

Mountain bike trail created along scenic Lake Hartwell

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It seems there aren't enough mountain bike trails near the Upstate. So every new route needs to be acknowledged, even if it's on the Georgia side of Lake Hartwell, just over the state line.

The 7.2-mile mountain bike and multipurpose trail is located at the 210-acre Paynes Creek Camping area on the Tugaloo River arm of Hartwell Lake. It was made possible through a joint effort of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (SORBA).

The trail was designed by the Hartwell office of the Army Corps and SORBA in 2009. The two also applied for "Handshake Partnership funding," which is described as a program that "creates new or enhances existing, recreation and natural resources management opportunities. It encourages community engagement and promotes mutually beneficial activities between the Corps and partner organizations," the press release said.



A mountain biker tries the new trail along the shore of Lake Hartwell. U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

The proposed multipurpose trail exceeded the criteria, and in January 2010 the project won \$25,000 in federal funds as seed money for the trail. SORBA matched the grant by donating \$20,000 in volunteer efforts and labor.

Open to bikers, hikers or walkers, the trail is nestled within Paynes Creek,

which is owned and operated by the Corps.

"The trail will enhance mountain biking and recreational activities on the upper portion of Hartwell Lake and increase opportunities for bank fishing, hiking and bird watching," said Zach Harkness, Corps natural resources program manager, in the

release. "About 75 percent of the trail runs along the shoreline, so hikers get to enjoy a beautiful lakeside view while they exercise."

Georgia SORBA groups from Gainsville, Columbus and Athens, as well as groups based in Upstate South Carolina, volunteered for the project.