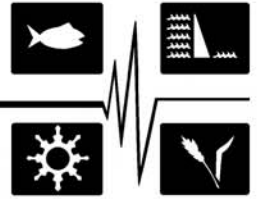




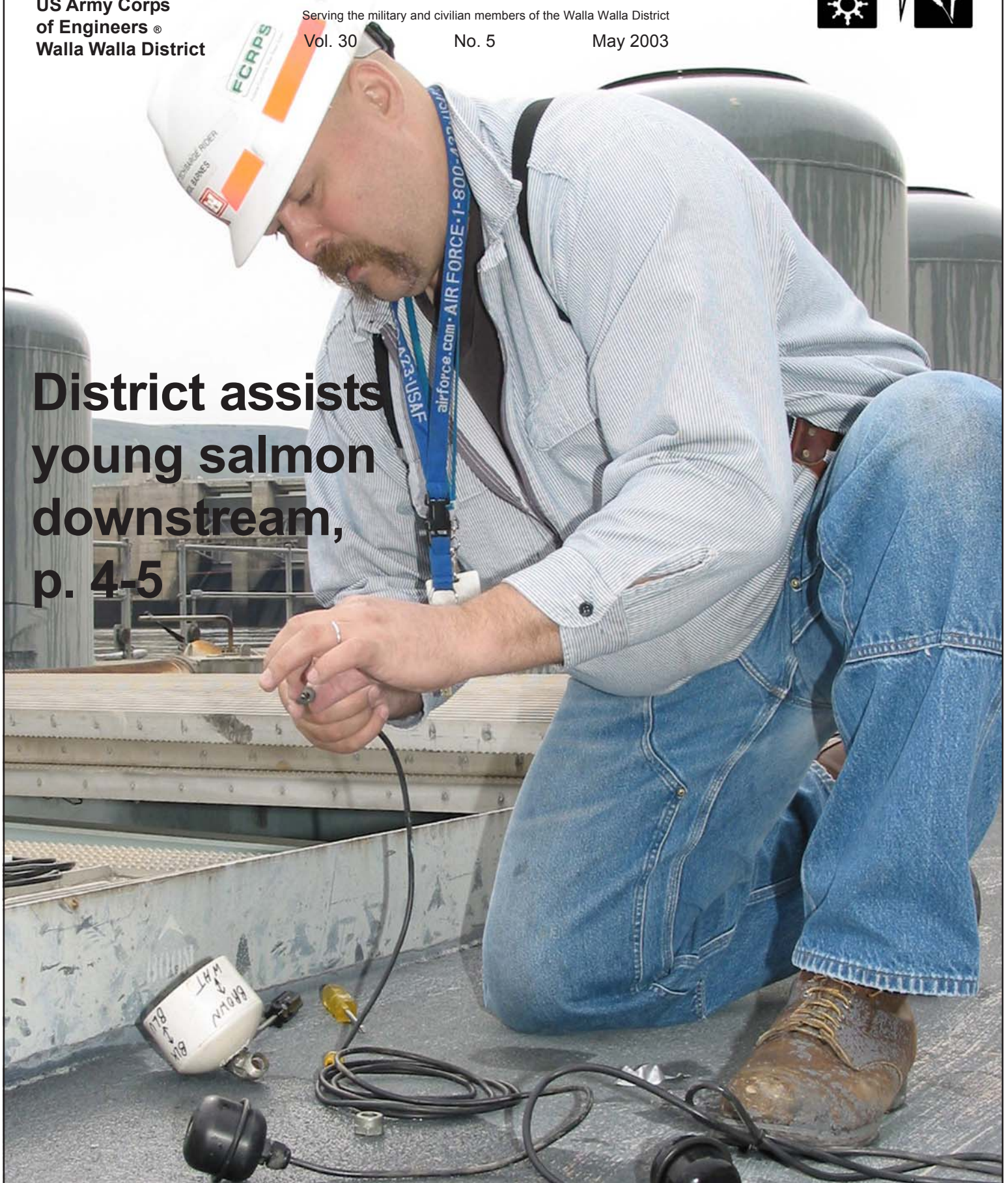
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Walla Walla District

Intercom

Serving the military and civilian members of the Walla Walla District
Vol. 30 No. 5 May 2003



