



Tower Times

Rock Island District's News Magazine

March 2011



Navigation resumes

The ice has melted and lock and dam work is complete



**US Army Corps
of Engineers** ®
Rock Island District

Tower Times

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ON THE COVER



The first tow to lock through Lock 22 on March 4 was the Roberta Tabor. Above it prepares to lock through Lock 14 on Monday, March 7. See story on page 9.

Photo by Bill Gretten.

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The winner of the February Where’s This? was Sam Heilig, Mississippi River Project. The correct answer was Coralville Lake Reservoir spillway. Visit the Tower Times online to participate in the March Where’s This?



Tower Times

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A message from....

Colonel Shawn McGinley, District Commander



Safety is job one at all times

Spring is almost here and for a civil works District like ours, one that has responsibility in five river basins, the pending issue of flooding is of paramount concern. This is the time of year we gear up for possible flood-fighting measures, hoping for the best scenario but preparing for the worst. As we get ready for the changing season and our missions, everyone should be keeping safety at the forefront of their thoughts.

I talk safety a lot because, of all my responsibilities, the health and well being of our employees is top of the list. This past year, our District performed well with positive trends in all safety statistics. But, as we move into the spring and summer months, the kinds of risk we must manage can change. Now is a good time to evaluate yourselves and your work environments.

The change in risk I refer to involves the outside forces that can create safety hazards. With the weather changing and the spring thaw occurring, many of our employees are turning into flood-fighting mode. And, if there is indeed flooding, many of you will be out diligently helping the communities affected. In helping, don't let your enthusiasm affect your ability to detect risk in whatever job you are performing.

Flood waters create high-risk situations and should always be treated with the utmost caution. Water is one of nature's most powerful forces and when it is moving, like in a flood, it can move tons of soil and even buildings. A person can be swept away instantly, if they are not careful. Respect the danger flood waters present.

Of course the change in weather means much more than possible flooding. The more mild conditions enable us to be outdoors more often, carrying out the variety of activities required to execute our missions. Construction sites will be operating at full force and anyone who works on, around or near these sites should remember their mandatory safety equipment. A hard hat, sleeved shirt, steel-toed boots and pants are just a few items everyone should be donning. That mandatory equipment could also include gloves, reflective clothing and a life jacket, depending on the situation. No one should be lax when it comes to safety equipment. It should be worn consistently and properly.

One other safety factor that is affected by the change in weather is related to driving. Some may think that the absence of snow and ice makes driving much less hazardous. The truth is that driving is always hazardous and should be treated responsibly, on or off duty. Many of our employees spend hours upon hours operating vehicles throughout the District. Driving safety is imperative.

Motor vehicle accidents are the single largest cause of accidental death and are one of the leading causes of on-the-job fatalities. Operating a vehicle can be one of the most risky activities for all of us, whether we are driving to work or taking a government vehicle to a work site. We have to respect the risk involved. When operating your vehicle be sure to obey posted speed limits and slow down when weather is a factor. Excessive speed is often the cause of accidents. Also, be constantly aware of your surroundings. It is tough to remain aware if you are using a cell phone, whether to talk or text. If you must use your phone, be sure to use a hands-free device. Pull over and stop the vehicle in a safe location if a text or email is warranted.

Safety is a team effort. We should police ourselves and others to ensure the wellbeing of our teammates. It can be easy to fall into a false mindset, one that creates an aura of invincibility or an attitude of "it won't happen to me."

It has been 25 years since the District suffered its most tragic safety-related accident. In a span of just five hours, two men lost their lives at two separate work sites involving cranes. It could certainly be described as a freak accident, one that isn't representative of our safety record as a whole. Accidents can happen but it is our job to do everything in our power to prevent and avoid injuries, fatalities and property damage. We can all do our part by identifying risk and managing those factors that create risk. It can be as easy as wearing the appropriate safety equipment, or as intensive as reviewing your entire processes to ensure all risks are managed.

For more information related to safety in the work place, contact our Safety Officer, Troy Larson, at 309-794-5280.

There is nothing that we do here in the Rock Island District that is so important that someone needs to hurry and not use proper safety procedures. All of you do your jobs fantastically and I want you to continue to do your jobs safely. The goal is to have no safety-related incidents. Let's all work toward that goal together. Thanks for all you do and **CONTINUE BUILDING STRONG®** 

Caring for our waters

By Hilary Markin, Editor

Note - This is the first in a series of articles to educate the workforce about the missions of the Rock Island District stemming from the Tower Times survey results.

