



US Army Corps  
of Engineers

# BRIDGING THE GAP

Volume 9

Issue 1

March 2025



## 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.

## In This Issue

National Volunteer & Partnership Award Recipients .....	2
Blue Marsh Love Your Lake Event.....	4
Moody Access Area Enhancements .....	4
Greater Ukiah Business and Tourism Alliance Partnership..	5
ORV Area Improvements ....	6

## 2025 Handshake Program Funding Recipients

Heather Burke, National Partnership and Volunteer Program Manager, HQUSACE

The Handshake Program offers a source of seed money to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (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 combining funding from local USACE projects and their partners to benefit the public.

Six projects selected for 2025 Handshake funding are:

- **Arcadia Lake:** Mountain bike trail improvements
- **Atwood Lake:** Habitat enhancement and linking MUR USACE to the Motus Wildlife Tracking System Network
- **Coralville Lake:** Amphitheater restoration
- **Cordell Hull Lake:** TRACK trail development
- **Kaw Lake:** Pavilion construction
- **Raystown Lake:** Portable invasive species boat washing station

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



Images top to bottom: Example of a Motus interpretive sign as part of the Atwood Lake Handshake Project. Example of the portable boat wash station for the Raystown Lake Handshake Project.



## Reminder: April 20- 26, 2025 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 and skills to make a difference in their communities.

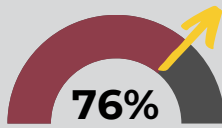




### FY 24 National Volunteer Program Summary




 **37,946**  
Total Volunteers

 **76%** **334**  
Projects Using Volunteers

 **1,751,141**  
Equivalent to 842 FTEs  
Total Volunteer Hours Served

 **222**  
America the Beautiful  
Volunteer Passes Issued  
For 250 Hours of Volunteer Service

 **31**  
USACE Annual Passes Issued  
For 100 Hours of Volunteer Service

 **33**  
Volunteer Excellence Coins  
Issued

This year's USACE national volunteer of the year award recipient is Stanley Frerich of Lake Georgetown in the Fort Worth District. Mr. Frerich has supported USACE since 2021, donating 2,307 hours of volunteer service. Stanley's background in general

maintenance and experience as an equipment operator has been invaluable when it comes to addressing various problems and challenges encountered in the parks. His hard-work and can-do attitude contributes to the success of the project across many levels.

The national volunteer of the year award recognizes 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. ■



Photo: USACE's National Volunteer of the Year Award recipient, Mr. Stanley Frerich of Lake Georgetown (Fort Worth District).

## 2024 Excellence in Partnerships Award Recipient



The Mississippi River Water Trail Association (MRWTA) at the Rivers Project Office in the St. Louis District has been selected as the 2024 Excellence in Partnerships Award recipient. Since 2005, the St. Louis community and the Mississippi River have benefited from their efforts with over 20,000 volunteer hours, \$180,000 in professional services, and \$50,000 of materials and equipment donated, bringing their total partnership value to over a half million dollars. It is the shared mission of the River's Project and the MRWTA to create safe, accessible opportunities for lifelong enjoyment of paddling on the Mississippi River.

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



Photo: USACE's Excellence in Partnership Award recipient, the Mississippi River Water Trail Association (MRWTA) of the Rivers Project Office (St. Louis District).

## Leave No Trace 2025 Spotlight Program

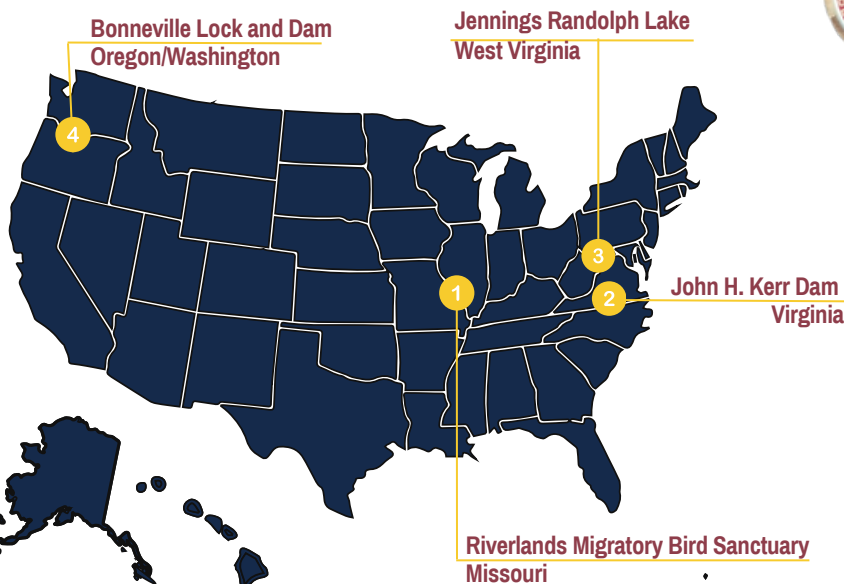
Our partners at Leave No Trace have selected four USACE lakes for their 2025 Spotlight program. Sites that are selected will receive 3 days of activation put on by the Subaru/Leave No Trace Traveling Teams that can include service projects, staff and community training, community outreach, and youth programs.

USACE sites include:

- April 10-12, 2025: Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, MO
- May 15-17, 2025: John H Kerr Reservoir, VA
- June 5-7, 2025: Jennings Randolph Lake, WV
- June 13-15, 2025: Bonneville Lock and Dam, OR/WA



Request for nominations for the 2026 programs will be announced in late July/early August. ■



## New National Cooperative Agreement Signed with the Student Conservation Association (SCA)



Photo: SCA interns dig soil profiles at the Willamette Valley Project.

USACE has entered into a new master national cooperative agreement with SCA under the authority of Sec 213(a) of WRDA 2000. This authority allows USACE to enter into cooperative agreements with non-federal public or nonprofit entities for services related to natural resource conservation or recreation management of Civil Works projects to further training and educational opportunities. The new agreement with SCA is set up for one year plus four option years and is being administered by the Fort Worth District.

## 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

- **April 20 - 26, 2025:** National Volunteer Week
- **April 22, 2025:** Earth Day
- **May 14, 2025:** Handshake FY 26 Funding Program webinar, 2:00 Eastern
- **May 17, 2025:** Kids to Parks Day
- **June 7, 2025:** National Trails Day
- **June 18, 2025:** Handshake FY 26 Funding Program webinar, 12:00 Eastern
- **July 16, 2025:** Handshake FY 26 Funding Program webinar, 11:00 Eastern
- **August 31, 2025:** FY 26 Handshake applications due



## Blue Marsh Love Your Lake Event

Alexis Albu, Park Ranger, Blue Marsh Lake, NAP

On Friday July 19th, 2024, Blue Marsh Lake hosted the 4th annual Love Your Lake event for Lake Appreciation Month. Participating local partners included the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, PA Lake Management Society, Penn State Extension Master Watershed Stewards, Berks Nature, Tulpehocken Creek Watershed Association, Aqua Om Paddle, Reading Hospital, and Mount Pleasant Volunteer Fire Department.

Park Rangers and partners educated the public on several aspects of environmental education and outdoor recreation safety including watershed education, water safety, harmful algal blooms, aquatic invasive species prevention, native wildlife around the project, and paddle board demos.

This year, Aqua Om Paddle organized kayak and stand-up paddleboard (SUP) races on the lake with a raffle to win a SUP which attracted new people from the area. Races of 0.25 mi, 1 mi, and 2 mi were held and benefitted PA Lake Management Society. The event concluded with an evening/moonlight paddle. ■



Left: Moonlight paddle activity. Right: Participants get ready for the paddling races.



## Moody Access Area Enhancements

Desmaray Brown, Natural Resource Specialist, Dale Hollow Lake, LRN

Dale Hollow Lake maintains and operates Moody Access Recreation Area, located in Celina, TN. The recreation area consists of 3 fishing piers and a boat launch providing key access to the Obey River. This area is a renowned trout fishery and is routinely stocked by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery. The area is utilized by over 20,500 annual visitors. Prior to the enhancement project, all fishing piers were in poor condition and becoming dilapidated, with no pier up to accessibility standards. The roadway and shoreline were eroding and sloughing creating a potential safety hazard and threatening the integrity of the piers.

The handshake agreement and contributions from volunteers and partners such as Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Music City Trout Unlimited, Friends of Dale Hollow Lake, and Clay County government in cooperation with USACE made enhancements to this area possible. Installation of new signage was performed in conjunction with the lake's friends' group, Friends of Dale Hollow Lake, and volunteers were utilized in removal of the old fishing piers.

Article continued on next page.

Photo Left: Leave No Trace event at Hodges Village, June 2024

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 13-16, 2026
- **FY 26 Session 2:** New England District Office, MA. July 6-9, 2026

Please visit

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



## Moody Access Continued

This opportunity allowed both USACE and the partners to work together on-site to complete a needed project for the community. With partner contributions, riprap was installed to prevent further erosion and new fishing piers were constructed. One pier was constructed with concrete to ensuring that it will be long lasting and sustainable, another was refurbished following ADA guidelines to ensure accessible use to the public.

This project increased safety and ease of use for recreators. This partnership has further enhanced the USACE reputation as the leading provider of outdoor recreational opportunities in the area.



Left: USACE staff and partners by the improved Moody Access Area. Right: Renovated accessible fishing pier.

## Greater Ukiah Business and Tourism Alliance Partnership

Poppy Burkhead, Park Manager, Lake Mendocino, SPN

On October 25, 2024 Lake Mendocino held a community event aimed at celebrating its new public/private partnership with the Greater Ukiah and Tourism Alliance (GUBTA). District Commander LTC Shebesta signed an agreement in August with the aim of increasing awareness of Lake Mendocino as a recreation destination and resource. The event included several keynote speakers including Poppy Burkhead and Katrina Kessen, as well as dance performances and a ribbon-cutting ceremony. "Our job is to build and maintain projects, so we're pleased to be able to partner with GUBTA to handle the marketing and promotion for all the recreation activities available at Lake Mendocino," said Burkhead. Lake Mendocino/GUBTA staff will work to transform a former campground into a destination park.



Left: Destination park design concept. Right: San Francisco District teammates help unveil the new Lake Mendocino entrance sign to a future destination park.

## FY 24 National Partnership Program Summary

Partner Investment:  
\$112.7 million (79%)

USACE Investment:  
\$29.9 million (21%)

**\$142,607,121**

Total Value of Partnerships

**4,286**

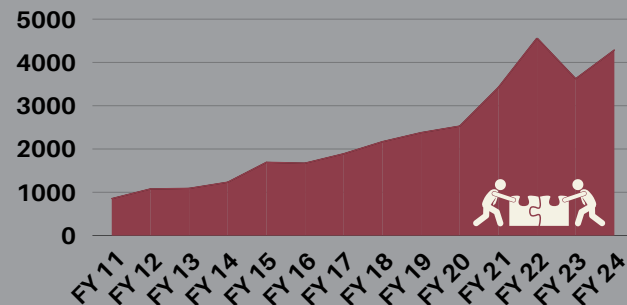
Total Partners



**308 of 422**

USACE Projects with Partnerships  
(73% of USACE Projects)

### Partnership Growth





## Meet Your PAC Team Members

**Heather Burke**  
HQUSACE

**Cassie Cross**  
SAD (John H. Kerr Reservoir)

**Jared Gagnon**  
NAD (East Brimfield Lake)

**Mike McCoy**  
LRD (Burnsville Lake)

**Phil Manhart**  
MVD (Lake Shelbyville)

**Taylor Baughn - Chair**  
SPD (San Francisco Bay Model)

**Keith Hyde**  
NWD (Lucky Peak Lake)

**Vacant**  
SWD



## Volunteer.gov Improvement: Addition of Team Members

Starting in April, volunteer coordinators at the project level will be able to access the Salesforce administrative website for Volunteer.gov as "Team Members." Team Members will be able to perform most of the administrative functions that a licensed District volunteer coordinator can do, with the exception of creating and posting new opportunities. Functions accessible to Team Members include: accessing applications and updating their status, onboarding new volunteers, and electronically signing OF301a Volunteer Service Agreement forms online.



## ORV Area Improvements

*Caleb Snider, Natural Resource Manager, Tuttle Creek Lake, NWK*

USACE and Midwest Krawlers Club partnered to make much needed improvements to the Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) area located at Tuttle Creek Lake. The only restroom facility in the area prior to the partnership was a single stall vault toilet that was insufficient for the amount of use in the area. The main parking lot was also in need of repair due to erosion through the area, making it difficult for trucks and trailers to navigate. The Midwest Krawlers generously provided funds to pay for the crane service and concrete needed to address these issues. USACE provided equipment and labor to facilitate the work. Lake staff will continue to make improvements to the area to ensure its continued enjoyment for the many ORV users who visit.



Photo: CXT & vault being loaded.

## New Partnership and Volunteer Program Photo Contest



The Partnership Advisory Committee and the Corps Foundation recently launched a national partnerships and volunteer photo contest. The contest is open to all USACE employees and volunteers. The contest deadline is January 31, 2026 but photos can be sent in anytime of the year.

This is an excellent opportunity to showcase your photographic talent. Categories include Environmental Stewardship Partnerships, Recreation Partnerships, Volunteers in Action, and Special Events with Partners. The Corps Foundation is donating prizes for the contest. The Grand Prize winner will receive a metal or canvas print of their photograph. Each category winner will receive a matted and framed print of their photo. The top three winners in each category will also receive a one-year membership to the Corps Foundation.

## New Partnership & Volunteer Authorities



With the passing of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024, the USACE NRM program has received two new authorities to expand our capabilities to work with partners and volunteers:

- **Volunteer recognition:** Allows for expenditure of appropriated funds on volunteer recognition items and award ceremonies
- **Cooperative management:** Expands authority to cooperatively manage recreation areas with nonprofits and provides full use of the RIS reservation system by the partner.

## South Florida Operations Volunteer Program

Robert Wiggins, Park Ranger, Lake Okeechobee, SAJ

East side and West side Ranger Staff get together biannually as a team with new and returning volunteers to hold a South Florida Operations volunteer training. A wide array of rotational topics are covered such as:

- CPR/AED/First Aid,
- Interactive team building exercises,
- Safety,
- USACE mission,
- Communicating with the public,
- Visitor center(s) and contact station(s) operations,
- Maintenance expectations,
- And much more!

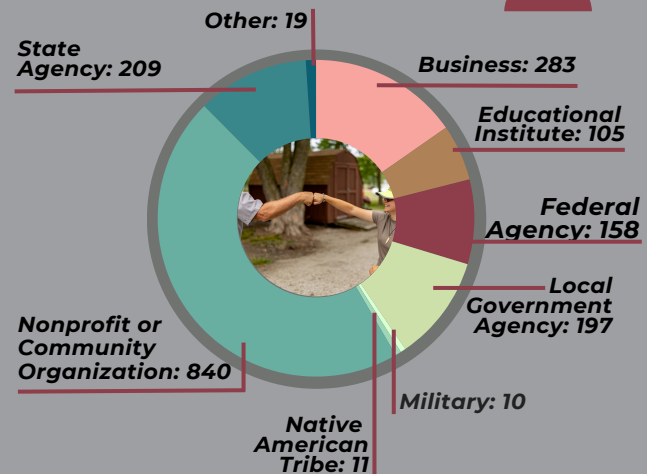
The reason for the training is to provide new and returning volunteers a basic building block of South Florida Operations expectations so they can successfully contribute to USACE's overall mission. ■



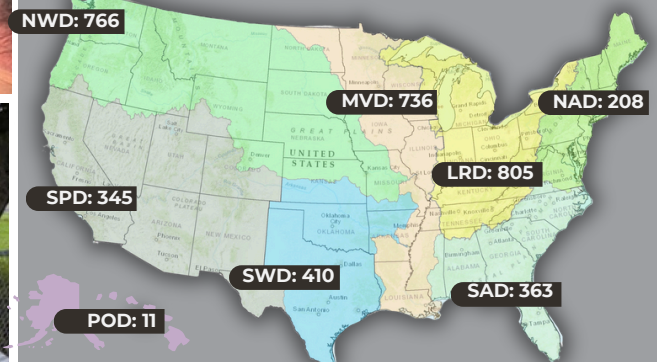
## FY 24 National Partnership Program Summary Continued

A total of **295** USACE projects partnered with **56** organizations that have a national MOU in place, providing educational programs, health and safety, environmental and recreation improvements. **56** USACE projects benefited from the assistance of **67** nonprofit cooperating associations which supported special events, interpretive activities, exhibits and programs, operated bookstores, and bolstered volunteer programs.

### OUR PARTNERS



### PARTNERS ENGAGED BY REGION



Photos left: South Florida Operations volunteer training.