

St. Louis District *Esprit*

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Readiness Program provides support, helps families overcome challenges of deployment

Story and photos by
MARY MARKOS
MVS Public Affairs

A deployment overseas or separation in support of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers mission state-side brings new experiences for a USACE employee. For the family back home, separations often bring unique challenges.

USACE and the Mississippi Valley Division hopes to ease those challenges with a new program aimed at supporting families of USACE employees.

MVD continued its path from "Good to Great" June 30 when Division commander Maj. Gen. Michael J. Walsh, signed the standard operating procedure for the Division's Family Readiness Program.

St. Louis District's Family Readiness Program Coordinator, Jana Miller, brings a unique perspective to the program, which is designed to provide support to family members during a loved-one's deployment.

Miller, whose husband returned from Iraq last month, understands the importance of a strong support group and the impact it has on family.

"My husband has deployed to Iraq twice. I know he, other Soldiers and deployed civilians worry about their families while they are away. They cannot focus on their mission if they are worried about their families," Miller said.

"The District's Family Readiness Program is here to ensure their families feel cared for. The program helps give families support during the deployment, and helps them see just how proud they should be of what their deployed family

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**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
St. Louis District

COMMANDER'S CORNER



MVS members play vital role in Division's path from "Good to Great"

If you turn to page 13, you will find June Jeffries' excellent article on the 2010 MVD Senior Leader Training Conference. The purpose for this conference was to assess where the Mississippi Valley Division was on our journey from "Good to Great," and to chart our next steps on that path. A great organization, as defined by our Chief, Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp, is an organization that:

- ◆ Delivers superior performance
- ◆ Sets the standard for its profession
- ◆ Makes a positive impact on the nation/world
- ◆ Is Built to last

I have heard many of you ask how this journey from "Good to Great" impacts specifically on what you do within the District. I believe there are four fundamental actions that each of us can take – and must take - to help propel us forward on this path. They are:

1. Do your job and do it well
2. Take care of our people and the public
3. Deliver what you/we promise
4. Play well with others

Over the next four Esprit columns, I will be discussing each of these fundamental actions in more detail with the intent of showing the linkage from the USACE Campaign Plan thru the MVD IPLAN and the District OPLAN to each of your individual jobs.

I know how important every person in this District is, but I want to help each of you see how what you do is important to our mission and to our journey. If we all embark on the path to greatness, if we all focus on these four fundamentals, the inevitable result will be a great District, a great Division and a great Corps – an organization that we will all continue to be proud of for years to come.

This month's cover story highlights one aspect of our second fundamental action - taking care of our people. In conjunction with this focus, our District, along with the Division, has established a Family Readiness Program.

Through this program, we will work to support our families, especially the families of those who have volunteered to deploy. These families are making sacrifices just as our deployed employees are, and we as a District must continue to do all we can to support them.

We currently have 18 individuals deployed supporting of overseas contingencies. Each of these individuals has someone or ones waiting for them at home. I encourage everyone in MVS to become active in our Family Readiness Program, and do what they can to continue to support the whole St. Louis District family.

I would be remiss if I did not also talk about the importance of safety to our MVS Family and those in the community we support in many ways. In the last month we saw two more people drown at our lake projects. It is sad to know that these tragedies could have been prevented by the simple act of using a life jacket. We all must do our part to be safe if we go on the water, and we all must inform those around us of the necessary measures they should take to stay safe as well. Remember "Friends don't let friends on the water without their life jacket".

In closing, I ask each of you to help me welcome Lt. Col. Dave Bitner, his wife Marcy, and their two children into our MVS family. Dave assumes responsibility as our Deputy District Commander this week. He is capable and talented and I look forward to what he will bring to our team.

Hooah!



O'Hara

*Col. Thomas E. O'Hara, Jr.
MVS District Commander*

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MVS welcomes new deputy commander

By MARY MARKOS

MVS Public Affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers welcomed a new Deputy District Engineer to the St. Louis District Aug. 1.

Lt. Col. David E. Bitner came to The Gateway City from the Joint Forces Command - Brunssum Headquarters (NATO) - in the Netherlands.

"I am really excited to be back working in USACE, and especially about joining the St. Louis District," Bitner said.

"I really believe the USACE mission is vital to the Nation. In the St. Louis District, we have an important and challenging mission set that is essential to the region."

Bitner's previous assignment with the Corps included serving as a project and program manager for the Savannah District and deploying to Iraq with the Gulf Region Division.

"While my previous USACE assignment was relatively short - only about 18 months - I really enjoyed working with incredibly dedicated and competent USACE employees. I look forward to the same experience here at MVS," Bitner said.



“I really believe the USACE mission is vital to the Nation. In the St. Louis District, we have an important and challenging mission set that is essential to the region.”

Lt. Col. Dave Bitner, MVS Deputy Engineer

Bitner brings with him a few principles that have guided him during his 18 years of military service.

"First and foremost, my leadership philosophy is based on a focus toward accomplishing the mission, while always taking care of our people and their families. I think this applies equally well at MVS," Bitner said.

"Another leadership principle I value is the importance of discipline. It is the cornerstone to any great organization."

Bitner said his goal at MVS is to continue to improve operations and assist in any way he can as the District and Division embark on a path from "Good to Great."

"I want to find ways to sustain and improve our effectiveness and

efficiency. MVS will need to continue to be innovative, creative, and adapt to change to ensure it remains relevant and ready," he said.

Bitner is accompanied by his wife, Marcy, and his children, Sophie, 8, and Jonathan, 5. He said he is excited for the opportunities St. Louis has for his family. "We've already been to a Cards game where they beat the Dodgers. That is a good start," he said.

Prior to joining MVS, Bitner served with the 16th Engineer Battalion in Bamberg, Germany; the 168th Engineer Battalion and the 18th Engineer Company in Fort Lewis, Wash.; the Waterloo, Iowa recruiting command; and the 20th Engineer Brigade and the 27th Engineer Battalion in Fort Bragg, N.C.

National Great Rivers Museum reaches 500,000 visitors

By GEORGE STRINGHAM

MVS Public Affairs

In less than seven years since its opening, the National Great Rivers Museum, sitting on the banks of the Mississippi River adjacent to Melvin Prices Locks and Dam, two miles downstream of Alton, Ill., has topped the half-million visitor mark. Without fanfare or flair, that visitor walked through the doors on June 10.

"Congratulations to the National Great River Museum on their remarkable visitor milestone," stated Mississippi Valley Division's Commander, Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh. "The museum is an incredible regional asset and helps the Mississippi Valley Division educate current and future generations of Americans about the tremendous value the third largest watershed in the world brings to our Nation."

The museum held its grand opening on October 15, 2003, with more than 300 visitors and dignitaries in attendance, including U.S. Rep. Jerry Costello, D-Ill.; former Mississippi Valley Division Commander, Brig. Gen. Don T. Riley; and former District Commander, Col. Kevin Williams. In its first year, the museum only logged 53,814 visitors, but, by October 2009, annual attendance had climbed to nearly 90,000.

