



# BRIDGING THE GAP

Volume 8

Issue 1

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## National MOU: Backcountry Hunters and Anglers



In September 2023, USACE and the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA) signed a national Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to develop and expand collaborative engagement on the broad and diverse communities of interest in wildlife-dependent outdoor recreation and sustainable wildlife habitat.

Under this MOU, BHA and USACE strive to:

- Collaborate on projects, including potential cost sharing activities;
- Implement stewardship projects, education, outreach, and research efforts;
- Increase public awareness through education, special events, and advocacy of the value and benefits (social, economic, physical, and environmental) derived from participation in sustainable outdoor recreation on public lands.

### About Bridging the Gap

"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 the partnerships and volunteer programs around the country. For more information, or to submit stories for future editions, contact your PAC representative.

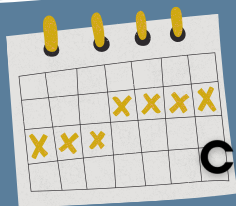
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A few examples of programs offered through BHA include the collegiate program, hunting for sustainability, armed forces initiative, and stewardship program. Past and current partnering efforts between BHA and USACE include collaboration on hunting/fishing events, lake cleanups, and other special events, construction of accessible fishing docks and archery ranges. A webinar with BHA will be held from 1:00 - 2:00 Eastern on Mar. 20, 2024. Tune in to learn more!

## 2023 Excellence in Partnerships Award Recipient



### Mark Your Calendars

- **March 20:** Backcountry Hunters and Anglers webinar, 1:00 pm Eastern
- **June 18:** Handshake FY 25 Funding Program webinar, 2:00 pm Eastern
- **July 24:** Handshake FY 25 Funding Program webinar, 11:00 am Eastern
- **August 14:** Handshake FY 25 Funding Program webinar, 2:00 pm Eastern
- **September 30:** FY 25 Handshake applications due



The Missouri Feral Hog Elimination Partnership across projects within NWD, SWD, and MVD has been selected as the 2023 Excellence in Partnerships Award recipients. This partnership has united private landowners, universities and over 15 federal and state agencies under the common goal of eliminating feral hogs from public and private lands throughout the state of Missouri. The benefits of this program include protecting public health, agriculture, and natural resources through control measures, education, legislative actions and enforcement, and disease monitoring.



Photo above: Park Ranger with captured feral hog.

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

## 2023 National Volunteer of the Year Award Recipients



### REMINDER April 21- 27, 2024 is National Volunteer Week

This is a great opportunity to recognize the collective impact of volunteer service to the USACE NRM program. National Volunteer Week can be used to offer up new volunteer opportunities, identify and thank volunteers who lend their time, talent and voice to make a difference in their communities.



This year's USACE national volunteer of the year award recipients are Tim and Pam Harrison of Kaw Lake in the Tulsa District. They have donated 6,763 hours of volunteer service over a five-year period including 1,475 hours in FY 2023. While at Kaw Lake, the Harrisons have supported a wide range of objectives, including visitor assistance, interpretation, landscaping, hazard tree removal, invasive species removal, campground host duties and routine repairs and maintenance. Throughout their service at Kaw Lake, they have been invaluable in recovering from several natural disasters, including the 2018 high pool event, the 2019 flood of record, the 2020 historic ice storm, and countless other storm and high wind-related events.

The national volunteer of the year award recognizes extraordinary service provided by volunteers, draws attention to their vast skills and contributions, and encourages an attitude of stewardship and responsibility in caring for USACE lands, facilities, and resources.

### Have you attended the PROSPECT Partnerships in NRM class yet? If not, sign up for one of our classes:

- ✓ FY 25 Session 1: Rend Lake, Benton, IL. Oct. 21-24, 2024
- ✓ FY 25 Session 2: Kansas City District Office, Kansas City, MO. Apr. 28 - May 1, 2025
- ✓ FY 25 Session 3: Raystown Lake, Hesston, PA . Jul. 21-24, 2025

Please visit <https://ulc.usace.army.mil/CrsScheduleNewFY.aspx> to enroll



## Podcasts and Partnerships

*Dillon Brown, Natural Resources Specialist, Philpott Lake, SAW*

Retired USACE captain Tom Conroy found a fulfilling volunteer role at Philpott Lake: hosting a podcast! His radio expertise and studio setup built from salvaged equipment made him a perfect fit. In his spare time after retiring, Tom assisted with remodeling radio stations. Radio communications and music were always hobbies of his, so it was a natural fit after retirement. Over the years, Tom collected outdated but functional radio equipment and used this equipment to build recording studios in his basement in Martinsville, Virginia.



