



Mississippi River Project



US Army Corps
of Engineers®

Getting Ready for Spring

Although the temperatures outside are not very spring like yet, winter will soon be gone and the Mississippi River Project will be in full gear getting ready for the recreation season. As we head into this busy time of preparation we look forward to welcoming back our summer staff that helps us out each year. Some of these rangers are students looking to get experience working in the field and others are just people who have an interest in the outdoors and great skill of working with people. This year we will be saying good-bye to a ranger who has dedicated many years to helping our project and with him will go a great deal of experience and knowledge.

FAMILIAR FACE HANGING UP HIS RANGER GEAR

To do anything for a career for 30 plus years is quite an accomplishment. To do something as a second career for 30 plus years is amazing. Amazing is just one word to describe retiring summer park ranger Richard (Dick) Blair. Tireless, enthusiastic, dedicated, and fun-loving would be others. Dick started his summer park ranger career for the Corps of Engineers back in the 1970's at Lake Red Rock near Pella, Iowa while teaching at Newton Community Schools.

A few years and a lot of stories later, Dick took a teaching and football coaching job in Port Byron, Illinois at Riverdale Schools, where he is still employed as a teacher. He then took a similar summer park ranger job with the Mississippi River Project at the Thomson Park Ranger Office in Thomson, Illinois, where he worked for more than 25 years. The summer of 2010 marked his last recreation season as a park ranger with the Mississippi River Project.

There have been so many changes to the recreation program over the years, including new supervisors, new fellow employees, new volunteers and contractors, and even new parks that he had a hand in developing, and through it all Dick was there – ready to tackle anything that the Mighty Mississippi River and our thousands and thousands of visitors could throw at him – always with a smile on his face. Working sometimes three jobs at once (teaching, coaching in his new assistant football position at Augustana College, and working nights and weekends as a summer park ranger for the Corps) for many years, he always approached the job of being a park ranger with enthusiasm, high energy, and consistency.

The many years of these efforts, coupled with a desire to finally have some weekends off and enjoy his family, finally lead to a very difficult decision for Dick to hang up his badge and name tag and boat off into the sunset. The stories will always be there for many of us who were fortunate enough to work alongside someone so dedicated to the river project (as will the recycled jokes he often used to break the ice with many of our visitors)! So we all thank him for his tireless dedication, we wish him the best of luck as he enjoys his summers off, and we hope he has a long and relaxing retirement! Thanks for everything, Ranger Blair!



Dubuque Ranger Station News



EARTH DAY EVENT AT GRANT RIVER

Date: Saturday, April 16, 2011

Time: 9:00 am

Location: Grant River Recreation Area

Cost: Free

The Park Rangers with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Dubuque, Iowa would like to invite you to a special Earth Day/Park Clean Up that will take place Saturday April 16, 2011 between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and noon.

Activities at the Grant River Recreation Area located 3 miles south of Potosi, Wisconsin, off of Highway 133 will include a park clean up, and small maintenance projects. Persons interested in participating should wear old clothes intended for spring weather and bring work gloves.

For more information please contact Dubuque Park Rangers by calling (563) 582-0881.

Thomson Ranger Station News

WOOD DUCK NESTING BOX CLEANING – MARCH 12

For the past 15 years Clinton Boy Scout Troop #642 has been collecting data for wood duck nesting boxes that have been established in the Thomson Causeway Recreation Area. Since the boy scouts began tracking data in 1992 the wood duck nesting box program has recorded over 500 successful hatchings. When collecting data for the nesting boxes, the information gathered includes the number of eggs laid and hatched and any evident activity from competitors. Competition for the nesting boxes includes squirrels, raccoons, and various bird species. If a successful hatch has occurred from the previous year feathers and egg shells will be left in the box to promote reuse by hens. This year we hope to continue the success of the program by replacing old, worn out nesting boxes to improve reproduction rates for the wood ducks in the future.

