



Tower Times

Rock Island District's News Magazine

April-May 2011



New vessel christened

The M/V Rock Island II launches for the first time



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

Tower Times

Contents

April-May 2011

ON THE COVER



The new Motor Vessel Rock Island II is christened in the Bayou Chico inlet of Pensacola Bay, Fla. See story on page 4.

Photo by Andrew Barnett.

- 3 District budget figures unsure but no need to panic**
Col. Shawn McGinley, District Commander
- 4 Christening of M/V Rock Island II**
The Motor Vessel Rock Island II launches for the first time
- 5 Reaching out to communities**
District supports communities during spring high water
- 6 Forecasting Mother Nature**
What happens behind the scenes in Water Control
- 8 District recognized for accessibility audit**
- 10 Retirement - How close am I?**
- 12 Safety Corner - Spring safety tips**
- 14 Around the District**
- 15 Spotlight on the District - Scott Pettis**

Visit the Tower Times online for the latest Where's This photo and information at <http://bit.ly/jl2xKO>.



Tower Times

Rock Island District, Clock Tower Building
P.O. Box 2004
Rock Island, IL 61204-2004
Email: cemvr-cc@usace.army.mil
Phone: (309) 794-5729

Commander: Col. Shawn McGinley
Deputy Commander: Lt. Col. Jared Ware
Chief, Corporate Communications: Ron Fournier
Editor: Hilary Markin

This publication is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the Tower Times are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, or the Rock Island District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

It is published monthly by the Corporate Communications Office, Rock Island District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Articles or photographic submissions are welcome and should be submitted by the 15th of each month preceding publication. Circulation 1,500.

On the web at: www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/TowerTimes

A message from....

Colonel Shawn McGinley, District Commander



District budget figures unsure but no need to panic

Challenging. That is probably a good word to describe our District's situation with regard to the budget. The next several quarters will present many fiscal challenges but rest assured the situation is not dire.

The federal government was recently under the inauspicious cloud of a possible shutdown. As our elected officials worked to pass a Fiscal Year 2011 Funding Authority many of you faced the real possibility of furlough. Luckily, it didn't come to that. Obviously the budget has been a contentious concern for the entire government. The shutdown was avoided but funding of government programs will be an issue for the foreseeable future and the Rock Island District is not immune.

I want to make a point that EVERYONE in the district is important and all of your efforts are key to our success. However, I had to decide who was mission essential based on the Military Order that we received from Headquarters, USACE. The intent of that order was to minimally man the District for the duration of a shutdown and we developed a plan to meet that intent.

One of the many things we will be focused on in the coming months is figuring out what level of service we can provide in FY12 to our customers and stakeholders under fiscal conditions that aren't going to be as robust as they have been in the past few years. This District has been fortunate in recent years. But, with the government-wide budget issues, we will have to be even more diligent in managing the expectations of those we partner with and serve. It will be important for us to clearly identify our expertise and capabilities so that we can be ready to assist with work efforts at the regional and national levels. I am confident, with the level of professionalism that exists throughout our District that we will have no problems but it will take a renewed vigor and an attention to detail.

As we manage expectations, it should be noted that the majority of our budget execution will go about in much the same way it has in recent years. Our Operations and Maintenance funding, under the FY12 President's Budget, looks like it will be funded at a level where we should be able to sustain the base level of service at the lock and dams, and the reservoirs. However, we may have to begin to cut back on operating hours of some of our recreation areas.

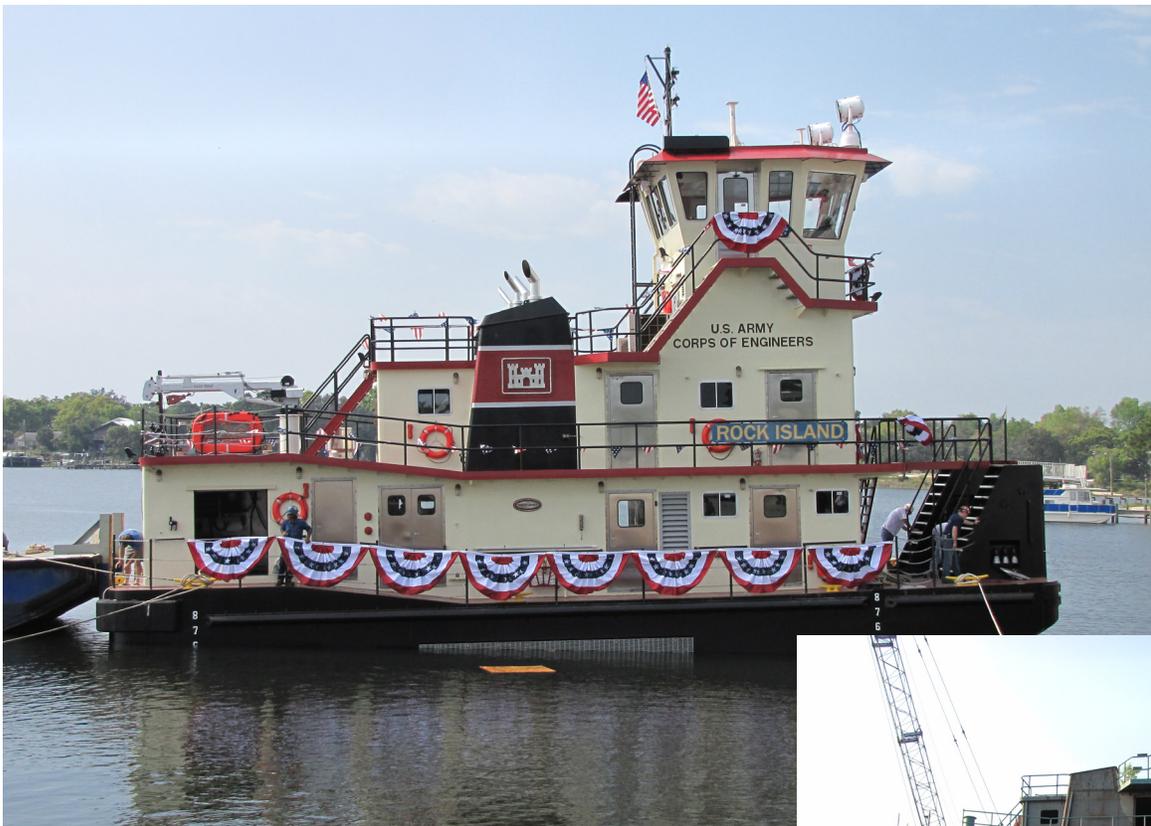
Barring any unforeseen major repairs we should be able to continue meeting the needs of the navigation industry by keeping the locks open while also continuing to provide the flood risk management support to the citizens of Iowa through operating and maintaining the dams and reservoirs as we have been in the past. The Upper Mississippi Environmental Restoration Program (EMP) and the Illinois River Restoration Program (519) will both be funded very near past year's levels. Work efforts on these two programs should continue in FY12 without interruption.

