



Tower Times

Rock Island District's News Magazine

August-September 2013



Low water inspection trip

MV Mississippi and MRC visit District

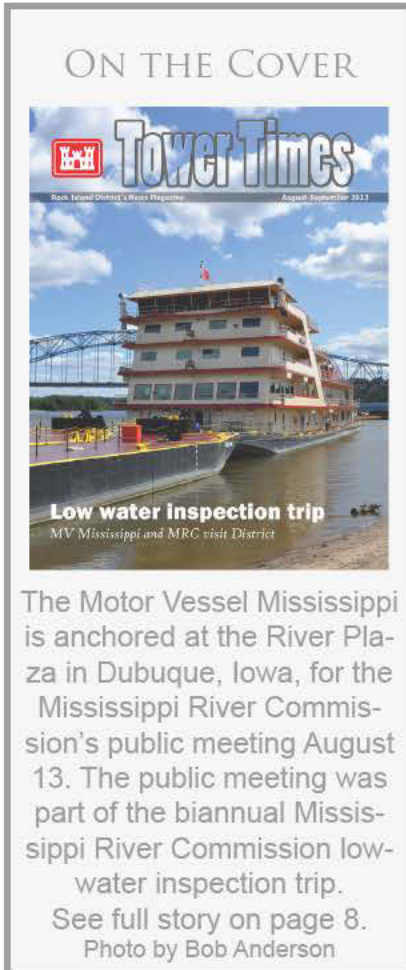


**US Army Corps
of Engineers** ®
Rock Island District

Tower Times

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The Motor Vessel Mississippi is anchored at the River Plaza in Dubuque, Iowa, for the Mississippi River Commission's public meeting August 13. The public meeting was part of the biannual Mississippi River Commission low-water inspection trip.

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Photo by Bob Anderson

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Tower Times

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A message from....

Colonel Mark Deschenes, District Commander



President's budget provides positive outlook for FY 2014

The new fiscal year continued a theme of uncertainty across our government, this time in the form of a government shutdown and more furloughs for thousands of federal workers, including many of our employees. After a year that included sequestration and budget constraints, fiscal challenges remain the norm but there are positive signs for the Rock Island District. Upfront, I truly appreciate the patience and resilience demonstrated by our workforce. There is undeniable frustration and confusion about the current path but the District leadership will never be distracted from the fact that it is our great employees who uphold the incredible reputation of this organization. Thank You.

Although most organizations are struggling with reduced funding, the Rock Island District has seen a steady to increasing budget for FY 2014. This is a positive sign regarding relevance and value to the nation.

The President's FY 2014 Budget includes nearly \$169 million for the Rock Island District, an increase of nearly \$35 million from what we were allocated in FY 2013. This year's President's budget includes more than \$43 million in construction funding and nearly \$125 million in operations and maintenance money. Both are increases from last year's allocation.


Much of the construction money is for the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Environmental Management Program (UMRR-EMP). This program is one of our District's most active with 54 projects completed since inception more than 25 years ago. We have eight UMRR-EMP projects currently in construction with another 28 in the design phase. The UMRR-EMP is a multi-district program between Rock Island, St. Paul and St. Louis Districts. We lead the effort with our sister districts to the north and south and all involved should feel proud of the program's accomplishments.

In addition to the construction funds for UMRR-EMP, our construction efforts at Lockport Lock and Dam Upper Pool will see more money in FY 2014. The more than \$130 million construction project is split into four stages with much of the work completed. But, there is still a lot more to accomplish as we endeavor to rehabilitate and repair structural integrity. Continued funding is needed to ensure we meet our goals to complete this project.

The increase in construction funding definitely points to a positive outlook. The upward trend of our operations and maintenance funding also bodes well but O&M priorities will challenge this District for years to come. Our locks and dams continue to perform as intended, maintaining the navigation system and enabling commerce. But it is no secret that those structures are aging. We still require significant improvements in the investment strategy for our aging infrastructure.

One of those pieces of infrastructure is the Marseilles Dam on the Illinois River. As many of you know, that dam was damaged during an accident in April. Gates were rendered inoperable and emergency repairs were needed. In the days and weeks afterward, our project management team formulated the short term repairs and with the assistance of the Coast Guard and industry, effects to navigation were mitigated and the river was able to resume normal operations relatively quick.

But, repairs will continue at Marseilles for quite some time. Our team has completed a majority of the short-term repairs and the long-term planning, design and inspections have begun. It will be several years, depending on funding, before the permanent repairs are in place. Our response to the Marseilles Dam emergency has been yet another example of the professionalism you all portray on a daily basis and further underlines the value you are providing to the nation.

The past year has been full of challenges, both fiscally and operationally. And, I'm sure FY 2014 will be no different. The threats of furlough and the continued sequestration cause stress for many of you but I have yet to see anything change with regard to your work ethic or your ability to overcome and adapt. I don't have a crystal ball but I would imagine we will need to be prepared for the threat of similar circumstances in the months to come. In the meantime, our steadily increasing budget points to a promising outlook. We need to continue providing value while doing so in a fiscally responsible way. I have no doubt that you will hold steady while we explore and push for new and innovative ways to maintain, if not improve, the critical services we provide the citizens of the Midwest during these nationally fiscally challenging times. Thanks for all you do and continue **BUILDING STRONG®**. 