Partnering with the Meeting of the Rivers Foundation, Lewis and Clark Community College, the Alton Convention and Visitors Bureau, National Great Rivers Research and Education Center, Audubon and other organizations in the community, the Corps has grown programming at the museum as well as outreach programming throughout the River

Project Service Area. The project service area also includes activities and outreach programs at the Rivers Project Office in West Alton, Mo., and public events around the St. Louis metropolitan area.

Walsh echoed this, saying that the museum also helps the Corps to form meaningful working relationships with all of our stakeholders, so that everybody has a seat at the table today to discuss the future for America's greatest river. The National Great River Museum will help our engineers and scientists to solve the problems we know we're going to have tomorrow.

Since opening in the Fall of 2003, free lock and dam tours are offered three times a day, totaling more than 6900 tours thus far and nearly 114,000 visitors. Tours for large groups can also be arranged through the Alton Visitor and Convention Bureau.

Inside the museum, visitors can explore more than 20 interactive exhibits that tell stories of the Mississippi River, one of which features a towboat simulator where visitors can test their skills at navigating a 15-barge tow through the St. Louis Harbor or into a lock chamber. They can also view a movie in the 100-seat theater, browse through the Confluence Store for river related books and gifts, enjoy lunch by the river at the picnic pavilion, take guided tours along the river on a Segway or participate in one of several special events held throughout the year.

The museum is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily except Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Years Eve and New Years Day. Admission is free.

St. Louis District receives 2010 Chief of Engineers Design and Environmental awards

By ROMANDA WALKER

MVS Public Affairs

The St. Louis Harbor River Training Structures Project earned the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers St. Louis District two awards in the 2010 Chief of Engineers Design and Environmental Awards Program.

The St. Louis Harbor Project, also known as “The Arches in the River”, earned the Chief of Engineers Award of Excellence in Environmental, the highest honor in that category. The team also earned the USACE Design Team of the Year Award for leading an in-house-designed project, achieving the highest level of excellence within the program.

The third busiest port in the inland waterways system, the St. Louis Harbor sees roughly 110 million tons of goods transported in its waterways each year. Heavy traffic and the random location of bridge spans makes navigation in the harbor difficult, Leonard Hopkins, project manager said.

To maintain the authorized nine-foot deep and 300-foot wide navigation channel, frequent dredging is often necessary. This is due to the dynamic characteristics of the river. In the 30 years prior to project completion, Hopkins said, this reach of the river was dredged approximately 110 times and roughly 13,149,000 cubic yards of material was removed from the navigation channel.

In the five years leading up to the study, on average approximately 508,000 cubic yards was removed and roughly \$1,015,000 was expended each year.

The St. Louis Harbor Project, which began with a model study in 2004, not only aids in reducing the chronic dredging problem in the harbor, it improves safety and saves taxpayers money.

This innovative project uses a combination of dikes, chevrons and weirs, and the natural forces of the river to manage sedimentation patterns, improve safety and minimize dredging requirements. The three stone chevrons, which resemble The St. Louis Arch, split the channel flow into two separate, self-sustaining navigable channels.

In addition to the navigational and economical benefits,

the chevrons also boast a very dynamic environmental benefit as well.

“Initial results have shown increases not only in bathymetric diversity that improves aquatic habitat diversity within the St. Louis Harbor, but also increases in species diversity and abundance associated with the chevron dikes,” Brandon Schneider, a biologist with the district who served as a member of a study group to determine potential benefits of open river chevron dikes, said.

Sampling has revealed that the number of species has more than doubled in the project area as a result of the chevrons. Backwater fish species such as largemouth bass and bluegill are supported within the pond-like surface water contained by the chevron. Many shallow-water species make their home around the new sandbar islands that were created downstream from the chevrons.

“Coupled with the benefits of maintaining a safe and dependable navigation channel, the St. Louis Harbor chevron dike project is an example of the Corps Environmental Operating Principles in action,” Schneider said.

“(The St. Louis Harbor River Training Structures Project) is a solution that is nimble in design, practical in application, effective in its utilization of resources and pleasing to the eye,” a juror from the competition said.

Hopkins said the solution would not have come to fruition without the support of others within and outside of the Corps.

“This project would not have been successful without the enthusiasm and full participation of our team,” he said. Members included the Corps of Engineers; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the Missouri Department of Conservation; the Illinois Department of Natural Resources; the River Industry Action Committee; the St. Louis Harbor Association; the Lange-Stegmann Company; and many others. “The river industry was instrumental in making this project a priority with top USACE officials and thus helping secure adequate funding,” Hopkins said.

Editor’s Note: For more on the award or to see how the winners of this award are determined, visit <https://ceawards.wes.army.mil/Default.aspx?f=Instructions>.



Photo by George Stringham

The St. Louis Harbor River Training Structures Project combines dikes, chevrons and weirs with the natural forces of the river to manage sedimentation patterns, improve safety and minimize dredging requirements.

Program links District, MVS family members

continued from Cover

member is doing. I know from experience that that makes a world of difference.”

The program, which is open to the families of all deployed Soldiers, Reservists and civilians, hopes to make a difference by providing resources and information, as well as by serving as an emergency contact to the family members of deployed employees throughout the Division.

“The main benefits are peace of mind and a constant support system,” Jessica Gilmore, MVD regional family support coordinator, said.

“We are a link for families to be able to find resources they need, and use those resources to empower their family.”

Miller provides resources and support to the more than 15 MVS family members who are awaiting their loved one’s return from a deployment.

“Our families don’t have the resources available to them that a Soldier’s family living on-post might,” Miller said. “Family members of deployed civilians are eligible for a number of services from tutoring, to YMCA memberships, to confidential counseling.”

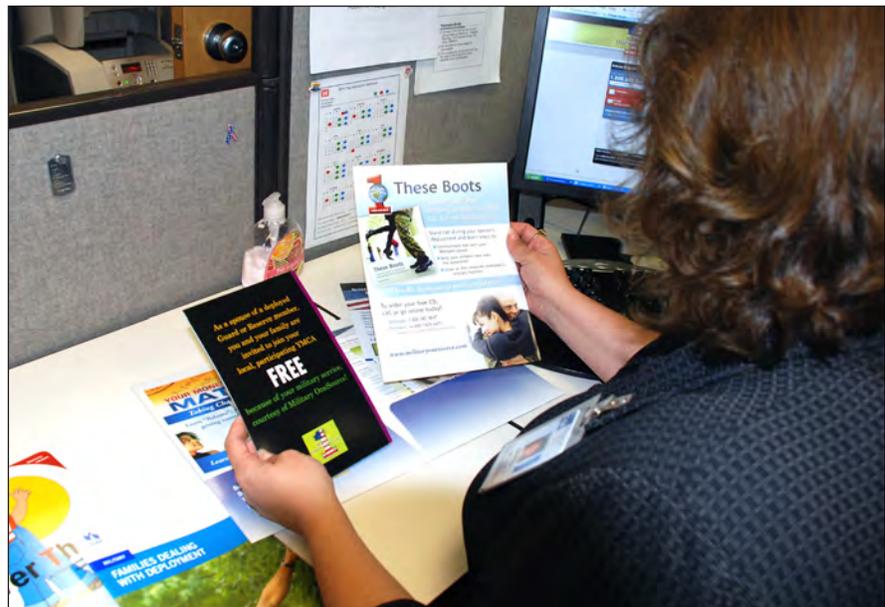
“There is more we can do than I thought when we started down this road,” said Kathy Tober, MVS Human Resources officer.

