



# Tower Times

Rock Island District's News Magazine

June 2011



## Water Safety Night

District and Quad Cities River Bandits promote water safety



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

# Tower Times

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**June 2011**

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District and Quad Cities River Bandits promote water safety

Bobber the water safety dog shares his life jacket with Rascal, the Quad Cities River Bandit's mascot, during water safety night at the ballpark. The Rock Island District partnered with the River Bandits on June 8 to promote water safety.

*Photo of Bobber (John Hayes), Rascal and Park Ranger Ben DeRoo. Photo by Allen Marshall.*

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## *Tower Times*

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*A message from....*

**Colonel Shawn McGinley, District Commander**



## District always ready, willing and prepared

Each year the chance of flooding within the Mississippi River Valley is a real cause of concern for citizens and for those who work for the Corps in the Mississippi Valley Division. As our District is charged with a flood risk management mission and disaster response when flooding occurs, we spent much of the early spring hoping for the best and preparing for the worst. This year, as we watched the spring thaw and the coming rains, it became evident that we would have a flood fight on our hands. Thankfully, due to the outstanding professionalism prevalent throughout our District, we were prepared and ready for the challenge.

In early March the National Weather Service forecast called for major flooding along much of the Upper Mississippi River. Predictions were calling for record-setting levels in some areas of our District. Luckily, the area was spared from catastrophic flooding and associated damages. But, many areas were still inundated and our folks were on scene to provide professional support and assistance.

Preparation is the key to a successful flood fight. As usual, our flood area engineers received annual training to ensure they were equipped with the skills they needed to assist communities. That training is critical, and for the first time we reached out to our teammates in public works departments and offered them flood-fight training; hosting several training sessions in communities along the river. In the end, flood-fighting and preparation is a community wide, team effort and I am proud of the continuous role we play on those teams.

Our District and the Upper Mississippi River were not hit as hard as predicted but our neighbors to the south were not so lucky. While most of the communities along our portion of the Upper Mississippi were seeing flood waters recede, communities like those supported by the Memphis District, were preparing for historic flooding. Many of you probably heard the news as the Corps operated the Birds Point-New Madrid Floodway for the first time in 74 years. Using more than 200 tons of explosives, the Corps team crevassed a two-mile section of levee south of Cairo, Ill., and two one-mile sections east of New Madrid, Mo.

We may have been ramping down our flood operations within our District borders but our employees were ready and eager to assist our teammates in the south.

Fourteen volunteers from the District deployed to assist with Operation Watershed. Those volunteers performed a wide range of tasks. Some were liaisons for the Federal Emergency Management Agency while others performed management and support at the Emergency Operations Center. We sent geotechnical specialists, flood specialists and people to track flood equipment. Their efforts were commendable and I appreciate their willingness to volunteer and travel away from home.

In addition to our volunteers, our District is a national supplier of Innovative Flood Fight Products for the Corps and the Regional Flood Fight Product Distribution Center for local and state governments during natural disaster response. Our Emergency Management and Contracting staff has done a tremendous job working diligently to meet the needs of those throughout the region and nation.

For Operation Watershed alone, we sent more than 21 million standard sandbags and nearly 100,000 large (2,000 to 4,000 pound) sandbags. We provided 45 pumps, nearly 73,000 HESCO bastion expedient flood-fight products and more than 2,000 rolls of polyethylene. All totaled, we provided nearly \$8 million of supplies to assist Operation Watershed.

Within the region, you continue to show communities throughout the watershed that the Rock Island District will answer the call. Prior to the high water in our District, we were supporting the St. Paul District with their flood-fighting efforts. These events underscore our outstanding teamwork and a commitment to our regional responsibilities. Overall, your performance responding to the 2011 floods has been impressive but we're not done.

As I write this we have District employees deployed to the Omaha District in support of the historic flooding occurring on the Missouri River. We are also repositioning supplies to assist in their flood-fight efforts and remain vigilant of what is just beyond the horizon; not just in our District or region, but nationally as well.

In 2011, flooding and other natural disasters have occurred throughout the country and will most likely continue. River levels are going to remain vulnerable as will the flood control structures and infrastructure that has been put to test this year. We currently have volunteers providing tornado recovery support and hurricane season has just begun. If natural disaster strikes again, I know we will remain prepared and ready to assist when, and where needed. Natural disasters are never good news but through great preparation and teamwork we will continue to help our communities and surrounding neighbors within the District, Division and across USACE.

To all of you who have supported these efforts so far, you have my gratitude. I am confident we are up to the challenges ahead and will do so with great professionalism. I appreciate all you do. Continue **BUILDING STRONG®** 

# Coralville Lake - A multiple-u

By Hilary Markin, Editor

*Note - In an ongoing effort to meet requests resulting from the Tower Times survey, this is the third article in a series to educate the workforce about the missions of the Rock Island District.*

One of Iowa's increasingly popular areas is Coralville Lake, one of the three Rock Island District reservoirs. It is located on the Iowa River just above Iowa City, Iowa, draining 3,084 square miles of land upstream and provides flood protection for 1,703 square miles of Iowa River Valley below the dam.