The never ending process of learning. We all work in an environment that is constantly changing, laws and rules change, people change and the world changes. Keeping up with the changes sometimes becomes a fulltime job. Over the years the Rock Island District Regulatory Branch has tried to keep consistency in what they do and how they do it. In the last few years they have worked even harder to educate both the public and other agencies and organizations on the regulatory functions and processes involved.

The Regulatory Branch is divided into two sections, each with specific responsibilities that pertain to Sections 9 and 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

The Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 deals specifically with projects proposed in "Navigable Waters of the United States" and requires a permit from the Corps for construction of any dam or dike and prohibits the creation of any obstruction or alteration in a navigable water.

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act regulates the placement of dredged or fill materials into a water of the United States including rivers, streams, lakes and their adjacent wetlands. Regulatory staff ensure that permit applicants demonstrate that they have followed a three-tiered approach to project planning to assure proper avoidance and minimization of impacts.

The Permit Evaluation Section handles all of the individual permits and letters of permissions. Complex projects involving larger proposed impacts to waters of the United States generally require an individual permit and involve public notification, coordination and an environmental decision document.

"The goal is to process these permits in less than 120 days but some take longer depending on the complexity and additional agency coordination," said Dan Johnson, chief of regulatory. Another function of the Permit Evaluation Section is the mitigation banking program. Two regulatory staff members lead the Interagency Mitigation Banking programs in each state coordinating with all the necessary partners including the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the other Corps Districts and the respective Department of Natural Resources (DNRs). They walk applicants through the mitigation banking process and are currently developing a guidance document for prospective "bankers" to help facilitate the process.

Also in the Regulatory Branch is the Enforcement Section. This section issues all of the nationwide permits, conducts the compliance inspections and carries out enforcement actions on unauthorized activities. The nationwide permits allow non-controversial, environmentally insignificant activities to continue with a minimum of government interference and are generally issued in less than 60 days. When a permit violation occurs, personnel from the Enforcement Section work with the violator(s) to try to rectify the situation as seamlessly as possible. They also handle unauthorized activities and work similarly to bring the

violator into compliance with Section 404, however in some instances cases may be turned over to the EPA who has resources to more effectively handle difficult situations with repeat and flagrant violators.

This past year the Corps discovered that Manatt's Inc., a company hired by the Iowa Department of Transportation to work on a section of Interstate 35, had placed fill materials in unpermitted areas during a site inspection. Manatt's had contacted the private landowner adjacent to the construction project seeking permission to fill in approximately 1,000 linear feet of an unnamed tributary of White Breast Creek resulting in impacts to the stream and three acres of adjacent wetlands. Neither the landowner nor the construction company obtained a permit from the Rock Island District to allow work within the stream and wetlands as required by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. This violation is currently in the hands of the EPA to resolve.

The two sections work closely together in processing permit applications, coordinating with other agencies as well as other offices within the District.

Regulatory staff regularly communicate with personnel from Real Estate (RE), the project sites in Operations Division, and personnel in Planning, Programs and Project Management Division. They are working to establish a system for processing federal land permit applications to ensure that Regulatory, RE and the Mississippi River Project Office are all on the same page and permits are processed in the most efficient manner possible.

For civil works projects, permits are done through the National Environmental Policy Act process and preparation of Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements prepared by the Environmental and Economics Branch (PM-A). Regulatory coordinates closely with the PM-A when preparing these types of documents. They also work with the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO) and the FWS to meet necessary requirements under the National Historic Preservation Act and Endangered Species Act.

Regulatory also gets involved with flood control projects working closely with Emergency Management (EM). When Levee Districts inquire about additional modifications EM coordinates with Regulatory, PM-A, RE, and Engineering and Construction to ensure all levee permit actions receive a coordinated District review and authorization.

Communicating within the District has proved to be essential



Neal Johnson (left) and Mike Hayes (far right) coordinate with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Natural Resource Conservation Service to investigate an unauthorized filling of a wetland.

but most of Regulatory's functions involve external audiences and corresponding with permit applicants. They work closely with the Iowa and Illinois DNRs, the FWS, the EPA, and the SHPOs. They also coordinate with the NRCS in Iowa and Illinois and meet regularly with them to gain a better understanding of each other's programs. Staff are currently drafting a memorandum of agreement with the Iowa NRCS to establish consistency in how the two agencies administer their respective programs across the state.

