



# USA Volunteers Dedicate Time to Repair Blue Marsh Lake Shelter Roof

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*Union volunteers work to repair Vista Pavilion, a 44-by-30 foot shelter located at Blue Marsh Lake's Dry Brooks Day Use Area.*

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By Carson Herbert

Situated northwest of Reading, Pennsylvania, Blue Marsh Lake National Recreation Area attracts almost one million visitors each year, and in April 2024, Union Sportsmen's Alliance volunteers helped restore a popular shelter on the property.

Managed by the U.S. Corps of Engineers (USACE), the recreation area spans 6,000 acres, including a 1,150-acre lake and 30-mile loop trail for biking, hiking and horseback riding. The lake is one of a few bodies of water that allows unlimited watercraft horsepower.

Vista Pavilion overlooks Blue Marsh Lake and was in need renovations after its roof deteriorated due to age and storm damage. Given the roof's condition, park rangers put it out of service last August.

The 44-by-30 foot pavilion is one of three picnic shelters in the Dry Brooks Day Use Area that hosts both social events and educational groups of up to 100 people.

According to volunteer project leader Bill Troutman, an active IBEW Local 743 member and lifelong area resident, Blue Marsh Lake has a large economic impact by generating revenue from lodging, fuel and more. With most of Vista Pavilion's use occurring between Memorial Day and Labor Day, Blue Marsh Lake staff faced questions from the public about its status and assessed different options.

USACE Natural Resource Specialist Jonah Eckert quoted roofing companies for repairs, but cost was a concern.

"[The cost] would've probably kept the pavilion out of service for a couple more years until it got worked into the budget to get the pavilion re-roofed," he said. "We had the money available to purchase all the supplies but what we couldn't afford was the labor."

That's when the USA stepped in. In a national partnership between the USA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, over 30 volunteers worked to repair the roof on April 27. Volunteers represented Electrical Workers Local 743, Roofers Local 30, Sheet Metal Workers Local 19, Bricklayers Local 5, Plumbers Local 690, Operating Engineers Local 542, and Carpenters Locals 164, 167 and 431.

"We purchased all materials, got a dumpster there, and the crew showed up and pretty much cranked it out in less than a full day," Eckert said. "They started in the morning and ended around

lunch time. We were able to get the pavilion back into service. Definitely a great help to us and provides a lot of value to the public and visitors who enjoy using that space.”

From removing wood tongue-and-groove decking to staining wood, volunteers worked hard for a purpose. The pavilion was dedicated to the late Ryan C. Helms, a former IBEW Local 743 president. This project was also a perfect fit with the USA’s conservation-focused mission of uniting the union community to expand and improve public access to the outdoors.

“I’m a former boy scout leader and have done at least 100 community projects over the years,” Troutman said. “This one here is extra special because it’s done with the Brooks County Building Trades. It’s outdoors, and it’s going to bring some outdoor life to the city of Reading.”

Eckert is going to share this as a success story.

“It’s definitely a noticeable change from what we had before,” he said. “Some casual observers, if they weren’t here before, might not notice it, but the people who knew what it was like by the end of the summer last year vs. now are definitely seeing the change with the fresh lumber and everything on the roof... It looks fresh, and we should get many more years of good service out of it.”

Troutman is proud of the teamwork done by the volunteers.

“When you finish a project that you did for the community, it makes everybody feel good,” he said. “These guys were all working together as a team, and they did something nice for the community. Everybody that showed up there that day, even if it wasn’t their trade that needed work done, stepped right in and did the job that needed to be done and worked together.”

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## Blue Marsh Lake Pavilion Roof Repair



Union Sportsmen's Alliance

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