Coralville Lake is a multiple-use project providing primary benefits in flood risk management for areas below the lake and low flow augmentation. Secondary benefits include recreation, fish and wildlife management, forest management and water quality improvement.

To do that Coralville has a staff of 15 permanent and four seasonal people who help make it happen. That number doesn't include the numerous contractors and volunteers who support lake missions throughout the season.

"I would put the Coralville staff up against anyone for the amount of work accomplished for our size, but that still isn't enough to do everything that needs to be done. Many of our current programs would cease to exist without help from volunteers and contractors," said John Castle, operations manager.

There is never quiet time around the lake, many people think that summer is the only busy time when in fact it is year round. The type of recreation is what changes.

Throughout the winter rangers are busy doing year end close-outs and planning for the next recreation season. Hunting seasons are in full swing and snowmobilers venture on to Corps land. Plus, many come to watch the gathering of bald eagles just below the dam.

This past winter the Corps partnered with MidAmerican Energy to minimize the danger of eagles flying into the power lines that crossed the Iowa River below the dam. The power company spread the wires apart and placed markers on them in hopes of making them easier for eagles to see while flying.

In spring, people are itching to get outside to hike, bike, camp, boat, bird watch, fish, play disc golf, etc. This spring Coralville Lake held it's first turkey hunt for disabled veterans read more on page 7.

During the summer rangers are kept busy in the campgrounds, at the beaches, in picnic areas and patrolling the waters. They also hold special events like the Memorial Day Veteran's Trail Dedication that takes place each year.

On May 30, more than 400 people gathered to recognize seven World War II veterans whose names were added to the Veterans Bench Monument. The Veterans Trail Commission at Coralville Lake has recognized 150 local veterans since the trail's dedication in 1989. The trail is one of two barrier-free access trails at



Left, high lake levels force water over the spillway at Coralville Lake in 2008. Right, construction of Coralville Lake started in 1949 but was delayed due to the Korean War and was completed in 1958.

## The specs

The dam is an earth filled embankment that is 1,400 feet long, 100 feet tall and 40 feet wide; with the top of the dam being 743 feet above sea level. The outlet works runs through the east end of the dam and is a concrete conduit that is 350 feet long, 23 feet in diameter and has three control gates that control the amount of water flowing through the conduit.

When lake levels reach the maximum pool of 712 feet above sea level (normal pool is 683 feet above sea level) water is diverted and flows over the spillway located on the west end of the dam. The spillway is a concrete overflow section that is 500 feet wide. The spillway has been used twice since Coralville Lake was put into operation, 1993 and 2008. 

# se project



Coralville constructed to accommodate wheelchair users, people with disabilities and able-bodied users. Adjacent to the other trail, Tailwater Riverwalk, is a barrier-free fishing pier.

"All of our hiking and biking trails receive a lot of use year round. Users find this a great place for quiet reflection at any of the numerous stops along the trail where they can watch native birds and other wildlife," said Jeffrey Peck, natural resources specialist.

Also happening on Veterans Trail and at the Visitor Center this summer will be the First Turkey Vulture Festival on June 18. Lots of activities for families will be available from 8 a.m. to noon to learn about turkey vultures and other birds who call Coralville Lake home.

Fall brings hunting seasons, hiking, bird watching and nice weekends bring out many recreationalists. The list of activities could go on and on and all the while lake levels are constantly fluctuating keeping staff on their toes.

All year-round park rangers conduct educational programs to local schools and organizations. This past year they conducted 340 programs reaching just over 16,000 students, teachers and

others.

There is also staff dedicated to managing the natural resources surrounding the lake. Restoring native species and habitat, managing invasive species, managing wildlife populations are a few of the goals that staff work to achieve.

One effort that is never ending is battling non-native invasive species.

"These species are the single largest threat to native biodiversity on our lands. Non-native invasives impact every ecosystem at Coralville Lake, often altering habitats so dramatically that they are unusable for our wildlife species," said Mary Sue Bowers, natural resources specialist.

The other part of the team is the maintenance staff who keep everything up and running and fully operational. They are in charge of all the park maintenance activities, building maintenance and do natural resource work. They do everything from repairing leaky faucets to facility repairs.

For more information on Coralville Lake visit their website at [www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Coralville/](http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Coralville/). 



## Devonian Fossil Gorge

Coralville Lake's main purpose is flood protection of areas downstream which has been tested two times since it became fully operational. In 1993, one of the wettest years on record caused high inflows and lake levels that eventually poured water over the spillway for 28 days. In 2008, the first six months were the wettest on record and record setting inflows and lake levels once again used the spillway for 13 days.

During the flood of 1993 a unique area was uncovered as water flowed over the spillway washing away up to 17 feet of soil and rock. This exposed a layer of limestone with fossils estimated

to be from 375 million years ago.

