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St. Paul District

Crosscurrents

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Upper districts form team to protect New Orleans





Photo by Capt. Clay Morgan

Tom Sully (left), project management, is at the 17th Street Pump Station in New Orleans with Maj. Bruce Smith, aide to John Paul Woodley, Jr., assistant secretary of the Army (civil works), and Lt. Col. Murray Starkel, deputy commander of New Orleans District. They are under pipes that discharge into Lake Pontchartrain. Sully is on assignment as a program manager at Task Force Hope.

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US Army Corps of Engineers®
St. Paul District

Crosscurrents

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Volunteers, district demonstrate commitment to success of hurricane protection mission

by Col. Mike Pfenning
St. Paul District commander

Happy 2007 to all!

It's great to be back home in St. Paul, again! Thank you for all your efforts in continuing to meet our



district's mission requirements while I was deployed to New Orleans for almost 120 days. The St. Paul District

continued its exceptional mission support of the hurricane protection system program, in response to the Corps' number-one domestic priority.

The Hurricane Protection Office commander, the Task Force Hope director, as well as the New Orleans District and Louisiana Recovery Field Office commanders sought me out to acknowledge your exceptional efforts in support of their mission – across Southeastern Louisiana.

I thought it appropriate to share with you some of my observations of the Task Force Hope recovery efforts from the perspective of my assignment as its operations officer for a second tour.

Pictures don't always portray the scope or the complexity of the hurricane protection system renovation mission, nor the positive impact your efforts are having on the confidence of the remaining and returning Southeast Louisiana natives.

Throughout my deployment, I was struck by the commitment of every one of the volunteers to the success of the TF Hope mission – they continue to make it their personal mission. Additionally, while every volunteer came as a technical expert in their field, the ever-changing mission set for the task force required each volunteer to adapt to emerging mission requirements. Often, this

adaptability required the development of new skills, staffing procedures and reports, while working a 12-hour day, seven-days-a-week. I observed a level of problem-solving and teamwork between contractor personnel (one-half of the Task Force Hope personnel) and Department of Army civilians that made me proud to be a member of our Corps of Engineers. No one ever backed away from a new challenge (and there were many) – it was always “Let us try.”

Many of the system-wide challenges in New Orleans are not new to the New Orleans District or the Corps of Engineers. What is new is the authority, funding and personal commitment of the Mississippi Valley Division and greater Corps of Engineers to meet those challenges, including necessary policy changes.

In light of this resource commitment, as well as the 12

points of change that came from the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina, the best engineering minds of the Corps are committed to the renovation of the hurricane protection system using our best engineering judgment.

Each of you will continue to play a supporting role – whether in being deployed or shouldering the redistributed work load at home.

Know that there will be many more opportunities for you to serve in Louisiana in the future, as the Hurricane Protection System renovation will extend into 2010

and beyond.

All that being said, we must maintain the capability required to execute our fiscal year 2007 civil works program, while providing appropriate support to global war on terror and TF Hope.

Our district goal for deployed personnel support is every MVD district's goal – to sustain 10 percent of our work force in support of global war on terror and TF Hope (combined) throughout 2007. We must sustain our ability to execute our civil works program, even if it means not meeting our deployed personnel support goal of 10 percent. Each of you will continue to play a supporting role – whether in being deployed or shouldering the redistributed work load at home. Like our ongoing support to the global war on terror – this is a marathon, not a sprint.

Thanks for what you do for our region and our district every day.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers graphic

The upper five Mississippi Valley Division districts are coordinating on projects in the Lake Pontchartrain vicinity. The St. Paul District is helping to design hurricane protection between the Orleans Avenue Canal and the London Avenue Canal. LPV 101 is St. Louis District, LPV 102 is Memphis District, LPV 103 is St. Paul District, LPV 104 is Rock Island District and gate structures are Vicksburg District.

‘U-5’ perform reach-back to repair and restore hurricane protection in New Orleans

by Peter Verstegen

This is the third of three articles on regional articles on regional management. Prior articles discussed the Environmental Management Program and the Navigation and Environmental Sustainability Program.

The St. Paul District is among the upper five districts, the collective U-5 in the Mississippi Valley Division, working as an integrated team to repair levees, floodwalls and gates that help protect New Orleans from storms such as Hurricane Katrina.

