

COOPERATING ASSOCIATIONS



US Army Corps
of Engineers®



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Authorities

33 USC 2328, Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 1992, Sec 225

ER 1130-2-500, Chapter 8, Cooperating Associations





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Cooperating Associations vs. Friends Groups

They are **not** the same thing!

- **Cooperating Association:** refers to a legal entity, organized under state law, which has a non-profit and tax-exempt status under Internal Revenue Service code AND which operates under the terms of a cooperating association agreement with USACE.
- **Friends Group:** Generally refers to local volunteer groups of citizens organized for a specific purpose in a particular geographical area. Friends groups may or may not have 501(c) status. A friends group does not become a cooperating association unless an agreement is signed with USACE.

Note: Many Cooperating Associations use the name "Friends of [Project Name]," which can cause confusion. The key distinction is the existence of a signed agreement with USACE.

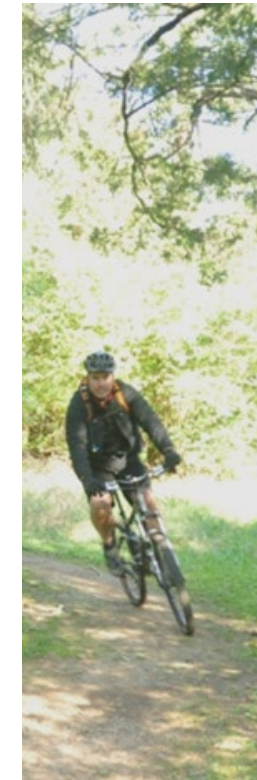
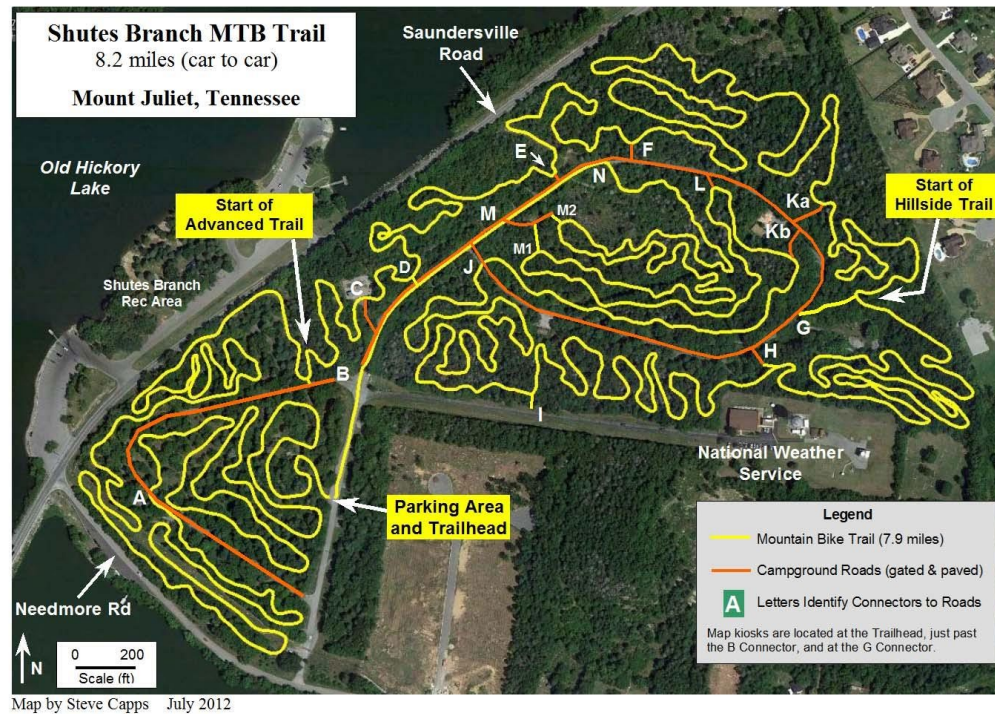


