



Spotlight on the District

Roger Bollman Chief, Natural Resource Management Section, Mississippi River Project

Story and photo by Mark Kane

When you think of an outdoorsman you might think of Jeremiah Johnson or Grizzly Adams, but chances are the name Roger Bollman doesn't come to mind.

Bollman, chief, Natural Resource Management Section, Mississippi River Project, doesn't have a big-bushy beard, he doesn't hangout or fight with bears, but he shares a common attribute with the fictional characters ... he loves to be outdoors. In fact, it's the very reason he picked the career he's in today.

Bollman was very interested in an outdoor career in fish and wildlife biology. He started in parks and recreation in 1971 as a national park ranger at Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota with an emphasis on land management.

"Thirty years later I'm still doing the same thing," said Bollman. "Back in those days, in the early 70s in the bad lands of North Dakota, was a great experience for me. It engrained in me a serious interest in continuing on in that field."

Bollman did continue in the career field, but not before being drafted during the Vietnam War Era.

In 1972, he was drafted into the Army and spent two years in the military stationed in Europe. He was with the 1st of the 509th Airborne Infantry and later, the 2nd of the 28th Mechanized Infantry stationed in Mainz-Gonsenheim, West Germany. Bollman left the military Oct. 24, 1974, and on Nov. 1, 1974, reported for duty back in North Dakota with the North Dakota Park Service as an area superintendent of state parks at Lake Sakakawea State Park.

Bollman worked with the state park service until 1978, but said he wanted to get back in federal service.

A vacancy popped up with the Rock Island District for a park technician at Lock and Dam 13, and he got the job.

"I've been with the Mississippi River Project ever since," said Bollman.

Since coming to the District Bollman has worked as a park technician, chief ranger, assistant park manager, park manager, and section chief.

In Bollman's current position he works with a peak regular staff of 42 as well as with 110 service contractors that include law enforcement officers, all of whom he says represents the Corps and the District everyday through their jobs.

Their area (the Mississippi River Project) covers 26 federal recreation areas; with recreational use dispersed on 215,000 project land and water acres in a four state area. The area borders 24 counties, 47 river communities, eight congressional districts, and five federal court districts.

"Our role can be a very complicated one because the Mississippi River has local, national as well as global interest," said Bollman.

One of the areas that has made Bollman's role more complex is logistics.

"For me to go out and visit all my sites I had to put 1,000 miles on my vehicle and it took three full days," said Bollman. "I try to hit field sites during the peak of the summer. Getting to the field sites is one of my biggest challenges and I need to do more so I can keep a sound connection with my staff and customers. Over the last 22

years of working with field issues I must credit my field staff for the quality service provided to our customers."

For the year 2000 Bollman said the total visitation for Mississippi River Project land and waters were 63 million visitor hours, of which 6.3 million hours were spent on Corps-administered sites.

Although his job may not mirror Jeremiah Johnson or Grizzly Adams, what Bollman considers a hobby does. Almost every year he and his wife, Dorie, Programs and Project Management Division, travel to Canada to canoe.

"My wife and I are the best of friends and we both like wilderness canoeing at Quetico Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada," said Bollman. "They fly us out, drop us off, and we find our way back to the starting point with just a compass and a map. We've made about 20 trips and we're going back again this spring."

The Bollman's were married in 1981, and will celebrate their 20th wedding anniversary in September.

His advice to anyone reading this article is, "Keep your sense of humor, and try to laugh at least once a day. Work is important, but life outside of work and family is more important and humor has a big role in that. I don't live for work, I work for the things that I love to do outside of work." 

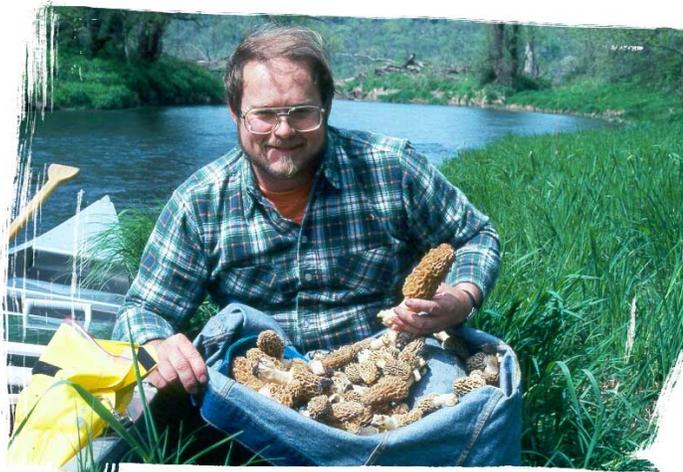


Photo by Dorie Bollman
Looking more like Jeremiah Johnson - Roger Bollman shows off a mess of morel mushrooms he and his wife found during a canoe trip on Yellow River in northeast Iowa.

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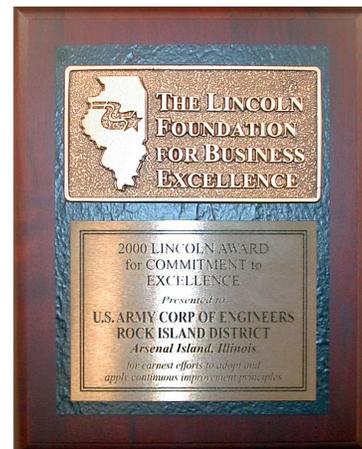
April 2001

Tower Times

Contents

District Receives
Lincoln Foundation
Quality Award

5



New and Improved
District Library

7



District Recognizes Safety

11



On the Cover

Four fledgling Red Shouldered Hawks in their nest last spring at Milan Bottoms in Illinois. The Red Shouldered Hawk should be on their nests now with fledgling stage occurring in May and coinciding with flood pulses on the Mississippi River.

Photo by Jon Stravers, Iowa Raptor Fund.