Handshake Partnership Program
Report - FY 2014 Recipients

1. Name of Corps Project/Lake: Allatoona Lake

2. District / Division of Corps Project/Lake: Mobile District/ South Atlantic Division

3. Handshake Project Name: Osprey Nesting Platform Project

4. What has been accomplished? Please provide photographs; before, during, and after!: The Allatoona Lake Osprey Nesting Platform Project first began with a partnership with the Georgia Power Company in 1998. At that time six osprey nesting platforms were erected in partnership with the company. For several years leading up to 2013, osprey population on the lake steadily increased with all six nesting platforms occupied by osprey. This lead to osprey looking for other nesting points, many times in dead trees, bridges, and even the Allatoona Powerhouse switch-yard frame. In 2013, the Allatoona Project once again sought out Georgia Power to help with erecting platforms around the lake for osprey habitation. Georgia Power agreed to contribute several power poles and would provide assistance installing the poles. The nesting platforms were built by Allatoona ranger staff to fit the poles donated by Georgia Power. In an unique twist, the platforms were made from recycled 1950's U.S. Army cots that once were used by Allatoona hydropower staff to spend the night at the dam. A second partner, Steel Materials, Inc, came on board and provided a powder coating to the metal platforms that stops rust and provides longevity to the platforms.

The project now complete, included the addition of nine new platforms around the lake. Once the platforms were all installed all nine were within months being used by osprey. In addition, three interpretive panels were added at the lake at viewing points for the osprey nesting platforms. In the Visitor Center, a full interpretive panel was added to help visitor identify osprey as well as to explain the Osprey Nesting Platform Program. Further benefits have been the strengthening of the lake projects partnerhip with the Georgia Power Company which also provides significant sponsership and assistance with the Great Lake Allatoona Cleanup.

	Total
Handshake Program Funding Amount	$3,617
Local Corps Office Funds (total expended on labor, materials, contracts, etc.)?	$9,000
Partner's Contributions (total value of funds, goods, services, volunteer hours, etc.)	
Partners Name	**Total Value of Contributions**
1 Georgia Power Company	$13,500
2 Steel Material, Inc	$3,600
3	$
4	$
5	$

6	$

5. 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 has been used on several occasions by this project. The program is usually announced well in advance and provides adequate directions on who, when and how to apply. Questions on the program have been fairly easy to find on the Gateway. The overall success of this program could not have been completed without the help of the Handshake Program.

B. Comments About Challenge Partnership Agreement: The examples of Challenge Partnership Agreements on the Gateway were utilized to help write the document. While the Project ran into problems with one major partner not wanting to sign the agreement, this was soon resolved and in no way was this the fault of the Handshake Program.

C. Recommendations: The Allatoona Lake Project has had much success at utilizing the Handshake Program and has no recommendations in terms of how the program could be better executed. The program provides an unique way for lake projects to "think outside the box" to complete projects and further partnerships.

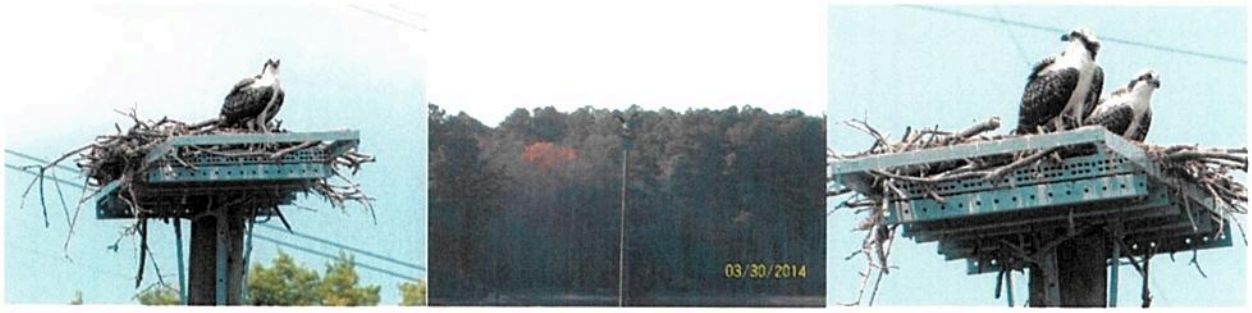
6. Handshake Summary:

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.