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Benefits of Friends Groups

- Even without a formal agreement, a friends group can get a lot accomplished for your project and be an advocate for USACE
- Example: Friends of Shutes Branch at Old Hickory Lake – Completed over 1300 hours of volunteer work to build a bike trail. Saved USACE \$40,000
- The group was unable to raise sufficient funds to establish a nonprofit and formalize a Cooperating Association agreement





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Successful Friends Group: Lake Lanier Association

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- Solar Lights
- Location Markers
- Aids to Navigation
- Water Quality
- Erosion Control
- Clean Lake Pledge
- Abandoned Boats
- Life Jacket Loaner Stations





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Cooperating Associations

To enter into a Cooperating Association agreement with USACE, an organization must meet the following criteria:

Cooperating Associations must have:

- Board of Directors
- Completed Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws
- Non-profit 501(c) status
- Mission that aligns with USACE mission

"Core Friends of Rend Lake is a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to furthering the US Army Corps of Engineers Rend Lake missions of conservation, stewardship of natural resources, recreation, water safety and community outreach."

SUPPORT REND LAKE'S FRIENDS GROUP

The Core Friends of Rend Lake is a non-profit organization dedicated to furthering the Rend Lake mission. Federal land management agencies, such as the US Army Corps of Engineers, rely on the contributions and partnership of Friends Groups to overcome authority limitations and provide the best service to the visiting public. YOU can help!

WHAT CAN YOU DO:

- Donate start up funds
- Join the board

Follow the Core Friends on Facebook!

WHY SUPPORT THE CORE FRIENDS?

1.4 MIL VISITORS ANNUALLY &
\$69MIL SPENT

WATER TO OVER 300K PEOPLE

OVER 400 LOCAL JOBS

40,000 ACRES OF LAND & WATER





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Getting Started

- Consult with Office of Counsel early in the process of trying to develop a new cooperating association.
- Determine if there is an existing association or non-profit group in your area.
- USACE employees can facilitate activities that lead to creation of a cooperating association.
- Nonprofit groups must have a developed structure and operating procedures.
- Provide them with resources to assist with forming an association
 - Web resources for nonprofit formation (e.g., IRS.gov)
 - Supporting associations (Public Lands Alliance)
 - Training

Partnering with an Existing CA or Creating a New CA

Association Type	Pros	Cons
Existing Associations	Availability of funds for start-up operations	Less influence over the association's direction and operational flexibility
	Track record for references	Potentially larger overhead expenses
	Familiarity with USACE policies	Less focus on individual projects
New Associations	More influence	No operational history or performance track record
	Lake/project focused	Higher risk due to lack of established history and processes
	Clearer reporting	



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Cooperating Association Toolkit

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TOOL KIT FOR DEVELOPING A
COOPERATING ASSOCIATION
PARTNERSHIP WITH THE U.S.
ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS



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USACE Responsibilities Under the Agreement

USACE Efforts

- Provide the Association with USACE goals, programs, and activities.
- Provide members with a sample agreement to review
- Sign the agreement
- Establish annual goals
- Ongoing communication and collaboration are essential to a successful partnership.





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Benefits of Cooperating Associations

- Associations can purchase materials, equipment, programs, exhibits, services, and publications to be used at the project.
- Associations can engage in fundraising, sponsorship, and collaborative activities.
- Associations can develop an organized constituency not typically accessible to USACE.
- Associations can be advocates for USACE. Some can lobby if they are established with that mission, subject to IRS restrictions for 501(c)(3) organizations.
- Can hire support staff to help Corps missions.



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Benefits of Cooperating Associations

Your Cooperating Association Partners can operate bookstores in USACE Visitor Centers!

