



Making NPLD 2020 a Virtual Success at Carters Lake

As the nation's largest single-day volunteer event for public lands, NEEF's [National Public Lands Day](#) (NPLD) typically draws hundreds of thousands of volunteers who want to protect and beautify our green spaces and waterways. But with COVID-19, this year's event—slated for September 26, 2020—will look different. Many public land sites are shifting to virtual events, hosting modified in-person events (following local rules and regulations regarding COVID-19), or taking a hybrid approach.

Case in point: last year at Carters Lake, a US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) site in Chatsworth, Georgia, over 100 volunteers spread two dump truck loads of mulch, pulled weeds, and cleaned up three miles of shoreline. This year, [Carters Lake](#) hopes to capture the same spirit of the day by offering a hybrid of mainly virtual NPLD events with some in-person options for people who want to come out on their own to enjoy public lands.

“The goal is to provide people with a connection to their public lands, and hopefully teach them something,” says Thomas Backwinkel, USACE Park Ranger at Carters

Lake.

NPLD 2020 at Carters Lake will include a mix of pre-recorded videos and livestream events that are also aimed at strengthening volunteers' connection to public lands while offering opportunities to learn and explore. The pre-recorded videos will be similar to the Carters Lake [summer learning series](#) led by Park Ranger George McBroom. This video series included talks from various experts, science-based education presentations, special in-person events (like Astronomy Night), and interpretive hikes.

"This year, it's not possible to do in-person activities, so we decided, 'either don't do anything or get creative,'" says Backwinkel.

For the livestream events, Carters Lake will feature a ranger out in the park talking about the conservation and environmental activities that staff have been doing on-site. Attendees will also be able to ask questions and share the activities they have been doing either through online discussions or photos.

"We'll post some interpretive videos on Facebook and suggest two to three activities that people can come out to do in person if they want to celebrate public lands in a safe, socially distant manner," says Backwinkel.

If you're looking for new ways to celebrate and care for America's public lands against the backdrop of the pandemic, check out the many [virtual NPLD events](#) being held across the country. Unlike in-person events, with virtual events you're not constrained by your geographical location. You can support both your local public lands as well as enjoy sights and sounds of the nation's iconic parks, national forests, marine estuaries, and more from the comfort and safety of home.

"We hope our virtual NPLD events will bridge the gap between public lands and people because of the pandemic," explains Backwinkel, noting how many out-of-towners might not feel comfortable driving across state lines to visit in person. "These virtual options give everyone an avenue to still connect with their public lands."

Ready to sign-up? [Find an NPLD event near you.](#)