**District assists
young salmon
downstream,
p. 4-5**



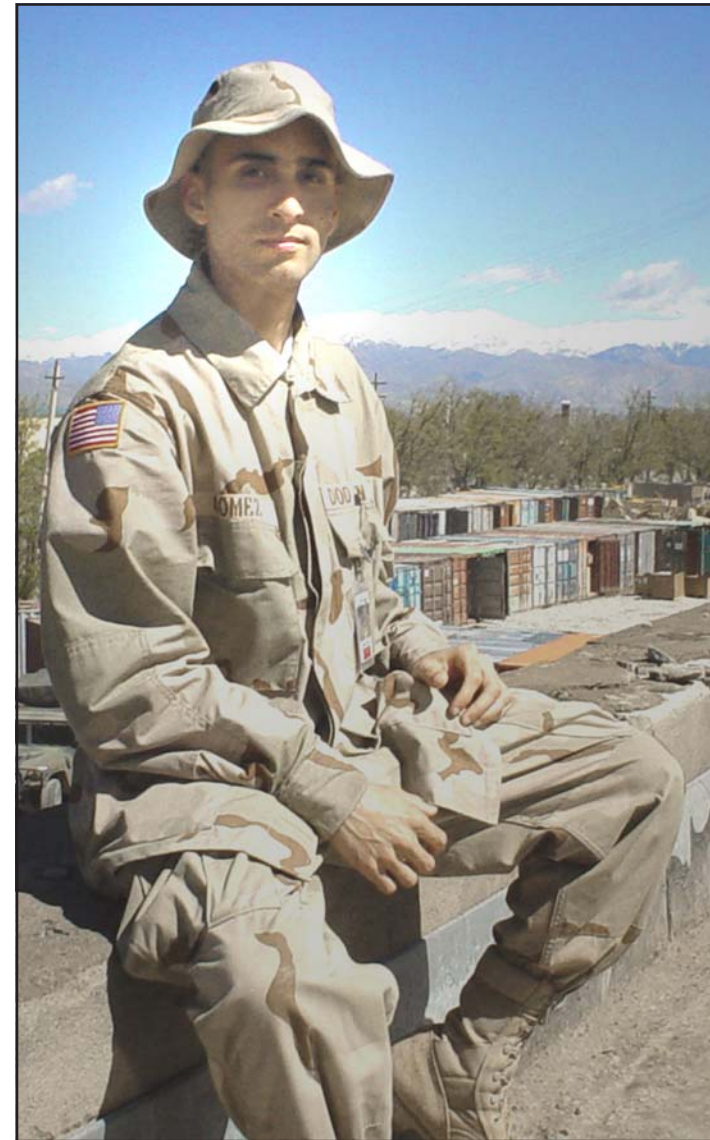
FROM WHERE I SIT

EIT's deployment spurs appreciation for soldiers

I arrived at the airfield in a convoy of several Army vehicles to a remote hospital in Northern Afghanistan one morning in early April.

I assessed the hospital's electrical grid in a few hours and decided to take the next flight back to the main camp. There, I had access to a computer and could document the status of the hospital grid and draw plans to improve their system. This was one of my final projects as I was nearing the end of my overseas deployment tour.

So there I was, leaning forward as I struggled to carry my rucksack and board through the rear ramp of the U.S. Air Force C-17 transport plane. Because



Onisem "Oni" Gomez, an engineer-in-training, returned to Walla Walla District in April following a four-month deployment in Afghanistan to support Operation Enduring Freedom.

of the security conditions in Afghanistan, all nighttime aircraft landings and takeoffs were made with the runway and aircraft lights turned off. As the planes take off, pilots fire flares into the air while making sharp turns in the sky to avoid potential anti-aircraft fire. After an uneventful take-off, our plane quickly reached cruising altitude and the cabin became very cold.

As I sat in the frigid, noisy and cramped plane, I started reflecting on my temporary duty assignment in Afghanistan. I had lost five pounds. I felt tired and homesick. Every day had been marked by dust and heat. Feeling pretty wimpy right then, I asked myself if the trip was worth all the effort.

Then, I looked around me – I was the only civilian on the flight and the rest of the passengers were a team of Special Forces soldiers who had just finished a mission.