Coralville created the Devonian Fossil Gorge allowing visitors a chance to explore the 375 million-year-old sea floor and the fossil remains of the sea life that once lived in the then tropical marine environment.

The spillway was used again in 2008 which uncovered more fossils but caused a lot of damage to the interpretive displays developed for the gorge. The displays have since been repaired and the fossil gorge is once again a magnificent place to learn about Iowa's past. 

Water rushes over the spillway in 2008 at Coralville Lake once again scouring the Devonian Fossil Gorge and uncovering more fossils. *Photo by Mary Sue Bowers.*



**Two contractors plant native tree species near Sand Run access as part of an ARRA-funded project at the Odessa Wildlife Complex. (Photos courtesy of Northwind Engineering.)**

# Restoring bottomland forest

By Joe Lundh, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist

One thousand twenty trees have been purchased and planted and more than 400 acres of forest lands improved as part of the Environmental Management Program's (EMP) Lake Odessa Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project (HREP). This portion of the EMP-HREP was completed through a Mississippi River Project, Natural Resources Management Section Indefinite Delivery - Indefinite Quantities (IDIQ) contract with Northwind Engineering, an 8(a) set aside business. More than 2,000 hours of private sector labor was funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to restore Odessa's bottomland forest.

The project location is within the Odessa Wildlife Complex which totals 6,800 acres of land and water and lies approximately 15 miles south of Muscatine, Iowa, in Louisa County. It is Corps fee title land that is managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) under cooperative agreements. The Odessa Complex is a former levee and drainage district that the Corps acquired in support of the 9-foot Navigation Channel Project in the 1930s. The area is managed for wildlife purposes by the FWS and DNR for waterfowl and shorebird habitat.

Mature pin oak forests dominated approximately 1,200 acres until the 1993 and subsequent major floods changed the landscape. These oak trees provided wildlife habitat to deer, turkey, waterfowl, and other species as well as a different environment from the ubiquitous silver maple forests along the river. A dense cover of silver maple trees took the place of the oak forests due to flooding and associated mortality of the mature trees. Scattered among them though was a new crop of pin oak, swamp white oak, and other equally less common bottomland species.

The ARRA funds provided an opportunity to conduct timber stand improvement (TSI) work re-establishing a diverse bottomland hardwood forest habitat, one of the goals of the Lake Odessa EMP-HREP. The main portion of the TSI work covered 400 acres on the downstream end in the Odessa Wildlife Management Unit of the Iowa DNR. Mississippi River Project Forestry staff worked with the EMP-HREP team including Corps biologists, the Iowa DNR, and the FWS to determine the TSI parameters and selection of tree stands for treatment.

The contractors selected up to 75 desirable trees per acre



**A contractor from Northwind Engineering cuts a silver maple to help restore the native bottomland timber along the Mississippi River.**

including oak, pecan and hickory species. Their survival was improved by cutting smaller (less than six inches in diameter) silver maples that competed with the canopy of the desired tree and killing larger trees through girdling (removing a strip of bark around the entire circumference of a tree). The larger girdled trees were left standing and provide habitat for species like the endangered Indiana Bat and cavity nesting bird species like red-headed woodpeckers.

In addition to the TSI, an area near Sand Run access was planted with 1,020 trees in the spring of 2010 further restoring the forest habitat. These container stock (or potted) trees were typically four to six feet tall and included several bottomland tree species: pin oak, bur oak, swamp white oak, American sycamore, northern pecan, and shellbark hickory.

Working in the river bottom is not without its challenges and this effort was no exception. High water during most of the summer and fall of 2009 slowed progress. Workers also dealt with the elements in hot, humid conditions with mosquitoes, poison ivy, and other difficulties in the spring and summer of 2010.



The hunters and guides pose for a photo following the first Disabled Veterans Turkey Hunt at Coralville Lake on April 17. (Photo by Erika Billerbeck, Iowa Department of Natural Resources.)

# Turkey hunt held for veterans

By Hilary Markin, Editor

This spring five hunters entered the woods surrounding Coralville Lake in an effort to fill their turkey tags. This was the first year for the Disabled Veterans Turkey Hunt in which the Corps partnered with the Veterans Administration, National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. They also received numerous donations from area business and organizations to create a successful event. “I could not have done this event without the local NWTf Chapter,” said Chris Pankow, park ranger, at Coralville Lake, who organized the event. “They helped make everything possible soliciting donations and providing volunteers.”

The event started on Friday night April 15 with a social gathering and dinner allowing the hunters and guides to get to know each other. Some even took the opportunity to site in their guns in preparation for the hunt. Saturday was another opportunity for the guides and hunters to interact seeing the locations of their blinds and making any necessary adjustments before the hunt on Sunday. A few even stayed in the woods till dark hoping to see where the turkeys were going to roost for the night.

At 4 a.m. the hunters and guides all arrived and set out to their blinds in anticipation of a successful hunt. Each group also had a videographer from Real Hunting in Ankeny, Iowa, along to document the morning’s activities.

