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...AND MORE



# JAXSTRONG

*jacksonville*

OUR WORK • OUR PEOPLE • OUR DISTRICT

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## COMMANDER'S CORNER

### MESSAGE FROM COL. ALAN DODD

**TALENTED MUSICIANS, WELL TUNED INSTRUMENTS,  
PLAYING IN CONCERT RESULT IN BEAUTIFUL MUSIC**

To make beautiful music you need the right mix of several things. You need a great and finely tuned instrument. You need a talented and well practiced musician to play the instrument. You need a combination of various kinds of instruments and musicians. And, you need these musicians to rehearse together so when they play as one orchestra, the sound they produce is effortless. The music doesn't work unless all of the pieces are in place and moving as one.

That is exactly the concept that will enable the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Jacksonville District to transform our civil works program and enhance our methods of delivery. Our processes are the instruments and our people are the musicians. What we deliver and how we deliver it is our "music." About a year ago, our Engineering Division underwent a quality management initiative resulting in streamlined processes that enhance our ability to execute quality work products. This initiative standardized our schedule template and minimized the time it takes for us to get the job done so we can layout a realistic P2 schedule. We now better understand every activity within the district -- whether it is Real Estate, Construction or Planning -- and how we all fit together to efficiently push a project to completion. We are more accurate in planning timelines and aren't caught off guard by deadlines because they are scheduled, we see them coming and act on them.

It's basically the difference between driving in the daytime and driving at night. In daylight, you are better able to anticipate problems and adjust for them where at night, obstacles can be thrust at you quickly and you can be forced to run off course. By building in 30, 60 and 90 day checks for deadlines and milestones we can move more resources to where they are needed and stay on course.

A process is worthless, though, unless you have highly trained professionals to make the process work. Our Jacksonville District workforce fits the bill. Approximately 50 percent of our engineering team members have professional licenses. We have 78 professional engineers, 17 professional geologists and three professional surveyors. Employees in other divisions and offices have advanced certifications and accreditations as well, including contracting and public affairs. Our team of "musicians" authors numerous technical papers for professional publications and belongs to organizations that promote professional development such as the Society of American Military Engineers, the Association of State Dam Safety Officials, the American Society of Civil Engineers and more. We even have those who serve as instructors at universities, for the Corps' PROSPECT training program, and for the professional engineer preparatory class taught by the Board of Professional Engineers. I both applaud this initiative in those who have taken these steps and encourage it for those who want to further their career and the work of Jacksonville District. Enhancing and maintaining technical skills and competencies is the only way we will meet current and future demands.

With the right people and the right processes, we deliver consistent products and reduce our risks. When we enhance our methods of delivery in this way, ensure consistent approaches throughout the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, improve operational management and long-term strategy of the water infrastructures for which we are responsible, and incorporate a more logical and integrated budget and planning process, we have transformed our civil works program. That is what I have been talking about in JaxStrong and that is what we are doing in the Jacksonville District.

I can hear the music and I really like the sound.

Army Strong. BUILDING STRONG®. JaxStrong.  
Alan M. Dodd  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
District Commander

**DISTRICT COMMANDER**  
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## ON THE COVER

LT. GEN. THOMAS P.  
BOSTICK, 53<sup>RD</sup> CHIEF  
OF ENGINEERS AND  
COMMANDING GENERAL  
OF THE U.S. ARMY CORPS  
OF ENGINEERS, VISITED  
THE EVERGLADES OCT. 10.  
(PHOTO BY JENN MILLER)



# Chief of Engineers visits the Everglades STORY AND PHOTOS BY JENN MILLER



Dan Kimball (left), superintendent of Everglades National Park, explains restoration progress to Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick (right) during his Oct. 10 visit.

Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), visited the Everglades Oct. 10, to see the restoration work being performed by Jacksonville District and its partnering agencies.

"USACE has one of the largest environmental restoration and sustainability roles in the federal government, and the Everglades restoration is our largest project of this kind," said Bostick. "After viewing first-hand the enormous challenges facing Everglades restoration and meeting with our partners in this effort, I am absolutely convinced that working together, we can achieve restoration goals and improve this ecological treasure for future generations."

During his trip to the Everglades, Bostick visited the Tamiami Trail Modifications project site in Miami-Dade County, a project sponsored by the National Park Service. At the site, he met with Shannon Estenoz, director, Everglades Initiatives for the Department of the Interior; Dan Kimball, superintendent of Everglades National Park; Dave Sikkema, project manager for Everglades National Park; Bob Johnson, director of the South Florida Natural Resources Center; Col. Alan Dodd, Jacksonville District commander and members of the project team to discuss the ongoing construction at the site.

"Progress continues to be made in Everglades restoration," said Dodd. "This progress is contingent upon the commitment of this district and our partnering agencies. Through a dedicated and collaborative effort, we will not only continue to move forward in our restoration goals but also fulfill our obligation to the nation to preserve this national treasure."

Construction of the \$81 million Tamiami Trail project, a key component of the Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park, began in 2010. The project includes constructing a one-mile bridge and raising and reinforcing an additional 9.7 miles of road, allowing increased water flows that are essential to the health and viability of the Everglades.

"A major construction milestone for the Tamiami Trail Modifications project was reached July 13 as the first concrete pour on the bridge deck was completed," said Tim Brown, project manager. "This milestone signified the start toward the end of the project's bridge construction. However, there is still more work to do and it is our collective discipline that will ensure our project's success."

After seeing the Tamiami Trail Modifications project, Bostick, along with agency representatives, took an airboat ride through Everglades National Park to see first-hand this national treasure. ♦



LEFT - Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, accompanied by Jacksonville District and Department of Interior team members, enjoyed an airboat ride in Everglades National Park, followed by a helicopter ride hosted by the South Florida Water Management District, during his Oct. 10 visit. RIGHT - Chris Rego (left), civil engineer, describes the Tamiami Trail Modifications project to Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick during his visit Oct. 10.

