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**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

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Bridging the Gap

Volume 2, Issue 2

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The True Value of Partnerships

Northwestern Division, Portland District, Willamette Valley, OR

By: Tom Ibsen

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Portland District's Willamette Valley Project (Valley) received an unexpected letter from their partner, Kalapuya High School (KHS) in Eugene, Oregon. In the past five years, under a Cooperative Agreement with USACE, KHS has achieved its environmental stewardship mission by growing and nurturing over 10,000 native plants, maintaining trails, and removing invasive plants.

But there is more to this story... Throughout the course of a one and half page letter, the principal, lead teacher, and crew leader explained the challenges faced by the diverse students who participate in the program. KHS students had historically been unsuccessful in traditional educational settings and faced significant barriers to graduating high school, including generational poverty and family issues. Students frequently arrived at KHS already behind on credits needed to graduate. Despite these challenges, KHS has managed to increase graduation rates while other districts across

Oregon have declined.

Teachers use experiences in the field to make classroom exercises relevant. Many of the students struggle to meet writing standards; however, the students' scores improve significantly and consistently when they write about the habitat work they perform through the partnership with USACE versus writing about other topics. In addition to increased classroom success, the partnership also enables students to gain skills, knowledge, and experience that will prepare them for the workforce. The community benefits as the youth develop a positive stewardship ethic and relationship with their local parks and open spaces. The students' efforts in helping restore threatened and endangered species enables them to understand and value the meaning of place.

The KHS letter concludes, "It would be tough to overstate the value that the USACE partnership has provided our school and district. At an academic level, it has helped us continue to increase graduation rates in the

midst of raised standards. It has also helped our students achieve career readiness and a connection to their land base. We are proud of the work accomplished so far and we hope that we can continue to develop and improve this program for years to come." All too often we look at partnerships and volunteers as merely tools to help us get the job done. Wendy Jones, Environmental Stewardship Supervisor, and her staff in the Valley have also taken the time to reflect upon what they give in these relationships.

Please consider how you can foster and strengthen your partnerships to ensure that your partners grow as much from their own experiences as the students of Kalapuya High School have. The results will be meaningful and long-lasting.



KHS students surveying Fern Ridge shoreline and mapping invasive Yellow Flag Iris

Pollinator Habitat Improvement Research Partnership

Southwestern Division, Fort Worth District, Whitney Lake, TX

By: Joshua Brown



Prescribed fire area

Pollinator species are paramount to the nation's food supply and native habitats. These species are in decline, prompting a national effort to improve pollinator habitat across the country. Researchers at the University of Texas approached the Whitney and Aquilla Lakes Office to explore opportunities to utilize public lands to research management techniques for improving pollinator habitat. Along with an Associate Professor at Oklahoma State University, the common goal was to determine best practices for use on private lands, and then educate and promote those techniques to the public. A MOU was established between USACE and the University of

Texas at Austin.

The researchers chose several plots: one as a control site, one to be burned, one to be burned and reseeded, and a fifty acre plot to be burned. Whitney Lake staff assisted in establishing the fire lanes and the researchers used grant money received from the USFWS Competitive State Wildlife Grants Program to hire Texas Fire Resources, a private firm, to plan and conduct the burns. The burns were successfully conducted in March 2018. The actual total area burned was seventy-five acres. Shortly after the burns, a 5-acre plot was reseeded with a native prairie mix by Native American Seed Company.

The Wildlife Management Area in which these activities were conducted had been under a grazing lease for ten years prior. This area will now be deferred for two years and the researchers will continue to collect data on vegetation and pollinator species. The most recent feedback reveals that Whitney Lake continues to be one of our sites with the most pollinators and relatively high flower diversity, although this year there are not many insects or flowers in general because of the drought.

Whitney and Aquilla Lakes continue to seek out partnership opportunities to improve land management as well as habitat improvement.

Staring Out Your Window Can Save Lives

Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, Detroit District, Lake Superior Maritime Visitor Center, MN

By: Denise Wolvin

Let's admit it; we've all spent time staring out the office window at work. I admit I've spent a time or two watching visitors playing in the water on the beach near our park.

There is no place to swim in our park, but visitors often come to the visitor center with towels and gear on their way to the Minnesota Point beach. I frequently worried they did not have up to date information about deadly rip currents.

A rip current work group including the City of Duluth, Minnesota Sea Grant, National Weather Service, Duluth YMCA, and others shares rip current conditions with warning flags at beach access points along Minnesota Point, an electronic message board, and a website:

ParkPointBeach.org. However, outside my window I see a gap in the USACE park where these warnings should also be shared.

