



US Army Corps of Engineers



BRIDGING THE GAP

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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 the partnerships and volunteer programs around the country. For more information, or to submit stories for future editions, contact your PAC representative.

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National Public Lands Day 2024

Heather Burke, National Partnership and Volunteer Program Manager, HQUSACE

National Public Lands Day (NPLD) continued to be an important partnership between USACE and the communities surrounding our civil works projects. USACE provided volunteer opportunities in conjunction with NPLD at 57 civil works projects across 27 districts and all MSCs.

NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY



Nearly 4,450 volunteers joined 285 USACE employees to provide over 19,000 hours of service (the equivalent of nine annual full time employees) removing invasive species, collecting debris and trash from shorelines and parks, planting trees, improving wildlife habitat, and maintaining trails. We are very grateful to our volunteers for their substantial efforts to support our USACE projects. ■



See page two for a full compilation of USACE NPLD results.

Above left: Coralville Lake, Rock Island District, volunteers planted trees and restored three acres of habitat.

Above right: Table Rock Lake, Little Rock District, volunteers cleaned 125 miles of shoreline, removing over 10,000 pounds of trash.

Bottom left: Sixty-eight volunteers in Hawaii District, cleared 1.5 acres of invasive vegetation at the Ho'omaluhia Botanical Garden.

Avian and Wildlife Protection Program Partnership at Lake Ouachita

Matt Ramsey, Senior Communication Specialist, Entergy Arkansas

National Public Lands Day: The Results

4,448

volunteers that provided

19,244

hours of service

310

tires removed

157

pieces of infrastructure maintained

6,792

trees/shrubs planted

546

miles of shoreline cleaned

22,390

square feet of invasive plants removed

49,434

pounds of trash collected

Entergy Arkansas partnered with Friends of Lake Ouachita and USACE to provide solutions for wildlife. As part of its Avian and Wildlife Protection Program, Entergy Arkansas provided its services to place three utility poles around Lake Ouachita National Forest for bald eagles to use for nesting. "Within Entergy, we have what's called an Avian Protection Program," said Tasha Hill, environmental supervisor for Entergy. "This project is more on the proactive side of that program, where we are setting a utility pole with an eagle nest on top and a perch. What it does is it helps us to make sure that the wildlife is not interacting with our energized utility poles and lines."

"We've seen a lot of success from other projects across the country, but we couldn't do it on our own," said Josh Tyler, natural resource specialist at the Lake Ouachita office. "We needed a partnership to help with our eagle habitat project and Entergy was the right one."

After donating more than 40 manhours to the project, the utility poles should last 30-50 years with proper maintenance, giving the eagles a nice home for many years to come. "This project is a good way for our lineworkers to give back to the community," said David Wasson, senior manager, regional distribution operations for Entergy Arkansas. "Our lineworkers were just as excited as everyone else involved in the project and it starts an increased partnership with USACE where we hope to do more in the future." ■

USACE, Union Volunteers Improve Boating Access at Lake Allatoona

Kate Nation, Communications Manager, Union Sportsmen Alliance

The Union Sportsmen's Alliance (USA) and 31 union volunteers, primarily tradeswomen, braved the Georgia heat on Saturday, June 29, to install a new floating dock at one of the most popular boat ramps on Georgia's Lake Allatoona.

"It was already 80 degrees at 5 a.m., and you could cut the humidity with a knife, but the weather didn't faze the great group of volunteers we had. They worked their butts off, and everything went very smoothly," said USA Conservation Coordinator Cody Campbell.

The project got started when Dyana (Dee) Lee, a first-year apprentice with International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART) Local 85, attended the USA's All-Women's Hike outside DC in 2023.

Article continued on next page.



Top: Nesting platform placed by Entergy Arkansas at Lake Ouachita.

Bottom: Entergy Lineworkers place a platform at Lake Ouachita.

Boating Access at Lake Allatoona Continued



When she learned about the USA's WorkBoots on the Ground (WBG) program, which unites union members to volunteer their time and skills to complete local conservation projects, she contacted the USA about leading a project in the Atlanta area. The USA reached out to USACE about their needs, and they identified Blockhouse Boat Ramp.

Lake Allatoona receives 6.5 to 6.8 million visitors per year, according to USACE Lead Ranger Chris Purvis, and Blockhouse Boat Ramp is one of the most popular ramps on the lake. The existing courtesy dock only had three anchor points, which resulted in dozens of boats waiting to come in during busy summer months. The dock was also unusable when the USACE lowered the flood control lake 17 feet each winter.

