

Handshake Partnership Program Final Project Close-Out Report

1. **Fiscal Year Selected as Winning Project:** 2020
2. **Name of Corps Project/Lake:** Carlyle Lake
3. **District / Division of Corps Project/Lake:** St. Louis District/ MVD/Carlyle Lake
4. **Handshake Project Name:** Visitor Center Outdoor Classroom
5. **Amount of Handshake Funds remaining:** **\$ 0.00**
6. **What has been accomplished?** Please provide photographs; before, during, and after!;

The grounds of the Carlyle Lake Visitor Center were improved by constructing an outdoor classroom. The outdoor classroom now offers the perfect environment for learning with a 30' x 20' half hexadome shelter, 24 benches for seating placed on a 36' x 54' concrete surface area with a sidewalk leading from the parking area and visitor center to provide easy access to the classroom. The handshake funds were used to pay for the half hexadome shelter, five interpretive panels, and the trenching and installing of wire underground from existing electric pedestal to provide 100amps of electricity to the shelter. Along the sidewalk leading up to the outdoor classroom are five interpretive panels with outdoor activities. The 5 panels focus on trees, insects, animal night life, signs of wildlife and monarch butterflies. Native pollinator plants, trees and shrubs were planted in the landscape surrounding the amphitheater to provide nectar, and host plants for pollinators and bird houses, feeders, a monarch observation box and pollinator palace were added to provide food, shelter and wildlife viewing.

	Total
Handshake Program Funding Amount	\$25,000
Local Corps Office Funds (total expended on labor, materials, contracts, etc.)?	\$25,000
Partner's Contributions (total value of funds, goods, services, volunteer hours, etc.)	
Partners Name	Total Value of Contributions
1 Bayer U.S. Crop Science	\$10,000
2 Carlyle Lake 50 th Anniversary Committee	\$4,100
3 Bromley Excavating	\$2,500
4 Schaefer Contracting	\$2,500
5 Carlyle Lake Ducks Unlimited	\$2,500
6 City of Carlyle	\$2,500
7 Boy Scouts	\$1,500
8 Carlyle Lake Association	\$1,500

6. 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.

The Handshake Program is very beneficial in that it provides extra money to fund projects that may not be otherwise funded. The process must begin with a well thought out plan and communicating with partners as to what is expected of them. If not, things may not go as planned. The COVID-19 pandemic and issues within the contracting department were two major setbacks that were unexpected. It took more time than usual to get some materials and contract awards. It is a great program that allows USACE to continue relationships with existing partners and build relationships with new partners.

7. Handshake Summary:

Please also include a separate 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 newly constructed outdoor classroom behind the Carlyle Lake Visitor Center will be a major asset for the Carlyle Lake area and allow members of the public to learn about many different topics in an outdoor setting. The exhibit room of the Carlyle Lake Visitor Center is relatively small, and this project is part of a plan to allow visitors to learn about nature while walking behind the Visitor Center, through the existing pollinator garden, and connecting to the Willow Pond Nature Trail. The entire area is connected through concrete sidewalks that allows handicap visitors the opportunity to learn and enjoy nature. The area also consists of a large variety of wildlife to view, including white-tail deer, waterfowl, bees, and many different species of birds and insects. The outdoor classroom will be used in a variety of ways. Every year, Carlyle Lake hosts the Celebrate the Earth event for Earth Day and over 2,500 students visit to learn about our earth. The classroom will provide an area for presenters to educate these students. Another use will be allowing professionals to cover a variety of environmental education topics on weekends that the public can enjoy. There are also many hunting and fishing groups around the Carlyle Lake area that may use the facility to teach younger generations about fishing, hunting, trapping and the importance of wildlife conservation. We also visit local schools for various types of programs and now schools will have the ability to visit the Visitor Center outdoor classroom for a better learning experience.



Area behind the Carlyle Lake Visitor Center before.



Area behind the Carlyle Lake Visitor Center after.



