



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
St. Paul District

Crosscurrents

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September - October 2005



**District personnel support recovery
from Gulf Coast hurricane**

**EMERGENCY
OPERATIONS**

District supports hurricane recovery; hurricane response delays new personnel system

By Col. Mike Pfenning
District Commander

Editor's note: Col. Pfenning wrote this column on the eve of his tour of duty in Louisiana.



It's time for me to provide you a brief update in four areas:

- St. Paul District support to Task Force

Hope and the recovery missions from hurricanes Katrina and Rita;

- Your support to ongoing non-

emergency assistance St. Paul District missions;

- National Security Personnel System implementation; and
- My upcoming Oct. 4 deployment to Louisiana.

I know that you join me in reaching out to the victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita in whatever means is appropriate to your personal and professional lives. The devastation in the states of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama from Katrina and Rita is an order of magnitude greater than what we as a country have ever experienced from a natural disaster.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues its outstanding work primarily in support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, carrying out a wide variety of recovery missions in response to the hurricanes.

In addition to our efforts to get the water out of New Orleans, we are also providing services throughout Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, to include providing ice, water and temporary power; as well as debris removal and temporary roofing. As I write this, the St. Paul District has 74 personnel deployed as part of the Corps' force of more than 3,100 employees assisting in the recovery.

That recovery effort will continue for many months. For every one of our deployed personnel, there are folks remaining behind that must pick up their duties and responsibilities. Thank you for your exceptional teamwork in supporting our deployees.


Even as we do our part in

assisting the Mississippi Valley Division in the hurricane recovery, the district remains committed to meeting our project delivery milestones to our regional customers and partners within available funding. Year-end closeout is always a huge task. Accomplishing it concurrently with a major disaster response takes teamwork and dedication – traits that you all demonstrate on a daily basis. You continue to meet that challenge.

As many of you are aware, the district was scheduled to begin implementation of the National Security Personnel System this fall for our general schedule employees as part of Mississippi Valley Division in the Spiral 1.1 portion of the NSPS implementation plan, including essential training for the affected employees and their supervisors. The final NSPS regulations are expected to be published very soon. The labor relations portion of the regulations will be effective 30 days later and the other portions – including pay banding and pay for performance – will be phased in subsequently, beginning with Spiral 1.1.

In light of the ongoing hurricane recovery efforts and the delayed approval of the final NSPS regulations, Mississippi Valley Division requested approval for a delay in our NSPS implementation time-line – for the division to be moved into the Spiral 1.3 portion – a delay of about six months in the original time-line. We will need to stay informed and engaged so that our project delivery and management team

Recovery, continued Page 3



US Army Corps of Engineers
St. Paul District

Crosscurrents

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Recovery, continued from Page 2 will be positioned for success in Spiral 1.3.

Participation by division employees who were nominated and selected to participate in the upcoming NSPS train-the-trainer courses is still to be determined. As such, the autumn town hall meetings that we had planned to cover the details of the NSPS implementation plan will be postponed until at least January.

Your levels of professionalism and technical competence inspire me to be a better commander and district engineer every day.

I must now take what you've taught me in leadership and mission execution over the last 14 months and apply it to the regional division recovery mission, where those skills are needed most. Beginning Oct. 4, I will deploy to Baton Rouge, La., for a period of at least 30 days to contribute to this effort. During my deployment,

our deputy district commander, Lt. Col. John Kunkle, will assume my responsibilities as the acting St Paul District commander. While the deployment of a district commander in support of disaster recovery is unprecedented, I am confident you will continue to execute all of our day-to-day missions in the same exceptional manner that you have in the past, providing Kunkle the outstanding support he'll need to make the tough decisions while I'm deployed.

In closing, please continue to keep the people of the Gulf Coast in your thoughts and prayers; continue to meet our commitments to our partners, our stakeholders, the region and the nation; and continue to do the great things that you do every day to make the Corps of Engineers a world class organization that is relevant, ready, responsive and reliable.

Essays!



Photo by Mark Davidson

Mike Emmons, a lock operator at Lock and Dam 5A, Fountain City, Wis., is working debris removal mission for the Corps in Mississippi. He deployed Sept. 12.

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Savannah District graphic

Next month



Photo by Kurt Brownell

The district held a public grand opening and dedication ceremony Sept. 22 for the renovated Lock and Dam 8, located on the Upper Mississippi River at Genoa, Wis., about 22 miles south of La Crosse, Wis. From left: Pete Schwab of Schwab Company, the contractor; Melissa Gulan, eastern area engineer; and Col. Mike Pfenning, district commander.

