

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Fiscal Year 2011
Handshake Program Application**

Please review instructions before completing application!

Corps Lake/Project Name:**Black Warrior & Tombigbee/Alabama-Coosa Project**

Handshake Proposal Title:**West Alabama Birding Trail**

Corps POC Name:**Diane Gruman**

Telephone:(**205**) **553 - 9373** ext.

E-Mail: **Diane.L.Gruman@usace.army.mil**

A. Eligibility checklist:

1. Is the funding going to be spent at Corps facilities and resources that are being maintained at 100% federal expense? * **Yes** **No**
2. Is the agreement with a non-federal public or private entity(ies)? * **Yes** **No**
3. Is the proposed activity within current authorities and contained in the annual or 5-year work plan in the approved OMP? ** **Yes** **No**
4. If no, when will the OMP be updated and approved? (example: Sept 10)

**If "No" to either question 1 or 2 the proposal cannot be authorized under the Corps' challenge partnership authority.*

*** If "No" to question 3 and the date provided in answer to question 4 would come after the commencement of your proposed challenge partnership your activity can not be authorized.*

B. Handshake Funding Program Request (maximum \$25,000): \$25,000

C. Cooperating Association Agreement Bonus: Challenge Partnerships that include an organization (cooperating associations, friends groups) with which your project/district has recently (after January 1, 2009) entered into a Cooperating Association Agreement are eligible to compete for an additional \$5000. You must include a copy of the signed agreement with your proposal. (Reference Chapter 9 of ER and EP 1130-2-500 for information on cooperating associations).

Date of Cooperating Association Agreement: (must be after January 1, 2009 to be eligible).

D. Incentive Points Categories: Check the box for each category that applies to your Challenge Partnership Agreement and include an explanation in the project description (Section E.). Qualifying applications will receive bonus points on their evaluation score.

Utilizes an existing National Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) - National Partner MOU's are posted on the NRM Gateway <http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/partners/list.html>). Local and regional chapters of national partner organizations are eligible. Groups must be an intended signatory to the agreement in order to qualify for the bonus points.

Includes a veterans and/or military family organization. Groups must be an intended signatory to the agreement in order to qualify for the bonus points.

Presidents Challenge - Active Lifestyle Program: Project provides specific opportunities for children and their families to get outdoors and participate in activities in order to receive a Presidents Active Lifestyle Award. http://www.presidentschallenge.org/the_challenge/active_lifestyle.aspx

E. Describe your partnership and the proposed project:

Your project will be evaluated on the following categories: Sustainability, Partnership Value, Recreation Benefit, Environmental Stewardship Benefit, Communication and Education Value, and Innovativeness. Please address each in your description. Also address incentive point categories you have identified in Section D.

Description:

Birding and wildlife watching has grown more rapidly than any other form of outdoor recreation in the U.S. A 2006 survey conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports a 19% increase from 1996 to 2006. A second statistic from the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation stated that birdwatchers numbered almost 48 million and those that traveled away from home totaled 19.8 million. The popularity of this outdoor recreational activity is expected to continue its upward growth pattern well into the future.

The Alabama Tourism Department has recognized the need to provide these wildlife enthusiasts with an experience throughout the state and has initiated the Alabama Birding Trails development project. The need for eight Alabama Birding Trails has been identified. These trails, when completed, are expected to unify existing and potential birding sites into a series of cohesive trails and loops that are collectively marketed as part of a state-wide system. Many of the sites along the various trails are already being used by thousands of birders and other visitors annually. However, most of these locations function independently and are limited in their capabilities to market their resources.

As will be ultimately implemented, the Alabama Birding Trails will offer the public a chain of eight geographic regions known as the following: North Alabama, West Alabama, Appalachian Highlands, Piedmont Plateau, Black Belt Nature and Heritage, Pineywoods, Wiregrass, and Alabama Coastal Birding Trails. The number of sites within each of these regions will vary. The North Alabama Birding Trail and the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail have been completed and proven very popular. The Alabama Black Belt Nature & Heritage Trail and the Pineywoods Birding Trail are both in the development stage. The remaining four trails are in the planning phase. This request would assist with the development and implementation of the West Alabama region. This region includes Bibb, Greene, Hale, Pickens, Tuscaloosa, Marion, Lamar, Fayette, and Walker counties.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been approached in regard to six of our parks and campgrounds located throughout Greene, Hale, and Tuscaloosa counties. These parks include Forkland Campground, Runaway Branch #2 Park, Lock #5 Park, Jennings Ferry Campground and Old Lock #8 Park which all fall under the Demopolis Site Office. The sixth, Rocky Branch Park is under the care of the Holt Resource Office. These two offices manage and monitor activity along the Black Warrior River which begins below Birmingham and empties into Mobile Bay. Each site has been evaluated and shown generous bird populations within a variety of woodland, wetland, and water habitats. These locations would need no improvements because they already provide the required amenities which include safe parking, restrooms, and basic picnic facilities. These sites are also convenient, accessible, and have the appeal to attract out-of-state visitors, as well as Alabamians who are seeking a quality outdoor experience.

The funding requested would cover the cost of materials needed to promote and publicize each involved U.S. Army Corps of Engineers site. The design and hosting of a website would promote all of the sites within the West Alabama region. It would provide a clickable map for each site with detailed descriptions and driving directions. A link to each of the other regions will be prominent on the website, in addition to one for the Alabama Birding Trail website. Also proposed for each site is a map or guide, site identification signs, roadway directional signs and an interpretive plan and panels. The map or guide would require data research, writing,

editing, graphic design, images and map preparation. It would also cover printing cost for 50,000 copies of a brochure, in addition to an 8 panel map/guide. A site identification sign (48 x 36) will be located at each area bearing a graphic design that will be consistent with all of the existing trails. Three directional signs will be placed along Alabama highways which will contain the Birding Trail logo and site number. This sign will also be consistent with those of the existing trails. The interpretive aspect would encompass a thematic framework for all of the areas. Interpretive messages and images would be placed on pedestal style posts at each site. A larger panel (24x36) would also be placed at each location depicting a variety of information. The cost to create and place these items is \$4,121.48 per site. With a total of six sites on Corps property the total cost will be \$24,728.88.

The Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources and Alabama Tourism Department contributed \$50,328.00 towards research related to several U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sites. These funds were used to inspect the areas to determine whether they would meet the criteria desired for each site and were spent before the Corps was approached. Once the Corps was contacted we reviewed the list of proposed sites and suggested six as the best suited to participate in the West Alabama region. The Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources has also contributed in-kind services provided through staff participation, evaluation, and overall expertise in wildlife observation and land management. The Alabama Tourism Department has contributed to the project management fees in addition to donated staff time associated with organization of the projects, facilitation and management of all funding secured for the project, and inter-department coordination with Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, Alabama Department of Transportation, and Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The Appalachian Regional Commission has contributed \$33,528.00 towards website design and prototype development of maps and guides, site identification signs and the interpretive panels and interpretive messages and images that will be used at each site.

Sustainability – As stated earlier, interest in birding and wildlife watching is on the rise. Over a third of participants are willing to travel to experience nature and all it has to offer. This proposal will support one area in a system of eight that will blanket the entire state. It stands to reason that people will explore the areas in their backyard first, and then move onto other areas. With two Corps areas located inside Class A campgrounds and other areas near Corps campgrounds it is also reasonable to expect new campers to make use of our facilities. Therefore, the lifespan of this product could be labeled infinite.

Partnership Value – The entire cost of research and planning has been put forth by partnering organizations. The cost of development, execution, and maintenance will be covered by grants and donations received from various entities or by funds contributed from the group on whose property the site is located. Future replacement of signs and other materials will be taken care of by funds set aside and held by the Alabama Tourism Department.

Environmental Stewardship Value – According to the Alabama Birding Association’s Code of Ethics, “Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first”. The West Alabama Birding Trail and surrounding areas will stay well maintained due to the nature of visitors it will attract. These visitors will ensure that the areas are kept in a manner that will provide a healthy habitat to keep and attract other wildlife species. This project will create a positive cycle that will help sustain these areas for many years.

Recreational Benefit – Two of these areas are located in Class A campgrounds and one is a beach day use area. This would help draw a new variety of people to these facilities and create awareness of other recreational opportunities for the entire family. It would also alert the general public to some of the Corps other interests and provide an avenue to more diverse projects.

Communication and Education Value – This project would expand the public’s view of the Corps because we are associated with water. While this is one of our primary functions it no longer defines the Corps. These viewing areas will educate interested audience members to the diverse wildlife that can be found on Corps property throughout West Alabama. The interpretive information and brochures will provide additional facts that viewers may pass on to other individuals, which would generate additional awareness for the Corps.

Innovativeness – This project has gathered several organizations, agencies, universities, and politicians together to meet a demand that increases each year. It will be a part of a larger system that will operate throughout the state and tie a variety of natural resources together. This project will help create a unique experience for anyone who loves the outdoors and broaden their knowledge of the natural world. It will also create awareness of the diverse opportunities available throughout Alabama.

The Corps will:

The Corps will be tasked with the general cleaning and maintenance at each of their sites as they are now. We would also take responsibility for placement of the site identification sign as well as the interpretive panels because these will be placed on Corps property. Directional signs will be placed by the Alabama Department of Transportation. The Alabama Birding Trail website will be maintained by the Alabama Tourism Department, while the West Alabama region website will be maintained by the Tuscaloosa Convention and Visitors Bureau. There are plans for funds to be set aside, and held by the Alabama Tourism Department, to replace damaged signs.

The Partner(s) will:

The Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources will continue to contribute personnel to the site plan development. The Alabama Tourism Department will continue to donate staff time associated with organization of the project, facilitation and management of all funding secured for the project, and inter-department coordination with Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, Alabama Department of Transportation, and Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The Alabama Birding Trail website will be hosted by the Alabama Tourism Department. The Appalachian Regional Commission will develop the website for each region as they are completed.

Challenge Partnership Financial Work Sheet

Corps Project Name: Black Warrior & Tombigbee/Alabama-Coosa Project

Work Project Title: West Alabama Birding Trail

POC Name: Diane Gruman

Address: 11911 Holt Lock & Dam Rd. City: Peterson State: AL Zip Code: 35478

Telephone: 205-553-9373

Location on Project: Forkland Campground, Runaway Branch #2 Park, Lock #5 Park, Jennings Ferry Campground, Old Lock #8 Park, Rocky Branch Park

Partner Organization 1: Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

POC Name: Mark Sasser

Address: 64 N. Union Street, Suite 468 City: Montgomery State: AL Zip Code: 36130

Telephone: 334-242-3469

Partner Organization 2: Alabama Tourism Department

POC Name: Kerry Teague

Address: 401 Adams Avenue, Suite 126 City: Montgomery State: AL Zip Code: 36103

Telephone: 334-242-4359

Partner Organization 3: Appalachian Regional Commission

POC Name: Bonnie Durham

Address: P.O. Box 681093 City: Ft. Payne State: AL Zip Code: 35968

Telephone: 256-845-3472

Proposed start date of work: October 2010

Simple description of work to be accomplished through the partnership: Develop several visitor friendly birding and nature viewing areas throughout West Alabama, which will be a part of the Alabama Birding Trail.

Double click on spreadsheet to access data entry fields:

	Local Corps Office	Handshake Funds	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 3	Total
Salaries	\$500	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500
Travel	\$0	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Materials and Supplies	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
Equipment Use	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0
Funds Contributed	N/A	N/A	\$6,210	\$44,118	\$33,528	\$83,856
Personal Property	N/A	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Volunteer	N/A	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
In-Kind Services	N/A	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other (explain below)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$500	\$25,000	\$6,210	\$44,118	\$33,528	\$109,356
Share of Total Cost	0.5%	22.9%	5.7%	40.3%	30.7%	100%

Explanations: The funds contributed by Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Alabama Tourism Department, and Appalachian Regional Commission have all been put towards research, planning and development of this project. No funding has been given to the Corps for any purpose.