

NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

2023 Annual Report



U.S. ARMY



US Army Corps
of Engineers®



MESSAGE FROM THE NRM CHIEF

It is hard to believe that yet another year has come and gone so quickly. 2023 marked my fifth full year as your Chief of Natural Resources Management and for each and every day of those five years, I continue to be inspired by the dedication, resourcefulness, and innovativeness of our Community of Practice.

As I reflect on the past year, 2023 proved to be full of both opportunities and challenges. Visitation to our projects saw an increase in use by over 2.5 million visits to reach a five-year high of 269 million visits. Yet through your meaningful outreach efforts, public recreation fatalities were reduced by 12%. At a national level, we have engaged more than ever with other federal agencies to support nation-wide efforts and initiatives. Our desire to support meaningful partnerships with federal, state, Tribal, nonprofit, and private entities has led to innovative efforts and projects that benefit visitors, USACE, and our surrounding communities.

As we embark on our journey through 2024, I share the sentiment that our work is never done. Our teams will continue to execute millions in funding received to complete repairs and maintenance to our public-serving assets. Together, we will continue our pursuit of excellence in delivering a sustainable Natural Resources Management Program.



I proudly acknowledge that our skilled NRM workforce is the program's greatest asset. I ask that you continue to prioritize your safety and the safety of our co-workers, volunteers, contractors, and visitors in the fulfillment of our daily missions. Thank you for all that YOU do, each and every day.

JEFF KRAUSE | Chief, Natural Resources Management



Photo: Fort Worth District

OUR MISSION

The Natural Resources Management Program (NRM) delivers safe public access to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers'(USACE) lands and waters in a manner that protects all project purposes and mission areas through responsible outdoor recreation, environmental conservation, and land use management while partnering with communities to serve the American people.

OUR VISION

Conserve natural resources and provide public recreation opportunities that contribute to the quality of American life.

>> YOUR HQ NRM TEAM

The headquarters NRM team is comprised of dedicated professionals that are dispersed geographically across the USACE enterprise. This motivated team strives to support staff members at field projects while addressing the fast-paced challenges and opportunities presented to the NRM program.



Jeff Krause

Chief, Natural Resources Management



>> 2023 CAREER ASSIGNMENT PROGRAM (CAP)

The NRM and Environmental Compliance and Sustainability CAP provides an opportunity for USACE's future leaders to gain valuable experiences and insights into both the NRM and Environmental Compliance and Sustainability programs. The opportunity allows participants to work directly with headquarters staff and become familiar with various roles and responsibilities.



Roseana Burick

Environmental Stewardship Program & Business Line Manager



Ryan Hartwig

Recreation Program & Business Line Manager



Michael Richards

Land Use Program Manager



Heather Burke

Partnership Program Manager



Heath Kruger

Senior Policy Advisor for Park Ranger Activities



Allison Walker

Federal Lands Transportation Program Manager



Jimmie Ward
2023 NRM CAP

Natural Resource Manager, Degray Lake



Pam Doty

Water Safety Program Manager



Myrna Lopez Ortiz

Environmental Compliance & Sustainability Program Manager



Tara Whitsel

NRM Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Program Manager



Scott Hyatt
2023 NRM CAP

Operations Project Manager, J. Strom Thurmond & Richard B. Russell Projects



AJ Jensen

National Sign Program Manager



Jason Owen

Recreation One Stop Agency Program Manager



Alyson Parker
2023 EC CAP

Environmental Compliance Coordinator, John H. Kerr & Philpott Reservoirs

NRM LEADERSHIP TEAMS

The NRM Program is supported by several national leadership teams. These teams serve in an advisory capacity to Headquarters (HQ) USACE, providing strategic planning, policy guidance, budget recommendations, and much more. Over 150 personnel from across USACE serve and provide the support needed to advance our program.

- **ES & REC Budget CATT** | Coach, Assist, and Train Teams
- **ISLT** | Invasive Species Leadership Team
- National Water Safety Team
- NRM Users Group
- NRM Uniform Committee
- **PAC** | Partnership Advisory Committee
- **Park Ranger CoP Advisory Board** | Park Ranger Community of Practice
- **RLAT** | Recreation Leadership Advisory Team
- **SAT** | Stewardship Advisory Team
- **SAWG** | Sign Advisory Working Group
- **VERS CATT** | Visitation Estimation & Reporting System CATT

INVASIVE SPECIES LEADERSHIP TEAM (ISLT)

The Invasive Species Leadership Team (ISLT) provides oversight of the USACE Invasive Species Program. The ISLT provides direction to achieve the goals and objectives established within the National Invasive Species Management Plan and the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force Strategic Plan that are applicable to USACE Civil Works (CW) programs and projects.

Over the past year, the ISLT supported the revision of USACE's Invasive Species Policy, issued in February 2023 in response to WRDA 2020, revised its Program Management Plan for 2023-2027, and drafted the USACE Invasive Species Strategic Plan in response to the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019. Additionally, the ISLT supports the Statement of Needs (SON) process in coordination with ERDC, and strives to further the exchange and sharing of information related to invasive species.

RECREATION LEADERSHIP AND STEWARDSHIP ADVISORY TEAMS (RLAT & SAT)

The RLAT provides oversight on the Recreation Program and serves as an ad hoc committee to the Chief of Natural Resources Management in HQ USACE. In 2023, this team supported the recreation fee reconciliation process and sub teams have been actively working on the ER update for commercial activities, an update to the closure policy, to include a minimum standards list, and the NRM Strategic Plan. More information on RLAT can be found on the NRM Gateway.



The SAT provides oversight on the Environmental Stewardship Program (ENS) and serves as an ad hoc committee to the Chief of Natural Resources Management in HQ USACE. In 2023, the SAT addressed an array of topics during their biannual in person meetings and tackled several projects through sub-project delivery teams (PDTs). Some of the projects included revising the ENS Program Development Manual, drafting national boundary maintenance standards to aid in driving enterprise consistency, and developing ENS Facilities Equipment Maintenance hierarchy and S3 standards.

ACROSS NRM IN 2023

There was a lot to be excited about in 2023 as our dynamic NRM program continually evolves to take advantage of opportunities and challenges. Below are a few key efforts that took place in 2023.

SOCIETY OF OUTDOOR RECREATION PROFESSIONALS - USACE AGENCY MEMBERSHIP



The Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals (SORP) provides leadership for the outdoor recreation profession through skill development, networking, and technical guidance. Since 1983, SORP has been the nation's leading association of outdoor recreation and related professionals who strive to protect our natural and cultural resources while providing sustainable recreation access.

In 2023, USACE established an agency-wide membership with SORP so that our natural resources management professionals have access to the training resources, reports, and networking the organization offers. <https://www.recpro.org/>

WRDA REPORTS



The Water Resources Development Act of 2022 had three specific reporting requirements for the NRM program. WRDA Section 8209 - *Recreation and economic development at Corps facilities in Appalachia*, WRDA Section 8227 - *Investments for recreation areas*, and Section 8237 - *Assessment of forest, rangeland, and watershed restoration services on lands owned by the Corps of Engineers*. Over the past year, the NRM program has been taking the time necessary to diligently ensure a quality product is provided to the requesting committees. When complete, these will be shared with the NRM community.