Rock Delivery for Foundation



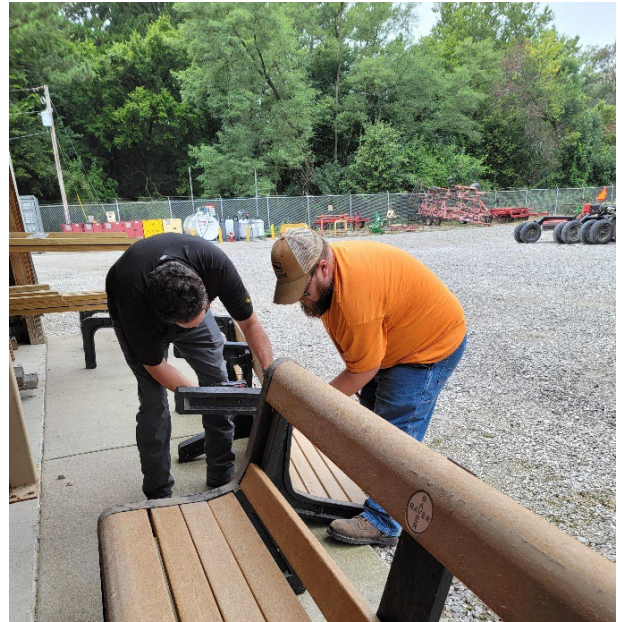
Site Inspection



Rock and Dirt Work being performed by Schaefer Contracting and Bromley Excavating.



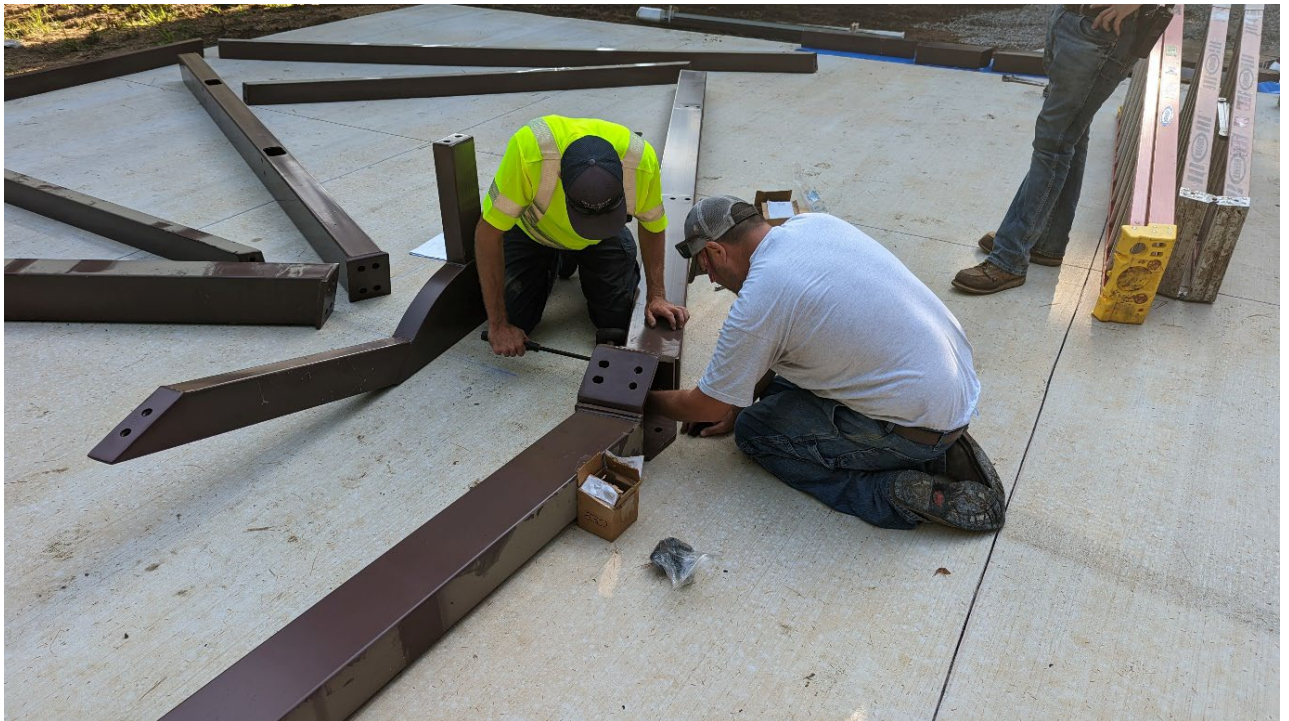
Concrete pad poured and setting up.



Bayer US employees putting together donated benches for the Outdoor Classroom.