Improving quality and performance

Six employees work toward green belt certification

By Hilary Markin, Editor

The District is moving forward with initiatives focusing on customer care and being good stewards of tax payer dollars through Lean Six Sigma.

Following the white and yellow belt trainings in December, six District employees attended two one-week green belt training sessions in June and July that were held in conjunction with the Rock Island Arsenal. Each of these employees are now working toward their certification by completing a green belt project.

The projects are designed for the employees to prove their true understanding of Lean Six Sigma and how to get to the root cause and then find the best possible solutions.

“Sometimes what we think might be the right answer or solution turns out to be the worst,” said Lt. Col. Todd Reed, deputy commander and green belt candidate.

During the yellow belt training a listing of potential projects to improve the District were identified which served as a starting point for the employees looking for a project.

“The hardest part has been narrowing in our projects to a particular piece of a process,” said Reed. “Everything we do is made up of hundreds of little processes that contribute to a larger one – it’s pulling one of those little processes out, reworking it, and then inserting it back into the larger one.”

“Sometimes what we think might be the right answer or solution turns out to be the worst.”

The employees have all selected their projects and are currently working them through the certification process called DMAIC, a structured problem-solving methodology used to improve speed, quality, and cost that stands for define, measure, analyze, improve and control.

Serving as a mentor to the employees to help them reach their certification is Gerry Hardin, a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt at the Mississippi Valley Division. He also meets and approves each stage of the DMAIC process.

“Three of the projects are in the define stage putting together their support team, identifying the process owner and defining the scope of their project,” said Reed. “The rest of us are now working through the analyze and measure stages taking an in-depth look at the process.”

District green belt candidates and their projects

Nicole Lynch – Blue Sheet Process

Angie Freyermuth – Photograph Storage Process

Doug Davis – Solicitation/Construction Process

Susie Walters – Building Related Construction Projects

Lt. Col. Todd Reed – Flood Preparation Project

Scott Bullock – Reservist Deployments

In some cases the projects are ones that the green belt candidates themselves are not familiar with which offers a fresh perspective.

“It brings in someone to question why this is the way we do it? A lot of times when I ask why they are doing it a certain way – they respond with ‘that is the way we have always done it,’” said Reed. “And sometimes that process has evolved over time to something much more complicated than it needs to be.”

The projects are all on target to be completed within six months which is the allowable time period to become green belt certified.


As word is spread about improving the District, and with the creation of the process improvement specialist position, additional project ideas have been brought forward by employees.

“Once these initial projects are complete, and we have certified employees, future process improvement projects will go much faster. There are a lot of boxes to check to get certified,” added Reed.

Regionally, the Mississippi Valley Division is working to receive its ISO 9000 certification, which is a family of standards related to quality management that helps organizations ensure they are meeting the needs of customers and stakeholders.

The ultimate goal is to improve the quality and performance of the District, Division and Corps as a whole for our customers.

“As with anything we do, we are trying to become a leaner organization as budgets get tighter and we need to accomplish more with less. The best way to do this is to improve our quality and performance,” said Reed.

The District recently hired Nicole Lynch as the process improvement specialist in the Executive Office. She will continue building on the District’s improvement journey. 

Practicing what they learned

District Leadership Development Program participants complete program

By Hilary Markin, Editor

The Rock Island District Leadership Development Program (LDP) Level II participants graduated in September after completing the year-long program.

Throughout the year, participants worked through set curriculum learning more about themselves and the basics of leadership development which included monthly meetings, guest speakers, reading leadership books and more. They also selected a mentor who helped guide them through the program.

In addition to the curriculum, which is organized by Evans and Associates Consulting Corporation, the participants got a chance to practice what they were learning through a team project.

This year the participants were asked to canvas the District for potential project ideas and to develop three proposals to present to the Executive Steering Board (ESB).

Assisting them was the LDP Steering Committee who helped guide some of their ideas and prepare for the presentation. While developing their proposals the team was to select a front runner with the others serving as back-up in the event ESB did not approve their first choice.

"To help us with the selection process, as there was no clear front runner, we created a decision criteria matrix that helped each of us rate the proposals based on their potential effectiveness," said Matt Coffelt, who served as the project manager.

"I thought they were going to come forward with two recommended projects," said Mike Cox, LDP working champion and chief of Operations Division. "In the end they came together and selected one."

The project this year focused on professional development and they broke into three subgroups to accomplish it. The key areas were promoting self development, evaluating and restructuring the existing LDP I program and expanding the District intranet training SharePoint site.

For the first one, promote self development, the group worked on developing ways to promote self development through promo-



Leadership Development Program participants pause during graduation day for a photo with Col. Mark Deschenes. From left, Bryan Snook, Beth Crutcher, Matt Coffelt, Col. Mark Deschenes, Dave Wallace, Tammy Loose, Jason Smith, Erica Stephens, Derrick Glisan, Allen Marshall and John Hayes. Absent from the photo is Chris Thennes. Photo by Hilary Markin

tional means including a video about LDP. They also took a look at training statistics and how to measure training as well as how to incorporate self development into performance objectives.

