

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Fiscal Year 2020
Handshake Program Application**

Please review instructions before completing application!

Corps Lake/River Project Name: **Blue Marsh Lake**

District / Division: **Philadelphia District, North Atlantic Division**

Handshake Proposal Title: **Blue Marsh Lake Trail Restoration - Phase 1**

Corps POC Name: **Brianna Treichler**

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A. Checklist:

1. Will the Handshake funds be spent on Corps facilities and resources that are being fully maintained by the Corps? (not in outgranted parks) Yes No
2. Will the Challenge Partnership agreement be 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 lake project OMP? Yes No
4. Have all of the NEPA requirements been considered for this project? Yes No
5. I am aware the Challenge Partnership Agreement must be reviewed and Approved by District Office of Counsel before sending to HQUSACE. Yes No
6. If the full funding amount requested is not available, could a portion of this Handshake Project be completed with partial funding? Yes No
7. I am aware that all government funds must be spent in accordance with FAR, DFAR and AFAR contracting laws and regulations, and that Handshake funds cannot be provided to the partner(s). Yes No
8. Did you participate in a Handshake Webinar in 2019 or review a 2019 Handshake Webinar on the Gateway? Yes No

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

C. Incentive Points Category: Check the appropriate box if your application qualifies to receive bonus points on the evaluation score.

- This project will be completed with a national MOU partner with which the Lake or Project hasn't previously partnered. (100 points).
- This project reduces O&M cost to the Corps over the lifecycle of the proposed project or improves existing infrastructure. (100 points).

D. Describe your partnership and the proposed Handshake Partnership Project:

Project applications will be evaluated on the categories below. Please complete each section as appropriate.

Summary Statement:

The 30 mile multi-use trail system at Blue Marsh Lake (BML) is a featured outdoor recreation opportunity in southeastern Pennsylvania. Due to rudimentary planning combined with 35 years of minimal updates and heavy use, the trail system is in need of refurbishment to transform the current conditions into a modern, environmentally friendly, and exciting experience for bikers, hikers and horeback riders.

Berks Area Mountain Biking Association (BAMBA), the local chapter of the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA), has partnered with the BML staff to revitalize the BML Trail System through a multi-phase project plan to create an user friendly trail experience for bike riders of all skill levels and abilities, that encourages regular outdoor recreation and fitness. The Blue Marsh Lake Trail Restoration Project (BMLTRP), Phase 1, consists of rerouting a 1.5 mile section of the existing trail to improve connectivity between other trail systems to the Dry Brooks Day Use Area as well as an addition of a Mountain Bike (MTB) Skills Area to encourage outdoor recreation and skills development for beginner and intermediate cyclists

Handshake Funding Cost Break Down:

Handshake Funding will be designated to BMLTRP Phase 1 consisting of the MTB Skills Area and the 1.5-mile reroute of the existing trail. Funds will be directed to the construction of the MTB Skills Area. Any excess funds will be contributed to the reroute of the main trail that has been primarily funded through BAMBA's award of \$25,000 grant from the Schuylkill Highlands Land Trust.

Costs include construction materials, rental of equipment not available by the Corps Project, and skilled equipment operators.

MTB Skills Area Cost Breakdown: \$16,697 TOTAL

Materials ==>\$4,007

2 triaxle load (44 tons) 2A modified \$700 (includes delivery fees)

2 triaxle load (66 tons) #4 stone \$914 (includes delivery fees)

1 triaxle load (22tons) 4-8" rip rap \$1,210

10 boulders \$25each (price may vary due to actual size) \$250

Pressure Treated Lumber 2X4X16 (4) \$40

Pressure Treated Lumber 2X6X8 (15) \$93

2 40 foot treated telephone poles \$800

Signage ==>\$1,000 (Skills Area Kiosk)

1 Month Equipment Rentals ==>\$4,640

Mini Skid Steer Loader \$1,960/month

Mini Excavator \$2,680/month

1 Month Skilled Equipment Operators ==> \$7,050/month

BMLTRP Reroute Cost Breakdown: \$48,270 TOTAL

Materials ==>1 triaxle load 2A modified stone \$390 (includes delivery fees)

Signage ==> \$1,120 (Trailhead Kiosk, Trail Carsonite Markers)

4 Month Equipment Rentals ==>\$18,560

Mini Skid Steer Loader \$1,960/month - \$7,840

Mini Excavator \$2,680/month - \$10,720

4 Month Skilled Equipment Operators ==> \$7,050/month -\$28,200

Longevity / O&M description:

Berks County is one of Pennsylvania's nine most populated counties and is set for considerable growth through 2040. Of the ten largest counties in Pennsylvania, Berks was among the six that showed increases in population of more than twenty percent from 2010-2040 (Pennsylvania Population Projections, 2014). It is important that as our local and regional population grows, we carefully manage our resources and promote the benefits of BML

and its recreation opportunities. Through the BMLTRP, we can diversify our visitation and use, encourage outdoor recreation through education, advocacy and additional programming, while sustaining our efforts through effective and efficient management that often requires dedicated community partners.

