

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Fiscal
Year 2024
Handshake Program Application**

Please review instructions before completing application!

Corps Lake/River Project Name: **Lake Seminole/ ACF Rivers Projects**

District / Division: **Mobile District /South Atlantic Division**

Handshake Proposal Title: **Saunders Slough Restoration Project**

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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 2023 or review a 2023 Handshake webinar on the Gateway? **Yes** **No**
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B. Handshake Funding Request (maximum \$25,000): \$25,000

C. Corps Foundation Bonus Request: (maximum \$5,000): \$5,000

Separate bonus funding provided by the Corps Foundation for a selected Handshake Project. Please do not include bonus funds on your overall financial spreadsheet below. Provide an explanation of how the funds will be used in the Corps Foundation Bonus section.

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

This lake/river project has never received Handshake funding. (100pts)

This lake/river project has not received Handshake funding in the past 5 years (FY 19-23 funding years). (50 pts)

This partnership project will either result in overall O&M cost savings or no net long-term O&M gain. It reduces program liabilities, consolidates, or eliminates redundant/inefficient recreation assets or facilities (Up to 200 pts)

E. 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:

Stewards of Lake Seminole (SOLS), Inc. entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Woodruff-Seminole Project, Mobile District in January 2023. The Stewards' mission as a non-profit is to manage invasive species at Lake Seminole, in collaboration with USACE, for the benefit of all Lake Seminole stakeholders. USACE and SOLS have complementary missions, and their different pathways for securing funding create the basis for a strong symbiotic "partnership" relationship. Since signing the MOU, SOLS has secured nearly \$300,000 in funding, completed 6 collaboration projects with the Corps, treated approximately 1000 acres of non-native invasive plant species, and improved lake access for over 500 residents with USACE permitted boat docks. SOLS proposes to continue work on a collaborative basis with the Corps to treat and remove approximately 125 acres of invasive species in Saunders Slough and restore the natural resource to a valuable fishery and wildlife habitat. In the past, USACE prioritized herbicide treatments to operational areas and small boat channels due to inconsistent funding and increased operating costs. As a result, impacts to fish and wildlife habitat occurred at a rapid pace. In 2018, Hurricane Michael heavily damaged Lake Seminole as a Category 3 hurricane, thus further spreading invasive species around the lake. Congressional interest is high due to the value of the lake to the community, with regular meetings and townhall occurring annually.

Handshake Funding Cost Break Down:

The Stewards of Lake Seminole will provide:

Mechanical harvesting equipment and labor for a period of 20 days at a value \$2,600 per day for a total contribution value of \$52,000.

The Handshake Program Request: \$25,000 for the USACE, ACF Projects

USACE-Mobile District-ACF Projects-Lake Seminole will provide:

\$50,000 for chemicals and application in accordance with the 2024 Aquatic Pesticide Application Plan.

Total estimated project is \$127,000. Stewards of Lake Seminole will be providing approximately 41% of the project value.

O&M Impacts:

Mechanical harvesting removes the invasive aquatic plants and biomass from the water. Follow-up herbicide treatments manage remaining residual plants and assist in restoring the area to a manageable and sustainable capacity. When aquatic invasive plants are left untreated, they grow relatively uncontrolled due to no nature predators or environmental conditions. Due to the rapid expansion, any delay in treating the aquatic invasive plants can double the cost from the previous year. The partnership between USACE and SOLS reduces the impacts on O&M by reducing the actual acreage of aquatic invasive plants, thus reducing the amount of acreage for the next year.

Partnership Value:

This is a partnership model that could be replicated across the region and nation at other USACE lakes. The partnership between USACE and SOLS has proven already to produce actual results in reducing aquatic invasive plant impacts on Lake Seminole. This renewable partnership is for a 5-year term, which is anticipated to expand the mission over time to other aspects of lake stewardship. Stewards of Lake Seminole will provide the equipment, labor, and operation for the mechanical harvesting for 20 days, at a value of \$2,600 per day, and with a total project value of \$52,000. The successful implementation for the restoration of Saunders Slough will serve as a "case study" on how we can expand the partnership to effectively reclaim thousands of acres currently choked off by aquatic invasives plants. Handshake funding of \$25,000 will be used in total to purchase aquatic

pesticides for application by USACE.