The group also took on the LDP Level I program. Many of the LDP II students were also recent graduates of the Level I program and had ideas fresh in their mind on how to improve the program. They successfully launched an FY 13 program working with Sara Paxson, the District's training coordinator, and the LDP Steering Committee, after learning it was not going to be offered. They also made changes based on the previous year's feedback and presented alternatives for the FY 14 LDP I program for the steering committee to consider based on the feedback they had received and information from Paxson.

The team also worked to revamp the District's Training site using tools available in SharePoint. They worked closely with Paxson to make the site a one-stop-shop for employees to locate information related to mandatory training and to learn about the numerous developmental opportunities available.

Each of the subgroups worked on their respective components of the project all working towards the goal of enhancing professional development and a well-trained workforce that is more efficient and effective.

The group presented their project during a Command and Staff meeting, sharing their product and seeking project approval. Through the trials and tribulations of working on a team they were able to succeed and produced a project that benefits both themselves and the District.

Story continued on page 15

Pool drawdown provides unique opportunity

By Charlene Carmack, biologist

There have been very few recent surveys of mussel populations in the Marseilles Pool even though several federal and state listed species were known to occur in LaSalle County.

A perfect opportunity arose when a tow moving barges on the Illinois River lost control in the strong river currents April 18 and seven of the fourteen barges that broke free ended up against Marseilles Dam damaging several gates.

The Corps quickly devised a plan to construct a rock dike below the dam to allow installation of bulkheads to block the flow of water through the inoperable gates. To complete the rock dike a 4-foot pool drawdown was necessary to reduce the volume of water flowing through the broken gates.

As plans came together, biologists were notified about the drawdown and the potential impacts to native mussels in early May.

Mussels typically bury themselves in the bottom sediment with a fleshy muscular foot and live by filtering algae and other food items from the water. Typically mussels are only found by divers using scuba gear however, the drawdown presented a unique opportunity to see almost 10 miles of exposed riverbed and collect mussels by walking.

Knowing time was of the essence, Corps staff notified federal and state resource agencies of the impending drawdown about 10 days prior to it occurring.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources quickly organized a group of more than 20 people from the DNR, Illinois



Pink and white heel splitters were some of the more common species found during the two-day mussel search and relocation in May on the Illinois River above Marseilles Dam. *Photo by Bill Graham*



This scaleshell (*Leptodea leptodon*) was found on the Illinois River above Marseilles Dam in May during a mussel survey and relocation effort. *Photo courtesy of Illinois Natural History Survey.*


Natural History Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Western Illinois University and the Corps to search the exposed areas of lower Marseilles Pool for stranded mussels during the drawdown.

During the survey, teams of biologists identified, counted and returned mussels to deeper waters adjacent to where they were found. In total, 14,850 individuals representing 23 different species were collected during the two-day effort. Many more mussels were also seen but due to limited time and manpower in addition to the area that needed to be covered forced biologists to work methodically to ensure as much ground was covered as possible.

While neither of the two state listed mussel species (slippershell and spike) were found, a federally endangered species, scaleshell (*Leptodea leptodon*), was collected. Mussel expert, Kevin Cummings from the Illinois Natural History Survey, who authored the Field Guide to the Freshwater Mussels of the Midwest, identified it in the field. Its identification was further verified through analysis of mitochondrial DNA by malacologists at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

This find was significant as no scaleshell's had been documented in the state for more than a century. Furthermore, until this discovery the only known populations were in Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma.

Mussels on the upper reaches of the Illinois River were considered to be nonexistent just 50 years ago after the opening of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. But thanks to state and federal regulations improving sewage treatment and water quality mussel populations have rebounded.

The drawdown presented a truly unique opportunity for biologists as miles of river bed were uncovered allowing them to gather thousands of mussels, documenting their species and number and relocating them to a place they would be safe during the drawdown. 

Your District is prepared - Are You?

District conducts COOP exercise, tests Mass Notification System

By Sarah Jones, emergency management specialist

The District has been busy planning for something they hope will never happen. During the week of July 29, District leaders participated in a table top exercise using a train derailment scenario that destroyed parts of the Annex Building adjacent to the Clock Tower including the computer rooms and servers. The exercise tested the District's Continuity of Operations Plan, otherwise known as COOP, which is the District's plan to reconstitute, establish command and control and conduct mission essential functions at an alternate facility in the event the District Headquarters complex is damaged or destroyed.


During the exercise, staff members deployed to the primary Emergency Relocation Facility, Mississippi River Project Office, and exercised communication capabilities, accountability and assessed the ability to establish command and control. They also discussed District and office mission essential tasks and identified mission essential employees to ensure those tasks were accomplished.

As part of the exercise an accountability message was sent to employees asking them to contact their supervisor using the District's Mass Notification System (MNS). Due to the MNS being new, many employees thought the notification was a hoax and either deleted the messages or did not immediately respond to the request.

The MNS the District uses is the Immediate Response Information System (IRIS). The system allows Corps officials to notify employees via e-mail, cell phone, home phone and text message in the event critical information impacting life safety must be distributed to all employees. Many other agencies including the Rock Island Arsenal have increased their communication capabilities with similar systems. This system is only to be used in emergency situations and exercises. It won't be used for non-emergency announcements such as fundraisers.

