

Handshake Partnership Program Report - FY 2011 Recipients

1. Name of Corps Project/Lake: Blakely Mountain Dam, Lake Ouachita

2. Handshake Project Name: Lake Ouachita Vista Trail

3. What has been accomplished? Please provide photographs; before, during, and after!:
A 16 mile extension to the Lake Ouachita Vista Trail, a multi-purpose trail open to hikers, bikers, joggers, and nature enthusiasts located near Crystal Springs recreation area on Lake Ouachita. Benches, Signage, foot bridges, and parking areas were purchased with handshake funding. Remaining funds were utilized toward the purchase of outdoor exercise equipment placed along the ADA portion of the Lake Ouachita Vista Trail.

	Total
Handshake Program Funding Amount	\$25000
Local Corps Office Funds (total expended on labor, materials, contracts, etc.)?	\$21000
Partner's Contributions (total value of funds, goods, services, volunteer hours, etc.)	
Partners Name	Total Value of Contributions
1 Lake Ouachita Citizen Focus Committee	\$43000
2	\$
3	\$
4	\$
5	\$
6	\$

4. Handshake Program Recipient Feedback

Please take this opportunity to provide feedback on all aspects of the Handshake Program and the Challenge Partnership Agreement authority. Your productive comments are important to the ongoing improvement of the program. Make sure to let us know how the Handshake funds have benefited your efforts to initiate and/or strengthen your partnerships.

A. Comments About Handshake Program: This program is very beneficial in providing seed money to foster positive partnerships. In times of challenging budgets, this funding makes possible projects that otherwise could not be accomplished.

B. Comments About Challenge Partnership Agreement: _____

C. Recommendations: This program is a wonderful program that should be continued each year.

5. Handshake Summary:

Please also include a separate one-page newspaper type article describing the project and the benefit to the Corps of Engineers and to the public as a result of this partnership project.

Examples can be found on the gateway under [Handshake Success Stories](#).

The LOCFC, comprised of regional volunteers, was established in 2001 to assist the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in developing initiatives and providing input to enhance public opportunities at Lake Ouachita. Meeting monthly, the committee is comprised of 15 volunteer members, including fishermen, marina operators, retirees, avid campers, and environmentalists. This year marks their 11th anniversary. Over the first eleven years, the LOCFC has made tremendous strides and positive differences for the benefit of visitors and tourism in the area. Operating on a shoestring without a budget, dues, etc., they continually utilize grants, partnerships and technology to complete many notable accomplishments towards support of our Recreation and Environmental Stewardship missions. They are truly Partners in Excellence!

Seeking a solution to the dramatic off-season drop in tourism revenues for the counties bordering Lake Ouachita, the Committee proposed constructing a new hiking and biking trail along the southern shores of Lake Ouachita. A coalition of federal, state, and county partners, in association with private individuals and organizations, was created to support construction of the trail, now known as *The Lake Ouachita Vista Trail (LOViT)*. To date, 36 miles of the proposed 45 miles of trail have been constructed by volunteers from the LOCFC, the "Trail Dogs" (an enthusiastic pack of hardworking volunteers!) and the Student Conservation Association. These volunteers have donated over six thousand hours in support of construction and on-going maintenance of the trail. They are known for their innovative trail design and construction methods focused on developing this new Class A trail at a minimum cost. In 2011 and 2012, several supporting projects have been completed to complement the trail, including an 800-foot ADA accessible elevated walkway with ADA fishing pier, numerous foot bridges, parking lots, trail heads, and a pavilion built by the trail dogs. In 2012, LOCFC was able to purchase through grant funds, six outdoor exercise stations to be placed along the ADA/Watchable Wildlife portion of the trail to support the "Get Outdoors" Healthy Initiative. This equipment is very popular with the local community, and many visitors utilize these stations daily. When the 45 miles of trail are completed, it will connect five resorts, six Corps of Engineers recreation areas, and two U.S. Forest Service campsites. The LOCFC has established a website and Face book page featuring the Vista Trail and Trail Dogs' activities to technologically enhance the trail effort.

In 2012, Lake Ouachita Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District entered into a handshake partnership agreement with the Lake Ouachita Citizen Focus Committee. The partnership handshake grant funding made it possible to continue construction of the Lake Ouachita Vista Trail with installation of signage, kiosks, parking areas, benches, and outdoor exercise equipment. The Trail dogs, a group of volunteers from the Citizen Focus Committee dedicated to trail construction, donated over 1500 hours in volunteer service in 2010 and 2011 clearing the trail, installing bridges, benches, gravel pave, and signage.

The Vista Trail has grown in popularity, and hiking and biking organizations from seven different states now schedule annual events on the trail including marathons, extreme sporting events, and Hike for a Cure. The trail extends through beautiful hardwood forests and offers picturesque views of Lake Ouachita. Thousands of individual trail users enjoy the Lake Ouachita Vista trail each year, bringing new recreational revenues to the Montgomery and Garland County areas.

Before:



DURING:



After:

