



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
St. Paul District

# Crosscurrents

Vol. 31, No. 10

November - December 2008

**District  
completes  
Hurricane Ike  
debris mission**





**Command Corner**  
by Col. Jon Christensen  
St. Paul District Commander



Photo by Shannon Bauer

**Leonard Lettner, lock operator at Lock and Dam 6, Trempealeau, Wis., worked the debris removal mission for Hurricane Ike recovery in Southwest Louisiana. He worked recovery duty Oct. 22-Nov. 18.**

**Team MVP:**

Thanks for your outstanding work this year, individually and as a team. The most recent honors include finance, small business programs and emergency response.

Please join me in congratulating Tom Koopmeiners, small and disadvantaged business unit; Tim Meers, the lockmaster at Lower St. Anthony Falls, Minneapolis; and Michelle Shafer, manager, readiness branch. They truly exemplify the meaning of “Disciplined People” as outlined in *Good to Great*.

Shelly [Shafer] received the Headquarters U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Emergency Manager of the Year Award. Her selection was for the multitude of emergency events faced and executed extremely well by the district.

Tim [Meers] received the Responder of the Year Award for his efforts during the Interstate 35-W Bridge collapse and recovery, starting Aug. 1. Shelly and Tim received recognition at a conference in Orlando, Dec. 2. This is the first time one district has won both emergency response awards.

Tom [Koopmeiners] received the Chief of Engineers 2007 Award for the Small Business Programs Specialist at a conference in Memphis, Dec. 9.

They would be the first to point out that these awards are shared with the rest of the St. Paul District, as well as with other districts and agencies that became part of the district team. Talented individuals allow teams to win games – but it takes a talented team to win a championship. Your efforts as a team enabled these three talented individuals to win the championship.

This past month, we received word that the Corps achieved an unqualified opinion on our financial statements, the first clean opinion for any major Department of Defense activity! The Corps is the first organization in the DoD to reach this milestone. An unqualified audit opinion is the gold standard in the financial reporting environment. All companies in the private sector and governmental organizations strive for this certificate.

As with all our successes, no single office or person is responsible for this at our district. This was truly a team effort. It took disciplined people, disciplined thought, and disciplined action to reach this goal. Resource management, acting as the chief financial office for the district, has led the way and promoted the accounting changes and financial controls needed.

People from throughout the organization in project management, engineering and construction, operations, real estate, information management, logistics management, internal review and other offices have played a significant part in the improvements made. Again, it took a talented team to win the championship. Your collective effort made successes for financial integrity and for emergency response and small business programs in 2007-2008. It was an outstanding team effort. Well done everyone!

All the best, and have a safe and wonderful holiday season!



US Army Corps of Engineers  
St. Paul District

**Crosscurrents**

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# Diverse debris team trumps trash

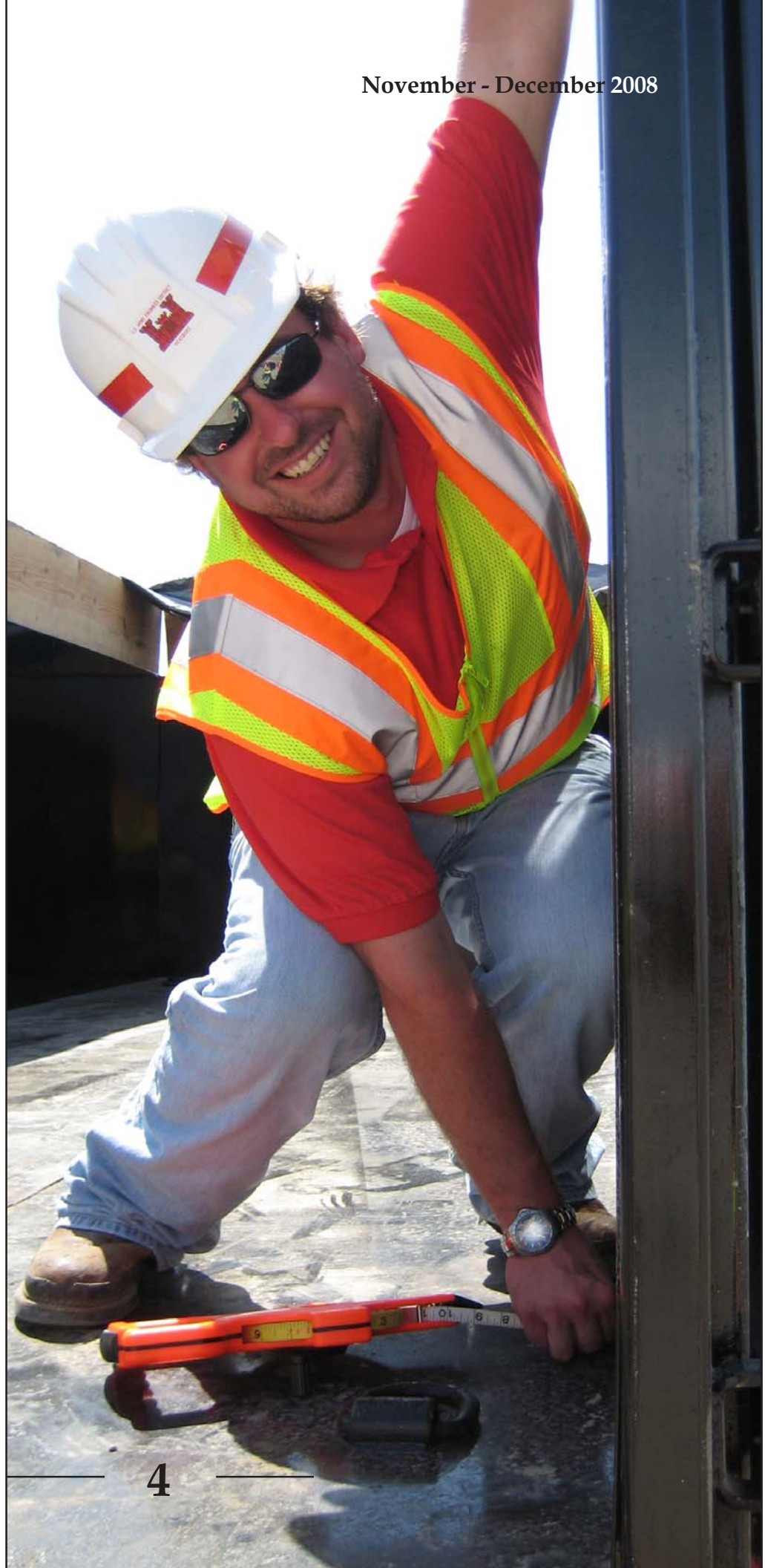
by Shannon Bauer

The Vicksburg District's Debris Planning and Response Team, or PRT, wrapped up its first mission Nov. 21 after removing approximately 70,000 cubic yards of debris left in Cameron and Vermilion parishes after Hurricane Ike caused damage along the Southwest Louisiana coast Sept. 13.

The debris team was formed Aug. 1, only a month before being put on alert for Hurricane Gustav. Barry Sullivan, mission manager and Vicksburg District navigation unit chief, said the team was formed because the Mississippi Valley Division's existing debris PRT, at the time, was based out of New Orleans District; and since New Orleans had the potential to be faced with a major storm event and might not be able to respond if it were a victim district. The decision was made that the division debris PRT would be based out of the Vicksburg District.

*Debris team, continued Page 5*

**The St. Paul District managed the Hurricane Ike debris removal mission in Louisiana. Cody Eckhardt (right), Vicksburg District, measured trucks as part of his quality assurance duties for debris removal in Cameron and Vermilion parishes, Louisiana. (Photo by Shannon Bauer)**



*Debris team, continued from Page 4*

Although Vicksburg’s team wasn’t needed for Gustav, they were again alerted for Hurricane Ike. When they hadn’t been called by Oct. 8, though, Sullivan said, they were basically told they weren’t going to be needed. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, however, gave the Corps the team’s first mission, debris removal in Cameron Parish, later the next day.

By Oct. 10, team members began arriving in Baton Rouge, La., where a recovery field office for Hurricane Gustav, set up by the St. Paul District, had been in the process of standing down. Negotiations began with Environmental Chemical Corporation, the ACI (Advanced

Contracting Initiative) SATOC (Single Award Task Order Contractor) the next day. The notice to proceed in Cameron Parish was issued and truck certifications began Oct. 15. Trucks were hauling debris by Oct. 16.

During this same timeframe, the Louisiana RFO ramped up once again and relocated to Lake Charles, La., to be closer to Cameron Parish. Additionally, FEMA assigned the Vicksburg team a debris removal mission in Vermilion Parish, a parish adjacent to Cameron. A request for proposals was sent out to the ACI MATOC (Multiple Award Task Order Contractor) pool with a 48-hour time frame for proposal submissions. All seven members of the MATOC pool turned in

proposals, which were reviewed, and the notice to proceed for the debris removal task order was sent to the successful low bidder, James Kelly Construction, Co./ Ceres Environmental Services, Inc., Joint Venture. Debris removal began Oct. 23.

In both parishes, the contractors were expected to remove at least 3,000 cubic yards of construction and vegetative debris daily, yet a number of challenges got in the way of meeting this goal. In Cameron, said Sullivan, there were specifically three challenges that made this goal nearly impossible.

“There was only one approved landfill to haul to, which was in Calcasieu Parish [to the north of Cameron] and which yielded a much higher haul distance of 50 to 75 miles that wasn’t anticipated,” said Sullivan. “The three landfills available in Cameron Parish that were used during Hurricane Rita did not have records showing that they had been through the NEPA process [National Environmental Protection Act].

“Members of our team worked aggressively to expedite the NEPA process,” he continued. “This was accomplished in approximately one week.”

Once cleared through the NEPA process, however, the owners of the landfill quoted tipping fees that far exceeded what was being paid in Calcasieu. Two of the three sites had to lower their tipping fees significantly. Sullivan said, “The PRT members performed an analysis to determine if these reduced tipping fees, although still higher than the Calcasieu site, would still provide a savings to the

*Debris team, continued on Page 6*



Photo by Shannon Bauer

**Eric Lockington (left), Lock and Dam 8, Genoa, Wis. discusses the debris removal mission in Hackberry, La., with Marcella Denton, Louisville District, and a contractor.**



*Debris team, continued from Page 5*

government, due to the shorter hauling distances, which would, in turn, decrease the overall contract length and, thereby, reduce daily rates for both the contractor and the Corps.” The analysis showed that this option would, indeed provide a savings to the government.

As a result, the contractor stopped hauling to Calcasieu and began hauling to the two Cameron landfills about two weeks into the mission.

A second challenge in Cameron included geography. “The debris was scattered over a very large area,” explained Sullivan. The parish is 1,932 square miles and home to only 8,000 people. Around 40 percent of the acreage is wetland. A large saltwater lake, Calcasieu Lake, divides the parish in half, and the only way to drive from one side to the other, inside parish boundaries, is via ferry. Both the homes and the debris were spread widely apart.

The third challenge the team faced, said Sullivan, is that many of the residents, who had also been victims of Hurricane Rita, never returned to their property and, therefore, did not place their debris in the public right-of-way. “Because of this, the estimated quantity of debris, which included debris on private property, far exceeded the quantity of debris actually placed in the parish right-of-way,” he explained.

The team faced other similar challenges in Vermilion Parish, a parish that is 1,538 square miles with 53,807 people. “For starters, there was only one landfill that could accept storm debris,” said

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**“A lesson learned was that on small missions, especially those with less than 100,000 cubic yards of debris, the Corps would possibly better serve the local entities in a technical assistance role,” said Barry Sullivan, mission manager.**

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Sullivan. “Plus, the debris was even more widely scattered than in Cameron Parish.

“Further, the parish had been picking up the debris since immediately after the storm, so the actual quantities on the ground were only about 38 percent of the estimated 65,000 cubic yards,” he added.

“A lesson learned was that on small missions, especially those with less than 100,000 cubic yards of debris, the Corps would possibly better serve the local entities in a technical assistance role,” said Sullivan, “especially due to the fact that administering the contract has an inherent minimum cost.

“If the Corps does take on these small missions,” he added, “the minimum daily production rates should err on the low side.”

Overall, though, he said he believes the mission was a success. “Although it was projected to take 60 days, it only took 36 in Cameron and 30 in

Vermilion,” he said. “It also provided extremely valuable training for any potential disasters that might come in the future.

“I could not have handpicked a better team. I think the team and the support that was called in worked extremely well together,” he continued. “Everyone that was given a task completed it professionally and on time. We had members from St. Paul, Vicksburg, New Orleans, Louisville, Detroit, St. Louis, Walla Walla and Mobile Districts, as well as ACE-IT support, ULA and rehired annuitants. To see this diverse group come together as a well oiled machine with the drive to complete this mission safely and efficiently was awe inspiring.”

Shelly Shafer, St. Paul District emergency manager and Louisiana RFO chief, echoed Sullivan’s thoughts. “I cannot say enough about the Vicksburg debris team. ... They overcame several challenges and quickly resolved any issues they faced,” she said. “I have been on a lot of disasters and have been fortunate to have worked with a lot of great PRTs, to include the teams we had for Gustav, but have never experienced a team that embodied the spirit of teamwork and selfless service as this team has.”

On an added note, this was the second mission in Lake Charles following Ike that Sullivan participated in. Directly following the storm, his navigation unit was tasked with surveying storm debris from the intersection of the Lake Charles access channel with the Calcasieu River up to and including the turning basin of the Port of Lake Charles.



Photo by Shannon Bauer

**Mike Stewart, Vicksburg District (left) and Mary Kay Larson, St. Paul District, confer with a contractor in Hackberry, La. The contractor holds a Personal Digital Assistant with software that cuts the time and costs for debris removal. Larson worked as a quality assurance inspector for white goods removal, such as refrigerators, washers and dryers, Nov. 6 - 22. Corps' debris planning and response teams in both Texas and southwest Louisiana made use of the technology to reduce time and costs.**

## Corps cuts costs, speeds debris mission with new technology

by Shannon Bauer

While cleaning up the devastation caused by Hurricane Ike along the Gulf Coast this past fall, the Corps of Engineers test drove a new technology intended to make debris removal after a disaster more efficient and less susceptible to fraud.

Rather than tracking debris

removal through the use of paper tickets as has been done in the past, the Corps' debris Planning and Response Teams, or PRTs, in both Texas and southwest Louisiana made use of an automated debris management system called HaulPass®, designed by Malcolm Pirnie. This system was created to reduce data entry costs and simplify accounting

throughout the process. It makes use of Global Positioning System, or GPS, enabled Personal Digital Assistants, or PDAs, to monitor and record debris removal from collection to disposal.

Similar to the old process, trucks are still measured and certified at the beginning of a mission.

*Debris, continued Page 8*



*Debris, continued from Page 7*

However, the driver also receives a smart card with an electronic chip on it that includes information such as truck number, truck dimensions and a photo of the truck.

Marcella Denton, Louisville District emergency operations manager and debris subject matter expert, said once a truck is full, a quality control person working for the contractor will insert the driver's card into a PDA to create a ticket. The PDA will record the date, time and truck number, as well as the GPS coordinates of where the debris was collected.

When the driver reaches the tower, continued Denton, he or she will give a Corps' quality assurance specialist the card. The QA will estimate the size of the load, insert the card into the PDA,

verify the truck number and record the load information in the PDA. Then, the QA will print three paper versions of the ticket – one for the driver, one for the contractor and one for the Corps. Once the tickets have printed, the card is erased and returned to the driver, making it ready for the next load.

The data is sent digitally from the PDA to a master database maintained by Malcolm Pirnie, where it is accessible from the Internet. "We can download it [the data], audit it to make sure we have a hard copy and that the hard copy matches what is in the database and bring it into our own database for reporting purposes," said Denton.

"One of the major benefits with this process is reconciling with the contractor," she added. "We had



Photo by Shannon Bauer

**Dave McFarlin, Fountain City, Wis., unified logistics activity, worked logistics at the Recovery Field Office in Lake Charles, La..**

100 percent agreement between us and the contractor on the amount of debris hauled during the first two week invoice period – down to a hundredth of a cubic yard."

Additionally, using the automated system makes fraud much more difficult. GPS coordinates show where the debris was picked up. It takes two different people, the contractor's QC and the Corps' QA, to complete a ticket and the electronic cards are not easy to reproduce.

To test the accuracy of HaulPass, the Corps used both this system and paper tickets during a Hurricane Ike debris removal mission in Texas that began mid-September. "Although we had some technical difficulties at first, what we found out is that paper tickets just take a lot more people and time," said Denton. "It took two to three times as long to process a truck through the tower using paper tickets than it does with HaulPass."

*Debris, continued Page 9*



Photo by Shannon Bauer

**From left are Shelly Shafer, emergency manager for both hurricanes Gustav and Ike; Col. Jon Christensen, mission commander; and Jamie Triplett, Vicksburg District. They are inspecting progress on debris removal mission in Creole, La.**



*Debris, continued from Page 8*

When the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, gave the Corps a Hurricane Ike debris removal mission along the southwest Louisiana coast mid-October, the decision was made to solely use the electronic system. “We thought we had worked out

some of the technical issues experienced in Texas,” said Denton. “Plus, it was a small mission. If problems occurred, we could stop and fix them.”

Barry Sullivan, Vicksburg District chief of navigation and mission manager of the debris removal mission in southwest

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**Sullivan and Denton do not see the Corps ever going back to using paper tickets for a debris mission. “I think it’s going to take a couple of training cycles for our teams to be comfortable with the process,” said Denton. “But when we become comfortable, it will be a much more efficient use of our staff.”**

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Photo by Shannon Bauer

**D.J. Moser, lockmaster at Lock and Dam 7, LaCrescent, Minn., worked as a quality assurance inspector for the debris removal mission in Vermilion Parish, Louisiana. She was there Nov. 4-22.**

Louisiana, said they experienced a few minor problems at first – mainly due to user error – but, overall, HaulPass worked well. “It greatly reduced the number of office personnel required to process the tickets,” he said, “and the system enabled the cubic yard totals to be calculated by mid-morning of the following day.

“It also slightly reduced the number of Corps’ QAs needed to monitor the loading sites,” he continued. “However, for this mission, due to the sparse population and widely distributed debris in the parishes, one QA could not watch three or four crews as anticipated.”

Sullivan and Denton do not see the Corps ever going back to using paper tickets for a debris mission. “I think it’s going to take a couple of training cycles for our teams to be comfortable with the process,” said Denton. “But when we become comfortable, it will be a much more efficient use of our staff.”

# Corps' personnel save life after two-car head-on crash

by Shannon Bauer

The quick actions of two Corps of Engineers' employees contributed to saving the life of a Louisiana woman Nov. 17.

While deployed as quality assurance inspectors, or QAs, in Southwest Louisiana for a debris removal mission following Hurricane Ike, Greg Deleon Guerrero, Mobile District, and Shannon Herrin, Vicksburg District, stopped to provide emergency assistance after

witnessing a two-car, head-on collision near Erath, La.

Deleon Guerrero, who normally works in emergency management, said both cars involved in the accident were trying to beat a yellow light – one was turning left and one was turning right – and they smacked into each other. “I turned on my hazards and pulled over to assist,” he continued. “Shannon Herrin was a couple of cars behind me, and he pulled over, too.” He said in one car there was a man who was able to get out of

his car by himself, but there was a young woman hurt inside the other vehicle.

Herrin, a forester for the Corps' Arkansas reservoirs, said the victim was complaining about her left leg. The victim's left eye had a deep gash over it.

Then, the other car caught on fire. Since the cars were close together, another bystander wanted to remove the woman from the car.

“We didn't want to take her out of the car and injure her any more,” said Deleon Guerrero. He put the car in neutral, and he and Herrin, as well as two additional bystanders, pushed the car into the shoulder away from the burning vehicle. They stayed with the woman until emergency vehicles arrived.

“I'm just glad that no one died,” said Deleon Guerrero. “That girl was very fortunate. She had a baby seat in the back, and it's a good thing she didn't have a baby in there with her.”

Deleon Guerrero and Herrin served as QAs in Louisiana's Vermilion Parish. The resident engineer responsible for Vermilion Parish on this mission, Robert Swayze, New Orleans District, said his team has been very fortunate to have such a high quality workforce like Deleon Guerrero and Herrin on it. “Shannon [Herrin] and Greg [Deleon Guerrero] risked their own safety on that very busy highway to help those in need,” he said. “That act was very selfless and heroic on both of their parts.”



Photo by Shannon Bauer

**Greg Deleon Guerrero, Mobile District emergency management, deployed as a quality assurance inspector in southwest Louisiana for a debris removal mission. He stopped to provide immediate assistance to a victim of a car crash during deployment for Hurricane Ike in Louisiana.**



Photo by Shannon Bauer

**Shannon Herrin, a forester at the Arkansas reservoirs in Vicksburg District, worked with Greg Deleon Guerrero to provide immediate assistance to a woman during his deployment for Hurricane Ike in southwest Louisiana. He deployed as a quality assurance inspector.**



# Cultural immersion with the Umatilla

by Jonathan Sobiech and Brad Perkl

We built a tipi, made projectile points out of obsidian using a deer antler, tied a fish net, tasted and learned about native plants, danced in native ceremonies and sat in a sweat house in temperatures as high as 250 degrees Fahrenheit.

That was how we spent the week of Oct. 5 – with the

Umatilla Tribe along the shore of Indian Lake in the Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon. The site is about two hours south of Walla Walla, Wash. In Umatilla, the name of the site is *Where Grizzly Bear Eaten*.

We signed up for the Corps' Native American Environmental/Cultural Resource training course to develop a better understanding of indigenous environmental, cultural and spiritual beliefs and to consider and apply these values to Corps' projects and actions.

The Umatilla welcomed us and shared important aspects of their culture, emphasizing sustainability and a spirituality of place – meaning what is important in one place relates to work, food,

worship and living. A lesson learned is that everyone needs to work together to preserve our collective culture, history and natural resources.

While this training is designed to develop principles and values to evaluate federal undertakings concerning tribal and tribal trust resources, sustainability and environmental concerns, it advances the Corps' Environmental Operating Principles and allows tribes to share their beliefs and values.

Through cultural immersion, or experiential learning, the training provoked a holistic relationship between the course participants, the environment and important

*Immersion, continued on Page 12*



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo

**Jon Sobiech (left), a biologist and forester, learns the art of tying a fishnet as part of the Corps' Native American Environmental/Cultural Resource training. The course is designed to help Corps' personnel develop a better understanding of indigenous environmental, cultural and spiritual beliefs.**



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo

**Students learned to build and live in a traditional Umatilla tipi during their cultural resources training.**

*Immersion, continued from Page 11* aspects of Umatilla culture.

The course began with a brief introduction of the instructors and students, then instructors demonstrated the proper way to set up a tipi – our lodging for the week.

After the demonstration, we broke up into groups to erect our own tipis. This team-oriented task took about 45 minutes to place and tie the lodge poles, orient the opening to the east – the direction of the rising sun – and drape and secure the canvas covering. Umatilla tipis and longhouses are traditionally constructed with hides or reed mats.

After moving into our tipis, we drove to the other side of the lake to the sweat lodges where we participated in a sweat with tribal members.

The sweat lodges are built out of willow saplings that are stuck into

the ground with their tops tied together to form a low dome. Burlap sacks, thick blankets and finally tarps cover the entire structure. Inside, a shallow hole contains numerous red-hot rocks allowing the temperatures to reach more than 250 degrees – depending upon how often the water is poured over the hot rocks.

With men and women separated for privacy, we shed all of our garments, rinsed off by pouring cold water over ourselves and climbed inside the sweat lodge. Once everyone was inside, they closed the door and we began the sweat. The water in the lodge contains couse (pronounced kowsh, also known as biscuit root), a root that gives off a fragrant smell and also has medicinal qualities. The Umatilla use this time to clear their minds, pray, sing and relax. This is also the way that they cleanse themselves. When we were ready to exit, we simply howled like a coyote and emerged steaming from the structure. We then poured cold water over ourselves to rinse off the sweat, dirt and grime.

Post sweat comments included:

- “Wow!”
- “Was that refreshing!”
- “A great feeling, very clean!”

After the sweat we went back to camp and enjoyed a wonderful meal prepared by cooks and guides from a white-water rafting outfit. All food was cooked and prepared outside featuring Dutch ovens. We all settled in for the evening, listening to a history of Umatilla longhouse traditions and traditional foods association. Instructors emphasized the importance of traditional foods and

feasts in the longhouses.

The following morning we woke up to temperatures in the low 20s. We had our breakfast and listened to talks on the Umatilla tribes first foods, salmon and other fish, deer and other big game, are associated with men. Couse and other roots, huckleberry and other berries, are associated with women. All foods center on water. The Umatilla set up and structured their Department of Natural Resources based on the first foods. By grouping ecologically related resources – water, aquatic species, big game, roots and fruit, it is easier for people to understand the spiritual, social and environmental importance of first foods.

We heard from many members of the tribe’s Department of Natural Resources staff:

- A water resource specialist explained the importance of water, and what the tribe is doing to manage the resource on their reservation and trust lands;
- A fisheries biologist taught the group the importance of salmon as one of their first foods and the importance of working with the Corps to manage the fishery.
- A wildlife manager explained the work being done to manage the elk herds and other big game species on the reservation;
- A botanist illustrated the variety of different terrestrial species and explained the medicinal and food uses of each plant;
- A cultural resource specialist taught us about the importance of oral history and preserving cultural sites; and
- An environmental rights protection specialist discussed the

*Immersion, continued on Page 13*



*Immersion, continued from Page 12*

planning of environmental projects to protect and restore resources under treaty rights.

All of these presentations were informative and offered examples of how important it is to work together and show how the Corps and the tribe are striving for many of the same goals.

Each day after lecture we were treated to demonstrations of different crafts, including flint knapping to fashion chipped stone tools, basket making, fish net tying, native plant identification and cultural presentations.

During the flint knapping activity we were given the opportunity to use deer antler, a more natural tool, or a copper-tipped pressure flaker tool which was a little easier to use to fabricate a projectile-point.

We selected a piece of obsidian, a volcanic glass traditionally used for tool manufacture, that was chipped off of a much larger piece of stone using direct percussion, then we used a technique called pressure flaking with our antler or copper-tipped flaker tool. The process was very time consuming, but everyone was able to make a serviceable projectile point with minimal hand lacerations.

Other students chose to learn how to make reed mats and baskets.

In the evenings we heard oral history stories from tribal leaders. These stories relayed the importance of passing along social values, knowledge, experiences and responsibilities from one generation to another.

Notable stories included a recounting of long ago encounters with Sasquatch, also known as



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo

**Brad Perkl (center) archeologist, and Jon Sobiech (second from right), a biologist and forester, participated in Native American Environmental/Cultural Resource training course the week of Oct. 5 along the shore of Indian Lake in the Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon. The site is about two hours south of Walla Walla, Wash.**

Bigfoot, and the ritual of the first hunt, including a description of the recent elk hunt conducted by a tribal member specifically for our nourishment.

Earlier that day we witnessed the cleaning and preparation of the elk for cooking.

We discovered the rituals of the first hunt resonated among families across cultures.

On the last evening, the Umatilla organized a feast of first foods, including elk, salmon, roots and berries and a delicacy, the oily taste of Lamprey eel.

The feast included a presentation by Umatilla traditional dancers. The dance showcased several Umatilla traditional songs. Males, females and children performed the dance in full regalia. After they sang and danced to several songs, they asked us to come up and

participate. Most of the members of the class reluctantly went up and tried to emulate their dance while being judged by the tribal members. (Sobiech received first place for the men's dance!)

We spent the last day of the training putting it all together. We went over the Corps' Environmental Operating Principles and discussed applications of what we learned to the projects we work on for the Corps. We dedicated time to reflect on our experience through the use of the Vision to Action Tool, an innovative visualization technique for capturing and integrating community and individual visions of sustainability, collaboration and actions to frame future direction. This training offered lessons worth sharing throughout the Corps of Engineers.

# News and Notes

## Announcements

The Combined Federal Campaign in the St. Paul District raised \$13,382, reported **Tom Crump**, chief, project management. Thirty three employees pledged a total of \$13,123 and another \$259 was raised through the bake sale and loose-change contest.

**Jay Bushy**, formerly a civil engineer, Western Area Office, construction branch, received the Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service prior to his departure from the Corps on Nov. 14.

**Ray Marinan**, natural resources, LaCrescent, Minn., finished 92 out of 260 participants in the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Dam Challenge Triathlon, La Farge, Wis., Oct. 4.

**Gordon Holman**, equipment repairman, is the new lockmaster for Lock and Dam No. 4 in Alma, Wis. Holman's selection is effective Dec. 21. **Fred Maule**, current lockmaster, retires Jan. 2, 2009, after more than 37 years of federal service.



Memphis District photo

**Tom Koopmeiners (right)**, small business program manager, received Corps-wide honors as the "Chief of Engineers Deputy for Small Business of the Year," at the twelfth annual U.S. Army Corps Engineers Small Business Conference in Memphis Dec. 8-10. The award is for work in fiscal year 2007.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo

**Maj. Gen. Bo Temple**, deputy commanding general, civil and emergency operations, presents **Tim Meers**, lockmaster at Lower St. Anthony Falls, Minneapolis, a citation for the Responder of the Year Award for his efforts during the Interstate 35-W Bridge collapse and recovery. The bridge collapsed during evening rush hour over the guide-wall at the lock and dam, Aug. 1. He received recognition at an emergency management conference in Orlando, Dec. 2.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo

**Maj. Gen. Bo Temple**, deputy commanding general, civil and emergency operations, presents, **Shelly Shafer**, St. Paul District Emergency Manager, a citation as Headquarters U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Emergency Manager of the Year Award. Her award was for the multitude of emergency events executed extremely well by the district in 2007. She received recognition at an emergency management conference in Orlando, Dec. 2.



Kazakhstan

Uzbekistan

Tashkent

Tajikistan

Kurt Reppe (below) of the St. Paul District real estate division has seen many changes in Afghanistan between his first deployment there in 2006 and his current and third tour. He said he thinks the Corps is helping to make a difference in the lives of the people of Afghanistan. Reppe was just extended for an additional tour of duty. Mark Davidson contributed to this postcard.

“On my previous tour here in 2006, Bagram Air Base consisted of approximately 9,000-10,000 people, consisting of U.S. Coalition Forces, contractors,

Corps people and some locals,” said Reppe.

“Now there are between 16,000-17,000 folks on Bagram Air Base and growing.”

When Reppe returned for his second tour at the Corps’ real estate office in Bagram in May 2008, staffing consisted of 12-14 construction folks.

“Now, by the end of November, the office will have a staff of over 40 folks,” he said.

The Corps Headquarters Real Estate Office in Afghanistan is located in Kabul, with a staff of four people. The Real Estate Area Office, located at Bagram Air Base, is where Reppe currently works as the real estate team leader with a staff of four.

“Our mission in Bagram is to provide support to the Army’s 101st Airborne Division,” said Reppe. “We cover the complete area of responsibility, or AOR, in conjunction with securing the lands for the U.S. Coalition Forces.

“If the lands are private, we work with the local landowners, negotiate leases and pay the locals for the use of the lands,” continued Reppe. “If the lands are government owned, we issue a no-cost land use agreement between the U.S. government and the Afghanistan Government Minister of Defense.”

Reppe said that it is a real challenge dealing and negotiating with the local nationals in Afghanistan, “but it is very rewarding to know that we are making a real difference in a positive way for the Afghan people, to include families, local tribes and children.”

“Our work schedule is 12-hour days, seven days a week with a half-day of work Fridays,” said Reppe. “Our housing was just constructed this past year, and I live in an eight- by 10-foot room with access to a computer, the Internet and a telephone.”



Kabul

Pakistan