# Cutoff wall complete in Reach 1 of Herbert Hoover Dike

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOHN H. CAMPBELL



Marcos Gaitan (center), Herbert Hoover Dike construction representative, briefs Jacksonville District Commander Col. Alan Dodd (second from right) on the status of his project during a visit to the Culvert 11 work site Oct. 17. Dodd reviewed progress on 21.4 miles of cutoff wall installation between Port Mayaca and Belle Glade and progress on the replacement of water control structures around Lake Okeechobee.

"The last section of cutoff wall has been accepted at Task Order Nine."

Jacksonville District Project Engineer Miguel Cedeno-Morales reported the news during a weekly conference call in early October on the construction progress of Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD). It took just a moment for the news, and its impact, to completely sink in.

"That's great news," said Tim Willadsen, HHD project manager. "That means 100 percent of the 21.4 miles of cutoff wall under construction between Port Mayaca and Belle Glade is complete."

The work began in earnest in 2007, with multiple contractors working to install the concrete barrier in the dike, about 50-80 feet below the crest. The cutoff wall is intended to provide a barrier to help substantially reduce or eliminate erosion, which has been taking place within the earthen dam for many years. Jacksonville District began awarding multiple "task-order" contracts for construction in what was considered the weakest portion of the dike – the area between Port Mayaca and Belle Glade. The construction contracts totaled \$220 million.

"This accomplishment showcases the Corps' commitment to build and operate civil works projects that reduce risk to communities," said Col. Alan Dodd, Jacksonville District commander. "It's something that should bring pride to every member of the team."

While news of the milestone has been circulating around to interested stakeholders over the past month, it's been business as usual for the engineers, construction representatives and contractors who continue to work on other projects associated with the dike.

"This is a major milestone," said Willadsen. "But we know we've got more work to do. Our focus now will turn to replacing and removing old water control structures around the lake, which have been identified as high-risk items that could cause the dike to fail."

Work started in 2011 to remove an old water control structure, commonly known as Culvert 14, along the east side of the dike. That job was completed earlier this year. In January, crews started work to replace Culvert 1A east of Moore Haven and Culvert 11 south of Port Mayaca.

"The culverts were identified as the greatest risk to failure of the dike, due to loss of material into and along the barrels," said Willadsen. "Replacing those structures will reduce the risk."

Under their existing contracts, the crews working on Culverts 1A and 11 will also be working to replace Culverts 1 and 16. Another contract was awarded in September to replace Culverts 3 and 4A on the south side of the lake between Clewiston and South Bay. With more projects under design for award in 2013, it's estimated that it will take about six more years before work will be complete on the culverts.

While construction continues, Jacksonville District's Engineering Division continues to conduct analyses aimed at guiding the future direction of repairs to the dike. These analyses will be used as the basis for a Dam Safety Modification Report (DSMR), which is expected to be finalized in 2014. Information in the DSMR is expected to guide development of the next round of HHD projects. The ultimate goal is to improve the dike's Dam Safety Action Classification (DSAC), which currently classifies the dike as a structure with very high risk in need of repair. Due to the amount of work needed, it may be a full decade before work is finished.

"The Corps is taking a system-wide approach to this problem," said Willadsen. "We are working on projects which reduce the risk through the entire HHD system as quickly as possible." ♦



Contractors drill in advance of cutoff wall installation at Herbert Hoover Dike surrounding Lake Okeechobee. Jacksonville District recently finished installing 21.4 miles of cutoff wall between Port Mayaca and Belle Glade.



# Port Canaveral finds success at Civil Works Review Board

BY AMANDA ELLISON



A view of Canaveral Harbor, the site of the federal navigation project. (USACE PHOTO)

The Port of Canaveral achieved a milestone in October, when team members successfully presented the Canaveral Harbor Feasibility Study to the Civil Works Review Board.

The feasibility study is only the second of its kind nationwide to be implemented under Section 203 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986. WRDA Section 203 allows the project sponsor to conduct the feasibility study itself, with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers acting as a consultant. The Canaveral Port Authority petitioned Congress to allow the Corps to conduct the review process and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) portion of the study.

The purpose of the feasibility study is to restore the safety and efficiency of cargo vessel and cruise ship operations and improve conditions to accommodate existing and larger vessels that use the federal navigation project at Canaveral Harbor. The project will widen Port Canaveral's 400-foot wide harbor by 100 feet and deepen it by two feet.

"The sponsor wanted to ensure the report was completed according to our standards, so when they presented to the Civil Works Review Board, it would be approved," said Osvaldo Rodriguez, project manager.

Extensive coordination and partnering between the sponsor and the Corps aided in the success of the study and helped shave critical time off of the project schedule. "A lot of work went into the review process," said Rodriguez. "The project delivery team conducted intense reviews with Canaveral Port Authority and the vertical team to get this project approved."

Due to the team's efforts, members of the Civil Works Review Board commented that the presentation was one of the best efforts they have seen.

"Jacksonville District has set the bar high," said Rodriguez. "The team has demonstrated its experience and creativity on this project. Their superlative performance and devotion to duty reflect greatly upon themselves and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers."

The next step for the project is obtaining a signed Chief of Engineers report, which is anticipated for December 2012. ♦

# Hours to change on Okeechobee Waterway locks

STORY & PHOTOS BY JOHN H. CAMPBELL



A boat waits for water to drain at the St. Lucie Lock as it travels east toward Stuart. The lock is one of five operated by the Corps on the Okeechobee Waterway. Beginning Nov. 13, operations at all five locks will take place between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. daily.

Operational changes are coming to the five locks on the Okeechobee Waterway this fall.

