



US Army Corps of Engineers®



Cape Cod Canal

BRIDGING THE GAP

Volume 6

Issue 1

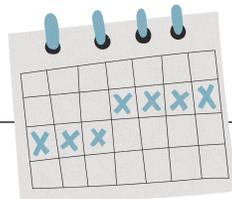
March 2022

2022 Handshake Program Recipients

The Handshake Program offers a source of seed money to USACE lakes/rivers for worthwhile partnership projects. The intent of this program is to enhance existing recreation opportunities and natural resources by providing an incentive to USACE projects to utilize partnering initiatives to their fullest potential by combing funding from local USACE projects and their partners to benefit the public.

- Six projects selected for 2022 Handshake funding are:
- Beltzville Lake - Invasive species portable wash station
 - Clendening Lake - Wetland loop trail and viewing area
 - John Martin Reservoir - Tamarisk removal and habitat restoration
 - Perry Lake - ADA fishing dock and fish habitat
 - Shenango River Lake - Hiking trail/bridge improvements (Photo left)
 - Wright Patman Lake - Disc golf course

For more information regarding the Handshake Program, please visit the Handshake page on the NRM Gateway or contact your division Partnership Advisory Committee member. ■



Mark Your Calendars!

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

- ✓ FY 23 Session 1: Philadelphia District Office, Philadelphia, PA. May 1 - 4, 2023
- ✓ FY 23 Session 2: Lake Shelbyville, Shelbyville, IL. July 17 - 20, 2023
- ✓ FY 23 Session 3: Summersville Lake, Summersville, WV. September 11 - 14, 2023

Reminder: April 17- 23, 2022 is National Volunteer Week. This is a great opportunity to recognize the collective impact of volunteer service to the USACE NRM program. National Volunteer Week can be used to offer up new volunteer opportunities, identify and thank volunteers who lend their time, talent and voice to make a difference in their communities. ■



About Bridging the Gap

'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 program around the country. For more information, or to submit stories for future editions, contact your PAC representative.

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2021 National Volunteer of the Year Award Recipients



This year's USACE national volunteer of the year award recipients are Ms. Brenda Grano and Ms. Wynona Brakeman of Allatoona Lake in the Mobile District. They have donated over 4,800 hours of volunteer service over a four-year period. This mother and daughter team have served in a variety of volunteer duties but have distinguished themselves by building a robust recycling program at Allatoona. Their efforts in growing the recycling program have led to new partnerships and volunteer programs and garnered praise from the visiting public.



The national volunteer award is sponsored by the Corps Foundation to recognize 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.

National MOU: Ruffed Grouse Society / American Woodcock Society

In October 2021, USACE and the Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society signed a new national MOU to help us to continue to collaborate on projects related to protection, restoration, and enhancement of ruffed grouse and American woodcock habitat on lands managed by USACE. This MOU establishes a framework for collaboration based on:

- Shared desire for the management of water resources consistent with the need for sustainable land use, development, and conservation.
- Shared appreciation of the value of working in partnerships, both public and private, and engaging communities and diverse stakeholders by identifying, understanding, and implementing projects to improve ruffed grouse and American woodcock habitat at USACE projects.
- Shared desire to exchange and disseminate conservation and environmental information related to ruffed grouse and American woodcock habitat and management. ■

Franklin Falls Disc Golf Partnership

Dan Lapolla, Park Ranger, Franklin Falls Dam, New England District

In 2014 after a surge in popularity for the game, the Franklin Falls Dam and a group of local disc golf advocates known as the Friends of Franklin Falls Disc Golf Club joined together to create a course on USACE property to provide a new recreational opportunity for the community. A Challenge Partnership agreement allows the ranger staff and disc golf club to plan, install, and maintain a popular course while sharing in the burdens of funding and labor.

Efforts began in 2015 with months of design, brush clearing and volunteer labor. Eventually the club hosted a fundraiser tournament with temporary baskets to raise money for permanent baskets and tee pads. The event was a massive success with nearly eighty participants. The initial installation of the course was well-received with people driving from throughout New England for the fresh experience and signature holes. The course had features players couldn't get at most facilities; elevation and terrain changes, holes over a thousand feet long, and beautiful scenic views.

However, in 2020 the USACE project and disc golf club were faced with unforeseen adversity. A beautiful red pine stand that was home to four of the course holes was diagnosed with red pine scale, an invasive insect that would soon leave the area a mess of standing dead trees. Immediately the ranger staff, local state forester and a contractually hired tree company got to work removing the trees. This left the project with an unsightly wasteland and four less disc golf holes.