All employees should add their personal contact information into the IRIS system so in the event something does happen they will be notified. The IRIS system will be used to notify employees to stay home in the event of bad weather or other emergency situations. It may also be used for accountability. All employees should expect periodic tests of the system and be prepared to respond to the messages, including after hours. Please see the sidebar to access and update your contact information in the IRIS system.

This was the first COOP exercise the District has completed and other exercises are planned in the future that will build upon the lessons learned.

A copy of the COOP is located on the District Intranet under District Offices/Emergency Management (EM). Additionally, your supervisor should have access to your office COOP. 

Rock Island District Mass Notification System - Immediate Response Information System (IRIS)

The District's Mass Notification System will be used to send emergency messages to the workforce. In order to be notified, each employee must log into IRIS and add their personal contact information.

The system allows everyone to maintain their own personal contact information.


"Keep in mind, providing home or personal cell phone numbers will help ensure you receive important alerts when you need them," said Troy Larson, chief of Safety and Occupational Health. "For instance, you may receive an alert that your work-site is closed due to severe weather.

All employees should log into the system and establish a password. Once logged in, click on the contact information tab at the top of the screen and add your personal information. The system already has government cell phone numbers and office desk phones for field site personnel. If you are located at the Clock Tower please do not add your office desk phone number, the physical sound system in the Clock Tower will notify people during working hours in addition to the emergency contact information you provide in IRIS. If any of your contact information changes please update this system to ensure you continue to receive important messages.

To access the system go to <http://www.irisdispatch.com>.

Both the username and password are initially your email address. Note the first letter of your first, middle, and last name is capitalized. For example, Username: John.D.Doe@usace.army.mil Password: John.D.Doe@usace.army.mil

You will be required to change your password at login.

Login or system problems may be directed to the vendor rep: lgonzales@techradium.com 





Teri Goodman, assistant city manager for the City of Dubuque, Iowa, gives testimony to the Mississippi River Commission about the goals of the America's Watershed Initiative at the public meeting in Dubuque, Iowa, August 13. *Photo by Bob Anderson*

Mississippi River Commission's Low Water Inspection Trip

By Hilary Markin, Editor

The Mississippi River Commission conducted the semi-annual low water inspection trip in August aboard the Motor Vessel (MV) Mississippi. During the trip the commission inspected projects along the Upper Mississippi River and held a series of public meetings to maintain a dialogue with stakeholders and the public exchanging viewpoints and ideas.

The inspection trip started in St. Paul, Minn., but prior to that, as the MV Mississippi made its way up river, the Districts were able to use the facilities on the boat to host meetings and other events.

The Rock Island District took this opportunity to host an Il-

linois and Iowa Joint Silver Jackets meeting. Attendees included state and federal partners as well as Corps staff from the districts who service Illinois and Iowa as well as Mississippi Valley Division and Headquarters staff.

A number of flood risk related topics were covered to include National Flood Insurance Program Reform, efforts related to the Midwest flooding this year and new tools being proposed and developed to enhance future flood risk management.

"The purpose of the meeting was to increase awareness of the various flood risk management work taking place within the two states," said Angela Freyermuth, outreach and customer relations specialist, who spearheaded the up-bound trip events. "In addition to that, the meeting helped us better identify areas for multi-state collaboration."

When the MV Mississippi arrived in the Quad Cities it docked along the City of Davenport's riverfront and the District held an open house promoting careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Children and adults were able to tour the MV Mississippi which spends 90 percent of its time as a working towboat, moving barges, equipment and supplies on the Lower Mississippi River. They also viewed displays and learned about what biologists are doing in relation to Asian carp, how a lock and dam operates, how to read a river chart and navigate the river, careers in engineering, the Corps' emergency management mission and how to identify waterfowl along the Upper Mississippi River.

"We had a good number of people tour the boat," said Freyermuth. "I saw lots of kids with their Bobber the Water Safety Dog tattoos and other goodies they picked up in the exhibit space."



Visitors enjoy displays relating to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics during the public open house aboard the Motor Vessel Mississippi along the riverfront in Davenport, Iowa. *Photo by Hilary Markin*



Above, Col. Mark Deschenes, addresses the mayors and the Mississippi River Commission during a signing ceremony at the Mississippi River Project Office in Pleasant Valley, Iowa. The signing ceremony celebrated a memorandum of common purpose between the Mississippi River Commission and the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative. Photo by Bob Anderson **Right, Mayor Mark Vulich, Clinton, Iowa, signs the memorandum during a signing ceremony in Dubuque, Iowa. Photo by Angela Freyermuth**



After the Open House the District's Leadership Development Program participants and their mentors and supervisors did team building activities aboard the MV Mississippi as it traveled from Lock and Dam 14 to 13.

"This was a great opportunity for them to get to know other leaders within the District, to ask questions and gain their insight on leadership and the interworkings of the District," said Freyermuth.

Inspection Trip

The Mississippi River Commission began the low water inspection of the Rock Island District's area of responsibility Aug. 13 through a series of meetings and presentations.

"Speakers ranged from Corps partners to flood risk management interests to environmental groups," said Mari Fournier, executive assistant, who organized the trip. "They all spoke very favorably about their interactions with the Corps."

When the boat arrived in Dubuque, Iowa, a public meeting was held at the River Plaza allowing members of the public to give testimony to the commissioners about the river and their vested interests.

