

Friends of Raystown honored for “Excellence in Partnerships”

They say everything’s big in Texas, and when it comes to partnership awards, the Friends of Raystown Lake would have to agree. In a February ceremony at the Association of Partners for Public Lands Conference in Dallas, the Friends of Raystown Lake received the biggest of awards when they were recognized for their “Excellence in Partnerships”, an honor bestowed on only one Corps partnering organization per year nationwide. The Friends of Raystown competed against other partners throughout the nation and were selected as the best, thanks to their myriad of partnering programs with the Corps of Engineers’ staff at Raystown Lake.

The criteria used to select a winner included (1) Creativity and Originality, (2) Improvement in Public Awareness, (3) Public Education, (4) Accomplishment of Management Objectives, (5) Involving Other Partners, and (6) Serving Diverse Audiences. Some of the projects the Friends are intricately involved with include an annual lake cleanup, support for the American Chestnut restoration program, lake navigation aids, hardwood forest replanting, fisheries habitat improvements, and the Corps’ water safety mission .

There are the two flagship programs that the Friends manage. The first is an environmental education project called RayCEP (Raystown Conservation Education Partnership). The Friends lead a consortium of federal and state agencies, private businesses, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations to use student interns in presenting hands on, interactive environmental programs. The second is the Allegrippis Trails, a 32-mile nationally recognized trail system built for mountain bikers to compliment the already sought after recreational opportunities at Raystown Lake. The Friends engaged the Raystown community to build a \$750,000 trail system that embraces each aspect of the Corps mission in environmental sustainability. Since opening, the trails have drawn riders from hundreds of miles to enjoy the pristine natural beauty of the forests surrounding Raystown Lake.



This distinguished award, supported through Corps' headquarters, recognizes an appreciation of the "outstanding contributions towards the recreation and environmental stewardship programs at the Raystown lake Project." The honor acknowledges that the "Friends of Raystown have demonstrated a passion for partnerships and community service." The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers congratulates the Friends of Raystown Lake for their cooperation with the Corps in accomplishing projects of national significance.

Left to Right:
Mary Coulombe, Chief of Operations & Natural Resources;
Ron Rabena, Friends of Raystown Lake President;
Allen Gwinn, Raystown Park Ranger;
Colonel Thomas Kula, Southwestern Division Commander



Corps of Engineers Excellence in Partnerships Award presented to the Friends of Raystown Lake at the 2011 APPL Convention in Dallas, TX.