That's the good news. Slightly less good news can be seen in some of our other projects and programs. The Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive Plan, the Upper Mississippi River Navigation and Ecosystem Restoration Program (formerly NESP), the Des Moines River Recreational Greenbelt Program, and the Cedar Rapids flood risk management project are not expected to be funded by appropriation in FY12. These projects have been funded in past years as Congressional adds. With the House of Representative-imposed moratorium on earmarks, there is little chance at this time of these being funded next fiscal year.

This lack of funding may come as a surprise to those who have been working so hard on these projects and programs. With projects like Cedar Rapids, for which the Chief of Engineers recently signed a Draft Feasibility Study, this may appear to be a setback. But, it doesn't diminish the countless hours and outstanding effort put forth by those involved. There has been some discussion that Congress may adjust the way they define earmarks. If so, there is a possibility these projects could return to being funded in FY13.

Yes, the next few years will be fiscally challenging. We at the Rock Island District and the Corps of Engineers as an organization are not exempt to the struggles of budget cuts. By no means are we alone. All government organizations are experiencing cuts and each federal employee has to be cognizant of how they go about doing their jobs in the most fiscally responsible manner possible.

This is not a time to panic. We will come together as a District, a Division and the Corps to continue to provide world-class, professional engineering expertise. The challenge for all of us will be to tighten up the purse strings and do our jobs responsibly. I have no doubt we can meet the challenge. Thanks for everything you do. Continue **BUILDING STRONG®** 



Above, the new Motor Vessel Rock Island II floats for the first time in the Bayou Chico inlet of Pensacola Bay in Florida. It is expected to arrive in the Rock Island District on June 15.

Below, the skeleton of the Motor Vessel Clinton II sits at the Patti Marine Enterprises shipyard undergoing construction. It is expected to be complete in August.



Christening of M/V Rock Island II

Story and photos by Andrew Barnett, Crane Operator Supervisor

On April 2, at Patti Marine Enterprises in Pensacola, Fla., the launch of the first of two towboats under construction for the Rock Island District was celebrated. The Motor Vessel (M/V) “Rock Island II” was christened and carefully launched into the Bayou Chico inlet of Pensacola Bay located seven miles off of the Gulf of Mexico.

The nearly completed towboat will serve as a Tender Vessel for the Mississippi River Structures Maintenance Fleet located at the Mississippi River Project Office in Pleasant Valley, Iowa. The newly constructed vessel is 65 feet by 24 feet and will be powered by two 600 horsepower C-18 Caterpillar Engines.

The vessel has two state rooms that can accommodate up to six crew members and a full galley on board. The vessel will replace the current M/V Rock Island which was built in 1970 by Grafton Boat Company. The sister ship of the M/V “Rock Island II”, the M/V “Clinton II” is still under construction.

The M/V “Clinton II” will be assigned to the Mississippi River Projects Maintenance Unit and will replace the current M/V Clinton upon its delivery scheduled for August 2011. Both vessels were designed and contracted through the U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers Marine Design Center located in Philadelphia. Senior Naval Architect Tim Keyser from the Marine Design Center worked very close with the Mississippi River Maintenance Unit managers and assigned master tenders to insure the vessels would be capable of performing the duties required on the project and serve the needs of crew members.

The vessels are being constructed by Patti Marine Enterprises of Pensacola, Fla. Patti Marine is an award winning shipyard that has built many U.S. Army Corps of Engineers vessels. Their awards include the “Significant Vessel of the Year” award by Work Boat Magazine for the Corps of Engineers St. Paul District 160-foot Quarters Barge “Taggatz” and the “Outstanding Civilian Service Award” from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which was a first for any shipyard. “Patti Built” boats have a reputation for their quality and outstanding craftsmanship and will be welcome addition to the Mississippi River Project Office Maintenance Fleet.

The M/V “Rock Island II” is scheduled to commence on its delivery trip June 1 and is expected to arrive at the Mississippi River Project Office June 15. 



Corey Hardt, emergency management specialist, shows John Punkiewicz and Larry Melaas, flood area engineers, how to operate one of the District's pumps during the flood-fight refresher training.