Recreational Value:

The recreational benefits are multifaceted. Clearing the channel provides unobstructed access between the Saunders Slough boat ramp and the Chattahoochee River. Reducing monoculture stands of aquatic invasive plants will increase the diversity of bird and other wildlife species which provides value to nonconsumptive users such as bird watchers and wildlife watchers. Managing the aquatic invasive species will improve habitat for fish spawning and food sources while improving both game and non-game fish populations. Opening these areas will add additional acreage for non-motorized boaters like canoers and kayakers. Hunters will have access to nearby islands for duck, alligator, and deer hunting.

Environmental Stewardship Value:

The non-native aquatic invasive species present do not have any native predators that can control them. Removal of the invasive plants either through mechanical extraction or herbicide treatments reduce competition so native species can return, which is ideal for all native fish and wildlife species. Mechanically clearing the vegetation reduces the buildup of biomass to preserve water depths, prevents eutrophication, and increases the life expectancy of native species. Removal of the standing vegetation will increase the water flow, which will raise dissolved oxygen levels promoting positive fish species health. Historically, Saunders Slough was a major spawning area for various fishes, and restoration of the area is important to users of the lake.

Communication & Education Value:

The Stewards of Lake Seminole have a professional website (www.stewardsoflakeseminole.com) which is used for education, communication, and transparency for activities. All communication of SOLS recent activities and successes with USACE are posted on the website. SOLS plans to promote the restoration of Saunders Slough in advance to the local communities, outdoor magazines, fishing organizations, two community newspapers, and as a member of Apalachicola Chattahoochee Flint River Stakeholders. SOLS will provide project update pictures on the website and to the two community newspapers. Before and after results will clearly demonstrate the commitment of the USACE mission and the value of the partnership between SOLS and USACE. In addition, USACE and SOLS will develop strategies to highlight the partnership through interpretive programs and materials.

Supporting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Goals:

Seminole County, GA has a median household income of \$35,286 and a poverty rate of 26.4%. Minorities comprise 39% of county residents. The county has two incorporated cities and two grocery stores. Fishing is a valuable resource for providing low-cost protein to households. The Saunders Slough project preserves and enhances approximately 125 acres of Lake Seminole for the benefit of all stakeholders particularly those that subsistence fish from the shoreline. In addition to the food value for low-income county residents, the project will enhance lake access for small boats, canoes, and kayaks. The area is protected from strong winds and waves making the slough ideal for smaller craft. Hunting, particularly duck hunting, and fishing are the largest share of tourism for the County. Visitor spending in the area was \$15.3 million in 2021.

Corps Foundation Bonus Cost Break Down:

The award of \$5,000 from the Corps Foundation would allow an additional 156 acres of non-native emergent and floating plants such as Cuban bulrush, water primrose, and water hyacinth to be treated with herbicide or allow two additional days of mechanical removal.

Conclusion:

Managing invasive species at Lake Seminole will provide a better recreation experience to visitors, boost the local tourism industry, and restore habitat for native species. The award of the Handshake Partnership Funds will support additional materials and activities to combat non-native invasive plants and will contribute to the commitment of the “partnership” with Stewards of Lake Seminole.

NOTE: To show foresight, commitment, and planning, it is REQUIRED to include maps/pictures/plans/specs as part of your overall package. Failure to include supporting attachments will result in points deductions.