*Photo above: Ranger Brown and the SAW Environmental Education team recording a "Rangers to the Corps" podcast episode.*

Tom's interest/skillset was forwarded to Dillon Brown, interpretive ranger and outreach/partnership coordinator at Philpott Lake. After talking about volunteer opportunities, they realized they both had a mutual interest in podcasting. Dillon mentioned the podcast possibility at a SAW Environmental Education Team meeting and it was an instant hit. There were a few kinks to work out first, but the hardest part turned out to be in place already: a distribution platform. DoD uses a site called DVIDS to handle all types of media, with a specific program for handling podcasts. Once you set up a profile (any ranger can do this with permission from your district PAO), you upload your podcasts as you record them, and they get distributed to six major podcast platforms.

Tom offered up free recording time in his studio, assistance with editing, along with audio training for Ranger Brown, the podcast host. It was then up to the team to prepare recording topics and podcast outlines. A subject they wanted to discuss were volunteer and partnership opportunities at USACE Lakes. They set off and recorded "Rangers to the Corps- Formal Partnerships and Their Benefits" where they interviewed PAC representative Francis Ferrell. In the episode each lake project explains how they work with partners and the benefits of those partnerships.

You can also search for *Rangers to the Corps* on your favorite podcast listening platform and listen to any of the episodes on that channel. While you are there, you might as well hit the subscribe button and stay up to date with Wilmington District environmental education! In another episode, the team has a great interview with a volunteer couple and coordinator at W. Kerr Scott Lake in Wilkesboro, NC. So far, the podcast has had great reviews. If any other projects or districts are interested, feel free to reach out to Dillon Brown at Philpott Lake. ■



## Chittenden Locks Volunteer Receives Volunteer Coin for Lifesaving Act

*Sarah Seaborg, Park Ranger, Lake Washington Ship Canal, NWS*

NWS Volunteer John Levesque was an essential responder in an emergency lifesaving event regarding a jet ski vessel accident that occurred at the front of the Lake Washington Ship Canal spillway. John's expedient actions, response, and decisions during the emergency response were essential in the vessel operator's rescue. The actions taken by John and the lock operations crew helped save a life that day. This act of courage perfectly exemplifies our volunteer's dedication to public service at the Lake Washington Ship Canal.



*Photo above: Volunteer John Levesque and Bobber the Water Safety Dog promote water safety education.*

Listen to this episode at the following link:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/rangers-to-the-corps-formal-partnerships-and/id1692785190?i=1000631523866>

## Mark Twain Lake Environmental Adventure Bike Trail



## Clendening Wetland Loop Trail and Wildlife Viewing Area

Steve Ecrement, Natural Resources Specialist,  
Clendening Lake, LRH

Allen Mehrer, Forester, Mark Twain Lake, MVS

Clarence Cannon Dam and Mark Twain Lake collaborated with the Mark Twain Lake Friends of Recreation and Environmental Stewardship (FOREST) Council to develop the Mark Twain Lake Environmental Adventure Bike Trail. The facility meets the demands of outdoor enthusiasts by providing a 1.5-mile trail immersing visitors in the biomes native to the area. The trail features a 10' tread of compacted pug limestone and developed on a consistent grade providing a durable facility for bicycle and pedestrian conveyance.

USACE Handshake Program resources funded the trail development, including site grading, drainage installation, and trail surface material installation. The MTL FOREST Council provided in-kind labor services to remove trees from the trail corridor and funded a portion of the limestone surface material. A unique aspect of this project was the use of crushed asphaltic material derived from concurrently occurring recreation area maintenance. The material was utilized as a base course for the tread surface, and effectively reduced overall project cost.