It is the partners' intention to use the current best management practices for trail management. Therefore, BAMBA has contracted with Trail Solutions, a nationally recognized trail engineering/construction company. Trail Solutions will work in conjunction with BAMBA and USACE staff regarding the design, engineering and construction planning for this project to best fit the park's needs and long term goals.

The MTB Skills Area project, which will be located near the Stilling Basin, is specifically designed to be accessible and inclusive to all visitors to practice and learn the skills required for mountain biking, drawing in new trail users for generations to come. BAMBA will also initiate programming and host skills training within the new MTB Skills Area.

The Skills Area will be a low maintenance, self-sustaining and welcomed feature integrated into the trail system, which will ensure the sustainability of the initiative. Additionally, the Skills Area design lends itself to expansion of the area to include higher level skills zones. BAMBA's membership will ensure that our diverse visitor needs and desires are included in the design features of the Skills Area so that it will not only attract new riders, but also riders of talented and experienced skills levels in the future.

BMLTRP Phase 1 will reroute a 1.5 mile section of the current trail from an open field located on a steep incline to a wooded area utilizing the natural terrain to create a more sustainable trail grade with reduced maintenance needs. The suggested project concept and construction plan will reduce trail surface material erosion, with reduced vegetation management, while enhancing the trail experience.

The BAMBA trail volunteers consistently participate in monthly volunteer days to help the USACE staff maintain the existing trail system, and have donated and installed two bike repair stations. Over the years they have volunteered over \$8,000 in volunteer services. In addition, BAMBA will monitor and maintain the Skills Area with the assistance of the Blue Marsh staff.

BAMBA has successfully demonstrated their drive and dedication to their commitments. Mt. Penn in Reading, PA has benefited from BAMBA's enthusiasm for outdoor recreation, transforming the area to a high class riding and hiking facility. BAMBA has been able to clean up and map the Mt. Penn Trails System, install proper signage along the trail and at trailheads, and construct bridges to improve stream crossings. BAMBA continues to regularly maintain the trails they have dedicated their time and resources to.

Partnership Value:

As a prominent and active organization benefitting our shared community, BAMBA is a valuable and highly motivated partner resource for the outdoor recreation improvement and expansion efforts at BML. Developing our partnership with BAMBA will help to build and strengthen community relationships at Blue Marsh Lake. As an organization, BAMBA consistently directs groups of volunteers to accomplish major projects to benefit our community. BAMBA's Board, members, and specifically the Blue Marsh Lake Trail Restoration Project Planning and Design Team (PDT) represent a wide variety of interests within Berks County's community structure. BAMBA has meticulously ensured that the PDT has the skills and leadership qualities needed to produce a first-rate trail plan representing the diversity of our region and therefore, our BML visitors.

BAMBA has dedicated their time and resources to the BMLTRP by bringing community members and organizations together to contribute funding towards the project. BAMBA has raised \$17,000 to fund the contract with Trail Solutions to evaluate the Multi-Use Trail and develop a master plan for the BMLTRP. Contributing partners include Berks County, Berks Nature, Berks County Community Foundation, Reading Recreation Commission, Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce, PA Americana - Visitor's Bureau, Mt Penn Planning

Partnership, and several private donors. BAMBA continues to seek additional funding resources to continue the forward momentum of the BMLTRP and accomplish our goals to improve our facilities. BAMBA also received a grant from the Schuylkill Highlands Partnership which will be used in the fall of 2019 for starting construction of the trail reroute.

The BML staff continue to develop and implement community and visitor outreach efforts, organize volunteers for events, and host initiatives throughout the year. Three of the larger programs include- Take Pride in Blue Marsh, Get Outdoors Day, and National Public Lands Day. Tours and programs for school and civic groups are popular and emphasize the USACE mission, water safety and outdoor recreation.

