

Bridging the Gap

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'Bridging the Gap' is an electronic publication produced biannually by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 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.

Your Partnership HQ Update

Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager

2019 Handshake Program Projects

The Handshake Program is an incentive program developed by HQUSACE for field sites to develop partnerships and use partnership authorities to encourage community engagement. For FY 19, there was \$100,000 available for competition.



Proposed wildlife viewing platform: Rend Lake



Saylorville Lake Archery Range

Six projects were selected for funding:

- Francis E Walter- Borrow area habitat restoration
- Rend - Wetland viewing area
- Saylorville - Archery range
- Summersville - Climber access trail
- Waco - Small boat access ramp
- Wright Patman - Pollinator project and interpretive trail

The FY 20 call for Handshake Program nominations will be sent out in June/July with an application due date of September 30, 2019. We hope to see another round of great partnership projects submitted!

2018 National Volunteer of the Year Award



Melody and Randy Parks checking kestrel boxes and educating students on the program.

The National Volunteer Award, sponsored by the Corps Foundation, was created to recognize the extraordinary service provided by volunteers, draw attention to their vast skills and contributions, and encourage an attitude of stewardship and responsibility in caring for USACE lands, facilities, and resources.

This year's award winners are **Melody and Randy Parks of Lucky Peak Lake in the Walla Walla District (NWD)**. Mr. and Mrs. Parks together have donated over 27,500 hours of volunteer service in a 6-year period.

Their efforts with the American Kestrel nest box program, project beautification, water safety initiatives, and more have displayed their commitment to the USACE missions and values.

Do you know who the PAC team representative is for your district?

Find yours on page 6 of this newsletter!



2018 National Excellence in Partnerships Award: Discover Your Northwest

Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager

The Excellence in Partnerships Award, sponsored by the Corps Foundation, recognizes exceptional contributions by a partner providing substantial support to the USACE Recreation and Environmental Stewardship programs.

This year's winner, **Discover Your Northwest (DYNW) of the Lake Washington Ship Canal in the Seattle District (NWD)** is an outstanding example of a successful Cooperating Association that goes above and beyond in their partnership with USACE. In 2017, DYNW led the effort to celebrate the Lake Washington Ship Canal centennial by organizing several events and bringing in additional partners.

DYNW partnered with the Corps Foundation to secure grant funding for the remodel of the fish ladder viewing area and continues to work towards completing their \$1.3 million renovation goal. In addition to their extensive fundraising efforts, DYNW operates the bookstore, hosts a summer concert series, 5K running races, Jazzfests, dances, and have upgraded the visitor center. DYNW's collaborative partnership with USACE has not only enhanced the visitors' experience, but has provided immeasurable support to USACE missions at the Lake Washington Ship Canal.



World Class Year Round **STREAM**[™] Educational Center

- S** - Salmon
- T** - Technology
- R** - Resource Management
- E** - Engineering
- A** - American Indian Arts & Cultures
- M** - Marine Industry



Phase I (Starting Winter 2017-18)

- Improve entrance, lighting, use of space and acoustics
- Modern accurate interpretive displays
- Digitally updatable information to educate visitors on all relevant subjects connected to the Locks:

Lake Washington Ship Canal proposed salmon viewing area upgrades



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

Want to know more about the various types of partnerships featured in this newsletter?

Visit the NRM Gateway Partnerships page!
corpslakes.erc.dren.mil/partners/partners.cfm

Abilities Unlimited Pathways to Employment Students Partnership for Water Safety



Brian C. Westfall (Retired)

Ouachita Project Management Office

Beginning in 2018, the Abilities Unlimited Pathways to Employment class joined forces with USACE to promote water safety in area schools. Abilities Students have built over 2,000 water safety education kits for area school children. Amy Shultz, Water Safety Program Manager, Lake Ouachita said, "The partnership with Abilities Unlimited saved countless hours of labor for Lake Ouachita personnel, and the area school students loved the water safety goodie bags given out during programs and events. We greatly appreciate all the hard work done by students and staff at Abilities Unlimited in putting together the water safety bags and helping us spread the water safety message."

"We look forward to continuing the partnership next year and for years to come!"

-Amy Shultz

The Abilities Unlimited Pathways to Employment program also known as P2E, provides special needs students the opportunity to transition from high school to the work force. The program strives to offer employment transitional learning opportunities for students ages 14-21 years.

"Our Pathways to Employment program, a transitional class for high school students, enjoyed assisting USACE with filling the water safety goodie bags" stated, Tammey Blake, Transition Instructor.

Yvonne Westfall, Transition Program Developer, stated, "The Corps of Engineers water safety partnership has been an outstanding opportunity for our students to get firsthand experience in assembly line work. Our students have packed over 2,000 water safety bags to date!"

Lake Ouachita is dedicated to providing quality water based recreation experiences with visitor safety as the highest concern. Partnering drives the water safety program. Professional relationships are the essential ingredients to saving lives on the water. In 2019, the Abilities Unlimited water safety partnership will continue with the goal of increasing the number of kits produced reach. "We look forward to continuing the partnership next year and for years to come!" said, Amy Shultz, Water Safety Program Manager.

Don't miss these upcoming webinars!

March 25: Handshake Partnership Program

April 4: Volunteer Program

July: Contributions Program

August/September: NRM Assessment/ OMBIL data entry

Handshake Partnership Program



P2E students and instructors pictured from left to right: Tammey Blake, Abbey Mahan, Brian Westfall, Lily Smith, Abby Sheets, Ryan Ragan, Austin Crow, TY Coffman, Daniele Soto, and Yvonne Westfall



Reeling in the Fun at Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery

Reece Nelson, Omaha District Office

It was a regular North Dakota fall day on the 11th of September at Garrison Dam/ Lake Sakakawea. As usual, it was windy... really windy. That did not stop senior citizens from local assisted living centers from coming out to catch their limit of rainbow trout at the 2nd annual Senior Fishing Derby.

Garrison Natural Resources Staff, USFWS personnel, and North Dakota state wildlife agencies welcomed over 60 ageless anglers to test their casting skills at the Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery. Volunteers spent time helping bait worms, teaching how or casting for the participants, cleaning 190 netted fish, and swapping fishing tall tales about 'that one that got away'.

Eric Kelsey, Natural Resource

Specialist, and Toni Ganje, Administrative Assistant with the USFWS, teamed up to coordinate this afternoon of fun. Out of the 80,000+ rainbow trout that are annually raised at the hatchery, 1,100 end up in the stocking pond. Before release to local streams, assisted living centers from Bismarck, Mandan, and Minot are invited to bring their residents out to enjoy the thrill of the catch, in a controlled environment. Not everyone caught their state limit of 3, but no one went away empty handed.

Partnering with local groups and other agencies is part of life for the Natural Resource management community, especially at Garrison Dam. Said Mr. Kelsey "I enjoy lending a hand with this partner agency. Working as a team, we are able to impact more public users and get a positive image out for both. It is also great to watch the anglers enjoy themselves." This is just one of the ongoing efforts and beginning of future events to get people out to the project. Mr. Kelsey mentioned that they are ramping up efforts for multiple events next year, including Memorial Day

events at the Hatchery, working with National Park Service to utilize USACE campgrounds to engage visitors in interpretive programs, and going out to State Park and surrounding fairs to spread the water safety message.



"It's crucial during times of diminished funding that we seek out partners to help accomplish our natural resource missions and continue to provide high quality and safe recreation opportunities to the public," said Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager. "We should all applaud the great partnership work going on not just at Garrison, but across the entire Omaha District NRM community."



USACE Abiquiu Lake and New Mexico Wildlife Center

Nathaniel Naranjo, Abiquiu Lake

For the past four years Abiquiu Lake in New Mexico has shared a successful partnership with the New Mexico Wildlife Center. The two organizations have partnered together in one common interest to provide a hands-on environmental education experience to the local community. This thriving partnership is not only a benefit to the surrounding community, but also targets nearby schools by holding an outside environmental education classroom experience called "River Class." River Class allows students, teachers, and USACE Park Rangers to conduct field studies such as benthic macro invertebrate sampling and water quality monitoring on the river.

The Partnership between USACE and the Wildlife Center has also brought successful public volunteer events to fruition such as Earth Day and National Public Lands Day. These events benefit the community as well as Abiquiu Lake's USACE missions. At events

such as these, the Wildlife Center brings several captive animals to showcase to the public, offering a unique interpretive experience. The New Mexico Wildlife Center also assists USACE with their bald eagle survey, and brings out their captive bald eagle, Maxwell, to assist the public in identifying eagles from far distances. The partnership between Abiquiu Lake and New Mexico Wildlife Center has been very rewarding for all parties involved, and will continue to grow and expand in the future.



New Mexico Wildlife Center provides the public with Kestrel Education program

Paddle Boarding Partnership

Allison Walker, Nashville District

Summersville Lake is tucked away in the Huntington District in Nicholas County, WV. The lake has long been an outdoor enthusiast's playground with its sheer sandstone cliffs and pristine shoreline. Annually, nearly one million visitors travel from around the world to experience the recreation opportunities that the lake provides. Many of these visitors want to participate in the rapidly growing sport of standup paddle boarding, but lack the knowledge, skills, and/or equipment. As a result of this, safety concerns needed to be addressed to enable safe paddle boarding, accessible to everyone.

The Park Ranger staff at Summersville Lake stumbled across a true blessing in the selflessly motivated Melanie Seiler. Seiler is the executive director of Active Southern West Virginia (Active SWV), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization whose purpose is to provide opportunities for physical exercise in southern West Virginia, thereby improving health and wellness of its citizens and workforce. In partnership with the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority, Active SWV operates programs within under-served communities where living a healthy lifestyle is critical to life expectancy and economic diversity.



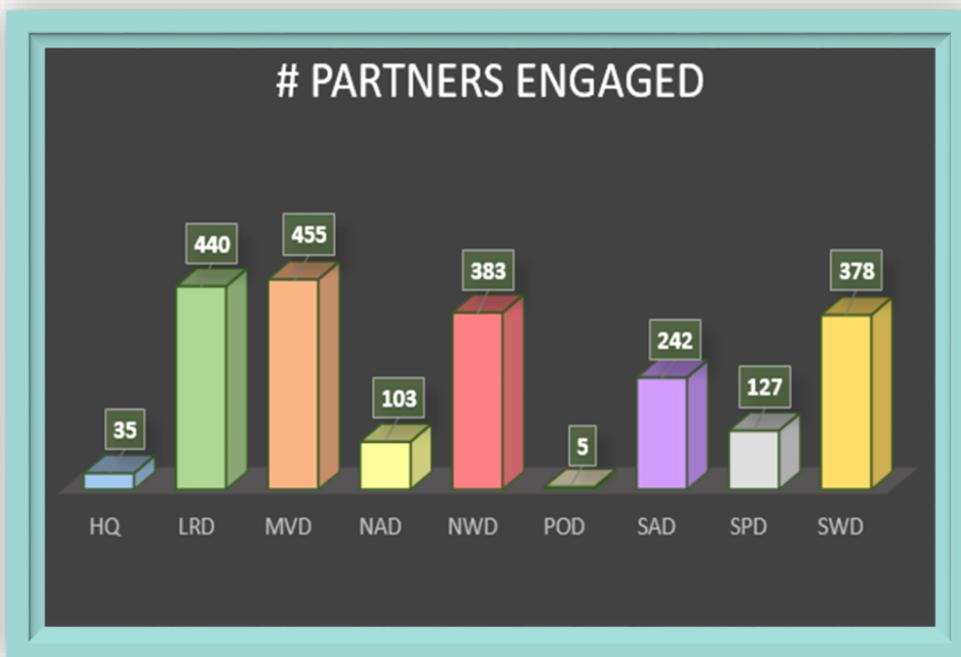
Paddle Boarding Partnership

–Continued.

The partnership between USACE and Active SWV was created after the sport of standup paddle boarding exploded at Summersville Lake. Since the partnership began, Park Rangers have noticed a significant change in the behaviors of paddle boarders including life jacket wear, courteous operation of crafts, and increased numbers of new users. Active SWV has been a major proponent in offering training classes for standup paddleboards, biking programs, and hiking safety. One of their largest events is a family triathlon designed for all ages. The unique feature is that the swimming event was removed and replaced with a paddle craft event for a safer family adventure. The money generated by this non-profit has been used to directly reinvigorate and grow the Kids Run Clubs in Nicholas County.

Active SWV has set new goals which include the following: increase participation in the annual triathlon; flexibility for captain training to lead hikes, walks, paddling, and biking programs; and support the “Almost Heaven Paddle Race” by providing event equipment, safety boaters, and promotions. One thing is certain in light of the past three years, the opportunities to positively benefit health and wellness for visitors to Summersville Lake and residents of Nicholas County will be increasing thanks to this partnership.

FY 18 Partnerships and Volunteer Program Accomplishments



FY 18 Partnership Fast Facts

Total partners: 2,168

Total value of partnerships:
\$70,555,889

(USACE: \$10.6 million investment/
Partner leveraged investment: \$60 million)

Total volunteers: 31,156

Total volunteer hours: 1.6 million

Meet your PAC Team

Heather Burke: HQUSACE

Stacy Sigman – Chair: MVD
(Lake Ouachita)

Scott Sunderland: NAD
(Blue Marsh Lake)

Francis Ferrell: SAD
(Falls Lake)

Allison Walker: LRD
(Nashville District Office)

Tennille Hammonds: SWD
(Three Rivers Region)

Taylor Saia: SPD
(Northern Area Operations)

Heath Kruger: NWD
(Omaha District Office)