Through the USA's WBG program, volunteers representing SMART Local 85 and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 613 installed a 55-ft. gangway and floating dock that has double the anchor points and extends 12 feet further into the lake, improving year-round access for boaters. United Association (UA) Local 72 and International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) District Council 77 and the Georgia Building Trades provided additional behind-the-scenes support.

"It was important for me to have lots of people involved in this project to show the community that union members can come together and create a massive event," said Lee. "There are so many kinds of people in the union, and when young adults are looking for career options, we want them to know we have a spot for them."



Above: Union Sportsmen's Alliance volunteers from SMART Local 85 and IBEW Local 613 standing on the newly installed AccuDock gangway at Allatoona Lake.

Even before the dock installation day, Lee noticed how conversations about the project were creating new friendships and building solidarity on the job. "This is the first jobsite I've been on where multiple trades gather for lunch every day and not only accept one another but have each other's back. It's such a positive environment," Lee said.

In total, union volunteers donated 392 hours of labor, a value of more than \$20,000, and world-renowned floating dock manufacturer AccuDock was chosen to build the floating dock and gangway as part of a new partnership with the USA.

Article continued on next page.

Recognize Your Valuable Volunteers with a Volunteer Excellence Coin

USACE, in partnership with the Corps Foundation created three styles of coins 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.



Small Coin

Large Coin Version 1



Large Coin Version 2

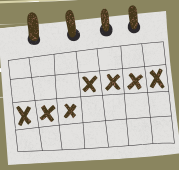
Volunteers can be nominated for small and large coins at any time throughout the year to recognize outstanding achievements by filling out the form found on the [NRM Gateway](#).

When considering a volunteer or group of volunteers to receive a coin, be prepared to answer the following questions as a guide.

- How did this volunteer or volunteer group go beyond other volunteer's efforts?
- How did they work with partners to improve recreation, environmental conditions or visitor interpretive facilities?
- How did the volunteer or group contribute significantly to public understanding of USACE?
- Did the volunteer or group help keep an area remain open that would have otherwise been closed?
- How did the volunteer or group contribute to natural resource conservation?

You will need to provide a short write-up and some photos on the nomination form to your [Division PAC team representative](#) to request a coin.

Mark Your Calendars



Boating Access at Lake Alatoona Continued



- **January 20, 2025:** Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service
- **April 20 - 26, 2025:** National Volunteer Week

"It was great to see everyone working together to get the floating dock and gangway installed," said AccuDock Sales Representative Bobby Dolan. "Our safe, strong and accessible docks ensure everyone can have fun on the water. The floating dock looks amazing, and AccuDock is proud to play a role in bringing easier access to the water for everyone in the community."

Approximately \$43,000 for the new dock was funded by the USA's annual Atlanta Area Conservation Dinner. Through auctions and raffles held during the dinner, union affiliates and union members donate money that is reinvested in the community through local conservation projects and events.



"We have been trying to do this for years, but the funding we receive is to help maintain what we have, not to improve areas," Purvis said, "so it has been a godsend for us that the USA was willing to not only contribute the dock, but also to have union volunteers install it. Fishermen and guides are really excited."

"As we were packing up to leave, there were already five or six boats waiting to launch," said Campbell. "The quality and stability of AccuDock is phenomenal, and there is no doubt the new dock will be well-used by boaters on the popular lake. ■"

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

- **FY 25 Session 2:** Kansas City District Office, Kansas City, MO. April 28 - May 1, 2025
- **FY 25 Session 3:** Raystown Lake, Hesston, PA. July 21-24, 2025
- **FY 26 Session 1:** San Francisco Bay Model, CA. April/May 2026
- **FY 26 Session 2:** New England District Office, MA. July/August 2026

Please visit

<https://ulc.usace.army.mil/CrsScheduleNewFY.aspx> to enroll

Below: National Public Lands Day volunteers and USACE staff at Youghiogheny River Lake.



Left: Union Sportsmen's Alliance Conservation Coordinator Cody Campbell and project leader Dee Lee, a first-year apprentice with SMART Local 85. Right: SMART Local 85 and IBEW Local 613 union volunteers preparing the floating dock for installation next to Blockhouse Boat Ramp on Lake Alatoona.

"TRACK Trail" Designated at McNary Wildlife Area



Brad Trumbo, Senior Natural Resource Specialist, NWW

In April, the Walla Walla District's Tri-Rivers NRM team partnered with the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation and Oregon Parks Forever to develop a children's self-guided adventure "TRACK Trail" at the McNary Wildlife Area in Umatilla, OR.

TRACK Trails are part of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation "Kids in Parks" program. The program's mission is to "...cooperate with partners throughout the country to promote children's health, and the health of America's parks and public lands, by increasing physical activity and engaging families in outdoor adventures that foster a meaningful connection to the natural and cultural world." Oregon Parks Forever is a similar non-profit formed to steward Oregon parks by supplementing existing funding sources to preserve and protect the experience for all who visit.