Tober began reaching out to deployed MVS civilians and their families more than two years ago to provide information and support.

“Our program is farther along than many of the other districts at this point. This is largely because of Col. O’Hara’s resolve in giving deployed employees and their family members a support network.”

The program, Miller said, goes beyond resources to provide a connection between the District and families.

“Col. O’Hara, as well as the Division and District leadership, really understand and support the families. We want to be there if they need anything, even if it is just someone to talk to.”



Jana Miller, St. Louis District Family Readiness Program coordination, explores the many opportunities available to family members of deployed Corps employees.

Miller’s basement flooded during her husband’s most recent deployment and she said she remembers looking at the situation and both laughing and crying.

“I did not want to call and bother anyone,” she said. “Crazy things always happen when your spouse is deployed. If family members are in a similar situation, I want them to know I understand what they are feeling and that they can call me.”

The MVS program also supports the deployed USACE employee.

“We stay in constant contact with the deployed members,” Tober said.

“We send them information and help them adjust when they return. It can be difficult for them to adjust to the pace of work, and at times it can be difficult to go back to the same job they left.”

Tober said the program works with supervisors after employees return to help them assess and use, whenever possible, the new skill sets employees may have acquired while overseas.

Support and encouragement will continue, Miller said, through activities designed to unite family members and

support those who are deployed.

The MVS program hopes to offer coffees, monthly gatherings and other activities in the coming months.

Miller said that while there is a focus on family members of deployed employees, all District employees are invited and encouraged to participate in program events.

MVD has already held a number of such events.

“Family First Fridays” gives individuals who wish to volunteer the opportunity to assemble care packages, write thank you notes, and plan Family Readiness Program events.

The Division has also established a sponsorship program that provides additional support to deployed employees and their families before, during and after a deployment.

“We hope employees and family members will feel fully supported throughout the entire deployment,” Gilmore said.

“We want to be of assistance and do our very best to provide the support they need during all types of deployments and emergencies.”

For more information, or to volunteer with the MVS Family Support Program, contact Jana Miller at 314-331-8530.

St. Louis' photogrammetric mapping division celebrates silver anniversary

By **MARY MARKOS**
MVS Public Affairs

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words.

At the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Technical Center of Expertise for Photogrammetric Mapping in St. Louis, pictures are worth far more.

The center, which celebrates the silver anniversary of its inception this year, brought the District approximately \$21 million in contracts last year alone – an impressive figure for a program that was first designed on the back of a hotel menu with the help of a phone book.

“Our first project saved the EPA (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) \$20,000 and provided topographical mapping of Times Beach, Mo., following the 1982 Meramec River Flood,” said Mike Dace, the department’s first program manager.

The record flood destroyed much of the community and led the EPA to sample the streets and roads of Times Beach for dioxin.

Part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Flood Mitigation Team, Dace worked with the EPA to determine the best course of action for the residents of the town.

In the end, the EPA elected to buy the town and relocate the residents. The agency then sought technical assistance from the St. Louis District Corps office with the construction of spur levees along the beach, leading to the first photogrammetric mapping project for the District.

The St. Louis District Photogrammetric Mapping Division was named the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Technical Center of Expertise in 1993.

“I picked up the yellow pages and began looking for contractors to do survey work in a dioxin contaminated area,” Dace said.

Following the project’s successful completion – “We accomplished our work on time and within budget,” Dace said – Dace turned to the EPA’s Las Vegas office and secured the birth of the a nation-wide Superfund surveying and mapping program.

“We had to convince the Missouri River Division who was in charge of all Superfund work that we could accomplish the mission. I was at a hotel room in Omaha and I wrote the plan on the back of the hotel menu.”

“We received our first funds in 1985,” Dace, who worked as program manager for the program for 14 years, said.

“During my time with the program, we gained \$100,000,000 worth of work for additional customers, such as BUREC (Bureau of Reclamation), NAVFAC (Naval Facilities Engineering Command), Air Force Regional Civil Engineer, the Baltimore District and many more.”

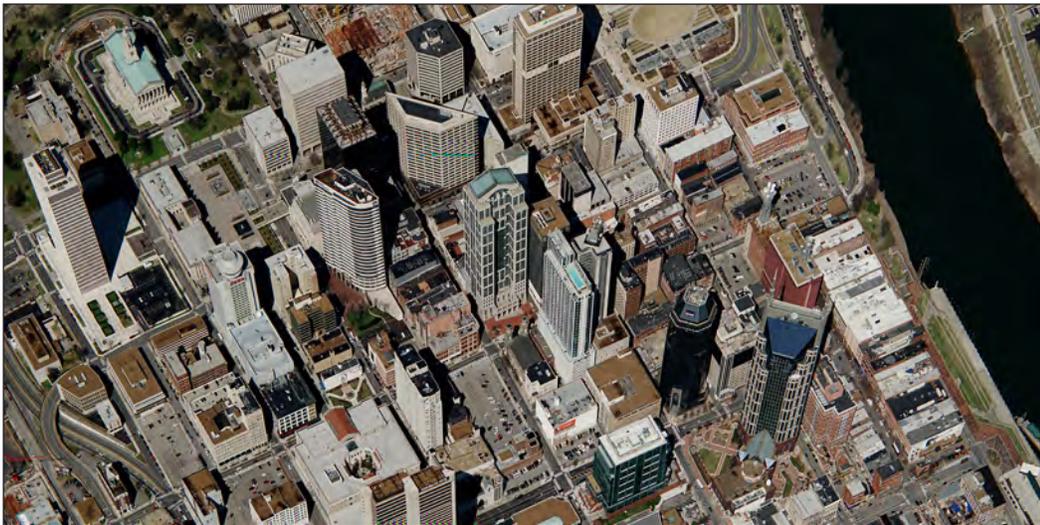
Twenty-five years later, the Geospatial Branch has grown to a staff of 23, with seven architect and engineering contracts available to serve USACE Districts, Divisions and Laboratories as well as other Federal agencies.

In 1993, USACE recognized and appointed the department the Technical Center of Expertise for Photogrammetric Mapping. Through the years and with the appointment, however, the mission remains the same.



Courtesy images

Above: Ted Stanton (left) of the MVS Geospatial Branch, and Bob Mesko, Geospatial Branch project manager, review aerial photos of Kansas. Left: A view of the Ohio State University football stadium at 0.5' pixels.



An oblique-aerial photo of downtown Nashville is just one example of the images the St. Louis District's Photogrammetric Mapping Division can provide to customers.