Since 2004, the District Regulatory Branch is officially the lead regulatory office for Iowa and Illinois, although they have been operating that way since the 1980s. As the lead District, they coordinate annual meetings to ensure the regulatory program is applied as consistently as possible across Iowa and Illinois. These meetings include representatives from the Corps Districts in each state, the DNR's and the state EPA. Other meetings are called on an as needed basis when consistency issues arise.

One of the challenges that Regulatory faces is deciphering jurisdictional waters for Section 404 permits. The Corps generally has regulatory authority over rivers, creeks, streams, non-isolated lakes and wetlands adjacent to these water bodies. When a permit application may impact a questionable area biologists conduct wetland delineations to determine the boundaries of the wetland. Then a jurisdictional determination is made based on the proximity of the wetland to an adjacent water of the United States. This action is the first step in the permitting process.

"The complexity of the jurisdictional determination process for headwater streams, wetlands and isolated water bodies has quadrupled over the past five or six years following several court cases that have gone all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court," said Johnson. "The program continues to get more complex which adds to the workload causing permit actions to take longer." He went on to explain that every time there is a lawsuit involving Section 404, Section 9 or 10 permits, tweaks are made to the pro-

cess. "It's an ever evolving program," he said.

Another issue is boundary lines of federal land and Corps project locations. For this Regulators have turned to technology using Geographic Information System technology. As the workforce ages and employees with 30 years of experience in the District retire there is a gap of institutional knowledge. What used to be a quick phone call to a fellow co-worker who knew the federal project boundaries inside and out is now being replaced with technology that is at everyone's finger tips to answer questions.

Regulatory staff have a combined total of 495 (average of 25) years of experience in the federal government 286 (average of 14) of which is directly involved in the District's Regulatory program. The program continues to evolve and change and the staff works to deliver enduring and essential water resource solutions through collaboration with partners and stakeholders. Goal 2 USACE Campaign Plan - Engineering Sustainable Water Resources.

More information can be found at www2.mvr.usace.army.mil/Regulatory/. 



Marlyn Schafer, Neal Johnson, Al Frohlich and Jim Kelley, project managers, Regulatory Branch, pose while in the field identifying wetland species.

Corps seeking comments on nationwide permits

The Corps is seeking comments on its proposal to renew and revise nationwide permits for work in wetlands and other waters that are regulated by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and/or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. The Corps is also proposing to issue two new nationwide permits that pertain to authorizing renewable energy generation projects.

"Our goal is to develop and authorize nationwide permits that provide clarity and certainty, saving time and cost to the regulated public and the government," said Maj. Gen. William T. Grisoli, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations. "We believe the set of nationwide permits being proposed today encourage innovation and creativity in meeting the challenges of protecting America's wetlands and aquatic resources."

The nationwide permits authorize activities that are similar in nature and cause only minimal adverse environmental impacts to aquatic resources separately or on a cumulative basis. Activities range from work associated with aids to navigation and utility lines to residential developments and maintenance activities.

Many of the nationwide permits being proposed remain unchanged from 2007, the last time the nationwide permits were authorized.

Corps division engineers may add, after public review and consultation, regional conditions to nationwide permits in order to protect local aquatic ecosystems such as bottomland hardwoods or to minimize adverse effects on fish spawning, wildlife nesting or other ecologically critical areas.

A public notice to solicit comments on the proposed set of revised nationwide permits was published on February 16. The Corps is accepting written comments for a 60-day period that ends April 18. Comments may be submitted by e-mail to NWP2012@usace.army.mil or through the Federal eRulemaking portal at www.regulations.gov at docket number COE-2010-0035. The current set of nationwide permits expires March 18, 2012. The nationwide permits being proposed today will replace the existing set.

Additional information about the Corps' regulatory program can be found at http://www.usace.army.mil/CECW/Pages/cecwo_reg.aspx. 

RETIREMENT PLANNING 101

By the Leadership Development Class of 2010-2011

Have you ever thought about retirement? Do you know when you should start planning for retirement? Do you know where you are on the Retirement Planning Timeline?

The following activities are recommendations to assist you in your planning for retirement.

