



US Army Corps  
of Engineers <sup>®</sup>

# TOWER TIMES

Rock Island District's News Magazine

November 2014



## Crews Repair Damaged Gate at Locks and Dam 14



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

# TOWER TIMES

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**November 2014**

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Mississippi River Project, Structures Maintenance Section crew members, (from bottom left) James Dean, Thomas Wright and Travis Viren, make repairs to a roller gate at Locks and Dam 14 in Pleasant Valley, Iowa, after a barge collided with the dam earlier this year.

Photo by Samantha Heilig

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## *Tower Times*

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*A message from....*

Colonel Mark Deschenes, District Commander



## *Aging Infrastructure Demands an Innovative Workforce*

**A**n almost annual topic ‘du jour’ within the Rock Island District and the entire Corps of Engineers is budget. How much money will we get to carry out our mission? How will we go about executing that budget? This is an important topic that is a constant challenge for many within leadership positions. But, when focusing on the dollars and cents required to do our job, it can be easy to forget the most important element required to carry out the mission – people.

For years, the operations and maintenance budget has lagged behind what is actually needed to sustain the infrastructure this District is charged with. Our 20 lock and dam sites are aging and under duress. And yet they remain open allowing those critical veins of commerce to function, affecting a global economy. The infrastructure remains functioning not because of a budget execution, but because this District employs some of the best maintenance teams and lock crews around.

The past several years have seen an increased frequency in flooding. Last year the Illinois River experienced the flood of record and the Mississippi River experienced major flooding in many areas; earning top 3 honors at some locations. When flooding occurs, much of our District’s focus is on flood fighting which is a critical service providing incredible value to the nation. But flooding also creates challenges for the lock and dam infrastructure. It seems each year, water is overtopping the lock walls causing damage and temporary closures. That damage needs to be repaired quickly for sites to re-open.

This year we passed another top 10 flood of record and we fully recovered from the aftermath in short order. Recovering the functionality of the lock and dam system after a flood and keeping that aging infrastructure functioning requires an expertise that is not acquired overnight. For decades, the men and women who work at our District’s lock and dam sites have been adapting and innovating to develop techniques and processes that keep the system operational. I have heard our infrastructure challenges described as “having a classic car that you are trying to maintain with a \$50 a year budget.” Well, the locks and dams are classic and they are maintained but the folks who do that maintenance are much better than your top-of-the-line classic-car mechanics.

There is never a typical day for the lock and dam personnel and they are constantly kept on their toes. That adventurous description can’t make light of the fact that much of what they do is inherently dangerous and yet, amazingly, they have a very good safety record. Again, this can be credited to years of honing their skills and developing processes which not only implement repairs but also consider risk mitigation. The lock and dam system is critical to many throughout the Midwest but its functionality is not worth risking the lives of those who aim to keep it running. I am proud of our District’s safety record as it relates to our work on the locks and dams.

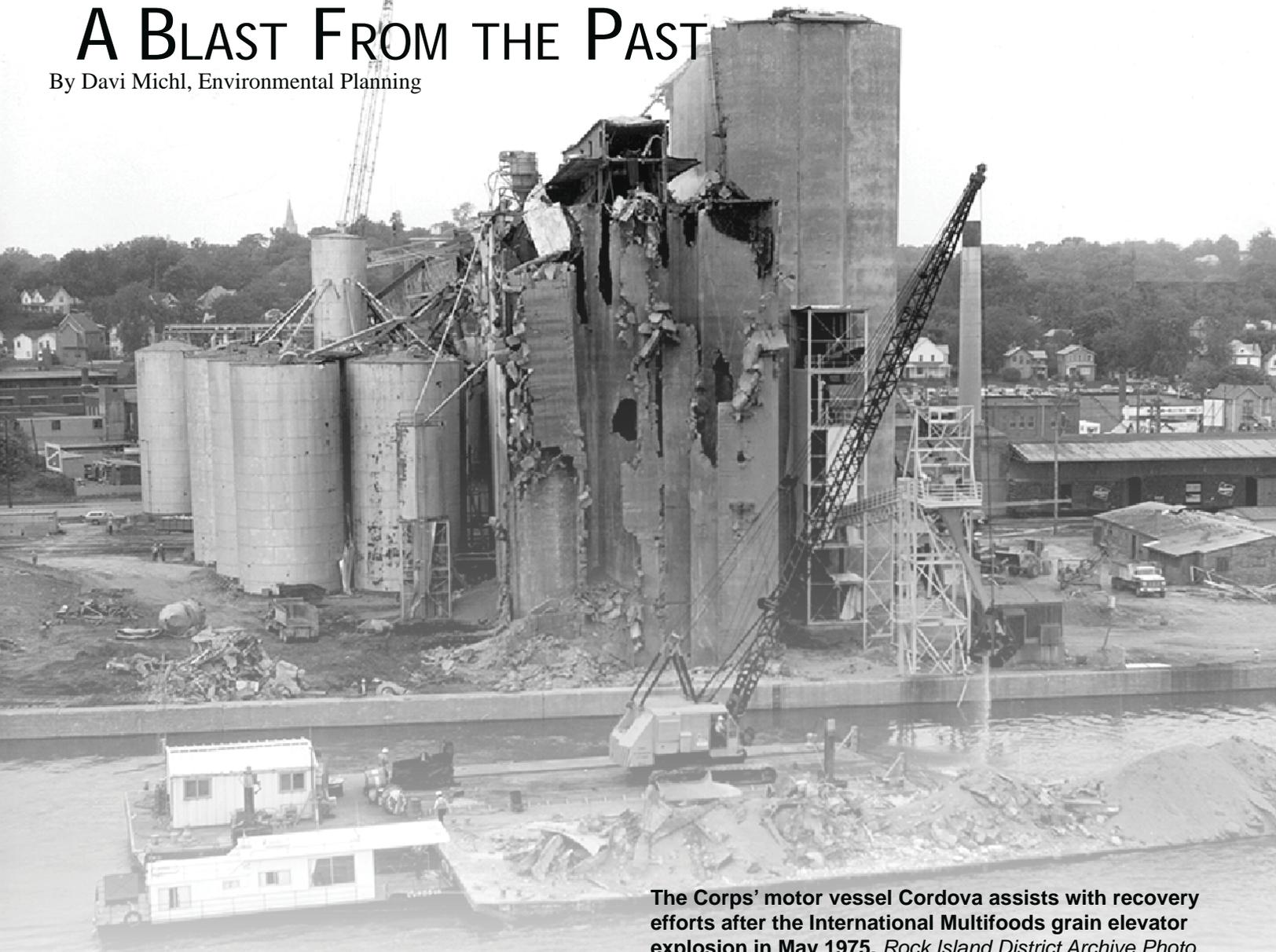
Considering our maintenance teams do such an outstanding job maintaining the District’s infrastructure you would think it’s easy to place that fact as a feather in our cap. But, there are potential drawbacks to performing such critical maintenance with incredible expertise and very limited resources. Most notably, their expertise could be seen by some as more than a temporary fix that can solve a long-term problem. I believe that could be an issue in the future. Although our folks have maintained the system well past its intended design life, is this a pace of maintenance that can be sustained and pushed well into the future? That is a question that will need to be answered.

Studies have been done looking at ways to reduce or eliminate certain aspects of our maintenance efforts. These studies have never taken into account the people involved in carrying out these maintenance efforts. One thing is for certain; the work that has been done at our locks and dams on both the Illinois and Mississippi rivers has been nothing short of exceptional. The men and women working year round to keep the locks and dams operating are some of the world’s best classic-car mechanics.

I believe the new norm is multiple yearly flood events overtopping the lock walls and continuing to degrade the aging infrastructure. I also believe our maintenance teams will adapt and overcome any challenge they face to keep the locks and dams operational. And, it is my hope that sometime soon we will see the budget match the efforts of our outstanding team members at all the locks and dams. Your performance inspires and makes me proud to be part of your team. **CONTINUE BUILDING STRONG!** 

# A BLAST FROM THE PAST

By Davi Michl, Environmental Planning



**The Corps' motor vessel Cordova assists with recovery efforts after the International Multifoods grain elevator explosion in May 1975. Rock Island District Archive Photo**

*(Editors note: Few employees working in the District today remember the explosion of the International Multifoods grain elevator on the Davenport, Iowa, riverfront. Here, veteran Corps employees reflect on the man-made disaster that demonstrates the Corps' commitment to disaster response and our value to the nation.)*

Catastrophic events can leave indelible imprints on the human psyche. People can communicate with great clarity exactly where they were or what they were doing on the day President Kennedy was shot or on the mornings of Pearl Harbor or 9/11. To many native Quad Citians, the explosion of the International Multifoods flour mill located on East River Drive in Davenport, Iowa, was a day they will never forget.

A prominent landmark on the Mississippi River just above Locks and Dam 15, the flour mill known by locals as the Robin Hood mill, nicknamed for the large painting of Robin Hood on the side of the building, was passed by thousands of people on their daily commutes. Perhaps it

was the proximity of this iconic image that causes local residents to remember May 23, 1975, as a historical event.

Just after noon on that tragic Friday in May, a spark ignited airborne particles and set off a series of explosions in a 1.8 million-bushel-capacity grain elevator that was attached to the 83-year-old mill. An International Multifoods internal publication later attributed this spark to an overheated machine bearing.

Flour is not overly flammable until suspended in air as dust and only becomes explosive when exposed to a flame. A foundational understanding of this chemical reaction helps explain why something as innocuous as grain flour resulted in the explosive power witnessed at

Robin Hood that day; a force so intense that it caused reinforced concrete to explode 100-feet in every direction. Interestingly, federal Occupational Safety and Health Act officials had just cleared the mill three weeks prior to the explosion, having found no evidence of particulate grain matter.

Bud Marion, retired crane operator foreman for the Rock Island District, could usually be found in the field during the time of day when the explosion occurred, but that day he happened to be in his office on the third floor of the District headquarters

“It was like an atomic bomb rocked the Clock Tower building,” said Marion.

Another retired Corps employee, John Gall, from Survey Branch, remembers being in the Clock Tower elevator during the explosion.

“I thought an earthquake was going on,” said Gall.

A number of people living in the immediate Davenport area reported similar phenomena, including several exploded windows in adjacent buildings. Though no windows were broken nor any damage sustained to the Clock Tower building’s structure, the entire building shook and everyone working that day crowded around the north-facing windows to watch the billowing black smoke across the river at the grain elevator.

Bob Wild, former crane operator for the Rock Island District had not yet begun working for the Corps when the incident occurred. He instead was working for the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 537, and was among the many helping with the cleanup in the days following the explosion.

“There were a lot of people on standby during the collaborative rush to assist in the emergency response,” said Wild. “Grain dust was everywhere and crew leaders were concerned about secondary explosions, as materials were still smoldering.”

Amid the concern for additional explosions, the crews anxiously searched for still-missing mill employees purported to be trapped under the rubble.



**The view of the Davenport, Iowa, riverfront today where the International Multifoods flour mill and grain elevator once stood. The space is now home to Block Ready Mix Group which still uses several of the buildings remaining from the mill as well as the barge loading dock area along the Mississippi River. Photo by Aaron Dunlop**

A few days after the explosion occurred, the Rock Island District sent a barge from Locks and Dam 14 in Pleasant Valley, Iowa, to help with recovery efforts of a barge that sank under the weight of exploded concrete. The black and white photo on page 4, shows the Corps’ motor vessel Cordova, a hydro survey vessel, pushing Barge 765 mounted with a Manitowoc crane. The Corps’ efforts were stalled several days waiting for clearance from the insurance company of the sunken barge. Six days after the explosion, the Corps’ crane unexpectedly recovered the body of the final missing employee from the wreckage adjacent to the sunken barge, providing closure to family members, colleagues and friends. This brought the death toll to four people.

While the Corps of Engineers may usually be associated with flood risk and navigation, emergency and disaster response are also components of our longstanding civil works mission. The Corps has a strong tradition of assisting in times of tragedy; when disaster strikes, the Corps’ stands at the ready to provide humanitarian aid to the communities they serve. 🇺🇸

# GETTING A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

By Samantha Heilig, Editor

This past spring, the Mississippi River Project's Maintenance Section took to the air with a new remote controlled drone that has both photo and video capabilities. In the past, the Corps would occasionally need to invest time and money into contracting a pilot to fly employees over major projects and rehabilitation work for the purpose of documenting the progress. The Maintenance Section's new drone does away with this need and makes documenting even the largest projects, simple.

Early this year, Aaron Dunlop, chief of the Mississippi River Project's Maintenance Section, determined the drone would be necessary to properly document the work being done at Lock and Dam 22 during a major rehabilitation project. Because of the scale of the work at the lock, photos from the ground or even the top of a crane could not get the big picture he was looking for.

"We decided rather than contracting a plane, it would be more cost effective to purchase the drone," said Dunlop. "For the cost of one flight up in the small plane, we could buy the drone and have it for years to come."

The flying drone, called a Phantom 2 Vision Plus, is a remote-controlled quadcopter with a high-definition camera mounted to the bottom. The camera, supported by a three-axis gimbal creates smooth video imagery and still photography. The device also has built-in Wi-Fi that sends imagery to a phone to give the operator a first-person view. At first glance, the high-tech flying machine might look complicated to use, but Dunlop who has operated the drone several times, explains that it really is quite simple. "Just open the box, charge the batteries, screw on the props and take it out for a test fly."

Unlike older remote-controlled flying devices, the Phantom 2 Vision Plus flies using a global positioning system (GPS). This means when the operator controls the drone to move up from the ground, it flies up and stays at whatever height the operator stops it. It then sits in that position until it is controlled to move again. Dunlop says this feature makes the drone easy to fly and safe for use over large bodies of water such as the Mississippi River even on windy days.

Other features of the Phantom 2 Vision Plus include a battery life that allows up to 25 minutes of flight time, a flight range of more than 2,000 feet and the capability to allow the controller to operate the camera from the ground.

**The Phantom 2 Vision Plus takes high definition photo and video like the image shown above and can be used throughout the District to document work.**

*Above photo by Aaron Dunlop, right photo by Mark Cornish.*



Since the Maintenance Section purchased the drone, it has been used several times. The Mississippi River Project has used it for documenting the dewatering at Lock and Dam 22 as well as to video the work process involved in changing out miter gates at the locks. Emergency Management Found a use for it when the levee breached in Pool 18 of the Mississippi River and access to the area was limited. The drone was used to fly over the breach and get an idea of the extent of the damage. The drone was even used by the Planning Section when working on the International Multifoods Flour Mill article for this month's Tower Times. *(The modern day photo of the explosion site shown on page 5 was taken with the drone.)*

"Just because the Mississippi River Project owns the drone, doesn't mean that other areas of the District can't benefit from its use," said Dunlop. "We purchased it with the intent that it might be used on many levels." 



**Aaron Dunlop uses the remote control to prepare the Phantom 2 Vision Plus flying drone for lift off.**

*Photo by Mark Cornish*

# ROLLER GATE REQUIRES SWIFT REPAIRS

By Allen Marshall, Public Affairs Specialist

The Rock Island District spends a majority of its annual appropriations operating and maintaining the expansive lock and dam system on the Upper Mississippi River. Much of the maintenance performed on this infrastructure is planned and scheduled while some comes as a surprise. An incident in July brought about some maintenance needs in the form of the latter when a roller gate at Locks and Dam 14 was damaged.

A concrete-filled barge collided with the roller gate causing damage that required swift action from offices throughout the District, as well as outside agencies like a contractor and a towing company. "It was a coordinated effort," said Dan Guise, Plant Facilities Manager at the District's Mississippi River Project Office (MRPO).

The first step in that effort, according to James Frederickson, Engineering Technician with the MRPO, was getting the barge cleared from the dam. Frederickson said commercial towboats worked in tandem to pull the barge away from the dam, fighting heavy current.

"It was an amazing thing to see," Frederickson said. "There was probably as much as 20 thousand horse power pulling through a lot of suction because of the river flow."

Once the barge was free of the roller gate, an analysis was performed. The roller gate is 100-foot wide and plays a significant role in regulating the river's water level. Guise said the analysis performed by District engineers determined that the damage to the gate would not prevent it from being raised or lowered in-place.

"Once we found that the gate could be raised and lowered, bulkheads were set to block the flow of the river," Guise said. "At that point personnel from multiple organizations could begin to develop a repair plan."

The first challenge was to assess the damage and determine what material could be removed without causing the entire roller gate to crumple. Working closely with District engineers, Guise said MRPO's Structures Maintenance Unit found they could remove the gate's skin plate and develop a process to move forward with the repairs.

Once repair plans were in place, another challenge was presented – safely accessing the roller gate to perform the work.

"Getting a work platform into that space (around roller gates) was pretty difficult," said Justin Carter, Crane Operations Supervisor. "There was only four feet of water in the area so none of our tow boats would fit. We had to get creative with work barges."

With a suitable work platform in place, repairs have been ongoing, seven days a week since Oct. 1. Some of the initial lead time, according to Guise, was material availability and delivery. "We had complete confidence in the contractor," Guise said.

The contractor he referred to was J.T. Cullen of Fulton, Illinois. J.T. Cullen was solicited by the District to perform the plate and structural shape rolling that was needed to repair the damaged section of the roller gate.

"We used them (J.T. Cullen) for their capability and expertise," said Frederickson.

Bob Castro, who is at MRPO on a temporary detail, said he was impressed with the precise capability of the contractor.

"All we gave them was a flat plate with holes (for bolts)

*(Continued on Page 11)*



**Staff from the Mississippi River Project's Structural Maintenance crew make repairs on the roller gate at Locks and Dam 14 after it was hit by a barge.**

*Photo by Samantha Heilig*

# NEW MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DIVISION COMMANDER GETS FIRSTHAND LOOK AROUND ROCK ISLAND DISTRICT

By Samantha Heilig, Editor

**D**uring a three-day visit to the Rock Island District, new Mississippi Valley Division Commander, Maj. Gen. Michael Wehr, got a firsthand look at the many projects and programs taking place in the District. Wehr, who recently took command of the Division on August 29, selected Rock Island as his first District to visit out of the six that make up the Division. He had made it a personal goal to get out and visit all the Districts in the first three months after taking command.

“It is really exciting to be back working in the Mississippi Valley Division,” said Wehr, a previous commander of the Vicksburg District. “There is no better way to get started than to get out and see the Districts.”

District Commander, Col. Mark Deschenes, greeted Wehr and his staff at Lewis University Airport in Romeoville, Illinois, where they met with recently appointed Great Lakes and Ohio River Division Commander, Brig. Gen. Richard Kaiser; Chicago District Commander, Col. Chris Drew; and Pittsburg District Commander, Col. Bernard Lindstrom, who attended by phone. This meeting showcased the success of cooperative efforts by the Mississippi Valley Division and the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division in the creation of the Inland Navigation Design Center (INDC).

The INDC team provides regionalized technical expertise in engineering, design and review services for studies, new locks, navigation dams, major rehabilitation of inland navigation locks and dams, and certain inland navigation lock and dam operations and maintenance projects.

After the overview of the INDC, Col. Deschenes, Maj. Gen. Wehr and staff traveled to Romeoville, Illinois, where they discussed joint efforts of the Chicago and Rock Island Districts in the prevention of the spread of invasive Asian carp. The group looked at electric fish barriers which have been installed in the Chicago Sanitary Ship Canal to

prevent movement of the fish from the Illinois River to Lake Michigan.

While visiting the Illinois Waterway the group also toured Brandon Road Lock and Dam where they were briefed on the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study and environmental projects taking place on the Illinois River. After the briefing they traveled to Marseilles, Illinois, where they met with mayor Patricia Smith who spoke about the Corps’ efforts during the barge incident that occurred at Marseilles Lock and Dam in April 2013 and how the flooding affected their city. Since the time of the incident, the Rock Island District has worked hard to make temporary repairs to maintain navigation on the Illinois River and recently awarded a contract to begin permanent repairs to the structure. Andrew Barnes, manager of the Illinois River Marseilles Dam Emergency Response Project, provided an overview of the ongoing work.

“It was a great opportunity to show the new division commander the positive relationship between the city and the Corps and to see the progress being made in the repair



**Mississippi Valley Division Commander, Maj. Gen. Michael Wehr, and District Commander, Col. Mark Deschenes, are briefed by Mississippi River Project Manager, Rob Germann, and Structures Maintenance Supervisor, Aaron Dunlop, on repairs being made at Locks and Dam 14 following a barge incident earlier this year. Photo by Samantha Heilig**

of the Marseilles dam,” said Barnes.

On day two of Wehr’s visit, he and his staff toured the facilities at the Mississippi River Project Office in Pleasant Valley, Iowa. Rob Germann, Mississippi River Project manager, provided a tour of the Locks and Dam 14 area and showcased the repair work being performed by the Project’s structural maintenance crew. Germann also took an opportunity to personally point out the hard work of some of the natural resource staff who had been putting in long hours and extended work weeks this past summer because of staffing shortages in the field.

While touring the Mississippi River Project facilities, Rodney Delp, chief, Emergency Management, gave an overview of some of the equipment stored at the maintenance office and provided information on the District’s designation as a National Flood Fight Material Center.

After the tour of the Mississippi River complex, the group traveled to the Clock Tower for a final stop at the District headquarters. Wehr and his staff were introduced to section chiefs and emerging leaders and then given the opportunity to view the District’s overview video which showcases our goals and missions. For lunch, Wehr sampled chili and mingled with the employees at the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Chili Cook-off Fundraiser. At the end of the meal, an informal town hall meeting was held where employees were recognized for significant accomplishments, winners of the Chili Cook-off were announced and employees asked questions of the new Division commander.

At the end of the town hall, Wehr pulled two employees to the front. The first was a new employee who just started working for the District and the other an employee who has been working for the Corps for 53 years. He spoke about the need for continuity and how the Corps will maintain its great workforce if people continue to learn from one another and pass information along to the next generation.

“We, as a Corps, are made up of incredible experts,” said Wehr. “Looking ahead we need to look at things in



**Maj. Gen. Michael Wehr samples Park Ranger, Abby Steele’s chili at the District’s Combined Federal Campaign Chili Cook-off. Photo by Samantha Heilig**

terms of continuity. Not only do we need to look at what we have learned and how we pass that on to others, but also we need to be mindful of the changes taking place and how to adapt to those changes over time.”

To wrap up his visit, the Division commander attended presentations from several District project and program managers and met with stakeholders over dinner in the local community. 



**Maj. Gen. Michael Wehr and Col. Mark Deschenes present Andrew Barnes and the Marseilles Dam Emergency Response Delivery Team with the USACE PDT of the Year award for Merit. Photo by Samantha Heilig**

# SEARCHING FOR THE PERFECT CAMPSITE

By Samantha Heilig, Editor

Visitors looking for a campsite along the banks of the Mississippi River have a new way of scoping out their favorite spot at Fisherman's Corner Recreation Area in Hampton, Illinois. District staff, in cooperation with recreation managers from the field, worked together to create something called a Google Virtual Tour. This new style of virtual tour, similar in most respects to the Google Street View, gives users an interactive 360-degree view of the recreation area.

The tours are part of a widely used service known as Google Maps and Google Earth. By using the Google platform, the Corps makes the virtual tours accessible on virtually any internet-connected device including smart phones, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers. The images used for the tours are taken by a Google certified contractor with a special camera that captures a 360-degree view of the area and then "stitches" the images together as they move through the park. This gives the user the effect that they can look or go anywhere while viewing the virtual tour. The images are then placed online as part of Google and hosted indefinitely at no further cost to the District.

One unique feature of the Google Virtual tour over the standard Street View is the ability to stage or position strategic messages throughout the area. It puts the site manager in control of the message being conveyed. Visitors to the Fisherman's Corner virtual tour site use onscreen arrows and navigational aids to move through the park. Along the way they see rangers interacting with campers and a view of the mighty Mississippi River. Users can even step up on stage with Bobber the Water Safety Dog while he educates guests at the amphitheater.

Dave Reynolds, Operations Division, Technical Support

Branch, was involved in the making of the Google Virtual tours and helped to ensure that specific messages were included in the content of the tour.

"The goal of creating this new style of interactive tour was to use today's technology for an already tech-savvy audience who might otherwise overlook us," said Reynolds. "By including strategically placed signs and banners promoting important messages we give visitors an interactive informational and entertaining experience while checking out our facilities online."

Virtual tours are not a new concept in the Rock Island District. More than 12 years ago Mike Mullinnix, with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Information Technology (ACE-IT) office, discovered the 360-degree imaging technology while attending a half day seminar in Chicago. "At that time it was an emerging technology," said Mullinnix.

After doing some research on the equipment and



**The new Google Virtual Tours at Fisherman's Corner Recreation Area were customized by recreation staff by adding additional signage throughout the facility.**  
*Photo provided by Google*

software needed, the District decided to purchase the items needed to produce their own 360-degree interactive images. Mullinnix worked closely with the rangers in the field to produce virtual tours for most of the Mississippi River Project campgrounds and all the campgrounds at Saylorville Lake. "I also traveled to Fort Worth and St. Louis Districts to complete virtual tours for them upon their request," said Mullinnix.

Although the District has produced in-house virtual tours in the past, the new Google Virtual Tours have much to offer in the way of added benefits.

"The tours are hosted on Google servers that offer high speed access around the world with no cost to the Corps," said Mullinnix. "They also use standard Google navigation which is familiar to most users and gives people the ability to look in any direction as they move throughout the recreation area."

Additional benefits that Mullinnix finds useful are the ability to customize the Google Virtual tours with quick reference (QR) codes, virtual scavenger hunts and social media campaigns, and the ability to find the tours in multiple locations such as Google Maps, Google search, the Google Place page, and embedded in social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Now that the Street View tour of Fisherman's Corner is complete, the Mississippi River Project is planning to add more recreation areas to the system.

"The nice thing about having these tours on Google Maps is that the possibilities are endless," said Reynolds. "We can add everything from campgrounds, boat ramps, day use areas, to trails, visitor centers and on and on."

In the end, Reynolds said he would like to see the District take advantage of this technology and apply it to more of the recreation areas within the District.

If you would like to check out the Street View tour of the recreation area, type Fisherman's Corner into a Google search engine on any internet connected smartphone, tablet or computer.

# ROLLER GATE REPAIRS

*(Continued from page 7)*

and told them what specification to roll it," Castro said. "To get it rolled to those precise specifications, and have everything match up perfectly, was pretty amazing."

The work on the damaged gate was scheduled to be finished by the first part of November and according to Guise that deadline was firm because the crews working on those repairs will have to depart the project and head toward Lock and Dam 20 which is scheduled for dewatering. Guise said a full operational inspection of the repaired roller dam gate at Locks and Dam 14 will take place before the project is complete.

Both Guise and Frederickson agree that the repair work was an efficient process from the start. Not only did the crews work to repair the damaged gate but they also used the opportunity presented by the work platform already in place to make other routine repairs to the dam system. Guise described the repairs as a combined effort pulling resources from the District's engineers, contract officers and the craftsmen performing maintenance.

"A lot of people have been involved and everyone worked well together," Guise said. "There were very few lulls or delays and that is a credit to everyone staying on the same page."

## Training Tidbits

**Just a reminder...** the Supervisor Development Course is required training for all supervisors. New supervisors have one year to complete the course. This course has a three-year refresher requirement. Enrollment instructions can be found on the following District Training SharePoint site under Supervisory Training, located midway down the page: [https://team.usace.army.mil/sites/MVR/trng/SitePages/mandatory\\_trng.aspx](https://team.usace.army.mil/sites/MVR/trng/SitePages/mandatory_trng.aspx)

**If you registered for...** the new Army training sites at GoArmyEd: <https://www.goarmyed.com/> or Army Career Tracker: <https://actnow.army.mil> and you fall under Career Program 18 (CP18), be sure that you and your supervisor register on both sites as this will allow you to become eligible for CP18 training funding if it becomes available.

**Be on the lookout...** for the Rock Island District Leadership Development Program Level II announcement during the month of November.



# Spotlight on the District

## ALAENA ENSEY

### CIVIL ENGINEER/LEAD FLOOD AREA ENGINEER

By Samantha Heilig, Editor

For more than 15 years, Alaena Ensey has been working for the Rock Island District in the Engineering and Construction Division, Design Branch, Project Engineering Section. Prior to her career as a civilian she was a commissioned military officer with the Corps of Engineers and served 13 years before leaving military service to complete a master's degree in environmental engineering.

On a typical day, Ensey creates engineering designs for projects involving maintenance and repairs of roads, buildings and other structures. But recently she was selected to take on an additional job as the Lead Flood Area Engineer for the Rockford and Dresden Flood Areas. This means that during a high-water event, Ensey will be responsible for leading the flood-fight efforts along portions of six different river systems including the Rock, Fox, Des Plaines, Illinois, Kankakee and Iroquois rivers. Her area of responsibility includes 10 levee systems and portions of 34 counties in Illinois and Wisconsin.

During high-water events, the Emergency Management Division activates flood area teams to assist in response efforts. Ensey has been serving as an Assistant Flood Area Engineer since she started with the District in 1999. With many years of experience under her belt, she is ready to take on the challenge of being a Lead.

"I've always enjoyed the work involved in being a Flood Area Engineer," said Ensey. "Now I will have the chance to take it to a new level and expand upon my level of involvement in the program."

Since the beginning of the District's Flood Area Engineer Program, which began in the early 90s, there have been many people who have served to fill the Lead Flood Area Engineer positions. Ensey however, is the first female to ever be selected for the job. Rodney Delp, chief, Emergency Management, says he is pleased to have



**Alaena Ensey stands with a large diesel pump used in her work as a civil engineer and as a Lead Flood Area Engineer. Photo by Samantha Heilig**

someone with so many years of experience eager and willing to accept the challenge and lead the team.

"The promotion to Lead Flood Area Engineer does not come with any true promotional guarantees," says Delp. "They basically volunteer to take on extra work that involves levee inspections, project modification reviews and leading the flood team during events."

Although Ensey enjoys her job as a civil engineer, she says she also enjoys the chance to get out of the office and into the field. As a Lead Flood Area Engineer she will now be in charge of leading a team of assistant engineers during a flood-fight event. In addition to the duties outlined by Delp, Ensey will also facilitate communication between the Corps and area sponsors and be responsible for maintaining a team that is fully staffed and ready to respond.

For anyone interested in finding out more about the Flood Area Engineer Program, contact Emergency Management at (309) 794-5325 or fill out the team application form located on the intranet at: <https://intranet.mvr.usace.army.mil/intranet/emfaetteam/default.cfm>

# SAFETY CORNER

## FIGHTING THE FLU - IT STARTS WITH YOU

*The single best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated each year*

*(Information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)*

Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. Flu season in the United States can begin as early as October and last as late as May. An annual seasonal flu vaccine, either by injection or nasal spray, is the best way to reduce the chances of getting seasonal flu and spreading it to others. Everyone six months of age and older should get a flu vaccine every season.

Flu vaccines work by causing antibodies to develop in the body that provide protection against infection with the viruses that are in the vaccine.

Although there are two different ways for a person to receive the vaccine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not express a preference for which flu vaccine people should get except in the case of young children. Starting this year, the CDC now recommends use of the nasal spray vaccine for healthy children age two through eight when it is immediately available and if the child has no contraindications or precautions to the vaccine.

Different flu vaccines are approved for use in different groups of people. Factors that can determine a person's suitability for vaccination, or vaccination with a particular vaccine, include a person's age, health, and any relevant allergies, including an egg allergy.

Flu vaccination should begin soon after the vaccine becomes available usually by October. However vaccination can be done anytime while the flu virus is circulating, even in January or later. Flu vaccines are

offered in many locations, including doctor's offices, clinics, health departments, pharmacies and college health centers, as well as by many employers, and even in some schools. Check with your health insurance to see if and where they cover the cost.

Once a person is vaccinated it takes about two weeks for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against influenza virus infection. This is why it is better to get vaccinated early in the fall, before the flu season really gets under way.

Even if a person is vaccinated for the seasonal flu, there is still a possibility that they could get the flu. The ability of flu vaccine to protect a person depends on various factors, including the age and health status of the person being vaccinated, and also the similarity or "match" between the viruses used to make the vaccine and those circulating in the community.

People need to be vaccinated for the flu every season for two reasons. First, the body's immune response from vaccination declines over time, so an annual vaccine is needed for optimal protection. Second, because flu viruses are constantly changing, the formulation of the flu vaccine is reviewed each year and sometimes updated to keep up with changing flu viruses. 



## What You Need to Know About Ebola Virus

By Thomas Janisko, USACE Public Health Service Officer

Transmission of the Ebola virus can only occur when someone has a fever and looks sick. If someone looks well, they are NOT infectious. Bodily fluids like urine, saliva and blood transmit the virus, so maintain distance from anyone who appears ill to reduce the chance of becoming infected. The best prevention of any viral disease is frequent hand washing and wiping down common areas with bleach as the Ebola virus is particularly sensitive to bleach.

Items to remember about the Ebola virus:

- The Ebola virus is not airborne.
- Overseas travel to West Africa and the development of a fever requires isolation.
- If no fever, than no transmission of Ebola is possible.
- Avoid all direct physical contact with someone who looks sick.
- Practice good hygiene. Do not touch your face with your hands and refrain from shaking hands with casual contacts. 

# Around the District

## Retirements ...

**David Martin**, civil engineer for the Hydraulics Branch, retired Oct. 3, after dedicating more than 39 years of service to the federal government.

**Douglas Porter**, from Starved Rock Lock and Dam, retired Oct. 31, after dedicating more than 35 years of service to the federal government.

**Kenneth Brenner**, from Operations Division, Technical Branch, retired Oct. 31, after dedicating more than 32 years of service to the federal government.

Can you name where this is?

If so, send your answer to [samantha.a.heilig@usace.army.mil](mailto:samantha.a.heilig@usace.army.mil). Correct answers will result in your name being entered to receive a special prize and be recognized in the next Tower Times.



### October Answer:

Survey marker on east side of Clock Tower.

### Winner:

No answers were submitted.



## Have something you would like to share?

If you have something you would like to submit for the Around the District section of the Tower Times please send it to [samantha.a.heilig@usace.army.mil](mailto:samantha.a.heilig@usace.army.mil)

## Congrats ...

Congratulations to **Paul St. Louis** and his wife, Laura, on the birth of a baby girl on Sept. 26. Rosemary Elaine weighed eight pounds, 15 ounces and was 21 inches long.



Congratulations to **Jason Appel** and his wife, Jennifer, on the birth of a baby girl on Oct. 10. Vivian Mae weighed eight pounds, six ounces and was 20 inches long.



On Oct. 9, District Commander, Col. Mark Deschenes, promoted 1st Lt. Matthew McKeehan, to Captain at a ceremony held at Locks and Dam 15. Friends, family and coworkers were all invited for this special occasion.

Capt. McKeehan is currently assigned to the Rock Island District and works in the Project Management Section as an Assistant Project Manager. Projects he has been involved with include developing a Project Management Plan (PMP) for conducting a Major Rehabilitation Evaluation Report for Lock and Dam 18 and developing a PMP for updating the cost estimate for the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program. 



# THE FINAL COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN CHILI COOK-OFF

By Samantha Heilig, Editor

**T**he final Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Chili Cook-off was held Oct. 8 at the Rock Island District. The CFC is a workplace charitable donation program that dates back to the early 1960s. Each year, federal employees participating in the campaign donate thousands of dollars to nonprofit organizations included in the CFC program. For the last 18 years, the District has been helping to support the CFC by hosting an annual Chili Cook-off event.

This year's final CFC Chili Cook-off was a special event with more than 25 participants from the Corps and the Arsenal entering chili into the competition. Guests paid \$5 to sample the different chili recipes and then voted for the winners. Volunteers also baked cookies which were sold for desert. In the end, the 2014 Chili Cook-off was the most successful event to date, raising \$1,000 for donation to the CFC.

Jody Schmitz, chairperson for the cook-off said, "I couldn't have done this without all the chili chefs, cookie bakers, volunteers and guests."

Schmitz will be hanging up her hat after running the event for 14 years. She said that due to the CFC program changing how donations are received, fundraising events like this will no longer be permissible. 



**Mississippi Valley Division Commander, Maj. Gen. Michael Wehr presents Jody Schmitz with a coin for her 14 years of service as the CFC Chili Cook-off chairperson. Photo by Samantha Heilig**



**Rock Island District employees Richard Defer, John Quick and many others, sampled the different types of chili available at the CFC Chili Cook-off event.**

*Photo by Samantha Heilig*



**This year's winners of the CFC Chili Cook-off were:**



**First Place - Mari Fournier, Executive Office, with her husband Ron Fournier, Corporate Communications.**



**Second Place - Abigail Steele, Mississippi River Project**



**Third Place - Scott Pettis, Engineering Hydraulics Branch**

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# STAYING SAFE AT CORALVILLE LAKE

A group of 49 students from Southeast Junior High located in Iowa City, Iowa, created a mural at Coralville Lake that is viewable from the West Overlook Day Use Area. The students, who are taking a class on advertisement, learned about the many ways that the Corps of Engineers promotes water safety throughout the nation. The teens designed and submitted multiple drawings to the staff at Coralville Lake and in the end created a mural that targeted multiple age groups. The “Think Before You Sink” design had been used in the past by the Corps for this promotion. This mural is now displayed at one of the busiest boat ramps at Coralville Lake. *Photo by Dee Goldman* 