Thankfully the disc golf club and staff at Franklin Falls adapted and quickly got to work redesigning and implementing a new layout. They created a more desirable course for the local community after listening to several years of player reviews and constructive criticism.



Disc Golf Partnership Continued

USACE gave the club guidance on what land was available and the creative freedom to provide an excellent new course design enjoyable for players of all ages and experience levels. The club put in another grueling round of volunteer labor and was able to complete the make-over in less than two months.



2021 National Excellence in Partnerships Award Recipient



There are constant aesthetic improvements being made, and the new course has seen an abundance of visitation all summer. The club is excited to continue providing this recreational opportunity and host events for people of all competitive levels. The club and its volunteers accomplished approximately 130 hours of work this year and has proved invaluable to the success of the course. The Franklin Falls Dam staff looks forward to continuing this partnership and is grateful for the support and collaboration it provides. ■

The Berks Area Mountain Biking Association (BAMBA) at Blue Marsh Lake in the Philadelphia District has been selected as the 2021 Excellence in Partnerships Award recipients for their monetary donations and volunteer services to support creating new trails, rehabilitating existing trails, providing inclusive mountain biking experiences, building a developmental area for new riders, and fostering an overall greater connection within the trails community of Berks County, PA. BAMBA's dedication to improving recreational development and sustainability has helped USACE and Blue Marsh Lake to meet the increasing demand on outdoor resources in response to a global pandemic.

Bayou Bodcau and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Team Up For Fish and Wildlife Management

Tommy Jones, Operations Project Manager, Louisiana Field Office, Vicksburg District

Bayou Bodcau Dam and Reservoir is located in Northwest Louisiana and Southwest Arkansas. It is a very diverse area with habitats ranging from upland mixed pine-hardwood forests to cypress swamps, to openings in various stages of succession. This diversity of habitat creates a lot of opportunity and work. To assist with the workload, USACE partners with the State of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) through a license to occupy and use 32,471 acres of land and water of the Bayou Bodcau project for fish and wildlife management purposes.

Personnel of the LDWF perform a variety of tasks on an annual basis, including planting of food plots, vegetation control, biological data collection, bag checks, maintenance of open fields, data collection from self-clearing permits, game law enforcement, operation and maintenance of a public firing range, road maintenance, boundary line maintenance, green-tree operation, wildlife disease monitoring, wildlife population studies, and habitat evaluation. They are responsible for determining the dates and bag limits for hunting and fishing. LDWF personnel are beneficial in assisting the Corps with prescribed burning, beaver control, visitor assistance, surveillance, maintaining public use facilities, assisting with conducting special events, and forest management. >



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

Bayou Bodcau Continued

Meet Your PAC Team Members



Heather Burke
HQUSACE

Scott Sunderland - Chair
NAD (Blue Marsh Lake)

Francis Ferrell
SAD (Falls Lake)

Mike McCoy
LRD (Huntington District Office)

Phil Manhart
MVD (Lake Shelbyville)

Taylor Baughn
SPD (Lake Mendocino)

Keith Hyde
NWD (Lucky Peak Lake)

Jennifer Linde
SWD (Fort Worth District Office)

The LDWF also reviews USACE annual work plans, environmental assessments, and operational management plans. The annual total partnership value averages approximately \$189,365. In 2004, a 520-acre impoundment within Bayou Bodcau project called Ivan Lake, was drained to control aquatic vegetation and perform inspections and repairs. The LDWF in coordination with USACE, the Bossier Parish Police Jury and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development took advantage of this opportunity to create one of the greatest fisheries in North Louisiana. They utilized approximately \$250,000 to fund the clearing and marking of boat rows; the construction of five fishing piers; and stocked the lake with Florida Bass, several species of sunfish, crappie; catfish and shad. The control gates were closed in early 2012 and the public has really enjoyed the improvements. In 2020, a bass weighing just over 13 pounds was caught from the lake. News of catches like that keep the anglers returning, which continues to reinforce the value of this great partnership. ■



Photos Left to Right: Fingerlings being released to re-stock Ivan Lake, LDWF Biologist banding wood duck, Feral hog trapping and control.



A big Thank You to Heath Kruger and Allison Walker who recently completed their terms on the PAC representing NWD and LRD!

Photo Above: Bayou Bodcau wood cock banding.