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	Handsha ke Funds	Stewards of Lake Seminole, Inc.	Partner 2	Partner 3	Partner 4
Salaries	\$3,000	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel	\$0	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Materials and Supplies	\$37,000	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Equipment Use	\$10,000	\$0	\$52,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Funds Contributed	N/A	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Personal Property	N/A	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Volunteer	N/A	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
In-Kind Services	N/A	N/A	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other (explain below)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$50,000	\$25,000	\$52,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Share of Total Cost	39.4%	19.7%	40.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	59.1%					

	Partner 5	Partner 6	Partner 7	Partner 8	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	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Funds Contributed	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Personal Property	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Volunteer	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
In-Kind Services	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other (explain below)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Share of Total Cost	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0

	Partner 11	Partner 12	Partner 13	Partner 14	Partner 15	Total
Salaries	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,000
Travel	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Materials and Supplies	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$62,000
Equipment Use	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$62,000
Funds Contributed	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Personal Property	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Volunteer	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
In-Kind Services	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other (explain below)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$127,000
Share of Total Cost	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%

The area within the white line indicates the restoration areas which total approximately 125 acres.



Social Media Post from USACE and SOLS



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Lake Seminole

April 17 · 🌐



"The US Army Corps of Engineers in partnership with Stewards of Lake Seminole will be conducting herbicide applications in Fish Pond Drain April 17, 18, and 19, 2023. Target plants will be hydrilla, milfoil, fanwort, and Limnophila. Do not use water from the lake for irrigation for herbaceous vegetation for 5 days and woody vegetation for 2 days after completion of application. Questions regarding this application may be directed to Brent Mortimer 334-430-9290."

👍❤️😮 12

9 shares



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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Lake Seminole limited who can comment on this post.



Stewards of Lake Seminole

April 18 · 🌐



For the first time in the history of Lake Seminole, the U.S.A.C.E. works with lake residents, through the Stewards of Lake Seminole, in a collaborative effort to manage the invasive aquatics in the first of six approved collaborative action plans.

This action is made possible by the nearly 200 Sponsorships that know the value of Lake Seminole to the communities that surround it. Be a part of our success by clicking the link below now and go to Sponsorships! <http://www.stewardsoflakeseminole.com>



👍 12

8 shares



Like



Comment



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Example of Previous Project Collaboration between USACE, GA DNR, and Stewards of Lake Seminole (<https://www.stewardsoflakeseminole.com/cuban-bulrush-task-force-update/>)

JULY 16TH, 2023



The Cuban Bulrush Task Force was formed on December 13th, 2022, at a meeting with Colonel Jeremy Chapman in Mobile, AL. The purpose was to attack the invasion of Cuban bulrush (*Oxycaryum cubense*) after hurricane Michael. The task force consists of three entities, U.S.A.C.E., Stewards of Lake Seminole, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

These entities have worked in coordination to allocate funding, set target priorities and implement cost effective corrective actions. Georgia, through the efforts of our representatives, senators, and a thousand Stewards and supporters, has allocated \$150,000 to the Department of Natural Resources to assist with this important initiative.

Results to date include: U.S.A.C.E. supplying chemicals and spraying Spring Creek and Flint River areas. Stewards of Lake Seminole supplying chemicals, spraying around the residential areas, and coordinating the DNR actions. DNR funding will allow us to treat nearly 500 acres of the combined invasives Cuban bulrush (*Oxycaryum cubense*, Water Primrose (*Ludwigia peploides*) and Water Hyacinths.

Collaborative results include aerial spraying, via helicopter, of 150 acres north and south of Hwy 253 bridge on Spring Creek. This area is the source of invasives flowing down Spring Creek, blocking residential and recreational access, and spreading invasive into the lake. This area had been inaccessible for treatment in the past because of all the water hazards. This was the first use of a helicopter on the lake and was very efficient and cost effective.

Follow up spraying began July 5th and will continue with two boats working the week of July 16th and targeting infestations in the Flint River.

Mechanical removal, another first, will begin in August for areas along the Flint River. This combined effort will target 250 acres of invasives, which will encompass approximately 30 miles of shoreline along the Flint River.

Cuban bulrush chokes out fish spawning areas and the habitat for native species. These efforts will restore hundreds of acres of fish and wildlife habitat for anglers and hunters. The success of this effort is largely due to the responsiveness of the State of Georgia. Georgia, we thank you for your support!

Picture of Vegetation at the Proposed Location:

