

Handshake Partnership Program Report - FY 2018 Recipients

1. Name of Corps Project/Lake: Mississippi River Project
2. District / Division of Corps Project/Lake: Rock Island District / Mississippi Valley Division

3. Handshake Project Name: Lock 14 Eagle Perches

4. Amount of Handshake Funds remaining: \$

5. What has been accomplished? Please provide photographs; before, during, and after!:

Smith's Island, located adjacent to Lock and Dam 14, once held several of the best winter eagle perch trees in the country. The proximity to open water and clear field of view attracts hundreds of migratory bald eagles each year as well as approximately 10,000 visits from recreationalists from all over the globe. The site has the backdrop of numerous photos used in brochures, art exhibits and several different social media sites. This site draws thousands of out of town visitors that has significant off-season impact to the local economy of several local towns and cities.

A winter storm in 2017 damaged the trees creating a hazard for the public resulting in the removal of trees from the site. The Army Corps of Engineers was contacted by the Quad Cities Photography Club regarding a way to mitigate for the loss of this resource. After several meetings, it was decided that suitable tree species would be planted at the site, as well as the installation of 3 artificial eagle perch structures to serve as temporary roost sites until tree establishment. Interpretive signage is being sought through the Handshake Partnership Funds to provide information to visitors on bald eagles on the Mississippi River and explain the Corp's role in managing natural resources along the river.

In the Fall of 2018, Mid-American Energy donated and installed three power poles with multiple perches extending from each pole on Smith's Island in place of the damaged trees. Shortly after the perches were installed, Living Lands and Water donated ten trees which were planted by the Quad Cities Photography Club. In the meanwhile, Project staff began working with a local Eagle Scout on the design of the interpretative sign and began the preparations to plant a prairie around the base of the poles to provide a buffer between the recreation area and roosting structures.

With the support from the Handshake Partnership funds, the interpretative sign was purchased and installed at the entrance to Lock 14/Smith's Island Recreation Area and the prairie was planted. Due to the reduced cost of the interpretative signage, additional funds were used to purchase a fence cap that was install on the chain-link fence along the boardwalk where visitors gather to photo feeding eagles along with additional seed to enhance the prairie. The fence cap provides a smooth surface so visitor's camera straps to not get caught on the chain-link fence.



Roosting trees prior to 2017 storm



Eagle roosting on new structure



Mid American Energy erecting the perches



WELCOME TO Lock and Dam No.14



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Rock Island District

This area is maintained and operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The boardwalk, recreation/picnic area and trails around Smith's Island are open to the public year-round. In the winter months, the lock and dam is a premier location for bald eagle watching and photography, with visitors traveling from around the world to view these majestic birds. For your safety, always obey posted signs and be aware of icy conditions. Each year, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sponsors several bald eagle-watching events along the Mississippi River. You can find more information at missriver.org.



Why do eagles winter here?

In the winter, as lakes, rivers, and streams freeze up north, thousands of eagles migrate along the Mississippi River. The turbulence created below the dam provides open water and an array of stunned fish, like the gizzard shad, that eagles can easily feast upon all winter. In addition, the wooded bluffs that overlook the Mississippi are an excellent habitat for night-roosting and daytime perching.

WATCHING TIPS

How do I spot a bald eagle?

The best way to observe is while the eagle is perched in a tall tree near the water's edge. Eagles choose mature trees between 30 and 150 feet tall for perching. To easily find them in the trees, search for their white heads. Also, they can be spotted soaring high above the water searching for fish. Once an eagle has captured its food, many times it will fly to a nearby ice floe to eat.

What should I do when I find one?

When viewing bald eagles, take care not to disturb them. They use as little energy as possible to maintain body heat. Therefore, it is important that resting eagles aren't frightened to the point of flying off. This may cause them to burn up much needed energy to the point of not feeding. You can help prevent stressing bald eagles by not approaching, standing too close or making loud noises. The best places to observe or take photos is along the boardwalk or from inside your car.

What if I find an injured eagle?

Eagles can be extremely dangerous and they consider humans a threat. For your safety, never attempt to approach, pick-up, or feed an injured eagle. If you find an eagle in distress, report it to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

BALD EAGLE CHARACTERISTICS

Adult or Juvenile

An adult's characteristics are what make it such a predominant figure. The head, neck, and tail feathers are bright white. Its beak and talons are yellow which contrast against the bluish brown torso and wings. A juvenile's color is a mixture of speckled brown and white with a black beak and talons. Its immature feathers are fuller than an adult's which make them appear larger. A juvenile reaches adult size at around 10 weeks old, but it will take 4 to 5 years to fully develop into an adult. A juvenile's first year of life is critical, meaning it has a greater chance of survival after its first year. A bald eagle has a lifespan of 20-30 years in the wild.



