

Bridging the Gap

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NRM Assessment News

Your Partnership HQ Update

Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager, HQUSACE

It's that time of year again... pumpkin spice flavored *everything* is available in the stores, and NRM Assessment is open for data entry! Now is the time to reflect back on FY 19 and recall all the amazing partners and volunteers you had the opportunity to work with and make sure you report your successes to get credit for your hard work. It's important that District, Division, and HQUSACE leadership hears about what you're doing. Partnership data builds internal support for our programs all the way up the line. It helps support our requests for the Recreation and ENS budgets by demonstrating that we have strong and robust NRM programs that should be financially supported.

Most likely you have more partner-

ships than you realize. People often think that you have to have a written agreement to have a partnership, but a large majority of our partnerships are actually relatively informal. Our contributions authority allows us to accept money, services, supplies, and materials from other entities or individuals. If you've done any special events with partners such as a water safety fair, eco meet, National Public Lands Day, FLW Fishing event, CAST fishing event, Kids to Parks Day, boat/RV show, etc., and those organizations have donated booth space, time or supplies to USACE... you have a partnership! Be sure to participate in one of the NRM Assessment Partnership webinars offered on Sept. 18 or Oct. 3 to learn more.

'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.

2018 National Volunteer of the Year Award Nominees

Steve Sporer, Supervisory Park Ranger, NAB

For the past four years beginning in 2015, Don and Autumn Benedict dedicated endless time and support to the Tioga-Hammond & Cowanesque Lakes (THC) within the recreation, environmental stewardship and flood risk management missions, contributing over 3,685 hours of volunteer service with a value of \$87,570. They have served as campground gate attendants, camp hosts, maintenance workers, and visitor center hosts.

The Benedicts are well known for supplementing the project's interpretation program both in the campground and at the visitor center. They provided information and guidance on park rules and procedures, as well as discussing flood risk management topics such as Project construction, water quality improvements, lake level status and damages prevented downstream. *Continued on pg. 7*



**We LOVE
our
volunteers!**

Names: Autumn and Don Benedict

Corps project: Tioga-Hammond and Cowanesque Lakes, Tioga, Pennsylvania

Volunteer hours donated: 3,685

USACE volunteers are worth their weight in GOLD!

Kansas City District Makes Migratory Birds A Priority

Kyle Ruona, NRM Specialist, NWK

Most people consider America's Heartland as 'fly over states.' That's no big surprise with the millions of birds that migrate through the central flyway annually. The central flyway is a bird migration route ranging from Canada's boreal forest and parklands across the Great Plains and down to the Texas Gulf Coast. With over two thirds of the Kansas City District (NWK) land base in the central flyway, it's easy to recognize the critical stop over habitat that USACE lakes provide during the annual migration.

From waterfowl hunters to birders, to federal and state land managers, migratory bird habitat sits high on the conservation mantle. The Kansas City District has built a strong history in partnering for migratory bird conservation with latest efforts focusing on bald eagles, least terns, and piping plovers, to name a few. Recently, NWK partnered with Ducks Unlimited (DU), Friends of the Wild Whoopers (FOTWW), and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks to focus on developing critical stop over habitat for migratory birds, with an emphasis on threatened and endangered species.

In 2017 Kanopolis Lake partnered with DU to develop and construct the Big Bottoms Wetlands. DU received funding for the project through a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant that supported the design and scoping of the project. USACE is using

an agriculture leasing program at Kanopolis Lake to fund the construction of the wetlands. Construction began in 2018 and is ongoing. Once completed, the wetland will consist of 3 cells totaling 232 acres providing critical stopover habitat for migratory birds.

Last year USACE signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the FOTWW to assist in the recovery of the



NWD ENS business line manager Mike Langeslay, Milford Park Manager Ken Wenger, NWK Conservation Biologist Dave Hoover, and Milford Lake State Wildlife Area staff discuss the benefits wetlands at Milford Lake provide during central flyway migration.

endangered whooping crane. Past radio telemetry conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey and direct field observation has documented many migration stopovers occurring on USACE-managed lakes in the central flyway. Last summer, NWK Conversation Biologist David Hoover and President of FOTWW Chester McConnell conducted field assessments at Milford, Kanopolis, Wilson, and Harlan County Lakes to determine if any suitable areas could be managed or appropriately developed to provide migration stopover habitat for whooping cranes. "Our preliminary

assessments of areas on USACE-managed lands has confirmed our initial belief that these areas do currently provide important migration stopover habitat. With some minor habitat management actions those benefits can be increased," said Chester McConnell. Additional areas have been identified where vegetation control will create more desirable whooping crane habitat.

Record flooding across the Heartland has greatly impacted lake operations this year, thus delaying efforts to improve critical stopover habitat. NWK will continue to rely on these partnerships to develop work plans that maintain and improve existing stopover habitat and create additional stopover habitat for migratory birds.

USACE, DU, FOTWW, and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks recognize their place in migratory bird conservation and are committed to ensuring that the critical stopover habitat at these lakes remains active in recovery efforts.

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

Mount Morris Dam Recreation Area Partnership Creates Opportunities for Dedicated Volunteers

Juliana Smith, NRM Specialist/Ranger and Volunteer Coordinator, LRB



ARC volunteers pick up litter in recreation areas



ARC volunteers performing boundary line maintenance



ARC participants outside MMD VC

The Arc of Livingston-Wyoming (The Arc) is a non-profit organization that works toward inclusion of adults with cognitive and emotional challenges as productive members of the community and society at-large. In 2012, The Arc contacted the Mount Morris Dam and Recreation Area (MMD), looking for a space to exhibit art created by their clients. After agreeing to display some of their art as part of a rotational exhibit in our visitor center, I chatted with The Arc staff to find out more about what they do. During this casual conversation, I learned some basics about many programs The Arc offers their diverse collective of individuals, and my wheels started turning!

Over the next several years our respective teams worked diligently to develop a meaningful partnership that has flourished for nearly a decade, and has grown over the years to include nearly 100 individual volunteers who have contributed over 15,500 hours of service. Volunteers from The Arc provide invaluable support to the MMD Recreation Program performing litter pick-up, trail maintenance, boundary line maintenance, and special event assistance. To date, The Arc's volunteer effort is valued at over \$366,095!

Most importantly, the value of this partnership is not simply one-sided, and several success stories have been born. While The Arc's volunteer contribu-

tions have certainly increased MMD's ability to provide high quality recreational opportunities to visitors, we have, in turn, provided valuable occupational experience to The Arc. These experiences help build job and life skills that can be used to move individuals toward personal independence by entering the workforce. In fact, many MMD volunteers from The Arc have successfully joined the workforce with paid positions in local businesses. Others have gained college experience through the LIVES Program (Learning Independence, Vocational, and Educational Skills) at the State University of New York. In the LIVES Program, students with all types of disabilities such as autism, down syndrome, speech, intellectual, and physical disabilities learn, work, and socialize with each other, and with students who don't have disabilities.

I consider this partnership a 'win-win' and have learned through my experience working with The Arc that sometimes big ideas start out in unexpected ways; in this case, with a little curiosity, a casual conversation, and an open mind.



USACE Galveston District Hosts Alligator Hunt for Combat Injured Veterans

Breeana Moore, Public Affairs Office, SWG



For the third year in a row, the Galveston District, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Chambers County Game Wardens, Anahuac EMS and Lone Star Warriors Outdoors proudly combined resources to offer combat injured veterans the opportunity to participate in an organized alligator hunt from Sept. 10-12, 2018 at the Wallisville Lake Project.

The Wallisville Lake Project is designed to primarily prevent the intrusion of saltwater up the Trinity River in order to conserve fresh water and to protect fresh water intakes for local municipalities, including the city of Houston. It also serves as a favorite recreational destination among Houstonians.

“Allowing this type of hunt provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for combat veterans to experience this natural treasure, while also assisting with our feral hog and alligator population management efforts.” said Michael East, park ranger at the Galveston District. This year, the alligator hunt was met with a few challenges.

“On the first day we had a boat that wasn’t operational and inclement weather that delayed our events,” said David Mackintosh, park ranger with the Galveston District. “Despite that, everyone was in high spirits and we had an amazing time bonding with the warriors.” In fact, this was a great year for alligator hunting. Six warriors attended the event, all of whom harvested alligators.

“It was a significant event this year because for the first time, among the warriors were two female combat injured veterans,” said Chris Gill, President and Founder of Lone Star Warriors Outdoors. “It was the first time we had female applicants for this event. I am looking forward to doing this again next year.”

On the first day, the group harvested the biggest alligator to-date: a 12 foot, 4 inch male alligator. “The Alligator was harvested by Jeremie Oliver, who was almost as big as the alligator” joked Mackintosh. “Overall, we were very successful and harvested 16 alligators.”

Some of the other activities besides alligator hunting were fishing, feral hog hunting, airboat tours, target shooting, and just hanging out in the Cajun Outback Lodge, a privately owned hunting lodge that was graciously donated for the Lone Star Warriors. “Even when we had to wait in the lodge together as the weather cleared for hunting, you could really feel a sense of pride and camaraderie with the

warriors” said Mackintosh. “We are so grateful to be able to host this annual event for combat injured veterans.”

The Wallisville Lake Project is a 23,000-acre natural retreat located along the outskirts of the nation’s fourth largest city, the City of Houston. The project not only provides recreational opportunities for visitors to connect with the outdoors, it serves an important watershed function.



PARTNERS ON PAPER?

Park Rangers in SWG reached out to their PAC team representative recently for advice on how to formalize their partnership with the groups mentioned in the above article. Currently there’s no formal MOU in place for the alligator hunt, but with some assistance from the PAC team, SWG will be able to formalize their partnership and lay the foundation for future events between the various partners mentioned in the article.

Do you need help formalizing a partnership?

Confused about where to start?

Reach out to your PAC rep today for help!



J. Strom Thurmond Project Receives “Government Partner Award”

Charles E. Fenwick, Park Operations Manager, SAS

The J. Strom Thurmond Project was recently recognized with the “Government Partner Award” for 2018, in recognition of our partnership with Rivers Alive in supporting National Public Lands Day (NPLD). Thurmond Lake was chosen from over 100 different organizations that partner with Rivers Alive each year.

As most of us know, NPLD is the largest volunteer work day on public lands. The Thurmond Lake NPLD event is heavily attended, and Rivers Alive provides 300 shirts each year to support this effort. This type of cleanup allows current and future generations of Americans to enjoy the special places USACE has to offer the same way we do now: pristine and beautiful. Clearly, this effort would not be possible without the numerous sponsors of NPLD; a critical one for Thurmond Lake is Rivers Alive. Thurmond Lake has partnered with Rivers Alive since 2010.

Rivers Alive is an annual program supported by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. They facilitate the cleaning and protection of Georgia’s many natural resources, in part, by sponsoring events around the state, including the Thurmond Lake NPLD event. For more information about the program, see <https://riversalive.georgia.gov/>

Do you know who the PAC team representative is for your district? See page 6 for a complete list!

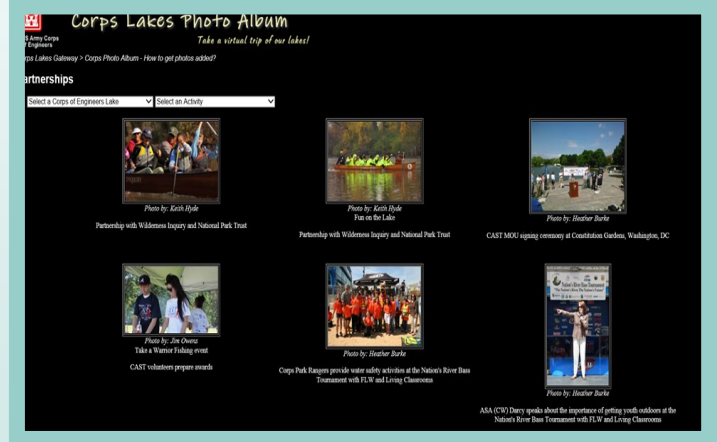


On April 23rd, 2019, Park Rangers Ben Werner and Allen Atkins attended an awards ceremony hosted by Rivers Alive in Atlanta, GA.

Corps Lakes Photo Album

Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager, HQUSACE

Did you know that the NRM community has an online photo album where you can post pictures from your lake or download pictures to use in publications and presentations? The Corps Lakes Photo Album Partnerships and Volunteers pages are in dire need of NEW photos! Many of the images on the site have been there for years.



To add your photos to the Corps Lakes Photo Album, simply click on the link near the top of the page for instructions, and email to corpslakes@usace.army.mil

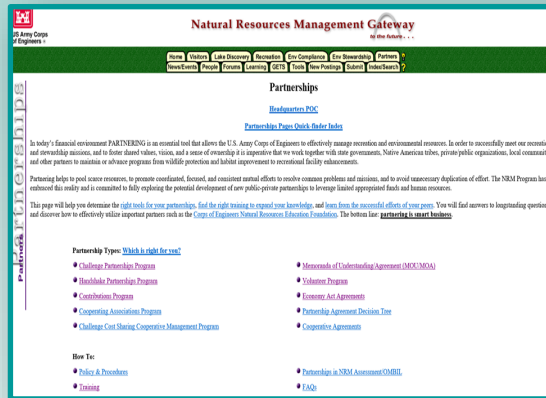


NRM Gateway Partnership Pages

Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager, HQUSACE

Have you taken a moment to check out the NRM Gateway lately? The PAC team works diligently to keep the 200+ pages of partnerships and volunteer content updated on a regular basis. This site provides 'one-stop shopping' to access legal authorities, regulations, policies, agreement templates, and MANY examples of successful partnerships with lessons learned and best practices shared.

Why reinvent the wheel when others have already done a lot of the hard work for you? To access the partnership pages, simply Google 'NRM Gateway' to get to the



homepage, and then click on the 'Partners' tab at the top of the page.

September 1 – October 15:

Partnership data entry due in NRM Assessment

September 10:

Handshake program webinar, 11:00 Eastern

September 18:

NRM Assessment webinar, 1:00 Eastern

September 25:

Excellence in Partnerships (EIP)/Volunteer of Year award webinar, 1:00 Eastern

September 28:

National Public Lands Day

September 30:

FY 20 Handshake Program applications due to Heath Kruger

October 3:

NRM Assessment webinar, 2:30 Eastern

December 6:

EIP/Volunteer of the Year award nominations due to Taylor Saia

PROSPECT

Classes

Oct 28 – 31, 2019

W Kerr Scott Lake
Wilkesboro, NC

Jun 8 – 11, 2020

Seattle District Office
Seattle, WA

Aug 3 – 6, 2020

Eugene Federal Building
Eugene, OR

Oct 2020 (Dates TBD)

Philadelphia District Office
Philadelphia, PA

May 2021 (Dates TDB)

Allatoona Lake
Cartersville, GA

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 Operations Branch)

Heath Kruger: NWD (Omaha District Office)

Kaweah Heritage Visitor Center Operated by Volunteers

Heather Dumais, Park Ranger, SPK

At Lake Kaweah, nestled majestically within the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, east of Visalia, California, lies the Kaweah Heritage Visitor Center (KHVC). The KHVC was born from the union of the Sequoia Natural History Association (now the Sequoia Parks Conservancy (SPC), USACE and the Tulare County Boat Patrol. Sequoia Parks Conservancy, our Cooperating Association, is a non-profit which funds experiences that educate the public, protect and preserve natural and cultural areas. Through the years, the KHVC has been staffed with USACE volunteers, until 2015 when SPC provided part-time seasonal employees. The volunteers have selflessly provided their time and creativity in bringing the Visitor Center to life. All exhibits have been created through the vision of staff and volunteers. Thousands of visitors have learned the importance of water safety, the USACE mission, local history and the beautiful offerings of the foothill's ecosystems. The Kaweah Heritage Visitor Center provides the public the

Volunteer, Millie Pickens, assists a visitor in the Center.



opportunity for education and relaxation as well as the ability to purchase souvenirs and America the Beautiful passes. The KHVC also provides a natural location for special events, interpretive programs, and an additional platform for water safety education such as the Life Jacket Loaner Program.

In a time of short staffing and tighter budgets, the Volunteer's presence in the Visitor Center is crucial to keeping the doors of the KHVC open. By having USACE Volunteers and SPC employees available to staff the Kaweah Heritage Visitor Center, Park Rangers at Lake Kaweah are able to spend their time working on other mission critical projects.

2018 Volunteer of the Year Award Nominees (Cont.)



Checking the life jacket loaner station, promoting water safety at the swim beach, and assisting with shoreline cleanup projects are just some of the things that make the Benedicts outstanding volunteers.



The Benedict's support of special events and community parades promoted the Project to the local residents and tourists. They have adamantly supported water safety outreach to younger individuals and within the community. Moreover, they provided hands on support, cleaning up lake refuse and constructing fish habitat structures with various partners in the community. Their diverse set of skills has been vital to the success of the THC.

The impact Don and Autumn have made over the years has gone well beyond our expectations and what can be quantified in a dollar amount. Their impacts enhanced Project capabilities through maintenance and logistical support, special event planning and execution, along with boosting morale of staff, volunteers and the visiting public. On June 14, 2019, the Benedicts were presented with the 2018 North Atlantic Division Volunteer Award and volunteer coin by the Corps Foundation for their extraordinary service.

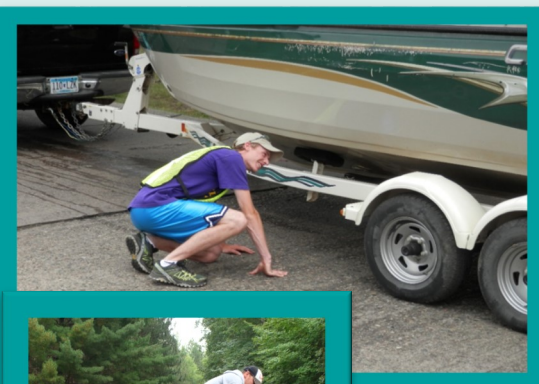
Preventing AIS in the Mississippi River Headwaters

Tammy Frauenshuh, Park Ranger, MVP



The Corps Mississippi Headwaters project, located in northern Minnesota, has been partnering with local agencies to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) at Headwaters reservoirs and waterways. The Mississippi Headwaters Project consists of 6 dams and project sites located on key waterways of the Mississippi River near its point of origination at Lake Itasca, MN. Originally authorized in the late 1800s to help augment flows on the Mississippi River near the Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN area during the summer dry months, today these project sites control some of the premier recreational lakes found in Minnesota, averaging 650,000 visitors per year to the Corps facilities.

AIS and Water Safety Coloring Contest



AIS inspector and decontamination station at Gull Lake.

USACE visitors to the Headwaters projects come from around the region to access the reservoirs for recreational boating purposes, leading to many boat launches and AIS removals. Four (of six) of the Headwaters Project sites have developed varying partnerships with respective county and lake association groups to allow boat inspectors to examine visitor watercraft utilizing the USACE launch facilities. These inspectors visually analyze incoming and outgoing watercraft for environmental debris such as weeds, shells, and algae which may be stuck on the watercraft or trailers, removal of all boat drain plugs, and presence of live fishing bait to ensure it is not transported between lakes. Inspectors are scheduled throughout the summer recreation season, primarily on weekends and holidays with inspections averaging 5-10 minutes to perform. AIS such as zebra mussels, Eurasian water milfoil, curly leaf pondweed and purple loosestrife have been detected in USACE waters. Inspections not only protect the reservoirs from potential new AIS, they also protect non-infested waters from equipment coming out of impacted reservoir's waters. In addition to visual assessment, Gull Lake and Leech Lake Headwaters Project sites have partnered

via cost sharing and handshake funding with their local county to provide hot water pressure wash decontamination stations to accompany on-site inspections. At Sandy Lake, AIS detection discs have been placed at USACE launch docks to help with early detection, and a water safety and AIS awareness coloring contest has been developed. At Cross Lake, along with weekend county inspectors, the local lake association worked with USACE to create a campsite for longer term AIS volunteer inspectors to stay in exchange for their services.

These partnerships provide the Headwaters reservoirs and waters throughout the region a valuable protection service that would be cost and staff prohibitive to perform without collaboration with local agencies. Keeping waters free of AIS is good for the environment, local communities, and USACE operations!

National Public Lands Day (NPLD) is September 28. It's not too late to register your event at:
<https://www.neefusa.org/npld/site-managers>

Three USACE lakes were selected as NPLD highlighted sites!

- Success Lake and Dam - Sacramento District
- Eastman Lake- Sacramento District
- Terminus Dam, Lake Kaweah - Sacramento District

Each of these lakes will receive a sponsorship package worth an estimated \$1,500.