- Day 1 of work – Open Thrift Saving Plan (TSP) account. If you can, contribute enough into TSP to equal your agency's contribution matching maximum.
- First ten years of your career – Increase contribution percentage by one percent each year. Maximum TSP contribution amount is currently \$16,500 a year. Keep in mind this is the time to think ahead and adopt a long-range investment strategy.
- 10 to 15 years in to your career – A good time to confer with a qualified financial advisor to measure your retirement planning progress. Also attend the 2-Day Mid-Career Retirement Planning Seminar.
- Nearing retirement – If needed, you can currently contribute a maximum amount of \$5,500 in catch-up contributions in a given year. Attend the 3-Day Planning for Retirement Seminar.
- Five years before retirement – Pay off all debts, such as mortgages and other loans. Attend the 3-Day Planning for Retirement Seminar. Also, ask for a Request for Earnings (form SSA-7004-PC) and Benefit Estimate Statement from your local Social Security Office. At the same time ask the Army Benefits Center - Civilian (ABC-C) office for a retirement estimate.
- Three years before retirement – Double check your savings accounts, TSP accounts, and any lingering debts to make sure

you are on track financially. Also ask the ABC-C office for another Retirement Estimate to ensure everything is in order.

- One year before retirement – Tell your supervisor about your proposed retirement date far in advance to allow for proper succession planning. Attend a Pre-Retirement Seminar. Consult with the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center to ensure your Official Personnel Folder is complete and accurate. If planning to draw Social Security benefits, notify the Social Security Administration.
- Applying for retirement – Submit your application for retirement 90-120 days before your desired retirement date to avoid processing delays.

Keep in mind that the National Institute of Transition Planning, Inc. (NITP) offers the retirement seminars mentioned above. The 2-Day Mid-Career Retirement Planning seminar focuses on the following: a detailed look at the TSP, aspects of what benefits employees would retain upon leaving the government before retirement, what benefits are available to family members if an employee dies before retirement, how a break in Federal Service affects future benefits, and information on financial planning.

The 3-Day Planning for Retirement discusses considerations necessary for planning for retirement, including Federal benefits options, best date to retire, TSP, Social Security eligibility, military service, financial and tax planning, health and fitness concerns, estate planning, and the psychological aspects of retirement.

Make sure to include these seminars on your Individual Development Plan to stay on track. It is never too early to start planning for retirement. 

Rock Island District - BUILDING STRONG®

Goal 4 of the Campaign Plan is to Recruit and Retain Strong Teams. To meet this goal the District has developed Task 4d1, which is to recruit and retain a high quality, diverse workforce to meet current and future mission requirements.

Do you have what it takes to be a Flood Area Engineer?

1. **Passion** – Do you have that passion to help others, apply your knowledge and skills in the field, work long days and nights, and be part of a high performing team?
2. **Relationships** – Do you enjoy working on teams, with the public, elected officials and community groups?
3. **Knowledge** – Can you use a map to learn about levees and flood-fighting techniques and gain knowledge about PL 84-99, watersheds and river gages?
4. **Awareness** – Are you interested in being involved in local issues and concerns, staying on top of weather conditions and flood potential, and keeping up with points of contact?
5. **Readiness** – Can you deploy quickly, adapt to changing weather conditions and information, quickly assess changes to levee conditions, share information and be "front and center"?
6. **Limits** – Do you know the where the line is in regards to safety, decision making vs. advice, committing government spending and when to stop throwing sandbags?

If you answered "yes" to any of the questions above or are intrigued to find out more contact the Emergency Management Office to learn more about Flood Area Teams. If you are ready to sign up visit <https://intranet.mvr.usace.army.mil/intranet/emfaeteam/default.cfm> and fill out the requested information. 

Information provided by Roger Less, Chief of Design Branch and "Retired" Flood Area Engineer



"Our HISTORY is Our Strength"

By Donna Hardy and Valarie Bollmann, Federal Women's Program Co-Managers

Our History is Our Strength pays tribute to the millions of women who helped create a better world for the times in which they lived as well as for future generations. Knowing the challenges these women faced, grappled with, and overcame can be an enormous source of strength to all of us.

- **January 1915**, Ester G. Mueller reportedly became the first female employee of the Rock Island District.
- **August 1920**, fourteen years after the death of Susan B. Anthony, women in the United States won the right to vote.

Women have played and continue to play a crucial role in several important movements throughout U.S. history:

- The **Labor Movement** began as early as 1765 when women formed the first society of working women.
- The **Women's Suffrage Movement** was launched in 1848 at the first women's rights convention held at Seneca Falls, N.Y.
- During the **Civil Rights Movement** women were leaders, organizers and participants.
- The **Women's Rights Movement** was re-energized in the 20th century with what is called the Second Wave.
- The **Environmental Movement** in which women played a key role from the early 19th century and which was officially launched on Earth Day, April 22, 1970.