"We need to continue funding the monitoring and science program along the Upper Mississippi River," said Mike Griffin, biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources. "The LTRMP (Long Term Resource Monitoring Program) has 27 years of experience collecting scientific data in the Mississippi River and is seen as a leader for the methods used across the world."

Following the public meeting in Dubuque and during a stop

at the Mississippi River Project Office in Pleasant Valley, Iowa, a signing ceremony was held.


The signing ceremonies celebrated a memorandum of common purpose between the Mississippi River Commission and the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI).

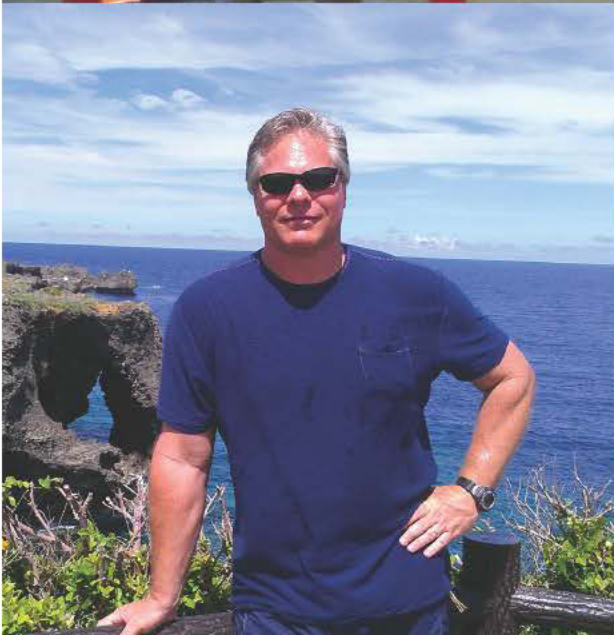
Mayors from Bettendorf, Clinton, Dubuque, Davenport, Guttenberg, and Muscatine, Iowa, and the mayor of East Moline, Ill., signed the memorandum on behalf of the MRCTI. Maj. Gen. John Peabody, then division commander, signed on behalf of the MRC.

The memorandum formalizes a shared commitment of the MRC, the Corps of Engineers, and the mayors to work in partnership to protect, sustain and enhance the natural attributes and economic vitality of the Mississippi River.

During the commission's stop at the Mississippi River Project Office they also toured the maintenance facilities and took a look at the equipment the project uses to maintain the locks and dams, navigation channel and recreation areas. They also saw the District's flood-fighting equipment and associated storage facilities at that location.

The rest of the trip through the District included hearing from additional partners and subject matter experts on various projects and programs the District manages.

"We tried to show them the diversity of the projects, programs and stakeholders that the Rock Island District services," said Fournier. 



Top, Jason Appel, realty specialist, Real Estate Division, poses in front of the king's chair while visiting Shurijo Castle in Japan. Bottom, Dave Wallace, appraiser, Real Estate Division, poses at a famous snorkeling spot in Japan before jumping in to do some cavern diving.

Opportunity to travel supports unique mission

By Hilary Markin, Editor

A common theme across the Corps is supporting others – whether that is maintenance crews supporting other Districts, working on complex problems like Asian carp or supporting others with manpower to accomplish a large mission.

Recently three employees traveled to Japan, with a team of about 25 other Corps employees to locate, document and reconcile all of the Defense Logistic Agency (DLA) property assets within and near some of the military installations in Japan.

This effort was in support of the Fort Worth District's mission to perform on-site Real Property inspections at the many military facilities around the world on behalf of the DLA.

The Real Estate Branch of the Rock Island District began supporting this mission back in July 2012 with six different employees currently supporting these efforts at varying levels.

The three that went to Japan for three weeks in mid-July were Jason Appel, Dave Wallace and Bonnie Tanamor.

Appel who is a realty specialist, and Wallace who is an appraiser, were assigned to a team sent to Okinawa Prefecture of Japan. There, they captured nearly 600 assets on 10 different military installations, including Camp Zama and Kadena Airbase. Tanamor, who is an appraiser trainee, was part of a mainland Japan team capturing nearly the same number of assets on eight different installations.

The teams were comprised of real estate and environmental personnel, facility engineers, fuel specialists and site coordinators.

The assets they were accounting for ranged from administrative buildings, access and other site improvements, 500-2 million gallon fuel tanks, security/force protection structures, fuel lines, valves, pig launchers (launching station to launch a cleaning device through a pipeline), containment systems and many fuel related support buildings.

They worked 10-12 hour days depending on the site and six days a week. A typical day would include nearly six hours of outdoor inspections with the rest spent indoors scanning the onsite property files.

When they first arrived at a base they would do an in-briefing with base senior leaders with a lot of emphasis being put on safety. An out-briefing was also conducted at the conclusion.

"The biggest message during the briefings was safety with the number one concern being snakes followed by heat and humidity due to the near 110 degree heat index where we were, and driving on the wrong side of the road," said Wallace. "In Japan, the snakes are called "Habu" which stands for very poisonous snake. They do have anti-venom but it only works twice. If you are a bit just once you are shipped out and basi-



Bonnie Tanamor (center), appraiser trainee, Real Estate Division, works at the Public Works Squadron, Misawa Air Base, with fellow teammates Zach Warren, Kansas City District, and Julie Hutcherson, Fort Worth District. Photo by Don Komara

cally barred from returning to their country.”

