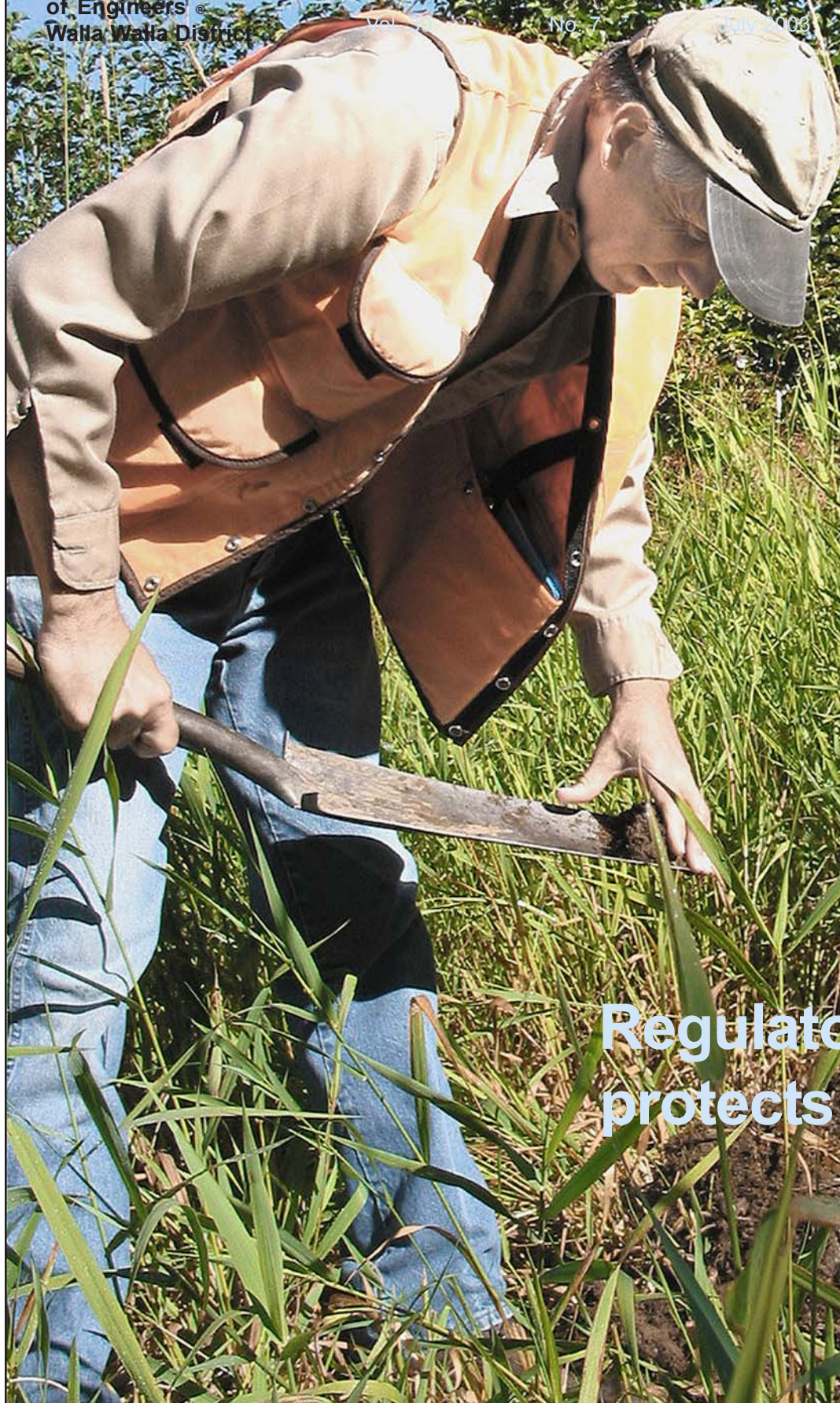




US Army Corps
of Engineers
Walla Walla District

Intercom

Serving the military and civilian members of the Walla Walla District
Vol. 1 No. 7 July 2003



**Regulatory Branch
protects wetlands,
p. 4-5**

Adversity - not necessarily a bad thing



A wise person once said that adversity makes one stronger. I believe that's true, but it goes beyond that. It gives us an appreciation for the simple things in life, even life itself, that isn't possible unless we've experienced hard times along with the good.

As many of you know, I recently returned from serving in Iraq for a few weeks with several other Northwestern

Division personnel. Our task was to assess the stability and functionality of Iraq's dams and other hydrographic structures. We traveled about 4,000 miles through many parts of Iraq with engineers from the Ministry of Irrigation.

Like so many other military and civilian personnel deployed to the region, we endured many of the hardships that come with deploying to an austere and often hostile environment, e.g., dust, heat, separation from loved ones, threat of attack, etc. It has made me appreciate even more the freedoms and opportunities that we enjoy in this land. How fortunate we are!



Deputy District Commander Maj. Harry Cunningham leads a dam assessment team as they evaluate the condition of the Dihok Project in Iraq. (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo)

Through traveling with our Iraqi engineer friends and listening to their stories of oppression and hardship at the hands of a cruel leader, I am deeply grateful for our way of life.

We don't have to worry about our children being executed in front of our eyes if we miss a deadline at work. We don't need to fear a 10-year prison term for voicing our opinion on a trivial matter. We don't need to fear an 18-month suspension from our job for temporarily removing a picture of our leader so we can paint the wall behind it. Nor do we need to live in fear of a government-sponsored mass execution of those who support another leader or political party. With these real-life stories as a background, you can imagine how hopeful our Iraqi engineer friends are at the prospect of a new and better way of life.

During our travels in Iraq, I came to know it as a land of much beauty and diversity. Some of it is wild and inhospitable, yet other parts are truly "flowing with milk and honey." The people of Iraq seem to be very much symbolized in the nature of their landscape. Like the hot and dry desert, there are some people in Iraq who are angry at the United States and our Coalition partners. They are doing whatever they can to prevent us from succeeding in building a free Iraq. They would very much like to regain power.

On the other hand, like the fertile Mesopotamia valley, there is another group of people in Iraq (like our Iraqi engineer friends) who are wonderful. They are kind, noble and courageous. They hold us in very high regard. These people are grateful to us for rescuing them from the hands of a mean dictator. They are warm and hospitable. This is especially true in northern Iraq where we saw signs and banners hung throughout the city thanking the United States and Great Britain for Iraq's freedom.

I awoke this morning after sleeping all night in a comfortable bed. The electricity was on; I had clean, hot water for my shower. Breakfast was simple, yet delicious. I am near the people I love. I have a job. I have health insurance, but don't normally use it. I have access to transportation and can travel in relative safety.

Isn't life grand?

Harry L. Cunningham
Deputy District Commander

Organization, Resumix changes won't impact CPAC operations

by Ray Quinn, CPAC chief

Abraham Lincoln once said, "I'm a slow walker, but I never walk back."

So it is with many of our personnel systems: change has been slow, but it's always moving forward in a better direction.

A number of changes are in the works for the Army's civilian human resources recruitment process. These developments should be available to employees by the end of 2003:

- A new vacancy announcement builder that will standardize the way announcements identify qualification requirements, necessary specialized experience, and other selective factors.
- A one-page vacancy announcement in plain English wording with links to obtain more detailed information.
- Vacancy announcements for all recruitment actions, with employee self-nomination from the Resumix data base.
- A new resume builder with one large block for experience instead of the current six small ones and a maximum length of four pages rather than three.
- Resumix for both internal and external recruitment.
- Improved Resumix grammar to more accurately identify applicants



Although soon to belong to the Army's new Human Resources Command, CPAC's service to District employees remains unchanged. (photo by Gina Schwetz)

with the right skills for the position being filled.

The upcoming change in our

Human Resources Command (HRC), will have no effect on services the District CPAC provides locally and regionally. We will not physically move from the District.

Neither will this restructuring affect the initiatives to improve recruitment systems.

From us in the CPAC to all of you, as we transition from Corps to HRC command, we say, "Adios, mis compadres and Essayons!"

"The (organizational) change... will have no effect on services."
 – Ray Quinn, CPAC chief

District's Civilian Personnel Action Center chain of command, from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to the Army's new

On the Cover...

Gregg Rayner, an environmental resource specialist, performs a soil analysis along the Spokane River near Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Walla Walla District's Regulatory Branch helps Idaho property owners comply with federal environmental laws to protect wetlands. (photo by Gina Schwetz)



Intercom



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Working in wetlands

Regulators help landowners comply with environmental laws

Story and photos by Gina Schwetz

When landowners want to develop property in or around Idaho wetlands or waterways, chances are there's a federal law or two they should know about before they begin planning their construction projects.

Walla Walla District's Regulatory Branch guides developers through the permit process, finding a way to achieve an applicant's project purpose and still protect the state's water resources. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also serves as the government's enforcement agency, working with landowners who ignore permit requirements and cause damage to United States waters.

Two federal laws most greatly impact the plans of those who work in or near waterways and wetlands:

- Section 10 of the River and Harbor Act of 1899 governs work done in navigable waters of the United States.

- Section 404 of the Clean Water Act requires authorization to discharge dredged or fill material into U.S. waters, including wetlands. This covers dirt, sand, rocks or other material used for almost any purpose.

"Our job often starts with a landowner requesting a building permit from their county – the county then notifies us that work is being planned for a potential or known wetland area. We check if the property has wetlands and whether the proposed work will require a permit," said Gregg Rayner, Regulatory's Coeur d'Alene field office project manager and environmental resource specialist. "Some counties in Idaho require the developer to get Regulatory's okay before they issue the development permit. We try hard to work with all the cities and counties."

Typical permits issued by the District include work plans

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Above, Gregg Rayner, a Regulatory Branch project manager and environmental resource specialist, inspects grasses and bushes planted as part of a developer's wetlands restoration plan around the Spirit Lake Mill Pond near Post Falls, Idaho. Right, after repairing the leaky bottom of the pond, water returned to former levels improving property values and restoring the aquatic environment (July 2003). Right-inset, Mill Pond's leaking basin turned valuable waterfront property into a mud flat (Oct. 2002).





Above, Gregg Rayner, analyzes a soil sample to determine a wetland boundary. Regulatory specialists examine soils for color, plant material and water content and smell. Right, Rayner and Gary Hite, president of Hite Crane and Rigging, Inc., meet at a work site along the Spokane River near Post Falls, Idaho, where Hite's crew follows Rayner's recommendations to minimize environmental impacts as they remove a massive, in-stream concrete block that once supported a lumber mill.



Rayner, digs a hole about 18 inches deep to get a soil sample that will help him determine the wetland delineation (boundary) of a location along the Spokane River just east of Coeur d'Alene.

Grisoli takes Northwestern Division helm

NWD News Release

At a Change of Command ceremony July 8, Brig. Gen. William T. Grisoli assumed command of the Northwestern Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Grisoli served as Deputy Director of the Army Transformation Office, Pentagon, Washington, D.C., before his assignment to Northwestern Division. He has also held numerous staff and command positions in the United States and abroad.

From his Portland, Ore., headquarters, Grisoli will direct a 5,200-member workforce and nearly \$2.0 billion of civil, military and environmental programs in the Columbia and Missouri river basins.

A large part of the Division's civil works program budget is earmarked for maintaining and operating hydroelectric, navigation and flood control projects, in addition to fish and wildlife activities at Corps projects in the Missouri and Columbia River basins.

Brig. Gen. Grisoli also directs the Corps' military construction program for the states of Colorado, Idaho,



Brig. Gen. William T. Grisoli

Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming. This program includes the design and construction of barracks, hospitals, airfields and family housing at Army and Air Force installations. The Northwestern Division is a national leader in providing environmental cleanup of hazardous and toxic waste for the Environmental Protection Agency and at hundreds of formerly used defense sites and active military installations.

Grisoli is a graduate of the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York. He also holds a master's degree in Civil Engineering from the University of

Illinois and a master's degree in Natural Resource Strategy from the National Defense University.

The outgoing commander, Brig. Gen. David A. Fastabend, was selected to serve as Deputy Chief of Staff for Doctrine, Concepts and Strategy, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, Virginia. Lt. Gen. Robert B. Flowers, Chief of Engineers, presided over the ceremony held at the Division's Customs House courtyard in Portland.



Gregg Rayner, an environmental resource specialist for Regulatory Branch's Coeur d'Alene office, inspects a completed development and restoration project near Post Falls, Idaho. (photo by Gina Schwetz)

Regulatory, from p. 4

for roads, erosion protection, underground utility lines and ecosystem restoration projects. The Corps works with developers to minimize damage to protected areas, said Brad Daly, the District's Regulatory Branch chief. The average Regulatory permit application takes about 60 days to process.

"Sometimes, just shifting a proposed building site to a different location on the property avoids the need for major environmental restoration after construction," said Daly. "If wetlands impact is unavoidable, Regulatory experts can help permit applicants plan for mitigation – restoring or establishing new habitat damaged by construction."

A minor percentage of those who do work that impacts water resources, either by ignorance of the law or failure to comply, break the law by failing to obtain necessary permits. The fines and expense of repairing the damage can be costly, said Rayner. But, most enforcement actions are resolved without litigation.

"Throughout my 24 years in Regulatory, I've seen a big change in the public's attitude about the environment," said Rayner. "They are more aware of environmental laws and seem to understand how important it is that they plan for protecting wetlands and water resources when they prepare to develop a piece of property. More people are aware that permits may be needed for working in waters and wetlands."

The District's Regulatory Branch also has field offices in Idaho Falls and Boise, serving all of Idaho State.

Mill Creek crew tops off new visitor facilities

Story and photos by Gina Schwetz

After decades with no major structural improvements around Bennington Lake, visitors can catch some shade under four new picnic shelters around the reservoir.

Each picnic spot consists of a four-post, open-sided, covered shelter on a concrete pad with a picnic table and nearby charcoal-type barbecue grill.

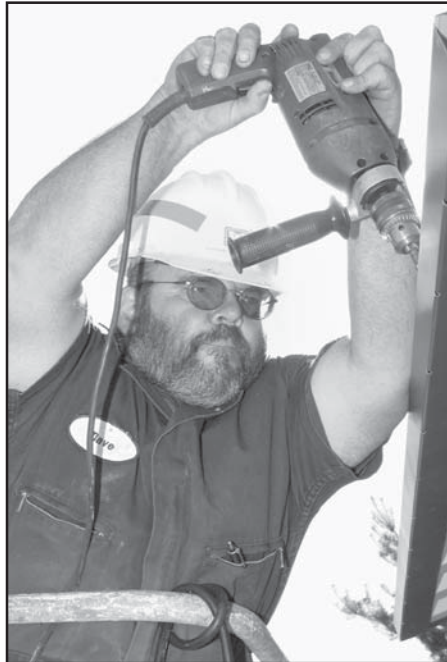
“The Mill Creek Project has been here for more than 60 years, and never before have we had any recreation improvements like these,” said Dave Hays, Mill Creek Project operations manager. “There used to be one small, uncovered picnic area on the lower west shore, but that was washed out during the 1996 floods. We nailed down the plan for these improvements two years ago, not only to replace the area lost to flooding, but also in anticipation of increased visitor numbers throughout the Lewis and Clark centennial celebration.”

The new shelters were built on higher elevation near the gravel parking area.

About 200,000 visitors use Mill Creek’s recreation areas each year. Bennington Lake is located east of Walla Walla, just outside city limits. Visitors arriving via Highway 12 should exit south on the Tausick Way exit, cross over Isaacs, then turn left onto Reservoir Road and follow it past the project office to the lake’s parking area.



Dave Parker, maintenance worker, puts the roofing pieces on one of four new picnic shelters at Mill Creek Project’s Bennington Lake.



Dave Parker safely accesses the top of a picnic shelter from a small boom-lift’s man basket to install edging pieces on the roof.



Dave Parker and Bob Radke, maintenance workers at Mill Creek Project, guide the final roofing piece on a picnic shelter at Bennington Lake.

Ooops, our mistake....

Correction: Mill Creek Dam holds the overall record for consecutive no-lost-time days in the Walla Walla District. The flood damage reduction project has been riding a safety wave since May 17, 1982. It was reported that Lower Monumental Lock and Dam held the historical record (June issue, “McNary notes 1000+ days no lost time”). It should be noted that Lower Monumental holds the no-lost-time record for hydropower-producing projects.

Life jacket “loaner” program encourages safe water fun

Story and photos by Gina Schwetz

Three Walla Walla District parks on the lower Snake River now offer safer swimming for young visitors.

Hood, Charbonneau and Fishhook Parks host life jacket loaner boards – cabinets stocked with kid-sized life jackets – near designated swim beaches. Families are encouraged to borrow the life jackets while swimming at the parks. The jackets are available in four sizes: infant to young adult. Signs written in Spanish and English posted on the loaner board instruct how to properly fit a life jacket on a child.

District personnel, the Blue Mountain Safe Kids Coalition and Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission officials teamed up to provide the storage cabinets and jackets at the parks to minimize the chance of swimming-related mishaps along the river.

“It’s a big river. Sometimes, it has strong, fast currents that can create undertows even in areas that are fairly shallow,” said Jeanne Newton, a park ranger at Ice Harbor’s Resource Center. “If the water is moving fast enough, or if a passing boat makes a large enough wake, the undertow created can pull little kids right out of the deeper parts of the swimming areas and down the river.”

With the help of the District’s Pasco Resource Maintenance Shop, Newton and Blue Mountain Safe Kids Coalition Coordinator Debi Alessio assembled the cabinets and installed them at the parks during July.

“The kids have fun using the life jackets while they swim. And, most visitors are good about returning jackets to the loaner boards when they’re done with them,” said Newton, who sees families using the loaner jackets when she patrols the parks.

While some life jackets seem to mysteriously “walk away,” Safe Kids Coalition officials take it in stride.

“Washington State Parks and Recreation provided the life jackets and plans to restock them as needed,” said Alessio. “While we discourage people from taking them away from the swim beaches, if the jackets are being used to keep kids safe in the open water, then they are being put to good use.”

Newton and Alessio said they plan to install another life jacket loaner board at the District’s Windust Park’s swimming beach.



Visitors at Fishhook, Charbonneau and Hood parks can find life jackets to borrow by looking for “Swim Safe” signs near the parks’ swimming beaches.



A young swimmer at Hood Park adjusts the straps on a loaner life jacket to fit a little better. Left, while patrolling Hood Park July 20, Jeanne Newton, an Ice Harbor park ranger, watches kids in the swimming area using the new loaner life jackets.