A Challenge Partnership Agreement was executed in June 2021 with the MTL FOREST Council. The project commenced in December 2021 with trail route establishment, site survey work, and the start of trail corridor tree clearing. Site grading started in October 2022, and the limestone surface was completed in January 2023. The trail was opened to the public in May 2023. The contributions and involvement of the Mark Twain Lake FOREST Council made it possible to offer a quality recreational facility, and enhance the services offered to our visiting public. ■



The Muskingum Region (MUR) Lower Tuscarawas (LT) Area was awarded Handshake program funding in FY 22. The Handshake project included completion of a 1.1-mile wetland loop trail that takes visitors around the majority of the USACE property. The trail crosses the wetland in two locations via floating boardwalks and crosses through a pollinator field. Interpretive signs (with assistance from the Corps Foundation) highlight different ecosystems and habitats throughout the property, and a permanent spotting scope allows visitors to overlook an osprey nesting platform, wetland, and Clendening Lake. The Wills Creek, Clendening, and Tappan maintenance staff, MUR environmental compliance coordinator, Upper Tuscarawas and LT natural resource specialists worked together with 10 partners to complete this project.

Our partners assisted with various portions of this agreement. The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District donated floating boardwalks, American Electric Power installed an osprey platform, and Ohio Prairie Nursery donated



native seed for the pollinator field. Individuals from the Shenandoah K-8 school assisted with installation of wildlife shelters that were provided by the Ohio Bluebird Society. The local YMCA camp on Clendening Lake allowed the students to stay in a cabin free of charge. Individuals from the Canton Audubon Society spent several days birdwatching and reporting their findings (greater than 90 species) on eBird to promote the site as a birdwatching destination. The Buckeye Trail Association and National Park Service North Country Trail Association provided trail development expertise and technical advice through phone calls and a site visit. Additionally, these conversations resulted a new 1.3-mile trail on MWCD land (adjacent to USACE fee property) that crosses through a historic rock quarry with the trailhead on USACE property. These two organizations are now considering rerouting the Buckeye Trail which would incorporate the two new trails (wetland loop and quarry loop) into their National Trail system. ■

# Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) Funded Project at Cook's Landing

Jennifer Hoban, Civil Engineer Tech, Little Rock District  
 Allison Walker, Federal Lands Transportation Program Manager, HQUSACE

Cook's Landing is a day use area located on the Murray Pool of the Arkansas River, near North Little Rock. The area offers recreation opportunities such as covered picnic areas, a group shelter, walking and biking trails, and a boat ramp. The area is also an access point to the Big Dam Bridge, a popular walking and biking destination.

The roadway access to Cook's Landing had deteriorated after years of use. The roadways and shoulders had declined to the point where asphalt was breaking apart, potholes had formed, alligator cracking, and depressions were forming. If the road conditions were not corrected, the roadways would continue to deteriorate, resulting in hazards to motorists, damage to vehicles, reduction in use of facilities (which could result in partial closures), and increase the cost of maintenance.

Cook's Landing received funding through the FLTP, a grant program through the Federal Highways Administration under the Department of Transportation. FLTP was created to provide funding assistance for transportation infrastructure owned and maintained by Federal Land Management Agencies. FLTP funds provided \$925,000 for improvements at Cook's landing including enhancements to one mile of roadway, one large parking lot, and two smaller parking lots.



The diligent Little Rock District team worked with a contractor to complete the repairs according to Arkansas Department of Transportation standards, including mobilization/demobilization, surface preparations, milling/scarifying, tack coat, 2" hot-mix asphalt overlay, stripping, pavement marking, and shoulder repair for approximately one mile of roadway and 3,900 square yard of parking lots in Cook's Landing. Work was completed in February of 2023 and the Little Rock team came in under budget, allowing for remaining FLTP funds to be shared with other sites across the country.

### Project Benefits to the Public:

- Improved access for about 310,000 visitors annually to walk, bike, boat and enjoy the day use facilities such as individual covered picnic site, group shelter and boat ramp.
- Improvement to safety for recreational visitors accessing the park due to road maintenance and low water crossing.



## Meet Your PAC Team Members

Heather Burke  
HQUSACE

Francis Ferrell - Chair  
SAD (Falls Lake)

Jared Gagnon  
NAD (East Brimfield Lake)

Mike McCoy  
LRD (Huntington District Office)

Phil Manhart  
MVD (Lake Shelbyville)

Taylor Baughn  
SPD (San Francisco Bay Model)

Keith Hyde  
NWD (Lucky Peak Lake)

Jennifer Linde  
SWD (Fort Worth District Office)

