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New England District team celebrates Earth Day with Cleanup Activities

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Yankee Voices

From left: Nicole Giles, Matthew Coleman, Ronald Woodall,
Jason Robinson, Lt. Col. Sonny Avichal



New England federal recreation areas to open

By Timothy Dugan
Public Affairs Office

Most recreation areas at the 31 federal flood risk management reservoirs in New England operated by the New England District will open to the public in mid-to-late May 2019. Some recreation areas in Connecticut will open in late April.

For a free brochure about 2019 Corps recreational opportunities in New England, including directions to each site, contact the New England District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ATTN: Public Affairs Office, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751. For more information about Corps of Engineers recreation and activities in New England visit the website at: <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation.aspx>.

The Corps of Engineers nationwide manages 12 million acres of recreation lands and waters in 43 states and hosts approximately 370 million visitors a year. For more information on Corps of Engineers recreation nationwide visit the website at <http://www.CorpsLakes.us>.

Matt Tessier receives special honor from U.S. Coast Guard

The U.S. Coast Guard recognized Matt Tessier, Chief, Navigation Section, for his outstanding work on the Boston Harbor Maintenance Dredging Project.

Rear Admiral Andrew Tiongson, Commander, First Coast Guard District, honored Tessier by presenting him with the U.S. Coast Guard Meritorious Public Service Award during the U.S. Coast Guard Night at the Propeller Club in the Port of Boston, April 11.

According to the citation, Tessier received the award, "for his outstanding public service and significant contributions to Coast Guard missions in the Port of Boston from March 2016 to March 2019."

Most notably, Tessier was recognized for his organizational leadership that resulted in the successful completion of the \$14 million Boston Inner Harbor Maintenance Dredging Project and the 90-foot-deep Confined Aquatic Disposal Cell.

Tessier devised a comprehensive set of well-synchronized plans for safe and secure transits. He successfully collaborated his effort with the Coast Guard, the New England District, Massachusetts Port Authority, State Pilots, Docking Pilots and the contractor, according to the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard also praised Tessier's management and leadership skills on the ongoing Boston Harbor Dredging and Improvement Deepening Project. Once completed, the project will allow large container ships and cruise ships to enter the Port of Boston and will add more than \$4.6 billion in economic activity currently generated by the port.

The award states, "Mr. Tessier's dedication and devotion to the safety, security and facilitation of the Maritime Transportation in the Port of Boston are most heartily commended, and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard."

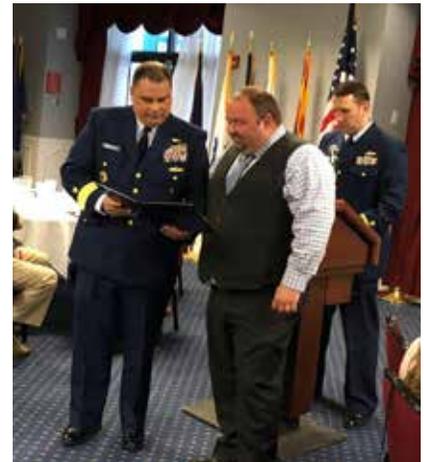




Photo by Brian Murphy

The New England District Ranger Color Guard and Lt. Col. Sonny Avichal pause their march for the wreath laying ceremony during the Patriot's Day parade.

District Team participates in Concord's Patriot's Day Parade

Lt. Col. Sonny Avichal, New England District's Deputy Commander, and the New England District Ranger Color Guard were honored with an invitation to march in the town of Concord's Patriot's Day parade, April 15.

The parade marks the 244th anniversary of the beginning of the American Revolution, which began in Concord and Lexington. The team participated to honor past Patriots and to celebrate Army Week Boston.

"It was an honor to represent the District and the Corps of Engineers at this historic event," said Lt. Col. Avichal.

Crowds of people lined the parade route, despite the rain, to catch a glimpse of the marchers. In addition to the New England District team,

there were companies of Minutemen and Fife and Drum Companies from all over the region.