Reaching out to communities

Story and photos by Hilary Markin, Editor

When the National Weather Service forecast was published on March 3, communities along the Upper Mississippi River were shocked. Predictions were calling for major to record-setting flood levels in some areas of the Rock Island District.

The District sprung into action making preparations. Contact lists were updated, procedures were reviewed and commodities accounted for. As the weather conditions changed and flood predictions were lowered, communities along the Mississippi River began to breathe a bit easier.

However, flood waters did come and although they weren't record setting as first predicted, they were significant. In the Quad Cities the water was the sixth highest on record and impacted much of downtown Davenport, Iowa, and surrounding neighborhoods and communities.

Communities along the river worked long, hard hours in preparation for the flood waters. They also called upon the Corps for technical expertise, pumps, sandbags and polyethylene sheeting when their supplies were exhausted. In total, the District supplied 18 pumps, 38 rolls of polyethylene, 108,000 sandbags and technical assistance to communities in Illinois and Iowa.

For the first time the District also reached out and hosted flood-fight training seminars for area public works departments and communities along the river. Sessions focused on what to look for when inspecting levees, how to build flood protection and monitor it. The Corps gave its recommendations for building flood protection barriers as well as appropriate ways to handle boils, manholes and other common issues that arise during high water.

The District also held flood-fight refresher training for flood area engineers. This training provided hands-on demonstrations of flood-fight materials, best practices when issues arise and flood-fight pump operations. They also heard overviews from District Subject Matter Experts on things commonly seen in the field, water control operations and how to work with the media.

"We had a lot of time to plan for this flood event," said



Josh Cackley and John Quick, flood area engineers, present flood-fight information to Quad City area public works personnel.

Rodney Delp, chief, Emergency Management. "This event was a slow-developing snow-melt flood. Most of our major flood events are thunderstorm driven and much harder to predict early."

As the water rose, communities went into action based on their flood operation plans.

"Many communities built temporary flood protection and put plans into operation well in advance of the event," said Delp. "During the flood, we supported multiple communities with commodities such as sandbags, polyethylene and pumps."

Communities weren't the only ones impacted by rising waters, the majority of recreation areas along the Mississippi River were closed as well as almost all of the locks. Lock 19 was the only lock that did not experience a closure to navigation due to water overtopping the upper miter gates and lock walls.

The locks have all reopened to navigation and maintenance crews and park rangers are working to clean recreation areas to reopen them to the public. 



Matt Zehr, Water Control, services the rain gage at Lock and Dam 16.

Forecasting Mother Nature

By Hilary Markin, Editor

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

One of the most dynamic forces humans contend with is the weather. Rainfall and its unpredictable nature continue to challenge forecasters in an age of sophisticated computer models and storm tracking technology. Incorporating the uncertainty of the weather and how it affects the 78,000 square miles of the Rock Island District is what the Water Control Section does every day as they manage the water resources projects of the District.

The section helps manage the Illinois Waterway – Nine Foot Channel Project, the Mississippi River – Nine Foot Channel Project, and the three flood control reservoirs in Iowa: Coralville Lake on the Iowa River; and Saylorville Lake and Lake Red Rock on the Des Moines River. Each of the projects is unique and therefore managed differently. For the Mississippi River, Water Control staff prepare daily water level forecasts, and provide dam gate settings to the lock and dam personnel to maintain the required nine-foot navigation channel. This is in contrast to the Illinois Waterway where a daily water level forecast is provided to the lock and dam personnel, who then determine the gate settings to maintain the nine-foot channel. For the three flood control reservoirs, staff provide daily gate settings for each dam, along with a daily water level forecast with the goal of minimizing downstream flooding.

In order to effectively manage those projects, Water Control maintains an extensive stream gage network that provides near real-time water level and weather data collected along the District's rivers. These stream gages are funded and maintained by the Corps and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), along with states and various stakeholders. Staff ensure the gages are working properly and respond when there is an issue. The section maintains everything from the sensors along the stream bank, to the satellite dishes that receive the data, to the content that is displayed on RiverGages.com.

Thirty years ago, Water Control staff would radio each lock and dam every morning to obtain pool and tail water readings in order to manually compute the flow of water in the river. With the advent of computers, satellite technology, and the internet, the process has changed and is now done automatically. The challenge now is to keep the technology running.

"I started in 1974, and remember manually computing the flows," said Jim Stiman, Chief of Water Control. "The 1980's brought on the technology with data loggers and satellite radios that transmit remote water level data automatically."

Today, Water Control has a dedicated computer room, several satellite dishes, and a dedicated staff who keep the computers and data acquisition systems running. They now have the ability to



Gene Vandusseldorp, Water Control, uses a water level indicator to verify the river stage at Lock and Dam 16.

obtain a lock and dam's water level and weather data in real-time. "Having this real-time data allows us to make timely, informed decisions," said Stiman.

Data sharing and collaboration are an integral part of managing the District's water resources projects. From the water level and weather information that is automatically shared through the satellite network and the internet with other agencies, to verifying and validating the data, to the calls from residents impacted by the District's rivers. It is a never ending cycle.

There are three primary agencies collaborating and sharing data that give a complete picture of what is happening in the District's hydrologic cycle. They are the National Weather Service (NWS), the USGS, and the Corps. All three agencies play a vital role in data collection, producing water level forecasts, and delivering water resources data to the public. Following the flood in 2008, a Rainfall River Forecasting Fusion Team was formed consisting of members of all three agencies. The Fusion Team has teleconferences on a monthly basis and meets several times a year to improve collaboration and find ways to improve on rainfall and water level forecasting.