Jacksonville District will begin operating the locks from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily beginning Nov. 13. The changes are part of a plan to provide consistent levels of service for all of the Corps' locks across the country.

"These changes are part of a civil works transformation process that will allow the Corps to deliver the best possible products and services to the nation," said Lt. Col. Tom Greco, deputy commander for south Florida.

Under the plan, the Corps has classified each lock into one of six categories based on the number of commercial and recreational lockages. The locks with the most commercial traffic will be authorized to operate 24 hours each day. The locks with the least commercial traffic will be operated by appointment only. Locks which had limited commercial traffic, but high recreational traffic will be authorized to operate 12 hours daily.

"The five locks on the Okeechobee Waterway fall into the third category [limited commercial, high recreational traffic]," said Jim Jeffords, Operations Division chief. "Each has more than 1,000 recreational lockages a year, but some have a low number of commercial lockages, less than 500. Under this plan, we can operate those locks for 12 hours a day."

Canaveral Lock, near Port Canaveral, is not impacted by these changes. With more than 900 commercial lockages a year, they will be authorized to continue operating at their current schedule of 6 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

The ultimate goal, from a national perspective, is to ensure the Corps is making appropriate allocations of its operations money to the locks that are most important to the country.

"We want to shape a sustainable portfolio of water-resources infrastructure for the nation's future," said Greco.

The national plan requires each district to review its lockage data annually. If traffic increases or decreases, operations could change accordingly. ♦

# Antilles engineer's prolific publications and presentations are impressive but personal goal is an example to all

BY JEAN PAVLOV



Wilmel Varela-Ortiz (left), acting resident engineer, North Puerto Rico Resident Office and Yamil Castillo (right), acting chief, Antilles Construction Office on the Weeks 506 Dredge, surveying work on the Arecibo Harbor maintenance dredging project. (PHOTO BY JAIME CRUZ)

Quietly working behind the scenes, a Jacksonville District employee tirelessly produces technical paper after technical paper, mostly published in construction journals or bridge and maintenance journals. This quiet, young employee has already amassed quite a distinguished list of awards and recognitions.

Wilmel Varela-Ortiz works unassumingly. Assigned to the Antilles Office as a civil engineer in the Construction Division, he was named last month as acting resident engineer at the North Puerto Rico Resident Office. Prior to his arrival in the Antilles Office in January 2005, Varela-Ortiz worked at the Corps' Engineering Research and Development Center (ERDC), Structural Engineering Branch in Vicksburg, Miss.

In addition to his current responsibilities as acting resident engineer, Varela-Ortiz maintains a heavy load of projects as a civil engineer. He has worked on the Rio Puerto Nuevo Flood Risk Reduction Project/Margarita Channel; De Diego Bridge Modifications; Bechara Middle Section; Rio de la Plata Flood Risk Reduction Project; the Fort San Geronimo Hurricane and Storm Damage Reduction Project and Arecibo Harbor maintenance dredging. But what is particularly impressive is what he does in addition to his projects.

"Wilmel is a young, talented and well-educated engineer who has kept his interest in continuing education by staying very active in academia and technical forums," said Yamil I. Castillo, acting chief, Antilles Construction Office. "He has been able to balance the practice of civil engineering as an active project engineer in the construction field with his interests in sharing the product of his research and his knowledge with the engineering community."

Varela-Ortiz has contributed to a considerable number of professional publications since joining the Corps. His technical papers have been published in national and international journals, on topics such as damage assessment and proposed remedies for bridges in combat zones and load testing and ground penetrating radar assessment for concrete bridges on military installations.

Additionally, Varela-Ortiz has presented papers at numerous conferences and other professional gatherings, such as the Corps' Infrastructure Systems Conference, the International Association for Bridge Maintenance and Safety and the Latin American and Caribbean consortium of Engineering Institutions.

Varela-Ortiz said that he joined the Corps because he wanted to positively impact the lives of individuals, particularly in Puerto Rico, where he can make an immediate impact on people of his own heritage. Varela-Ortiz is a role model who mentors young people on both the personal and technical level. Starting in college and continuing to this day, Varela-Ortiz works with the Alliance for Minority Program, mentoring children in chemistry, pre-calculus and calculus. He also mentors Hispanic minority students from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez campus as part of the Students Temporary Employment Program. As a program mentor, he has contributed not only to students' professional development, but has also provided encouragement and helped in diminishing cultural and language barriers.

"I am very grateful to those that have helped me along the way," said Varela-Ortiz, "and I hope to do the same for young people in my life."

Varela-Ortiz also contributes to the professional development of fellow young engineers within the Corps, as he is currently providing bridge assessment training to both civilian and military engineers.

His impressive list of awards includes being named the Most Promising Engineer by the Hispanic Engineer National Achievement Award Council in 2008 and recognition by the Eighth U.S. Army Special Forces Command Engineers, the U.S. Army Special Forces Command Engineers and U.S. Forces Korea Combined Forces Command in June 2007, for his contributions to the "Passability of Heavy Equipment Transporter System and M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank Military Vehicles on Korean Bridges." He also earned ERDC's Technical Support Achievement Award, for his work on the Installation Management Agency centrally managed bridge safety program.

In July 2006, Varela-Ortiz was recognized by then-Assistant Commandant of the U.S. Army Engineer School and current deputy commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Maj. Gen. Todd T. Semonite for his contributions to the "Battlespace Gap Definition & Defeat Demonstration." Most recently, he was recognized as a member of the 2011 Jacksonville District Team of the Year, awarded to the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act-sponsored Rio Puerto Nuevo Flood Risk Reduction/Margarita Channel Project Delivery Team.

