

Paynes Creek Multipurpose Trail



Thanks to a Handshake Partnership agreement between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, and the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (SORBA), Hartwell Lake is now home to a professionally-designed, 7.2-mile mountain biking and multi-purpose trail.

Located at the Paynes Creek Camping area on the Tugaloo River arm of Hartwell Lake, the trail officially opened to the public during a ribbon cutting ceremony April 29, 2011. Representatives from the Corps, SORBA, and the contractor, Long Cane Trails, were present for the ribbon cutting ceremony. Open to bikers, hikers, or walkers, the trail is nestled within the Paynes Creek 190-acre day-use area, owned and operated by the Corps.

The Hartwell office partnered with SORBA in 2009 to design the trail and apply for the Handshake Partnership funding. USACE-HQ rated the applications based on six key factors: sustainability, partnership value, environmental stewardship value, communication and education value, recreational benefit and innovativeness. The proposed multi-purpose trail exceeded all criteria. In January 2010, the Corps headquarters awarded Hartwell Lake \$25,000 in federal funds as a source of seed money to install the trail. SORBA matched the grant by donating an additional \$20,000 in volunteer efforts and labor toward the project.



Volunteers make it happen

Volunteers like Jud Turpin, a Georgia National Guardsman, Hartwell-area resident, and member of the SORBA Athens chapter, helped with construction since December. Turpin said the trail is one of a kind for the Hartwell community. Before the trail was built, riders had to drive several hours away to Clemson, S.C., or Augusta, Ga., for a similar route.

Georgia SORBA groups from Gainesville, Columbus and Athens, Georgia, as well as groups based in upstate South Carolina, came from hours away to volunteer their time.

“Kudos to the Corps - they’ve been great to work with and they’ve given us everything we needed,” Turpin said. “They allowed us to come in and camp at the campground before it was even open, which was especially beneficial for the folks who lived far away.”

“It’s great to get involved with the parks and with the Corps,” Turpin said. “We want to build on our partnership and host some events to raise funds that we can put back into the trail. If we can make money with the resources we already have and use those funds to keep up the maintenance - all while providing outdoor recreation - it’s a win-win for everyone.”



SORBA members and Corps Personnel participate in the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Paynes Creek Multipurpose Trail

For more information on the Corps of Engineers Handshake Partnership Program, visit <http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/challenge/handshake.cfm>