Katrina swept ashore on the Gulf Coast on Aug. 29, 2005, and became the worst natural disaster

HPO, continued on Page 5



Photo by Kent Hokens

Neil Schwanz, right, participated in an initial site inspection of work along the Orleans Avenue Canal. The bridge in the background carries traffic over the Orleans Avenue Canal. Lake Pontchartrain is beyond. The concrete apron protects against erosion if water overtops the protected side of the wall. Marsha Mose, design branch; Bill Csajko, project management; and Rick Femrite, design branch, are standing along the cantilevered sheet pile wall. In the graphic at the top of the page, the Orleans Avenue Canal is at the left (west) of LPV 103.

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to strike the continental U.S.

The U-5 work under the mission of the Hurricane Protection Office, or HPO, to execute levee and floodwall projects in Orleans Parish.

“I consider this integrated regional management,” said Dennis Hamilton, project manager from Rock Island District. “The U-5 team is working together and sharing resources to complete the Lake Pontchartrain Vicinity reaches 101-104 work.

“Although a district is assigned lead responsibility for each of the four reaches, we are working together as a single team. Vicksburg District is responsible for all road-closure gate designs and geotechnical investigations, Rock Island District has provided surveys and converted specifications to specifications intact, St. Paul District is providing geotechnical and structural oversight, St. Louis District is coordinating the independent technical reviews and value engineering studies and all districts are taking turns providing on-site liaisons to coordinate with HPO during design and construction.”

St. Paul District’s specific reach is the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity 103 (see Page 3 graphic). The objective is to expedite the design and construction of the reach, which includes raising the existing levees up to authorized levels of protection and strengthening existing flood walls to meet post-hurricane design criteria.

Marsha Mose, design branch chief, leads a reach-back team in

HPO, continued on Page 6



Photo by Kent Hokens

Bill Csajko, project manager, acquaints himself with the floodwall on the east bank of the Orleans Avenue Canal, at the west end of the district’s Lake Pontchartrain project site in late August.



Photo by Kent Hokens

Dave Rydeen (right), chief of the geotech, geology and surveys section, St. Paul District, accompanied personnel from St. Paul and other districts to inspect work completed in New Orleans under authority of Task Force Guardian. The concrete pad is designed to protect against erosion if the wall is overtopped. Rydeen is talking with Richard Pinner, New Orleans District.

HPO, continued from Page 5

St. Paul and coordinates with her U-5 counterparts in Rock Island, St. Louis, Memphis and Vicksburg. Bill Csajko is project manager.

The district learned to work fast in its work on the Grand Forks, N.D.-East Grand Forks, Minn., project. That flood reduction project was in response to the flood of 1997.

The experience allowed a faster response for the Corps in New Orleans.

“The design effort for the HPO on phase one plans and specifications would normally take nine months to a year,” said Mose. “This would be similar to the Grand Forks project. However, the district met its delivery date for the HPO in about 90 days. This is incredibly fast.”

Contracting out part of the work helped expedite phase one. The district incorporated outside architect-engineering firm support

for its 1.7-mile reach.

Two retirees from the district, Dave Loss and Bill Spychalla, work with Stanley Consultants to support phase one to bring the district’s portion of the system up to current authorized levels.

“It is good to be involved in the follow-up work on the New Orleans hurricane protection system to upgrade the system to prevent future catastrophic failures,” said Loss, a retiree from project management. He is a water resource engineer with Stanley.

Said Spychalla, “The experience from the repair work of Task Force Guardian has been very helpful in the current effort to upgrade the system.”

Spychalla is working on plan formulation, alternative evaluation and report preparation for the development of the 100-year level of protection plan for the levee reach that St. Paul is responsible

for. “My primary task is the writing of the main report,” he said. Spychalla also works as water resource engineer.

The district’s work has two phases. Phase one, scheduled for completion this summer, restores levees to authorized levels. Work also includes modifying I-walls, placing fill on levees, addressing floodwall stability and seepage and scour protection.

The objective of phase two is to provide a 100-year level of protection to New Orleans. This means new higher floodwalls and higher, more stable, levees and raising an existing sector gate. The construction window for phase two is one-year.