Friends of the North Carolina Mountains to Sea Trail

David Schwartz, Park Ranger, Falls Lake, Wilmington District

The state of North Carolina may be most famous for its beautiful Outer Banks coastlines or its ancient Blue Ridge Mountains. North Carolina's official state hiking trail, the 1,175-mile Mountains-to-Sea Trail, connects these two vastly different areas of the state and provides its communities with a world class hiking resource. On its winding path from the mountains to the sea, the trail travels for 60 miles along Falls Lake, a USACE project north of Raleigh, NC. How does a USACE office of just four Natural Resource Specialists manage a trail that encompasses its entire project? Enter the amazing partnership Falls Lake has with the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (FMST).

The FMST is a state-wide volunteer group that clears, builds and maintains this extensive trail system. The Falls Lake Task Force, led by super-volunteer Jeff Brewer, is a roughly 120-member volunteer group of the larger FMST community whose focus is maintaining the 60 miles of trail along Falls Lake. >

Friends of North Carolina MST Continued

Each year the Falls Lake Task Force hosts 5 major workdays, where large groups of volunteers get together to build new sections of trail and focus on areas of the trail that need repair.

Like many outdoor resources across the nation, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a huge increase of hikers using the MST. While the record setting visitation along the trail is cause for celebration, it has also led to a big increase in necessary trail maintenance. In the past year the FMST volunteers have been busy keeping up with general trail maintenance, building new re-routes and bridges, protecting and interpreting cultural resource sites along the trail, and smoothing over conflict between adjacent landowners and the users of a popular trail head.

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Between the workdays and other miscellaneous efforts, FMST contributes over 4,000 volunteer hours to Falls Lake and the larger USACE volunteer and partnership programs every year! The Falls Lake staff is incredibly grateful for everything the FMST does to improve local hiking experiences, and we do our best to support and recognize them in return. Falls Lake staff collects and returns sales of FMST t-shirts, hats, patches, and bumper stickers at the Visitor Center, an arrangement made possible through our Cooperating Association agreement. In the past year Jeff Brewer was recognized by the Corps Foundation as an Enduring Service award nominee, and ranger staff helped FMST secure a \$1,000 National Public Lands Day NEEF grant. Building a strong relationship with support flowing both ways between FMST and the staff at Falls Lake has kept the Mountains to Sea Trail in great shape throughout the "Covid-Crush" and laid the foundation for managing any new challenges the future may bring. ■

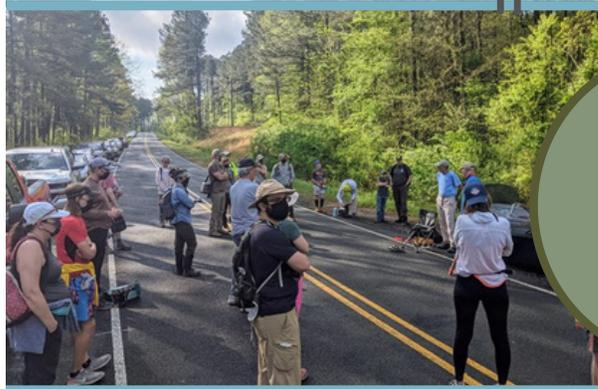
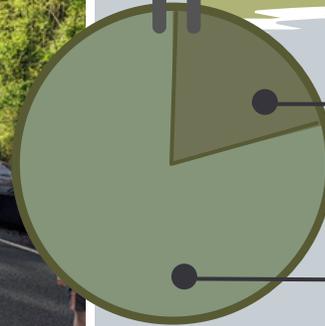


Photo Top: FMST volunteers muster up for a safety briefing and trail building instructions.
Photo Bottom: FMST volunteers hard at work constructing a new section of trail along Panther Creek at Falls Lake.



FY21 Partnerships Program Accomplishments



USACE Investment \$23.2 M

PARTNER Investment \$88.6 M

\$111,803,771

TOTAL VALUE OF PARTNERSHIPS



3,422
TOTAL PARTNERS



894
NEW PARTNERS



273
USACE PROJECTS WITH PARTNERSHIPS
(68% of USACE Projects)



FY21 Volunteer Program Accomplishments



18,274

TOTAL VOLUNTEERS



\$44.5 M

TOTAL VALUE OF VOLUNTEER HOURS

1,559,839

TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS SERVED

(Equivalent to 750 FTEs)



PROJECTS USING VOLUNTEERS

Photo Above: Bay Model kayak rentals.

Chris Gallagher, Park Manager, San Francisco Bay Model, San Francisco District

Every day when I sit down at my desk, I am greeted with two cards: one entitled 'Permission Slip' from Chief of Engineers General Flowers (2000-2004) and the other is 'The Five Defining Points of a Partnership' from Chief of Engineers General Strock (2004-2007).