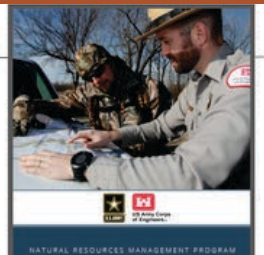
NRM STRATEGIC PLAN - 1ST BIENNIAL REPORT

On July 19, 2021 Maj. Gen. William Graham, Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations, USACE, signed the Natural Resources Management Program Strategic Plan 2021-2031. As noted in his memorandum, the plan "provides a framework for the future of the NRM Program to ensure we continue to provide safe public access to USACE lands and waters in a manner that protects all project purposes and mission areas through responsible outdoor recreation, environmental conservation, and land use management".

NRM STRATEGIC PLAN BIENNIAL REPORT (1) 2023

INTRODUCTION. The 2021-2031 Natural Resources Management (NRM) Strategic Plan was developed to establish a foundational framework to shape and chart the course for the NRM Program over the next decade. The Recreation and Stewardship Leadership Advisory Teams (RLAT/SAT) were charged with implementing and monitoring the plan to include a biennial report. This document serves as the first biennial report to document the achievement of the strategic goals and adapt the strategy to be inclusive of changes in business practices, federal policy, and national initiatives since the plan's development.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES. The strategic priorities of the plan focused on four goal areas: Workforce



Over the past 2 years, implementation teams were established within the Recreation Leadership Advisory Team (RLAT) and Stewardship Advisory Team (SAT) to address a total of 37 actions associated with the goal areas of: Workforce, Communication, Resourcing, and Program Delivery. A total of 14 actions are documented as "Complete" or "Complete with Sustained Effort". An additional 18 actions are documented as "In-Progress".

The Biennial Report notes specific accomplishments related to each goal area and provides a quick-view status of each action. This report has been shared with the NRM Community through the CW Knowledge Management Portal and NRM Gateway.



INTERAGENCY VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

The Interagency Visitor Use Management Council's mission is to provide guidance on visitor use management policies and to develop legally defensible and effective interagency implementation tools for visitor use management. Agencies represented on the council include: NPS, USFS, BLM, USFWS, NOAA, and USACE.

The council's purpose is to:

- Develop field-tested, science-informed, interagency guidance for implementing effective visitor use management programs that are consistent, efficient, and inclusive.
- Identify sustainable strategies for improving institutional capabilities and professional competencies, including partnerships.
- Launch and update shared tools and trainings to create a unified approach to visitor use management across member agencies.
- Support internal and external communication and education efforts to disseminate council guidance and products.

Photo: Allatoona Lake

INITIATIVES & INTERAGENCY WORK GROUPS

FEDERAL INTERAGENCY TEAM ON VOLUNTEERISM (FITV)

The Federal Interagency Team on Volunteerism is a public-sector alliance to promote and support volunteerism in natural and cultural resource management agencies. FITV is comprised of national volunteer program leaders from USACE, Bureau of Reclamation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, AmeriCorps, Bureau of Land Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, US Geological Survey, US Forest Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Strategic priorities include:

- *Promote interagency collaboration: Establishing a national network of training resources and expertise.*
- *Foster volunteer management training: Share effective volunteer engagement and meaningful volunteer experiences.*
- *Enhance accountability and efficacy: Support management of fiscal and human resources.*
- *Expand outreach: Increase engagement in volunteerism.*



Photo: Wright Patman Lake

Collectively, the agencies of FITV:



**MANAGE
450,000
VOLUNTEERS**

who provide



**10 MILLION
SERVICE HOURS
ANNUALLY**

with a value of

**\$285
MILLION**

In 2023, FITV made major improvements to the Volunteer.gov website, a volunteer recruitment and management portal for people who are passionate about supporting causes managed by federal agencies. The public can use Volunteer.gov to find volunteer opportunities, submit an application, and track volunteer hours.



Photo: Albeni Falls Dam

FICOR

The Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR) was launched to coordinate Federal efforts on expanding outdoor recreation opportunities and providing people with improved and more affordable experiences on America's public lands and waters.



In 2023, FICOR working group teams collaborated on improving recreation policy, implementing Federal fee-free day coordination, engaging youth through an interagency transportation grants proposal, and establishing long-term sustainability of FICOR with development of an operational capacity plan and creation of a website.

ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES & INTERAGENCY WORK GROUPS



COMPACT ACT

The Veterans Comprehensive Prevention, Access to Care, and Treatment Act of 2020, or the Veterans COMPACT Act of 2020 (Public Law 116-214), implements programs, policies, and reports related to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

USACE joins representatives from the VA, the Departments of Interior, Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Defense, and Homeland Security, and representatives from veterans service organizations on the Task Force.

Over the past year, NRM Program leaders worked with the VA to report and provide recommendations regarding the use of public lands and outdoor spaces for veterans.



Photo: National Water Safety Program

ACROSS NRM IN 2023

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: REND LAKE

Funded in FY 23, work at Rend Lake included the repair and resurfacing of 150,000 square feet of parking lot and roadways at the Rend Lake Visitor Center.

Addressing aging infrastructure enabled Rend Lake to better serve its 1.6 million visitors. The Rend Lake Visitor Center is a launchpad for STEM education, interpretative programs, and visitor inquiries. Visitors to

Rend Lake spend \$60 million annually in the surrounding communities.

Photo: Buffumville Lake

SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAM FUNDING

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (Public Law 117-58), provided a \$17.1 billion (B) investment for Civil Works projects that address water resources and infrastructure needs for the nation. The IIJA provides \$4B to remain available until expended, in Operation and Maintenance (O&M) funding (\$2B in FY22, \$1B in FY23, and \$1B in FY24).

LOOKING AT FY 23

\$19,000,000

FY22-FY23 ENVIRONMENTAL
STEWARDSHIP BUSINESS LINE

\$87,000,000

FY22-FY23 RECREATION
BUSINESS LINE

\$106,000,000

FY22-FY23 TOTAL
NATURAL RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT

In FY 23, NRM projects continued to expend FY 22 and FY 23 IIJA funding. A large portion of work completed focused on energy and water efficiency.



**APPROX
\$44 M**

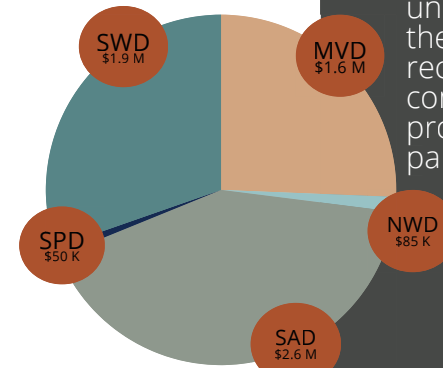
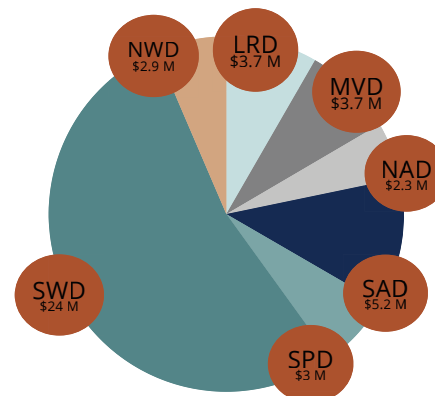
**ENERGY AND WATER
EFFICIENCY**

LOOKING AT FY 24

In FY 24, NRM projects will work toward the completion of over \$50 million in IIJA funded efforts.

**RECREATION
PROGRAM: \$44.9 MIL**

**ENVIRONMENTAL
STEWARDSHIP: \$6.3 MIL**



PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: BUFFUMVILLE LAKE

Work at Buffumville Lake in FY 23 resulted in the improvement of universal access to the project's beach recreation area. The completed effort provided two accessible parking areas in addition to a new access ramp for restroom facilities.



ACROSS NRM IN 2023



80 USACE PROJECTS RECORDED MORE THAN 1 MILLION VISITS
(Nearly 1/5 USACE Projects)



59.8 MIL THE 10 MOST VISITED USACE PROJECTS RECORDED A COMBINED 59.8 MILLION VISITS

Photo: Rend Lake

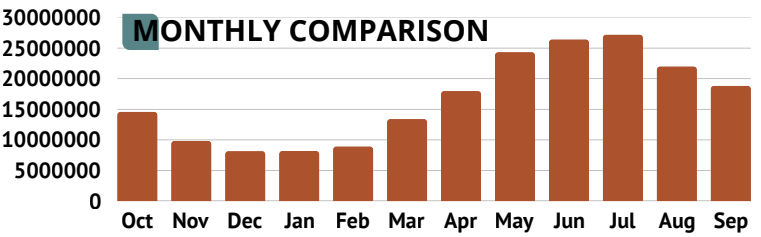
VISITATION

Total visitation during FY23 increased by more than 2.5 million visits. In all, nearly **269 million** visits were recorded throughout the past year which parallels the visitation experienced during the pandemic in 2021. As part of an effort to ensure accurate visitation data, the Visitation Estimation Reporting Coach, Assist, and Train Team completed a considerable effort to align data associated with visitation from various sources including the Corps of Engineers Financial Management System remittance, automated fee machines, and Recreation One Stop .

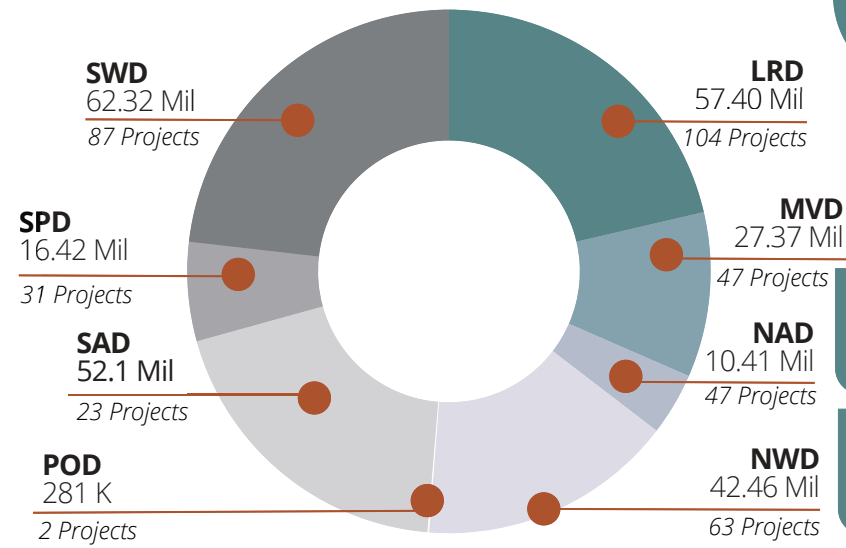


DAY USE VISITATION ACCOUNTS FOR 86.8% OF TOTAL VISITATION, WHILE OVERNIGHT VISITATION ACCOUNTS FOR 13.2% OF TOTAL VISITATION.

A CLOSER LOOK AT VISITATION



VISITATION BY REGION



FEDERAL LANDS HIGHWAYS

Federal Lands Highways (FLH) administers numerous programs and types of funds to facilitate transportation improvements for many federal land management agency partners, including USACE. These programs provide a funding source for transportation improvements in an environment where funding for transportation improvements in USACE recreation areas is not readily available.

FLTP

FLH Programs provide funding and support for repair and rehabilitation of roads, bridges, parking areas, and other transportation features in USACE managed recreation areas through the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP).



\$63.8 MILLION FLTP DOLLARS RECEIVED (SINCE FY 13)



90 MILES OF ROADWAY IMPROVED (SINCE FY 13)



8.5 MILLION VISITORS PROVIDED SAFER ACCESS

FLAP

FLH Programs provide funding and support for the enhancement of state, county, and city managed transportation that improves access to USACE lands through the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP).



FY 23: State, county, and local government partners to USACE received a total of **\$4.2 million** at **19** projects across **14** states.

FLPP

FLH Programs provide funding and support for conducting transportation related research, developing asset management collections and data management systems, and conducting long range planning through the Federal Lands Planning Program (FLPP).



84% of USACE public roads and parking assets have GPS data collected by Student Conservation Association (SCA) survey crews.



178 USACE bridges were inspected in FY 23

ERFO

FLH Programs provide funding and support for emergency repairs and recovery from natural disasters through the Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) Program.



ERFO funds have supported transportation recovery efforts at USACE projects from damages by **31** severe weather events from 2015 to present.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Cook's Landing, a day use area located on the Murray Pool of the Arkansas River, received funding through the FLTP in the amount of \$925,000 for transportation improvements. The Little Rock District team worked with a contractor to complete the repairs according to Arkansas Department of Transportation standards, including mobilization/demobilization, surface preparations, milling/scarifying, tack coat, 2" hot-mix asphalt overlay, pavement marking, and shoulder repair for approximately one mile of roadway and 3,900 square yard of parking lots in Cook's Landing.



Photo: Cook's Landing

Project Benefits to the Public:

- Improved access for about 310,000 visitors annually to walk, bike, boat and enjoy the day use facilities such as individual covered picnic site, group shelter and boat ramp.
- Improvement to safety for recreational visitors accessing the park due to road maintenance and low water crossing.

PARK RANGER EFFORTS

CITATIONS AND WARNINGS

Each year, Park Rangers across the country enforce Title 36 using written warnings and citations as tools to perform the various visitor assistance functions required of their position. Recorded written warning and citation data helps to identify trends with public users, utilization of resources, and can be used to inform Visitor Assistance programs across all levels of the enterprise. In 2023, USACE Park Rangers:



ISSUED

21,158

WRITTEN WARNINGS



ISSUED

2,180

CITATIONS



WHICH REPRESENTS

9.7

WRITTEN WARNINGS PER EVERY CITATION ISSUED
(A 1.2% INCREASE FROM 2022)

LAW ENFORCEMENT CONTRACTS

District Commanders are delegated the authority to contract with states and their political subdivisions to obtain increased law enforcement services at CW projects to meet needs during peak visitation periods and to augment the citation authorities granted to USACE under 36 CFR Chapter III, Part 327 (Title 36). In FY 23, USACE:



SPENT

\$8.85

MILLION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT CONTRACTS
(AN INCREASE OF 18.4% OVER 5 YEARS)



RESULTED IN

35,557

ACTIONS BEING REPORTED ON USACE MANAGED LANDS/WATERS
(AN INCREASE OF 10.2% OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS)



WITH A TOTAL OF

235

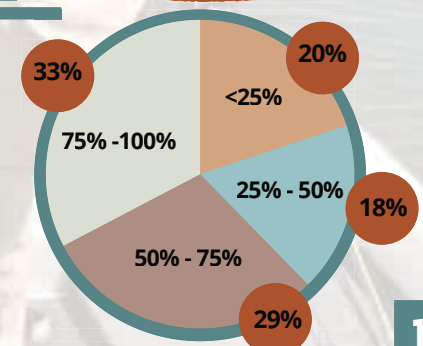
LAW ENFORCEMENT CONTRACTS IN PLACE
(A DECREASE OF 5.3% OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS)

PARK RANGER SURVEY

The responses from the 2023 Park Ranger Survey provided an opportunity to research and further compile a list of trending topics in the USACE Visitor Assistance Program. The goal of this list is to provide and share information on the current status of these topics across USACE and to provide assistance and awareness for future trainings. Additional information on these topics will be made available on the NRM Gateway.

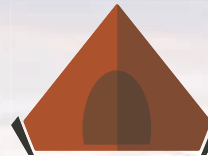


% of Time During the Summer Recreation Season Spent Performing Visitor Contact Duties

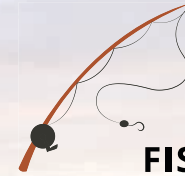


RECREATION

USACE is one of the leading federal providers of outdoor recreation in the nation. Over 400 lake and river projects in 43 states provide a diverse range of recreational opportunities. By providing controlled access and management on USACE lands and water, recreation program managers play a key role in the successful execution of all project missions.



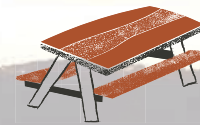
94,000+
CAMPSITES



2,000+
FISHING TOURNAMENTS



7,400+
MILES OF TRAILS



33,000+
PICNIC SITES

REC BUDGET

FY23 RECREATION BUDGET. The FY 23 appropriated budget for the USACE Recreation Program was \$240 million. Additionally, nearly \$70 million was received through various supplemental programs.

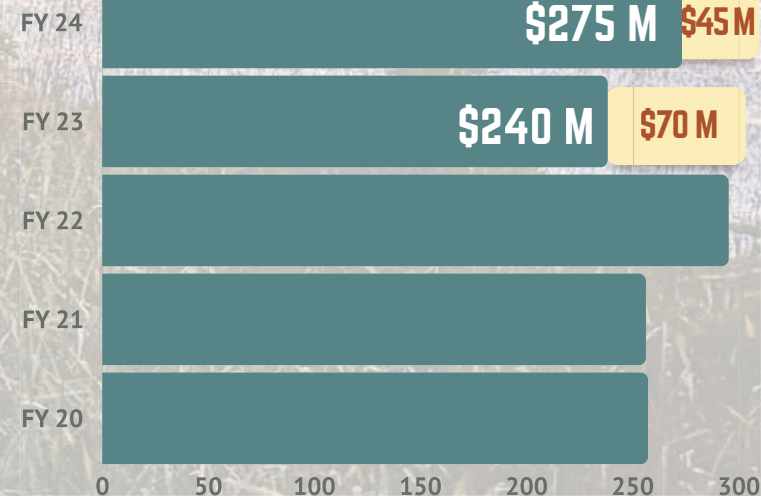
Looking forward, total appropriated funding for FY 24 trended upward toward \$320 million. This includes a President's budget of nearly \$275 million and \$45 million in supplemental program funding.

In FY 25, the President's budget for the Recreation Program is just over \$280 million; not including any supplemental program funding that may be received.

LOOKING FORWARD



FY 24
\$320,000,000



RECREATION

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL PASS PROGRAM REVENUES

Fees collected through the America the Beautiful Pass (AtB) Program have funded a variety of improvements to recreation areas across USACE.

For example, in early 2023, the Carters Lake Project utilized America the Beautiful funds to revamp the aging Carters Lake Nature Center, which contained a number of features that were unfriendly to interpretation. The funds were used to purchase multiple interpretive technology items, interpretive paneling, and a range of items to make the nature center feel more open and natural. Final touches included a range of interpretive panels to educate on the new installations and provide instructions for interpretive technologies.

Photo: Allatoona Lake

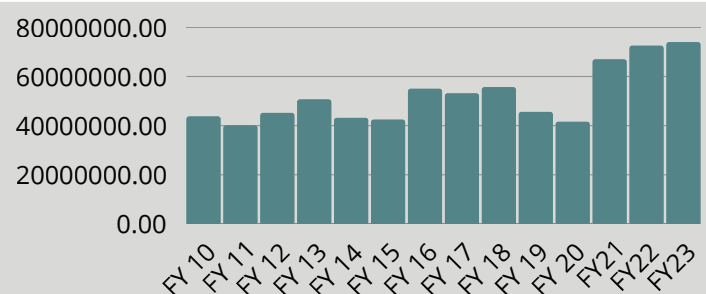
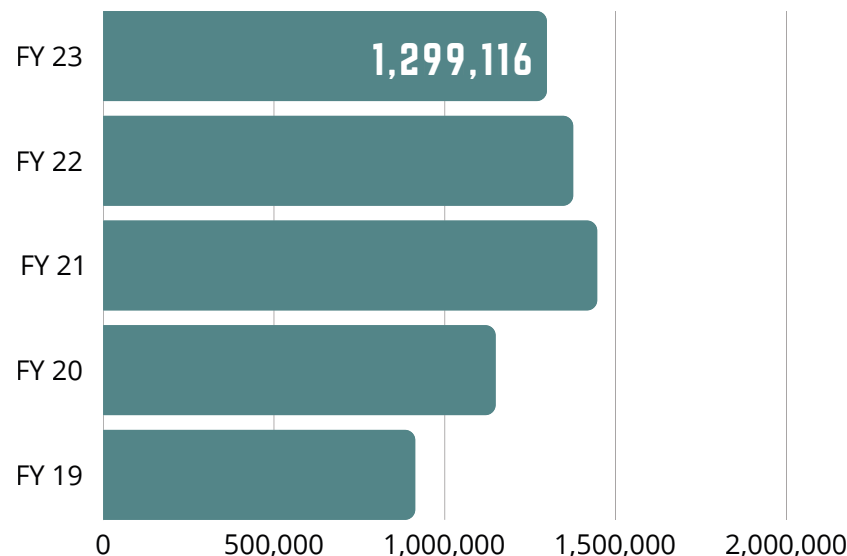
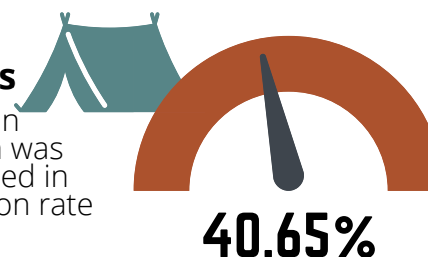
RECREATION REVENUES

Recreation revenue is the summation of three types of fees authorized under three statutory authorities (16 U.S.C. § 460d-3, WRDA 2014 Section 1047, and WRDA 2014 Section 1048). These fees are "Special Recreation Use Fees (SRUF)," "Interagency America the Beautiful (ATB) Revenues," and "Special Use Permit Fees."