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 8)

# Jacksonville District uses unique technology to search for munitions debris

BY NAKEIR NOBLES



The open prairie-type conditions at Avon Park Formerly Used Defense Site are ideal for using the helicopter magnetometer to search for munitions debris at the site. Flying about 30 to 40 mph, the helicopter detects ferrous metallic debris. (PHOTO COURTESY CORPS CONTRACTOR, ZAPATA)

A large munitions response site, coupled with heavy vegetation and hazardous wildlife, provided ideal conditions for Jacksonville District to use a helicopter magnetometer for initial fieldwork at the Avon Park Formerly Used Defense Site in central Florida Sept. 28.

Jacksonville District's project manager for the site, Bill Spence, said the helicopter is a great tool to use for large open acreage that needs to be investigated.

Flying at speeds of 30 to 40 mph at six feet above ground, the helicopter flies low enough to be effective, says Steve Morrisette, a project manager with Zapata, the Corps' contractor for the fieldwork.

At a lower altitude, sensors are closer to the ground, which produces a better signal response from ferrous metallic debris at the site. As the helicopter flies higher due to buildings, trees and power lines, the magnetic signal to the sensors is lowered.

Because Avon Park is open prairie land and has minimal obstructions, use of the helicopter at this site was ideal, said Morrisette.

"Given the expected site conditions of high concentrations of practice bomb casings in localized areas, the helicopter system was ideally suited for the Avon Park site," Morrisette said.

The helicopter works by detecting magnetic anomalies on the ground or in shallow subsurfaces. If magnetic metallic debris is present, it disrupts the normal flow of the earth's magnetic field, which the sensors are able to detect. Morrisette said it's an excellent way to look for ferrous metallic objects over large areas.

Prior to beginning the aerial work, landowners were briefed on the helicopter's operating practices. Special conditions that may require landowner action, such as keeping ranch workers out of an area, are coordinated before the work begins. In the case of livestock, the helicopter is not flown in that area until the landowner relocates the animals.

Other precautions that are taken before work begins includes taking a reconnaissance flight over the site to determine conditions prior to flying close-to-ground transects. The pilot doesn't fly over livestock that are cornered at a fence line or any other enclosure.

Spence says proper coordination with landowners before the aerial investigation begins, prevents the low-flying aircraft from scaring livestock. "We want to work with landowners to eliminate as much stress on the animals as possible," he said.

"Typically the pilot observes livestock moving away from the area once they see and hear the helicopter. The pilot will also nudge cattle away from a transect area from a higher altitude prior to completing a transect," Morrisette said.

Because the aircraft flies so low, it may seem as if the noise it produces would affect one's hearing.

Morrisette says the helicopter creates a level of noise typical of a turbine powered helicopter. "My experience was that once you were about 100 feet or more away, hearing protection was not required. In operation over a munitions response site, unless a person was right under the helicopter, the noise level was not excessive."

The use of the aircraft for metal detection at formerly used defense sites may never replace traditional methods of fieldwork. But Morrisette says he's sold on its results.

"It may not be appropriate for every situation, but in less than a week, we had four 649-acre and two 20,000-acre munitions response sites flown and characterized. This would have taken several months on the ground with higher hazards and risks to workers. The work was completed at a fraction of the cost it would have taken to complete ground-based digital geophysical mapping over these large areas," Morrisette said. ♦



The helicopter magnetometer detects magnetic anomalies on the ground or in shallow subsurfaces. The device flies six feet above ground at speeds of 30 to 40 mph. (PHOTO COURTESY CORPS CONTRACTOR, ZAPATA)

## Jacksonville District marks new fiscal year with celebration and compassion

BY NANCY J. STICHT



Dawn Zattau (left), Jacksonville Humane Society volunteer, chats with Col. Alan Dodd, district commander about her organization's work at the CFC kickoff event Oct. 1. Zattau is the wife of Bill Zattau, chief of the Invasive Species Management Branch. (PHOTO BY DAVID KIMERY)

Jacksonville District team members gathered together Oct. 1 to celebrate the accomplishments of the past fiscal year and to begin the new fiscal year by marking the start of the annual Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) drive.

"I commend all of you for an exceptionally well-executed 2012 and for successfully closing out the year so we can turn our attention to 2013 and the opportunities it has in store for us," said Col. Alan Dodd, district commander. Among the district's many accomplishments over the past year, said Dodd:

- Had five Chief of Engineers' Reports signed.
- Started construction of the Tamiami Trail bridge.
- Signed a Project Partnership Agreement with the Port of Miami.
- Awarded 1,207 contracts valued at more than \$3.6 million, including nine dredging projects and four shore protection projects.
- Processed approximately 10,000 regulatory actions.
- Dealt with Tropical Storms Debby and Isaac, without missing a beat.
- Passed the half-way mark on the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP). The second pilot project to be implemented under civil works transformation, the Lake Worth Inlet Feasibility Study, will benefit Palm Beach Harbor, which hasn't seen any improvements in more than 40 years.

"You excel at what you do day in and day out. But you also excel and make a difference in the communities in which you live...Even during some of the most stressed economic years our nation has seen, you have still come through for the many charities that rely on the annual Combined Federal Campaign," Dodd said.

Dodd then invited team members to visit with representatives of some of the participating CFC charities, who shared information about their organizations during the kickoff event. Jacksonville District's goal is to "Give From the Heart" by donating at least \$61,000 this year. The CFC drive runs through Dec. 15. ♦



Earl Wagner, left, speaks with a representative of Hubbard House, an organization that assists victims of domestic abuse, at the CFC kickoff event Oct. 1. (PHOTO BY DAVID KIMERY)

## ANTILLES ENGINEER'S (continued from PAGE 6)



Jose M. Rosado (left), former deputy commander for the Antilles and Wilmel Varela-Ortiz (right) receive awards at the 2008 Hispanic Engineer National Achievements Awards Conference in Houston, Texas, from now retired Brig. Gen. Joseph Schroedel, former South Atlantic Division commander (center). The conference was held to identify, honor, and document the contributions of outstanding Hispanic American science, engineering, technology and math professionals. Rosado's award was for Environmental Distinction in Civil Engineering and Varela-Ortiz's award was for Most Promising Engineer or Scientist - Graduate Degree. (USACE PHOTO)

"[It is unusual for] a young engineer...he [is] very much involved in academia," said Castillo. "Wilnel does this in a unique manner; he has been able to balance his professional life with his family and friends and his other interests in research."

Varela-Ortiz graduated from Emilio R. Delgado High School, Corozal, Puerto Rico in 1998, receiving a high honors award. Inspired by his father and older brother, who were builders, he went to the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus, majoring in civil engineering. While working on his bachelor's degree, which he received in 2003, he also earned the Etienne Totti Award and the Civil Engineering Department's Most Outstanding Student award. In 2007, he graduated with his master's degree in engineering from the University of Puerto Rico.

Off the job, Varela-Ortiz continues his education by performing research work for ERDC in conjunction with the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez campus.

"He should be an example for young engineers that sometimes think that once you get your degree you do not need to keep on studying and learning. Our profession demands continuing education to keep abreast of the technological changes and the needs of our communities. Wilnel is an example for all of us," said Castillo. ♦



Wilnel Varela-Ortiz (far right) was one of the Jacksonville District team members who assisted with the Hispanic Engineer National Achievement Awards Corporation (HENAAC) annual conference, held this year in Orlando, Fla. Other team members are Edgardo Velez (third from right) and Alberto Gonzales (fourth from right). They were joined by Fidel Rodriguez (fourth from left), USACE Hispanic Program Manager. (PHOTO BY EUGENE PAWLK, HQUSACE)



# Record of Decision signed for Everglades Restoration Transition Plan

BY JENN MILLER



Lowering of water levels in Water Conservation Area 3A will directly benefit tree islands, marsh vegetation and the Everglade Snail Kite. (USACE PHOTO)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Jacksonville District received a signed Record of Decision for the Everglades Restoration Transition Plan (ERTP) Oct. 19. The Record of Decision, signed by Col. Donald E. Jackson Jr., South Atlantic Division commander, provides the authority for ERTP to replace the current Interim Operational Plan for Protection of the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow (IOP), modifying current water management operations of the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) project in the area.

"The IOP is no longer a viable option due to the condition of endangered species within Water Conservation Area 3A," said Donna George, project manager.

Water Conservation Area 3, also referred to as WCA-3, is the largest of the three water conservation areas located in south Florida, covering 915 square miles in western Broward and Dade counties. It is the only water conservation area not entirely enclosed by levees and is separated into WCA-3A and WCA-3B by the L-67A Canal, which runs southwestward from the eastern boundary toward Everglades National Park.

The purpose of the ERTP is to define water management operating criteria for the C&SF project features located in south Florida, including portions of Broward and Miami-Dade counties, Everglades National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, and adjacent areas. It includes water management operating criteria for the currently constructed features of the Modified Water Deliveries (MWD) and Canal 111 South Dade (C-111) projects, congressionally authorized projects that will restore natural water flows and ecological viability to Everglades National Park.

ERTP will change the WCA-3A Regulation Schedule, including the lowering of the uppermost zone (Zone A) from 9.5 to 10.5 feet NGVD; eliminating Zones B and C; and extending Zones D and E1 to provide additional operational flexibility.

Lowering of water levels in WCA-3A will provide direct benefits to tree islands, marsh vegetation and the Everglade snail kite by reducing

prolonged inundation and high water depths until modifications to increase the outlet capacity of WCA-3 associated with Everglades restoration plans can be implemented. ERTP provides greater flexibility within the existing system to store and release water in WCA 3A to accommodate multi-species needs through operational capability, application of performance measures, and assessment of observed hydrologic/ecological conditions.

"ERTP represents a transition from single to multi-species management," said Gina Ralph, supervisory biologist. "Its objectives include improving conditions in Water Conservation Area 3A for the endangered Everglade Snail Kite, Wood Stork and wading bird species and their habitat, while maintaining protection for the endangered Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow and congressionally authorized purposes of the C&SF project."

Under ERTP there will be no seasonal closure criteria for S-12C, one of the primary discharge outlets for WCA-3A. This will allow for an increase in the dry season flows into the Northeast part of Everglades National Park.

Additionally, Periodic Scientists Calls will be conducted to provide a forum for agencies and tribes to provide information to be considered in the Corps' decision making process and enable real-time water management decisions to provide benefits to multiple species within WCA-3A. Calls will occur on an as-needed basis with the interval between calls determined based upon ongoing or anticipated conditions within the WCAs, the South Dade Conveyance System, and/or ENP. Regularly scheduled Periodic Scientists Calls in January, May and October will be used to obtain information on long-term (annual and/or seasonal) conditions in WCA-3 and/or ENP.

"ERTP incorporates more flexible operating criteria to better manage Water Conservation Area 3A for the benefit of multiple species," said George. "It represents a positive step towards balancing the competing needs of a complex system." ♦

# Command Sergeant Major visits Corps team members along the Okeechobee Waterway

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ERICA ROBBINS



Command Sgt. Maj. Karl Groninger's visit to the Port Mayaca Lock and Dam was well-timed: he was able to visit with lock and dam leader Matt Kirschner, lock and dam rover Danny Williams and dedicated lock and dam operator Jon Fields. Fields was at the lock on his day off, working on a bench to match the showcase (shown above), that he and Kirschner had built from scrap lumber.

Command Sgt. Maj. Karl Groninger serves as the eyes, ears and boots-on-the-ground for Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Recently, Groninger visited with Corps team members at several locations in Florida along the Okeechobee Waterway, including the South Florida Operations Office in Clewiston, Port Mayaca Lock and Dam, and the St. Lucie Lock and Dam and Visitor Center.