The 'Permission Slip' asks: Is it good for my customer? Is it legal and ethical? Is it something I am willing to be accountable for? If so, don't ask for permission, you already have it - JUST DO IT! The second card was developed in the first years of the Partnership Advisory Committee. Early in his tenure, General Strock was in a meeting with our federal lands partners where he defined a partnership as a handshake, not a handout (the origin of the Handshake program's name). Below this powerful phrase, the card goes on to list five defining points of a partnership:

- Partnerships are part of our culture.
- Partnerships combine individual strengths to accomplish the mission.
- Partnerships foster relationships, common goals and teamwork.
- Partnerships build constituency and broad-based community support.
- Partnerships leverage resources to meet challenges and improve opportunities.

I mention these two small, but significant documents because they are two sets of guiding principles that have helped me navigate new and existing partnerships. The Bay Model is not a typical USACE project. We are not a lake with traditional recreation opportunities (swimming, campgrounds, etc.). The Bay Model is a large visitor center that tells the story of the San Francisco Bay and the San Francisco District. Our unique location and mission lend to an excellent partnership capacity and invites equally unique collaborative opportunities. Three examples of the Bay Model's distinctive partnerships are our partnerships with a local sea kayaking company (Sea Trek), a water-specific environmental education organization (Call of the Sea) and a local chapter of the California Native Plant Society.

Sea Trek is a local Sausalito sea-kayaking company that has been an institution for over 30 years. In May 2014, they were forced to find a new location for their business but knew they could not afford the sizable increase in rent to remain in Sausalito. After hearing of their situation, I approached my Chief of Operations and asked about the possibility of re-locating their operation to the Bay Model. He gave it some considerable thought and replied, "If you think you can do it, go ahead". After Sea Trek got over the initial shock of being approached by the government as a partner, the rest went rather smoothly. I worked with our district offices (Office of Counsel, Real Estate, Contracting, etc.) to make the transition and coordinated with the base yard to reposition some of the USACE vessels on the docks to make room for the kayaks. By October 2014, we had new neighbors and created a lasting partnership dedicated to fun and safe recreation on the water. >

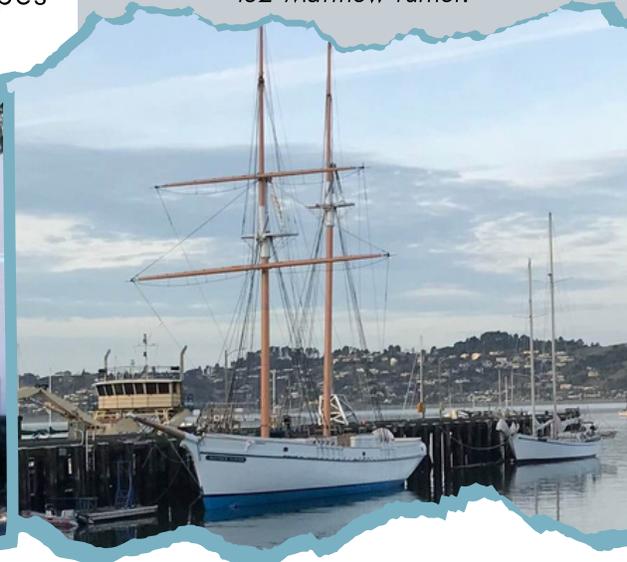
SPD Partnership Spotlight Continued

Call of the Sea is an organization that has been in Sausalito since 1985. The mission of the organization is to provide inclusive and equitable access on the water through science-based educational programs that foster the connection to watersheds, ocean environments and nautical heritage. This is all done by using and bringing STE(A)M (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Math) ideals into their curriculum which coincide nicely with the environmental stewardship mission at the Bay Model. In 2016, Call of the Sea embarked on a new project to build the first 'tall ship' in the Bay Area in over 100 years. Their leadership approached me about docking the finished ship at the Bay Model to better serve the community as an interpretive gangway for fostering nautical connections. I was happy to receive such a unique proposal and on April 1, 2017 (no fooling) the 132' Matthew Turner was launched at the Bay Model! While the finishing touches still had a way to go, we boasted over 5,000 spectators who came to witness the launch and attend the celebration. Through an MOU with USACE, Call of the Sea continues to promote the Bay Model as we encourage our visitors to experience their tall ship sitting in the bay outside the visitor center doors. It is both of our hopes that together we are building better stewards of the Bay and inspiring future generations to do the same.

