
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources
- International Union of Operating Engineers Local 318
- Laborers' International Union of North America Local 773
- Iron Workers Local 392
- Erb Equipment
- Ryterski Brothers
- Rend Lake Area Tourism Council
- Sierra Bravo
- River2River Runners
- Lake Contracting Inc.
- Xylem Inc.