Before: Osprey utilized six nesting platforms that were erected in partnership with Georgia Power in 1998 while others used nesting areas such as natural dead trees that were not very supportive, framework of dangerous lake bridges, and even the Allatoona Powerhouse switch-yard frame.

During: U.S. Army cots from the 1950's were recycled and refitted to place on power poles. Partner Steel Materials coated the platforms to prevent rust and provide longevity outdoors. The platforms were secured to the poles in the field on the day of installation. Finally, partner Georgia Power provided poles, machinery and expertise in placing the poles in the ground.

After: Handshake monies were used to provide an interpretive display in the Allatoona Lake Visitor Center (left) and three interpretive panels at locations in full sight of osprey nesting platforms (right).



After: All nine nesting platforms installed for the Allatoona Osprey Nesting Platform Project are now occupied by nesting pairs of osprey. In addition, six platforms installed in 1998 were also occupied by osprey totaling fifteen nesting platforms.

US Army Corps of Engineers

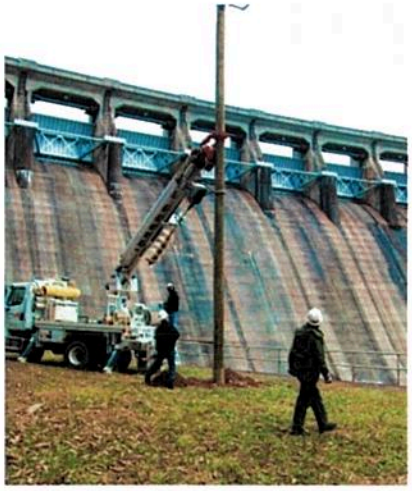
The Allatoona Lake Osprey Nesting Platform Project

Allatoona Lake Project
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
2014 Handshake Partnership Program

The Allatoona Lake Osprey Nesting Platform Project consisted of two components: (1) the installation of nine osprey nesting platforms at strategic points on the lake and (2) the addition of interpretive panels at three osprey nesting locations in view of the public and an interpretive display inside the Allatoona Lake Visitor Center.

Allatoona Rangers and Georgia Power workers ready to install platforms at Clark Creek South Campground assembled from recycled Army Cots onto donated power poles.

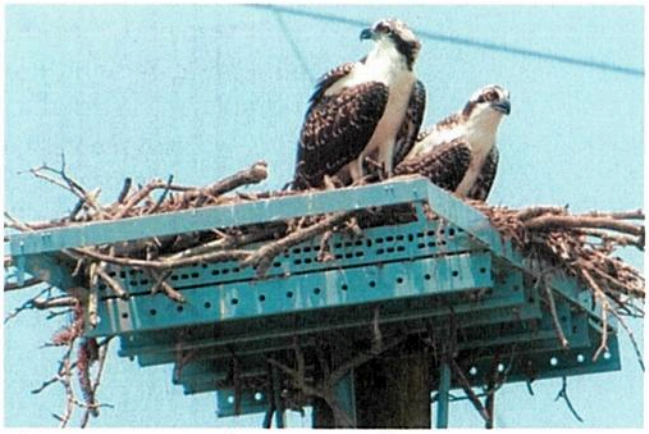
To partner on the project, Allatoona staff sought out the Georgia Power Company to help with providing poles and erecting the platforms around the lake. The Corps and Georgia Power had been long standing partners for years on other projects including installing six osprey nesting platforms together in 1998. Georgia Power jumped at the chance to assist on a worthwhile environmental project. A third partner was identified later when Steel Materials, Inc. came on board and provided professional cleaning and a powder coating to the platforms to help them last in the outdoors. Steel Materials owner, an avid outdoorsman and lake visitor, was more than willing to assist with the project.