Throughout the morning the woods were alive with sounds as

turkeys gobbled and birds chirped. Each of the groups had activity around them keeping their attention and anxiously waiting for an opportunity. One of the groups was in the right place at the right time when a mature tom walked within 15 yards allowing the hunter the golden opportunity.

“Even though only one hunter was successful they were all excited to have the opportunity,” said Pankow. “Many of them have already inquired about next spring and some will be participating in the other activities we have planned at the lake.”

The morning ended with lunch provided by the local NWTf chapter. Everyone shared their experiences from the morning and watched the videos.

“Next year we plan to make the event a two day event,” said Pankow, already planning the Second Annual Disabled Veterans Turkey Hunt.

In the meantime Coralville Lake continues to work with the Veterans Administration Hospital in Iowa City, Iowa, to hold additional events for local veterans. A Veterans Fishing Trip is planned for July 16. This event is open to veterans and their families as well as the general public. There is also a Veterans Deer Hunt planned this fall from Sept. 18-Oct. 3. For more information on these events contact Chris Pankow at Coralville Lake by calling 319-338-3543 ext. 6309. 

*Continued from page 6...*

They completed most of the project under frozen, sometimes frigid conditions this winter and narrowly finished the last week of work just after the ice melted and before the high water this spring. (Continued on next page.)

The Mississippi River Project, in cooperation with the Iowa DNR, will follow-up on several sites to remove other species competing with the desired trees identified in the TSI. The combined efforts of ARRA funds, EMP-HREP and the Mississippi River Project made this unique effort possible and restored

a large track of native bottomland forest along the Mississippi River.

The goals of the Lake Odessa EMP-HREP are to restore and protect wetland, terrestrial and aquatic habitat. The project features include restoring the perimeter levee, installing a spillway, dredging areas for overwintering fish habitat, reestablishing grassland, as well as planting and enhancing bottomland hardwood forest. 



The Hercules lifts and maneuvers a sector gate at Fresh Water Bayou Lock in Louisiana. The sector gates are pie-shaped and weigh approximately 157,000 pounds each.

# Going the distance

By Susan Yager, Public Affairs Assistant

This spring the Illinois Waterway Structures Maintenance Unit 1 traveled their furthest southern distance to Fresh Water Bayou Lock, La. The 580-foot by 70-foot-fleet, made up of the Motor Vessel (M/V) City of Ottawa, Hercules crane barge, two flat deck barges, crane barge 9 and the tug boat M/V Channahon set sail on their 1400 plus mile journey March 19.

"For three years in a row, the Illinois Waterway Structures Maintenance Unit Crew has done an outstanding job in supporting the New Orleans District with their heavy lift floating plant needs. The Crane Barge Hercules and its crew continue to be a vital asset to the Mississippi Valley Division and are always willing and ready to assist anywhere and anytime a heavy lift asset is needed on our nations' inland waterways," said Brady Beckman, general maintenance supervisor, Illinois Waterway Project.

Running around the clock the crew of six ate, slept and lived on the M/V Ottawa. Their first stop was Ensley Yards in Memphis Tenn., the Memphis District's equivalent to our project offices but on a much grander scale. With only a 24-hour stop they moved on to Baton Rouge, La.

The Mississippi River was running high and fast which provided better than average speeds to Port Allen, La., where it was necessary to pick up an additional boat captain, Billy Zar. Captain Zar of the M/V Kent, New Orleans District, provided the necessary licenses for navigating the inland waterways. Coast Guard regulates Inland Waterway Licenses for intercoastal waters in which the fleet crossed over on their way to the Fresh Water Bayou Lock.

The unit stopped over in Morgan City, La., where they picked up the sector gates for Fresh Water Lock expanding the fleet to 700 feet long and 70 feet wide due to two additional barges.

Once arriving at Fresh Water Bayou Lock the heavy lift for setting the gates ran smoothly and was finalized without injury or set-backs. Departing on April 7, the fleet made it back to the

Peoria Project Office on April 20, just before the Mighty Mississippi really started rolling due to the high water.

"It is a true testament of our employee's dedication and professionalism to keep an almost 40 year old crane running strong year after year saving the taxpayer millions and providing unique capabilities across the Division. The Hercules and her crew have traveled from the northern most regions of the Mississippi River to within inches of the Gulf of Mexico in an effort to meet mission requirements and to get the job done safely and efficiently, each and every time. The members of Structures Maintenance Unit 1 are to be commended on another job well done," said Beckman. 



The crew that traveled from Peoria, Ill., to Louisiana pauses for a photo before starting work for the day. Crew members include (first row, from left) Brady Beckman, Fred Tazelaar, Johnny Dyer, Danny Johnson, Lisa Perreault, Kenny McClain, Bill Zar, Layne Yager, and Matt Dillon, (2nd row, from right) Bryan Smith, Terry Bielser, Steve Bielser, Randy Kyle, Cameron Klein and Jim Baird.

# Corps Day

Thursday, June 23

10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Memorial Field, Rock Island Arsenal



**AWARDS** Team members will be recognized for their great contributions to the District. Ceremony starts at 10 a.m.

**FUN** Volleyball, bean bag toss tournament, kids crafts, hobby vehicle show, horseshoes, bingo, Euchre

**FOOD** Hamburgers, brats, hotdogs, veggie burgers, chips, fruit, veggies, cookies, drinks (adult beverages \$1 each)

\*Please only take 1 burger and 1 hotdog/brat until everyone has been served.



Corps Day is brought to you by RIDWA and the Corps Day Committee. Fundraisers are held throughout the year to fund the event, additional donations are always welcome.





Above, Andrew Barnett, Mississippi River Project, discusses the Mississippi River Structures Maintenance Unit with Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp, chief of engineers, and Col. Shawn McGinley, district commander. (Photos by T.F. Eyre.)

Below, Kara Mitvalsky, Engineering and Construction, and Monique Savage, Planning Division, were stopped in the hallway by Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp, chief of engineers, after picking up supplies from Emergency Management to go on flood duty in April.



# Final site visit

By Hilary Markin, Editor

The Rock Island District hosted Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp, 52nd Chief of Engineers, for his final site visit before retirement. The Chief arrived on Thursday, April 14 and as he arrived on Arsenal Island he remembered earlier in his military career when he had been to the Clock Tower; but this was his first official visit as Chief.

During his visit he met with employees at Lock and Dam 15, toured the Mississippi River Visitor Center and was led on a historic tour of the Clock Tower. He also spoke at the Quad City Society of American Military Engineers luncheon held at the Quad Cities Botanical Center, Rock Island, Ill.

A Town Hall meeting was conducted for all employees where he talked about the hats that he wears as the Chief of Engineers and Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He provided employees an insight into the amount of responsibility he has, some of his business philosophies and some of the Great things happening across the Corps.

He spoke about Jim Collins book "Good to Great" during his speech and how the Corps of Engineers has gone from Good to Great over the last four years. He provided numerous examples of

how the Corps continues to evolve with new ideas and innovative technologies within a limited budget.

Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp also took a tour of the Mississippi River Project Office which included a look at the entire fleet that was in port due to the rising river conditions. He met employees, saw first-hand the innovative equipment the District has and gained insight into how the aging infrastructure is maintained.

On Friday, Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp made his way around the Clock Tower visiting with as many employees as possible. One of the things that he enjoyed about his job was hearing directly from the workforce. His final moments in the Rock Island District were spent with graduates of District Leadership Development Program. They enjoyed lunch with the Chief sharing thoughts and ideas about the "standards" of the Corps of Engineers.

A retirement ceremony was held on May 3 honoring Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp in Washington, D.C. President Barack Obama has nominated Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, deputy chief of staff G-1 (Army personnel and administration), to be the next Chief of Engineers, pending Senate confirmation. 

# LDP class graduates...program starts again this fall

By Sara Paxson, Professional Development Specialist

The 2010-2011 Leadership Development Program class graduated on Monday, April 18. After nearly a year long program the graduates celebrated the completion of the program and new personal growths as individuals. They also presented their final project findings to the Executive Steering Board.

The project focused on the Human Capital Plan and took a hard look at recruitment, retention and retirement in the Rock Island District. Through their research the team found that overall the District is doing very well and came up with a few things to help us do even better; taking the District from Good to Great.

The LDP team developed a SharePoint site to share the results of their project as well as a listing of valuable resources and information for all employees. The site can be accessed at <https://kme.usace.army.mil/MVD/MVR/ldmt/>. Earlier in the year the team also looked at the Student Career Experience Program and developed a policy memorandum relating the program to the Human Capital Plan.

The LDP program was contracted to Evans and Associates Consulting Corporation who provided monthly training sessions and materials to participants. They also facilitated a mentor program where each person selected a mentor to guide them through the year and increase their knowledge and understanding of leadership and how it applies to the Corps.

Participants also went on two field trips; the first to Rock Island Arsenal Joint Manufacturing and Technology Center, and the second to John Deere. Each provided a unique aspect of leadership outside the Corps and how they conduct day-to-day business.

Throughout the program participants read books on leadership development, did hands-on activities and discussed numerous topics. Each month's classes were focused on an aspect of leadership development, the next class building on the previous. The classes mostly focused on individual development but in the



LDP enjoy a field trip to the U.S. Army Rock Island Arsenal Joint Manufacturing and Technology Center in November learning about their business processes. (Photo by Hilary Markin.)

context of how it relates to working with others.

Each participant also set personal goals to accomplish throughout the program. Using information gained from a survey they developed an action plan with specific steps to help them accomplish their goal. A great discussion was held during the final LDP session where participants shared their personal growth and development and how it has impacted their work environment.

The next Leadership Development Program is set to start this October. The LDP committee has been busy making some adjustments to continue the success of the program for both individuals and the District. If you are interested and would like to apply be sure to talk to your supervisor now – don't wait until this fall. Training budgets are due soon and supervisors will need to account for your participation in next year's budget. A lunch-n-learn will be held and videotaped this summer for those looking for additional information about the program. 



The 2010-2011 Leadership Development Program class was recognized during the April awards ceremony by Col. Shawn McGinley, district commander. First row (from left) Beth Bernauer, Hilary Markin, Julie Millhollin, Alaena Ensey, Matt Schneider and Lisa Perrault. Back row (from left), Steve Rumble, Jim Homann, Leo Keller, Scott Perilles and Matt Traver. Not present was Todd Ernenputsch. (Photo by Troy Larson.)

# SAFETY CORNER

## How to prevent a bad back

**A**mong the most common and costly injuries suffered by workers are back injuries. These can involve injuries to the spinal column, and strains or sprains to the muscles, tendons and ligaments of the back. Lifting injuries aren't usually caused by picking up vehicle transmissions or 45 gallon drums. Instead, they frequently involve improper lifting of common smaller items such as clothes on the floor or bending over the sink.

Apply ergonomics to reduce the need for manual lifting in your workplace and home. Talk to your supervisor about your ideas for more efficient and easier materials handling or eliminate the need to handle items all together.

Here are some tips for safe lifting:

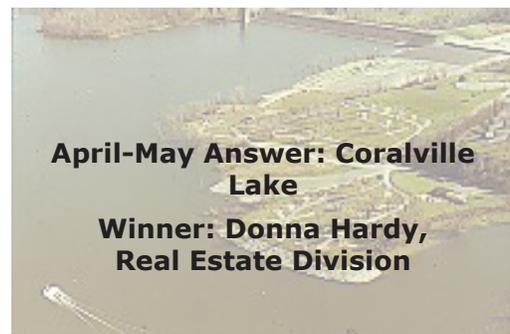
- Plan your route so you have a clear path to carry the item. Have a place to put the item down once you reach your destination.
- Check the weight of the item you will be lifting to see if you will need help. Do this by grasping the object firmly by an outside corner and tipping it towards you. You should be able to tell if it is too heavy.
- Use the proper devices for lifting and carrying. Materials handling equipment such as handcars and stock pickers can help you move materials without straining your back.
- Ask for help others. When you do a team lift, appoint one person as the leader who tells everyone else when to pick up the object and put it down.
- Bend your knees when you lift instead of stooping over. Hold your back straight and vertical to the ground. If you keep your head up, your eyes looking ahead and your stomach muscles tight, you will help yourself maintain this posture.
- Keep the item close to your body. Lifting or carrying an object at arm's length puts much more strain on your back.



Here are more tips for preventing back injuries:

- Do warm-ups before any physical exertion.
- Avoid excessive bending, reaching or twisting motions.
- Stand up straight, but not rigid. Keep your knees flexed and maintain the natural curves in your back.
- When sitting, choose a comfortable, relaxed position in which your back is straight. Don't slouch.
- When you are lying down, keep your back curved naturally. Use a low pillow under your head and neck.
- Avoid sleeping on your stomach.
- Maintain physical fitness. Exercise to keep the muscles of your back and abdomen strong.

Arrange your work area to decrease the need for lifting and moving materials. Proper planning can reduce the need to handle stock unnecessarily.



**April-May Answer: Coralville Lake**

**Winner: Donna Hardy,  
Real Estate Division**

**Can you name where this photo was taken? If so, send your answer to Hilary.R.Markin@usace.army.mil. The first correct answer will receive a special prize and be recognized in the next Tower Times.**

# PROJECT UPDATES

## Illinois Waterway Project

The Illinois Waterway sent four individuals to the USACE Boat Instructor Class in Temple, Texas. These new instructors will help to re-invigorate the Waterway's training program, which currently only has two instructors who are nearing retirement. Additionally, these members will be available for District-wide trainings.

## Programs & Project Management

**Waubonsie Creek:** This spring was the first time since 1901 short-head redhorse suckers, quillback suckers, and many other spring run fish species had the opportunity to utilize the Fox River tributary, Waubonsie Creek, as one of the fishes' traditional spawning and feeding sites. The District and Illinois Department of Natural Resources (ILDNR) partnered to remove three small dams and improve some riffle sections of the creek late in 2010 to achieve fish passage. Len Kring and Joe Jordan, Environmental and Economics Branch, met with ILDNR staff on site and observed successful fish passage above all the structures. The ILDNR will continue monitoring efforts throughout the spring and summer months.

## Lake Red Rock and Saylorville Lake

Sunday, May 21 was the kickoff to National Safe Boating Week, and Red Rock and Saylorville teamed forces to staff a water safety booth during Bass Pro Shops' "Get Outdoors" event that weekend. Bobber the Water Safety Dog made frequent appearances as visitors took a water safety quiz and learned how to be safe around water. Bass Pro has partnered with the Corps since they opened their doors at their Altoona, Iowa, location a couple of years ago. They've provided booth space for the lake projects free of charge on several occasions. Approximately 125 contacts were made during the weekend's activity.