One product that was born from the Fusion Team was the development of an interagency chat room that allows important information to be shared between all three agencies at multiple levels. This was especially useful during the 2008 flooding as levees were overtopped and other situations developed information was fed immediately to all necessary channels.

It takes significant time, effort, and experience to complete the task of producing timely and accurate water level forecasts. Forecasting models are ran daily to determine the predicted water levels for locations along the District's rivers. For the Mississippi

River, the Illinois Waterway and for the reservoirs, the NWS and the Corps compare daily model results to ensure forecasts are lining up. If they aren't, contact is made and discrepancies are discussed and adjusted accordingly.

"They have been matching pretty well right now," said Stiman, referring to the high water level forecasts currently on the Mississippi River. "There has been a lot of advance planning for this year's flood as the National Weather Service's spring outlook was calling for record setting high water."

Another useful tool that the Water Control community has developed over the years is the RiverGages.com website. In 2003, the Rock Island District spearheaded an effort to stand-up a website to communicate river levels for the Mississippi Valley Division. This website captures real-time water levels and forecasts that are displayed in a format easily read and interpreted by the public. The use of Rivergages.com has expanded to encompass much of the Corps, and continues to grow as new information is added and becomes available to the public.

The District's Water Control Section is staffed 365 days a year and personnel are available 24 hours a day.

"Through a rotation of staff we work year round to provide gate settings, etc. to field site personnel," said Stiman.

Considering the dynamic forces of Mother Nature, forecasts are only as good as the information that generates them. This makes the work of Water Control both challenging and rewarding, and brings something different to the job every day.

Background photo of Saylorville Lake by Jonathan Wuebker other photos by Hilary Markin. 

Goal 2, USACE Campaign Plan – Engineering Sustainable Water Resources. Delivering enduring and essential water resource solutions through collaboration with partners and stakeholders.



Rachal Deahl, equal employment opportunity specialist, and Lt. Col. Jared Ware, deputy commander, accept an award on behalf of the Rock Island District from Liz Sherwin (center), executive director, Illinois/Iowa Center for Independent Living (IICIL). The award was presented during the IICIL 23rd Anniversary celebration in March.
Photo courtesy of the Illinois/Iowa Center for Independent Living.

District recognized for accessibility audit

By Rachal Deahl, Equal Employment Opportunity

Each year the Illinois/Iowa Center for Independent Living (IICIL) recognizes organizations and businesses that have made exceptional efforts to make their programs and facilities accessible to people with disabilities in our community.

The Rock Island District was presented the Community Support Award March 28, at the Illinois/Iowa Center at the center's 23rd Anniversary celebration. The District contracted with the center in 2010 to conduct an accessibility audit of the Clock Tower and Annex. The focus of the audit was to evaluate the buildings in terms of access for staff and visitors to the facilities who might have disabilities. The end result was a detailed analysis framed in a report that outlined a complete snap shot of the accessibility of the Corps to people with all types of disabilities, including parking and other amenities offered. This report can and will be used as a tool for future planning and in the development of strategies to address full accessibility.

The IICIL opened its doors January 1988 in Rock Island, Ill. Their mission is to create and maintain independence options for people with disabilities by advocating for civil rights, providing services, and promoting full participation of disabled individuals in all aspects of the community.

The IICIL offers a variety of services to include: accessibility

surveys, braille services, housing assistance and referral, independent living skills, interpreter and captioning at real time services, peer support, personal care assistance, systemic advocacy, telecommunication distribution, social/recreation and transportation. For more information on the IICIL please visit www.iicil.com or call phone: 309-793-0090 (Voice/Teletypewriter (V/TTY)) or toll free 1-877-541-2505 (V/TTY).

John Punkiewicz and Leah Deeds serve as Special Emphasis Program Managers on the Special Emphasis Program Committee for the Programs for Individuals with Disabilities. Punkiewicz has served as a board member with the IICIL for the last six years.

"My community involvement with center has been a win – win partnership for both the Corps and the center. There are barriers within our communities and workplaces that need to be identified and understood in order for us all to work, live and play together in our diversified world. We all need to understand that the focus of persons with disabilities is in 'ability' not disability," said Punkiewicz.

Please feel free to contact John Punkiewicz (309-794-5484), Leah Deeds, (515-276-4656) or the EEO Office (309-794-5471) with questions or concerns. 

May is Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month

By Doug Davis and Hilary Markin, Asian/Pacific American Employment Program Managers

For almost twenty years May has been officially recognized as a month celebrating Asian and Pacific American communities. It was chosen to honor the time of year that the first Japanese immigrants arrived in the United States as well as the many Chinese laborers who completed work on the trans-continental railroad, in May of 1843 and 1869 respectively. This year's theme is "Diversity, Leadership, Empowerment and Beyond." The theme celebrates where the Asian and Pacific American community is today and leaves room to envision the future.

Today, more than 15.5 million Asian Americans live in the United States. Of those, 28.5 percent have only a high school degree; 28.8 percent have some college education; 17.5 percent have a bachelor's degree and 10.2 percent have a graduate or professional degree. The U.S. Department of Education has been working to change that.

In 2010, eight new higher education institutions were awarded grants to support leadership development, student retention and graduation, collection and analysis of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) student data, faculty training and curriculum development. As of November a total of 16 Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPI-SI) received funding.