PREPARATION FOR EARTH DAY ACTIVITIES – APRIL 16

The Thomson Ranger Office is beginning preparation for the Annual Earth Day Event held at the Thomson Causeway Recreation Area. Earth Day activities include debris pickup throughout the recreation area, trail maintenance, and a volunteer luncheon provided by local businesses. This event is a great opportunity for a scout group or other service group. If you or your group is interested in volunteering, please contact the Thomson Ranger Office at (815) 259-3628 for registration.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PROJECT EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Ben DeRoo – Park Ranger

I started working for the Corps of Engineers, Mississippi River Project in the spring of 2008 as a seasonal park ranger at the Muscatine Ranger Office while finishing my degree in Biology from St. Ambrose University. In my first season at Muscatine I was exposed to the various challenges that came with being a park ranger on the Mississippi including two floods and a severe windstorm. In the fall of 2009 I accepted a position under the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP) and transferred to the Thomson Ranger Office. Since I began working in Thomson, I have had the opportunity to organize interpretive events for the area while performing day to day operations and maintenance needed to operate our recreation areas. Working in Thomson has exposed me to many different experiences. Whether I am working in the recreation areas performing visitor assistance, inspecting boundary line for pools 13 and 14, or assisting the foresters with environmental stewardship the challenges and learning experiences of my position are incredible.

In my spare time I enjoy the opportunity to relax with family and friends. You can usually find me spending time outdoors hunting, fishing, and camping or at a baseball diamond taking in a game.



Mississippi River Visitor Center News

HISTORIC CLOCK TOWER TOUR

Date: March 12th and 13th, 2011

Time: 9:00 AM

Cost: Free – Reservations required

Information: 309-794-5338

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi River Project announces that the Visitor Center at Locks and Dam 15 is inviting guests to come participate in a Historic Clock Tower Tour. Relive the early days of the Rock Island Arsenal as you climb your way up the historic corridor of the Clock Tower Building which has been a Quad City landmark for over 100 years! Waiting at the top is a spectacular view of the Mississippi River and surrounding area.

Visitors are invited to join these tours on March 12th and 13th at 9:00 AM. The tours will be approximately 1½ hours long and be guided by a Visitor Center Park Ranger. The tours will begin at the Mississippi River Visitor Center, located on the western end of Arsenal Island at Locks and Dam 15. This program is free of charge and everyone is invited to attend. **Advanced registration is required.** An adult must accompany children under 12 years of age. **All persons over age 16 must carry a photo ID to enter the island. Vehicles are subject to search and participants should allow 15 minutes extra to ensure proper arrival time for the tour.** For more information, or to sign up for the program, please contact the Mississippi River Visitor Center at (309) 794-5338.

PELICAN WATCH – LOCKS AND DAM 14



Date: March 26 & 27

Time: 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Location: Lock & Dam 14

Cost: Free

Another great springtime event is the Quad Cities Annual Pelican Watch. This event is organized by the Mississippi River Project of the US Army Corps of Engineers along with the Quad Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau. It will be held from 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, March 26-27, 2011.

The Pelican Watch is held at the Day Use Area at Locks and Dam 14 located just off Highway 67 between Bettendorf, Iowa, and the I-80 bridge. Corps of Engineers Park Rangers and interested volunteers will be

present to answer questions and assist Pelican watchers with spotting scopes. Experienced birders and novices alike are encouraged to be part of this event. For more information, contact the US Army Corps of Engineers park rangers at 309-794-5338.

BOATING SAFETY CLASSES OFFERED

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi River Project announces they will be offering five different opportunities to attend a **free** boating safety education class. The classes will be held on the following dates: March 19th, April 2nd, April 16th, April 30th, and May 14th, 2011. Each class will run from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. and only one class is required to complete your certification. This class is recommended for people who are new to boating on the Mississippi, families that enjoy weekend boating adventures, or seasoned boaters who would just like to brush up on their safe boating knowledge. Anyone over the age of 12 can be certified. This is a classroom based safety course and will not include an on-the-water experience. Upon successful completion of the class and exam, participants will be issued an Illinois DNR Boat Safety certification which is honored in both Iowa and Illinois. These classes will be held at the Mississippi River Project Office at Locks and Dam 14 in Pleasant Valley, Iowa. **Pre-registration is required, space is limited, and the classes fill quickly.**

To register, contact the park rangers at (309) 794-5338.

Muscatine Ranger Station News

EARTH DAY CLEANUP AT ANDALUSIA SLOUGH

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi River Project invite you to celebrate Earth Day by participating in a cleanup at Andalusia Slough along the Mississippi River. Free lunch will be provided following the day's work. This event will be held, rain or shine, on **Saturday, April 23, 2011 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** at Andalusia Slough Recreation Area. The park is located two miles west of Andalusia, Illinois, along IL Hwy 92. Please meet at the park's picnic shelter the day of the event and bring gloves, shoes or boots and dress appropriately. In the event of flooding, this event will be held on Saturday, April 30, 2011. Work will include park and river bank cleanup, landscape work and other park maintenance. In addition to enjoying the outdoors, your help in cleaning the park and river of garbage helps improve the ecosystem of the river and the appearance of the area. To help make sure enough food is provided, individuals or groups interested in helping out with this worthwhile Earth Day event are encouraged to register by Monday, April 11, 2011. Please contact the Muscatine Park Rangers by calling (563) 263-7913, by email at mvrodmn16@usace.army.mil or mail to: 1611 Second Avenue, Muscatine, Iowa 52761.

Quincy Ranger Station News

With spring right around the corner, Quincy Rangers have the daunting word of high water surrounding them. In early February, a blizzard dumped record snowfall in the tri-state area. Shortly after that, came a false sense of spring as temperatures crept into the mid 60's. What this means is that high water seems as though it is going to be inevitable this spring as the predictions keep coming in. With that aside, we are looking forward to the upcoming recreation season. Several of our recreation area contracts are up for bid. Cody has been finalizing these contracts and Brent has been busy with Jr. Ranger programs. With contracts and Jr. Ranger programs done for the season, Cody and Brent will begin to focus their work on preparing the recreation areas for the upcoming summer.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PROJECT EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Brent Groesch – Park Ranger

My name is Brent Groesch and I am 24 years old. I was born and raised in Springfield, IL and lived there until I was 21. I moved to Quincy, IL when I was 22 to finish out my college career at Quincy University. I started working with the Corps of Engineers through a Student Career Employment Program (SCEP) under the wing of ranger Dennis Franks, who has since retired. Eventually I was able to move into a full time spot as the secondary ranger at the Quincy Field Station, after completing college last spring. Growing up, I knew that I wanted to do what I like and like what I do and being a park ranger for the Mississippi River Project is that in a nutshell. Being a river ranger presents a lot of variety in the scope of work being done. This is great for me because I hate being stagnant, both at work and life in general.

When I am not working, I enjoy being with my daughter, who just turned 1 in February, as well as traveling, music, family, friends, and Cardinal baseball. When the season is right, I spend as much time as I can in the woods and with Mother Nature, harvesting her tasty critters. I am blessed to have a job and a daughter in the same area as Quincy, which means I am anchored here for the next so many years.

However, my fiancé and I would not mind getting out of the Midwest one of these days and head west. The Rocky Mountains is where our hearts have always been. Once you go west, it's hard to come back to corn and beans.



News from Around the Project

RECREATION AREAS OPENING APRIL 8TH FOR 2011 SEASON

GRANT RIVER RECREATION AREA

Grant River Recreation Area is located on the shores of the Mississippi River three miles south of Potosi, Wisconsin. Facilities at the park include 63 campsites with electrical hookups, 10 walk-in tent sites, shower building with flush toilets, on site camp host, boat ramp with courtesy dock, group picnic shelter, amphitheater and law enforcement patrol.

THOMSON CAUSEWAY RECREATION AREA

Thomson Causeway Recreation Area located just outside of Thomson, IL. Facilities at the park include 126 campsites with electrical hookups, 5 tent sites, shower buildings with flush toilets, boat ramp, group picnic shelters, playground, amphitheater, on site camp host, and law enforcement patrol. **Reservations will be accepted at this facility for dates after May 20th, 2011.**

FISHERMAN'S CORNER RECREATION AREA

Fisherman's Corner Recreation Area located on the banks of the Mississippi River just above Locks and Dam 14 in Hampton, IL. Facilities at the park include 51 campsites with electrical hookups, 5 tent sites, shower building with flush toilets, playground, amphitheater, on site camp host, and law enforcement patrol.

CLARK'S FERRY RECREATION AREA

Clark's Ferry Recreation Area is located a short distance from the Quad Cities off Hwy 22 near Montpelier, IA. Facilities at the park include 45 campsites with electrical hookups, shower building with flush toilets, playground, boat ramp with courtesy dock, group picnic shelter, amphitheater, on site camp host, and law enforcement patrol.

If you would like to be removed from our e-mail list please print "unsubscribe" in the subject line in a reply to us.

**Thank you,
Park Ranger Staff**

P.O. Box 2004 Rock Island, Illinois 61204-2004

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