

## Handshake Partnership Program Report - FY 2019 Recipients

**1. Name of Corps Project/Lake:** Summersville Lake

**2. District / Division of Corps Project/Lake:** Huntington District/Great Lakes and Ohio River Division

**3. Handshake Project Name:** Orange Oswald Climber Access Trail

**4. Amount of Handshake Funds remaining:** \$0.00

**5. What has been accomplished?** The 2019 Handshake Agreement grant received by Summersville Lake funded erosion mitigation efforts at the Orange Oswald climbing area and the instillation of a metal staircase on the path to Orange Oswald. In conjunction with New River Alliance of Climbers and the use of the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources “Dump Barge,” over several months, 60 tons of the over 140 tons of gravel used during this project was transported from the Salmon Run Launch Ramp, where it was placed in gabion baskets along 120 foot of shoreline. In October 2020, the staff at Summersville Lake with volunteer assistance from the New River Alliance of Climbers, built, hand loaded, and installed dozens of gabion baskets filled with stone, along with constructing the new metal staircase which will provide a safer trail system and emergency medical access for any injured visitors. With these baskets in place, a vital resource that is frequented by not only the local climbing community, but climbers from all over the United States, will be able to utilize the climbing area for years to come.

|   | Total                               |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Handshake Program Funding Amount</b>   | \$20,000                            |
| <b>Local Corps Office Funds</b><br>(total expended on labor, materials, contracts, etc.)?     | \$10,000                            |
| <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 New River Alliance of Climbers  | \$17,000                            |

### 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.

- A. Comments About the Handshake Program: This program was essential for allowing the funds to get both parties in this partnership 'moving' on a job that has been pending for decades.

B. Comments About Challenge Partnership Agreement: This is the perfect resource to not only strengthen our partnerships, but to also create new opportunities. It provides a mutual link to help get work accomplished. Our partners feel that they are engaged, part of the decision-making process, and provide valuable insight to our collaborative efforts.

C. Recommendations: We ask this program to continue. It provides the projects a mechanism to develop both recreational, and environmental assets that normally could not be accomplished

## **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.

Please see the attached video, write up with pictures, and storyboard below:

<https://www.facebook.com/303699529647636/videos/827756727998168>

## Summersville Lake Handshake Partnership Program Rock Climbing Climbing Access Improvements

Rock Climbing has served as a popular outdoor recreation activities over the past 30 years at Summersville Lake. The names of the climbing walls are synonymous with local climbers: Long Wall, Narcissus Cave, Satisfaction Wall, the Coliseum, and Orange Oswald. Orange Oswald is one of the most popular areas, containing 38 of the most heavily used routes at the Lake. Shoreline erosion has long been an issue for an important part of the trail system. Additionally, the trail descended a sheer drop by way of a wooden ladder that was in need of replacement. The Army Corps of Engineers and the New River Alliance of Climbers (NRAC) partnered to repair the eroding shoreline, and to provide a safe alternative to the ladder to access.

Several attempts to repair the shoreline were made over the years. A larger effort began in 2013, when the Corps and NRAC employed a large-scale volunteer effort during the Boy Scout Jamboree that was held in the area. Over 80 tons of stone was hauled to the wall by floating barge, and was hand placed by volunteers. The stone migrated from the steeper areas but formed a valuable foundation for future work. In 2016, NRAC conducted a world class climbing event at the Lake which raised \$10,000 for lake climbing improvements. It also set the stage for future volunteer work. In 2019, \$20,000 was secured through the Handshake Challenge Partnership Program which enables NRAC and the local Corps Lake Office to provide additional financial resources. With the help of a borrowed “Dump Barge”, 60 tons of stone was transported to the work site. Also in 2020 a custom built steel staircase was installed in place of the former wooden ladder. The Corps utilized a crane to assemble a rented barge assembly to move an excavator up the lake and to the job site. With these assets in place, the Corps and NRAC constructed, hand loaded, and installed dozens of gabion baskets filled with stone.

In a video produced by NRAC, C.J Hamilton, the Operations Project Manager for the Kanawha Area remarked on the relationship between the Corps and Climbers:

"I think the partnership between the Corps and the climbing community will just continue to get stronger. We have done so much here over the years, and we really appreciate their insight into best management practices and opportunities to that we have to further enhance the resource, to protect the resource, and so, we love getting their input, working together on common projects."

Gene Kistler, president of NRAC noted on the relationship between the Corps and Climbers that “If we didn’t have this relationship...it would be very problematic.” The relationship between the Corps and Climbers is one that continues to grow and remains strong, helping to enhance a precious resource at Summersville Lake.