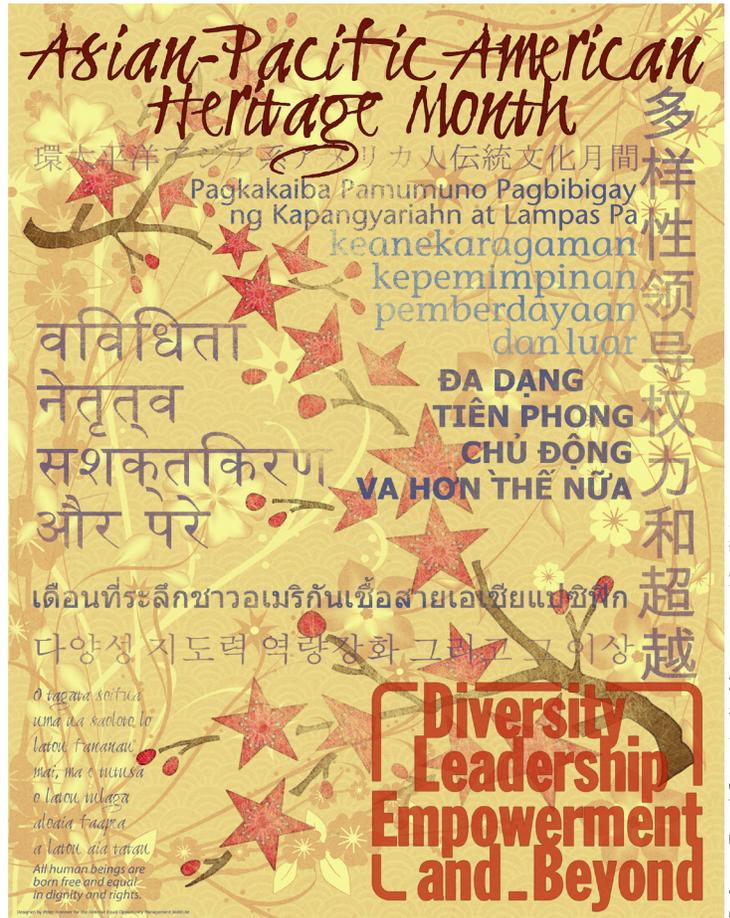
"The Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions designation helps build a stronger pathway for federal resources that can serve AAPI institutions, community organizations and students," said Kiran Ahuja, executive director, White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

The purpose of the program is to provide grants to eligible institutions of higher education to improve academic quality, increase self-sufficiency and strengthen capacity to make a substantial contribution to our nation's higher education resources.

There are a total of 27 institutions that have been designated as AANAPISIs by the Department of Education. One of those is located near the Rock Island District and that is the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC.) UIC was one of the eight who received a grant in 2010 totaling \$390,880.

In order to be eligible for a grant the institution must have at least a 10 percent enrollment of AAPI students and that at least 50 percent of their degree-seeking students receive Federal financial assistance. At UIC, more than 20 percent of the total student body is Asian American and 13 percent of the faculty and staff are Asian or Asian American.

In 2005, the UIC opened an Asian American Resource and Cultural Center to provide education and resources, increase awareness of cultures, strengthen the Asian American campus community, support the growth of Asian American studies and



The artist, Peter Hemmer, Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, designed this year's poster celebrating Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month. He translated the theme "Diversity, Leadership, Empowerment, and Beyond" into eight different languages (Indonesian, Hindi, Filipino, Chinese, Korean, Thai, Japanese, and Vietnamese). There is also a translation from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Samoan.

guide students in reaching their academic, personal and professional potential.

These efforts are perfect examples of providing young AAPIs the tools to lead, empower and go beyond. 

Information from the Department of Education and University of Illinois at Chicago.

The purpose of the Special Emphasis Program Committee is to promote fair and equitable treatment for all personnel and applicants and reshape the culture through a vision of a highly professional, inclusive, and diverse workforce that is reflective of our customer base. If you have questions, please contact the Asian/Pacific American Employment Program Managers Hilary Markin (309-794-5730) or Doug Davis (309-794-5205). You may also contact the Equal Employment Office (309-794-5471).



Retirement

How close am I ?

By the Leadership Development Class of 2010-2011

As employees near retirement there are many commonly asked questions most importantly when can I retire. The other is what steps do I need to take to retire. The government uses the following requirements for eligibility:

- Civilian Service Retirement System (CSRS) – Have at least five years of creditable civilian service with the federal government, have been employed under CSRS for at least one year out of the last two years preceding your final separation from federal employment, must separate from a position subject to CSRS coverage and meet one of the following age and service requirements. An employee is eligible to retire with an un-reduced benefit at age 62 with at least five years of service, at age 60 with 20 years of service, or at age 55 with 30 years of service.
- Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) – Have at least five years of creditable civilian service with the federal government, meet Minimum Retirement Age, must separate from a position subject to FERS coverage, and meet one of the following age and service requirements. An employee is eligible to retire with an un-reduced benefit at age 62 with at least five years of service, at age 60 with 20 years of service, or at the Minimum Retirement Age (55-57) with 30 years of service. An employee is eligible to retire with a reduced benefit at the Minimum Retirement Age with 10-29 years of service.

If you're eligible for retirement what are the steps to retire?

- **5 years** - When you are five years before retirement these are the following steps to perform: payoff all debts, attend the 3-Day Planning for Retirement Seminar, sign up for a health insurance plan if you intend on carrying it into retirement, request for Earnings and Benefit Statement (Form SSA-7004-PC) from your local Social Security Office and lastly, ask the Army Benefits Center - Civilian (ABC-C) office for a Retirement Estimate.
- **1 year** - Steps to take when you get within one year of retiring: review finances to ensure you are financially on track to retire. Create a retirement spending plan. Consult the Social

Security Office to get an idea of what income you can anticipate and when. Confirm when you will be eligible to get a retirement benefit and decide when you want to retire. Consult with the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) on the best times to retire based on benefits and to ensure your Office Personnel Folder is complete and accurate. Tell your supervisor about your proposed retirement date. Make sure you give sufficient notice to allow for proper succession planning.

