



US Army Corps of Engineers®

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, HQUSACE

Partnerships During a Pandemic

A lot has changed in the world since our last issue of 'Bridging the Gap' was released. We were in the very early stages of grasping the concept of a global pandemic and unknowingly about to shift into a completely different mode of operation. Many lake projects were just gearing up to get ready for the busy recreation season, selecting volunteers, and working out the logistics of new spring partnership projects. None of us were truly prepared for what laid ahead, but in typical fashion our NRM team jumped right in and adapted to the changing situation! Many of our partner organizations have been economically hard hit by the pandemic. It is more important than ever that we keep open lines of communication and seek ways to work together to find 'wins' to get through these difficult times.

An example of one of the positive outcomes from COVID-19 has been the development of the Recreate Responsibly coalition. This partnership of more than 600 nonprofits, government agencies, outdoor businesses and individuals has created guidelines for getting outside and maintaining access to public lands. Between Memorial Day and July 4th weekend, the campaign reached more than 100 million people and continued to grow throughout the summer. This level of collaboration is unprecedented, and something that should pay dividends into the future for partnership projects.

#RecreateResponsibly

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Check the status of the place you want to visit. If it is closed, don't go. If it's crowded, have a back up plan.

PRACTICE PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Keep your group size small. Be prepared to cover your nose and mouth and give others space. If you are sick, stay home.

PLAN AHEAD

Prepare for facilities to be closed, pack lunch, and bring essentials like hand sanitizer and a face covering.

PLAY IT SAFE

Slow down and choose lower-risk activities to reduce your risk of injury. Search and rescue operations and health care resources are both strained.

EXPLORE LOCALLY

Limit long-distance travel and make use of local parks, trails, and public spaces. Be mindful of your impact on the communities you visit.

LEAVE NO TRACE

Respect public lands and waters, as well as Native and local communities. Take all your garbage with you.

BUILD AN INCLUSIVE OUTDOORS

Be an active part of making the outdoors safe and welcoming for all identities and abilities.

7/1/20

#RecrearResponsablemente

INFÓRMATE ANTES DE IR



MANTÉN TU DISTANCIA



PLANEA CON ANTICIPACIÓN



EVITA LOS RIESGOS



QUÉDATE CERCA DE CASA



DEJA SÓLO HUELLAS



APOYA LA INCLUSIVIDAD AL AIRE LIBRE



7/1/2020

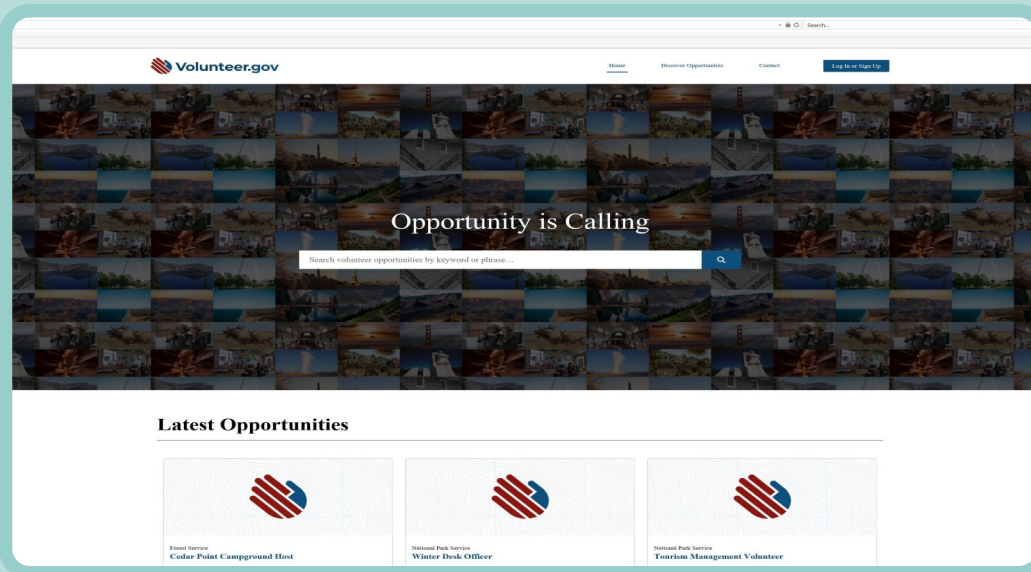
Do you know who the PAC team representative is for your district? Find yours on page 8 of this newsletter!