Article continued on next page.



"TRACK Trail" Continued

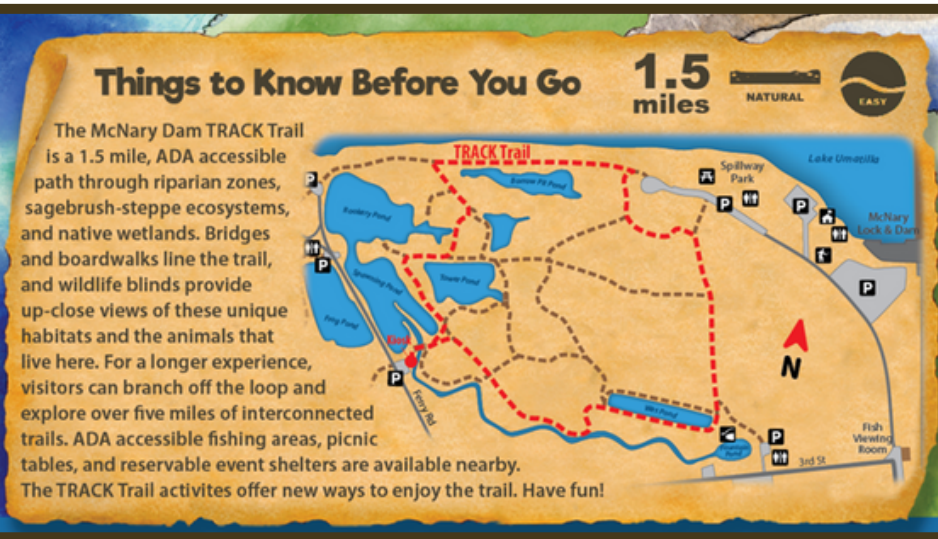


Kids in Parks accomplishes its mission through the installation of TRACK Trails - a series of networked hiking trails that provide brochure-led, self-guided adventures designed to turn an ordinary hike into a fun-filled adventure. Kids can track and log their adventures online and receive prizes. Through this partnership, Oregon Parks Forever donated a kiosk and TRACK Trail brochures for an existing trail within the McNary Wildlife Area. This 1.5-mile, ADA-accessible path winds through riparian zones, sagebrush-steppe ecosystems, and lush wetlands. Bridges and boardwalks connect the trail and wildlife blinds offer views of these unique habitats and wildlife inhabitants. Hikers may also branch off the loop and explore over five miles of interconnected trails.

Kaw Lake Recognizes 2023 Volunteer of the Year and Partner of the Year

Dakota Allison, Assistant Lake Manager, Kaw Lake, SWT

Tim and Pam Harrison were awarded the 2023 National Volunteer of the Year. The Harrisons were selected for this award due to their dedicated service to the recreation, flood risk management and environmental stewardship programs at Kaw. They have donated 6,763 hours over a 5-year period at Kaw Lake. This is the first National Volunteer of the Year Award within SWT.



Above: TRACK Trail map.



Above: Tim and Pam Harrison with COL Hudson and LTC Loftin.

Kaw Lake recognized their invaluable private-public partnerships with Phillips 66 Ponca City and the City of Kaw City. Over the last six years they have contributed over \$240k worth of improvements for the visitors of Kaw Lake including a playground, new dock and pollinator gardens.



The Kids in Parks program offers easy-to-implement interpretive outdoor activities for children that adds value to the USACE Environmental Stewardship and Recreation missions. Other adventure trails include disc golf, fishing, biking, paddling, and the soon-to-come CRASH course, which offers natural science education. Visit the McNary Kids in Parks website for a glimpse into this newly-designated TRACK Trail: McNary Lock & Dam | Kids in Parks. ■



Left: TRACK Trail kiosk.



Above: COL Hudson and LTC Loftin presented the award to the leadership of P66 and Kaw City at Coon Creek.

Meet Your PAC Team Members



Friends of Franklin Falls Disc Golf Association Improves Golf Course

Cody Symonds, Natural Resources Specialist, Franklin Falls Dam, NAE

The Franklin Falls Dam disc golf course is one of the largest disc golf courses in New England. This course was established through a partnership between USACE and the Friends of Franklin Falls Disc Golf Association (FFFDGA) in 2016. The course was successfully established and remains one of Franklin Falls Dam's highest visitor use attractions.

The partnership continues to be a success, with FFFDGA continuing to maintain the course and make improvements when necessary. In the past year they have installed 7 new baskets to replace old ones and 25 new turf tee pads on the course. FFFDGA also began yearly mowing to maintain the course. The course now hosts multiple tournaments a year, and a league night once a week. ■



Above: New tee pads installed by Friends of Franklin Falls Disc Golf Association.

