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FEATURED

## Fishing platforms help at McCabe Park

By MIKE JOHNSTON senior writer  
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Volunteers earlier this summer put up water access platforms around the pond at Helen McCable State Park southeast of St. Louis.  
Photo by Deb Essman

Two local nonprofit conservation groups have banded together to protect the environmentally sensitive shoreline around the pond at Helen McCable State Park.

Volunteers with the Kittitas Environmental Education Network, or KEEN, and the Kittitas County Field and Stream Club in July completed work on four fishing platforms around the approximate eight-acre pond that's three miles southeast of Ellensburg near the mouth of the Yakima River Canyon.

Volunteers with Boy Scout Troop 400 also assisted.

The sloping shoreline of the popular pond has been impacted by visitors and fishers trying to get close to the edge, said Jill Scheffer, KEEN president. This has resulted in erosion and a degrading of the waterside habitat.

The sloping shoreline also makes it difficult for visitors and anglers, and especially those with wheelchairs.

Scheffer, on behalf of KEEN, last year sought a grant for the platforms from the state Department of Fish and Wildlife's Aquatic Lands Enhancement Program. KEEN was later approved for a nearly \$10,000 grant.

## **Helps everyone**

The four pond-side platforms, three across from the park's entrance and another on the pond's south side, consist of cedar 6-inch square by 20-foot beams stacked as bulkheads and back-filled with special sized gravel.

Scheffer said the gravel is of the type that compacts to a somewhat smooth surface after being exposed to rain, making for an easier surface for lawn or outdoor chairs, wheelchairs or other implements used by those with physical disabilities.

The platforms give people better and safer access to the pond. They also protect and stabilize the shoreline, Scheffer said.

"Those at the edge of the platforms are at a point that, if there were no platforms, they would be in the water," Scheffer said earlier this week.

The work was completed by KEEN and club members, along with Boy Scouts over two weekends.

Field and Stream Club President Deb Essman said the cedar beams are not treated so chemicals won't leach into the ponds.

She said the platforms are, apparently, a hit with park visitors.

"Within minutes after completing one of the platforms we had a father and his two adult sons set up to fish," Essman said in emailed comments.

The father told volunteers he hadn't been able to accompany his boys fishing for some time because he cannot walk on uneven ground.

"He was able to use his convertible walker-seat to comfortably watch and converse" while being close to his sons on the platform, Essman said. "We were touched."

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Mike Johnston