



US Army Corps of Engineers
BUILDING STRONG®

Corps signs agreement with locals, promotes volunteer and educational programs

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By Brittany Bangert

TIOGA, Pa. — Community leaders, volunteers, visitors and members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers gathered Feb. 11 at the Ives Run Visitor Center for a ceremonial signing of the Friends of Tioga-Hammond & Cowanesque Lakes cooperative agreement. This agreement establishes a formal relationship between the Corps and community to provide volunteers, services, educational programs and family events to the local community.

"Declining federal recreation budgets in recent years require an innovative approach to operating our nation's parks," said Col. Trey Jordan, commander of the Baltimore District. "By collaborating with partners like the Friends of Tioga-Hammond and Cowanesque Lakes, we can keep parks open and continue to offer quality recreation to millions of visitors every year." The park, formed by the construction of three dams in and around Tioga, Pa., sees more than 250,000 visitors each year.

"The partnership with the Friends will provide additional outdoor recreational and educational opportunities for families, while simultaneously protecting and improving natural resources," said Robert Schnell, operations project manager for Tioga-Hammond and Cowanesque Lakes.

The establishment of this agreement represents the culmination of effort that began in August 2011 when Dina Henninger, park ranger at THC; and Ruth Hermansen, secretary and associate director for student life at Mansfield University, met to research and discuss ways to better use the natural resources of the park to serve the community. Soon after, the process of looking for potential board members and establishing a non-profit organization began.

In January 2012, the group elected local community members and frequent visitors to THC lakes as board members, which included its now-president and local business owner, Don Kelly.

"A few years ago, I was invited to a meeting about forming this Friends organization," said Kelly. "I saw this as an even bigger opportunity to help give back to a place that has meant so much to me," said Kelly.

During the past two years, the group has already conducted campground events, pet parades, family movie nights, and educational events such as an ice fishing seminar.

"We are very excited to have formed this new partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,

Photos



Don Kelly (left), president of Tioga-Hammond and Cowanesque Lakes officially signs the cooperative agreement with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District commander Col. Trey Jordan along with members from the board. (Photo by Brittany Bangert)

Baltimore District," said Kelly. "Right now we are a small organization, but our goals and objectives are big."

Other Corps projects throughout the country use cooperative agreements to assist with park operations and to increase volunteers.

Within the Corps' Baltimore District – of which THC falls – exists agreements the Friends of Jennings Randolph Lake and Friends of Raystown Lake. These similar agreements have led to opportunities such as lakeshore clean-ups, trail improvements, environmental education, staffing visitor information centers, fishery improvements, hunting events for the physically disabled and recycling programs.

“If you benefit from the parks in any way or want to help us ensure these projects will remain a great recreational destination for many years to come, then I encourage you to join us,” said Kelly.

Each year, an estimated two million visitors use the many public parks, shelters and campgrounds located throughout New York, Pennsylvania and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District.