Heather Burke
HQUSACE

Rob Wiggins
SAD (Lake Okeechobee)

Jared Gagnon
NAD (East Brimfield Lake)

Mike McCoy
LRD (Huntington District Office)

Phil Manhart
MVD (Lake Shelbyville)

Taylor Baughn
SPD (San Francisco Bay Model)

Keith Hyde
NWD (Lucky Peak Lake)

Vacant
SWD



Robust Volunteer Program Helps Reduce Recreation Operating Costs at Rathbun Lake



Christine E. Paul, Public Affairs Specialist, NWK

Rathbun Lake, located in southern Iowa, is one of the largest in the state and boasts approximately half a million visitors annually. With over 22,000 acres of land surrounding the lake, there is plenty of work to be done to keep the lake project operable for one of its congressionally authorized purposes: recreation. It might come as a surprise then, to learn the lake depends on dozens of volunteers rather than paid staff to keep it operating at a capacity able to satisfy the recreational needs of its visitors.

'They feel beneficial'

"The volunteer program started roughly six years ago," said Phil Brown, operations project manager for Rathbun and Long Branch lakes. "Contract costs [were] going up with inflation and our budget wasn't keeping up, so that's when we started strategizing. We took a lot of services from contractual services and put them in the volunteer services." Using volunteer services to complete maintenance tasks like mowing, custodial services and general groundskeeping services, as well as using volunteers as park attendants, has saved roughly \$300,000 in contract services annually.

"We compensate [the volunteers] for their services [by giving them] a full hookup campsite with 50-amp service, water and sewer for 20 hours of service a week," said Jordon Griffin, natural resources manager at Rathbun and Long Branch lakes. "A lot of [the volunteers] have tried it here in Iowa and they love it, and they keep coming back," said Jamison Davis, volunteer coordinator. "

Article continued on next page.

NRM Gateway Spotlight: National Public Lands Day

- ! Didn't hold a NPLD event this year?
- ! Looking for ideas as you plan ahead for 2025?
- ! The NRM Gateway has you covered with ideas, summaries, and examples to share from previous years.

[NRM Gateway NPLD Link](#)



Rathbun Lake Continued



'They see a lot'

Davis has a wait list of volunteers wanting to come work at Rathbun Lake. The staff at Rathbun Lake initially tried traditional methods of advertising the volunteer program. While they still use some traditional advertising like radio spots and local flyers, they primarily rely on word of mouth to recruit new volunteers. With a limited workforce themselves, the USACE park staff often rely on the volunteers to be their eyes and ears around the lake project. "[The volunteers] can clue us into things that are happening at the campgrounds ... and they see a lot that we are not able to sometimes."



Above: Ember Williams, Rathbun Lake volunteer, fist bumps Jamison Davis, volunteer coordinator, at Rathbun Lake on June 20, 2024.

'They can set the tone'

Beyond the financial savings, the volunteers, often from the surrounding communities themselves, help spread the message of USACE's mission and the benefits the agency has on the local communities and the region. "[The volunteers] are our best allies out there," said Davis. "If they associate well with the public, they respect them, and the public respects us. It's just a win-win situation."

"They have more pride in the work - taking care of things in the parks and providing customer service," said Brown. "The difference between a contractor and a volunteer ... is the level of pride." Often the first line of contact with the public, the volunteers at Rathbun Lake have the added responsibility of acting as middlemen between the public and the USACE staff. However, the volunteers have taken this in stride and understand the importance of representing USACE in a positive light. "They are ambassadors for [USACE]," said Brown. "They can set the tone for people coming to the lake."



Above: Volunteers Ember and Terra Williams (Left) and Mike Bryan (Right) help to manage the campgrounds at Rathbun Lake.

'A hidden gem'

Ask the volunteers at Rathbun Lake what they like best about the program and the answers are almost always the same: the people. A tight-knit community, the volunteers enjoy meeting people from all over and spreading their joy for camping. "We love being out here and being able to help people and make sure they enjoy camping as much as we do," said Terra Williams, volunteer park attendant.

Other volunteers agree - interacting with recreators and campers is the best part of the job. Wesley Woten and his wife have been volunteers at Rathbun Lake for eight years. Woten is the unofficial carpenter at the lake, often working on projects that require woodworking and construction skills. The Wotens are well-known around the lake and often hold dinners for the other volunteers.

"We are not a destination point [like other national parks]," said Brown. "But I feel like more and more people are starting to discover Rathbun [Lake] and that word of mouth is getting out that it's a beautiful area of the country. A hidden gem." ■