Here are some women who participated in these movements:

Frances Perkins, U.S. Secretary of Labor, began her advocacy for the labor movement when she witnessed the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in 1911. Appointed to the Cabinet in 1933, Perkins worked hard to secure legislation to enact unemployment relief, public works, Social Security, minimum wage, and the prohibition of child labor.

Alice Paul represented the last generation of suffrage leaders and brought fearlessness and tenacity to the fight for women's right to vote. She organized the first pickets at the White House in 1916 and 1917. Along with dozens of women, Paul was imprisoned, went on a hunger strike, and was force fed. After winning the vote, she worked to enact the Equal Rights Amendment.

Minnijean Brown-Trickey was only 16 years old when she became one of the Little Rock Nine who integrated Central High School in 1957. Along with eight other African-American teenagers, she defied death threats, hostile white demonstrators, and even the Arkansas National Guard, to attend the all-white high school. Brown-Trickey's courage helped change the lives and education of all students throughout the country.

Bella Abzug is one of the most recognized and bold leaders of the 20th Century's Women's Movement and was elected to the U.S. Congress at the age of 50. She presided over the first government sponsored National Women's Conference in Houston in 1977. With great joy, Abzug took part in the last leg of a relay carrying a torch from Seneca Falls, site of the first women's rights convention, into the stadium at Houston.

Rachel Carson is known as the founder of the contemporary environmental movement. In 1962, Carson published "Silent Spring," which documented the dangers of air pollutants and pesticides on animals, people, and land. Her writing boldly challenged the practices of agricultural scientists and even the government. Carson called for a change in the way humankind viewed the natural world.

Women throughout history and those presently continue to exhibit the courage to be the first:

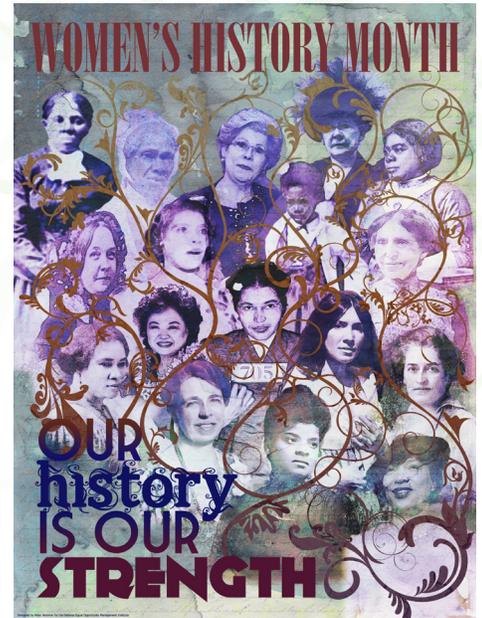
November 2008, **Gen. Ann E. Dunwoody**, first female four-star U.S. Army general.

January 2008, **Michelle Obama**, nation's first African-American First Lady.

August 2009, **Sonia Sotomayor**, third woman and first Hispanic female to sit on U.S. Supreme Court.

October 2010, **Lt. (junior grade) La'Shanda Holmes**, is appointed U.S. Coast Guard first black female helicopter pilot.

Excerpts taken from March 2010 Tower Times article "Writing Women back into History" <http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/TowerTimes/> and National Women's History Project website www.nwhp.org.



SAFETY CORNER

Severe Weather Awareness: Outdoor Warning Sirens

Each year severe weather lashes across the nation, interrupting normal activities, damaging property, and posing a threat to life. The effects of severe thunderstorms in east central Iowa, northeast Missouri, and northwest Illinois can be particularly devastating.

The National Weather Service issues a Hazardous Weather Outlook every morning outlining any significant weather expected in the next 24 hours. Although it is designed for use by law enforcement, spotter groups, emergency managers, schools, and other officials, the Hazardous Weather Outlook can be helpful to anyone when they are trying to plan their day. They also update the outlook when conditions change from what was expected. You can read the outlook on their website at www.crh.noaa.gov or hear it on a NOAA Weather Radio.

The outlook gives a heads-up to watch what could happen. Do you know what it means when you are under a severe weather watch or warning?

A **WATCH** is issued to give advance notice when conditions are favorable for the development of severe weather, whether it be severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, or flash flooding. When a watch is issued for your area, it is time to take precautions and make sure you are prepared should bad weather strike. Make sure you have a flashlight, radio, and weather radio with fresh batteries handy in case you lose power. Monitor the weather radio closely for the latest statements or warnings. It is also a good time to move vehicles and animals to shelter and secure loose outdoor articles.