Attend a Pre-Retirement Counseling Seminar.

- **180 days** prior to retirement download forms from the ABC-C website <https://www.abc.army.mil/forms/retirementforms.htm>. Make sure to review the retirement forms preparation briefings prior to filling out the retirement forms. CPAC can assist you with your personnel folder, forms, military buy back, Thrift Savings Plan, life and health insurance and assist with filling out the retirement forms.
- **120 days** - Apply for retirement by mailing retirement forms to ABC-C. Remember to keep a personal copy for yourself. ABC-C will review your retirement package and will send a letter to acknowledge receipt and requests missing forms and documents if needed. If you submit your retirement package to ABC-C with less than 60 days notice, be financially prepared for a delay in the receipt of your first annuity payment.
- **Last month of work** – Succession planning - turn over work.
- **Last day of work** - Celebrate!!!

A SharePoint site has been established that contains useful websites that will be helpful with retirement and planning for retirement. This SharePoint is located at <https://kme.usace.army.mil/MVD/MVR/ldmt/default.aspx>.

Remember your retirement is up to you - start planning now. 



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.

Don't leave your CAC behind...

Common Access Cards (CAC) have many uses including controlling access to government computer networks, enabling users to sign documents electronically, encrypt email messages and enter controlled facilities. The CAC is issued to all active duty military, Reserve, National Guard, Department of Defense (DoD) civilians, state employees and eligible DoD contractors who need access to DoD facilities or computer networks.

It can not be overemphasized how important it is to pull your CAC out of your computer when you are not sitting at your desk. We all must protect our government networks and facilities. You don't want to be the one who sacrifices our safety and security by having your CAC fall into the wrong hands.

For more information regarding this topic please contact the Security and Law Enforcement Office (email CEMVR-SL). 



Tournament fishermen hear water safety message

By Hilary Markin, Editor

Presenting water safety programs never gets old when the goal is protecting and saving lives. Kevin Ewbank, supervisory natural resource specialist, Illinois Waterway, recently presented a program during opening ceremonies of the Masters' Walleye Circuit tournament in Spring Valley, Ill, something the Illinois Waterway park rangers have been doing for more than 10 years.

"I arrived wearing a Coast Guard approved inflatable life jacket," said Ewbank. "By show of hands, over half had never seen one and didn't know they were approved for use."

During the presentation he discussed the different types of life jackets available to anglers and the importance of wearing them rather than just "having them along." He mentioned a recent accident that occurred in South Carolina where two fishermen landed unexpectedly in the water.

According to reports, the two men were fishing when their boat began taking on water and they decided to swim to shore. One man had a life-jacket on and made it to shore safely; the other did not and was pulled from the lake unresponsive.

"Using real life examples such as this is a great way to bring the reality factor into safety presentations," said Ewbank.

The presentation also included information about the Illinois Waterway and its multiple users. He brought to their attention the large towboats and barges traveling up and down the river and reminded them to keep watch for and stay clear of them.

His final comments to the group of fisherman evolved around the dangers of hypothermia.



Kevin Ewbank wears a Coast Guard-approved inflatable life jacket while conducting a boat inspection on the Illinois Waterway. *Photo courtesy of Illinois Waterway Project.*

"This is usually thought to occur during the winter months but it can actually occur in any season," said Ewbank. He went on to remind the boaters that if they do fall into the water to keep their clothing on and wear their life jacket. 

Engineer Safety Gram

A BAND OF BROTHERS
& SISTERS

Engineering the Edge for Safety Excellence



U.S. ARMY
ARMY SAFE
IS ARMY STRONG

Spring Safety Tips

The snow is melting, the trees are budding...Spring is finally here! Spring is a great time to get away from the cold, dark days of winter and have some fun in the sun. Keep your family safe while enjoying the warmer weather by following these tips.

If your spring plans include traveling, consider these safety tips

- ◆ Look out for each other. Always travels with a group, because there is safety in numbers.
- ◆ Prepare for the unexpected when you travel, carry extra cash or credit card to deal with an emergency
- ◆ Drivers are reminded to be on alert for motorcycles, especially when pulling out into or across traffic, and when changing lanes.
- ◆ Motorcycle riders need to wear proper riding gear and take advantage of motorcycle training safety courses
- ◆ Motorcycle riders should also remember to look out for potholes, loose sewer lids, and loose gravel. The long hard winter took its toll on the roads and many of these problems have yet to be fixed.



If drinking alcohol is part of your spring leisure plans, remember that it can impair your judgment and actions.

- ◆ Don't drink too much!
- ◆ Decide in advance what and how much you will drink.
- ◆ Plan on how you will refuse once you reach your limit.
- ◆ DO NOT DRIVE. Use a designated driver or choose public transportation.

Outdoor Spring Safety Tips

- ◆ You can get dehydrated anytime of the year. Drink plenty of water, non-carbonated and non-alcoholic drinks, even if you do not feel thirsty.
- ◆ Be aware of the weather conditions. It can change quickly. Seek shelter in case of storm.
- ◆ If barbecuing is in your plans, make sure you clean your BBQ and check for leaks, breaks, and other wear & tear. Remember, never store propane inside your house or garage.
- ◆ Don't let the cool spring time temperatures fool you, protect yourself from the sun whenever you're outside at work or play. Use a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. Look for the words "broad-spectrum" on the label - it means that the sunscreen will screen out both ultraviolet B (UVB) and ultraviolet A (UVA) rays.
- ◆ Don't forget to protect your eyes also

While you are enjoying the beautiful weather and dusting off the cobwebs of winter, remember to take your on the job safety awareness with you.