Male or female

Size will vary depending on the age, and gender. Females are often slightly larger than males.

- Length: Males (30-35 inches); females (34-43 inches)
- Wingspan: Males (6'7"); females (up to 8 feet)
- Weight: Males (8-9 pounds); females (10-14 pounds)

Eagles or other birds of prey



Eagles: Large, dark soaring birds with long, flat wings and a short, broad tail. They steadily glide and soar with their wings straight across.



Turkey vultures: Similar in size to eagles, they have large broad wings but they hold their wings in a "V" shape when soaring.



Ospreys: Smaller than eagles (medium to large) with long, narrow wings held in a "M" shape when soaring.



DID YOU KNOW?

• There are about 60 eagle species in the world found on every continent except Antarctica. Due to its appearance and diet, the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) is known as the "white-headed sea eagle" and is the only species exclusive to North America.

• Today, the bald eagle population is estimated at 70,000 with 78% living in the Northwestern United States and Canada.

• On June 20, 1782, the U.S. Congress adopted the bald eagle as its national bird. It can be found on the nation's Great Seal and currency as a sign of strength, power and majesty.

• Eagles have extraordinary eyesight (five to six times better than humans) which makes them excellent hunters.

Eagles are at the top of their food chain. However, eagle population declined drastically in the 20th century due to the use of pesticides, lead poisoning, hunting, and habitat reduction.

• In recent years, bald eagle numbers have made a comeback due to improved education and conservation efforts. As of 2007, bald eagles are no longer on the endangered species list but they are still protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (16 U.S.C. 668-668d).

President John F. Kennedy once said, "The Founding Fathers made an appropriate choice when they selected the bald eagle as the emblem of the nation. The fierce beauty and proud independence of this great bird aptly symbolizes the strength and freedom of America."

ARTIFICIAL PERCHES PROJECT

Two large trees at the point of Smith's Island were heavily used by bald eagles to rest and scan the water for fish. These trees fell victim to Dutch Elm disease and had to be removed in early 2017. Veteran eagle watchers Tim Brandenberg, Stan Bousson and Jay Brooks developed a plan to create temporary perches knowing that it would be several years before eagles could use replacement trees. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was fully supportive of the idea knowing the value of the area and need to restore the bald eagle perch. Over three days in September of 2017, Mid-American Energy donated the materials and labor to install the three artificial perches. Living Lands and Waters donated the trees planted around the perches to secure a more natural long-term restoration. Within six months of the installation, the first bald eagles used the temporary perches.



QUAD CITIES VIEWING LOCATIONS



PROJECT SPONSORS: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers / Jay Brooks, Tim Brandenberg and Stan Bousson / Quad Cities Photography Club / Mid-American Energy / Living Lands and Waters
SIGN SPONSORS: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers / Matthew Cushing, Eagle Scout Project / Midline Communications / Photography by Jay Brooks

Sign purchased with Handshake funds

	Total
Handshake Program Funding Amount	\$11,000
Local Corps Office Funds (total expended on labor, materials, contracts, etc.)?	\$4,200
Partner's Contributions (total value of funds, goods, services, volunteer hours, etc.)	
Partners Name	Total Value of Contributions
1 Mid American Energy	\$14,600
2 Living Lands and Water	\$1,380
3 Quad Cities Photography Club	\$7,725
4 Eagle Scout	\$483
5	\$
6	\$
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.

After being approached by a possible new partner (QC Photo Club), the Handshake Program/funds was the opportunity needed to establish the project and new partnerships. The possibility of getting funds and starting the project energized the partner to reach out to other organizations to support the project. Setting up the formal partnerships and applying for the Handshake funds was relatively easy. Due to the multiple donations and reduced cost on supplies on the original idea for the Handshake, we had enough funds to accomplish additional items related to the project that were set to be completed in the future. The flexibility to add to the scope after receiving the funds was helpful.

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](#).

A video created by the Quad Cities Photography Club about the significance of Lock 14 and the Handshake Project can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mylYvkj9ZQo>