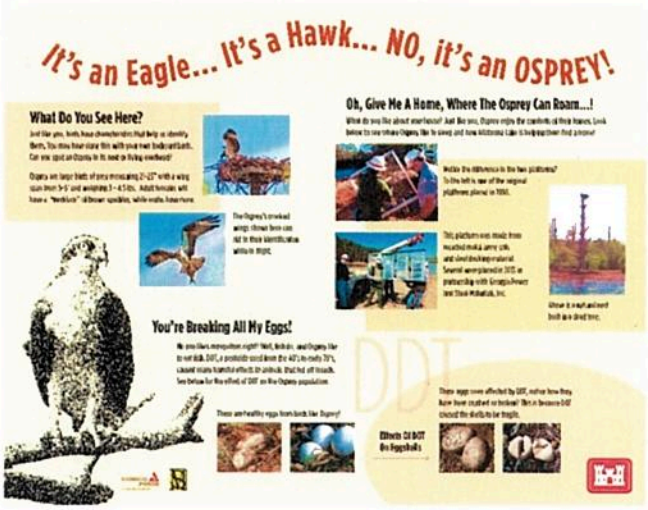
A platform added near the Dam provided a new nesting point for an osprey pair that had been attempting to nest in the Powerhouse switch-yard framework.

The Allatoona Lake Osprey Nesting Platform Project was completed in 2016 when an interpretive display and panels were added to the Visitor Center and select areas. The nine additional nesting platforms added during the project brought the total of platforms on Allatoona to fifteen. By 2015, all fifteen platforms had nesting pairs of osprey demonstrating the success of the project.

Rangers assist Georgia Power workers in erecting nesting poles at Old Hwy 41 #3 Campground.



Above - *Nesting pair of osprey, Tanyard Day Use Area 2016.*
Below - *One of three interpretive panels added to selected osprey viewing points on Allatoona.*



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Georgia Power helps ospreys thrive on Lake Allatoona

Georgia Power and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have teamed up to create a nesting habitat for ospreys in north Georgia.

Ospreys are large, fish-eating raptors with a wingspan of more than five feet. The birds spend the spring and summer in Georgia before traveling to Central and South America for the winter.

A line crew from Georgia Power's Cartersville Operating Headquarters erected two nesting platforms around Lake Allatoona near Emerson in Bartow County. The platforms were fastened to 45-foot distribution poles around the lake to encourage the birds to nest in the area.

Johnathan Wise, a Corps of Engineers representative, said the Corps of Engineers built the nesting platforms from the frame of U.S. Army cots from the 1950s. The beds were once housed within Allatoona Dam for hydro employees who had to spend the night at the dam.

"During the age of tight budgets you find creative ways to use material," said Wise. "We thought this was a creative way to recycle this material." Besides installing the platforms, Georgia Power supplied the poles that the platforms were fastened to.

"We were able to repurpose some poles for this project," said Candler Ginn, distribution resources and services project manager. "Donating the poles and the manpower furthers Georgia Power's commitment to the environment and it helps reestablish the habitat for the birds."

Ospreys like to nest on top of large, dead trees near the shoreline, but if trees are not available, they will seek manmade structures


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Georgia Power helps ospreys thrive on Lake Allatoona


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such as cell phone towers and high-voltage power lines. Building the nesting platforms keeps the large birds from putting themselves in harm's way. Bird's nests on or near electric equipment may cause power outages and endanger the birds.

The installation of the two nesting platforms brings the total around Lake Allatoona to eight. Georgia Power helped the Corps of Engineers install the first six platforms in the 1990s. The six nesting platforms have been used by ospreys since their installation.

The Corps of Engineers may add seven more nesting platforms to the area later this year.

USACE has eyes to the skies in habitat rehabilitation
by Matt Shinall
03.25.14 - 08:00 am

USACE Natural Resource Specialist Jonathan Wise moves one of the Osprey platforms created by recycling two Army cots and old walkways to courtesy docks. SKIP BUTLER/The Daily Tribune News

Read more: The Daily Tribune News - USACE has eyes to the skies in habitat

This summer, keep an eye out for birds of prey hunting above the waters of Lake Allatoona. An increasing osprey population at local bodies of water is, in part, due to the habitat rehabilitation efforts of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Osprey, one North America's largest raptors, hunt fish by swooping down to pluck their prey from the water. To do this, the osprey chooses its nesting ground with care — preferring a lone, tall, dead tree rooted well within the waterline of a body of water where its field of view is unimpaired and its young will not be threatened by predators on the ground.

