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FROM WHERE I SIT

Communicating early, clearly, completely, honestly and accurately

by Dutch Meier, Chief, Public Affairs

Okay, time for a pop quiz! What is the Corps' purpose in having "communications principles?" What Army Corps of Engineers document exists to describe the command's official take on that subject? How many key points in the Chief's list of communications principles? What is the Corps' policy on communications? Who listed "getting the word out" as a key command interest topic?

The answers to this little quickie exam are close at hand and if you read all of this, you'll find where to get your own copy of the source materials.

As the Chief of Engineers said: "... to build and maintain [these] relationships by fostering a climate of effective, two-way communication..." There's your answer to the first quiz question, by the way. And he said it in remarks on the agency's official "Communication Principles" poster. That's the answer to your second quiz question.

What does it mean? It's a way of bringing together many elements that boil down to telling the Army, Corps and District stories to the audiences and constituencies out there that have an interest in what we do with the taxpayers' money. The answer to the third question is that there are six key points to Lt. Gen. Bob Flowers' "Communications Principles." These are:

- Listen to all constituencies both inside and outside USACE about issues of importance to them. Respect their viewpoint. Seek opportunities for synergy.
- Communicate early, clearly, completely, honestly, accurately and often with all constituencies on issues of importance.
- Incorporate communication as an integral part of the project management business process.



Tri-City Herald Reporter John Trumbo interviews Everett Wright, spillway stilling basin erosion repair project manager, Engineering Division, at Lower Monumental Dam near Kahlotus, Wash., on Nov. 26.



Dave Reese, Hydrology Section chief, explains how he analyses various weather and snow-pack data to produce hydrologic forecasts to KVEW television weather reporters Oct. 28 at Columbia Park in Tri-Cities, Wash. Photos by Gina Schwetz

- Be accessible to all constituencies and respond promptly without censorship or misinformation.
- Proactively inform the public and other constituencies of the Corps vital role in areas where we have special expertise.
- Do what we say we will do.

Implementing those points helps us get to the Department of Defense standard about telling our stories to the media and public with a strong focus on being objective, accurate and responsive without propaganda or spin. DoD instructors at Public Affairs Academy 101 teach every practitioner the guiding principle about the release of information. It says: "Maximum disclosure with minimum delay." That fits well with the Corps' policy on communications, your next answer, taken right from the Communications Principles poster.

The policy of the Corps is to communicate in an open, factual, and timely way with the Corps team, the American people, the Administration, Congress, the international community, tribes and the news media. We will make relevant information fully and readily available to these constituencies consistent with law and national security interests.

The final answer on your quiz is free points for you because everyone knows that's the second item of command emphasis for the current District Commander and this one was tossed in so you don't have to do pushups for him. Now, I promised that you'd find a source for these items. Just go to the Public Affairs page on the District intranet site and click the link. Congratulations, you passed this exam!

AROUND THE DISTRICT

Corps employees participate in 'Celebrate American Education Week'

by Sharon White,
Executive Assistant

Some District employees went back to school in November.

In an effort to better showcase local educational programs and issues to community members, Walla Walla Public Schools hosted a "Celebrate American Education Week" special event.

The events featured community members visiting district schools for two-hour celebrations.

Eight District employees participated in the Nov. 20 event.

Carolyn Foote and Samantha Handcox of Engineering Division; Stan Heller and Craig Newcomb of Planning Branch; Allen Pomraning, Programs and Project Management Division; Lynda Nutt, Operations Division; Tony Weeks, Office of Counsel; and myself.

School principals reviewed

the school improvement plan and provided a guided tour of the school for the District employees.

Following the tour, District members gave presentations on their Corps careers and worked with students in the classrooms.

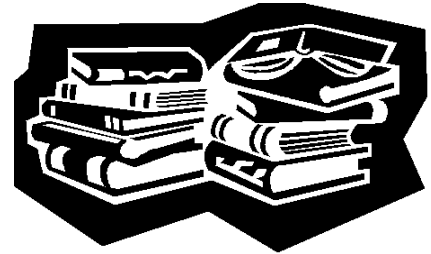
They toured the facilities and ate lunch with students at the various schools.

I think the experience proved to be mutually beneficial for both employees and students.

Lynda Nutt stressed the importance of water safety while Samatha Handcox related

the importance of mathematics in her duties as a budget analyst to elementary students.

Lunchroom activities were interactive; one student reminded an employee "that cutting in line was the best part."



Construction employee earns Safety Award

Story and photo by Gina Schwetz

Terry Zerb, a Walla Walla District construction quality assurance and safety



Terry Zerb
Quality Assurance and
Safety Representative,
Construction Division

representative, earned construction division's "Safe Worker of the Year" award. District Commander Lt. Col. Edward J. Kertis, Jr. presented the award Dec. 6 at the District headquarters in Walla Walla, Wash.

"It's an award we give in construction division to recognize people who go above and beyond their normal scope of duty to ensure that construction sites are safe places to work for Corps and contractor employees," said David Opbroek, construction division chief.

Zerb surpassed the high bar of safety excellence this past year for many reasons, according to Opbroek.

"Terry was assigned to QA at McNary Dam when Russ Crowder, the quality assurance representative at Ice Harbor Dam, had a heart attack and passed away. Terry took the bull by the horns at Ice Harbor, picking up the safety and QA responsibilities there, in addition to what he had at McNary," Opbroek explained.

"Between both dams, he had some construction projects on his plate that had high potential for safety problems. He ensured quality and safety standards were adhered to on all of those projects, resulting in no lost-time accidents," he said.

Intercom



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Corps develops master plan for wildlife habitat area near Boise

Story by Cindy Boen, Planning Branch and
Debbie Willis, Programs and Project Management
Photos by Blaise Grden, Planning Branch

As the seasons change along the Boise River, so do wildlife habitats and the activities of its inhabitants. The Barber Pool Conservation Area, abundant in wildlife activity, is six miles from downtown Boise.

Barber Pool is host to more than 200 species of birds and mammals, including bald eagles, mule deer and elk.

This conservation area has become significant to conservationists, scientists and the general public because of its native riparian habitat along the metropolitan reach of the Boise River.

With the rapid urban growth and development around the area, a concerned group of local folks came together to establish the Friends of the Barber Pool Conservation Area.

This group – made up of representatives of the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands, Ada County, Boise City, The Nature Conservancy, The Land Trust of Treasure Valley, Golden Eagle Audubon Society and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game – has been working hard to preserve and protect this area.

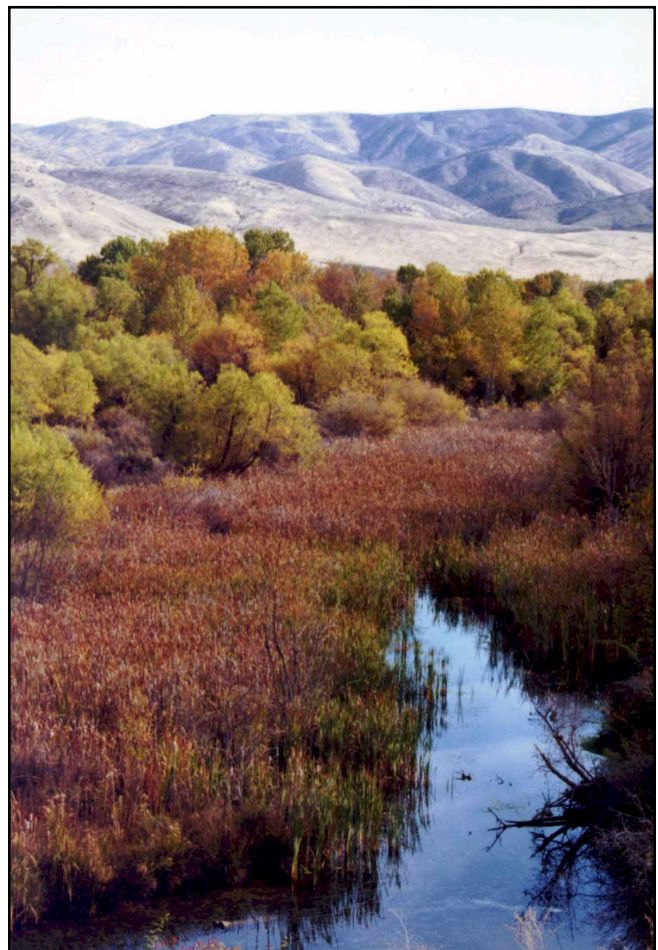
The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation invited the Walla Walla District to work with this group to help develop a master plan during the past year.

Under Section 22 – Planning Assistance to States authority, District professionals worked with the Friends of the BPCA to produce a master plan which included an inventory of the natural resources of the BPCA, current ecological, human, and aesthetic uses of the land, ecosystem components, and conditions necessary to sustain desired wildlife and plant habitat.

Through this combined master planning effort, the Friends of BPCA now has a plan of action to support their goals to protect the resource and provide educational and recreational opportunities, as well as any future management needs.



Red-winged blackbirds, like this one, are among the more than 200 bird and mammal species at Barber Pool.



The Corps developed a master plan with the “Friends of the Barber Pool Conservation Area” for the wildlife habitat area, approximately six miles from downtown Boise.

Dworshak turbines put the squeeze on maintenance workers

Story and photos by Gina Schwetz

Maintenance and training opportunities flourished during the fall season at Dworshak Dam's powerhouse.

The Bonneville Power Administration temporarily shut down distribution lines from turbine units two and three to perform maintenance in mid-September, leaving a two-month block of down time for Dworshak maintenance crews to service both turbines, said Bill Shaw, mechanical crew supervisor at Dworshak.

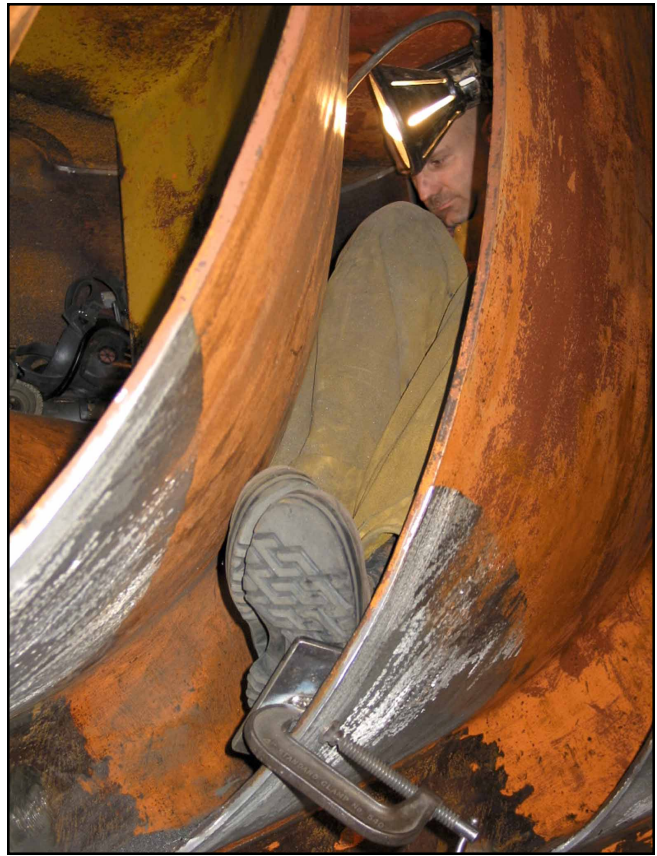
Given the unique design of Dworshak's Francis turbines, a search began for Walla Walla District mechanics who could meet the strict criteria for the job.

That requirement – must be small enough to squeeze through the nine-inch-wide space between turbine wicket gates. Bill Alteneder, a maintenance worker from Lower Granite, and Warren Dimson, a second-year power plant trainee from McNary Dam, fit the criteria.

"I've only got one guy on staff here who is small enough to fit through the wicket gates to get inside the turbine's bucket to do the work," said Shaw.

"Bill and Warren just barely got through the gates, and that's with us doing some adjustments to their normal positioning. We basically had to spread the gates further apart to get a guy in there to work," he said.

Mechanics completed repairs and periodic maintenance on Nov. 7.



Bill Alteneder, a maintenance worker from Lower Granite's powerhouse, works in close quarters between the wicket gates Oct. 11 as he repairs cavitation in the bucket of a Francis turbine at Dworshak Dam.



Sonny Mitchell, a utility worker at Dworshak, helps Bill Alteneder, a maintenance worker from Lower Granite, squeeze out from between the wicket gates of a Francis turbine at Dworshak's powerhouse.

Communications manager earns county 4-H award

Story and photo by Gina Schwetz

Walla Walla District's communications manager works in the information management world of data, electronic equipment and computer programs.

Off-duty, Robin German's life appears to have gone to the dogs.

Local canine advocates agree – German is the best new 4-H canine obedience club leader in Walla Walla County.

Walla Walla 4-H Extension Office officials presented the 2002 Best New Leader award to German during a Nov. 3 ceremony.

German serves as a youth program 4-H Club leader for 12 students and their dogs. Their club, Paw Prints, focuses on basic dog obedience, canine health, grooming, dog show protocol and good sportsmanship.

A dog trainer since 1979, German said she felt her leadership and animal training experience would benefit young dog-owners here.

"I think obedience classes are essential for kids who have dogs. 4-H clubs offer kids a venue to learn how to be responsible pet owners," she said.

"I hope my involvement with dog training will help reduce the number of dogs being dumped at animal shelters."

German and her students meet regularly for training and canine socialization classes. Even non-club members call for help with their dog behavior problems, said German.

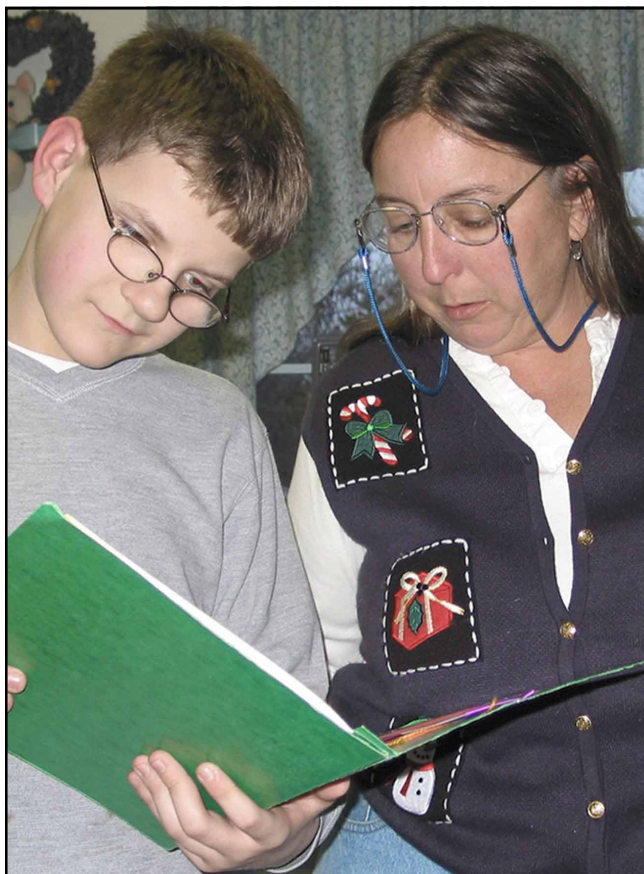
"I remember one family came to me with a German shepherd that nipped and scratched at people. They had reached the decision that either the dog stopped biting and scratching or they had to get rid of it," German recalled.

"The dog wasn't mean – it was just case of inconsistent training. Several months down the road, with the whole family now educated on how to train and be consistent, they had a well-behaved, happy dog that's a joy to have around."

German's contribution of her time to help dog owners extends beyond the Paw Prints club, said Jeanie Fulton, 4-H program coordinator for Walla Walla County.

"In January, German teaches a seven-week-long dog obedience class here in Walla Walla that's open to anyone," said Fulton. "It's a very popular class, and our office receives lots of positive comments about Robin's instruction."

"Last year, there were 52 dog owners who



Robin German, Walla Walla District communications manager and recently-named best 4-H leader in Walla Walla County, reviews William Matschukat's project book. German provides leadership and canine obedience training for 12 students and their dogs.

signed up for my class. I had to split them up into three groups, running classes back-to-back on Saturday mornings," said German.

Her commitment to volunteering much of her off-duty time to teaching others yields immeasurable rewards of the "warm-fuzzy" variety, according to German.

"Too many dogs get dumped at the pound and are eventually destroyed simply because their owners don't know how to train them to become good family pets," she said. "I like helping families have a dog they can live with."

4-H is the youth education branch of the Cooperative Extension Service, a program of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Each state and each county has access to a County Extension office for both youth and adult programs, according to the National 4-H Program Web Site, www.4-h.org.

AROUND THE DISTRICT

Service recognition

Rooks Park hosts roll up more than 4,000 volunteer hours

Story and photo by
Gina Schwetz

Rooks Park hosts, Bill and Darlene Hill, earned recognition for their volunteer service efforts at the District's Mill Creek Project located east of Walla Walla.

District Commander Lt. Col. Edward J. Kertis, Jr., presented the Hills with certificates lauding more than 4,000 volunteer hours at this park over the past six years during a town hall award ceremony held Dec. 13 at District Headquarters here.

The Hills, hosts at Rooks Park for more than six years, are no strangers to Federal service.

Darlene retired in 1991 from a 36-year career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District, where she served in the Real Estate Division and Supply.

Bill served in the U.S. Navy for 21 years, retiring to Walla Walla County in 1983.

They were living in their fifth-wheel trailer at a recreational vehicle park in Prescott when they heard about the need for a park host at Mill Creek.

"We wanted to get out of that RV Park – it was crowded and noisy," said Bill.

"When we were selected to host at Rooks, we were so happy. There are specific park duties we do in exchange for trailer space, water, sewage, garbage service and electric.

"Those duties are a welcome trade to be able to live out here in the middle of a quiet, beautiful park," he said.

"I see deer out here every day, and just look at what we have as a front yard," Darlene



Bill and Darlene Hill stock a Rooks Park information booth with trail maps and wildlife brochures – one of their routine park host responsibilities.

smiled and pointed to the woody-landscape-surrounded lawn just across the street from their trailer. "It's beautiful and so peaceful out here. And, there are always lots of birds and squirrels at my bird feeder when I look out my window during breakfast. It's a great place to live."

Both tout their park host arrangement with the District as a good deal.

Mill Creek officials say the Hills' service at Rooks Park has benefits beyond the requirements of their host contract.

"The agreement requires them to open and close the gates at certain hours, keep the information booths stocked, empty trash bins and routine things like that," said Steve

Thompson, Mill Creek park ranger.

"But, they always volunteer to do more than they have to ... helping out with improvement projects, repairs and maintenance. Plus, just the fact that Bill and Darlene live out here, providing a 24-hour caretaker presence, helps deter vandals and other unwelcome elements from hanging out in our park."

Bill and Darlene said they look forward to interacting with the crowds of park visitors who flock to Rooks Park during warmer seasons.

And, they have made friends with many who frequent the Mill Creek recreation facilities.

The Hills said they plan to host as long as Rooks Park needs them there.

FOCUS ON THE DISTRICT

Focus on the Safety Office

Most accidents are the result of human error

by Mike Remington, Chief, Safety Office

The District's Safety Office provides a source of technical support to assist employees, supervisors, and managers in meeting their workplace safety goals.

The basis behind the Corps Safety Program is our Risk Management Program in which employees and supervisors decide what are acceptable levels of risk and actions needed to take control of those risks.

As much as 80 percent of our accidents are the result of human error, which means that most of our accidents can be controlled through changes in human behavior, pre-job planning, and training. The safety office makes every effort possible to help all employees succeed in their mission, without imposing operational restrictions. Restrictions or prescription safety requirements are really just barriers put in place to reduce accidents. With a little innovative thought, there are usually equivalent protective measures that can put into place that will protect the worker and property, while minimizing cost and time requirements.

Each commander has a little different path for the safety program to follow, but the end result is the same. Each commander and manager wants to see all of their employees return home every night to their families uninjured. Our present course in safety is one in which we are getting back to the basics with an emphasis on safety awareness, employee training and compliance with our existing standards. We've started an employee safety poster program this year which gets people to thinking more about safety. We have also added some safety incentives for employees both in terms of financial rewards, and employee recognition type awards such as the District Safety Coin.

Safety is a metric used in our BPA performance indicators, which provides an additional incentive for employees and supervisors. Over the

past year we also developed the groundwork for a Districtwide ergonomics program, and have developed better means of documenting and communicating lessons learned to be used in the planning of future projects. We have also begun a year long campaign emphasizing an "Injury Free Workplace" which stresses employee responsibility.

We still have much work ahead of us as far as integrating safety into the business process, and this will be a high priority for this year.

Additionally, the safety office is in the process of creating a safety specialist position to help alleviate some the workload not only in the District office, but to centralize some program areas that can be more effectively and efficiently run out of the District office.

The word "safety" encompasses so much and involves all of us. The staff of the Safety Office is proud to help out whenever we can, and we value each and everyone as our "customer."

**YOUR SAFETY
AFFECTS
US ALL**


US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Walla Walla District

By: Erick Knotts