"Despite the rainy weather, there was still amazing participation from the local community," said Lt. Col. Avichal. "This is a community that appreciates and treasures its history. For me it was unbelievable to see the folks in the community come out and cheer as we marched through the streets."

The parade, much like the New England District, is steeped in history and tradition. After assembling on Stowe St., parade participants made the 3-mile loop through Concord Center and Monument Square to the North Bridge and back again. The parade stopped briefly at the Minuteman Statue to lay a wreath in honor of the

fallen Soldiers during a ceremony on the North Bridge.

"The Battle of Lexington and Concord and the Old North Bridge are landmarks in our nation's history and it was amazing to walk on that same hallowed ground on Patriot's Day," said Lt. Col. Avichal.

The Corps traces its roots to Col. Richard Gridley when Gen. George Washington named him the first Chief of Engineers and ordered the field fortifications at the Battle of Bunker Hill. The Corps of Engineers, New England District, is the birthplace of the Corps, and will be celebrating 244 years of service to the nation, June 16.

Nicole Giles, Ron Woodall, Matthew Coleman and Jason Robinson made up this year's Color Guard.

New England District Earth Day celebrations a success despite wind and rain

Torrential downpours and high winds did not dampen the hearty New Englanders who ventured out into nature to roll up their sleeves and get dirty during New England District's Earth Day celebrations, held April 13 at West Hill Dam and April 20 along the Cape Cod Canal and Hodges Village Dam.

The annual Trail Work Day at West Hill Dam in Uxbridge, Massachusetts was delayed for a few hours to let the heavy rain pass through. Soon after the rain subsided volunteers went straight to work. West Hill's partner, Bay State Trail Riders, brought members out to clear five miles of trail and performed upkeep work on water bars and culverts at the beaver and bog area.

"They did a nice job and it wasn't easy as the water is very cold this time of year and you have to lie on your stomach to get to the culvert," said Park Ranger Viola Bramel, event organizer.

The West Hill Dam team and the Bay State Trail Riders have enjoyed a partnership spanning over 25 years.

"We have been working with Viola for a long time now," said Becky Kalagher of the Bay State Trail Riders Association. "She has such a positive attitude all the time and she knows so much!"

In addition to the trail work, over a dozen scouts from Boy Scout Troop 14 from Bellingham, Massachusetts lent a



Even the youngest members of this family took part in cleaning up along the Cape Cod Canal.



Photos by Elizabeth Cosselin

Volunteers sort through trash for recyclables during the Canal Cleanup Day.

hand clearing downed limbs from wind and storm damage.

The Cape Cod Canal Team and their partner, AmeriCorps Cape Cod held their 19th annual Cape Cod Canal Cleanup despite 30 mile per hour winds and morning rain.

More than 150 volunteers walked up and down seven miles of the Canal banks and picked up over 500 pounds of trash. This year the team had another partner join the cleanup party.

"This year we were joined by Cape Cod Moves, a local non-profit who plans events and partners with events that provide opportunities that encourage wellness and helping others and the community," said event coordinator, Park Ranger Elisa Carey.

The new partners provided the local band, "Wicked Trio" to entertain volunteers in addition to cooking breakfast and lunch for cleanup participants. Despite the high winds, there were still some educational booths and activities open during the cleanup.

"AmeriCorps painted faces, Mass Audubon had a shorebird match game out, volunteers made paracord bracelets at the LL Bean Tent and the Ocean Protection Advocacy Kids Inc. had a microscope set up to look at microscopic animals that live in the ocean as well as the tiny pieces of plastics floating around with them," said Carey.

Die-hard volunteers at Buffumville Lake/Hodges Village Dam did not wait for the rain to stop – they held two events



Photo by Ann Marie R. Harvie

Natalia Vasquez, Cadette Girl Scout Troop 30304, spreads wildflower seeds onto her pollinator garden at Hodges Village Dam as fellow Girl Scout Samantha Thomas looks on.



Photo by Gloria Duhaime

Becky Kalagher (left) and Rose Zariczny clean out a culvert blocked by branches at West Hill Dam.



