

## Handshake Partnership Program Report - FY 2014 Recipients

**1. Name of Corps Project/Lake:** Mount Morris Dam and Recreation Area

**2. District / Division of Corps Project/Lake:** LRD-Buffalo-Mount Morris Dam and Recreation Area

**3. Handshake Project Name:** Wildlife Loop Trail

**4. What has been accomplished? Please provide photographs; before, during, and after!:**  
The Handshake Partnership program allowed the Mount Morris Dam and Recreation Area to create and develop a unique 1 mile Wildlife Loop nature trail. Volunteer help was used for the trail path creation and the handshake funds were used for interpretive and directional signs along the trail. The trail is unique that it gives kids the opportunity to Get Outdoors and experience wildlife in their natural habitat. Panels were created to be close in shape, size, and look to native animals typically encountered and visitors must go out and find them! This trail not only gets our visitors closer to nature, it adds yet another recreational feature to the Mount Morris Dam and Recreation Area.

	<b>Total</b>
<b>Handshake Program Funding Amount</b>	\$4000.00
<b>Local Corps Office Funds</b> (total expended on labor, materials, contracts, etc.)?	\$5000.00
<b>Partner's Contributions</b> (total value of funds, goods, services, volunteer hours, etc.)	
<b>Partners Name</b>	<b>Total Value of Contributions</b>
1 Genessee Valley Educational Partnership	\$18084.00
2 SUNY Geneseo Outing Club	\$4800.00
3 Finger Lakes Trail Conference	\$1000.00
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 allowed the Mount Morris Dam and Recreation area to build stronger relationships with current partners and to

give back to the community. This program added greatly to the recreation program and added to the visitors experience to the dam.

**B. Comments About Challenge Partnership Agreement:** The Mount Morris Dam and Recreation Area has forged strong relationships through this agreement that will extend well beyond this trail construction project and showcased a community coming together for a great cause.

**C. Recommendations:** Keep up with the program. It is a great tool to help our partners to get involved in the community and to make a direct impact on national recreation areas.

#### **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.



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## Mount Morris Dam and Recreation Area Handshake Partnership Award: Wildlife Loop Trail

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers partnered with the Genesee Valley Education Partnership (GVEP) Conservation Class, The State University of New York Geneseo-campus Outing Club (Outing Club), and the Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC) to create an interpretive multi-use trail, called 'The Wildlife Loop Trail,' at the Mount Morris Dam and Recreation Area between 2013-2016. The handshake program provided funds for interpretive panels and an informational kiosk to orient visitors to the trail and surrounding area. Project partners provided in-kind services assisting in the removal of invasive plants, delineating and blazing the trail and creating and installing directional signs, and wooden benches along the trail. Partners have also committed to the continued upkeep and maintenance of the trail surface and features.

### **Before:**

Creation of the Wildlife Loop Trail was part of a larger management plan referred to as the Back Forty Habitat Improvement Project, on ~ 40 acres of federal property at the Mount Morris Dam and Recreation Area. The USACE at the Mount Morris Dam began actively managing this area in 2011, following recommendations from a Level II Environmental inventory. Prior to dam construction (1940s), the plot was privately owned farm pasture. Following federal procurement, the area became a meadow, popular for bird and wildlife watching. After several decades, invasive plant species such as Autumn Olive, Tartarian Honeysuckle, Black Swallow-Wort, and Tree of Heaven began to dominate the area. USACE began restoring the meadow habitat and reducing the invasive species footprint but didn't have the resources to accomplish the mission without assistance. A multi-use trail was added to the Back Forty Habitat Improvement Project and included in an updated Operations Management Plan (OMP) with the idea that including more diverse recreation opportunities would generate multiple stakeholders who would then be highly vested in stewardship. Soon, partnerships were developed with GVEP, the Outing Club and FLTC to reduce the invasive plants and develop a multi-use trail. Handshake funds were sought to purchase interpretive signage along the trail to enhance the visitor experience.





### During:

Three local organizations provided invaluable assistance in the form of volunteer labor, materials, tools and equipment during wildlife loop trail construction. GVEP and Outing Club volunteers cleared invasive species, and assisted with blazing the trail path and creating a uniform trail surface. Additionally, GVEP fabricated and installed wooden direction signs and benches. The FLTC assisted with trail design and blazing, collected GPS data for mapping, and ultimately included the Wildlife Loop as a spur to the existing Finger Lakes Trail system. In total, GVEP provided some 600 hours of volunteer services, The Outing Club 200 hours and the FLTC an additional 40 hours. The combined 840 hours of service is valued at \$19,378. \$3k of Handshake funds were used to purchase several realistic wildlife images made into interpretive panels which were dispersed along the trail. The “animals” are representative of the habitat type that they frequent and guarantee that trail users have a wildlife ‘encounter’ each time they use the trail. The remaining \$1k of funds were used on materials for directional sign construction and for a sign base for the informational kiosk.





**After:**

The Wildlife Loop trail has been wildly successful since completion. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held in June of 2015, officially opening the trail to the public and thanking the various partners who assisted in its creation and ongoing maintenance. The trail offers families the opportunity to get nearer to nature while traversing through forest and restored meadow habitat. The work done by the volunteers has added nearly 2.5 acres of critical meadow habitat for pollinator and bird species. The trail takes visitors through varied habitat types and is great for wildlife viewing, casual hiking, snow-shoeing, cross country skiing, and is a popular hike for school field trips.