## 2023 National Public Lands Day



**5,231**  
VOLUNTEERS  
ENGAGED BY USACE



**20,000+**  
VOLUNTEER HOURS  
PROVIDED TO USACE



**\$638,942**  
VALUE OF SERVICE



**218**  
PARTNERS INVOLVED



**50**  
MILES OF TRAIL  
MAINTAINED



**57**  
TONS OF  
TRASH REMOVED



**150**  
ACRES OF HABITAT  
IMPROVED



**60**  
MILES OF ROADWAY  
CLEARED

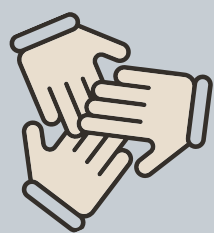
# FY23 Partnerships Program Accomplishments



## Extension of Grand Trunk Trail at Westville Lake

Jared Gagnon, Park Ranger, East Brimfield Lake, NAE

The Town of Sturbridge, Massachusetts in collaboration with USACE staff at Westville Lake and the Department of Conservation and Recreation Massachusetts Trails recently completed construction of a half-mile extension of the Grand Trunk Trail on USACE property along the Quinebaug River. The Grand Trunk Trail is a popular multi-use trail with a name that pays homage to the fact that large portions of the trail were built on an abandoned railroad bed originally constructed by the Grand Trunk Railway in the early 1900s.



**3,622**  
TOTAL PARTNERS



**304 of 422**  
USACE PROJECTS WITH PARTNERSHIPS  
(72% of USACE Projects)

### PARTNERS ENGAGED BY REGION

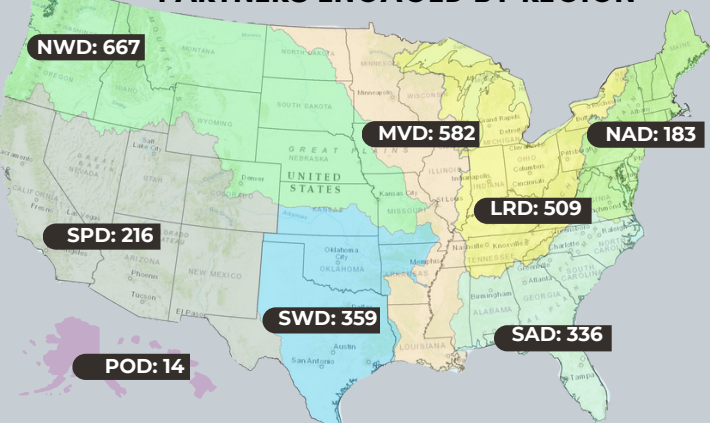


Photo above: USACE staff and partners at trail grand opening.

This new trail section was first envisioned in 2000. It will serve as an important link between the existing trail system at Westville Lake and additional existing and proposed trail systems located throughout Sturbridge. The cost of construction was \$415,000; the vast majority of which was funded with local and state grants. The project was also made possible through a generous easement provided by the Morse Family of Sturbridge, MA. The staff at Westville Lake have been close partners with The Town of Sturbridge and the Sturbridge Trails Committee for over 20 years and look forward to working together on future projects that improve recreational opportunities in the area. ■

**\$138,001,584**



**TOTAL VALUE OF PARTNERSHIPS**

(USACE Investment: \$37 million (27%))

(Partner Investment: \$101.1 million (73%))

## Baylor University "Steppin' Out" Shoreline Cleanup

Matthew Hackler, Park Ranger, Waco Lake, SWF

Baylor University located in Waco, Texas was chartered in 1845 and is the oldest continually operating university in Texas. It enrolls roughly 21,000 students from across the United States and 100 foreign countries. Baylor is committed to academics, but service is an integral part of the Baylor student experience.

Article continued on page 7.

## Baylor continued

Baylor continually involves its students, faculty and staff in community service opportunities, recording over 150,000 hours of community service in and around Waco.

Twice a year, thousands of Baylor University students engage in an event called "Steppin' Out", in which Baylor students "step out" to serve the Waco community. Baylor alumni and Waco Lake volunteer coordinator Park Ranger Matthew Hackler coordinated the fall semester "Steppin' Out" Waco Lake service day with the director of the "Steppin' Out" student planning committee. Partnering with this committee allowed USACE to manage a large influx of volunteers by accommodating trash bags, grabbers, gloves, hi-visibility safety vests, and water.