In FY 23, USACE collected a total of \$73.9 million, of which \$69.6 million in SRUF offset general treasury funding.* Other revenue generated in FY 23 included \$1.9 million in America the Beautiful pass sales and \$2.4 million in Special Use Permits which was returned to the point-of-sale site.

FY 23 Camping Reservations

In FY 23 there were nearly 1.3 million USACE camping reservations, which was slightly less than the high experienced in FY 21. The average monthly utilization rate for the fiscal year was 40.65%.



*Based on reconciled collections

<https://corpslakes.erd.dren.mil/nrm.cfm>



Photo: Carters Lake

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The Environmental Stewardship Program protects, preserves, and restores significant ecological and cultural resources at Civil Works projects nationwide while balancing land use activities. These efforts contribute to the quality of American life by managing and conserving natural resources consistent with ecosystem management principles and provide a sustainable environment for future generations.



12 MILLION
ACRES OF PUBLIC
LAND AND WATERS
MANAGED



1 MILLION
ACRES OF
GRASSLANDS



14%
U.S. FRESHWATER
FISHING



7 OF THE TOP 10
MIGRATORY BIRD
FLYWAYS CROSS
OVER USACE LANDS
& WATERS

ENS BUDGET



In FY 23, **\$141 million** was enacted by Congress for the ENS Program. Nearly **31%** of the \$141 million was for work associated with fish, forest, and wildlife habitat management along with pest and invasive species management. Additionally, over \$26 million was requested by other business lines, such as navigation, hydropower, and flood risk management for work associated with biological opinions.

Looking forward, the FY 24 enacted budget again supports the program at **nearly \$142 million**, which includes \$4.2 million from the Mississippi River and Tributaries fund. In FY 25, the President's budget for the ENS program is \$129M including \$4 million in MR&T funding.

LOOKING FORWARD



FY 24
\$141,752,000





PROJECT SPOTLIGHT:
WILLAMETTE
VALLEY PROJECT

The Fender's blue butterfly, found only in Oregon's Willamette Valley, was believed to be extinct. It was rediscovered in 1989 and subsequently listed as endangered in 2000. Thanks to more than 23 years of collaborative recovery efforts involving USACE, this butterfly was recently reclassified from "endangered" to "threatened."



Photo: Allatoona Lake

PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS

Similar to previous years, notable focus areas within the ENS Program included boundary management, shoreline management, and the revision of project master plans.

MASTER PLANS. USACE has focused significant effort and funding to revise project master plans and ensure that each project has a relevant, concise plan for strategic management.

# of Master Plans completed in FY 23	24
# of Master Plans completed in FY 22	36
# of Master Plans completed in FY 21	14
# of Master Plans completed in FY 20	21
# of Master Plans completed in FY 19	22
# of Master Plans completed in FY 18	12

BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT.

USACE is responsible for protecting over **38,000 miles** of boundary line - that's 6 times the length of the Mexico and Canada borders combined. More than **\$23 million** of boundary related work was funded in FY 23.

INVASIVE SPECIES. In FY 23, the presence of nearly **200** species of invasive organisms were noted at USACE projects. Johnson grass, multiflora rose, autumn olive, tree of heaven, and Canada thistle were the 5 most commonly reported species.



22,649

ACRES MANAGED OR
MAINTAINED FOR
POLLINATOR SPECIFIC
HABITAT



14,574

ACRES IMPROVED OR
ENHANCED FOR
POLLINATORS DURING
THE FY



768

PREScribed
BURNS WERE
CONDUCTED DURING
THE FY TO BENEFIT
HABITAT AND REDUCE
FUEL LOADS

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT:
BLUE MARSH LAKE

The Berks County Conservation District received \$135,000 from Bass Pro Shop's U.S. Open Grant to stabilize eroding shorelines and add offshore wood habitat structures to Blue Marsh Lake. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and USACE partnered to work on the shoreline at three different access points. Additionally, coordination is occurring to place 300 wooden structures on the lake bed to supplement existing fish habitat.





THE SPORTSMEN'S
VOICE FOR OUR WILD
PUBLIC LANDS, WATERS
AND WILDLIFE



Photo: Lake Shelbyville

PARTNERSHIPS

Alongside USACE staff, our partners organized community events, fostering connections and raising awareness about USACE missions. These events served as platforms to engage with new volunteers and potential partners.

At the national level, USACE continued to team up with other Federal land management agencies to support the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation, the America the Beautiful 30x30 initiative, the Recreate Responsibly and the Together Outdoors coalitions in providing outdoor recreation and conserving or sustainably managing natural and cultural resources. As we look ahead, we are excited about the potential for even greater achievements and are grateful for the ongoing support of our remarkable communities.

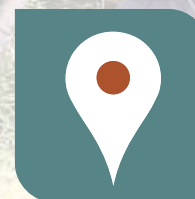


Photo: Lake Ouachita



3,622

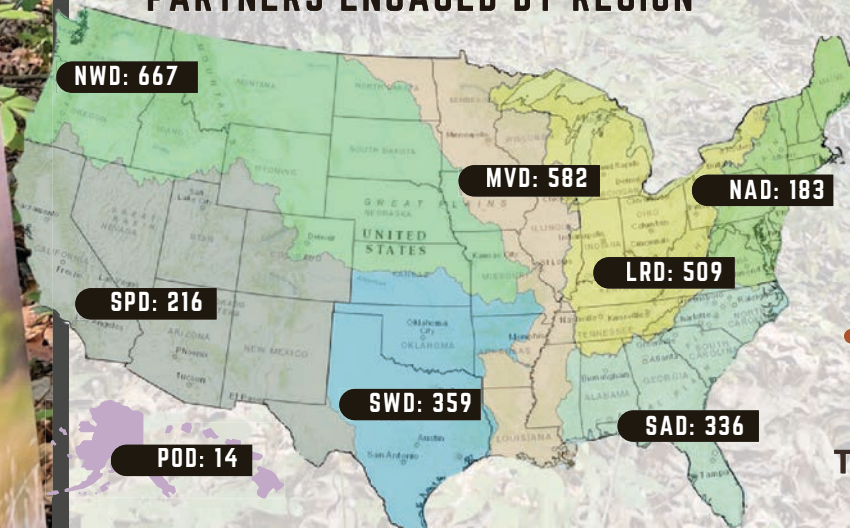
TOTAL PARTNERS



304

**USACE PROJECTS
WITH PARTNERSHIPS**
(72% of USACE Projects)

PARTNERS ENGAGED BY REGION



USACE Investment: \$37 M
PARTNER Investment: \$101.1 M
\$138,001,584
TOTAL VALUE OF PARTNERSHIPS

<https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/nrm.cfm>



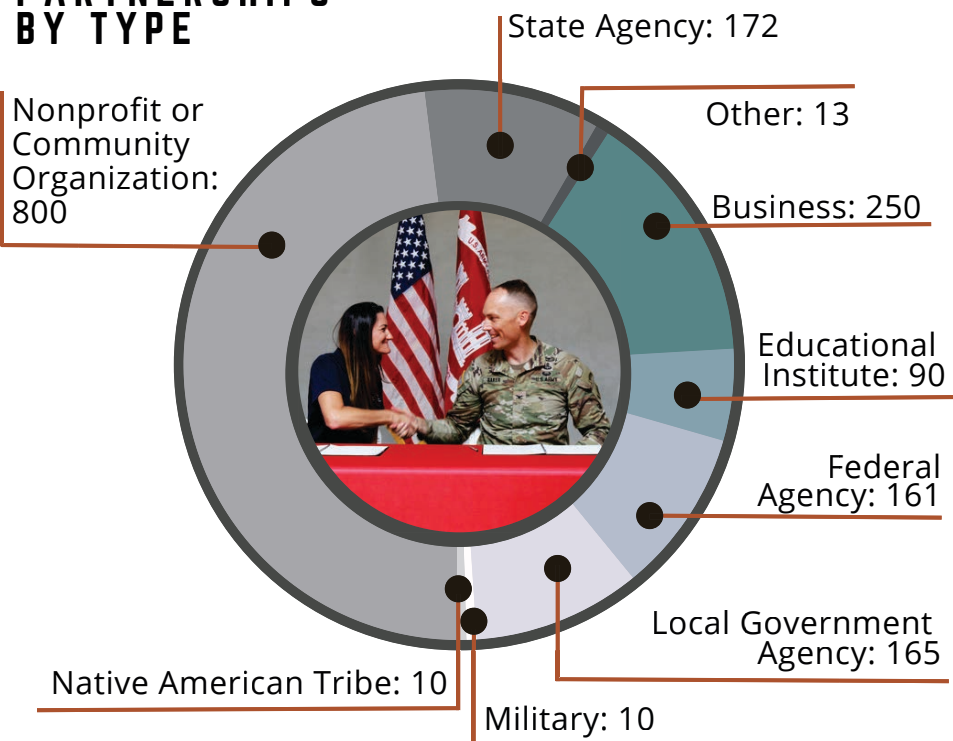
Photo: Lake Shelbyville

PARTNERSHIPS

A total of **225** USACE projects partnered with **34** organizations that have a national MOU in place, providing educational programs, health and safety, environmental and recreation improvements. **58** 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 USACE PARTNERS

PARTNERSHIPS BY TYPE



PARTNERSHIP GROWTH

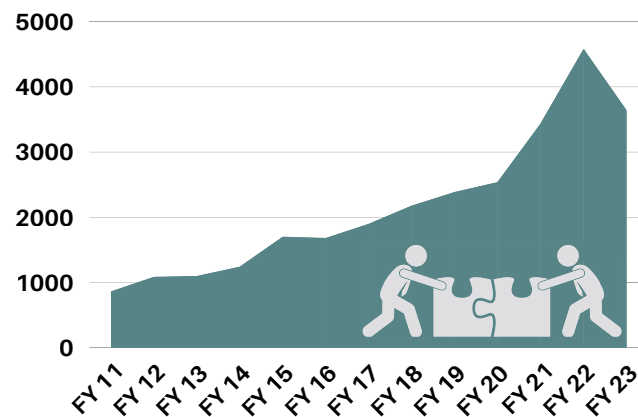
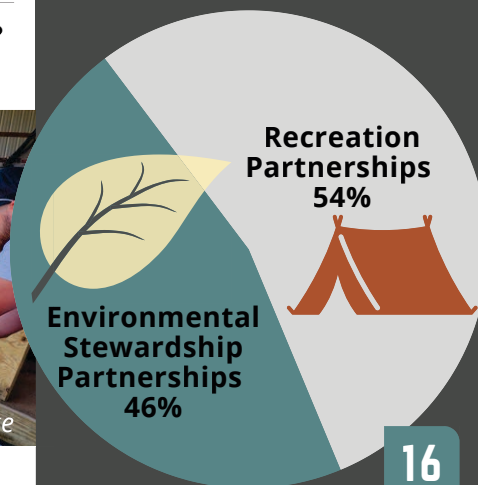


Photo: J. Strom Thurmond Lake

PARTNERSHIPS BY BUSINESS LINE





HANDSHAKE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM



The intent of the Handshake Partnership 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.



Photo: Beltzville Dam

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

From 2004 to 2024, the Handshake Partnership Program:

has provided

\$3.7 MILLION

in "seed money" to USACE facilities for

218 

partnership projects to improve recreational opportunities and benefit environmental stewardship activities on USACE managed lands and waters.



747

partner organizations have responded by generously donating

\$10.3 MILLION 

in volunteer hours, professional services, materials, supplies, equipment, and funds to these efforts.

Project Spotlight: Beltzville Dam. During water quality sampling at Beltzville Dam, the staff discovered hydrilla, an invasive species. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) and USACE partnered to establish decontamination sites at each of the public boat launches.

Handshake Funding was used to procure a mobile watercraft decontamination unit, priced at \$22,600. The unit is transported and deployed at the two different launch sites by PA DCNR and the Friends of Beltzville State Park who provide labor and in-kind services. Both of these organizations make staff available to operate the wash station, transport and deploy it for use, and fill the water tanks as needed. The PA Fish and Boat Commission and PA Lake Management Society provide educational tools and material for handouts to the public and recreational user groups.

Beltzville Dam is the first USACE Philadelphia District owned dam to purchase and test a boat washing system at a public launch site. Working in partnership with PA DCNR, USACE is providing the first proactive effort at Beltzville to bring State and Federal agencies together to work on preventing the spread of invasive species and to preserve water quality throughout the region.



Photo: Beltzville Dam

2023 Handshake Partnership Project Recipients

Alum Creek - Accessible Trail
Beach City - Disc Golf Course
Dale Hollow Lake - Fishing Access
Lake O' the Pines - Kayak Launch
Mansfield Hollow Lake - Pine Barren Restoration
Shelbyville Lake - Archery Park
Truman Lake - Roadside Park

<https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/nrm.cfm>

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers play a valuable role in helping USACE care for the environment and provide high quality recreation opportunities. Each year, people generously give their time, expertise, and resources to serve millions of visitors who enjoy USACE managed lands and waters.