In 2017, USACE joined the Rip Current Work Group and suggested adding a rip current signal flag on USACE property, as well as a kiosk to share beach information in the visitor center lobby. The Handshake program was the perfect tool to make this plan a reality. Funds covered the purchase and installation of a flagpole. The City of Duluth Fire Department changes the flags when needed. This partnership extends our water safety mission, and can save lives by warning visitors of dangerous conditions.

Looking out my window now, I can see the signal flag indicating rip current conditions, and watch visitors

reading the sign on the flagpole. I smile knowing they now have the information needed to make a safe decision about going into the water or simply enjoying the view from the beach. This lifesaving signal flag would not have been possible without the Handshake Program.



Signal flagpole installation

Ukiah Rod & Gun Club Enhances Interpretation at Lake Mendocino

South Pacific Division, San Francisco District, Lake Mendocino, CA

By: Poppy Lozoff



Steelhead mural

Lake Mendocino in Ukiah, CA has a successful partnership with the Ukiah Valley Rod and Gun Club, a non-profit organization dedicated to fish and wildlife habitat restoration in Mendocino County. USACE and Ukiah Rod and Gun have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) which enables the club to assist with Steelhead egg collection at the reservoir, and send the eggs to the Don Klausen Fish Hatchery at Lake Sonoma to hatch.

In 2010, Lake Mendocino applied for and received funding from the HQ Handshake Program to complete interpretive murals on both the small hatchery at Lake

Mendocino, and the Coyote Valley Egg Collection Facility. The murals depict the life cycle of steelhead trout, including potential predators, spawning grounds, and the human assisted spawning process. Recently the mural has been coated to revitalize its vibrant colors and provide further protection for years to come.

The murals are often the centerpiece of ranger-led tours of the facilities. Students of all ages benefit from the artistic interpretations of the fish life cycles. The partnership has aspired to convey a message of resource conservation for future generations. Ukiah Rod and Gun Club volunteers enjoy watching the next generation of anglers and environmental stewards learn the complexity of the Steelhead's journey.



Steelhead egg collection

Friends of Coralville Lake

Mississippi Valley Division, Rock Island District, Coralville Lake, IA

By: Leah Deeds

Incorporated in 2016, the Friends of Coralville Lake (FOCL) is a non-profit Cooperating Association committed to working with USACE to enhance the recreational and aesthetic value of the Coralville Lake area. The membership and board are a group of individuals with very diverse and specialized interests in the lake and surrounding lands. Members' passions include everything from horseback riding to disc

golf to recreational boating and includes adjacent home owners.

While still a young organization, this diverse group has joined together to get an accessible fishing dock donated, put together and trained a volunteer fire brigade to help with prescribed burning, put on a Halloween event, coordinated a lakeshore cleanup, and received donations to assist with a major rehab of the Veteran's Trail. In addition, FOCL runs the firewood sales and recycling programs in Coralville Lake campgrounds.

The group also brought the community together to provide valuable input into the re-write of the Coralville Lake Master Plan and Shoreline Management Plan.



Prescribed fire team



Accessible fishing dock

Clean Jordan Lake: Helping to Protect a Valuable Resource

South Atlantic Division, Wilmington District, Jordan Lake, NC

By: Jon Bannerman

Clean Jordan Lake, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, was founded in 2009 by local outdoor enthusiasts who wanted to address the growing litter problem along B. Everett Jordan Lake's shoreline. What started as an annual shoreline cleanup event in the first year has grown in scope and scale to include a Cooperating Association Agreement with USACE, 19 Adopt-A-Shoreline Groups, two Adopt-A-Feeder Stream Groups, corporate partnerships for community service days, and public awareness campaigns through local media and government.

The former president of Clean Jordan Lake, Dr. Fran DiGiano, was instrumental in increasing the organization's influence in the past 10 years. Dr. DiGiano, often with the help of his wife Ann, has selflessly dedicated much of his free time in retirement to enhance the environmental health and recreational enjoyment of B. Everett Jordan Lake's 1.5 million annual visitors.

Rapid urbanization in the Haw River and New Hope Creek watersheds over the past 30 years has contributed to excessive litter issues on much of the lake's southern shoreline. Clean Jordan Lake has little trouble attracting volunteers for service days.

Over 300,000 local residents rely on B. Everett Jordan Lake for their drinking water and approximately 2 million people now live within a an hour's drive of the project. Many first time volunteers are often surprised to discover the scope of the litter problem and leave eager to return for future cleanup events. Since 2013, nearly 13,000 volunteer hours of service have been donated through the Clean Jordan Lake organization.