## Mississippi River Project

A crew located at Lock 16 is performing routine mechanical dredging of the auxiliary miter gate area placing 620 cubic yards of spoil material behind the upper approach wall on June 7. Rip-rap is being placed in the spoil area for protection. Another crew continues to perform strike removal of dredge cut "B" at Fernald Island in Pool 18.

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## New Saylorville Lake Marina boat ramp open

By Hilary Markin, Editor

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held Monday, June 6, officially opening the new boat ramp at Saylorville Lake. The high water in 2008 caused extensive damage to the boat ramp at the Saylorville Lake Marina which had been out of service since. A contract was awarded to Jensen Construction Company, Des Moines, Iowa, for \$1.7 million using 2008 Flood Recovery Funds to complete the project.

"The ramp being in service is a major feature of the marina and critical to their operations and provides high water boating access for the public," said Jeff Rose, operations manager, Saylorville lake.

Part of the contract included recycling the concrete from the old boat ramp. The concrete was barged to a specified location in the lake and created an artificial fishing reef providing habitat to aquatic species. 



Above, (from right) Polk City Mayor Gary Heuertz and U.S. Rep. Leonard Boswell hold the ribbon while Col. Shawn McGinley, district commander, and Mike Slatterly, manager, Saylorville Lake Marina, cut the ribbon officially opening the boat ramp at Saylorville Lake Marina. Also in the photo are local government officials, and representatives from Jensen Construction and the Corps of Engineers.

Left, broken concrete from the old Saylorville Lake Marina boat ramp drops into the lake creating a spawning and fish habitat structure.



# Around the District

## Retirements ...

**Dan Johnson**, chief, Regulatory Branch, Operations Division, retired May 1, after dedicating 30 years and two months to the federal government.

**John Herren**, lock and dam equipment mechanic, Lock & Dam 18, Mississippi River Project, Operations Division, retired May 3, after dedicating 30 years to the federal government.

**Danny Till**, maintenance worker supervisor, Natural Resource Management Section, Mississippi River Project, Operations Division, retired May 31, after dedicating 28 years and two months to the federal government.

**Jerald McAlister**, lock and dam operator, Lock & Dam 17, Mississippi River Project, Operations Division, retired May 31, after dedicating 27 years and nine months to the federal government.

## Congrats ...



**Kelli Ewbank (right)**, and her teammates celebrate after earning a gold medal at the Special Olympics regional bocce ball tournament.

**C**ongratulations to Kelli Ewbank, daughter of Kevin and Kimbra Ewbank, for receiving a gold medal in the Special Olympics bocce ball tournament. Her team's gold medal finish qualifies them to compete in the Illinois State Games, held at Illinois State University in June. She also completed the Special Olympics Global Messenger training and is now on the speaker's bureau for Special Olympics. Congratulations to the Ewbank family. Kevin Ewbank is the supervisory natural resources specialist on the Illinois Waterway.

## Sympathy ...



**Robert C. "Bob" Vanderjack**, 75 of Pinckneyville, Ill., passed away on April 7 at St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital, Mt. Vernon, Ill.

He was an environmental biologist with the Corps of Engineers retiring in 1997.

He also served in the United States Army.

## Spring blood drive held

The District held a blood drive on April 28 at the Clock Tower in partnership with the Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center.

District blood drive results:

- 42 - scheduled donors
- 5 - walk-in donations
- 2 - deferrals
- 7 - first time donors
- 1 - retiree donation

**= 46 units of blood collected (1 unit can save up to three patients)**

The Rock Island Team plays an important part in providing the life-saving gift of blood products and therapies to help patients who live, work and play in our communities.

"I have enjoyed my 24+ year association with the blood center, their dedicated and experienced staff, pleasant and professional nurses, and most of all with our caring TEAM of donors who have always generously donated this LIFE SAVING GIFT to help thousands in need," said JoAnn Wilgenbusch, District blood drive coordinator, who will be retiring this summer.

The next blood drive is scheduled for Oct. 6 in the ABC Conference Room.



**Diane Karnish**, checks her blackberry while a nurse prepares her to give blood.





# Spotlight on the District

## John Castle

Operations Manager  
Coralville Lake, Operations Division

Mother Nature draws a lot of us in and some make a career out of serving and protecting natural resources. One unique aspect is spending all but the first summer at the same Corps project watching it grow and develop for more than 30 years. John Castle has done just that.

While in college at Iowa State University earning a degree in Outdoor Recreation, Castle worked summers at a state park in Illinois near his home town of Mount Morris. When he moved off campus, he started looking for a job close to Ames. He applied for a summer position at Saylorville Lake and was hired. Back then the lake was still being built and had no water in it providing a unique insight into the Corps and reservoir operations. He enjoyed his summer and began looking for fulltime employment opportunities with the Corps.