“There were also Giant Wood Spiders that make a large web that isn’t always easy to detect,” added Appel. “I had a few close calls. The nature of the job often takes you off the beaten path looking in remote areas which also serves as perfect homes for spiders and other critters.”

While on the bases they had an escort to help them find and identify the various real property items.

“Not all equipment is created equally nor documented the same way, depending on if it was an Army, Navy or Air Force installation,” said Wallace. “This made it challenging – at one site they would call it X while at another the same X was a Y.”

All of the assets were photographed and the GPS coordinates were recorded. The team members also had to be cognizant when taking photos to not document highly classified items, such as fighter jets, munitions and force protection equipment.

“We are given a list of known assets at each of the sites and basically work through it checking each item off and if new items are found adding them to the list,” said Appel.

The real-property inspections and the scanned property files are all compiled into a database called D-REO, the DLA’s Infrastructure Assessment Program-Real Estate Objects Reconciliation Tool, which is used to reconcile the records. This is all done by other team members and is an effort that Donna Hardy has been supporting. (A story on her experiences will follow in the next Tower Times.)

During their trip they also got a chance to take in the sites.

One Sunday, Appel and Wallace visited the world’s second largest aquarium called Kuroshio Sea in Okinawa. They also visited various cultural sites, spent time on the beach and went golfing and snorkeling.

In addition to the sites and the critters they saw during working hours – there were also night-time critters to contend with.

“Okinawa has large fruit-eating bats,” said Appel. “I almost couldn’t believe what I was seeing when I first saw them flying around the hotel at dusk. I’ve never seen a bat that big before.”

They enjoyed some of the local cuisine including fresh sushi and sashimi (rawfish). They also splurged one night and enjoyed

Kobe beef which comes from the Tajima breed of cattle raised in a prescribed way in the Japanese prefecture of Hyogo where Kobe is the capital.

Tanamor was in Misawa in northern Japan where the climate is more like Seattle’s.

“I had my fall gear on while they were snorkeling in the ocean,” said Tanamor. “My team decided to travel using the bullet train from Misawa to Tokyo, which was an experience when everyone had two pieces of luggage. We hauled all of our luggage onto a connecting train during rush hour. Wow! It was definitely an experience as we don’t have that type of public transportation in the Quad Cities.”


While Tanamor does enjoy the work that is accomplished on the trips, she is really enjoying traveling to new and different places.

“I’ve wanted to travel my entire life, so this program is great,” she said. “Being exposed to other cultures is really eye-opening. For example, I really appreciated American-sized beverages after visiting Japan. And now, being in Germany, I really appreciate free water in the states. You can get beer and wine cheaper then you can get water there. It’s crazy!” Tanamor and Appel recently returned from supporting another DLA mission in Germany.

She is also learning about other disciplines across the Corps.

“As an appraiser, I don’t get to mingle with the engineers and environmental folks too often. But being a part of the DLA program exposes me to their disciplines. I feel very grateful to be a part of this program,” said Tanamor.

Appel also commended the mission as a great experience. “Being able to support a mission that allows for the opportunity to travel internationally, meet many new people from the Corps, and develop a new skill set is easily one of the highlights of my career,” he said.

Other Rock Island District team members continue to support the Fort Worth District’s mission and more articles will be appearing in future editions of the Tower Times. 

EMERGING LEADER INTERVIEW

MVD Emerging Leader Beth Bernauer attends USACE Emerging Leaders Conference and Strategic Leaders' Conference

1. What was your experience like at the Senior Leaders' Conference? It was a very professionally rewarding experience. I learned a lot through the presentations and discussions on missions and functions. The opportunity to network and shadow senior leaders was the icing on the cake.

2. Who was your Senior Leader Sponsor during the conference? Mr. Wesley Miller, Director of Resource Management.

3. What were some of the sessions that you attended? To kick-off the Emerging Leaders Conference (ELC) - The Flippen Group conducted a two and a half-day leadership development training workshop Aug. 3 through Aug. 5.

That Monday we had lunch with Lt. Gen. Tom Bostick and our Senior Leader Sponsor for the conference. Following lunch, the Strategic Leaders' Conference began. First on the agenda was the National Management Board meeting. That evening I attended a Senior Executive Service Induction and Awards Ceremony Dinner.

On Tuesday, was a Command Management Review (CMR) meeting followed by a networking opportunity that evening. Wednesday, I shuttled to the GAO Building (HQ USACE) for track discussions on the Campaign Plan, Goal 4 a & d. That evening, I attended a professional development opportunity at Arlington National Cemetery's Women's Memorial. A reception was held after and I had the opportunity to attend the prestigious Twilight Tattoo. From what I understand, this was the first time USACE sponsored this event.

On Thursday, Campaign Plan champions briefed us on the outcomes from the track sessions. At lunch, the Emerging Leaders put together a presentation on what we had learned and we emphasized on how to deliver Employee Value Proposition and capitalize on employee engagement drivers. After the presentation, the Emerging Leader induction was performed by Bostick,

who presented each of us with a USACE coin. The event ended with closing remarks from Bostick.