Since Clean Jordan Lake's inception, the organization has hosted over 350 cleanup events. Nearly 145 tons of litter and 4,500 tires have been removed from 18 miles of shoreline. Some of this litter is now able to be recycled through a local mixed-waste processing facility.

Clean Jordan Lake will continue to be a valuable partner to USACE, the visiting public, and the flora and fauna along the project shoreline.



Adopt-A-Feeder Stream program



Lakeshore cleanup

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Have you attended the NRM Partnerships PROSPECT class yet? If not, sign up for one of our FY 20 classes!

Session 1:
Oct 28 - Nov 1, 2019
W. Kerr Scott Lake,
Wilkesboro, NC

Session 2:
Jun 8-11, 2020
Seattle District Office,
Seattle, WA

Partners Work Together to Protect Pollinators

North Atlantic Division, New England District, Surry Mountain Lake, NH
By: Lola Bobrowski, Outreach Coordinator Cheshire County Conservation District

Residents in Surry, NH have a new public pollinator garden to enjoy this summer, thanks to USACE and local community partners. The 4-acre field, located just north of the Surry Mountain Beach entrance on Route 12A, abuts the USACE recreation area at Surry Mountain Lake.

Surry Mountain Lake, a flood control project, applied for HQ Handshake program funds and approached local partners for help with this project. These funds, combined with funding from the local project and their partners' contributions, benefit the community by improving the environment and providing additional recreation opportunities.

Of the 9 projects funded in the country this year, the Surry Pollinator Project is the only one in the New England District selected for funding. The project received \$19,000 to get started.

Though these funds were essential to purchase supplies, plants, mulch, and gravel, it was the in-kind support of local community partners that really helped bring this project to life. David Brooks of Brooks Construction Company provided time, equipment, and labor to construct the parking area and path. Local K-12 students at the Surry Village Charter School were also engaged throughout the entire life of this project to create a sense of ownership and connection to

the space. Students took walking trips to the garden site to conduct pollinator research, develop plant recommendations, and designed a walking path with the guidance of Principal Ecologist, Jeff Littleton, of Moosewood Ecological LLC.

When all is said and done, this project with all expenses and in-kind donations, has been valued at \$139,000. There is also the priceless ecological value the 4-acre garden will provide, as well as the endless opportunities for outdoor learning that students will benefit from for years to come.

Reminder: FY 2019 Handshake Program Applications Due Soon!

What is the Handshake Program? It is an incentive program developed by HQUSACE for field sites to develop partnerships and use partnership authorities to encourage community engagement.

Who can we partner with? Handshake funds can be used to partner with non-federal public or private entities under a Challenge Partnership Agreement

How much money is available for the program? \$100,000 in FY 19

What is the maximum amount of money we can request? \$20,000 per proposed project

What kinds of projects have been funded in the past? Trail development and upgrades, recreation facility construction and improvements, environmental stewardship projects, educational/interpretation programs, accessibility improvements, and more!

When is the application due? September 30, 2018











Raystown bike skills park



W Kerr Scott Environmental Ed Center

Partnership Advisory Committee Team Members



- | | |
|---|---|
|  HQ Heather Burke – HQUSACE |  SPD Taylor Saia - SPD (Northern Operations Branch– SPK) |
|  SAD Miriam Fleming - Chair - SAD (Carters Lake) |  NWD Heath Kruger – NWD (Omaha District Office) |
|  MVD Stacy Sigman - MVD (Lake Ouachita) |  SWD Tennile Hammonds—SWD (Three Rivers Region-SWF) |
|  LRD Allison Walker - LRD (Nashville District Office) |  NAD Scott Sunderland – NAD (Blue Marsh Lake) |

Important Dates to Remember

- September 30: FY19 Handshake nomination packages due to Heath Kruger
- October 11: 2018 Excellence in Partnership and Volunteer of the Year Award Application webinar, 1:00 pm eastern
- November 5-8: Certified Interpretive Guide training at National Great Rivers Visitor Center (hosted by the Corps Foundation)
- December 9: 2018 Excellence in Partnerships and National Volunteer award nomination packages due to Taylor Saia
- December 31: Partnership data entry due in NRM Assessment/OMBIL

‘Bridging the Gap’ is an electronic publication produced biannually by the USACE Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC). The purpose of this newsletter is to provide information about partnerships and volunteer programs around the country. For more information, or to submit stories for future editions, contact your PAC team representative listed above.