PROJECT UPDATES

Illinois Waterway Project

Todd Ernenputsch, park ranger, Illinois Waterway, staffed a booth at the 18th Annual Peoria Clean Water Celebration and spoke with more than 750 middle and high school students. The celebration encourages students to learn about water resources and how to protect them.

Lake Red Rock

Shawn Bonnett was selected as Lake Red Rock's new maintenance chief. He started his career at Red Rock in 1999 as a laborer, and was promoted to maintenance worker in 2007. Prior to working for the Corps, Bonnett was employed in the construction industry.

Engineering and Construction Division

Members of the Ordnance and Explosives Engineering Section have partnered with members of St. Louis District's Ordnance and Technical Services Branch to conduct an investigation of potential recovered chemical warfare material presence within two parcels of land at the Pine Bluff Arsenal, Ark. This project is being performed under the Installation Restoration Program on behalf of the Army Environmental Center and will consist of historical research at various national and regional archives, a site visit, and preparation of a findings report.

DISTRICT COMMANDER'S AWARDS



Congratulations to **Kirsten Brown**, Hydrology Branch, Engineering and Construction Division, who received the January 2011 District Commander's Award. Her efforts and contributions to the Rock Island District Wellness Association (RIDWA) events and fundraisers while serving as a core member of the Holiday Committee, is commendable. Brown is a new member to the RIDWA team and has taken the initiative to tackle many of the events when other RIDWA members had to step away due to their job duties.

Co-workers have stated that her bubbly personality infects those around her, and she keeps a positive attitude when approaching the most daunting tasks. Brown seeks ways to make the District a pleasant place to work, and shares her knowledge and ideas with coworkers to complete tasks as efficiently and effectively as possible.



Congratulations to **Nathan Gorham**, Lock & Dam 15, Operations Division (OD), who received the February 2011 District Commander's Award. His contributions to assist OD with the implementation of the Facilities & Equipment Maintenance System (FEM) were admirable. While maintaining his regular duties at Lock & Dam 15, he utilized his expertise in FEM to assist the effort to implement FEM at the MVR recreation sites. Gorham volunteered for and undertook the task of developing a two-day FEM user refresher course. Nathan's "Good-to-Great" effort helps to build effective, innovative and sustainable solutions for the District and USACE.

Gorham also performed a majority of the data input for the project sites. The data entry takes a significant amount of work, and he undertook the effort to ensure completeness and ease the learning experience of the various project sites staff. Gorham went above and beyond what was asked of him to help make the implementation of FEM a success for the Rock Island District.

Photos by Hilary Markin.

Good things are happening all over the District - please take a moment to recognize fellow employees who are making a difference and going the extra mile to Build Strong. All employees are eligible to nominate fellow employees. If you have questions regarding the criteria or format to submit nominations, please contact Anne Marie Roarty at 309-794-5436.

Around the District

Retirements ...

John Hamill, lock and dam operator, Lockport Lock, Illinois Waterway Project, Operations Division, retired April 30, after dedicating 35 years and eight and one-half months to the federal government.

Carol Jacks, management support specialist, Planning, Programs and Project Management Division, retired April 30, after dedicating 27 years to the federal government.

Sympathy ...



Paul Whestine, 83, of Sebring, Fla., passed away March 7, 2011 at his home.

He was a supervisor for the Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, retiring in 1988 after more than 26 years of service.

Whestine was also a veteran of World War II, serving in the U.S. Navy.



Michael Schultz, 53 of Jacksonville, Fla. passed away from a flying accident in Florida April 24.

He was a civil engineer for the Rock Island District in the early 1980s and then in Jacksonville.

Congrats ...

"Biggest Loser" Competition

The Rock Island District Wellness Association held the first "Biggest Loser" contest for District employees.

The event was kicked off in February with speakers from the health care community presenting beginners tips on diet and exercise. A total of 17 employees competed in the eight-week competition focusing on eating healthy and exercising. Total contestant weight loss was 82.8 pounds!

The male and female contestants with the highest percentage of weight loss were awarded \$50 for their hard work. Winners were John VanWatermeulen and Vicki Kohl. Both stated they have plans to continue living a healthy lifestyle. 



John VanWatermeulen and Vicki Kohl proudly display the \$50 they won during the first Rock Island District Wellness Association "Biggest Loser" contest. *Photo by Hilary Markin.*



Some of Rock Island Districts newest employees attended a Newcomer's Briefing in March. These trainings provide new employees with an overview of the District and a chance to talk with leaders of the District. *Photo by Hilary Markin.*



Spotlight on the District

Scott Pettis Hydrologic Technician

Water Control Section, Hydrology and Hydraulics Branch,
Engineering and Construction Division

Once you get your feet wet it's hard to stay away. That is true for many of us who grew up on rivers and streams fishing, swimming and paddling. This is especially true for Scott Pettis, who only left the Mississippi River Basin for a short period of time, and whose life continues to revolve around the river.

Pettis grew up in Osceola, Wis., on the St. Croix River, a tributary of the Mississippi River, where childhood river adventures led to a river career.

"The river has been a part of my life, my whole life with the exception of two years on Lake Erie," said Pettis.

