

New England District project sites celebrate National Public Lands Day

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Three New England District recreation areas held events to celebrate environmental stewardship and volunteerism. Buffumville Lake/Hodges Village Dam, West Hill Dam and Surry Mountain Lake all held events in honor of National Public Lands Day.

The West Hill Dam team in Massachusetts had over 150 volunteers, many of them Scouts and Junior Rangers, come out to get their hands dirty in the name of improving the environment.

Work included clearing and improving miles of trails, resurfacing the park playground, cleaning and sealing the beach gliders and picnic pads, improving the access ramp and platform, adding a pollinator garden and painting all the bridge railings.

Buffumville Lake/Hodges Village Dam in Massachusetts hosted an event on Sept. 30. About 95 volunteers and five Park Rangers performed work that included 30 pounds of trash cleanup, improving five 4'x4' pollinator gardens, and improving two disc golf tee baskets. Volunteers also removed 500 pounds of invasive plants, reinstalled a mini nine-hole disc golf course, cleared Purple Loosestrife and woody vegetation from Cranberry Bog Island, cut park understory and plant pine saplings, replaced railroad ties and fixed tier stairs; painted 75 park grills, fixed and added split rail fence in the park; painted water sealer on exit guardrail and improved the pollinator garden at the main stair garden. This year marks the projects' 26th year participating in National Public Lands Day.

Also on Sept. 30, Alicia Lacrosse, Park Ranger at Surry Mountain Lake in New Hampshire, and eight volunteers braved torrential downpours and slippery conditions for about an hour to pull 15 trash bags full of the invasive Purple Loosestrife from a wetland at the project. Among the volunteers were two students from Keene High School who also earned credits for their AP science class.

The efforts of the volunteers this year saved the government thousands of dollars in labor costs and helped keep the recreational areas in good conditions for everyone to enjoy year-round.