By David J Cooney  
Park Ranger, Summersville Lake



*A Crane utilized by the Corps of Engineers lowers a part of the rented barge during the Orange Oswald Climber Access Trail Project.*



*John Cody (Left) and Shawn Griffith (Center) lower a piece of the barge into place during assembly as Lake Manager Toby Wood looks on (Right).*



*Stone being dumped Spring 2020.*





*The first row of baskets being assembled at Orange Oswald.*





*A volunteer from the New River Alliance of Climbers readies to pour a bucket of rocks behind the newly constructed gabion baskets.*





# SUMMERSVILLE LAKE & NEW RIVER ALLIANCE OF CLIMBERS

(2019 HANDSHAKE PARTNERSHIP RECIPIENTS)

Great Lakes &  
Ohio River Division



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## Partnership Summary:

Please see 4 minute video: [A Corps, an Alliance & a Partnership](https://vimeo.com/474696297)  
<<https://vimeo.com/474696297>>

## Objectives:

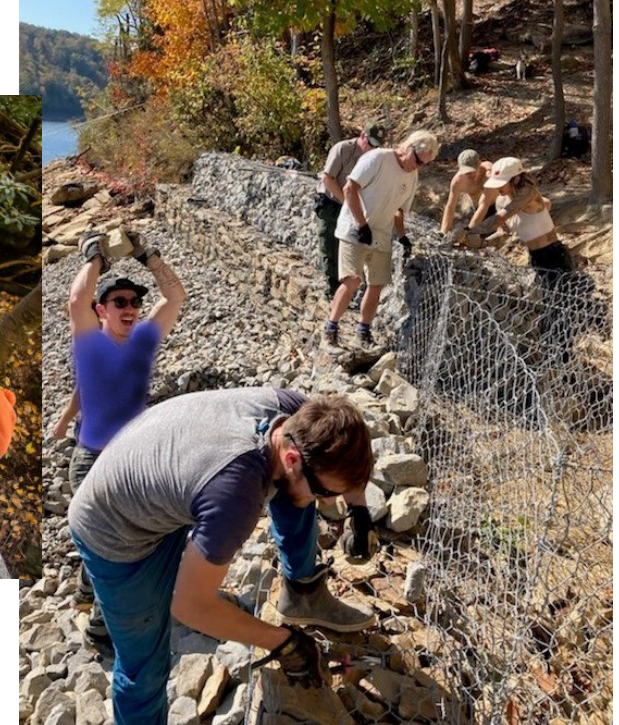
- Repair eroded shoreline located in remote road-less area.
- Improve trail access for emergency response.
- Protect hiking trail and climbing access from further degradation.
- Formalize long-standing partnership with NRAC.
- Leverage resources & allocate funding.

## Background:

Summersville Lake hosts over 150 rock climbing routes located at nine different locations around the Lake. One of the most popular climbing areas is Orange Oswald, which has one of the finest lineups of sport routes in the nation.

Unfortunately, access to this climb was diminishing as the shoreline portion of the trail to Orange Oswald had eroded away from the wave action of the lake and efforts to stabilize this shoreline only provided temporary relief. The lack of access for heavy equipment prompted the search for a more inventive, permanent solution.

Additionally, route limitations to Orange Oswald forced thousands of users to brave a 20' sheer cliff by way of an antiquated wooden ladder. Improved access, not only for visitors, but also EMS was recognized and a plan to design and install a safer alternative was put into action.







# SUMMERSVILLE LAKE & NEW RIVER ALLIANCE OF CLIMBERS

(2019 HANDSHAKE PARTNERSHIP RECIPIENTS)



## Actions Timeline:

- **2013** - Corps & NRAC employed a huge volunteer effort during 2013 Boy Scout Jamboree. 80 tons of stone floated-in by barge and was hand placed by volunteers. The stone migrated from the steeper areas, but formed a valuable foundation for future work.
- **2016** - NRAC conducted a world class climbing event at the Lake which raised \$10,000 for lake climbing improvements. It also set the stage for future volunteer work and philanthropic donations.
- **2019** - \$20,000 in funding was secured through Handshake Challenge Partnership program.
- **2020** Spring – West Virginia DNR supplied a 'dump barge' for hauling 60 tons of stone to the worksite at summer pool.
- **2020** Summer – NRAC completed fabrication, galvanization and install of a sturdy, steel staircase.
- **2020** Fall – Corps used a crane to assemble a floating barge system and moved a rented excavator to the job site. With these assets and efforts combined, dozens of gabion baskets were assembled and filled.

## Successes:

- Partnered with non-federal groups to acquire supplies, specialized equipment and to construct a gabion shoreline wall consisting of 140 tons of stone.
- Purchased raw materials, designed and installed professional grade stair case to improve trail access & safety.
- Brought in over 540 hours of focused labor by over 90 different volunteers.
- Strengthened the heavily utilized, dispersed recreation features that lie outside our developed areas.