Groninger said that upon assuming command, Bostick's directions to him were simple: "Travel as often as you need to, wherever you need to...I want you to be able to look people in the eye and talk to them, and let them know a couple of things. First off, tell them that they are the most important thing we have in the Corps. Let them know at the end of the day, they are the folks that make things happen. Their hard work creates all of the successes that we can claim."

Groninger travels to do "battlefield circulation" about two weeks out of every month. He has already visited various locations in the Northwestern Division, North Atlantic Division and South Atlantic Division. He sees his mission as a double opportunity to share information back and forth.

Groninger takes to the road with at least three goals in mind.

"First, we want to make sure that employees understand that at headquarters, we recognize that they are our most important resource," said Groninger. "When we make decisions, we always try to evaluate the impact those decisions will make on our employees. Second, we consider our employees in the field to be our technical experts and we want to take advantage of their knowledge and skills. We are always trying to find out what we can do better and how we can improve. As an organization, we try to get better every day. One way to do that is to solicit input from our people in the field. Finally, we want to thank our employees for their service and to let them know they are important. We recognize that they work hard to represent the U.S. Army Corps every day and we want to take the time to let them know that in person."

Groninger's day began in Clewiston before 7:30 a.m. at the South Florida Operations Office. After a brief introduction, Groninger asked the supervisors to step out and provided an opportunity for the workforce a chance to air their views.

"I get very frank and important feedback," said Groninger. "I walk away with a better understanding of the problems and concerns at ground level. I hope that the people that I've spoken with come away feeling that I have listened to them and heard them. I want them to know that I care, and that I will share their concerns with management. I also

want to make sure that I follow up after my visit. That's part of leadership – to make sure that their issues and concerns were addressed."

During Groninger's meeting with supervisors, he shared that many of the themes brought up by the workforce are common ones heard across the country, and that they are getting to be more common as budgets tighten. He also emphasized that teambuilding is an important part of leadership, so that everyone feels like they are pulling together. Part of that is communicating with the workforce and explaining the challenges that they face as managers.

Steven Dunham, chief of the South Florida Operations Office, thanked Groninger for his visit. "Our employees relish the opportunity to talk to someone at your level, and to know that the chain of command is involved and cares," said Dunham.

Groninger reiterated the importance of this trip to his overall mission.

"Lt. Gen. Bostick says that the workforce is priority number one. They are our number one resource, and we care about them. They are the face of the Corps at a barbeque, at church, and at Wal-Mart on the weekend. People are going to be talking to them and asking questions. Person-to-person contact is very powerful and our employees are our best spokesmen because they have credibility in their communities. We need to make sure that they all feel that they are part of the team."

In closing, Groninger said, "You have a great workforce. We've got a big bench and a lot of good people. They want to do better and they want to do more." ♦



Command Sgt. Maj. Karl Groninger (left) and lock and dam leader Matthew Kirschner discuss operations on the Okeechobee Waterway, while overlooking Lake Okeechobee where it meets the St. Lucie Canal at Port Mayaca.

# Gonzalez family knows the meaning of freedom

BY NANCY J. STICHT



LEFT - Albert Gonzalez (center) and (from left) his mother Caridad, sister Alina, brother Carlos and father Gilberto celebrate their first Christmas in the United States after emigrating from Cuba during the Mariel Boatlift in 1980. RIGHT - Albert Gonzalez (left), project manager in the Miami Regulatory Office, along with his daughters Kylee, 5 (left) and Madison, 9 (right) and his parents Caridad and Gilberto. Gilberto is especially proud of his son's federal career and grateful for the freedom his family has enjoyed since coming to the United States in 1980. (PHOTOS COURTESY ALBERT GONZALEZ)

For days the determined family waited on the beach, sleeping under swaying palm trees and watching the horizon expectantly for the shrimping boat from Key West that would transport them from Cuba to America. Leaving behind all their worldly possessions, their home subject to rampant looting and themselves subject to taunts of "traitor" from angry, even violent mobs, they could not look back and they had nowhere else to turn.

The boat the Gonzalez family was waiting for would bring an uncle who had been among the first, years earlier, to survive crossing the Straits of Florida on a raft to emigrate to the United States. Economic conditions in Cuba had since deteriorated so drastically that Fidel Castro had announced that all Cubans wishing to leave for the United States were free to board boats at the port of Mariel, west of Havana, Cuba.

The Mariel Boatlift, which began in April 1980, saw approximately 125,000 Cubans stream out of Cuba in 1,700 boats before it ended in October of that year. Among them was three-year-old Albert Gonzalez, his parents, Gilberto and Caridad, his older brother and sister, Carlos and Alina and his grandmother, Osoria.

Albert Gonzalez, project manager in the Miami Regulatory Office, doesn't personally remember much about his family's emigration – he celebrated his fourth birthday mere days after arriving in Key West to begin a new life. Over the years, his parents have described to their children the circumstances that led to their decision to leave Cuba.

"They made their decision because they did not see that the government was going to get any better," said Gonzalez. "Living conditions were getting harder; elections were a fraud. Young boys were drafted into the military to fight in faraway places like Angola, and my brother was approaching draft age."

Schoolchildren were being brainwashed with communist ideology and freedom of speech was non-existent. In fact, Castro's "el comite" – a secret society of sorts, would report those who spoke out against the government, even in casual settings. "This created a lot of distrust," said Gonzalez. "Sometimes you had no idea which side even your neighbors were on."

Upon the arrival of the Elizabeth M, the boat that would carry them to freedom, the family was processed and presented with a manifest that

detailed the conditions of their departure. They were forced to take other passengers with them; what they didn't know at the time was that Castro was using this opportunity to rid the island nation of criminals and mental patients, deemed "undesirables." Some of the boats were so overloaded that they were intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard, and some passengers were transferred to other vessels.