Castle graduated from Iowa State in 1976 and was selected to fill a position at Coralville Lake during the spring of 1977. He has been there ever since.

"I was in the right place at the right time," said Castle. "I never had to move anywhere to advance in my career," he added. "That is pretty unique considering some travel across the county to get to where I am at."

Castle has been the operations manager since 1991. He summed up his duties as "the person responsible if something goes wrong." He spends a lot of time communicating with the District office, doing paperwork, working with people and the public.

"I really enjoy the people both on the inside and out," said Castle. "I have good people on my staff which makes my job easier. I also like dealing with other agencies and organizations plus the private citizens who visit Coralville Lake."

Over the years he has been instrumental



**John Castle, speaks during a ceremony in 2009 announcing a potential long-term partnership between the Corps of Engineers and Kirkwood Community College. (Photo by Hilary Markin.)**

in developing recreational areas.

"When I first started we had very basic recreational facilities. One shower building, open camping, etc. I have laid out a lot campsites and watched Coralville transform to meet the growing recreational needs of the community," said Castle. Those upgrades include Class A campgrounds, non-alcoholic beaches, closing areas at 10 p.m., etc. The atmosphere and clientele has changed a lot over the years making Coralville a family-friendly lake. The word has also spread. When Castle first started many didn't even know that Coralville existed and if they did they didn't know what it had to offer.

"We are finally a known area and many are educated on what we offer and what we do for the community," said Castle.

One of the highlights of Castle's career has been the partnership developed with

Kirkwood Community College. For more than 10 years Coralville has been working with their Environmental Science and Agricultural Departments to foster student development as well as accomplish land management goals. They have also been establishing outdoor classroom areas including a recent wetland site that will provide unique learning experiences for students and staff.

Some of the more trying times have been the floods.

"During the flood of 1993 there were a lot of unknowns since the spillway had never been used before. In 2008, things weren't as hectic especially since eight employees had been through the '93 flood and knew how to handle things," said Castle. "The other challenge is the never ending budget woes and their increasing complexity," he added.

Castle is married with two sons and they live in rural Solon. He is looking forward to doing the things he wants to do after spending many years chasing kids from one activity to the next. He enjoys doing projects around the house and recently purchased two motorcycles, after nearly 20 years. He is looking forward to taking trips on his Gold Wing much like he did before having kids.

He is also looking at starting a new chapter in his life as he nears retirement. He is looking forward to new challenges and hopes to find something that is non-supervisory and he can look back at the end of the day and see that he accomplished something.

When asked about advice he said "Things are always going to be there tomorrow. There aren't too many things that are that important that they can't wait. Do what you can do and come back tomorrow and take another shot." He ended with "Give it your best effort but don't make it your life." 

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# Contracting Division participates in Procurement Management Review

By Hilary Markin, Editor

On May 18 and 19 visitors from the Principle Assistant Responsible for Contracting (PARC) in Atlanta were at the Clock Tower Building conducting a Procurement Management Review (PMR) of Contracting Division. The PMR is a proactive, positive assessment determining the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the National Contracting Organization contracting offices and identifies opportunities to improve and excel.

“The PMR assists the contracting chief, commander and customers to improve their operational efficiencies and the effectiveness of the organization,” said Ella Snell, team lead for the PMR. “We are here to provide assistance and will do on-the-ground training if deficiencies are noted.”

Prior to the PMR, Contracting staff completed a series of toolkits producing pre-visit information to the team. These toolkits are categorized by specific contracting processes and required regulatory compliance.

“This cuts down on the length of the visit,” said Snell, referring to the toolkits. The Rock Island District is the third district to participate in the compressed PMR testing. The original PMRs took a week to complete and have now been reduced to two and one-half days in an effort to save time and travel expenses.

Joining Snell were three other individuals; Brenda Owens, district analyst for Rock Island, PARC Atlanta; Stephanie Craig,

contract specialist, Louisville District and Misty Jones also from Louisville.

“This is my second PMR,” said Craig. “I encourage others to volunteer to do a PMR. It is a great opportunity to learn and share what other districts are doing.”

PARC-Atlanta oversees contracting activities at South Atlantic, North Atlantic, Great Lakes and Ohio River and Mississippi Valley Divisions. They are required to visit districts every two years, this being the first PMR in Rock Island.

The deputy PARC-Atlanta, Judy Armstrong, also visited the District and conducted a miniature Town Hall meeting with Contracting staff. She shared her wealth of knowledge with the staff updating them on what is happening at the National Contracting Organization, PARC’s recent changes and information about Procurement Instruction Letters.

Following the PMR a report is generated and provided to the District and posted to their SharePoint site. PARC Atlanta employees also put together and share the best business practices found from their visits and share those readily throughout the Corps.

The PARC offices provide world-class contracting support through technical oversight and approval of contractual documents to ensure successful execution of USACE mission requirements. 