“Photogrammetric mapping is using aerial photography to measure features on the surface of the earth. Products generated are typically maps or 2D and 3D models that represent the area of interest,” said Keith Short, Geospatial Engineering Branch chief.

“The TCX provides expert technical management of photogrammetric mapping projects with a wealth of knowledge and expertise not necessarily available at other offices. We manage several contracts for photogrammetry services, providing an avenue for agencies to accomplish their missions without interruption of their current workload.”

As the Center gained contracts and recognition, it also gained new responsibilities.

“It means a lot to our staff to be considered a TCX. We feel that it says we are leaders in our field,” Short said. “This brings a great amount of responsibility, as any District or government agency that comes to us expects the best support for their projects. We want to make sure we always give them that support.”

The TCX supports organizations by providing photogrammetric mapping for many purposes such as planning, construction, flood protection, real estate, GIS and emergency support.

Current and past clients include most Corps Districts; the Army Geospatial Center; all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces; the National Parks Service, various cities, counties, and states; The Bureau of Reclamation; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the Federal Aviation Administration; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; the U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Land Management. The TCX has continued to support FEMA during natural disasters.

“It is always rewarding when we are able to provide emergency support for any effort whether it’s within MVD or outside,” Short said.

Providing support for emergencies also highlights one of the challenges of the Center.

“Natural disasters are something we provide support for but obviously cannot plan for. It’s a challenge to plan and budget for the program when we do not know where all of our

customers will come from each year,” Short said.

The Center must also adapt to today’s advancing technologies.

“As we move towards digital data collections - film aerial photography is not requested much anymore - and the sensors keep getting more powerful, we are getting to where more amounts of data and more precise data is available. Storage of all that data, and software that can manipulate it, seems to be key now,” Short said.

Short said the real key, however, is not in the collection of the data, but in the working relationship his staff has with other District departments.

“There are a lot of key players involved with the program. Success requires not just the staff’s technical expertise but the support of many others in MVS,” current Project Manager Bob Mesko said.

“We work closely with CT (contracting division), RM (resource management), PM (project management), and OC (office of council) to get contracts, task orders, and modifications awarded, funding processed and agreements drafted,” Mesko added.

There are many Project Delivery Team members involved and the fact that our program has been so successful for so long says a lot about

the strong working relationship among members of these offices.”

Deanne Strauser, former project manager, said she is not surprised at the success of the program.

“We have and have had a good quality control and assurance system to ensure that the mapping and surveying work has been done correctly,” she said. “It is different than what it used to be, but that system is still in place – it still works, as evident by our many repeat customers.”

Former Branch Chief Dennis Morgan greatly expanded the TCX’s role by establishing more in-depth partnerships with the Army Geospatial Center and the National Guard. It is important, he said, that the Branch continues to acquire new imagery to assist in technologies developed for today’s war fighter.

“ It means a lot to our staff to be considered a TCX (Technical Center of Expertise). We feel that it says we are leaders in our field. ”

Keith Short

Geospatial Engineering Branch Chief



Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division commander, emphasizes the importance of the Mississippi River to American Inner Coast Summit participants June 22.

Summit unifies, strengthens vision for third largest watershed in world

Story and photos by
ALAN DOOLEY
MVS Public Affairs Officer

When we speak of the coasts of the United States, we usually think of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. We think of the large cities and major shipping centers, like New York, Charleston, Los Angeles and nearby Long Beach, San Francisco and Seattle.

But if you take a different look at the nation, from high above, and stretch your imagination a little, you can also see eastern and western segments of the country – and another coast with a long narrow coastal water body, with major cities and major shipping centers – New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Memphis, Cincinnati and St. Louis. That long, narrow coastal water is the Mississippi River and its tributaries and distributaries.

Much attention and many resources have been devoted to developing shipping capabilities of the nation’s East and West coast, but relatively less has been focused on the inner coast, the Mississippi River and its tributaries.

Today that “coast” serves a number of purposes. It supports a rich ecosystem. It is a water interstate highway that safely and economically moves more than 500 million tons of cargo annually. It is a source of water for sustenance, industries and agriculture. It supports recreation. And it is an object of love and reverence for those who live and work on it and along it.

Members of several non-governmental organizations, federal agencies, states, tribal nations, private landowners, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, private industry, academia and community representatives converged at Union Station in

St. Louis for the America’s Inner Coast Summit June 22-24.

The summit was co-facilitated by the Sand County Foundation’s, John Laub and the Mississippi Valley Division’s, Dr. David Vigh. The purpose was to discuss and help further a vision for this multiple-use inner coast.

A steering team made up of representatives of Monsanto Corporation, The Nature Conservancy, Gulf Engineers and Consultants, Inc., the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center and the University of Florida, and the Office of Conferences and Institutes rounded out the leadership roles.

The goal of the summit was to develop high-level recommendations to be considered in developing sustainable Mississippi River valley projects and initiatives and to help further the exchange of information regarding progress and barriers or constraints on current projects, programs and activities.

Unlike other summits or conferences where the focus is often narrowed to one particular aspect, such as navigation, development or the environment, this gathering’s focus was on the combination of those aspects and how they can be intertwined for a total purpose – SUSTAINABILITY.

“We were excited to have the opportunity to co-facilitate this landmark event with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and to encourage collaboration of the many partners at the summit to articulate a sustainable vision of the watershed based on sound ethics, science, partnerships and voluntary landowner actions,” said Brent Haglund, president of Sand County Foundation.

Sand County Foundation Director Terry Mulcahy, wove the setting for the conference in his opening remarks. Mulcahy, a professional engineer who lists a broad spectrum

of contributions to public service, ranging from 11 years as Wisconsin's Deputy Secretary and Secretary of Transportation to service as the ranking Army Reserve General Officer and senior engineer for the U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf War, introduced the Sand County Foundation's nationwide and global purpose and their commitment to AICS.

Maj. Gen. Michael J. Walsh, Commander of the Mississippi Valley Division and president designee of the Mississippi River Commission, shared the opening session by suggesting that we are caught up in the culture of our past.

Walsh also commented that he's been told that the Mississippi River watershed is too big to have a vision. His response – "It's a working vision, we can mature and change it as we need to."

The general talked of a 200-year vision for the entire watershed. He called not just for accepting such a vision, which he said would be an intellectual exercise. He asked people, instead, to believe in one with their hearts and to commit to the hard work required to communicate and bring people along to agree on a path forward for the 3rd largest watershed in the world.

The nature of the co-facilitation of the summit spoke volumes about its unique purpose and far reaching potential.

On one hand, there was the non-governmental Sand County Foundation, represented by Haglund and Mulcahy, originally founded in 1965 to preserve the land surrounding Aldo Leopold's family farm on the banks of the Wisconsin River, but now extending Leopold's land ethic to projects across the nation.

On the other hand there was Walsh and the Mississippi Valley Division of the U.S. Army's Corps of Engineers. It was, and is, a partnership of different strengths made stronger by combining them in a common purpose.

Ivor Zavadsky, a senior water resources management specialist from Europe's Global Environmental Facility followed the general to the podium.

Zavadsky provided insights into how governments of foreign nations, through which the Danube River flows and Black Sea interests have come together to develop a regional approach to solving trans-boundary issues that parallel mid-America's concerns for the Mississippi River and its tributaries.

Policy Analyst Mark Gorman, of the Northeast-Midwest Institute next told how our vision and beliefs can either stimulate or restrict our understanding and actions.

Using an early Spanish map of America, he told how the Spanish were convinced – as their map showed – that the Gulf of California ran all the way to the northern Pacific Ocean and that California was actually an island.

Refusing to believe differently for more than three decades, when Spanish leaders directed their colleagues in California to penetrate into the unknown interior to the east, they also sent boats for them to cross from California to the mainland to the east.

Gorman urged his audience to overcome today's parallel limits of thinking, that stem from an environment overseen by more than 30 House and Senate committees and subcommittees, state boundaries and often divergent goals, to incorporate public and private concerns to form a system vision.

John Anifson, of the National Park Service, next presented a history of the river and region, showing how public policy shifted as flood control and navigation projects were overlaid on its waters.

A cultural resources and history program manager for the

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, Anifson described the river as European settlers found it.

"It was wider. It varied in many places from 16 inches to two feet in depth. Islands dotted its length, and it was a rich ecosystem without navigation," he said. He then wove a story of succeeding navigation works that culminated in today's nine-foot channel depth and the locks and dams that support it from St. Louis northward.

The last speaker on the summit's first day was John Ehrmann, founder and senior partner of the Meridian Institute. Ehrmann described his work in the field of developing collaborative decision-making processes for more than two decades.

He described methods for building and sustaining decision-making and sustaining processes, calling for inclusiveness to ensure success. Meridian Institute also interviewed 43 river partners across various user sectors on aspects of a watershed effort to help focus the first day's afternoon work groups.

The summit's lunch speaker was National Corn Growers Association Marketing Vice President Fred Stemme. Stemme used statistics about agriculture's impacts on the nation and its ability both to meet its own needs and feed much of the world.

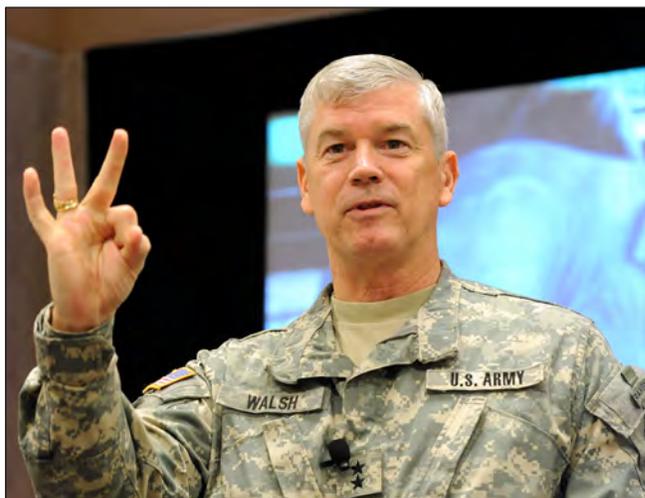
Focusing on corn, methods of increasing crop yields while decreasing impacts on the environment, he told lunch listeners his organization's vision for the future of this important sector of the nation's economy.

The afternoon was given over to breakout work groups to examine specific issues and to develop recommendations for future consideration and work in specific areas, such as communication and outreach, integrating such groups as Indian nations, state, community and private interests into the future processes and other specific areas for future exploration.

Thursday morning's session began with viewpoints from the two largest contributors to the Mississippi River, the Ohio and Missouri Rivers' watersheds.

First up was ORSANCO Executive Director and Chief Engineer, Alan Vicory. Vicory told how his group, the Ohio River Valley Sanitation Commission, was formed to manage water resource uses and issues for the entire length of the

See AMERICA'S Page 11



Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh, Mississippi Valley Division commander, speaks about the economic and environmental sustainability of the Mississippi River.

Corps showcases historic vessel, channel maintenance

By MINDY CORY

National Great Rivers Museum

An open house aboard the Dredge Potter was the perfect setting for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to showcase its mission of channel maintenance to hundreds of visitors.

The Potter drew a large crowd of more than 854 visitors June 26-27 at the Melvin Price Locks & Dam and National Great Rivers Museum in Alton, Ill.

The visitors saw all of the “in’s” and “out’s” of the dredge - everything from the engine room to the wheelhouse.

For many, this was their first time aboard a working boat. Guides were stationed throughout the decks to explain Potter’s inner workings. Many visitors said they were impressed when learning how the dustpan head “vacuums” the bottom of the river.

Park rangers from the Rivers Project Office combined with the dredge crew, a team of river engineers, and several volunteers to tell the channel maintenance story.

Visitors were heard exclaiming everything from “awesome” and “cool” to “amazing” and “wow” as they boarded and exited the vessel throughout the weekend.

The Potter, which is the oldest operational vessel in the Army’s fleet, was first launched in 1932.

While the vessel has undergone many changes, such as the conversion from steam to diesel power, her main function remains the same: ensuring a minimum depth of 9-feet exists



Photo by George Stringham

Russell Errett and Peter Russell, hydraulic engineers with the St. Louis District’s Hydrologic and Hydraulics Branch, explain the techniques that the Corps uses to maintain the river’s navigation channel at the Dredge Potter open house.

throughout the navigation channel.

Combined with training structures, and locks and dams, dredging is a quintessential part of creating and maintaining a 9-foot navigation channel.

Without dredging, there would be many spots on the Mississippi River that would remain non-navigable.

The dredge’s ability to remove sediment from these shallow spots

increases the efficiency of river transportation by allowing the barges to be loaded to maximum capacity.

As part of the special weekend, tours of Melvin Price Locks and Dam were offered continually, rather than on the normal fixed schedule. This was an added bonus, visitors said. More than 400 guests took the Melvin Price Locks and Dam tour.



Photo by George Stringham

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer’s Dredge Potter is the oldest operational vessel in the Army’s fleet.

Midwest levee conference focuses on sustainability

Story and photo by
ALAN DOOLEY
MVS Public Affairs Officer

More than 500 military and civilian engineers and related construction industry representatives descended on St. Louis July 13-14 in mid-July heat and humidity for a regional and Midwest levee conference that focused on sustainability.

Attendees came from across the nation, for the conference that overlooked the watersheds of the Missouri and Mississippi River and their tributaries.

The two-day event was hosted by the St. Louis and Scott Air Force Base Posts of the Society of American Military Engineers.

Key speakers included Air Force Brig. Gen. Theresa Carter, Installations and Mission Support commander for the Air Mobility Command, and Senior Executive Service leader Mark Mazzanti, Programs Director for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division and Mississippi River Commission.

Mazzanti, who stood in for Corps of Engineer Chief, Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp and MVD Commander, Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh, broadened his usual Mississippi Valley perspective to present an over arching Corps-wide message.

In his remarks, he discussed the Corps' multi-billion dollar programs that support military operations worldwide, as well as the civil works and research and development missions that reaches nationwide.

He wrapped up his remarks with a look at the SAME, Engineering and Contracting student mentor program in Vicksburg, Miss., that reaches out to high school students interested in the engineering field. He noted that more the 60 percent of students who attend indicate intent to pursue educations and employment in science and engineering fields.

The conference theme was Working Together to Reduce Risk – Define, Communicate, Manage.

Break-out track sessions, which were chaired by experts, a broad spectrum of consultants, industry leaders and government agency experts. These experts offered conference



Senior Executive Service Leader Mark Mazzanti (left) and Col. Thomas O'Hara, MVS commander, speak with levee conference participants July 13 .

attendees opportunities to focus on their areas of interest.

These areas included Asset Management, Sustainability, Managing Flood Risk – Policy and Guidance and Managing Flood Risk – Technical Issues.

Pre-conference and after hours sessions afforded to attendees included a tour of the Melvin Price Locks and Dam and the National Great Rivers Museum, as well as a social evening at the St. Louis City Museum.

If attendees didn't generate enough energy networking with each other, a 5-kilometer fun run in the 90-plus heat and humidity completed the task.

A highlight throughout the conference was a series of one-hour breaks that were the busiest times for visiting numerous displays by corporations that included a "who's who" list of engineering consultancies and construction firms that spanned from rapidly developing small businesses to industry giants.

While St. Louis and the two regional SAME posts are certainly not strangers to conferences that bring large numbers of attendees together in the nation's heartland, it was announced that St. Louis will host the national conclave of the Society of Military Engineers in 2012.

America's inner coast takes center stage in St. Louis

continued from pg. 9

Ohio River. Established in 1948, the organization exists under a charter that is ingrained in laws of the Ohio River's states and two more nearby states.

Vicory told how that document binds the states together, funds the organization's modest budget and ensures that the various entities work together for the common benefit of the region.

The last speaker to take the podium was Missouri River Association of States and Tribes Executive Director David Pope. Pope discussed the often divisive issues affecting the Missouri River valley, including the operation of its system of vast reservoirs that provide water supply, flood control,

hydropower and recreation.

A feature of the river watershed is the cyclical precipitation patterns, he told the audience, resulting in an historical panorama ranging from surpluses of water to lengthy dry spells such as the droughts and the dust bowl in the 1930s, which was at least partly attributable to poor farming practices.

Breakout work groups closed the morning with presentations on their discussions, which included opportunities for questions and comments from the rest of the summit attendees.

The AICS ended with an air of excitement. Unlike many conferences, few participants departed early "to catch planes."

The Summit primarily focused

on the main stem Mississippi River, with brief examinations of its main tributaries. Based on comments from the attendees, future efforts will shift to the larger watershed – the third largest in the world -- that drains 41 percent of the nation and includes more than 1,250,000 square miles.

The summit was built on recent agreements between federal, state, non-governmental and private organizations.

The future of the watershed will be best defined by bringing groups with all of the various interests, goals and dreams for the watershed together to build economically and environmentally SUSTAINABLE solutions to the challenges of this and future generations.

Carlyle Lake park ranger receives U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Interpreter of the Year award

By **MARY MARKOS**
MVS Public Affairs

At 7 a.m. on June 22, St. Louis District Corps of Engineers' Carlyle Lake Park Ranger Kim Hammel received unbelievable news – news that would make her ask if what she heard was really true.

"I was so surprised and glad I was sitting down," Hammel said. "What I thought would be a typical day at the Carlyle Lake Project Office turned out to be a day I will truly remember. I was so excited."

Hammel, who has been with the MVS District for 21 years, was selected to receive the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2010 Hiram M. Chittenden Award for Interpretive Excellence.

The award recognized Hammel for her interpretive efforts through partnerships in the community and for her creative avenues to deliver the interpretive message.

"We are very proud of Kim and the work she does at Carlyle Lake," said District Commander Col. Thomas O'Hara. "She is a dedicated team member with a passion and drive that moves Carlyle Lake and the St. Louis District toward excellence."

Much like the renowned U.S. Army officer, engineer, author and historian the award is named for, Hammel's work affects not only the approximately 2.9 million visitors to the lake each year, it has lasting effects on both the environment and lake patrons.

Hammel's signature event, the lake's annual "Celebrate the Earth," delivered educational and entertaining environmental programs to 3,000 students from 23 area schools in 2009. Hammel helped the event grow from its original 500 students by leveraging funding for the event by utilizing volunteers and field donations from local businesses.

Hammel also pioneered a butterfly program at local schools to allow youth to better understand the metamorphosis process. The program, which has her collecting eggs, larva and chrysalis, is often requested by teachers and schoolchildren.

"As an Interpreter, I feel it is important to strive to educate the public on the Corps mission, environmental



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Hiram M. Chittenden Award recipient Kim Hammel works to educate children on the importance of life jackets.

Courtesy photo

stewardship and water safety," Hammel said. "By educating the public through interpretation our lake visitors have a better understanding of the operation of the lake, how to stay safe, fit and improve their quality of life for future generations.

"By working with partners in the community to create recreation opportunities and host special events, we see an increase in lake visitors, which generates more spending and economic development in the area while providing opportunities for people of all ages to connect with nature."

Throughout 2009, Hammel worked as part of the Carlyle Lake Prairie View Trail Committee, which includes the City of Carlyle, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation and Development and county and township officials to establish a bike trail that would offer more than 60 miles of multi-use routes over federal, state, city, county and township roads around the lake.

By partnering with these agencies, Hammel leveraged funds which will result in increased tourism to the region, along with providing a safe environment for bicyclist. This multi-year effort has leveraged more than \$300,000 for trail improvements around the project.

For Hammel, it is the connection with nature and lake visitors that keep her motivated.

"Every morning as I get up and prepare to go to work, I am proud to put on my uniform, and I am excited to go to

work," she said.

"Each day is full of challenges and opportunities to make a difference at the lake and in the community. Whether using my creative talents to inspire and share my passion of environmental stewardship with a group of grade school students, or working to forge a partnership in the community to help improve quality of life, economic development and promote tourism, I feel I can touch many lives and make a difference through my job."

Making a difference in the community, Hammel said, is especially important, as she resides in the Carlyle Lake vicinity. "I feel that if the community and lake are supporting each other together, they will grow stronger together in many ways."

Hammel, who paints in her spare time, said wetland conservation is also important for the future. Every year she donates one of her paintings to Ducks Unlimited for auction. It is estimated her paintings have helped the organization raise more than \$3,000.

She combined her artistic ability with her passion for water safety to create an 8-foot-tall wood cut-out of Bobber, the Corps' Water Safety Dog, for use in local events and parades.

Hammel also spearheaded community emphasis on water safety by partnering with eight radio stations and numerous local businesses to broadcast and display water safety messages.

Hammel received her award Aug. 2 at the 2010 USACE Summer Leader's Conference in Seattle, Wash.

iWATCH enables, protects District employees

by MARY MARKOS

MVS Public Affairs

In the aftermath of 9/11, citizens demanded to know how such a terrorist attack could have been prevented; they wanted to know what one could do to protect themselves and what could be done to prevent future attacks.