Crosscurrents

District supports Hurricane Katrina response, recovery

By Peter Verstegen

More than 100 St. Paul District personnel have deployed to Mississippi and Louisiana, some as early as August 27, to support response and recovery from Hurricane Katrina, a category four hurricane that devastated the Gulf Coast states in late August-early September. By mid-October, 35 had returned and four were expected to deploy.

The district worked under the authority of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to conduct quality assurance on contractor debris removal, support emergency response and recovery offices, assist in recovery planning, support specific FEMA missions, manage the portable building mission and provide administrative and other support services.



Photo by Shannon Bauer

Disaster recovery volunteers meet to discuss the debris removal mission, Sept. 22, at the Mississippi Recovery Office, Emergency Recovery Office-West in Hancock County. From the left are: Jonathan Polk, debris team member from Tulsa District; Jonathan Hanson, debris team member from St. Paul District, Gull Lake recreation site; Danny Phelps, debris team quality assurance leader from Louisville District; and Larry Jones, congressional liaison from Rock Island District.



Photo by Shannon Bauer

Kari Layman, St. Paul District engineering and construction, managed installation of portable buildings, such as schools and city halls, in Mississippi.

Carol Davis (left), a park ranger for Vicksburg District, confers with Kenton Spading, St. Paul District engineering and construction. Spading worked on the portable building mission in Mississippi. At right, behind him, is the emergency deployable tactical operations center, a mobile command post, parked at Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi, Miss. Spading returned to the district Oct. 8.

September-October 2005

Corps restores De Lisle, Miss., fire department

By Shannon Bauer

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers rolled in its first mobile home for a public entity in support of the Mississippi Hurricane Katrina recovery operations Sept. 22.

The agency hooked up the building's utilities and turned over the keys to the De Lisle Fire Department Sept. 25.

The temporary building is being used by the fire department until it can replace its own home, which Katrina completely destroyed. This building was the first of many that the Corps, under the direction and funding of FEMA, is providing to local governments in Mississippi. Installing the mobile homes enables city and county government workers to go back to work and provide essential services to local citizens.

Kenton Spading, initial Corps' project manager, said the De Lisle site was selected to receive the first trailer because it already had power and water located nearby, and it didn't have too much debris to clear.

Other similar projects the Corps is working on in Mississippi, he continued, to name a few, include another fire department in Henderson Point; a city hall and police department for Gulfport; a new sewer and water office and lab for Diamondhead; a five-building complex for Waveland; and a court house complex for Hancock County.

A composite crew, made up of



Photos by Oscar Reihsmann

De Lisle, Miss., now has a fire department, thanks to Dave Kitmann (left), an electrician at Lock and Dam 5, Minnesota City, Minn., and Jimmy Carver, Grenada Project Management Office, Vicksburg District. Hurricane Katrina destroyed the previous station.



Phil Nelson, Vicksburg District, examines electrical connections for the temporary fire department installed by the Corps of Engineers.

both Corps of Engineers' employees and Mississippi National Guard members, prepared the De Lisle site for the placement of the mobile home. Starting work at the site Sept. 17, the crew tore down the old fire department and prepared the ground with clay and top soil. When the building arrived, they secured it to the site and hooked up electrical and sewer lines.

"The building was available, so the work went fast," said current Corps' project manager Dave Kitman, St. Paul District electrician, Lock and Dam 5. "This is a coup for the Corps. We're showing them [local governments] we're here, we're going to stick around, and we're going to help them rebuild."



Photos by Shannon Bauer

Chris Beardain (left) and Tim Taylor, both Vicksburg District, set up columns knocked down during Hurricane Katrina.



Soldiers from the Mississippi National Guard installed a makeshift, wooden flag pole and brand new American flag (above). The pole bears the signatures of more than 50 Soldiers.

Restored memorial lifts town's spirit

By Shannon Bauer

"We didn't want any glory from this," said Tim Taylor, who normally works at the Vicksburg District's Lake Enid site but is currently deployed to Hancock County, Miss., in support of Operation Task Force Hope. "We just did it for the vets. If it weren't for them, we wouldn't even be here."

Taylor, along with other deployed Vicksburg employees Chris Beardain, Lake Enid; Joey Capwell, Lake Enid; and Robert Upchurch, Lake Sardis, voluntarily requested and received permission from Corps' leadership to clean up the Waveland, Miss., Veteran's Memorial, located on the city's beach.

Hurricane Katrina overturned columns at the monument and covered it with sand and debris, as well as left big holes in the sand alongside the sidewalk that leads up to the structure. The monument, built by American Legion Post 77 in Waveland, sits in a neighborhood completely decimated by the storm. What remains of the post, located a block or so behind the monument, is only a cement slab.

"A vet came up here when we first started, and he had tears in his eyes," said Upchurch. "He didn't say anything. He didn't have to."

In one day, the Corps' team cleaned off the monument, righted the columns and filled the holes with fresh sand. The following day, they cleaned the sand out of the parking lot to allow people to visit

the site. Even before the crew had finished their job, Upchurch said, more than 200 people had stopped by. "They sit at the monument and stare off into the Gulf," he explained.

The good work caught on. On their own initiative, members of the 223rd Engineering Brigade, or "Lt. Col. Jimmy Stringer's guys," from the Mississippi National Guard installed a makeshift, wooden flag pole and brand new American flag. Since the monument's three flag poles are missing, the Soldiers inserted the pole inside a basin used to retire American flags.

Within hours, at least 50 Soldiers working in the city, from all services, had signed the pole with their rank, name and date.

Island clearing logs \$1,700 for district

By Kurt Brownell
Natural Resource Specialist

As of Oct. 7, the St. Paul District has made just under \$1,700 on the sales of logs, thanks to an environmental restoration program coordinated through the natural resources project office in La Crescent, Minn.

Flash back to April 15, when 54 Badger Challenge Cadets landed on Goose Island, Corps-owned land on the Mississippi River three miles south of La Crosse, Wis.

The cadets joined Kurt Brownell, natural resources specialist; Jon Sobiech, forester; and Jerry Lee, ranger (now retired), to clear away black locust as the first step in re-establishing a diverse bottomland hardwood forest at this site. This project started in September 2004 and is the first phase in controlling an invasive species that covers hundreds of acres on Goose Island, as well as elsewhere in the district. (See December 2004 *Crosscurrents*).

Badger Challenge is an 11-year-old program operated by the Wisconsin National Guard, designed for at-risk youths from 14 to 16 years old.

The program teaches cadets to get their lives back in order by participating in a rigorous 17-hours-a-day schedule, including physical training, classroom work and environmental work projects. The cadet program accepts volunteers only (no court orders); and since the first class in 1994, the academy has graduated hundreds of young men and women and given them new



St. Paul District photo

Kurt Brownell, natural resource specialist, briefs the Badger Challenge Cadets prior to beginning work on Goose Island on the Mississippi River about three miles south of La Crosse, Wis.

direction in their lives.

The cadets typically provide labor for environmental projects at Fort McCoy, Wis.

Brownell inquired with the academy to see whether they were available for off-post work and arranged for their work at Goose Island.

The cadets assisted the Corps in consolidating black locust logs into piles to facilitate their sale and chipping logging debris not suitable

for sale. The cadets learned about invasive species and the Corps' efforts to eliminate them. The Corps benefited by receiving no-cost assistance from the cadets.

Thanks to the cadets help, the site has now been cleared of logging debris.

They sorted and stacked logs for easier removal with outcomes that enriched the cadets and the district.



St. Paul District photo

Cadets fed black locust branches on Goose Island into the wood chipper. Their volunteer work helped generate \$1,700 in log sales.

News and Notes

Father, daughter meet in Iraq



Photo courtesy Marjorie Thompson

2nd Lt. Jennifer Thompson (left) met her father, Chief Warrant Officer Jim Thompson, when they crossed paths at Logistics Support Area Anaconda in Iraq, Oct. 9. “They haven’t seen each other since she left for Fort Hachuca, Ariz., for training in June 2004,” said Marge Thompson, regulatory branch. Marge is Jennifer’s mother and Jim’s wife. “Dad will be coming home as daughter is deployed,” she said. Jim was completing his year-long tour of duty with the 457th Transportation Battalion in Iraq and Jennifer is beginning a year-long tour with the 221st Military Intelligence Battalion. The 457th is based at Fort Snelling, Minn.

Holiday Awards set for Dec. 16

The St. Paul District will hold its Holiday Awards Ceremony at The Prom Center, I-94 and Inwood Ave., Oakdale, Minn., Dec. 16.

Dale Britnall, operations division, is event manager. The contact for retirees is Jan Pream, operations division, at 651-290-5312.

Grandma and granddaughter don hard hats for hurricane



Photo courtesy Georgia Stanonik



Photo by Mark Davidson

From Minnesota to Mississippi, recovery efforts became a family affair when grandma and granddaughter, donned Corps hard hats to support Task Force Hope to assist recovery from Hurricane Katrina’s damage in Mississippi. Georgia Stanonik, (right) office of counsel, worked at Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi, Miss., while her granddaughter, Sydney Lencowski (above left), sized up a hard hat worn by Stanonik.

“It is great here,” said Stanonik. “The people are really nice. My roommate is a nurse, and she is the greatest. The days and dates are running together. I am inputting data all-day long.” She volunteered for a 30-day tour of duty. Stanonik returned to St. Paul Oct. 17.

Gull Lake Loon count highest since 1999

Gregg Struss, Gull Lake Recreation Area resource manager, reported the Loon survey for 2005 registered 61 Loons at Gull Lake. Only 1999 was higher, at 64 Loons. This year’s count included 14 juveniles and 47 adults.

Retirees gather for 30th annual reunion



Photo by Peter Verstegen

Above: members of the St. Paul District Hall of Fame joined the newest member, Mary Kay Linder, center, in Eagan, Minn., Sept. 8. From left are retirees Pete Fischer, engineering; Dave Haumersen, construction-operations; Linder, secretary in the executive office; Bill Spychalla, project management; Jim Kursu, project management; St. Paul District Commander Col. Mike Pfenning and Lou Kowalski, deputy district engineer and chief, programs and project management. Below: the majority of retirees paused for a group photo outside after the reunion.



Photo by Jon Lyman

Mary Jane Trcka (left) and Ann Allen, both retired from resource management.



Photo by Jon Lyman

Above are Dennis Erickson (left), construction-operations, and Craig Hinton, resource management.



Photo by Marc Krumholz



Photo by Peter Verstegen

Sheryl Hurley (left), retired from contracting, caught up on district happenings at the retirees' reunion Sept. 8 with Marianne Price, equal employment opportunity officer.

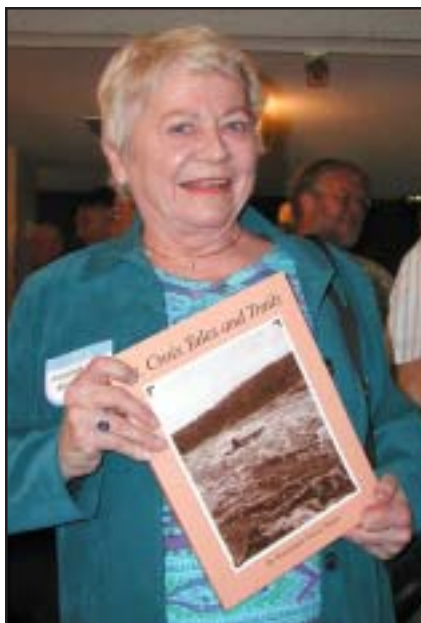


Photo by Peter Verstegen

Rose Braatz, retired from the old construction-operations division, published *St. Croix Tales and Trails* this summer. The book presents a history of the St. Croix Falls, Wis., region compiled from her years of interviewing and writing stories about local people, places and events. For more information, contact Braatz at 715-483-3046 or e-mail her at jruff@centurytel.net.



St. Paul District photo

Nancy Peck (right), the cook-steward on the Dredge William A. Thompson, receives recognition as August Employee of the Month from Arley Martin, master of the dredge.

Nancy Peck honored as August Employee of the Month

Liz Dvorak, civilian personnel, nominated Nancy Peck for August Employee of the Month. The awards committee skipped the July award due to support of emergency response to Hurricane Katrina and Task Force Hope.

Nancy Peck, the cook-steward on the Dredge William A. Thompson, opened her home this summer to a student employee from the Maine Maritime Academy, Castine, Maine, assigned to the Thompson.

Angel Stellmach joined the dredge crew May 9. She attends the academy, but her family's permanent residence is in the Twin Cities. For most of the summer, she was assigned to travel, eat and sleep aboard the Thompson with the rest of the crew. Since the dredge was not be out of port until May 16, Stellmach was left in a quandary for her first week as a St. Paul District employee.

The available choices were to delay her start date and miss an opportunity for an in-depth orientation and small craft operator training; commute the distance between the Twin Cities and Fountain City, Wis.; or incur hotel expenses in the Fountain City area – an expense not in a typical student budget.

Peck presented a fourth option to Stellmach – stay at Peck's home until the dredge left port. The personal generosity and workplace loyalty that Peck showed in doing this is no surprise to those who know her. Peck's positive attitude, enthusiasm and pride in her work and in the dredge are evident to anyone she meets.