Volunteer.gov Gets a New Look

Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager, HQUSACE

On August 1, celebrating its 18th year of connecting volunteers with federal opportunities, the Volunteer.gov website went live with a much-needed upgrade. The updated website not only meets stricter government cyber security standards, but also hosts improved collection and management of volunteer data and a more user-friendly interface from either a desktop or mobile platform for the public and volunteer coordinators.

Under the former 'legacy' volunteer.gov website, volunteers had to manually type in their information any time they wanted to apply for a position. With the updated site, volunteers can create a user account and profile to easily apply for multiple positions, manage their applications, and track their application status. District volunteer coordinators can create and manage positions, review/forward applications, and accept volunteer applicants. There will be more improvements in future phases to include volunteer hour tracking, reports, volunteer pass tracking, and volunteer event management.



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

Visit the NRM Gateway Partnerships page!
corpsslakes.ercd.dren.mil/partners/partners.cfm

NRM Gateway: Volunteer Program

Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager, HQUSACE



Despite the current world situation, the USACE volunteer program has continued to stay strong with a steady stream of volunteers seeking opportunities at USACE lakes and applying for positions. If you are a volunteer coordinator and want to keep up with the latest in the volunteer program, be sure to check out the Volunteer Program page on the NRM Gateway. On this page, you can find the policies, forms, volunteer plans and handbooks, JHAs/AHAs, training tools, brochures, posters, and information about clothing, awards, background checks, and more!

Cooper River Rediversion Project Hosts 5th Annual Fishing and Dove Hunt Days

Joe Moran, Chief of Operations, Charleston District

Six years ago, the Charleston District's Operations Division reached out to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to ask for support in hosting Warriors and Veterans Fishing Days and Dove Hunts at the Cooper River Rediversion Project (CRRP). Our DNR partners immediately were "all in". To identify potential participants, USACE staff made contact with the Vantage Point Foundation, an organization that assists post-9/11 veteran transition into civilian life. The organization has assisted in the execution of the events since they began in 2014. The 5th Annual Fishing and Dove Hunt Days were held this year – a testament to the partnership and willingness to provide these opportunities for camaraderie and time in the outdoors to our heroes.

The events are unique opportunities to utilize federal land to give back to our Warriors and Veterans. The land is typically underutilized by the public and these events provide a safe space for veterans to spend time with people who have gone through similar experiences while sharing an activity.

In the past two years the number of participants for these events have more than doubled, and "The Group of Three" - DNR employees Bill Post (Fishing Days) and Will Carlisle (Dove Hunts), and Vantage Point Executive Director Mark Holyfield (both events) have worked closely with USACE staff to ensure quality experiences.

Post, Carlisle, and Holyfield worked closely with USACE personnel to develop a pre-event lesson delivered in March 2019 to the 11th Grade biology class at local Timberland High School, a STEM partner school. Students were provided an overview of the CRRP and the USACE natural resource missions, a fish biology lesson, biological

sampling techniques, and provided an overview of the service that our warrior and veteran participants provide to our nation. Nearly 20 biology students from Timber-

land sampled fish and interacted with the nearly 60 participants at the 2019 Fishing Day. Over the past several years, Timberland administration has actively supported student projects at CRRP, including field preparation and sowing of pollinator-friendly wildflowers. These activities supported the CRRP's pollinator program resulting in ten beehives, which was the first Federally-sponsored pollinator project in South Carolina.

While a lot of hard work goes into these partnership efforts, it is well worth it knowing that these events are giving back to those who have selflessly served our country. This is best described by a participant at our first Fishing Day in 2014. For a young disabled veteran recently

released from the hospital after surgery and treatment for a debilitating head injury, the Fishing Day was his first venture outdoors in many months. After finding the best spot on the bank and working with his family to secure him, he caught at least a dozen fish. Both he and his family cried. That is the essence of our events and these partnerships, and an image that none present will forget.