The reach-back effort in St. Paul also includes regular New Orleans District work. For example, Tim Grundhoffer, design branch, is leading work for the New Orleans District on the Bayou Sorrell lock and the Grand Caillou floodgate.

Teed turns Gulf Region service into learning experience

by Theresa Teed

Theresa Teed, project management, is working at the Corps of Engineers’ Gulf Region Division.

Theresa “TC” Teed is looking out for lots of people in her job in Iraq – her fellow Corps’ workers and some relatives stationed there.

“I volunteered to support my boys who are active military,” said Teed. “Since then, I have found out that two of my great-nephews are here, one in Iraq and one in

Kuwait. They also have been added to my list to support.”

Teed is an administrative assistant for the Military Programs Section, formerly called Program Management and Integration. It is the normal administrative support function for the program managers and program analysts. She has also helped to set up various functions like going away parties for our personnel returning home.

“I am learning some of the program analyst functions, and recently I have been asked to help out the protocol officer,” said Teed. “So far, I have helped on two dinners that included VIPs from Washington that were visiting Corps sites here.”



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ photo

Theresa Teed (above), project management, helped with the base clean-up day. “We cleaned the street from our compound to the palace,” said Teed. “We had some of the local Iraqi’s come out, and they started cleaning up, too.”



Corps, Fish and Wildlife Service guide Pool 7 islands tour

by Kurt Brownell
Natural Resource Specialist

The Lake Onalaska Protection and Rehabilitation District sponsored a tour to the Lake Onalaska area of Pool 7, on Aug. 24. The purpose of this trip included viewing recent federal habitat projects and discuss citizen concerns.

Kurt Brownell, natural resource section office in La Crescent, Minn., and Jim Nissen, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service district refuge manager in La Crosse, Wis., were joined by U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, lake district board members and a number of private citizens. The group visited two projects

constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers in cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Arrowhead Island, one such project, is one of three islands constructed under Environmental Management Program in Lake Onalaska. The Corps' Fountain City labor crew, with funding provided by the service, completed a project on the island that aims to reduce the population of a non-native faucet snail (*Bithynia tentaculata*). These snails are native to Europe and serve as the intermediate host of at least two species of intestinal parasites called trematodes. Waterfowl feed on these snails and thousands of these birds have died during the

spring and fall migrations since 2002.

Large rocks, used to riprap the shoreline of these islands, provides habitat for the faucet snails. Surveys conducted by the service showed that riprap surrounding this island had the highest concentrations of snails in the lake.

This project was designed to reduce snail habitat by placing material over existing riprap to chink the spaces and reduce the amount of surface area available to the snails. Multiple areas of the island were treated with gravel, as well as a mixture of gravel and sand. These areas will then be compared to non-treated riprap to determine their effectiveness and stability. The results will be used to better design future EMP projects in areas where these snails are a problem.

The other project visited included a barrier island just offshore of Brice Prairie, Wis. This island had been eroding and a labor crew, once again, provided equipment and personnel to construct this project. Both the Corps and service provided funding to add material to eroded sections and then stabilize the work with riprap. This island provides terrestrial and backwater habitat benefits, as well as providing protection for the Brice Prairie shoreline.

Participants cut short their meeting as a severe thunderstorm rolled over the Minnesota bluffs.



Photo by Kurt Brownell

Tour participants examine an aerial view of project sites. Left to right are: Jim Nissen, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Marc Schultz, Lake District Board, U.S. Rep. Ron Kind; Karrie Jackelen, aide to Kind; and Tom Shini, Lake District Board.

Planning associates attend Pool 8 environmental management briefing

by Kurt Brownell
Natural resource specialist

Planning associates program trainees toured Pool 8, beginning at Wildcat Park near Brownsville, Minn., and ending at Stoddard, Wis., Aug. 16.

The planning associates program is an advanced training opportunity in water resources planning offered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It targets to journeyman-level professionals in

the field of water resources – generally at the GS-11 and GS-12 level of federal service.

The program consists of approximately 17 weeks of rigorous training scheduled in one to three-week blocks.

Program goals are to broaden planners' competencies in solving complex water resources problems and challenges and to strengthen their leadership talents.