WARNINGS are issued when severe weather is occurring or imminent. When a warning is issued for your area, you should take action immediately to protect your life and your property.

The best safety tip of all is to be prepared ahead of time.

The Risk

Sleeping. Working. Playing baseball. Enjoying a graduation party. The people most at risk in any severe weather situation are those who are not aware of the threat. Simply put: you must know in order to act! Once aware of an impending threat, you can take action to protect yourself, your family and friends, and sometimes even your property if time allows. Numerous types of warning systems exist, each with its own strengths and weaknesses.

Outdoor Warning Systems

When it comes to severe weather, outdoor warning systems (sometimes known as sirens) have one purpose - alert people who are outdoors that something dangerous is happening and they should go inside. Depending on local policy, sirens may be sounded for a variety of life-threatening hazards, but always with the intent that people outdoors should seek shelter.

Benefits:

- Quickly notifies people outdoors that a life-threatening situation is occurring.
- Many people can be notified at once.

Limitations:

- Not designed to wake you up when you are indoors.
- Backup power capabilities vary by community.
- Can be expensive to install and maintain.



There are many variations and misconceptions in the use of outdoor warning sirens. Ask local officials in your area about outdoor warning sirens. Does your community have them? Why are they sounded? Do they have backup power? When are they tested?

Indoor Warning Systems

The primary indoor warning tool is a NOAA Weather Radio All-Hazards. Like a smoke detector, a weather radio waits in standby mode until a warning is issued. When a warning is issued radios in businesses and households throughout the threat area automatically alarm and broadcast the warning, allowing people to take appropriate action.

Benefits:

- Alert function wakes you up so you can take action.
- Battery backup.
- Programmable for the area of interest.
- Details about the threat at the touch of a button.

Limitations:

- People must choose to purchase and use it.
- Not everyone has one.



Find out if a NOAA Weather Radio station serves your area. Purchase a weather radio for your home and business. You may also want to consider a portable model for use outdoors or when traveling. 

The bottom line: Living in the most severe weather prone country in the world, your best defense is to be both prepared and informed. Know the local warning systems; Invest in a NOAA Weather Radio; Stay informed; Take action – indoors or out!

Information from the National Weather Service.

PROJECT UPDATES

Illinois Waterway Project

Farmdale Recreation Area, Illinois Waterway Project, was presented with the Community Service Award by the Illinois Valley Striders (IVS) Mission for its gracious support of trail running at the recreation area. IVS promotes running and walking fitness as a life sport while striving to enhance the community.

Saylorville Lake Pneumatic Crest Gates

Replacement of the pneumatic crest gate bladders was completed at Saylorville Lake in February. The final testing and inspection took place February 23 with the contractor finishing ahead of schedule thanks to favorable weather conditions.

Work completed at locks and dams on the Mississippi River

By Hilary Markin, Editor

Many parts of the Upper Mississippi River were frozen this winter but that doesn't mean activity stops. Through the work of Corps employees and contractors, six lock and dams had major projects completed. Additionally, staff from Rock Island District helped the St. Paul District dewater the chamber at Lock and Dam 10.

All of the work was completed for the reopening of locks 11, 20, 21 and 22 on March 4 at 4:30 p.m. The Mississippi River Project Office routinely communicated with the navigation industry throughout the closures and, as promised, boats were waiting to head upstream at 4:30 p.m. March 4.

"Doing work during the winter months is tough but allows for a minimal disruption to the navigation industry," said Bill Gretten, operations manager, Mississippi River Project Office.

Major work items completed this winter included the repair and restressing of the upper miter gates at Lock and Dam 11 by Mississippi River Project personnel. Prior to the ice setting in, a crew prepositioned the Quad Cities heavy lift crane at Lock and Dam 11 in order to pull the gates and complete the work.

Work at Locks 20, 21 and 22 to raise the main lock control stands was completed by a contractor. The stands were raised up nearly five feet above the lockwall to provide better visibility to lock operators and protect equipment from future flood waters. The contractor also sealed the electrical cable penetrations in the Central Control Stations providing flood proofing to the buildings.

Lock and dam employees combined together to form a team to perform similar work at Locks 17 and 18 raising the control stands on the intermediate walls. This work was completed in February.