The **California Native Plant Society (CNPS)** is a California environmental non-profit organization that seeks to increase understanding of California's native flora and to preserve it for future generations. In 2017, a local photographer and member of CNPS inquired about having her California wildflower

photographic tour (*Beauty and the Beast*) as an exhibit at the Bay Model. After hearing about the show and seeing the wonderful photographs of local plants, I mentioned that we had been awarded environmental stewardship funds to plant a native plant garden. I wasn't sure where to start but hoped my new contact with CNPS would have some good suggestions. Suddenly it was like Christmas morning, "We'll do it for you and we will maintain it forever" they said. Thus began the process of our collaborative efforts to make the garden a reality. From the layout to specific pollinator plants, to the signage with proper names, to irrigation and beyond, we worked hand-in-hand. By March of 2019, the garden was ready to be unveiled to the public with a ribbon cutting with our District Commander and lavender cookies for everyone. A few months later, *Beauty and the Beast* made its debut at the Bay Model and served as a perfect complement to the new garden. True to their word, members of the Native Plant Society continue to work on the garden throughout the year completing all work required in maintaining a beautiful garden. Some even jest they are jealous their gardens at home do not look nearly as nice!

Reflecting on these experiences, I have enjoyed working with all our partners on these projects and being able to bring them in as part of the USACE story. As I tell everyone, it is all about relationships. For partnerships to be successful I had to have a good relationship with my co-workers throughout the district as well as with my partner counterparts. We had to have good communication and make the extra effort to stay connected and on the same page. Remember: it is always a team effort. ■



FY21 Volunteer Program Accomplishments



VOLUNTEER EXCELLENCE COINS

Photo Below, Left to Right: Bay Model Visitor Center Native Plantings Ribbon Cutting and 132' Matthew Turner.

Lake Barkley Fish Habitat Improvement Project

NRM Gateway Spotlight: Contributions Page

WWW.

Visit the Contributions Program page on the NRM Gateway to learn more about the USACE authority to accept contributions of money, materials and services from groups and individuals to provide for operation and management of recreation facilities and protection and restoration of natural resources. On this page you will find links to policies and procedures for accepting contributions, District Contributions Plans, FAQs, and success stories.

<https://corpslakes.ercd.dren.mil/employees/contribute/contribute.cfm>



Kayl Kite, Resource Manager, Lake Barkley, Nashville District

Since its impoundment in 1966, Lake Barkley has built a reputation as one of the best fishing destinations in the United States. However, in recent years, the loss of habitat in combination with frequent water level

fluctuations during the spawning season has negatively impacted spawning recruitment. Critical fish habitat has consistently declined as pre-impoundment vegetation has rotted away, and much of the shoreline vegetation, including buttonbush (*Cephalanthus* sp.), has receded back to higher elevations resulting in very little available vegetative cover during the spawning season. Additionally, siltation and the development of large mudflats has impacted the preferred spawning substrates for most sportfish. Efforts to improve the fisheries in Lake Barkley focus on habitat improvement and siltation mitigation.

To achieve this goal, Lake Barkley joined a collaborative effort with the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources (KDFWR), the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Kentucky B.A.S.S. Nation, the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership (RFHP) and several local fishing clubs to work on a \$100,000 habitat improvement project. Approximately 1/3 of the project cost was funded by a RFHP grant that was used to purchase the tools, materials, and supplies to fabricate and install various forms of fish habitat. The primary objectives of the project are: 1) decrease siltation and increase shoreline stability through cypress tree planting, 2) mitigate the effects of existing siltation by installing artificial spawning beds with suitable substrate, 3) improve overall habitat, at various water levels, with the installation of natural tree laydowns, stake beds, and fish attractors.

Over the past 12 months, this partnership has resulted in the installation of over 1,200 natural tree laydowns, 350 artificial spawning beds, 200 stake beds, 80 shallow water fish attractors, and 40 deep water brush piles. Prior to the lake rising to summer pool, staff and volunteers will plant 1,000 cypress trees and install an additional 50 spawning beds and 120 shallow water attractors. At the completion of this project in mid-April, over 12 miles of shoreline, encompassing 14 different bays in two states, will have received some form of habitat improvement.

This is a labor-intensive project that would not be possible without cooperation from multiple agencies and volunteers working substantial hours. We are especially thankful for the expertise, planning, and coordination provided by Adam Martin, KDFWR Fisheries Biologist, and Michael Clark, TWRA Fisheries Biologist. Lake Barkley hopes to continue working with our partner agencies and volunteer groups in the coming years to make even more improvements to the local fisheries. ■

Photo Top Left: Lake Barkley and TWRA loading fish attractors. Photo Bottom Left: Lake Barkley and KDFWR cutting laydown trees to improve overall habitat quality.