Bayer US employees with 16 of 24 recycled benches for seating at the Outdoor Classroom.



City of Carlyle assisting with construction of outdoor classroom shelter.



City of Carlyle assisting with construction of outdoor classroom shelter.



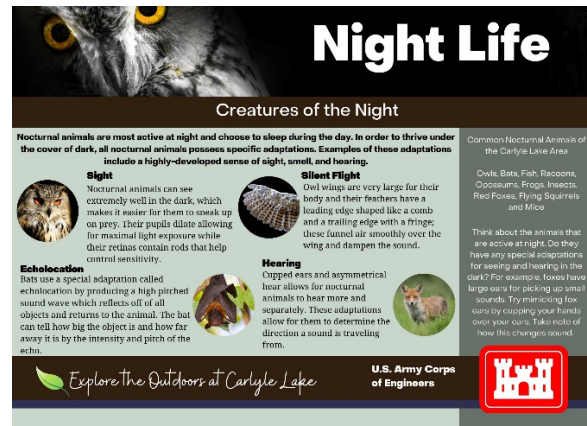
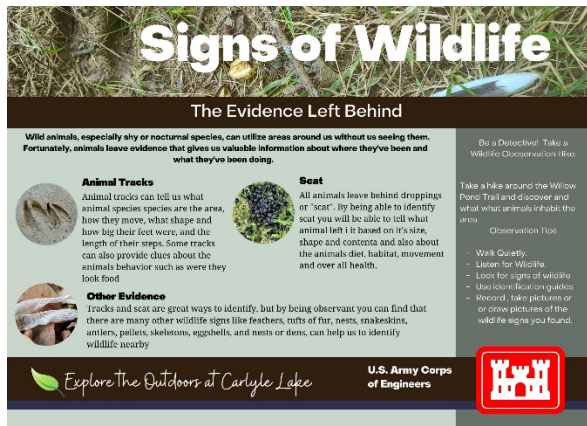
Construction of shelter completed.



Bayer US donation of pollinator seed.



Ducks Unlimited sowing pollinator seed.



Carlyle Lake Ducks Unlimited researched and designed 4 interpretive panels.



Carlyle Lake Ducks Unlimited putting together interpretive frames and interpretive panels.



Boy Scout Troop 281 with habitat boxes and feeding station that the troop constructed.



Boy Scout Troop 281 setting up a feeding station that the troop constructed.



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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New Outdoor Classroom Complete at Carlyle Lake Visitor Center

CARLYLE LAKE – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Carlyle Lake announce the completion of an accessible outdoor classroom located behind the Carlyle Lake Visitor Center in the Dam West Recreation Area. The outdoor classroom consists of a 36' x 54' concrete pad with 24 benches and a 20' x 30' amphitheater shelter. This facility was made possible with the support of eight partners and the USACE Handshake Partnership Program.

The Carlyle Lake Project was awarded \$25,000 in 2020 from USACE headquarters in Washington, D.C. This seed money is used to enhance recreation projects through community partnerships. The staff at Carlyle Lake partnered with Bayer U.S., Boy Scouts Troop 281, Bromley Excavating, Carlyle Lake Ducks Unlimited, Carlyle Lake 50th Anniversary Committee, Carlyle Lake Association, City of Carlyle, and Schaefer Contracting to complete this enhancement project.

The new accessible classroom will be utilized by the Corps of Engineers for interpretive/educational programs, the City of Carlyle, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), local school groups, boy scout and girl scout troops, local sportsmen and outdoor groups, and members of the general public. This facility will provide visitors an accessible and unique interpretive experience, increase awareness of Corps missions, and more recreational opportunities, all taking place in a natural setting. Outdoor classrooms help restore the traditional benefits of childhood, while addressing many of the challenges we face today. They encourage visitors to be outside and more active, connect visitors to nature, and provide a wide range of recreational activities that support overall development. The accessible outdoor classroom will provide visitors the opportunity to learn from interpreters and naturalists in a setting that allows them to truly connect with nature. Visitors will be exposed to a variety of recreational opportunities including fishing, hiking, biking, geocaching, and the joy of the outdoors.

For more information on Carlyle Lake, contact the Carlyle Lake Project Office at (618) 594-2484 or email at carlylelake@usace.army.mil.

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