For rangers on Lake Allatoona, the very nature of ospreys presented a challenge. Due to the lake's age and construction, trees cannot readily be found standing beyond the water's edge. To combat this, a project was taken up more than a decade ago to plant nesting platforms in the lake.

Today, the initial efforts of the USACE are evident in the birds that hunt and nest over Lake Allatoona every year. The six nesting platforms from the first project are now occupied each spring when osprey return to breed and their own nesting sites can be seen in Allatoona WMA and one brave bird has built its home atop Bethany Bridge at the entrance to Red Top Mountain State Park.

"The six that we had are all being used," said USACE Natural Resource Specialist Jonathon Wise. "So we just saw the need that there could be some more. I think with the amount of ospreys we're getting around here now, it'll be good to start it back up because every year there's a bird on all of the platforms.

"Ospreys aren't considered threatened or endangered, but back in the '50s and '60s they went through the same population decline as the eagle because of the DDT and the thinning of the shells, and they have had a great population rebound in the coastal areas. But, here in the inland, putting up nesting platforms is one of the best conservation techniques. That's really how they rebounded in this area after the banning of DDT."

When the need arose, USACE rangers knew what to do because a successful program had already been established, but since the first nesting platform project took place, a deep and lingering recession has taken a toll on the budgets of governmental agencies. The question became one of means rather than ability, but rangers at the Lake Allatoona field office off Spur 20 in Cartersville came up with a creative way to repurpose existing supplies as opposed to purchasing costly aluminum as was done in the past.

"When we were thinking of putting up new osprey nests, we had to come up with what we could use because we're limited by shrinking budgets," Wise said. "We couldn't go out and buy aluminum. We could have looked for donations, but then someone had the idea of using the beds we were about the throw away from the hydropower station. They're probably '50s- or '60s-era bed frames, they're real heavy metal, and they were just going to the junk pile.

"So we decided that would work for the frame and then we needed something for the bottom. We wanted something that would drain, but would be solid enough to hold the sticks they use. So we just went out our scrap pile to see what we had."

The result was enough material to create up to 12 new platforms using U.S. Army cots from the '50s and scrap from retired metal courtesy docks. The cots that will soon be home to osprey were once housed within Allatoona Dam for hydro-electric workers in case of emergency situations necessitating overnight shifts.

Once the platforms were built, rangers faced another obstacle — weather resistance. Aluminum was chosen for the initial project for its lifespan in harsh conditions, whereas 60-year-old steel cots pose a new challenge. The solution, however, was found in the services of a Cartersville business owner. Steel Materials owner Steve Cowart just so happens to be a lake enthusiast and outdoorsman and was glad to offer his services to the corps.

"We cleaned and powder-coated the platforms," Cowart said. "It's a baked-on finish that will stop rust and make it last a whole lot longer. Paint will peel off in a year or two and you'd have to repaint them, but powder coating should last eight to 10 years.

"I just wanted to help out. I just think anytime you can help the Corps of Engineers or anything like that it's good for the community and the environment."

The first powder-coated recycled nesting platforms went up earlier this month. Two more were scheduled to be erected Friday, but the threat of foul weather saw those plans postponed. The only problem is that as water levels rise for spring recreational use, the optimal locations for placement become submerged; therefore, the next round of platforms may not see use until 2014.

With the completion of this month's platforms, the total created nesting habitats rose to eight, and when the next round of platforms are erected, Georgia Power will be there to help. Georgia Power partnered with the USACE in the first nesting project and continues to help by donating utility poles as well as the equipment and labor to install them.

"We were approached by the corps to see if we would be able to help by putting in some wood poles because there's a lack of nesting habitat for the ospreys in Lake Allatoona because it's such an old lake it doesn't have any standing timber in the water and they like those locations," said Georgia Power Environmental Supervisor Jim Candler. "We actually did a project with the corps about 10 years ago that was very successful. We put up the poles and they made the platforms, and now all the ones we put up back then are being used.

"Sometimes they'll nest on our transmission towers near the lake or communication towers. They're not endangered, but they were declining in number up until several years ago and I think things like this — helping them get nesting areas out in lakes — have helped them come back."