



Tower Times

Rock Island District's News Magazine

January 2012



2012 Bald Eagle Days



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

Tower Times

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January 2012

ON THE COVER



A bald eagle perches on a branch in Bob Shetler Recreation Area at Saylorville Lake, Iowa. See story on page 7 to find an Eagle Watch in your area.

Photo by Jonathan Wuebker.

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Tower Times

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A message from....

Colonel Shawn McGinley, District Commander



Be ready to take on the challenges of 2012

A new calendar year has begun and although we celebrated the ushering out of 2011 and the welcoming of 2012, business at the Rock Island District is not bound by the calendar. It is continuous. As a workforce, I hope you were able to use the holiday season as an opportunity to recharge and spend time with loved ones because things have not and will not slow down in this New Year. I know you all are ready to take on upcoming challenges.

For nearly a year, I have been relaying the challenges we face from a budgetary perspective. I have mentioned there is no need for doom and gloom but to expect reduced funding in the coming fiscal years. That fact has not changed, entirely. But, at the end of 2011 there was some good news, and welcomed surprises.

On Dec. 23, 2011, the President signed into law, under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, the FY 2012 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act. This bill included \$5 billion of regular appropriated funds for the Corps of Engineers as well as an additional \$1.7 billion in supplemental funds to assist with disaster relief. The signing of the bill helped clear up some of the uncertainty regarding our District's funding.

In areas like Investigations, the Illinois River Restoration Program, the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program and Operations and Maintenance (O&M), we are receiving funding at levels within our range of expectation. But, the surprise comes in the form of Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) funding.

CAP is to receive \$49 million, to be allocated by headquarters throughout the nation for the highest priority projects. The appropriated amount is a pleasant surprise. Previous indications were that no additional CAP funds would be appropriated in FY12. Which projects in MVR will be funded is unknown at this time but we're optimistic we'll receive some funding to continue a few ongoing projects.

Also within the new bill is funding for ongoing Investigations, Construction and O&M projects. Headquarters is currently working on prioritizing on-going projects that meet the criteria set forth in the bill to help determine which projects will be funded. We should know by early February if any of our projects will be receiving some of these funds. I see this as potentially good news that was unexpected.

Of course, operating and executing our budget only represents a small snapshot of what we, as a District, will accomplish in 2012. At this time of year, as spring approaches, many of you will be turning your attention toward the potential flood season. As

I write this, most of the 78,000 square miles within our District have been experiencing a mild winter. There has been very little to no snow and conditions have been relatively dry. Whether or not Mother Nature and our District's waterways will coexist without incident is yet to be seen. Either way, we must be prepared for the worst and I think we have proven in the past that we are. Last year we were integral in Operation Watershed and flood fights within our District. With any luck, we will not see those kinds of events this year.

Our flood fight efforts are always in need of bolstering. I encourage everyone to consider taking on the task of a Flood Area Engineer. Anyone interested should contact Rodney Delp and our Emergency Management team.

Without a doubt, 2012 will be a busy year. Whether it is construction starts at projects like Fort Dodge Greenbelt or construction completion on projects like the Davenport flood wall, the Rock Island District will continue a tradition of getting things done. We should even see progress on projects that have been highly profiled to varying degrees of fanfare. Specifically the Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management project will make strides in the coming months. Planning and design is ongoing and we are optimistic that additional funding will become available so that work can continue.

As our entire team works to carry out our myriad missions and operations, we will also prepare for several administrative events. The District will play host to the Senior Leaders Training Conference in June, which will gather the Mississippi Valley Division's top leaders. This is an excellent opportunity to display our professionalism to our peers throughout the Division.

On top of playing host, we will also put on a change of command. In conjunction with the Senior Leaders Conference, we will welcome a new commander, Col. Mark Deschenes. The easy part will be relinquishing command to the very capable hands of Col. Deschenes. The hard part for me will be leaving the team I have been so proud to be part of. But, that is nearly six months away and as I have outlined, there is a lot of work to be done between now and then.

I hope you all are ready to continue the District's tradition of success in the New Year. The challenges that lie ahead are no match for this workforce. You have my full confidence in making 2012 better than the year before. Thanks, as always, for everything you do and Continue **BUILDING STRONG®**. 



The view from a helicopter of the Don Mueang Airport in Bangkok, Thailand, during the worst flooding in more than 50 years in the fall of 2011.

A unique opportunity sparks a thought

By Hilary Markin, Editor

When a call came in on the Thursday before Veterans Day the people who answered had no idea what they were getting into. Weekend conference calls were held and the following Tuesday one individual was on a plane to Thailand. The lucky person was Denny Lundberg, chief, Engineering and Construction Division. The mission was unwatering and restoration of the Don Mueang Airport and to provide recommendations for long-term water resource planning.

This fall, the central-northern provinces of the Kingdom of Thailand experienced the worst flooding in more than 50 years with preliminary estimates showing more than 2.8 million people affected. The flooding included the city of Bangkok which is located on the lower floodplain of the Chao Phraya River. The levee system for the metro area was designed for a 30-year event and the 2011 event was estimated to be a 70-year event.

“The call came into Rock Island because of our experience during Hurricane Katrina and unwatering the city of New Orleans in 2005. The problem was that only two people met the qualifications they were looking for, myself and Roger Less,” said Lundberg. “I drew the short straw so to speak.”

As more information became available, Lundberg and Less spent the weekend completing all the training requirements for international travel and developing situational awareness of the mission ahead.

“Roger took the training with me just in case something happened at the last minute and I was unable to go,” said Lundberg.

On Monday, Lundberg got the required shots, drove to Chicago to get his passport and took the final test that evening. On

Tuesday, he traveled the 31 hours to Bangkok, reporting to duty at the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group Thailand on Nov. 17.

Lundberg; Jeff Davis, Hydrologic Engineering Center; and Michael Wong, Honolulu District, were the Corps team members assigned as engineering support to the III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF) out of Okinawa, Japan. The team also included members from the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Agency for International Development. This team was in support of the U.S. aid package that was delivered by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to the Government of Thailand on Nov. 17.



Denny Lundberg, chief, Engineering and Construction Division awaits the helicopter tour of the devastating flooding in Bangkok.

On the first day, the team put together a list of questions and data needs to help them formulate a plan for unwatering the airport. The initial estimate was for the airport to be unwatered naturally in 30 days. The team developed a plan for unwatering sooner, however it would require isolating the airport, bringing in larger pumps and had potential for negative impact to the surrounding communities. A less robust plan was also developed that focused on unwatering small areas which contained critical facilities or infrastructure that would be needed to get the airport back in operation. As more information materialized, it became apparent that unwatering the Don Mueang Airport was no longer a high priority for the Government of Thailand. Their revised plan was to allow for the airport to drain naturally, and did not require significant unwatering support from the United States. However, the III MEF did provide localized assistance for unwatering critical infrastructure that was required to get the airport back in operation. The III MEF also provided support to community services and the reopening of public buildings such as police stations.

The team then switched gears and on Nov. 19 began making in-country contacts with civil representatives to lay groundwork for future collaboration with the Government of Thailand relating

to long-term water resources planning. Lundberg and another team member also participated in a helicopter flight providing an overview of the flooding in and around Bangkok, including the Don Mueang Airport.

On Sunday and Monday, the team continued to make contacts and began working on a Findings and Recommendations Report. On Tuesday, Lundberg departed Bangkok and made the journey back home to Rock Island, Ill.

The other team members stayed a few more days and continued meeting with other officials further discussing the possibility of a U.S.-Thailand Joint Working group to address the flood problems in Thailand.

This adventure sparked the District to begin thinking about succession planning for areas that the District is known for our expertise. As some look to retire in the future, capturing their knowledge and experience is becoming a priority.

“Our engineering expertise now has a reputation not only nationally but internationally,” said Lundberg. “We need to start training younger employees and provide them opportunities to support the Corps mission across the nation and world.” 

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday, Jan. 15 Monday, Jan. 16 - Federal Holiday

Remember! Celebrate! Act! A Day On...Not a Day Off!!

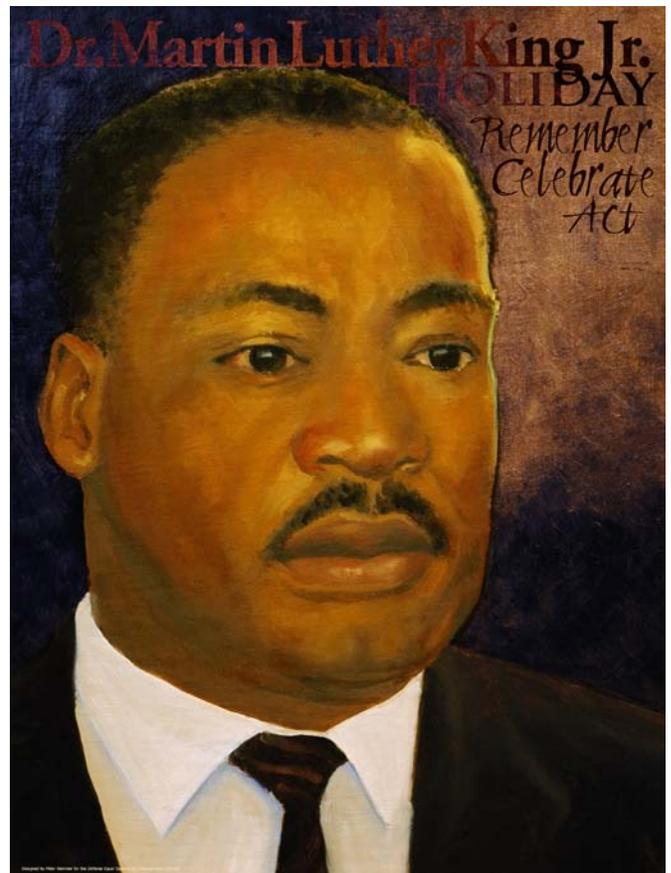
It took 15 years to create the federal Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday. Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., first introduced legislation for a commemorative holiday four days after King was assassinated in 1968. After the bill became stalled, petitions endorsing the holiday containing six million names were submitted to Congress.

Conyers and Rep. Shirley Chisholm, D-N.Y., resubmitted King Holiday legislation each subsequent legislative session. Public pressure for the holiday mounted during the 1982 and 1983 civil rights marches in Washington.

Congress passed the holiday legislation in 1983, which was then signed into law by President Ronald Reagan. A compromise moving the holiday from Jan. 15, King's birthday, which was considered too close to Christmas and New Year's, to the third Monday in January helped overcome opposition to the law.

In 1994, Congress passed the Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Holiday and Service Act, designating the King Holiday as a day of volunteer service. The national recurring theme is “Remember! Celebrate! Act! A Day On...Not a Day Off.” It calls upon all people to engage in public service and promote nonviolent social change. The MLK day of service empowers individuals, strengthens communities, bridges barriers, creates solutions and moves us closer to Dr. King's vision of a “Beloved Community.”

For more information or to find a MLK Day of Service project in your area go to mlkday.gov/. You can also create your own project and register it to help recruit more volunteers. 



Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute

Reaching out to save more lives

By Hilary Markin, Editor

Unfortunately, sometimes a bad situation necessitates an increase in our outreach efforts – especially when they pertain to water safety. An accident this past summer on the Mississippi River that involved the drowning of an 11-year-old boy from Rock Island, Ill., resulted in a request from customers to provide water safety information and hopefully prevent this type of accident from happening again.

The young boy was an immigrant from Burundi, Africa, moving to the United States four years ago and to the Quad Cities two years ago. The Church of Peace in Rock Island and The Community Resource and Learning Center of Moline, Ill., work with refugees to educate, train and prepare immigrants for their new lives in local communities. Following the drowning, these organizations reached out to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Park Rangers to provide water safety programs to educate the immigrants on how to stay safe while recreating in or near the water.

In this particular program the refugees are from five countries with eight different languages spoken including: Thai, Burmese, Karen, Arabic, Swahili, Spanish, Togolese and one tribal language. This created a communication challenge for the rangers preparing and presenting the programs.

“We found that the programs were more successful by creating presentations with some key word translations and having a native translator on site to communicate our water safety message in their language,” said Lou Ann McCracken, natural resources specialist, Mississippi River Project.



Lou Ann McCracken, natural resources specialist, Mississippi River Project, presents water safety information to local refugees educating them on hidden dangers in the river.

The key messages for the class inform participants of the many hidden dangers of the Mississippi River like river currents, locks and dams, wing dams, and snags. A significant number of immigrants are from regions of the world that have lakes and rivers, but a lot of them are shallow and offer little or no current. They are accustomed to swimming safely in these large, shallow rivers and lakes and don't realize the hidden dangers of the Mississippi River.

“The Mississippi River Project Office and the Mississippi River Visitor Center take water safety very seriously. We are always looking to expand our water safety education to as many individuals that we are capable of reaching. If even one life is saved because of these efforts, then our water safety mission is a success,” said McCracken. 



**November Answer: Lock and Dam 21
Winner: Andrew Barnett,
Mississippi River Project**

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.



**Mississippi River Visitor Center - Eagle Watch/Clock Tower
Tours**

Jan. 14 - Feb. 12, weekends only
Reservations required - call 309-794-5338

**Keokuk Bald Eagle Days
Jan. 15-16**

Outdoor viewing - along river front
Educational programs - River City Mall, Keokuk
Environmental fair and live eagle programs
Call 1-800-383-1219

**Dubuque Bald Eagle Watch
Jan. 21**

Outdoor viewing - Lock & Dam 11
Live eagle and bird of prey programs at Grand River Center
Special attraction – live cougar presentations
Call 563-582-0881 for more information

**Illinois Waterway Visitor Center Bald Eagle Watch
Jan. 28-29**

Educational programs - Illinois Waterway Visitor Center
Live birds of prey programs
Native American dancers, activities and eagle watching
Call 815-667-4054 for more information

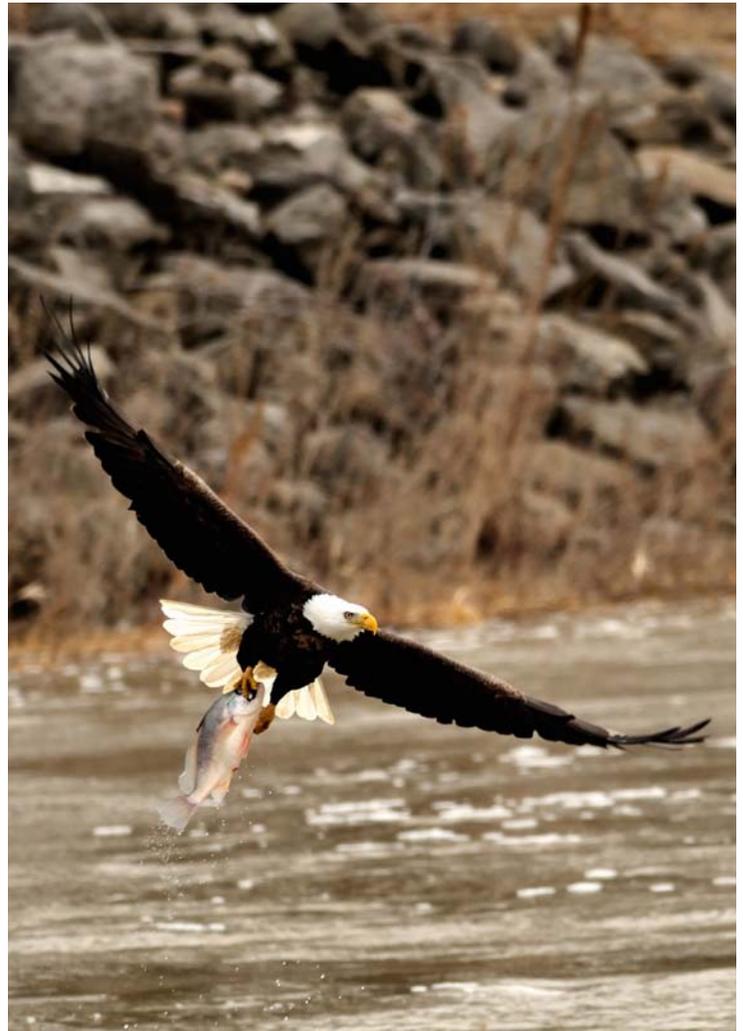


Photo by Ron Huelse.

Celebrating Bald Eagles



Photo by Stan Bousson.

**Saylorville Lake Bald Eagle Watch
Feb. 26**

Driving tour around Saylorville begins at the Saylorville Lake
Visitor Center
Call 515-276-4656 for more information

**Red Rock Bald Eagle Day
March 3**

Outdoor viewing - Lake Red Rock
Educational programs - Central College, Pella
Environmental fair and live animal programs
Call 641-828-7522 for more information

SAFETY CORNER

2012 Resolutions

Every 12 months we go through the same ritual. On December 31st, when the stroke of midnight proclaims a new year, many pledge to make the new year a healthier and safer year. We resolve to give up smoking, lose weight, start an exercise program, or stop drinking alcohol. New Year's resolutions are usually pie-in-the-sky goals which fail because we want to accomplish too much – too quickly.

As you start the new year consider focusing on your own and others' safety and health, resolve to:

- **Improve safety at home and at play.** Pay more attention to home and community safety, which today far surpasses the workplace in accidental death and injury rates.
- **Improve your driving habits.** Put away your cell phone and stop text messaging while driving. Be an active participant in teens learning to drive safely.
- **Improve your awareness about prescription drugs.** Always read the instructions on medications you are taking, realizing that failure to do so is part of what's behind a steep increase in accidental poisonings by overdose. Help kids understand the dangers of taking someone else's prescription drugs.
- **Learn first aid.** Refresh your first-aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation training.
- **Improve home safety by cleaning up.** Organize your garage, removing clutter that's a mess but also dangerous.
- **Focus on fire safety.** Get in the habit of checking smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector batteries twice a year, with the time changes. Make sure you store your flammables safely.
- **Have fun** – but never drink and drive.

Also consider trying some new tactics for self-improvement.

- **Set attainable goals for the coming year.** Start with small goals and reward yourself for attaining each level. Join a support group if you are trying to lose weight, stop smoking, give up drugs or alcohol. Enjoy your successes a day at a time.
- **Like yourself.** You can't change your basic shape so focus on who you are and not how you look. If you are a happy person, you can be a safer and healthier person. Unhappiness can be a life-threatening distraction from the safe operation of vehicles, machinery, or equipment.
- **Control your blood pressure.** Learn to control unsafe blood pressure with diet, exercise, weight loss and medication as prescribed by your doctor. Visit your doctor for a complete physical before embarking on any change in your current exercise levels. For added personal safety, make sure you have regular checkups.



- **Eat for health.** Reduce your fat and cholesterol intake and increase the fiber in your diet. Avoid food with saturated fats such as whole milk, fatty red meats, lard and shortening, which can contribute to heart disease. Add whole grain breads, cereals such as oatmeal, fresh fruits, vegetables, beans and peas to your meals.
- **Be active every day.** Try climbing extra flights of stairs on your way to work. After work go for a walk. Try swimming, gardening or mowing the lawn for half an hour. Wash your car or play fetch with your dog. Being in good physical condition makes you safer by giving you the ability to respond quickly to a hazard.
- **Reduce stress.** Learn to control your stress with exercise, diet and plenty of relaxation, not drugs and alcohol. After work, play softball with your kids or walk the dog. Treat yourself to a long warm bath while you listen to good music or read an interesting book. Learn to say "no" to extra commitments and "yes" to time with family. 

This year, check to make sure your New Year's resolutions are realistic. Small changes to your habits can add up to a healthier and safer New Year.



Spotlight on the District

Lou Ann McCracken Natural Resources Specialist

Mississippi River Visitor Center, Mississippi River Project,
Operations Division

Taking advantage of opportunities can take you a lot of places and for one Rock Island District employee it certainly has.

Lou Ann McCracken received her first experience with the Corps during high school when she worked at Curwensville Lake (a Corps reservoir in Pennsylvania) as a lifeguard for the state of Pennsylvania. But what ultimately attracted her to the Corps were the opportunities to travel and see different parts of the country.

"I like to travel," said McCracken. "With the Corps I was able to combine traveling with my love for natural resources."

McCracken came to the Rock Island District, Mississippi River Project Office, in 2010 as the Lead Ranger at the Mississippi River Visitor Center. Prior to that, she worked at various Corps projects stretching from Kentucky to New Hampshire and from New York to Washington. Her last position was in the Huntington District where she was a natural resources specialist in Ohio.

"I enjoy meeting different people and the different types of customer contacts," said McCracken.

Her position at the visitor center includes overseeing activities and staff members, conducting interpretive programs, boat patrol as well as performing office administrative duties. She also gets involved in other activities at the project.

"I help co-instruct the Illinois Boat Safety course and am working on becoming an American Heart BLS (Basic Life Support) instructor," said McCracken. "I also used to be an EMT-B (Emergency Medical Technician) in some of the previous states I have lived."

McCracken grew up in rural Pennsylvania near the town of Curwensville. She is one of five children from a family who spent a lot of time in the outdoors, hunting and helping on the farm. Her parents, who have been married 61 years, continue to raise draft horses and live on the same family farm.

"I have been an avid hunter for 39 years," said McCracken.

"My interest in the outdoors came from growing up where I did and my family influences."

Growing up with horses led McCracken to get an associate's degree in Equestrian Studies from the University of Findlay in Ohio. She went on to get her bachelor's degree in Adventure Recreation and master's degree in Recreation from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio.



From there her travels took her to various parts of the country including an internship in Idaho at the Mountain Home Air Force Base through the Outdoor Adventure Program. The majority of her time was spent leading white water rafting trips. However, the interns also spent time backpacking in the Wind River Range in Wyoming and went on an adventure to Hells Canyon in Idaho.

McCracken also spent a couple years living in England working at RAF Bentwaters a former Royal Air Force station about 80 miles northeast of London.

"I traveled around Europe taking a two-week sightseeing trip, camping along the way," said McCracken. "A high-light was hiking up Matterhorn (famous mountain in Switzerland) going as far as I

could go without ropes."

Some of her additional hobbies include gardening, cooking and using her smoker.

"I enjoy canning and making different salsas and jellies," said McCracken.

Her faith and church family are also very important to her.

Her next traveling adventure will hopefully take her to the boundary waters to explore. "That is one place I have always wanted to see," said McCracken.

She is also building a cabin on property she owns in Pennsylvania. "I currently have an entrance road and septic to the property. The next step is starting to work on the structure."

When asked about advice she shared this: "Always keep your doors open to opportunities. You don't know what the next bend in the road will bring – have strength in your faith to guide you." 

Around the District

Sympathy ...



William "Bill" Barber, 90, of Fulton, Ill., passed away Dec. 18 at Pleasant View Nursing Home in Morrison.

Barber worked for the Corps of Engineers as the Chief of Cost Estimating. He retired in 1982 after 24 years of service.

He also served in the U.S. Army during World War II.



In effort to reduce the costs associated with printing and mailing the Tower Times please consider signing up to receive it electronically. You can do so by sending your name and e-mail address to Hilary Markin at Hilary.R.Markin@usace.army.mil.

Retirements ...

Harold Atherton Jr., lock and dam repairer supervisor, Lock and Dam 13, Mississippi River Project, Operations Division, retired Dec. 31, after dedicating 28 years and seven months to the federal government.

John Castle, supervisor park ranger, Coralville Lake Project, Operations Division, retired Dec. 31, after dedicating 35 years and nine days to the federal government.

Daniel Coder, lock and dam operator, Brandon Road Lock and Dam, Illinois Waterway Project, Operations Division, retired Dec. 31, after dedicating 32 years and three days to the federal government.

Randy Dies, lock and dam operator, Lock and Dam 16, Mississippi River Project, Operations Division, retired Dec. 31, after dedicating 25 years, four months and 18 days to the federal government.

Hugh Harness, lock and dam operator, Lock and Dam 21, Mississippi River Project, Operations Division, retired Dec. 31, after dedicating 39 years, two months and 28 days to the federal government.

Nickolas Heleg-Greza, safety and occupational health specialist, Ordinance and Explosives Section, Technical Services Branch, Engineering and Construction Division, retired Dec. 31, after dedicating 17 years, eight months and 24 days to the federal government.

Diana Helke, management support assistant, Maintenance Section, Mississippi River Project, retired Dec. 31, after dedicating 24 years, seven months and four days to the federal government.

Donald Larson, engineering equipment operator, Project Maintenance Unit, Maintenance Section, Mississippi River Project, Operations Division, retired Dec. 31, after dedicating 26 years and five months to the federal government.

Joseph Morris, lock and dam operator, Peoria Lock and Dam, Illinois Waterway Project, Operations Division, retired Dec. 31, after dedicating 34 years and three months to the federal government.

Thomas Pickett, lock and dam repairer supervisor, Lock and Dam 22, Mississippi River Project, Operations Division, retired Dec. 31, after dedicating 33 years, nine months and 29 days to the federal government.

James Stanton, welder, Maintenance Section, Mississippi River Project, Operations Division, retired Dec. 31, after dedicating 30 years, four months and seven days to the federal government.

Please send birth announcements, engagements, obituaries and other items of interest for the Tower Times to Corporate Communications at cemvr-cc@usace.army.mil.

Support & Sacrifice for Corps

Thanks to our employees who are deployed to the Afghanistan Engineer District - North (AEN) and the Afghanistan Engineer District - South (AES)!



Andrew Barnett, AEN



Robert Balamut, AEN



Charles Bauer, AES



Peter Corken, AEN



Mark Hoague, AEN



Celeste Iverson, AEN



Brian Lane, AEN



Mark Miller, AEN



Gordon Rush, AEN

SECURITY
OFFICE

Deter, Detect, Defend: Avoid IDTheft

Awareness is an effective weapon against many forms of identity theft. Be aware of how information is stolen and what you can do to protect yours, monitor your personal information to uncover any problems quickly, and know what to do when you suspect your identity has been stolen. Armed with the knowledge of how to protect yourself and take action, you can make identity thieves' jobs much more difficult.

- Shred all important financial documents - prevents dumpster diving for personal information.
- Request your free credit reports each year - <http://www.annualcreditreport.com> alerts you to possible fraudulent activity on your account.
- Use strong passwords and pin numbers on all financial accounts and change them often, birthdays, anniversaries and nickname are not strong, criminals can obtain this information fairly easy.
- Mail all bills from the post office and not from your own mailbox. Don't leave personnel and banking information sitting in your unsecured mailbox.
- Don't carry your social security number with you and don't use it as a user ID or password. Only share it when absolutely necessary.
- Be on guard when using the internet and who are you sharing your personal information with. Visit www.onguardonline.gov/topics/identity-theft.aspx for tips.
- Monitor credit card bills and bank statements for unusual activity.
- Keep your personal information in a secure place at home, share only with those family members who have a legitimate need for it.



Identity theft is a serious crime. It occurs when your personal information is stolen and used without your knowledge to commit fraud or other crimes. Identity theft can cost you time and money. It can destroy your credit and ruin your good name. Deter, detect and defend against identify theft.



A steel roller gate will close off Saylor Road during flood events preventing water from flooding homes and businesses behind the Birdland Park Levee. Photo by Rich Busch.

Birdland Park Levee project substantially complete

By Ron Fournier, chief, Corporate Communications

Repairing damages from flood waters is nearly complete for one community in the Rock Island District. The repairs and realignment of the Birdland Park Levee in Des Moines, Iowa, was celebrated Nov. 15 at a ceremony next to the Saylor Road closure gate structure.

The \$8.1 million contract to reconstruct the Birdland Park Levee was awarded to Ceres Environmental Services, Inc., in March 2010. The project consisted of degrading the existing levee and rebuilding a compacted earthen embankment along most of the original alignment, adding stone protection, construction or modi-

fication of gateway structures and pump stations, construction of a steel roller gate across Saylor Road, and the addition of a multi-purpose trail including a new connection to McHenry Park.

The project provides an increased level of protection against a one percent chance flood event for homes, businesses and North High School.

Final grading and seeding are yet to be completed however the new levee system is able to withstand the design flood in its current condition. 