Mark Holyfield (Vantage Point Executive Director) and Osby Mosely, Jr. (SAC Chief of Resource Management) each served in the US Marine Corps.



Biology students from Timberland High School collecting length and scale samples from the 2019 Fishing Day.

Lewisville Lake Partnership Provides Unique Outdoor Experience for Disabled Youth

Josh Houghtaling, Lewisville Lake Park Ranger, Fort Worth District

For the last two years, park rangers at Lewisville Lake in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex have partnered with three local chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to conduct a whitetail deer hunt that offers a unique opportunity for youth hunters. Lewisville Lake is surrounded by urban sprawl, with USACE property surrounding the lake making up the majority of the remaining wildlife habitat in the area.

On the downstream side of the Lewisville Lake Dam is a hidden wildlife gem. It is a 2,400 acre parcel of USACE property known as the Lewisville Lake Environmental Learning Area, or LLELA. This property is leased to a consortium comprised of the University of North Texas, the City of Lewisville and the Lewisville Independent School District for research, public outreach/education, and habitat restoration. Once a year, USACE works with these partners to host a disabled youth deer hunt for youth between the age of 13-18 with physical disabilities.

The partnership goes back prior to the hunt. USACE, NWTf, and TPWD have been partnering together to improve hunter access points at Ray Roberts Lake, which is managed by the Lewisville Lake Office, as well as



Youth hunters participating in the Wheelin' Jakes Youth Deer Hunt at Lewisville Lake show off their harvest at deer camp this past fall.

wildlife habitat within hunting areas for several years. It was during that time that the special hunt becoming a reality. Working with representatives from TPWD and three local NWTf chapters including the Kaufman County Double Beards Chapter, the Cross Timbers Chapter, and the Cottonwood Creek Chapter, the groups collaborated with USACE on the event which has become known as the "Lewisville Lake Wheelin' Youth Deer Hunt".

Since the start of the event in 2018, TPWD and NWTf have communicated well with USACE. They take pride in



Staff from the USACE Lewisville Lake Project Office partnered with representatives from three local National Wild Turkey Federation chapters and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to host a special deer hunt for five physically challenged youth.

what they do and have made the hunt run smoothly. The event is spread across a Friday, Saturday, and Sunday in December. On Friday the youth hunters, partners, and volunteers meet at the Lewisville Lake office for a pre-hunt safety briefing, snacks, and a meet-and-greet. A safety briefing is followed by familiarization of the firearms at a designated shooting range. On Friday evening the guides and the youth hunters proceed to the blinds to begin the hunt. Each hunter is allowed to harvest a buck and two does. The volunteers anxiously await the hunters arrival back at camp to see if anyone was successful. If so, the NWTF volunteers help skin and quarter the meat for the youth hunters. Once pictures have been taken and stories exchanged, a large dinner awaits as everyone gathers by the campfire.

On Saturday the hunt participants enjoy a catered breakfast and lunch provided by a local Chick-fil-A restaurant. Saturday includes a morning and evening hunt for the youth hunters. Great food, family, and friends share stories and enjoy the camaraderie of deer camp between sessions. Guides lead the hunters out to the blinds on Sunday morning for the final morning of the hunt. After the hunt, USACE staff and



Volunteers from three north Texas chapters of the NWTF received a national partnership award at the NWTF national convention. Pictured from left to right are Tim Webster, Lauri White, Chris Womack, Tammy Womack, and Dean Castillo.

volunteers from TPWD and NWTF assist with clean-up. During the entirety of the event the volunteers put the focus on the kids and make every one feel special.

In February 2020, the three NWTF chapters involved in the event were recognized and received a national award for their efforts with the youth hunt and the partnership they created with USACE. The Lewisville Lake Office looks forward to many years ahead of partnering and working with this group to continue providing a unique outdoor experience for physically-challenged youth hunters.



Did you know that USACE has a national MOU with NWTF?

Visit the NRM Gateway NWTF webpage <https://corpslakes.erc.dren.mil/partners/national.cfm?Partner=nwtf>

to see more examples of partnership projects with NWTF and use the MOU to reach out to your local chapter for potential projects.

Saylorville Lake Archery Range

Justin Roy Edwards, Natural Resource Specialist, Saylorville Lake, Rock Island District

In FY 19, Saylorville Lake was a selected recipient of the Handshake Program funding. Saylorville Lake is located on the Des Moines River in central Iowa, just north of the city of Des Moines. Partnerships and funding from the Handshake program have supported the development of an archery range in the Bob Shetler Recreation Area. The range will serve as a public space for archery practice, as well as an area for youth/adult archery programs with focused curriculum that teaches proper use and techniques of archery and other related outdoor recreation.

The Saylorville Lake Archery Range will feature a vault restroom, handicap accessible walkways, a small pavilion, nine ground level shooting stations and a three station elevated shooting structure. Located at the end of each shooting station are covered target structures which will be ranged at 10/20/30/40/50 yards. The construction of the range would not have been possible without the ongoing support of local partners who are dedicated to assisting us with providing this new outdoor recreation amenity. Several of our partners, such as the Carpenters Union – Local 106 and Boy Scouts of America – Troop 202, donated in-kind services to construct the elevated shooting and wooden target structures. Manatt's Inc. and Martin Marietta, building material companies, donated rock, concrete and other

materials. Sportsman's Warehouse, Bass Pro, and the National Wild Turkey Federation donated archery supplies (bows, arrows, and targets) to support programming at the range.

Saylorville Lake is committed to providing quality outdoor experiences and recreation opportunities for all park visitors. This project supports the Saylorville Lake Master Plan vision and the newly signed Greater Des Moines Urban Wildlife Conservation Partnership MOU; which will engage a diverse urban community to nurture and instill an appreciation of wildlife conservation as well as provide the delivery of environmental education, interpretation and outreach programs. Ultimately, the archery range is just the beginning of what can be accomplished when partners work together. USACE continues show unwavering commitment towards environmental education as well as providing safe, fun and engaging recreation opportunities for park visitors in the surrounding Des Moines metropolitan area.



Volunteers work to construct an elevated shooting station at Saylorville Lake's archery range located in the Bob Shetler Recreation Area.

Nashville District Partners with USDA for Feral Swine Control

Scott Fanning, USACE Nashville District and Blaine Hyle, USDA-APHIS

The Nashville District's Economy Act Agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (WS) for invasive wildlife control includes an agreement to control feral swine around several Tennessee reservoirs. As an agency, the USDA WS has a long history of controlling nuisance wildlife populations that cause damage to public and private property and

to people have occurred from vehicle collisions and attacks on farmers, hikers, picnickers and other park users.

Traditional swine hunting is ineffective for controlling or eliminating hog populations. In fact, legalizing hunting has exacerbated the problem by increasing the incentive to illegally stock feral swine into new areas. This undermines agencies' efforts to control or eliminate the hogs. Because of this, in 2011, the Tennessee Wildlife



Feral swine rooting damage in an agricultural field near Cordell Hull Lake in Jackson County, Tennessee

a unique expertise and ability not generally found within USACE. WS has the ability to ensure that the work is performed inexpensively, humanely, and in a timely manner.

USDA's goal is to control and/or eliminate populations of feral swine because they are a non-native species that causes extensive damage to natural resources, water quality, property, and agricultural resources. Additionally, feral hogs are known to carry diseases that have the potential for spreading to humans, pets, and livestock. Injuries

Resources Agency (TWRA) reclassified swine from big game status to "destructive species" status. This changed their management strategies and implemented fines and jail for those caught illegally transporting or releasing feral swine.

The partnership between USDA and USACE is needed to control invasive swine that are damaging USACE property around Cordell Hull Lake in Jackson County and posing a risk to wildlife and other natural resources. WS utilizes in-house

manpower to conduct site assessments of the areas being impacted by feral swine. Staff determines population levels and the best methods of control and eradication. These methods include scouting from the ground and using drop- and corral-traps as well as aerial work from aircraft. WS-owned and piloted helicopters include crew members who are biologists or technicians who conduct swine removal (shooting) activities. These sharp-shooters have backgrounds in wildlife and natural resource management, have completed firearm certification, and have extensive training and experience in aerial wildlife damage management operations. They have passed firearms safety and proficiency qualifications established by their agency as well as comprehensive background checks and drug testing. The pilots and crew members involved in aerial operations receive recurring annual training and proficiency checks.

Whether ground-trapping or aerial elimination, experts with WS have found that eradication of whole sounders (groups of hogs led by the adult females) is the most effective method of feral swine control. Removal of a few hogs or separating groups only disperses the groups and creates multiple sounders from the original. Employing proven strategies, WS and their partners,



USDA helicopter in action over a sounder of feral swine

including USACE and TWRA, have eliminated all known populations of feral swine in Sumner County, Tennessee. These hogs were located on property adjacent to the Old Hickory Lake Wildlife Management Area on USACE property and no swine activity has been observed there since 2015.

Officials with WS report that 2,678 feral hogs were successfully removed from Tennessee’s landscape in fiscal year (FY) 2019 (3,209 in FY 2018). Since the beginning of FY 2020, when WS began to focus on the removal of the upstart hog population in Jackson County, with a particular focus on the swine population around Cordell Hull Lake, there have already been 77 hogs eliminated county-wide and 27 removed from USACE property (2,674 state-wide).



One of the USDA-owned helicopters used for feral swine control in Tennessee

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)**

**Rob Jordan: SWD
(Lewisville/Ray Roberts
Lakes)**

**Taylor Saia: SPD
(Northern Area Operations)**

**Heath Kruger: NWD
(Omaha District Office)**

**Tennille Hammonds—
Emeritus: SWD**

Canoemobile's Outdoor Educational Classroom at Black Butte Lake is Growing!

Miranda Peters, Park Ranger, Black Butte Lake

In the spring of 2018, Black Butte Lake began partnering with the nonprofit organization Wilderness Inquiry to share the invigorating Canoemobile program with one hundred 4th and 5th grade students from Fairview Elementary School in Orland, CA. Since its inception, this outdoor educational experience has grown immensely. In April 2020, approximately 600 students from multiple local elementary schools were scheduled to be on-site at Black Butte Lake to participate in curriculum-based, environmental education programs. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, this program was canceled for the 2020 season. Despite this setback, the partnership with Wilderness Inquiry continues to be a priority for Black Butte Lake with ongoing communication for a future event.

To prepare students for their visit to Black Butte Lake, Park Ranger Miranda Peters

visited fourth grade classes throughout November 2019. During her visits, she provided an orientation of the Canoemobile program along with information on Black Butte Lake's missions: flood control, irrigation, recreation opportunities, natural resources and water safety. Ranger Peters also presented over 580 fourth graders with Every Kid Outdoor passes.

Canoemobile is a "floating classroom" that brings students out on local waterways in



Students practice their skills at throwing a life ring



USACE park rangers and Wilderness Inquiry volunteers teamed up at Black Butte Lake, California on April 11, 2019 to educate and train nearly 400 students from local elementary schools. Students learned how to safely navigate waterways in canoes and save others from drowning. The youngsters also learned important lessons about natural resources and the culture and history of the lake. Photo by Kenneth Wright, PAO Office



It is Wilderness Inquiry's mission to 'connect people from all walks of life to the natural world through shared outdoor adventures'. This aligns well with the USACE NRM Mission, and Black Butte Lake looks forward to continuing this educational, fulfilling partnership in the future.

Students anxiously await their turn in the canoe.

Onsite orientation

24- foot Voyageur canoes to learn about science, history, geography, and culture.

Canoemobile's Outdoor Educational Classroom, now a multi-day event at Black Butte Lake, also incorporates land-based activities which meet California Next Generation Science Standards in the following disciplines: Life Science, Earth Science, and Physical Science. During on-site visits, students rotate through a series of science-based learning stations provided by USACE Park Rangers as well as several other organizations.



Mark Your Calendars!

- **October 6 @ 1:00 Eastern:** NRM Assessment webinar
- **October 21 @ 11:00 Eastern:** NRM Assessment webinar
- **October 29 @ 2:30 Eastern:** NRM Assessment webinar
- **October 31:** Handshake nominations due to Heath Kruger
- **December 4:** Excellence in Partnership and Volunteer of the Year award nominations due to Taylor Saia