RECREATION. Within the Recreation Program, volunteers have assisted in the construction and maintenance of trails, served as campground and visitor center hosts, conducted interpretive programs, developed and built displays, assisted in the maintenance of facilities, and collected fees.

ADMINISTRATION. Volunteers assisted in various administrative roles, including writing and editing materials for publications, completing computer and database entry, and assisting in capturing our workforce and visitors in action through photography.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP. Volunteers have performed a variety of duties assisting staff in managing our natural and cultural resources, such as removing invasive species, planting native species, building and installing artificial nesting structures, and monitoring wildlife species.



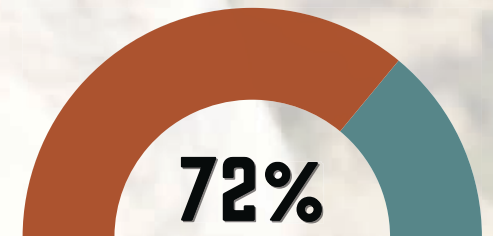
42,839
TOTAL
VOLUNTEERS



1,715,001
TOTAL VOLUNTEER
HOURS SERVED
*(Equivalent to 825 full
time employees)*



\$54.5 M
TOTAL VALUE
OF VOLUNTEER
HOURS



72%
PROJECTS USING VOLUNTEERS
(316 of 441 USACE Projects)

VOLUNTEERS

RECOGNIZING OUR VOLUNTEERS

Over the past 5 years, the USACE volunteer workforce has averaged approximately **33,000** volunteers providing **1.5 million** hours of service annually.



4,647

**USACE
ANNUAL
PASSES
AWARDED**

(for 100 hours of volunteer service)



616

**AMERICA THE
BEAUTIFUL
PASSES
AWARDED**

(for 250 hours of volunteer service)



23

**VOLUNTEER
EXCELLENCE
COINS PRESENTED**

Photo: Raystown Lake

NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY

On Sep. 23, 2023, USACE projects joined with other federal land management agencies to celebrate the connection between people and green spaces in their community, inspire environmental stewardship, and encourage the use of open spaces for education, recreation, and health benefits. USACE provided volunteer opportunities in conjunction with NPLD at 51 lake projects.



5,231

**VOLUNTEERS
ENGAGED BY USACE**



20,000+

**VOLUNTEER HOURS
PROVIDED TO USACE**



50

**MILES OF TRAIL
MAINTAINED**



60

**MILES OF ROADWAY
CLEARED**



150

**ACRES OF HABITAT
IMPROVED**



\$638,942

VALUE OF SERVICE



218

**PARTNERS
INVOLVED**



57

**TONS OF
TRASH REMOVED**



4,202

**SQUARE FEET OF
INVASIVE PLANTS
REMOVED**



10,124

**TREES/SHRUBS
PLANTED**



WATER SAFETY

The mission of the National Water Safety Program is to develop and provide campaigns, initiatives, partnerships, policies, and educational materials and resources to USACE projects that help increase public awareness of water safety and reduce the number of water-related accidents and fatalities.

WATER-RELATED RECREATION FACILITY STATISTICS



1,771

USACE BOAT RAMPS
(PLUS 1,960 OUTGRANTED)



530

MARINAS LEASED
TO CONCESSIONS



685

USACE LIFE JACKET
LOANER STATIONS
(PLUS 184 OUTGRANTED)



485

USACE BEACHES
(PLUS 339 OUTGRANTED)

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CORPS FOUNDATION

The USACE National Water Safety Program works in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers Natural Resources Education Foundation (The Corps Foundation) to enhance and promote the Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns Campaign. In FY 23, the Corps Foundation received a \$195,000 Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund grant, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), to enhance and promote the campaign. The Corps Foundation then donated beach towels and t-shirts to the National Water Safety Program which were distributed to USACE lakes to use in their "I Got Caught" initiatives. The beach towels and t-shirts were given to adults that were "caught" wearing their life jackets.

This was the fourth year that the Corps Foundation conducted the Life Jacket Video Contest in cooperation with the USACE National Water Safety Program. Thirty-four qualifying entries were received. Using USCG grant funds, the first-place winner for their 55-second video entry received \$5,500 and the 25-second video first place winner received \$2,500. The winning entries were made into public service announcements (PSAs) for all USACE offices and others to use. The winning videos and other entries that were made into PSAs can be viewed on the National Water Safety Program's YouTube Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/user/USACEwatersafety>.





WATER SAFETY

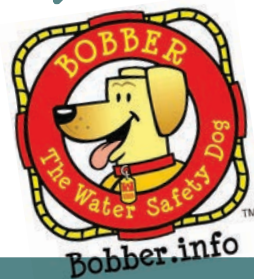


PLEASE WEAR IT

The "Please Wear It" Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages are the National Water Safety Program's social media pages that are used to promote the Life Jackets Worn...Nobody Mourns campaign to adults. These social media pages are managed with The Corps Foundation utilizing USCG grant funds.

Photo: Fort Worth District

SHARING WATER SAFETY



BOBBER THE WATER SAFETY DOG

Bobber the Water Safety Dog is the USACE National mascot for water safety. Bobber made numerous appearances at events with help from Park Rangers and other USACE employees.



Photo: USACE

One of Bobber's appearances was at the July 19, 2023 U.S. Army Twilight Tattoo. During the event, Bobber stood next to Chief of Engineers LTG Spellmon while he welcomed and thanked the USACE Park Rangers that staffed the NRM/water safety booth in the interactive area of the Twilight Tattoo event.

Unfortunately, with over 268 million visits public recreation fatalities do occur. In FY 23 the total number of public recreation fatalities at USACE projects decreased to 161 lives lost. Of those, 95% were water-related. USACE staff, volunteers, and partners work hard to educate our visiting public about water safety because one life lost is too many.



Photo: USACE

2,661,961
 PLEASE WEAR IT
 FACEBOOK TOTAL REACH

27,327
 PAGE LIKES

28,636
 PAGE FOLLOWERS

844,356
 WATER SAFETY
 ON-SITE CONTACTS

623,425
 WATER SAFETY
 OFF-SITE CONTACTS

➤➤ RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

OUTDOOR RECREATION ROUNDTABLE LEGENDS AWARD

The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable Legends Award honors employees from federal agencies that manage outdoor recreation on public lands and waters for their outstanding work to improve outdoor recreation experiences and opportunities for the American people. Since 1991, the Legends Award has been the only award in which individuals are nominated by agency peers in recognition of their extraordinary efforts that have made a concrete difference in enhancing outdoor recreation programs and resources.

Legends Awards are presented to individuals from the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Park Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Mr. Scott Sunderland, Supervisory Natural Resource Manager at Blue Marsh Lake, Philadelphia District (NAD), was selected as the USACE recipient of the 2023 Outdoor Recreation Roundtable's Legends Award for his outstanding work to improve outdoor recreation experiences and opportunities for the American people.