- May sell interpretive and educational items, such as publications, maps, visual aids, audio recordings, pamphlets, handicrafts, and other objects directly related to the recreation, scientific, interpretive, and educational goals and mission of a project.
- Your partner should act as the primary distribution method for the sale of approved items.
- USACE personnel and/or volunteers may assist associations with nominal duties including the sale of bookstore items.
- The association shall not be charged for the use of facilities, utilities, or janitorial services when the use is incidental to the usual operation of the facility. If these activities go above and beyond normal operations, USACE shall be reimbursed at an agreed upon (but nominal) cost.
- Any necessary real estate instruments shall be a separate document and action from the cooperating association agreement.



Bookstore items in Lower Granite VC - NWW



Volunteer selling items at Bonneville L&D – NWP
Both bookstores operated by the cooperating association, Discover Your Northwest



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Cooperating Associations

<https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/employees/coopassoc/coopassoc.cfm>

USACE Efforts: Currently 58 Cooperating Associations and Friends groups in partnership

Examples from across USACE districts:

- LRH: Active Southern West Virginia Inc
- MVK: Friends of Lake Ouachita
- NAB: Friends of Raystown Lake
- MVS: Friends of Lake Shelbyville
- SAW: Friends of Mountains to Sea trail
- SWF: Friends of Lake O' the Pines



Iowa Academy of Science

Promoting science research, science education, the public understanding of science, and recognizing excellence in these endeavors.



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As a USACE Employee May I:

- Participate in a fiduciary role as officer, director or trustee unless authorized by statute or waiver?
- Participate in partner operations, e.g. budget, fundraising, membership drives, by-laws, lobbying, or “for profit” activities?
- Endorse products or services?
- Accept compensation for official duties performed with partner?

NO, to all the above



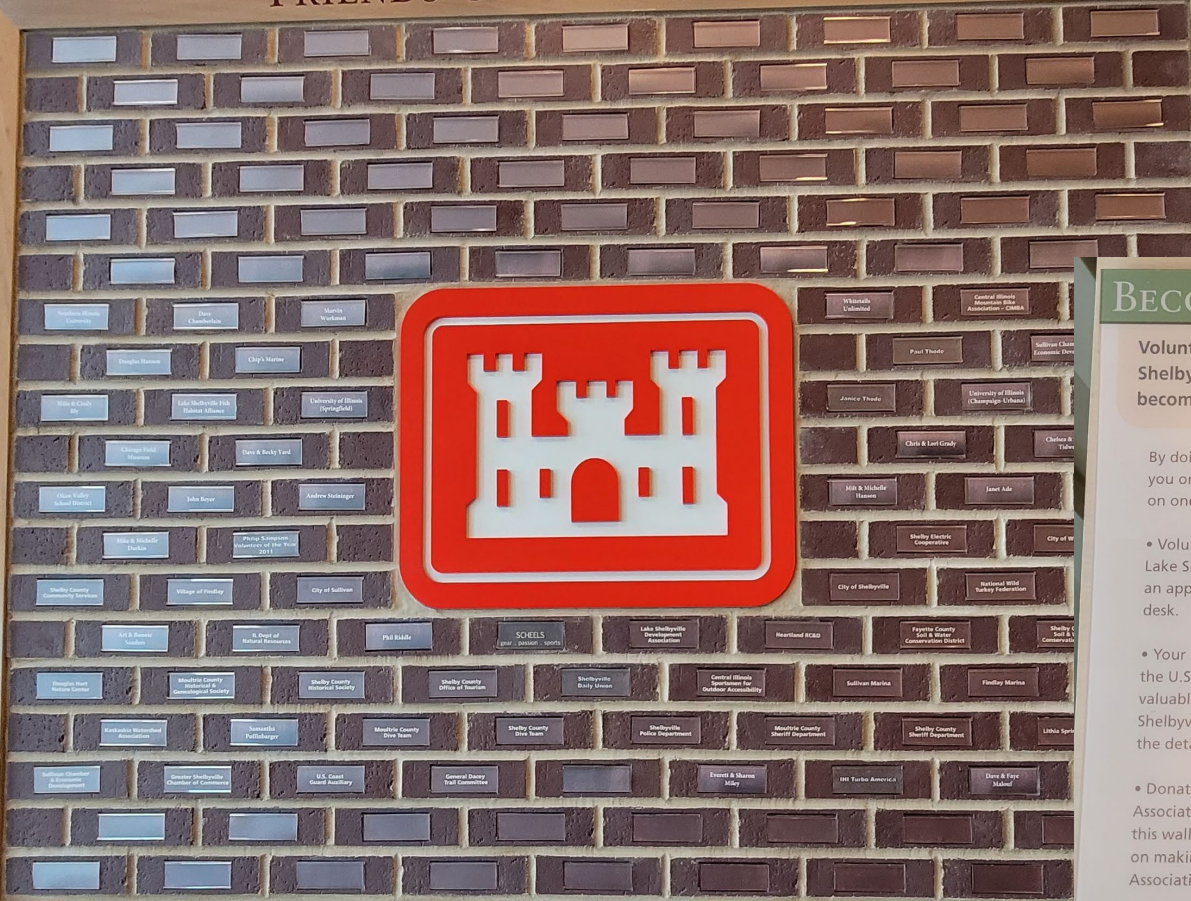
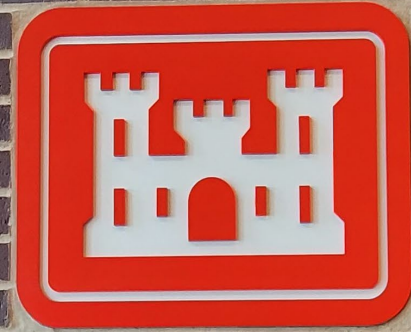
Fundraising Displays and Materials

USACE may allow the non-intrusive display or distribution of materials on its projects to educate visitors about an authorized fundraising partnership or activity.





FRIENDS OF LAKE SHELBYVILLE



BECOME A FRIEND OF LAKE SHELBYVILLE

Volunteers and partners are valuable to Lake Shelbyville and you can make a difference by becoming a friend of Lake Shelbyville.

By doing at least one of the things listed below you or your organization's name will be placed on one of the bricks above.

- Volunteer at least 100 hours of your time at Lake Shelbyville. To become a volunteer, fill out an application and turn it in at the information desk.
- Your group or organization can partner with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on a project valuable to everyone that visits Lake Shelbyville. Ask to speak with someone about the details of becoming a partner.
- Donate \$35 to the Lake Volunteers Association and your name will be placed on this wall for six months or longer. Information on making a donation is in the Lake Volunteers Association brochure.



Facility Maintenance



Special Events Such As Kids Fishing Tournament

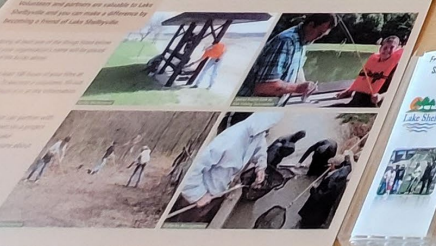


Trail Maintenance

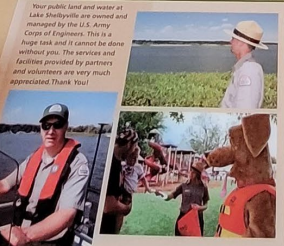


Fisheries Management

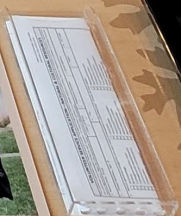
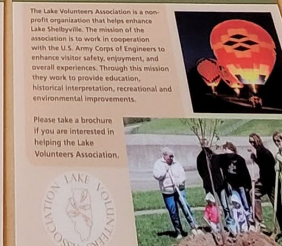
BECOME A FRIEND OF LAKE SHELBYVILLE



THANKS FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE!



LAKE VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION





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Fundraising Website Connections

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- USACE may authorize links from USACE websites to partner websites where electronic contributions are accepted.
- Must conform to USACE information technology management and security policies.
- Must be authorized by written agreement between USACE and partner.



Home About Friends Partnerships Join/Donate News Contact

...ive recreating on the water, and when they do – it's most likely on a lake or waterway managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the largest provider of water-based recreation in the country! The Corps Foundation is the only nationwide nonprofit organization dedicated exclusively to supporting our nation's lakes, rivers and the lands surrounding them. The Corps Foundation works to connect contributors, businesses, communities and "Friends" organizations to benefit visitors and help ensure healthy lakes and waterways for current and future generations.

HOW WE ARE HELPING

Supporting Recreation



Did you know that USACE operates and manages over 430 recreation sites and 12 million acres of land and waters in 42 states? Over 270 million visitors annually enjoy the recreation activities at these sites, and their tourism dollars support local, mostly rural, gateway communities. Federal funding for boating and fishing facilities and management has declined in spite of increased public demand. [LEARN MORE...](#)

Donations and memberships to the Corps Foundation provide financial support to improve programs and facilities that directly benefit the public.

Stewarding Public Lands



We partner with agencies, organizations and local community efforts to sustain operations, improve recreational facilities, preserve natural and cultural resources and enhance the visitor experience. The Corps Foundation pursues a variety of fundraising, and grant opportu-

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Corps Foundation uses 100% of your membership and donation funds to directly support education programs, stewardship projects and contribute toward partnership opportunities. Americans are enjoying their public lands more than ever before. In fact, outdoor recreation now comprises over 2% of the American economy. Despite this demand, public lands agencies, including the US Army Corps of Engineers, continue to face reduced Federal funding that could impact your access to lands and waters of the US.

Your financial support helps Corps projects and their friends groups connect, grow, and increase their capacity to fulfill the Corps' natural resource education mission on lakes and waterways across America.

JOIN US

DONATION



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Success Story: Award Winning Fundraising (NWS)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_thRvSpmlg

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Success Story: Clean Jordan Lake (SAW)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bV3IAXbEXC4>

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- Became a USACE cooperating association in 2012
- Unique and focused mission to improve the environment and water quality at Jordan Lake through:
 - Removal of trash from public lands
 - Litter prevention
 - Prevention of illegal dumping
 - Promotion of recycling
 - Public engagement and education
- Hosted 980 clean-up events with 11,800 volunteers removing 225 tons of trash

DO NOT LITTER



How Does Litter Harm Jordan Lake?

Small animals mistake trash, including cigarette butts, for food and can die from ingesting toxic chemicals that also impair water quality

Birds and other small animals are killed or injured when they get trapped in fishing line, 6-pack rings, plastic bags & other trash

Human illness can be caused by rodents & mosquitoes that are attracted to open containers

Tell your family and friends **NOT** to litter. If you see litter, **PICK IT UP**. Volunteer with www.CleanJordanLake.org and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. **REMEMBER: LITTERING IS ILLEGAL.**

How Long Does Litter Stay in the Environment?



*Polystyrene foam materials can stay in the environment for over 1 million years.





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Success Story: Mississippi River Water Trail Association (MVS)

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Throughout their 20-year partnership, the MRWTA has donated over 20,000 volunteer hours, \$180,000 in professional services, and \$50,000 of materials and equipment, bringing their total partnership value to over \$550,000.

Partnership results:

- Conservation of the 121-mile Mississippi River Water Trail, working with communities, organizations, and agencies toward the shared goal of healthy rivers and people.
- Volunteers working alongside USACE Park Rangers, supporting annual special events and providing educational outreach.
- Developing relationships with numerous other partners to include the Missouri White Water Association, St. Louis Canoe and Kayak, and the Missouri Paddling Coalition.
- Serving diverse audiences through accessibility improvements to include an accessible kayak launch, training scholarships, transportation assistance, equipment loans and free programming to underserved groups.





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Success Story: Friends of Burnsville Lake (LRH)

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Bicycle helmet giveaway event:

- 100 helmets given away
- 30 nighttime bike lights were donated by a camper
- 10 brand new bicycles were given to ten lucky kids!
- USACE Burnsville Lake provided water safety bags
- WVU Medicine provided water bottles, magnets, and a children's activity book.

Partners:

- Friends of Burnsville Lake, WVU Medicine, Braxton County Rotary Club, the Rotary of Weston, WVU Always Ready for Kids (ARK) Program, and Bigfoot Braxxie's Bikes.

Activities:

Braxxie's Bikes performed safety inspections on bikes in the campground, the FOBL provided snow cones, USACE handed out water safety bags and the donated bike lights, Bobber interacted with kids, and WVU Medicine provided cool swag.





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Success Story: Call of the Sea and SeaTrek (SPN)

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- Partners:** Bay Model, Call of the Sea, Bay Model Alliance, and Sea Trek (adding DYNW soon)
- Multiple associations working together to provide educational programs and activities on the water
 - Bay Model Alliance has a lease for the docks and subleases to Sea Trek to provide services for kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding, electric boat rentals and guided tours of the San Francisco Bay
 - Translates Bay Model concepts (tides, currents, watersheds) into real-world experiences



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On the Gateway

<https://corpslakes.erdcdren.mil/employees/coopassoc/coopassoc.cfm>



US Army Corps
of Engineers ®

Natural Resources Management Gateway

to the future . . .

Home Visitors Lake Discovery Recreation Env Compliance Env Stewardship Partners
News/Events People Forums Learning GETS Tools New Postings Submit Index/Search ?

Cooperating Associations Program

[Headquarters Partnership POC](#)

Cooperating associations are non-profit, tax-exempt organizations that financially support and volunteer services to the Corps through a cooperating association agreement. They are free-standing corporate entities with boards of directors, purposes, and abilities consistent with their boards and objectives. Some associations work in single areas; others are involved in various areas achieving multiple tasks.

Cooperating associations are used to accomplish such broad goals as natural resource and recreation management, interpretation, and visitor service activities at civil works water resource projects, fee-owned lands, and other areas for which the Corps has administrative and management responsibilities. In addition, forming an association develops partnerships with communities and improves communication among local constituencies.

Associations can:

- Support special events, interpretive, educational or scientific activities, exhibits, and programs
- Support natural resources management and/or public programs at or near Corps projects through conservation and educational activities and special events
- Acquire materials, equipment, supplies, or other items, or services appropriate for management, operation, interpretive, educational and visitor service functions.
- Provide services to visitors through the sale, production, publication, and/or distribution of appropriate interpretive and educational items related to the goals and mission of the Corps
- Distribute medium for those educational and scientific publications which relate to the Corps projects missions
- Collect dues; operate bookstores on-site, purchase equipment and materials for use at Corps projects, conduct and/or fund programs, and fund Volunteer Recognition Events.

There is often confusion between the definitions of a cooperating association and friends groups. To clarify:

- **Cooperating Association:** refers to a legal entity, organized under state law, which enjoys a non-profit and tax-exempt status under Internal Revenue Service codes and which operates under the terms of a Cooperating Association Agreement with the Corps of Engineers.
- **Friends Group:** generally refers to local volunteer groups of citizens organized for a specific purpose or interest in a particular geographical area. Friends groups may or may not have 501(c) status. A friends group does not become a cooperating association unless a cooperating association agreement is signed.

● [Policy & Procedures](#)

● [Toolkit for Developing a Cooperating Association](#)

● [Existing Corps Cooperating Associations](#)

● [Related Sites](#)

● [Sample Templates](#)

● [News / Current Issues](#)

● [Lessons Learned](#)

● [FAQs](#)

● [Success Stories](#)

● [Division & District POCs](#)

Cooperating Assoc.

USACE NRM Partnership Agreement Decision Tree

(for Recreation and Environmental Stewardship Partnerships)