Two days later, the Gonzalez family arrived in Key West, Fla., where they were processed, immunized and released to family members. Those who didn't have family sponsors were sent to tent cities. The influx of criminals caused the crime rate in south Florida to skyrocket, creating a negative stereotype of Cubans and making it difficult for honest immigrants to find jobs. It was many years before the stigma could be overcome.

Their first home was in a trailer park off SW 8th Street in Miami, with many other Cuban families that had immigrated. What surprised them, though, was that many of their neighbors were Vietnam Veterans who were still struggling since their homecoming from that conflict.

"My parents each worked two jobs, saved up to buy a home, and were proud to put two of us through college," said Gonzalez. His sister eventually became a teacher and his brother a journeyman electrician. Gonzalez attended Miami-Dade Community College and graduated from Florida International University with a bachelor's degree in environmental science. He worked at a research laboratory and for Miami-Dade County prior to joining the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers five years ago, a career that brings great pride to his father.

"Dad is so proud that I am working for the federal government – the highest level of government – and for the Department of Defense," explained Gonzalez. "He just eats it up when I receive something like a [commander's] coin or my five-year service certificate; it makes him very proud. This country has given him and his family the opportunity to live the American dream, and Dad has high respect for it."

Now the father of two daughters, ages five and nine, Gonzalez said that he can't imagine being faced with making the decision his parents made. Now U.S. citizens, they have never returned to Cuba even though they still have family members there.

"Until the government in Cuba changes, we believe it would be hypocritical to go and spend money there," said Gonzalez.

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**GONZALEZ FAMILY** (continued from PAGE 11)

Recently he and his family were enjoying a cruise vacation when their ship came upon a raft carrying 19 Cubans. Cruise ship crew members were sent in a lifeboat to offer water and other supplies.

"The crew recommended they come onboard, but as tempting as that might have been for these poor people out in the middle of the ocean, it would have meant that their chance of freedom was over," Gonzalez explained. "They would have gotten a ride to the nearest port on the luxury cruise ship, but then they would have been sent back to Cuba. So in reality, they knew that although the cruise ship meant temporary safety it also meant going back to Cuba, so they refused the offer to come onboard."

The crew's limitation to help is due to the "wet-foot dry-foot" policy. Initiated in 1995 to prevent the type of mass exodus as seen during the Mariel Boatlift, the policy holds that Cuban migrants apprehended in the water between the two countries have "wet feet" and are returned to their country. However, those who make it to the U.S. shore have "dry feet" and may qualify for legal permanent residency and U.S. citizenship. Over the years, countless migrants have lost their lives at sea, attempting the dangerous 90-mile crossing, often in homemade rafts or boats.

"The Cuban people are very resourceful. That is in large part why the Castro government has lasted this long," said Gonzalez. "People find a way to get by."

Gonzalez is happy that almost his entire family lives close by, in Miami. "Cubans place the highest priority in their lives not on money or possessions but on family and staying close to one another."

"Immigration to this country has taught our family that having the freedom to pursue your goals is fundamental. Without that nothing else is possible no matter how talented you are or how hard you work," Gonzalez said.

"My Dad, over the years, has used a phrase that at first I did not understand, but it sums up his gratitude and pride in this country," he added. "It is, 'From here you have to move to the moon.' This means that in his opinion this is the best place on Earth, and could only be topped by someone that was living on the moon." ♦

## Corps, Coast Guard assess Florida's east coast



Jacksonville District team members flew with the U.S. Coast Guard Oct. 29, to conduct an aerial assessment of Hurricane Sandy's impacts to the federal beach projects along the eastern peninsula of Florida between Duval and Miami-Dade Counties. Although there was significant erosion from Brevard to Broward Counties, this view of the St. Johns County Shore Protection Project at St. Augustine Beach shows that the project performed well and experienced minimal impacts. (PHOTO BY JASON ENGLE)

## Panel prepares team for successful resumes and interviews

BY ERICA ROBBINS

To better prepare team members for successful interviews, the Jacksonville District Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEO) hosted a coffee round table, Prepare for Success: Resumes and Interviews, as a National Hispanic American Heritage Month (HHM) activity.

Luis Alejandro, Hispanic employment program manager, said the program was inspired by requests from young Hispanic American teammates who want to develop their leadership skills and who aspire to higher levels of service within the Corps. The panel he assembled and moderated included several district leaders who have served on selection panels, including Ava Benudiz, director, Human Resources Office; David Hobbie, deputy district engineer for Programs and Project Management; Laureen Borochaner, chief of the Engineering Division and Jim Jeffords, chief of the Operations Division. The panel shared their views and experiences, with the goal of helping district team members understand how the selection process works and what panel members look for when reviewing resumes, and to provide advice on navigating the application and interview process.

"In the Jacksonville District, we are a team. We have different backgrounds and experiences, but we are a team and we all complement each other," said Alejandro. "It is important to share our institutional knowledge for the benefit of us all. This Hispanic American Heritage Month activity is one of the many ways we can mentor and support our teammates and help them to succeed."

### TOP TEN TIPS

- In both your resume and your interview, be succinct and use specific examples that illustrate your significant accomplishments and how they contributed to team and/or organizational success.
- Research the organization and be prepared to ask questions or use examples to illustrate that you have done your homework.
- Tailor your resume to the position for which you are applying.
- Include other activities where you may have demonstrated or applied relevant skills and knowledge, such as participation in a leadership development program.
- Along with examples of success, be prepared to provide an example of a recent mistake – including how you handled it and what you learned from it.
- Dress for success, display energy and enthusiasm, use open body language and smile!
- Prepare and practice a statement that summarizes who you are, what qualifications you bring and what qualities you possess that will make you a good fit for the position. Use this statement at the beginning of the interview, when asked to tell something about yourself and at the end of the interview, when asked if you have anything to add.
- Prepare a number of solid examples and success stories that illustrate technical as well as interpersonal success, and use them to illustrate your strengths.
- If asked, "Would you accept this job if offered?" respond "Yes," without hedging, and then elaborate: "This is the path that I have been on and these are the things I have done to bring me here, and I absolutely think this is the next step for me. I am going to be an asset to you. You will never regret the day that you selected me for this position."
- Ask for feedback – from friends, family, colleagues and previous interviewers – and be open to their suggestions.

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USACE NEWS RELEASE

# Army Corps of Engineers waives day-use fees at recreation areas on Veterans Day

BY ERICA ROBBINS

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will waive day-use fees for veterans, active and reserve component service members, and their families at the more than 2,400 USACE-operated recreation areas nationwide on Veterans Day, Nov. 11.

"We honor our veterans, active and reserve service members, and their families this Veterans Day with an invitation to launch a boat or swim at one of our beaches free of charge, said Maj. Gen. Michael J. Walsh, USACE deputy commanding general for civil works and emergency operations.

The day-use fee waiver requires only verbal confirmation of service. This waiver covers fees for boat launch ramps and swimming beaches. The waiver does not apply to camping and camping-related services, or fees for specialized facilities such as group picnic shelters. USACE does not charge an entrance fee to access its parks. Other agencies that manage recreation areas on USACE lands are encouraged, but not required, to offer the Veterans Day waiver of fees in the areas that they manage.

"We first began the Veterans Day fee waiver in 2006 as a way to honor the men and women who have served our nation and the armed forces, and to encourage them and their families to spend some time together enjoying America's great outdoors," added Walsh.

With more than 370 million visits annually to 422 lake and river projects, USACE is the largest federal provider of outdoor and water-based recreation in the nation. It's estimated that 90 percent of the more than 2,400 USACE-operated recreation areas nationwide are within 50 miles of metropolitan areas and offer a diverse range of outdoor activities to people of all ages. ♦



## JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT'S RECREATION AREAS IN FLORIDA, WHICH WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE DAY-USE FEE WAIVER ON VETERAN'S DAY, ARE:

- W.P. Franklin North boat ramp      \$3 boat ramp fee
- W.P. Franklin South Recreation Area      \$3 boat ramp fee; \$1 swimming beach fee
- Ortona North Recreation Area      \$3 boat ramp fee
- St. Lucie South Recreation Area      \$3 boat ramp fee

To find other Corps-managed recreation sites, please visit:  
<http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/visitors/visitors.cfm>



The W.P. Franklin South Recreation Area, near Fort Myers, Fla. is one of Jacksonville District's recreation sites that will waive day-use fees on Veteran's Day Nov. 11. (PHOTO BY JOHN CAMPBELL)

## PANEL PREPARES (continued from PAGE 12)

Panelist David Hobbie closed with this advice: "Doing all of this is great in preparing for interviews, but let me be clear - you interview every day you are at work...your reputation precedes you, so make sure that you have that positive interview long before you step into an interview." He also made a timely suggestion, "Since it's appraisal time, let me add this: When you have your appraisal, ask your supervisor what you could be doing better."

"I think that this is a great forum," said Col. Alan Dodd, Jacksonville District commander, who also attended the discussion. "A lot of good information should be coming out of this and I appreciate everyone for participating."

"I want to thank the leadership for sharing their experience and insights with our team members," said Alejandro. "We are one team with different backgrounds, but our common missions unite us. We want everyone on our team to be more knowledgeable about the interview process so they are better prepared, and more comfortable and confident. We have gotten excellent feedback on the program, and many people said that they found the discussion to be very useful. We look forward to using this great information during other district programs in the future." ♦

# National Native American Heritage Month



Serving Our People, Serving Our Nations:  
Native Visions for Future Generations

**OVERSEAS  
CONTINGENCY  
OPERATIONS**

**WELCOME HOME**

MILTON SWITANEK  
RICHARD RYAN



**ELECTION DAY**  
NOVEMBER 6, 2012



## HOW THE MIGHTY FALL

AND WHY SOME COMPANIES  
NEVER GIVE IN

**JIM COLLINS**

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF GOOD TO GREAT

## BOOKNOOK

HOW THE MIGHTY FALL BY JIM COLLINS, © 2009.

A MONTHLY BOOK RECOMMENDATION BY DISTRICT LIBRARIAN ORIANA BROWN ARMSTRONG, MLS

In *How the Mighty Fall*, Collins confronts questions like: "Can decline be detected early and avoided? How far can a company fall before the path toward doom becomes unshakable? How can companies reverse course?" In responding to these questions, he offers leaders the well-founded hope that they can learn how to stave off decline and, if they find themselves falling, reverse their course. Collins' research project uncovered five step-wise stages of decline:

- Stage 1: Hubris Born of Success
- Stage 2: Undisciplined Pursuit of More
- Stage 3: Denial of Risk and Peril
- Stage 4: Grasping for Salvation
- Stage 5: Capitulation to Irrelevance or Death

By understanding these stages of decline, leaders can substantially reduce their chances of falling all the way to the bottom. Companies that embrace Collins' stumble-recover theory avoid the risk of failure.

Every institution, no matter how great, is vulnerable to decline. There is no law of nature that the most powerful will inevitably remain at the top. Anyone can fall and most eventually do. But, as Collins' research emphasizes, some companies do indeed recover—coming back even stronger—even after having crashed into the depths of Stage 4.

Collins research finds that decline is largely self-inflicted, and the path to recovery lies largely within our own hands. We are not imprisoned by our circumstances, our history, or even our staggering defeats along the way. As long as we never get entirely knocked out of the game, hope always remains. The mighty can fall, but they can often rise again. ♦

Review from HarperCollins.