Mr. Sunderland started his career with USACE in 1982 as a seasonal park aide. This experience served as a great introduction to the world of natural resources management for a student who just graduated from Penn State University with a degree in Forest Technology. During that first summer, he patrolled park lands and waters, assisted visitors, responded to emergencies, and spent time working with a crew of disadvantaged youth on a trail along Blue Marsh Lake. That summer led to two more summers as a seasonal park aide which led to a full-time position with USACE in the fall of 1984.

Over the past 42 years, Mr. Sunderland has become a national leader and innovative thinker for USACE and the NRM program. He has served as chairman on both the USACE Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC) and the Stewardship Advisory Team (SAT). He also served on the Operations Project Managers Advisory Board, the Recreation Leadership Advisory Team (RLAT), and both the Recreation and Environmental Stewardship Budget Coach and Train Teams. He has instructed fellow USACE employees in the Partnerships in Natural Resource Management PROSPECT course and was one of the first pepper spray instructors in the North Atlantic Division. Over his career he has mentored hundreds of young, new Park Rangers inspiring many of them to seek full-time employment with USACE or in conservation related fields. Through creative partnerships, stakeholder collaboration, and thoughtful leadership, he has led USACE in offering the best possible recreational opportunities to the visiting public.

Congratulations and Thank You, Scott!

<https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/nrm.cfm>

»» RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE



HIRAM M. CHITTENDEN AWARD

The Chief of Engineer's Hiram M. Chittenden Award for Interpretive Excellence recognizes outstanding achievement using interpretation to enhance public understanding of USACE, prompting positive experiences and attitudes, and encouraging voluntary stewardship of natural, cultural, and created resources. The 2023 recipient of this award is Ms. Tammy Frauenshuh, Natural Resource Specialist, Big Sandy Lake.

Ms. Frauenshuh is recognized for her exceptional work and professionalism in the Interpretive Services and Outreach Program. Her continued commitment and dedication to creating meaningful and worthwhile interpretive programs and environmental educational experiences for visitors and local schools has made Big Sandy Lake one of the leaders in interpretive programming within the St. Paul District.



NRM EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

The NRM Employee of the Year Award is awarded to an individual who has exhibited exceptional leadership and selfless service to the NRM Program. The 2023 recipient of this award is Deryck Rodgers, Supervisory Natural Resources Project Manager, Green River Area.

Mr. Rodgers is recognized for his effort and personal commitment of time and energy to plan and implement a variety of natural resource management projects including the development of a new shoreline management plan for CM Harden Lake, implementation of cutting-edge erosion control measures, and large scale use of volunteers. His leadership in the organization has been carried out with professionalism and enthusiasm all while mentoring and encouraging the development of his staff and peers.

➤➤ RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

EXCELLENCE IN PARTNERSHIP AWARD

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

The Missouri Feral Hog Elimination Partnership across projects within NWD, SWD, and MVD has been selected as the 2023 Excellence in Partnerships Award recipient. This partnership has united private landowners, universities and over 15 federal and state agencies under the common goal of eliminating feral hogs from public and private lands throughout the state of Missouri to protect public health, agriculture, and natural resources through control measures, education, legislation actions, enforcement, and disease monitoring.



VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

The national volunteer award recognizes extraordinary service provided by volunteers, draws attention to their vast skills and contributions, and encourages an attitude of stewardship and responsibility in caring for USACE managed lands.

This year's USACE National Volunteer of the Year award recipients are Tim and Pam Harrison of Kaw Lake in the Tulsa District. They have donated 6,763 hours of volunteer service over a five-year period including 1,475 hours in FY 2023. While at Kaw Lake, the Harrisons have supported a wide range of objectives, including visitor assistance, interpretation, landscaping, hazard tree removal, invasive species removal, campground host duties and routine repairs and maintenance. Throughout their service at Kaw Lake, they have been invaluable in helping the Kaw Lake staff recover from several natural disasters, including the 2018 high pool event, the 2019 flood of record, the 2020 historic ice storm, and countless other storm and high wind-related events.



RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE

The National Water Safety Awards are presented in cooperation with the National Boating Federation to recognize a USACE employee and team that have contributed to boating and water safety and through their efforts have made a difference in saving lives on our nation's waterways.



NATIONAL WATER SAFETY EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Ms. Rachael Gwinn, Student Conservation Association (SCA) Water Safety Intern for the Interpretive Services and Outreach Program (ISOP) at Raystown Lake, is the recipient of the 2023 USACE National Water Safety Employee Award. Ms. Gwinn made over 5,000 direct on-site interpretive water safety contacts, oversaw several successful water safety initiatives, such as the "I Got Caught" initiative, and organized events including Glow Swim and Chalk the Walk. Despite being an intern, Ms. Gwinn acted as a leader helping to guide, mentor, and train seasonal park rangers. She also developed ways to motivate staff to exceed 16,000 direct interpretive water safety contacts in 2022. Ms. Gwinn's dedication and passion to promoting water safety is admirable and reflects great credit upon herself and USACE.



NATIONAL WATER SAFETY TEAM OF THE YEAR

The Abiquiu Lake Staff is the recipient of the 2023 USACE National Water Safety Team Award. Their efforts to engage the public, both adults and youth, in water safety fundamentals resulted in over 35,000 direct interpretive contacts made in 2022. As COVID restrictions began to decrease, the staff eagerly welcomed the ability to reengage with the public. The Abiquiu Lake staff promoted water safety along with performing numerous other duties and they performed them all remarkably well. Their selfless service, community engagement, and dedication to promoting water safety is appreciated.





NATIONAL WATER SAFETY PHOTO CONTEST

The National Water Safety Program conducts a photo contest every two years. The contest categories include: Employees in Action, Partners in Action, Commercial Boating, Water Recreation, and Non-Water Recreation. USACE employees and volunteers can enter the contest and all entries must be associated with water safety except for those in the Non-Water Recreation category. The winning photos and 2023-2024 photo contest guidelines are posted on the NRM Gateway at <https://corpslakes.erdc.dren.mil/employees/watersafety/photos.cfm>



FIRST PLACE WINNERS



Employees in Action: Tia Mercer (NAE)



Partners in Action: Jennie Wilson (NWK)



Water Recreation: Stephanie Jones (SWF)



Commercial Boating: Carmen Paris (LRE)



Non-Water Recreation: Scott Frieden (NWK)

Second place winners were:

- Trevor Welsh (SWF)
- Carmen Paris (LRE)
- Michael Gross (SWT)
- Jessica Schaeffer (MVS)

Honorable mention winners were:

- Paige King (NWP)
- Frankie Bowers (SPK)
- Carla Robinson (SPN)
- David Schwartz (SAW)
- Jenna Conner (NAB)
- Michael Gross (SWT)
- Darren Murphy (MVS)
- Lauren Howard (NWW)
- Alicia Palmer (NAB)



The Natural Resources Management Annual Report is an unofficial publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). This is produced with the purpose of providing its readers information about the USACE Natural Resources Management Program. Editorial views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army.