Currently, BML hosts many of BAMBA's community outreach programs to promote mountain biking such as Introductory Rides and Group Rides. BAMBA also organizes and facilitates a guided group bike ride during Blue Marsh Lake's annual "Get Outdoors Day". Trail improvements and the development of the Skills Area will allow BAMBA to host and facilitate additional programming for an increased number and wider variety of users, exposing an average of 25 participants per event (at an estimated 2,500 participants/year) to the mission and recreational opportunities at BML. Overall, BAMBA's goal while working with BML staff is to enhance the current outdoor recreation facility for all user to one that is locally, regionally and nationally recognized.

The BMLTRP is in perfect alignment with the USACE mission and its current advocacy initiatives and activities. Therefore, BAMBA and the USACE have solidified a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for partnership in the renovation, building and maintenance of the BML trail system and the MTB Skills Area. USACE is an active participant in all PDT meetings and has greatly benefited from this active involvement from the concept start. BML greatly values this partnership specifically due to its cooperative participation and the value of our combined insight and commitment.

Recreational Benefit:

Located 7 miles from the city of Reading, in Berks County, PA (population 413,000), Blue Marsh Lake provides 6,200 acres of green space and numerous outdoor recreational opportunities for our local and regional community. The 36 total miles of trails at BML attract a wide array of trail users, including hikers, mountain bikers, equestrian riders, and wildlife enthusiasts from across the region. The 30-mile Multi-Use Trail has been recognized by the Department of the Interior as a National Recreation Trail since 2011, and is touted as one of the prominent ride areas within the Greater Reading Area Ride Center recognized by IMBA.

The Stilling Basin Access Area is a key intersection between the Blue Marsh Multi-Use Trail, the Berks County Union Canal Trail (Leesport, PA to Reading, PA; 6.5 miles), and the Schuylkill River Trail (Pottsville, PA to Philadelphia, PA; 130 miles), all acting as connectors from the city of Reading to the Blue Marsh Lake Recreation Area. Currently, the Multi-Use Trail route from the Stilling Basin to the Dry Brooks Day Use Area is fragmented and difficult at best to maneuver which forces users to walk/ride along stretches of roadway that include two long steep hills. The reroute of Multi-Use Trail will provide an easier grade while reducing pedestrian/biker/equestrian road use to improve visitor safety. It will also solidify the connection between city residents who use the trail systems as a means of travel to reach the very popular Day Use Area.

The MTB Skills Area will introduce and connect new riders to the sport of Mountain Biking, with an emphasis on safety, and an opportunity to build skills and confidence. The Skills Area will ensure a variety of graduated skill zones that allow for a safe progression from easy to more difficult terrain. Young riders and their parents, who otherwise would be watching from the sidelines, will be welcomed and involved. This will build an appreciation for mountain biking, creating future advocates for the sport and solidify the popularity and consistent use of the Skills Area.

Environmental Stewardship Value:

The Skills Area will be located in a wooded area near the entrance to the Stilling Basin by the intersection of three trails. This wooded area is level which will reduce environmental impacts of construction and use.

The existing trail lacks a proper layout and suffers from erosion and other environmental issues. One of the main goals of the trail improvement plan is to implement best management practices and utilize the natural terrain and resources of the BML area to create a sustainable trail system. This will reduce the effects of erosion from weather and heavy usage while conserving soil and vegetation resources, create a safer trail experience, and prevent rogue trail construction or use to preserve the surrounding environment. The practices utilized during this project will bring the trail up to current best management standards. Ultimately, this project will contribute to improved water quality within the lake due to the reduction in erosion and sedimentation from storm water runoff across the landscape.

Outdoor experiences increase motivation to learn more about the environment and develop understanding and awareness of environmental issues. The BMLTRP will showcase well laid out trails, and the MTB Skills Area will appeal to a new generation of outdoor recreation enthusiasts, all who will be invested in the stewardship of our natural resources.

Communication & Education Value:

BML is an established and exceptionally popular recreation, picnicking, fishing, hunting, boating, biking, and hiking destination for not only Berks County residents but also for visitors both within and outside of the region. It is also of special historical, natural, and economic importance.

The Skills Area location at the Stilling Basin entrance will be at the heart of the most visited areas of BML. It will be highly visible to visitors as they enter project property by vehicle or by the trail lending it to become a highlight attraction along the main trail as it traverses through the main recreation areas of the park. As mentioned before, this location is where a critical intersection of regional and local trails and a featured starting point for many of our visitor's outings. Signage will be produced to recognize the cooperation and efforts of the partners to highlight the importance of how partnerships help benefit the community and park users.