Photo by Ann Marie R. Harvie

Cadette Girl Scouts Kaitlyn Silverberg and Emma Dumont remove grass and prepare their pollinator garden for seeds at Hodges Village Dam.



Photo by Karen Parin

Volunteers from the Bay State Trail Riders pose with Park Ranger Viola Bramel prior to working at the Earth Day event at West Hill Dam.

going on simultaneously and everyone was eager to start.

“We hosted our first ever Earth Trails Day Clean-up,” said Park Ranger Jamie Kordack, Buffumville Lake. “We had four rangers and 21 volunteers come out for this event.”

The volunteers, which included one Cub Scout and one Boy Scout Troop, broke into five groups – two on the East side trails and three on the West. “The two-hour event was held entirely in the rain, so these were brave volunteers.”

So brave, that according to Kordack, the scouts were seen playing in the rain, completely unphased by the weather. The teams picked up trash, moved downed limbs off the trail, also known as “sweeping” the trail, and used loppers to cut back pokers.

Just down the way, Cadette Girl Scout Troop 30304 from Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, created three 4'x4' pollinator plot gardens as part of their Silver Award Project.

“The project they chose was to create pollinator wildflower plots to help enhance habitat for bees and butterflies,” said

Park Ranger Nicole Giles, Hodges Village Dam. “Through extensive research, they chose native wildflower seeds including plants for caterpillars to eat! They are also currently raising Painted Lady butterflies which will be released into the gardens in a few weeks.”

Giles said that pollinator gardens are important because habitat for pollinators is declining rapidly each day due to construction, deforestation and heavy pesticide use.

“It’s important for young people to get involved because education, research and action are the only ways we as humans are going to attempt to save the bees from decline,” she said. “It’s important to educate the next generation about the environmental issues they have inherited and it will purely be up to the young people to change what they see.”

Volunteers at every age are crucial to the stewardship of public lands. The hard work performed at all of the projects will assist in the maintenance of the projects and enhance the recreational experience of thousands for months to come.



Photos by Beth Cosselin

Bobber the Water Safety Dog and Bill Mehr emphasize water safety during the race weekend.



Kayakers and bystanders enjoy good weather during the 56th Annual River Rat Race.

Birch Hill Dam, Tully Lake make releases for annual white water races

by Timothy Dugan
Public Affairs Office

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers New England District provided controlled water releases from Birch Hill Dam and Tully Lake Dam, both in Royalston, Massachusetts, on Friday morning, April 12, to provide adequate river flows for recreational canoeing, kayaking and rafting on the Millers River on Saturday and Sunday April 13-14.

The Corps of Engineers provided water release flows up to 1,400 cubic feet per second (cfs) from Birch Hill Dam and 400 cfs from Tully Lake Dam for the weekend events.

Various events by local groups for Athol-Orange, included the 56th annual River Rat Race on Saturday; the Pro Race on Sunday; and the Kayak Race on Sunday. Events by local groups in Erving were the Zoar Outdoor Rafting on Saturday and Sunday.

Construction of Birch Hill Dam was completed in 1942 at a cost of \$4.8 million. The 1,400-foot-long, 56-foot-high dam can store 16.2 billion gallons of water. To date, flood damages amounting to more than \$80.3 million (\$257.9

million, adjusted for inflation) have been prevented. The state-leased Lake Dennison Recreation Area offers many recreational opportunities, including camping, hiking, hunting, swimming, picnicking, boating, fishing, mountain biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling and cross country skiing, and attracts more than 250,000 visitors annually. For details contact the Park Ranger staff at (978) 249-4467 or visit the website at: <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation/Birch-Hill-Dam/>.

Tully Lake Dam, on the East Branch of the Tully River in Royalston, is 1,570 feet long and 62 feet high. Completed in 1949 at a cost of \$1.7 million, the dam has a reservoir storage capacity of 7.1 billion gallons of water. Tully Lake Dam has prevented flood damages of \$29.1 million (\$81.1 million, adjusted for inflation) since it was constructed. More than 100,000 visitors annually enjoy picnicking, hiking, boating, camping, mountain biking, disc golfing, fishing, hunting and cross country skiing. For details contact the Park Ranger staff at (978) 249-9150 or visit the website at: <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation/Tully-Lake/>.

