

July 2, 2024

## **USA, Union Volunteers Improve Boating Access at Lake Allatoona**

CARTERSVILLE, Ga.—The Union Sportsmen’s Alliance (USA) and 31 union volunteers, primarily tradeswomen, braved the Georgia heat on Saturday, June 29, to install a new floating dock at one of the most popular boat ramps on Georgia’s Lake Allatoona.

“It was already 80 degrees at 5 a.m., and you could cut the humidity with a knife, but the weather didn’t faze the great group of volunteers we had. They worked their butts off, and everything went very smoothly,” said USA Conservation Coordinator Cody Campbell.

The project got started when Dyana (Dee) Lee, a first-year apprentice with International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) Local 85, attended the USA’s All-Women’s Hike outside DC in 2023. When she learned about the USA’s Work Boots on the Ground (WBG) program, which unites union members to volunteer their time and skills to complete local conservation projects, she contacted the USA about leading a project in the Atlanta area. The USA reached out to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) about their needs, and they identified Blockhouse Boat Ramp.

Lake Allatoona receives 6.5 to 6.8 million visitors per year, according to USACE Lead Ranger Chris Purvis, and Blockhouse Boat Ramp is one of the most popular ramps on the lake. The existing courtesy dock only had three anchor points, which resulted in dozens of boats waiting to come in during busy summer months. The dock was also unusable when the USACE lowered the flood control lake 17 feet each winter.

Through the USA’s WBG program, volunteers representing SMART Local 85 and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 613 installed a 55-ft. gangway and floating dock that has double the anchor points and extends 12 feet further into the lake, improving year-round access for boaters. United Association (UA) Local 72 and International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) District Council 77 and the Georgia Building Trades provided additional behind-the-scenes support.

“It was important for me to have lots of people involved in this project to show the community that union members can come together and create a massive event,” said Lee. “There are so many kinds of people in the union, and when young adults are looking for career options, we want them to know we have a spot for them.”

Even before the dock installation day, Lee noticed how conversations about the project were creating new friendships and building solidarity on the job.

“This is the first jobsite I’ve been on where multiple trades gather for lunch every day and not only accept one another but have each other’s back. It’s such a positive environment,” Lee said.

In total, union volunteers donated 392 hours of labor, a value of more than \$20,000, and world-renowned floating dock manufacturer AccuDock was chosen to build the floating dock and gangway as part of a new partnership with the USA.

“It was great to see everyone working together to get the floating dock and gangway installed,” said AccuDock Sales Representative Bobby Dolan. “Our safe, strong and accessible docks ensure everyone can have fun on the water. The floating dock looks amazing, and AccuDock is proud to play a role in bringing easier access to the water for everyone in the community.”

Approximately \$43,000 for the new dock was funded by the USA’s annual Atlanta Area Conservation Dinner. Through auctions and raffles held during the dinner, union affiliates and union members donate money that is reinvested in the community through local conservation projects and events.

“We have been trying to do this for years, but the funding we receive is to help maintain what we have, not to improve areas,” Purvis said, “so it has been a godsend for us that the USA was willing to not only contribute the dock, but also to have union volunteers install it. Fishermen and guides are really excited.”

“As we were packing up to leave, there were already five or six boats waiting to launch,” said Campbell. “The quality and stability of AccuDock is phenomenal, and there is no doubt the new dock will be well-used by boaters on the popular lake.



Union Sportsmen’s Alliance volunteers from SMART Local 85 and IBEW Local 613 standing on the newly installed AccuDock gangway at Lake Allatoona.





SMART Local 85 and IBEW Local 613 union volunteers preparing the floating dock for installation next to Blockhouse Boat Ramp on Lake Allatoona.



Union Sportsmen's Alliance union volunteers and USACE staff installing the new floating dock on Lake Allatoona.





(L-R) Union Sportsmen's Alliance Conservation Coordinator Cody Campbell and project leader Dee Lee, a first-year apprentice with SMART Local 85.