Following high school, he continued his love for the water by joining the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve (USCG) in 1976. In 1981, he went on active duty for six years. His first assignment was at a search and rescue station on Lake Erie where he assisted and rescued many boaters. He was then transferred to the Quad Cities USCG office where he performed safety and security patrols, vessel and waterfront facility inspections, pollution prevention and response, and water and boating safety outreach. It was then that he met his wife Susan and they decided to raise their family in the Quad City area.

During his time with the Coast Guard Pettis became familiar with the Corps, and when a position came open in Channel Maintenance he applied and was hired on to the hydrographic survey crew in 1987.

"The timing was perfect, I was hired by the Corps on my last day of active duty with the Coast Guard," said Pettis.

For the first seven years of his career with the Corps he was on the water, spending the majority of time on the Mississippi but also saw parts of the Illinois Waterway. As he and his wife started a family he took a job in the Survey Branch that didn't involve as much travel.

"It was a big change to go from being on a boat everyday to sitting in an office,"



Scott Pettis, enjoys being out of the office teaching a boat licensing course at Coralville Lake. *Photo courtesy of Coralville Lake.*

said Pettis. He spent seven years in Survey primarily processing data from field survey crews and performing real estate map revisions. "Occasionally I got out in the field which was a nice change of pace," he added.

When an opportunity to join Water Control came along in 2000, Pettis jumped at the chance to try something new. It was one of the best decisions he has ever made.

Pettis is one of the forecasters in Water Control spending most of his time regulating the Mississippi River navigation dams, providing gate settings to maintain the nine-foot navigation channel.

"I truly love my job," said Pettis. "One of the most rewarding things is the interaction with the public and our internal customers."

When performing Mississippi River regulation duties Pettis is on call 24 hours a day because the pool of each dam is

required to be maintained in a 0.5-foot operational band. When away from the office, RiverGages.com is used to monitor pool elevations. Pettis always keeps a close eye on the current weather conditions and forecasts which have a significant impact on dam regulation.

Teamwork is essential in nearly every job and Water Control is no exception, working closely with the National Weather Service (NWS) and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The USGS and the Corps manage an extensive gage network that includes 249 gages in the District. Pettis, along with others in Water Control monitor the gages closely and coordinate maintenance when necessary. Daily, Pettis runs a Mississippi Basin forecast model that produces a water level forecast for 22 gages along the river and a flow forecast for Dam 22. This forecast is made available to all internal District customers, St. Louis District Water Control and the Division Water Management Team. It is also shared with the NWS as well as any scheduled dam gate changes. The NWS is the official water level forecasting agency, but this teamwork is essential in their forecast accuracy.

While performing all of these duties the phone is typically ringing with calls from internal customers, the public, other government agencies, and businesses looking for general river information or data. In between phone calls the river levels are checked to ensure the forecast is working as planned, with additional dam adjustments made if needed.

"My goal is to call a lock before they have to call me," said Pettis referring to a pool elevation that is moving out of its operational limits. To assure a good nights sleep Pettis checks RiverGages.com one last time before going to bed, and checking the river is the first task when he wakes up the next morning.

"My job is sort of like a 24-hour game

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, ROCK ISLAND
CLOCK TOWER BLDG. – P.O. BOX 2004
ROCK ISLAND, IL 61204-2004

that ends at 0600 each day,” said Pettis. “I look forward to coming to work every day and never get tired of it!”

Since joining the Corps he hasn’t forgotten about the USCG. He is still involved as a reservist and enjoys being a liaison between the Corps and the local office. Over the 35 years that he has been a part of the USCG he has been on five deployments mostly conducting security details. Those include Desert Storm, Flood of 1993, Hurricane Floyd, Operation Iraqi Freedom and 9/11. Each provided a unique experience and a chance to serve. He also works closely with the USCG Auxiliary (the volunteer service of CG), helping them with boat crew training and public boating skills classes.

Over the years, Pettis has provided continuity for the Quad City USCG office. As assignments change and new people come in, he introduces them to relevant members of the Corps and also helps them get acquainted with the community. It has been a big part of his life and he still enjoys it.

One of his passions is water safety. He enjoys teaching water and boating safety programs and especially the boat licensing courses for the District. Pettis is one of the District’s Boat License Examiners. He also serves on the District Water Safety Team and numerous committees with the USCG.

“It is very rewarding to work with kids and teach them about water safety,” said Pettis. “The Corps boat classes also get me out of my every day routine and I get to meet many of the lockmen that I deal with on a daily basis. Face to face communication is the key to team building and I learn valuable information from the lockmen that help improve my forecasting skills.”

Pettis is active in the community and recently served on a task

force for the new Veterans Memorial Park in Davenport. The park will recognize all veterans and will be dedicated on Memorial Day of this year. He also serves on the Board of Directors for an annual Davenport event in August called “Tribute to Our Fallen,” that honors the men and women who gave the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq and Afghanistan. The event also honors the fallen in all wars since World War I and those who lost their lives on 9/11.

During his free time, Pettis can be found spending time with his wife Susan and sons Mike and Tom. His son Mike is married to Molly, the daughter of District employee Lisa Cooksey. Pettis is active with his church and his hobbies include biking, basketball, hunting and the Green Bay Packers.

When asked about advice, he shared “Strive to be the very best at what you do and have fun doing it, if you don’t love your job then move on to something else.”

Pettis jumps at the opportunity to serve, and relishes in the joy his service brings to others. 



Scott Pettis, teaching a U.S. Coast Guard boat safety class to local children.
Photo courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard.