

Handshake Partnership Program Report - FY 2013 Recipients

1. Name of Corps Project/Lake: Raystown Lake Project

2. Handshake Project Name: The Raystown Lake Naturalized Wildlife & Bird Watering Rehabilitation Project

3. What has been accomplished? Please provide photographs; before, during, and after!:
The Raystown Lake Naturalized Wildlife & Bird Watering Rehabilitation Project included the renovatation and revitalization of over 5,500 square feet of degraded wildlife and birding habitat adjacent to the Visitors Center. Previously the area provided little educational and wildlife benefits to the facility. Inefficient pumps and aging infrastructure of the ponds required ongoing maintenance that was beyond the availability of current and future resources. Non-professional contouring of the gardens and plant selection led to inadequate drainage and damaging runoff conditions. Leaks and poor plumbing required daily addition of treated water while invasive plant intrusions outcompeted most native plants, limiting natural food sources and attracting little diversity in wildlife.

The project, now completed, included: (1) the removal of the existing ponds (2) the construction of new water and energy efficient ponds, (3) the design and implementation of a rain garden, (4) treatment of invasive species, and (5) native plantings. The project has transformed the existing area into an environmentally sound, sustainable, and aesthetically pleasing landscape feature for the visiting public while serving as a critical educational (interpretive) extension of the Visitor Center exhibits. Please find attached before, during, and after photographs of the project along with additional project details.

	Total
Handshake Program Funding Amount	\$30,000
Local Corps Office Funds (total expended on labor, materials, contracts, etc.)?	\$14,000
Partner's Contributions (total value of funds, goods, services, volunteer hours, etc.)	
Partners Name	Total Value of Contributions
1 Natural Biodiversity	\$8,000
2 The Friends of Raystown Lake	\$11,370
3 The Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau	\$2,500
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: The Handshake Program was well announced to encourage participation in the program with an adequate amount of time provided to prepare quality applications and develop partnership opportunities. The Partnership Program on the NRM Gateway is well done to provide a host of examples, ideas, and tutorials to aide in the process. This project would not have been completed without the availability and support of the Handshake Program.

B. Comments About Challenge Partnership Agreement: The example Challenge Partnership Agreements provided on the NRM Gateway are excellent tools to begin the process of writing the document. The availability to utilize Challenge Partnership Agreements provides as avenue to complete projects such as these.

C. Recommendations: None. The program is well executed and beneficial to Corps Projects in terms of the public we serve and the natural resource we strive to protect and enhance.

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.



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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For Immediate Release:
Date:
(Assigned by PAO)

Contact:
Jude Harrington, Park Ranger
814-658-3405
Jude.T.Harrington@usace.army.mil

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Corps and Partners Complete Project at Raystown Lake Visitors Center

RAYSTOWN LAKE, Pa. — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Raystown Lake announces the completion of a naturalized wildlife and bird watering project adjacent to the Raystown Lake Visitors Center. The project, which included the renovation and revitalization of over 5,500 square feet of degraded wildlife and birding habitat, was supported through the Corps Handshake Program.

In 2013, the Corps' headquarters in Washington, D.C. awarded \$30,000 in funds as part of its Handshake Partnership Program, which provides a source of seed money to enhance recreation projects through community partnerships.

The staff at Raystown partnered with Natural Biodiversity of Ebensburg, The Friends of Raystown Lake, and the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau to design and construct rain gardens in the front of the Visitors Center and install a new, efficient and sustainable, pond system immediately adjacent to the Visitors Center. The project began with the demolition of existing, antiquated pond system by a group of enthusiastic volunteers from Huntingdon High School's Key Club. The Natural Biodiversity team provided a design for the rain garden which captures runoff from the Center's roof and appropriately channels it to the newly constructed pond. The design, implemented primarily by Friends of Raystown Lake volunteers, includes hundreds of native plantings which provide beautiful blooms during the spring, summer, and fall. "Not only are these plants beautiful for the visitor, but they provide critical support to pollinator species such as bees and butterflies which are in serious decline" said Park Ranger Tara Whitsel.

The Corps final step in the plan includes the development and incorporation of wayside exhibits to continue public education on the Corps Environmental Stewardship missions, energy sustainability efforts, and the benefits of incorporating rain garden and pond systems in the community and visitors homes. “With our federal budget continually under tight constraints, projects such as these would simply not be possible without the support and help from our partners,” said Nick Krupa, Raystown Lake Operation Manager. “We are looking forward to a beautiful spring around the Visitors Center.”

For more information on this project, contact the Raystown Lake Ranger Office at 814-658-6809.

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Photo: Students from the 2013 Huntingdon High School Key Club work to remove the previous pond at the Raystown Lake Visitors Center.



Photo: The completed rain garden captures run-off from the roof of the Visitors Center and channels it toward the newly constructed ponds.





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The Raystown Lake Naturalized Wildlife & Bird Watering Rehabilitation Project

Raystown Lake Project

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2013 Handshake Partnership Program

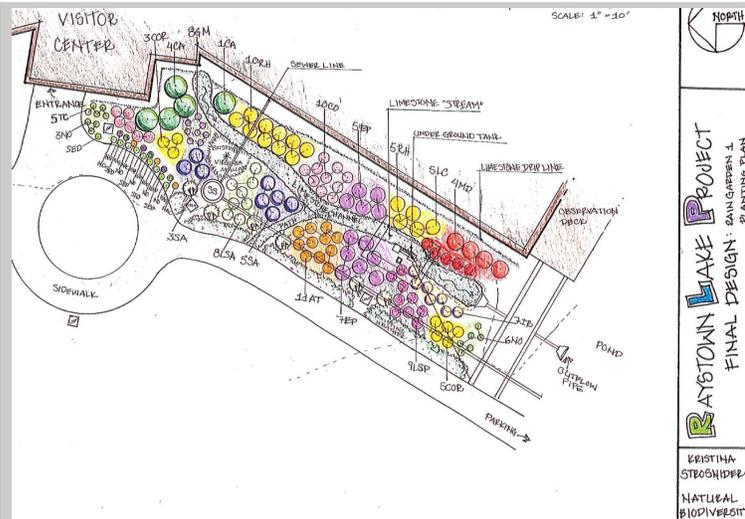
PAGE 1

The Raystown Lake Naturalized Wildlife & Bird Watering Rehabilitation Project consisted of 2 main efforts: (1) the design and implementation of a rain garden to replace the existing garden in the front of the Raystown Lake Visitor Center and (2) the removal, design, and construction of a water and energy efficient artificial pond system.



Photograph Above: The previous garden in front of the Raystown Lake Visitors Center. The gardens were continually plagued by weed growth, experienced severe damage from roof runoff, and provided little diversity for wildlife.

To begin the project, Raystown Staff developed a new partnership specifically for this project with Natural Biodiversity. Natural Biodiversity provided design and volunteer services. Existing partnerships with The Friends of Raystown Lake and the Huntingdon County Visi-



Photograph Above: Design layout for Garden A of the Raystown Lake Visitors Center.

tors Bureau were utilized and strengthened to provide resources and volunteer support. Natural Biodiversity provided a new design for the front of the Visitors Center that has effectively captured roof runoff and channels it appropriately to a newly designed pond system. Removal of the existing gardens and implementation of the new rain garden design (almost 3500 ft2 of garden area) were primarily completed by volunteers.

When necessary, Raystown Lake Project personnel and equipment were utilized. The Friends of Raystown Lake and the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau provided both financial and volunteer support to the project. Removal of non-native plants, combined with the planting of native species; now provides a host of flowers blooming all season that are not only aesthetically pleasing to visitors; but provide necessary resources to pollinator species and other wildlife.



Photograph Above: Corps personnel utilized a skid steer to dig a new drainage trench to capture roof runoff. The water captured in this system will provide water to the pond.



Photograph Above: Friends of Raystown Lake members, E.J. and Lori Hornick provided over 400 hours of volunteer service in this project.
Photograph Below: Garden A of the completed rain garden portion of the project during the first growing season.





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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

2013 Handshake Partnership Program

PAGE 2

The second phase of the Naturalized Wildlife & Bird Watering Rehabilitation Project included the removal, design, and construction of a water and energy efficient artificial pond system. The first step in this phase of the project was to remove the existing pond system which included in-efficient pumps and leaks that resulted in regular water loss.



Photograph Above: Before photos of the previous pond system.

Photographs Below (From Top to Bottom): Members of Huntingdon High School's Key Club volunteered their time, enthusiasm, and muscle to remove all of the existing pond system.



Raystown Staff utilized projects fund to establish a Landscaping Blanket Purchase Agreement to provide a contracting method for design and construction of the pond system which also provides for the inclusion of future maintenance needs that maybe beyond the scope of project personnel. The design incorporates water from the rain garden system which has dramatically reduced the need to artificially add water to the system. In addition, invasive species were removed and treated.

As in the rain garden system the project was completed through a variety of native plantings. Species were specifically chosen to provide bloom throughout the spring, summer, and fall to support the health of pollinator species. In addition grasses have been incorporated to provide winter habitat for wildlife species. A final step in the plan includes the development and incorporation of wayside exhibits to continue public education on the Corps Environmental Stewardship missions, energy sustainability efforts, and the benefits of incorporating rain garden and pond systems in the community and visitors homes.



Photograph Above: Contractor employees lay stone to begin configuring and implementing the design of the pond system.

Photograph Below: The completed pond system during a Pennsylvania winter.