4. Why is it important for Emerging Leaders to attend events like this? The opportunity to network with USACE Emerging Leaders, have a senior leader sponsor to shadow at the conference and meet others was invaluable. It was an eye opener to see how the USACE Senior Leaders view issues and make resolutions.

5. What was the most memorable thing that you learned? The most memorable thing that I learned had to do with ensuring all employees know the strategic vision and how their role plays into the vision. The key to success is to bring employees together and make them feel they are a valuable part of the organization. Some other noteworthy topics were: knowledge management, reverse mentoring program, promoting innovation, and "gripe up, not down."

6. How does attending events like this benefit the District? Attending events like this is a great opportunity that provides valuable training and professional development for both senior and emerging leaders. We are able to take the information presented back to our workplaces and share it with others as well as apply it in our day-to-day duties. I networked with USACE's senior leaders hearing their views and discussing the strategic vision and plan for the future and how their role plays into the vision.

The theme of the Emerging Leaders Conference and Strategic Leaders' Conference was "Delivering Best Value" which is linked to delivering the USACE Vision of "Engineering solutions for the Nation's toughest challenges" and incorporation of the efficiency and effectiveness expectations of our customers and USACE identity. 



Can you name where this is? 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.

SAFETY CORNER

An Ounce of Prevention

Keeps the Germs Away

Staying healthy is important to you, your family and the workplace. Follow these easy, low-cost steps to help stop many infectious diseases before they happen.

1. Wash your hands often – Keeping your hands clean is one of the best ways to keep from getting sick and spreading illnesses.

How to wash:

- Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold) and apply soap.
- Rub your hands together to make a lather and scrub them well; be sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Continue rubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- Rinse your hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.
- If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet



Remember: If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based wipe or hand gel.

2. Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces - Cleaning and disinfecting are not the same thing. Cleaning removes germs from surfaces - whereas disinfecting actually destroys them. Cleaning with soap and water to remove dirt and most of the germs is usually enough. But sometimes, you may want to disinfect for an extra level of protection from germs.

- While surfaces may look clean, many infectious germs may be lurking around. In some instances, germs can live on surfaces for hours - and even days.
- Disinfectants are specifically registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and contain ingredients that actually destroy bacteria and other germs. Check the product label to make sure it says "Disinfectant" and has an EPA registration number.



Disinfect those areas where there can be large numbers of dangerous germs - and where there is a possibility that these germs could spread to others.

Common places to routinely clean and disinfect at home:

- Kitchen - clean and disinfect counters and other surfaces before, during and after preparing food. When cleaning, don't let germs hang around on cleaning cloths or towels. Use paper towels that can be thrown away or cloth towels that are later washed in hot water or disposable sanitizing wipes that both clean and disinfect.
- Bathroom - routinely clean and disinfect all surfaces. This is especially important if someone in the house has a stomach illness, cold or the flu.

Places full of germs that should be routinely cleaned and disinfected at work:

- Office phone
- Keyboard and mouse
- Desktop - especially if you eat lunch or snack at your desk, or if you set your purse or brief case on it
- Fax and copier machine
- Communal kitchen items - coffee pot, refrigerator, and microwave
- Water cooler
- Shared pens
- Common areas - conference room armrests, doorknobs, light switches, railings
- Break room water faucets
- Vending machine
- Elevator buttons



Studies have shown that common work spaces can hold more germs than toilet seats.

There are many types of germs (viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi) that cause many types of illnesses - including the common cold or flu and food-borne illnesses. These germs can spread easily from one person to another - and have wide reaching effects. Stay healthy by washing your hands regularly and routinely cleaning and disinfecting areas at home and around the workplace.

Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Learn more at www.cdc.gov.

Did you know...

About 13.8 million U.S. adults (ages 18-69) were unable to work during 2011 due to health problems, and 6.8 million were limited in the kind or amount of work they could do.

Around the District

Retirements ...

Roger Harroun, lockmaster, Lock and Dam 14, Mississippi River Project, Operations Division, retired July 1 after dedicating 34 years to the federal government.

Russell Stillwell, lock and dam repairer supervisor, Illinois River Project, Operations Division, retired August 31 after dedicating 32 years to the federal government.

George Staley, civil engineer, Hydraulics Branch, Engineering & Construction Division, retired July 1 after dedicating 38 years to the federal government.

Susan Yager, executive secretary, Executive Office, retired July 1 after dedicating 12 years to the federal government.

George Gitter, community planner, Programs & Project Management Division, retired July 27 after dedicating nearly 31 years to the federal government.

Verna Coyle, secretary, Environmental Planning Branch, St. Paul District, retired July 31 after dedicating more than 25 years to the federal government.

Steve Vacek, natural resources specialist, Mississippi River Project, Operations Division, retired Aug. 31, after dedicating 35 years to the federal government.

Sympathy ...



Larry Edlen, 71, of Meredosia, Ill., passed away Aug. 1 at his residence.

Edlen retired from the Illinois River Project after 38 years of service.

He also served in the U.S. Army.



Harold Kendall, 88, of East Moline, Ill., passed away Aug. 31 at his home.

Kendall retired from the Corps of Engineers in 1980, after 30 years of service.

He also served in the U.S. Army.



David Norgren, 73, of Bettendorf, Iowa, passed away Aug. 23 at his home.

Norgren retired from the Corps of Engineers in 1996.

He also served in the U.S. Army.



Bettie Schlosser, 79, of Bettendorf, Iowa, passed away Aug. 18 at his home.


Schlosser retired from the Corps of Engineers in 1993 after 15 years of service.

Combined Federal Campaign 2013

October 1 marked the beginning of the 2013 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). The CFC is an annual fundraising drive conducted by federal, postal and military employees in their workplaces each fall. Millions of dollars are raised through the CFC that benefit thousands of non-profit charities. It is the only authorized fundraising campaign for charities permitted in federal and postal workplaces.

From mid-October through early December, key persons for the Corps will be soliciting employees for donations to the CFC. You can donate through payroll deduction or give a cash donation. Key persons will hand out brochures with over 2,000 local, national and international charities available to accept your contributions. Employees may select as many charities as they wish.

We will also hold our annual CFC On-Line Auction. In the past we have auctioned off craft items, art work, quilts, candy, pies, parking spaces, gift baskets, jewelry, etc. Jackie Clark, Operations Division, is the point of contact for this event.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Aimee Vermeulen, 2013 CFC Chair, at x5311. There is also more information about the Combined Federal Campaign at www.illowacfc.org. 



Support & Sacrifice for the Corps

Thanks to the employees who are deployed to the Transatlantic District - Afghanistan (TAA)!



By Hilary Markin, Editor

Recently the Corps combined what once was three separate districts to just one. The new district is headed up by the former St. Paul District commander, Col. Michael J. Price.


During the district activation ceremony July 9, Maj. Gen. Michael Eyre, Transatlantic Division commander, addressed the crowd, "There was much accomplished by the two districts that we are inactivating on Wednesday and Thursday. They have served with distinction. But it is time to pull together a new team working as one, to stand up a new district...with a new identity. Working together we will move forward through 2014 and set the conditions for longer term support. The establishment of the Transatlantic District Afghanistan, which will be identified in short as TAA, will provide the continuity we need to focus on completion of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' vital mission in support of the war fighter...and to the citizens of Afghanistan.

The USACE mission in Afghanistan does not change today. This new district will have priority focus on building quality facilities for the Afghan National Security Forces."

Eyre reminded the crowd in his remarks the challenges the Corps has ahead. He listed that we need to complete more than 300 projects valued at more than \$3.5 billion during a time of continuing drawdown and retrograde.

Eyre said, "When all of the construction that USACE is responsible for is completed, there will be over 717 project facilities to support the 350,000 Afghan National Army and National Police personnel. This effort will help reinforce their capability to provide security and stability throughout Afghanistan."

To learn more about volunteering, contact Emergency Management at (309) 794-5595.

News releases and articles from the Transatlantic District Afghanistan contributed to this article. 




Tim Kerr (right) and Kabule Area Office resident engineer Randy Braley, serving from USACE Rock Island District, brief TAA commander Col. Michael J. Price, and Kabul Area Office officer-in-charge Col. Richard Heitkamp at the site of a project that began as an open field near a village. Photo by T.W. Lyman, USACE TAA

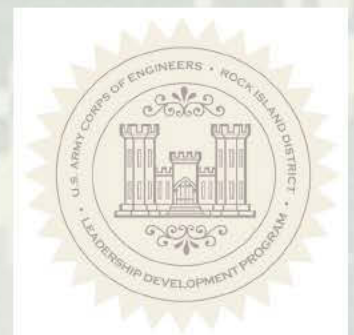
Leadership Development Program, continued from page 5

"The project definitely added value to the District and it also added value to the participants," said Cox. "The secondary goal of the project is to add value to the District. The main focus is on team development and leadership. The value is learning to work together in a team environment."

Which is exactly what the team did – learning more about one another, how to work together on a team and practicing the skills they were learning in the LDP curriculum.

The District is preparing to launch the next LDP Level II program and is currently working to make improvements to the program based on the feedback from the After Action Review as well as input from the Steering Committee.

"We are always learning from every group of students," said Cox. "We review all of their feedback and make changes based on it – all to improve the program for the next class. Another part of being a LDP Alumni is giving back and this is the first way they do that." 



Hispanic Heritage Month & Minority Observances

A perspective by Félix Castro, Hispanic Program Manager

While working in the Rock Island District, it's hard not to notice there always seems to be some kind of observance related to minorities occurring in our workforce. I remember being captivated and intrigued on this fact. Moreover, I remember discussing it with co-workers and hearing comments like: "What's the point?" "Why not a Caucasian Male Month?" Right? To be honest, some of these comments might have been mine.

As part of a minority myself, I never felt comfortable having special recognition for meeting my goals just like my peers. On the other hand I see the value in casting a spotlight on the contributions made by historically underrepresented communities. These minorities had to, and still are, waging a fight for their rights in and outside the workplace. Being an engineer myself, engaging for the quest for a panacea, I now see these observances as a celebration of the same values that constitute our country. By showcasing the contributions made by minorities for our society in the past, we reaffirm the democratic ideals of America's founding documents - a celebration of us.

The theme for this year is "Hispanics: Serving and Leading our Nation with Pride and Honor." Join me during National Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15 – Oct. 15) as we celebrate the successes of the Hispanic community and the democratic values of our nation. 