BML reaches over 15,000 followers through Facebook that actively engage with posts regarding what is happening at the lake. Social media will be a prominent forum to inform the public of the changes to be made to the existing trail system and the reasoning behind them while acknowledging the critical roles in which partnerships play to complete the project. Posts will be produced in conjunction with BAMBA and shared onto their social media forums as well.

Innovativeness:

BMLTRP Phase 1 is a comprehensive project that will connect southeastern Pennsylvania residents and visitors to outdoor recreation. It will connect the Dry Brooks Day Use area to the City of Reading via the Berks County Union Canal Trail. This connection also allows for trail users to access Blue Marsh Lake via the Schuylkill River Trail from as far away as Philadelphia.. These trail connections promote a unique opportunity to create a safe, accessible, alternate means of travel from one area to another without the use of a vehicle.

The proposed MTB Skills Area will be the first of its kind in the Berks County region, creating a unique opportunity for prospective mountain bikers to test and build their skills with direct access to one of the longest running trails in the region. The Skills Area will be a highlight on the list of recreational and educational activities offered by BML and will provide an innovative experience to satisfy the demand for something fresh and fun. The Skills Area will be an excellent community asset that will not only provide a managed and safe area for beginners but will also provide character building opportunity through recreation and programming for our youth.

The rehabilitation, careful management and connectivity of the trails with the addition of the MTB Skills Area will fully advocate for outdoor recreation, ensure diverse and inclusive participation for all visitors at Blue Marsh Lake regardless of age or ability, and will ultimately serve and benefit the Berks County community and beyond. In addition, the BMLTRP Phase 1 will positively impact BML and all of Berks County through increased visitation- both by residents of Berks and from across the Nation. Increased visitation will benefit local businesses- specifically tourism and the c industry .

The BMLTRP will be an excellent example of how a diverse and often struggling community can come together to ensure a welcoming and inclusive environment to positively impact a sense of belonging and community pride. The BAMBA and USACE partnership will be promoted as how public and private entities can work together to benefit their shared community.

Conclusion:

The BMLTRP Phase 1 is of key significance in the overall trail plan at BML. It addresses connectivity, maintenance, and environmental issues with the present design of the trail while enhancing the outdoor recreation experience for all. As the first project to be completed, Phase 1 will solidify the partnership bond between BAMBA and USACE. This partnership will benefit both the visitors to BML and the local community and control maintenance burdens that take up valuable staff resources.

Double click on spreadsheet to access data entry fields and to enter Partner names.

You MUST enter partner names into the spreadsheet:

	Local Corps Office	Handshake Funds	Partner 1 BAMBA	Partner 2 Berks Nature	Partner 3 PA Americana - Visitor's Bureau	Partner 4 Berks County
Salaries	\$15,000	N/A		\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel	\$0	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Materials and Supplies	\$6,517	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Equipment Use Funds	\$14,300	\$23,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Contributed Personal Property	N/A	N/A	\$17,000	\$500	\$1,000	\$1,000
Volunteer In-Kind Services	N/A	N/A	\$16,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other (explain below)	\$0	\$2,000	\$27,500	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$35,817	\$25,000	\$58,000	\$500	\$1,000	\$1,000
Share of Total Cost	28.6%	19.9%	46.3%	0.4%	0.8%	0.8%
	48.5%					

	Partner 5 Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce	Partner 6 Mt Penn Planning Commission	Partner 7 Berks County Community Foundation	Partner 8 Reading Recreation Commission	Partner 9	Partner 10
Salaries	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Materials and Supplies	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Equipment Use Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Contributed Personal Property	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$500	\$0	\$0
Volunteer In-Kind Services	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other (explain below)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$500	\$0	\$0

Share of Total Cost	1.2%	0.8%	0.8%	0.4%	0.0%	0
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	Partner 11	Partner 12	Partner 13	Partner 14	Partner 15	Total
Salaries	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$15,000
Travel	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Materials and Supplies	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$6,517
Equipment Use	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$37,300
Funds Contributed	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$23,500
Personal Property	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Volunteer In-Kind Services	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other (explain below)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$27,000
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$125,317
Share of Total Cost	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%

Explanations: BAMBA Other Contributions – Professional Fundraiser \$2500, Schuylkill Highland Trust Grant Award \$22,500






Handshake Funds Other –

Funds to be used for skilled equipment operators

Blue Marsh Lake

Trail Restoration Project 2019

Legend

-  Blue Marsh Lake Visitor's Center
-  Existing Trail
-  Proposed
-  Proposed Skills Area
-  Proposed Trail Reroute