Taking advantage of Waco Lake being 12' below conservation pool, multiple sites along exposed shoreline were selected for the number of students projected to take part in the service day. Students were oriented to the lake and USACE missions upon check-in, participated in a safety brief, and then divided up between Park Rangers Hackler and Taylor Christian to complete their service. In total, 158 volunteers cleaned approximately 20 acres of shoreline and disposed of 120 trash bags. This volunteer service attracted local news channel KXXV to interview students and tell the story to those in the community.

This was a great and effective opportunity to inform the Baylor student body about the USACE missions, establish future volunteer opportunities, and increase awareness of USACE in the Waco Community! ■



## Celebrating Los Angeles District's Premier Cooperative Partnership Agreement

There are big things happening in Los Angeles District, especially when it comes to partnerships!

On Oct. 17, 2023 Col. Andrew Baker, L.A. District commander, and Stacy Gorin, Executive Director of the Southern California Mountains Foundation (SCMF), signed a commemorative document acknowledging a Cooperative Agreement between USACE Los Angeles District and SCMF. SCMF is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to missions such as a youth development through conservation initiatives, environmental education, training, hands-on service projects, interpretive services, outdoor recreation, responsible use, and stewardship of the natural environment.

This partnership agreement is the first of its kind in the region and provides opportunities for cross-organizational training, interpretation, education, and environmental stewardship services at Mojave River Dam and Reservoir. SCMF volunteers also gain experience in project planning, development, and implementation on USACE project lands. Currently, USACE and SCMF's Urban Conservation Corps and OHV crew are working together to protect a sensitive wildlife and wetland area and promote responsible recreation on Corps lands.



Photo above: Cooperative agreement signing ceremony.  
Photo by Dena O'Dell, LA District Public Affairs

**Congratulations L.A. District  
on this accomplishment!**

## FY23 Volunteer Program Accomplishments

Over the past year, volunteers played a valuable role in helping care for the environment and providing high quality recreation opportunities.

**Total Volunteers**



**42,839**

**316**



**Projects Using Volunteers**

**Total Volunteer Hours Served**



**1,715,001**

Equivalent to 825 FTEs

**\$54.5 Million**



**Total Value of Volunteer Hours**



Over the past 10 years, the USACE volunteer workforce has averaged approximately 35,000 providing 1.5 million hours of service annually.

**616**

To Volunteers for 250 Hours of Service



**America the Beautiful Passes Issued**



To Volunteers for 100 Hours of Service

**4,647**

**USACE Annual Passes Issued**

**23**



**Volunteer Excellence Coins Issued**

Thank you to ALL of our USACE volunteers!

## 2024 Handshake Program Funding Recipients

The Handshake Program offers a source of seed money to USACE lakes/ivers for worthwhile partnership projects. The intent of this program is to enhance existing recreation opportunities and natural resources by providing an incentive to USACE projects to utilize partnering initiatives to their fullest potential by combing funding from local USACE projects and their partners to benefit the public.

Six projects selected for 2024 Handshake funding are:

- Burnsville Lake: Falls Mill all access paddle craft launch
- Lake Barkley: Cadiz Park playground and accessibility improvements
- Lake Seminole: Saunders Slough restoration project
- Patoka Lake: American Chestnut reintroduction
- Rend Lake: Enhancement of multi-use trails
- Tioga-Hammond Lake: Pollinator field and nature trail with habitat restoration

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

## NRM Gateway Spotlight: Military Partnerships

Visit the Military Partnerships page to find examples of partnering efforts with military organizations. On this page you will find maps of military installations on or near USACE lakes, success stories, and detailed information about our newest authority to accept troop training services at no cost to USACE.

The screenshot shows the Natural Resources Management Gateway website. The header includes the US Army Corps of Engineers logo and the tagline "to the future...". A navigation menu lists various categories like Home, Visitors, Lake Discovery, Recreation, Env Compliance, Env Stewardship, Partners, News/Events, People, Forums, Learning, GETS, Tools, New Postings, Submit, and Index/Search. The main content area is titled "Military Partnerships" and contains text about the Corps' dedication to encouraging military use of recreation resources and its commitment to expanding programs for military members and families. A list of links is provided at the bottom, including "News/Current Issues", "Corps/Military Partnership Success Stories", "Military Installations on Corps Lands", "Army Installations Near Corps Lakes", "Supportive Services for Veteran Families", "Army Recovery Care Program", "Wounded Warrior Project", "Operation Purple Camps", "Operation Warfighter Program", and "WRDA 2022 Sec 8124 Reserve Component Training".