Thomaston Dam and longtime partner keep riding trails in peak condition for the public

Volunteers are an invaluable asset to New England District teams out in the field. When the call goes out for cleanup events such as Earth Day and National Public Lands Day, these Environmental Stewards show up in force to repair and improve public lands for everyone to enjoy.

Some come as individuals, but others come in organized groups and form long lasting partnerships with the District's field teams. Thomaston Dam has enjoyed one such partnership with the Pathfinders Motorcycle Club of Connecticut which began in 1979, when the two organizations signed a cooperative agreement for trail management. The Pathfinders held their annual trail cleanup of the dam on March 7.

"This past year when the Thomaston Dam team performed a comment card survey, it was noted that eight out of 10 visitors were dirt bike riders," said Christopher Way, Basin Manager at the Naugatuck River Basin. "Approximately 35,000 riders visit Thomaston Dam on an annual basis."

The Pathfinders hold at least four to five work parties per year at Thomaston with between 10 to 30 member volunteers participating. The parties are typically three to five hours in length, according to organization head, Tony Gasper.

"Usually at least two of these are just before the start of the riding season," he said. "The dam impoundments over the winter typically leave a lot of trash on the trails."

Gasper said when doing cleanups, their focus is trash, tree limb debris and puddle clearing. "In the middle of the riding season we focus on 'face slapper' branches and tall grasses," he said.

The Pathfinders Motorcycle Club has been a fixture in Connecticut since 1971, promoting fun, family-oriented riding in New England since 1971. Since that time, the club has been keeping the only public trail riding spot in Connecticut free of debris and safe for all riders. Thomaston Dam benefits from the cleanups as it can offer safe, enjoyable trails to the public.

"Without their help, I don't know if we could maintain the trails," said Way.

Gasper says that the Pathfinders are proud to maintain the trails. "The biggest benefit we get as a group is the satisfaction of giving back to the sport," he said. "All of us understand that riding is a privilege, not a right. We want to give back to the riding area and maintain our excellent, long-standing relationship with the Army Corps."

In addition to cleanups, the Pathfinders try to keep everyone safe on the trails by sponsoring safety classes for young riders from seven to 15 years old. "We have a



A volunteer removes a downed limb from the trail.

Photos provided by Thomaston Dam



Pathfinder volunteers farm out and begin their trail cleanup at Thomaston Dam.

couple different kinds of safety initiatives that have been offered on and off over the past 10 years," said Gasper. "We have offered several rider clinics in which we teach young or novice riders how to safely operate their dirt bike – this has also included maintenance to improve the safety of the motorcycle itself."

Gasper said that the Pathfinders have also done "patrol days," passing out safety information in the parking lot, and then patrolling the trails in case a rider needs assistance or advice on riding the trails. One of the highlights of the trail-riding season is the annual Hare Scrambles event opened to any member of the New England Trail Rider Association. The total weekend attendance can range from 250 to 500 riders, plus spectators and family members according to Gasper.

Way noted that Thomaston Dam is planning on rehabilitating the dirt bike parking area. One of the potential improvements is installing beam counters at the two trail entrances to better capture usage. No doubt, the Pathfinders will lend their assistance to the project.

"Our relationship with the Park Rangers at Thomaston Dam is one that we value very highly and work hard to keep strong," said Gasper.

The riding trail area at Thomaston Dam was developed in 1975 after a trail system was mapped and created within the project's boundaries. It was officially designated as an off-highway vehicle area by Col. Charles Samaris, then District Commander, on August 22, 2011.

Dredging up the past



Photo by CJ Allen

Modern day members of the military, to include New England District Commander Brian Ostendorf, receive a lesson in musket firing from a Concord Minuteman prior to the wreath laying ceremony at the North Bridge. The dignitaries and historical reenactors were participants of the town of Concord's Patriot's Day Parade on April 19, 2002.

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