The program curriculum emphasizes team-building, leadership training, experiential training in the Corps' civil works business programs, case studies, individual and group projects, instructional training and experiences and offers networking opportunities with leaders from the public and private sectors.

Personnel from the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources joined Kurt Brownell, natural resource section office in LaCrescent, Minn.; Lisa Lund, Fountain City Channels and Harbors Office in Fountain City, Wis.; and Don Powell, project management.

Tour leaders first described their involvement in ecosystem restoration activities within St. Paul District. The group then boarded boats for a tour of projects in Pool 8.

After visiting the Brownsville temporary placement site and learning how the district

beneficially uses dredged materials for island building and other projects, trainees toured various phases of the Pool 8 Environmental Management Program projects. The tour ended at Stoddard, where trainees boarded a bus to continue their trip.



Photo by Kurt Brownell

Don Powell (right), project manager for the Environmental Management Program in the St. Paul District, briefs participants in the Corps of Engineers' planning associates program this August. He discussed the Mississippi River Pool 8 islands habitat projects. Additional presenters included Jim Nissen (left), manager of the Upper Mississippi Wildlife and Fish Refuge District Refuge in La Crosse, Wis., and Marvin Hubbell, EMP manager from the Rock Island District, Rock Island, Ill.

'Dam girl' eased mariners' cruises on the Upper Mississippi River

by Joe Scott
Waterways Journal Weekly

Courtesy of Waterways Journal Weekly. Reprinted by permission. Copyright © Waterways Journal, Inc.

Mariners heading north on the Upper Mississippi [River] should dress warmer, because "Dam Girl"



St. Paul District photo

isn't there anymore. Judy Kiges, affectionately known as "Dam Girl" at Lock and Dam 3 on Mile 797 near Red Wing, Minn., worked as a

lock operator in the St. Paul District for 28 years until being forced to quit recently by a pair of bad knees.

"She collected coats, sweaters, hats and gloves year-round," said George Mead, head operator at Lock and Dam 3.

"She kept a box-full of clothes in her trunk. We'd get deck hands up from the south, and they wouldn't have coats. She'd see them out shivering on deck and throw them a coat."

Kiges said, "A lot of times, they didn't know they'd be coming so far north." Kiges said she would bug her friends year-round to give her extra clothes, books or food.

"When the boats started cutting back, some of the oil tows and barges didn't have cooks,

especially the smaller boats," she said. "So, I always made banana bread. It was cheap, easy and it's nice to have something homemade."

She would take crew members into town to do their laundry, pick up supplies or bring in Benadryl® for a spider bite.

"I remember one fellow was from Mexico, and there was a Mexican grocery store in town, so I got him these Spanish novelettes."

Mead said Kiges' seamanship was top notch, too.

"She made up all of our monkey fists," he said. "She was always friendly and patient, even with the recreational boats. I never once heard her lose her temper."

Mead recalled, "One time, we had a terrific accident, and she was right on it. She got the oil-containment booms out right away and had a list of places to call."

Kiges said she joined the Corps because she wasn't happy behind a desk and wanted to work outside. Her brother worked for the Corps, and she decided to apply for a position.

"When I started back in 1980, they didn't really hire women on the river," Kiges said. "They hired me, but they didn't think I'd last. For the first three years, I wore a pink ribbon in my hair and wore lipstick to work everyday just to rub it in."

Men teased her at first, but she adjusted. "I thought a lot of the guys on barges ate glass, because they can look rough," Kiges said. "Then, I learned that once you get to know them, they're really nice. The guys always made fun of me, but after a couple of years you throw in a few swear words here and there and you fit right in."

Deck hands, towboat captains and other mariners always seemed glad to talk to her, she said.

"When they'd get away from the other guys, they'd say how they missed their wives and their children," she said. "Everyone was an absolute gentleman."

"I think I was meant to be there to make it easier for those guys, to pass out a book or a sweatshirt to them," Kiges added. "Sometimes you want to break the ice; and if you get somebody to smile, that's half the job."



St. Paul District file photo

Judy Kiges, a lock operator at Lock and Dam 3, north of Red Wing, Minn., kept a box-full of clothes and coats to give to shivering deck hands up from the south.

Contractors, agencies and volunteers coordinate Pool 9 beach nourishment project

A large construction barge with cranes is positioned on the Upper Mississippi River. The barge is dark-colored with a white crane on the left side. The river is blue and calm, with a forested shoreline in the background under a clear blue sky.

Weymiller Marine, Brennan Construction and Andrie, Inc., work together to nourish beaches on the Upper Mississippi River in Pool 9 near Lansing, Iowa.

Photo by Lisa Lund

by Lisa Lund

Memories of warm summer days on clean sandy beaches along the Upper Mississippi River inspired a coordinated beach nourishment project in Pool 9 in northeastern Iowa and southwest Wisconsin.

What began as an informal group of people from Lansing, Iowa, who wanted to restore spacious beaches they remembered from their youth, grew into a coordinated and planned nourishment project on existing beaches.

The project shows how contractors, federal and state agencies and local volunteers can work together to accomplish significant recreational benefits.

The volunteers, called "Friends of Pool 9," contacted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service district office in McGregor, Iowa, in the fall 2005.

"Without the continued placement of materials on historic dredged material placement sites, many of these 'beaches' have eroded away or have been revegetated with trees, shrubs and grasses," said Tim Yager, Upper Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Refuge-McGregor District manager.

The service engaged additional river resource agencies, including the Army Corps of Engineers, to meet the "Friends" for in-office planning meetings. Agency personnel and Friends followed up with on-site planning sessions at the beaches needing restoration.

Yager said, "We've experimented with a couple of techniques for maintaining beaches while minimizing impacts on fish and wildlife and with good communication and collaboration we've learned a bunch about what the recreating public desires."

Beach, continued Page 11

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In March 2006, the Friends hired a bulldozer and marine equipment. They stripped away poison ivy, willows, and other unwanted vegetation to enhance existing beaches for recreation. They also cut down dead trees and limbs. Volunteers built fire rings that were placed on the beaches.

In October 2006, the Corps had a mechanical dredging contractor in the area. The contractor placed approximately 800 cubic yards of dredged sand from the Mississippi River on three of the beaches.

However, the size of the contractor's equipment limited access at one of the beaches, so the Friends hired a local marine contractor to transport and unload the dredge material. Another local contractor used a bulldozer to sculpt the sand on the beaches.

Distance yourself from pandemic flu

by Mark Davidson

"We're looking primarily at social distancing as a way to protect employees during a pandemic," said Dave Christenson, readiness chief and pandemic flu team member. "Examples of this may include teleworking, cancelling training and meetings and the



use of personal protective gear both at work and at home."

The above information is from the October 2006 *Crosscurrents* and is about a critical step in fighting a pandemic flu but still doing your job

by teleworking. But are you ready to telework from home?

There are about 200 employees with laptop computers. Employees can sign out about two dozen more to use at home.

The first thing you will need is a Corps' laptop computer. More and more district employees are obtaining laptop computers, said Mike Dubovich, with the district's Information Management help desk.

"IM recommends that you bring your laptop computer home with you very soon to get used to setting up your computer at home and logging onto the district's VPN – virtual private network," Dubovich said.

Right now, said Christenson, the greatest concern with large scale teleworking is the type of home connection.

"If you don't have a high-speed Internet connection in your home, you may have to use dial-up, which is very slow," said Christenson. "Getting a high speed connection will probably take a lot of time during a pandemic bird flu event. However, the district may assist essential employees with the connection."

The district is still working on alternatives for employees who don't have laptop computers or an Internet connection at home, said Christenson. "Employees with no Internet connection at home or who don't get a laptop computer will have to work in the district headquarters, with personal protective gear provided by the district or work from one of the district telework centers."

Keeping in touch with your supervisor and fellow workers will be critical, too, said IM and emergency management officials. "Unless telephone connections are swamped, hard-wired telephones and cell telephones should keep you connected," said Christenson.

A daily accounting of personnel – location, health status, availability for work – is essential to maintain district functions. Supervisors must know how to contact each employee. All employees and supervisors should work out this process now.

District employees will also be able to keep up on district information by checking the district public Internet site and Intranet site, said Holly Zillmer, the district webmaster.

Instructions for posting information to these sites can be found under IM services on the Intranet home page under web pages, said Zillmer.

Small business contracting generates large numbers

by Mark Davidson

The St. Paul District met all of its small business goals in fiscal year 2006 for the first time since fiscal year 2000 – and it’s all due to teamwork, said key team members.

More than \$62 million dollars, out of the district’s total of \$75 million in contracts, were awarded to small businesses in the following six categories: small businesses, small disadvantaged businesses, woman-owned businesses, hub zone or historically under-utilized business zone, service-disabled veterans, and historically black colleges universities/minority institutions.

Tom Koopmeiners, the district’s deputy for small business since February 2002, said the district’s small business utilization goals have risen over the years and that’s why it takes almost a daily teamwork effort to achieve all of the goals.

“The small business team is large,” said Koopmeiners. “It consists of everyone in the contracting division, many people at the operations division field sites, lots of the project management project mangers and the senior executive team.”



Photo by Alan Dooley

Tom Koopmeiners (right), St. Paul District’s deputy for small business, travels to about 20 events each year to educate small business owners about the opportunities of contracting with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Above, he is at the 10th annual Corps’ small business conference in St. Louis, November 2006.

Said Jim Roloff, the district’s chief of contracting, “It’s quite an achievement for the district because these goals are very difficult to meet. There are many variables that play into this process, which makes it a real challenge trying to strike that balance between contracting efficiently while getting fair and reasonable prices for the district, and, ultimately the taxpayer, and spreading the wealth among the various contractors who fall into one of the small-business categories.”

The district receives its small business utilization goals from

Mississippi Valley Division, which originally come from the Department of Defense, before the new fiscal year starts.

Koopmeiners then shares this information with the small business team within the St. Paul District. Educating and informing the small businesses is another challenge for Koopmeiners.

“Outreach is the key to educating people that own the small businesses,” said Koopmeiners. “I travel to about 20 events in Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin to educate small business people at seminars, trade shows and procurement fairs.

Business, continued Page 13

Business, continued from Page 12

These events are usually held November to March, when the construction season is shut down.”

Working with the Small Business Administration, or SBA, is the next step in working with small businesses, said Koopmeiners. He has to work closely with SBA to reach out to small disadvantaged businesses because that program is run through SBA.

“Tom [Koopmeiners] is well known in the government contracting community,” said Randall Czaia, assistant district director, Minnesota District Small Business Administration. “If you attend any government contracting event, you will find Tom counseling small businesses on how to do business with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He is always looking out for the interests of small business.”

A critical step in making sure the small business goals are met is the almost daily work done by the district contracting office. “It’s very important to make sure all of the contracting specialists are on board with the small business program and know what businesses are out there that the district can use,” said Koopmeiners.

Roloff from contracting sees other challenges.

“Another challenge is educating our internal and external customers as to why we sometimes need to take the extra time to search for vendors and contractors who fit a particular category. Examples of this are service-disabled, veteran-owned, small businesses or small, disadvantaged businesses which are typically owned by a member

of a minority group. Congress recognizes that the government may very well pay more by going to a small business rather than a large one, but that’s an accepted part of the program. We need to keep them in business because the government needs them as much as they need us, and it’s these smaller firms that employ so many in this country.”

An on-going key step in meeting the small business goals is to develop and coordinate the annual district small business action plan.

“I get the annual small business plan out to the district’s small business team,” said Koopmeiners. “I attend the project review board and project information exchange meetings to glean information on what is going on with the projects. I work with the project managers, the division and office chiefs, the field site people in operations and senior executive team to get the word out about small businesses.”

This constant attention and communications with members of the district small business team paid off in fiscal year 2006.

“Maj. Leigh Bandy, contracting, and Terry Birkenstock, project management, worked on a contract with Howard University that helped us exceed the goals for the historically black colleges universities/minority institution category,” said Koopmeiners.



Photo by Karen Brady, Memphis District

Brig. Gen. Robert Crear, center, presented an award to recognize the St. Paul District Small and Disadvantaged Business Unit program. With him are Maj. Leigh Bandy, contracting, Tom Crump, project management, Tom Koopmeiners and Col. Mike Pfenning, St. Paul District commander.

News and Notes

SNACs to munch on

Staff meetings at the district office and at field sites continue to include Safety Now Action Chats, or SNACs, on discussion agendas.

Personnel at locks and dams have held SNACs on frostbite and hypothermia, flammable and combustible liquids, electrical safety, holiday safety tips, cold stress, winter driving, stress management, contractor fatalities, and space heaters.

The safety office offered additional topics to discuss during routine staff meetings, including winter driving safety, controlling skids, blind spots, office safety, back injuries, slips, trips and falls and practical ergonomics, among others.

A complete list of topics and web links are posted on the Safety and Security office intranet page (not available to the public) at https://mvp.iis.mvp.usace.army.mil/safety_office/.



Photo by Al Pallas

The Motor Vessel Margret D. was the last tow to lock through Lower Saint Anthony Falls Lock and Dam, Dec. 5, 2006. Joetta Grant, clerk, and Larry Kjellberg, equipment repairer, stand on the lock wall, top right, as the tow exits the lock. The St. Paul District closed its locks and dams to navigation north of Hastings, Minn., Dec. 1, to begin dewatering Lock and Dam 2. This rehabilitative work happens every 15 to 20 years on each Mississippi River lock and dam. The Twin Cities shipping season began March 22 this year. The average opening date of the navigation season in St. Paul for the last 10 years is March 17.

Smith takes on extra work, manages controversy, follows through



Molly McKegney, office of counsel, nominated Tim Smith, regulatory branch (at right with Col. Mike Pfenning, district commander), for August Employee of the Month. Here's what she said:

Tim Smith goes above and beyond his normal duties on a daily basis and cheerfully accepts additional work assignments despite an already tremendous work load. In addition to being a vital liaison between regulatory branch and office of counsel, Smith manages many of the controversial matters in regulatory. He is committed to doing his job well.

Even when he is on vacation, he calls the office of counsel to check on ongoing issues, and he is continually looking for ways to improve the standard operating procedures.

Smith represents the Corps well during his frequent interactions with the public, appearing knowledgeable and straightforward. Not only does he handle numerous difficult and challenging assignments with a great attitude, but the quality of his work is extremely high.

Office of counsel is among those who can rely on him to get the job done right the first time. He is one of the hardest-working, dedicated employees in the district.



Photo by Shannon Bauer

A biodegradable fiber mat covers a 20 percent-steep grade on the access road to the Chippewa River near Milan, in Western Minnesota. The district dedicated the erosion control project designed to protect Big Bend Cemetery, atop the river bluff, Nov. 16. The mat keeps seed and top soil in place.

Big Bend Cemetery erosion control project laid to rest

by Shannon Bauer

The St. Paul District, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Chippewa County and the Big Bend Lutheran Church of Milan, Minn., celebrated the completion of its stream bank erosion project at the Big Bend Cemetery with a ribbon cutting ceremony Nov. 16.

The cemetery sits on a 60-foot high eroding bluff adjacent to the Chippewa River. The project included protecting nearly 330 graves by stabilizing the base of the bluff and halting the river's movement toward the cemetery.

Corps' contractor Northwest Constructors of Mahanomen, Minn., placed nearly 8,600 tons of rock riprap and 1,700 tons of topsoil along 900 linear feet of stream bank to accomplish this. The project cost around \$572,000 and, once a contract had been awarded, construction took around three months to complete.

"Our Corps' team worked on the project more than five years, and their collective efforts resulted in a

project that delighted the sponsor and key non-federal partners," said Craig Evens, project manager. "The team overcame several hurdles, including repeated interruptions due to temporary lack of funding, changes in personnel, the presence of a farm dump, involvement of four different landowners and last-minute safety concerns with the steep site access. They worked diligently to make progress whenever possible and keep the study moving despite these obstacles."

Evens and Judy DesHarnais, deputy for programs and project management, attended the ceremony and participated in the ribbon cutting. They were included among 30 individuals selected to cut the ribbon.

All stakeholders involved in the construction complemented the Corps and its contractor on how smoothly project implementation was carried out.

The project involved significant public involvement and interaction with the news media because of high local interest in the cemetery and the broad non-federal partnership that supported the project.