

Handshake Partnership Program Report - FY 2019 Recipients

1. Name of Corps Project/Lake: Rend Lake
2. District / Division of Corps Project/Lake: MVS/MVD
3. Handshake Project Name: River Road Wetland Viewing Area
4. Amount of Handshake Funds remaining: \$0.00
5. What has been accomplished? Please provide photographs; before, during, and after!:

A fully accessible 12'x12' viewing platform has been constructed on an 8 acre wetland area along River Road. River Road was underutilized but offered well-maintained paved roadways, ample parking, and just a .5 mile drive south of the main dam and 2 miles from the Rend Lake Visitor Center. This area has now been discovered by photographers and is in the process to be used for our "in the field" environmental programs, tailored to High School science groups.

The Phragmites that had completely taken over the area has now been properly treated thanks to our expert partners. We also have the provided LiDAR maps to show where the best locations are for our future osprey nesting structures.

Before photos of River Road Wetland engulfed by Phragmites. The River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area (RTRCWMA) Program Director is pictured taking GPS points and photos:



After photos including the dead Phragmites after two years of treatment along with the completed accessible viewing platform.



	Total
Handshake Program Funding Amount	\$20,000.00
Local Corps Office Funds (total expended on labor, materials, contracts, etc.)?	\$27,240.00
Partner's Contributions (total value of funds, goods, services, volunteer hours, etc.)	
Partners Name	Total Value of Contributions
1 River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area	\$18,000.00
2 Ozark Koala Ecosystem Services	\$1,500.00
3 IL Department of Natural Resources	\$500.00
4 Union Sportsmen's Alliance	\$2,500.00
5 Natural Resources Conservation Services	\$1,000.00
6 SouthEastern IL Electric Cooperative, Inc.	\$1,000.00
7	\$
8	\$
9	\$
10	\$

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.

This is not feedback towards the program itself, just information about this particular project. This has been the most difficult project for us to get everyone back on track with. The pandemic made is difficult to communicate and get folks together to make and implement plans. We also had difficulty ordering the shelter due to material shortage and it took the company three times to get us the correct posts. This is a company we typically have no issues with.

Union iron workers had committed to assembling the shelter for us, but after receiving the wrong materials multiple times, they had become too busy with their normal work to help us with this. Our contractor had union laborers on staff that donated their time to assist with this though.

We are still working to complete this project. SouthEastern IL Electric Cooperative has committed to following through with constructing and placing at least one osprey nesting structure in the best location. We still plan to order interpretive exhibits to assist with using this area for in the field environmental programming.

The area was difficult to burn because the Phragmites lost the density needed to carry the fire. After the remaining stalks are gone, we will be working with the IL Native Plant Society to assist with a plan for appropriate native species to plant along the shoreline.

On the bright side, working with the RTRCWMA was a fantastic partnership that led to all of our lands (both leased and managed by us) to be aerial surveyed for phragmites and we were able to treat nearly 300 acres (in partnership with the IDNR) for two consecutive years. This was extremely effective. We have a close relationship with the weed management area and they continue to assist with quick plant identification and proper removal techniques for us.

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.

May's Rend Lake Spotlight

Looking for a place to do some wildlife viewing and photography? The wildlife viewing platform located on River Road, just south of the Rend Lake Dam, is the perfect spot. This platform is a part of an ongoing project that is beginning to take shape with the help of several key partners.



The U.S Army Corps of Engineers, Ozark Koala Ecosystems Services, River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area, Southern Illinois Prescribed Burn Association, Illinois Native Plant Society, Illinois

Department of Natural Resources, and SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative have come together to improve this underutilized recreation area. The involvement of all partners has been critical to the success of this project. The partners have provided their time, skills, and resources to create a wildlife viewing area that is unique in its function and location. Just a short bike ride or drive from the Rend Lake Visitor Center, it will provide visitors with several different opportunities for wildlife viewing and a new location for wildlife interpretive programming.

The River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) have been major partners towards the vast improvement of this area. The River to River CWMA located and mapped all acreage invaded with *Phragmites australis* (also known as common reed) via aerial surveying. They then provided treatment plans to fight the undesirable plants in this area along with the rest of the shoreline and wetlands at Rend Lake.

Not only does this partnership provide recreational benefits for our visitors, but it will soon provide environmental benefits as well. The Osprey is listed as a threatened species in Illinois. After years of not being spotted, Osprey have made a comeback to Rend Lake, with at least 3 known nests. Through this partnership, osprey nesting structures will be erected near the same location and built using a power pole like design, one of their favorite choices for a nest base, to provide a safe place to raise young.



SouthEastern IL Electric Cooperative will be the key partner in finishing the beautiful viewing area by constructing and placing these osprey nesting structures near the new River Road Wetland Viewing Project.

With the help of the Rend Lake Team and its key partners, the River Road Wetland Viewing Project will be a beautiful, nature-inspired location where visitors can get up close to Illinois' native habitats and wildlife. Visitors will

not want to miss this on their next Rend Lake adventure!