The U.S. Army answered the question of what citizens can do - report suspicious activity - and it has implemented a program that makes reporting suspicious activity easy.

In conjunction with Antiterrorism Awareness Month this month, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the St. Louis District Security Office will promote the Army's program and require antiterrorism training for District members.

"USACE has implemented the Army's iWATCH Terrorist Watch Program in an effort to promote antiterrorism awareness throughout the Corps. We all must be active participants in the program and work together to report suspicious activity," Kent Hayes, MVS security officer, said.

iWATCH is a modern version of a neighborhood watch program focused on the threat of terrorist activity. It is designed to heighten public awareness to the indicators of terrorist activity and encourage reporting suspicious behavior.

"The inactive component of iWATCH is individual situational awareness of their surroundings. The active component of iWATCH involves individuals taking action to report suspicious behavior or activities to law enforcement for further investigation," Hayes said.

He added that individuals may not understand how their actions and report can save lives. "A simple reported observation, which may seem insignificant, could stop a terrorist act. Reporting suspicious activity could save the lives of one's neighbors, one's friends, one's coworkers, and especially one's loved ones without knowing it," Hayes said.

The key, Hayes said, is trust one's instincts and report



anything that does not "feel" or look right.

"A simple way to remember what to report is the five W's we all learned in school: the who, the what, the where, the when, the why and the how. Try to get a description of the person involved the gender, height, weight, hair color, build, race, and clothes - or if there is a suspicious vehicle, get the license plate number, the color, make and model of the vehicle," Hayes said. "The more details that are provided, the more likely officials will be able to find anyone preparing an attack."

MVS employees are asked to contact Hayes at 314-331-8065 or the Federal Protective Services at 1-877-437-7411 if they notice suspicious activity in or around the Ray Federal Building. Employees at field sites should contact Hayes or the local or state police departments. The FBI can also be called at 314-589-2500 in Missouri, and 217-522-9675 in Illinois.

"You can make a difference if you do something," Hayes said. "Lives may depend on your actions. Even reports that seem meaningless at the time may add the final piece of the puzzle for law enforcement officials."

Senior leader training reinforces Division strengths

by JUNE JEFFRIES

MVS Emerging Leaders Member

How can an individual working within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers help the Corps "Build Strong?"

At the Senior Leader Training Conference in Vicksburg, Miss., June 7-10, senior leaders from the Mississippi Valley Division gathered to reconfirm what they could do as individuals, and leaders to further MVD's progress on the path from "Good to Great."

"The Mississippi Valley Division is on a journey from a good organization to a great one," said Maj. Gen. Michael J. Walsh, Division commander. Holding a hunk of #18 rebar, he continued, "this hunk of rebar is the strongest of its kind, and just like the Corps, it is built to last."

St. Louis District Commander Col. Thomas O'Hara, ten division chiefs, and participants of the MVS Emerging Leaders program attended

the conference to gain insights into the District's role in reinforcing and supporting the strength of the Division.

"It was great to see everyone in the Division come together," O'Hara said. "The conference helped us to unify our goals and strengthened not only our understanding of the Corps' campaign, but the role every individual plays in it."

The conference showed leaders the role the Division, which receives 25 percent or \$5.2 billion of the Corps overall Civil Works budget and leads the nation in Civil Works, plays in the Corps's Campaign Plan.

To reinforce MVD's strength and the journey from "Good to Great," conference participants received a piece of rebar symbolizing: Ready for all contingencies; Engineering Sustainable Water Resources Solutions; Building Effective Innovative Sustainable Solutions; and Recruit and Retain Strong Teams.

Conference themes also revolved around family support and professional development.

"As a Division, we will focus on the need for increased numbers of employees who have professional certification this year," said Kathy Tober, MVS Human Resources officer and conference attendee. "We also need to concentrate on ensuring everyone has meaningful performance objectives and assessments. Everyone should have an IDP (individual development plan) and supervisors need to take time to sit with employees to explain options for development."

Other goals for conference members were to encourage their Districts to invest time and effort into seeking out the voice of Corps customers and stakeholders. The conference stressed the need to build relationships and work together with the communities, as well as with other Districts.

EDITORIAL

MVS public affairs officer bids District farewell

By **ALAN DOOLEY**
MVS Public Affairs Officer

Since my name has been on Esprit for eight-plus years as your Public Affairs Chief, I have appropriated (or misappropriated) a page to bid farewell.

In late 2001 before I interviewed for this job, I went to the Internet to see what the District and the Corps did. I simply didn't know, and incorrectly sort of assumed you straightened rivers and paved them.

Somehow I was selected and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and has been an education. From building the coastal forts to prevent our fledgling nation from being reabsorbed by Europe, to opening the first interstate system – our rivers – to finishing the Washington Monument, drying out New Orleans and giving self-government a chance in Iraq and Afghanistan, this has been a remarkable organization. I was blessed to be part of it for a short time.



Dooley

The learning started immediately. Days after I arrived, I was in the field with then-DE, Col. Mike Morrow, Wally Feld and Mike Ricketts from Regulatory. At 6'2" tall, I felt like a midget. Then I went to Lock 24 in February and left my parka in my car – for 5 minutes. I learned it is always 20 degrees colder on the river. Mostly I quickly learned that I had a lot to learn.

My teachers have been Claude Strauser, the aforementioned Wally Feld, Dave Busse, Mark Alvey, Drs. Sonny Trimble and Terry Norris, and many more. I hesitate

to start. I will inevitably leave someone out, and I don't mean to. There's Archie Ringgenberg too, a real war hero and about the best friend I could have.

The opportunity to go to Iraq in 2003 and New Orleans the day after Katrina profoundly influenced me. Many times as I walked quietly in Baghdad's Green Zone I had to pinch myself and say, "You're in Baghdad!"

Flying over New Orleans post-Katrina humbled me to see how all-powerful Mom Nature is and how careful we must be in trying to influence, let alone control her.

But Baghdad, New Orleans, Washington, D.C., and other places have paled in comparison to day-to-day events and opportunities I have shared here in St. Louis.

It's been you all; your tenacity and attention to detail that have been mind boggling. You truly care.

I've been blessed with a great PA team: Charles Camillo; Tish Tyler; Nicole Dalrymple; George Stringham; Mary Markos; Romanda Walker and Phyllis Thomas. They have done everything I have asked of them and then soared above and beyond. My profound admiration and thanks to each and all.

I'm almost done. You have all shared with me, countless opportunities to serve our citizens as individuals and our nation as a whole. There is no higher calling. Thank you for letting me be a part of your lives, your toils and triumphs -- all you do.

Finally, my love and appreciation to Sherry, who has let me do all these things, supported me, stood by me and loved me, and fed the horse, dogs, cats and lizards while I was gone.

There – that's it.

Hooah! And keep on Building Strong.

Alan Dooley

Corps waives recreation fees for civilians on leave from overseas contingency operations deployments

USACE Press Release

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced July 21 it will continue to waive day use and camping fees for active service military personnel and DoD civilians who are on mid- or post-deployment (reintegration) leave from duty involving deployments in support of Overseas Contingency Operations.

The Corps began waiving recreation fees for active service personnel on temporary leave from duty in Iraq in 2003.

In August 2008, the Corps expanded the waiver to cover DoD civilians and active service military personnel on mid or post leave from deployments.

"Our intent is to recognize the selfless service of these men and women to our nation and the world," said Steve

Stockton, the Corps Director of Civil Works.

"The more than 2,200 Corps-operated recreation sites nationwide provide excellent opportunities to find renewal, solace, and to reconnect with families and friends."

Active service military personnel and DoD civilians on leave will be required to show identification and leave orders/forms upon arrival to the recreation sites to obtain the waiver.

The waiver will also apply to all immediate family members accompanying them on their visit. The waiver will be applied to day use and camping fees.

Fees will be waived on a walk-up and space available basis, as well as for reservations made through the National

Recreation Reservation Service call center at 1-877-444-6777. However, fees will not be waived for on-line reservations made through Recreation.gov.

In addition, state, local and other managing entities of recreation areas located on Corps lands are encouraged, but not required, to comply with this waiver of fees in the areas they manage.

The Corps is the nation's largest federal provider of outdoor recreation, managing more than 400 lake and river projects in 43 states and hosting more than 350 million visitors per year.

The Corps estimates that nearly 89 percent of its recreation projects are within 50 miles of metropolitan areas and provide a diverse range of outdoor activities to people of all ages.

For more, visit www.CorpsLakes.us.

USACE HEROES: SUPPORTING OVERSEAS CONTINGENCIES

FRANCIS WALTON



Francis Walton, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Construction Representative deployed to Bagram, Air Force Base, Afghanistan in March.

“I wanted to experience a different work environment, a sense of adventure, and meet some financial needs,” Walton said of his deployment.

Walton isn’t a stranger to adventure. Previously, he deployed to serve as a Quality Assurance Inspector for debris removal after Katrina. “I also served two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in El Salvador in 1977 and 1978,” he said.

Although Walton enjoys learning about construction, he said that there is a steep learning curve and a vast amount of information to digest. He said that can be a bit of a challenge.

“The great people I have met both in the Corps and among the contractors and laborers, as well as the quality of interesting birds and beautiful mountains surrounding Bagram makes for a rewarding experience,” he said.

Walton and his wife Debra have three children – Emily, 20; Aaron, 17; and Austin 15.

Walton has been with the Corps and the St. Louis District for 30 years.

Walton was scheduled to return in early September, but has been approved for a new six month taker to begin late September of this year.

“I recommend anyone with a spirit of adventure to apply,” he said.

PORTIA STAGGE



Portia Stagge deployed six months ago to Afghanistan Engineering District South as a cartographic technician.

This is her first deployment overseas. “I wanted to make a difference and provide great quality service for our nation,” she said.

Stagge says she isn’t surprised by a lot of things that happen at Kandahar Air Field. “Well, except for the rockets attacks in the middle of the night. I am now getting quite use to hitting the ground,” Stagge said jokingly.

“The friendships I’ve made here have been the most rewarding for me,” she said.

Stagge has 3 sons - Shaun, 25; Justin, 18; and Brandon, 21, who is stationed at Holloman Air Force Base. She also has two grandsons and expecting the addition of another grandchild in September.

Stagge has been with the Corps for 14 years and with the St. Louis District for almost two years.

When she needs to get refocused, Stagge tries to attend the Ramp Ceremony which occurs often on the compound.

“It helps me remember why we are here and the need to support our soldiers with this mission. This has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, being able to make a difference to the people I work with and learn new ways to improve and develop my skills in the field of GIS,” Stagge said.

MICHAEL QUINN



Michael Quinn deployed a month ago to Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan as an electrical engineer.

“There was a need for help, and I wanted to come and contribute to the efforts here,” he said of his six-month deployment.

Quinn deployed previously with the Army during Desert Storm and then again in 2003 – 2005 for Operation Enduring Freedom/ Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“Getting used to the heat and the dust again has been a challenge,” he said.

Quinn said he enjoys working on projects that aid in making the living conditions for our troops safer and a bit more comfortable.

“The great attitude and spirits of our troops over here surprises me. They’ve probably been on multiple deployments away from family and friends. They come and do their jobs and complete their missions with professionalism in the most adverse and dangerous conditions that most of us will never face,” he said.

In 1997, Quinn joined the Corps family. He has worked with the St. Louis District since that time.

Quinn and his wife of sixteen years, Stephanie, have two sons – John, 15; Patrick, 11 and a daughter Emma, 8.

“HOOAH,” Quinn added.

RETIREE CORNER

“The ROMEOs” reunite USACE colleagues

by **BOB WICH**
MVS Retiree Liaison

Welcome to the world of the retired – and a wonderful world it is.

This monthly column will try to serve two audiences and provide two types of information. The two audiences are the current St. Louis District employees and the retired MVS employees.

It will attempt to provide info about what the retired folks are doing while also relating how things were back in those good old working day worlds. Hopefully the current employees will find some of our stories amusing, insightful or both.

There is currently an active group of retired MVS employees who go by the name “The ROMEOs.”

For anyone who is interested, the name comes from **Retire Old Men Eating Out**, and the moniker was hung on the group by Wally Feld several years ago.

The group includes women as well as men, but the name has just hung on in spite of it being politically incorrect in this day and age.

What do “The ROMEOs” do? Well, they meet monthly for lunch – period. There is no agenda, no program, no meeting minutes and no performance appraisals. They have a happy hour, but it’s generally limited to about 30 minutes since members lead such



Wich

busy lives.

They have lunch, lots of camaraderie, and try to remember who the chief of this or that branch back was in 1960-something.

“The ROMEOs” meet on the third Wednesday of each month. The location varies depending on the whims of the group. Recently they’ve met at Growler’s Pub, Wildhorse Grill, Favazza’s, Lazy River Grill and Lesters. Varying the location serves two purposes – it provides variety in both location and menu and it provides mental exercise for the members, many of whom have had to learn how to use Mapquest in order to get to lunch.

The qualifications for being a ROMEO member are quite simple. All one has to do is have worked in the St. Louis District at some point in their career and be retired.

The group uses the term “retired” very loosely. As long as you’ve retired from some place at some time, then you are considered retired. If anyone reading this meets the above criteria and is not currently on the list and wants to join in the revelry, such as it is, please send an e-mail to me bswich@charter.net. The e-mail lists are maintained by me as well as Jack Niemi.

The current ROMEO list has about 90 members with 15-20 showing up for lunch in any given month.

If you do not have access to e-mail (current District employees – can you imagine this?) and you want to attend the lunches, just give me a call at 314-638-8463 for the location of the next lunch.

One final thing – congratulations to Joe and Ellie Bisher who recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary – way to go Joe and Ellie!

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