At Lock and Dam 20 the contractor worked to install bulkhead slots downstream of the lock chamber to facilitate safe dewater-

Mississippi River Project Retirement

Park ranger Richard (Dick) Blair recently hung up his ranger hat after 30 years as a summer park ranger. Blair is a fulltime teacher and spent his summers patrolling campgrounds and the waters of the Rock Island District. He started at Lake Red Rock back in the 1970's before taking a teacher job in Port Byron, Ill., and spending summers at the Thomson Park Ranger Office with the Mississippi River Project. His knowledge and can-do attitude will be missed.



Contractors work to raise the Central Control Station at Lock and Dam 21 providing better visibility to lock operators and protection from high water.

The upper miter gates at Lock and Dam 11 were repaired this winter by Mississippi River Project staff.



ing of the lock chamber in the future.

Another team of employees from the Mississippi River Project Office spent the winter months working at Lock and Dam 18 to repair the tainter gates.

The first boat to lock through Lock 22 was the Roberta Tabor followed by 10 other upbound tows in the first 24 hours. Traffic will slowly pick up as river conditions allow and locks and dams in the St. Paul District reopen and are accessible. 

Around the District

Retirements ...

Ronald Laatz, lock and dam operator, Starved Rock Lock and Dam, Illinois Waterway Project, Operations Division, retired Feb. 12, after dedicating 20 years and nine months to the federal government.

Upcoming Events ...

Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp, Chief of Engineers, will conduct a Town Hall Meeting on April 5, 10 a.m. at the Naval Reserve Center, Rock Island Arsenal.

Rock Island District Corps Day will be June 23 at Memorial Field, Rock Island Arsenal. The Rock Island District Wellness Association will be conducting fundraisers to help defray costs associated with the event.

Sympathy ...



Stanley Buckholtz, 70, of Rock Island, Ill., passed away Feb. 7, 2011 at Trinity Rock Island.

Buckholtz worked for the Corps of Engineers for 38 years. He was a supervisor/boat operator out of the Clock Tower.



Ardeth Hoover, 80, passed away at home on Feb. 16, 2011.

Hoover retired from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers after many years of service.

Congrats ...



Congratulations to **Rich Busch**, resident engineer, Western Resident Office, Construction Branch, Engineering and Construction Division, who received the September District Commander's Award. He is recognized for his efforts in administering construction contracts for Saylorville Lake, Lake Red Rock and projects in downtown Des Moines following the flood of 2008. He is responsible for over 25 construction contracts with a value of more than \$55M. He was instrumental during the 2010 flood events leading efforts with engineering and communicating with the contractor on emergency actions protecting the work site at NW 78th Avenue as lake levels overtopped the emergency spillway impacting NW 78th Avenue. His tireless efforts, level of commitment and dedication and customer service reflect great credit upon himself and the District.



Congratulations to **Nancy Vanderleest**, budget analyst, Budget and Manpower Branch, Resource Management, who received the December District Commander's Award. Her efforts and contributions to the Rock Island District are being recognized based on her extraordinary efforts in FY 10 Year-End Closeout. Nancy worked tirelessly to cover the Resource Management office's requirements (with three personnel out during that time frame) while providing outstanding customer service to the District. The District closed out with a zero balance and successfully completed its year-end mission on time due to Nancy's efforts.





Spotlight on the District

Bryan Snook

Hydraulic Engineer

Hydraulic Engineering Section, Hydrology and Hydraulics Branch, Engineering and Construction Division

Working seven days a week, 12-14 hours a day can be grueling but also very rewarding - especially when you are seeing direct results of the work you are doing.

Bryan Snook recently returned from a deployment to Iraq with the Air National Guard after working six months using his civil engineering skills in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom which is now Operation New Dawn.

Snook first enlisted in the Army in 2000, then transitioned into the Army National Guard while attending college. He has a bachelor's and master's degree in civil engineering with a primary focus on hydro systems and a secondary on structures. During that time he attended the officer candidate program and following graduation transferred to the Air National Guard in 2008. He is currently a First Lieutenant in the 231st Civilian Engineer Flight in St. Louis, Mo.

He joined the Corps in 2008 through the Federal Career Intern Program as a hydraulic engineer in the Hydraulic Engineering Section, Hydrology and Hydraulics Branch (EC-H).

"While growing up my family spent a lot of time at Corps reservoirs and I always thought it would be an exciting place to work," said Snook. "When the opportunity came up to extend my federal service from the military sector to the civilian sector, I jumped at the chance."

A part of the program is rotating around to the various branches and sections to gain a broader perspective of what the District does. He had the opportunity to spend time in the field on the dredges, inspecting levee repairs following the flooding in 2008 and much more. After graduating from the program he returned to EC-H for only a few months before he was called up with the Air National Guard.

Snook's initial assignment was in Afghanistan, but due to staffing changes during his mobilization he deployed to Iraq. He



Bryan Snook getting ready to "fly" a flag over Iraq in a Black Hawk helicopter on September 11, 2010.

left in late April for Army Combat Skills Training and eventually made it overseas where he was stationed at Joint Base Balad near Baqubah, Iraq.

Because his missions often required him to travel throughout the region, Snook was able to see most of the country during his deployment. His unit, the 732nd Expeditionary Prime Beef Squadron, was primarily in charge of surveying, contract and project management, and direct engineering support to the Army.

"It was amazing to see the fast turnaround on projects. It seemed like you could start a project on Monday and have it authorized and funded by the end of the week," said Snook.

He conducted post blast surveys of bridges and structures throughout Iraq. When going out in the field, he would take an Air Force engineering assistant with him and a platoon of soldiers for security.

"For me, time spent in the field was not unusual because of my previous Army experience but many of the assistants preferred to stay on base," said Snook.

During the bridge inspections, Snook would document the amount of damage caused by improvised explosive devices and then determine if the bridges were safe for the equipment and other loads to pass over. Snook was able to use his connections through the Corps of Engineers and experts at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Reachback Operations Center to assist with determining the Military Load Classifications for several of the bridges.

He also worked on projects around the base including base master planning to help in the drawdown effort and several drainage analyses to help alleviate flooding.

"Although Iraq is typically dry, some regions experienced one of the wettest years in decades last year and we worked on several ditches and retention basins to help alleviate localized

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flooding,” said Snook.

While there he participated in “Hearts and Minds” missions giving food, water and other items to people in the local communities. He was also an active member of the Balad Chapter Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) and was able to acquire thousands of dollars worth of new engineering manuals and other technical guides from the Rock Island Post SAME to distribute to the local Iraqi Engineers.

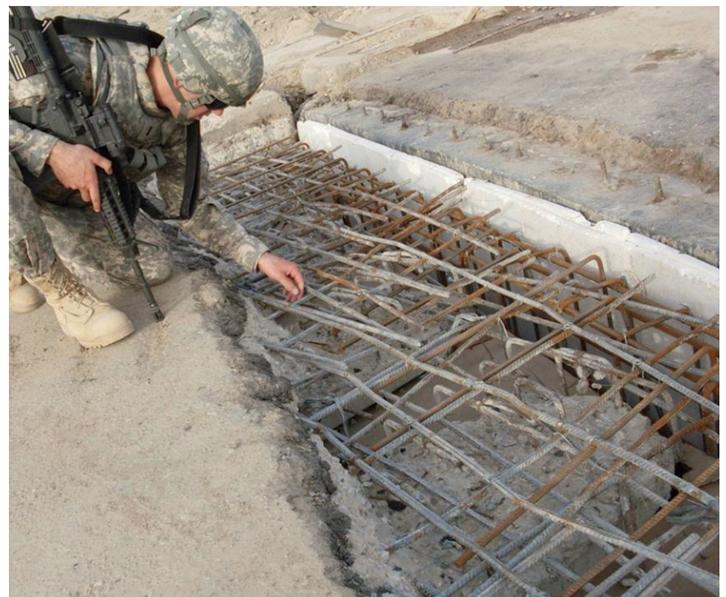
Because he was filling a Joint Engineer Tasking, Snook worked closely with the U.S. Army during his deployment and was recently awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for his engineering contributions and his overall exceptional support to the Army.

During his deployment he stayed in contact with family and friends through various means including Skype. His wife Andrea, a high school social studies teacher, used his deployment to help educate her students about the events taking place around the world. On Veteran’s Day they arranged for Snook to Skype with the students to explain the importance of the missions in Iraq as well as what the military is doing for the country.

When asked about going back he said “definitely.” He would like to go back to Iraq to see what it looks like in the near future and the impact the military had on the country.

In his free time Snook enjoys outdoor recreation activities such as camping, hiking and boating.

For advice he had this to share, “Try to make a contribution



1st Lt. John Riley inspects the condition and placement of rebar on a bridge approach that was damaged by an improvised explosive device in Iraq.

every day to improve your environment and the lives of those around you.” After all; “What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; What we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.” -Albert Pike 