I started a conversation with one of them. The soldier mentioned how he, like me, was also nearing the end of his tour. But his tour, unlike mine, was nine months long instead of three.

As I sat there, I mentally compared my deployment experience with that of the soldiers I worked with at the main camp.

Because of the weight they had lost during their deployment, I hardly recognized some of them from the predeployment family photos they had placed near their workstations. While my workday averaged around 11-hour shifts, it didn't appear as though the soldiers were ever off-duty except for when they slept. I also recalled the pain-stricken faces of the sick people the medical soldiers had treated that afternoon at the Afghan hospital.

I suddenly realized how much more these soldiers were sacrificing for America than I was.

All at once, the plane didn't really seem all that cold or crowded. And by the time we landed, the drudgery of inspecting sub-standard electrical grids didn't seem all that tedious after all. Even my rucksack didn't seem so heavy anymore.

My three-month deployment to Afghanistan was a worthwhile and enriching experience. I was given the opportunity to help our nation and people in need.

But most importantly, I got to appreciate first-hand what our soldiers are doing for my nation and for me, a fellow American.

Onisem "Oni" Gomez, Engineer-in-training

Reenactor highlights immigrants' challenges

Story and photo, NWW Public Affairs

It wasn't your ordinary, everyday guest speaker who visited May 23 to talk about the importance of tolerance, acceptance and cultural change for the Federal Women's Month program at the District headquarters.

"We wanted to present something a bit different for a change," said District FWP Manager Charlene Duncan. "We found an organization called 'Living Voices' who helped us book a reenactor who portrayed an immigrant from Sweden named Julia Berg and how she and her family worked to overcome all the challenges and discrimination faced by many new arrivals in this country."

The Living Voices actor was scheduled for three appearances in Walla Walla during the visit, according to Duncan. Walla Walla audiences at the District headquarters, the Veteran's Administration hospital and Garrison Middle School, had all expressed interest in the story of the immigrant who worked to build a successful new life as a nurse at Seattle's Swedish Hospital.

Professional actress and theater director Holli Hornlien said Berg is one of several characters she has portrayed around the country through Living Voices for the last year and a half.

"This is all very exciting for me because it allows me to travel all over and from group to group presenting the stories of women from several cultures and their challenges and issues," said Hornlien. "I find it really fulfilling. Besides Berg, I portray Sarah Weiss, a young German girl whose family tried to escape Nazi persecution by fleeing to Holland. My other character is an Irish immigrant named Bridget Fitzgerald."

Hornlien, originally from New Jersey, studied musical theater at the Boston Conservatory and theater at Emerson College in Boston. She was the female lead in a short screenplay adapted from an Oprah Winfrey book-of-the-month selection entitled "The Pilot's Wife," in which she portrayed the title character. She shared



Holli Hornlien, professional actress and theater director, presents a living history reenactment of a Swedish immigrant in Seattle during the late 1800s.

that her passions are acting, teaching and directing children's theater.

"We were lucky to get her here," said Duncan, discussing Hornlien's appearance. "Talented reenactors really help us in the FWP to highlight our role to help understand the roots of intolerance and promote education, understanding and awareness. The program is more than actors and their presentations, though. Our FWP program is for every member of the District and we encourage anyone interested in awareness and understanding to become involved."

On the Cover...

Virgil Barnes, biological technician and 'barge rider,' at Lower Granite Lock and Dam, replaces a monitoring system to help him determine air flow settings for the holding tanks on a fish barge. Barnes wears a lanyard around his neck in honor of his son who serves in the U.S. Air Force in Texas.



Intercom

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Saving salmon

Corps fish programs target survival

Story and photos by Gina Schwetz

During April and May, river flows and water temperatures rose in lower Snake River tributaries, spurring smolts into their downstream run to the Pacific Ocean. Walla Walla District fish facilities went into high gear to give protected fish species a safer ride to the sea.

Using specially-equipped barges to carry migrating juvenile salmon and steelhead around dams on the lower Snake and Columbia rivers, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers works with many state and federal agencies to transport and study salmon. District fish facilities operate daily during the spring run to tag and transport as many fish as possible.

Lower Granite Lock and Dam's fish facility transports the most fish in the District.

"Granite is the first dam on the Snake River that these fish encounter, so we see the most here," said Mike Halter, fish facility manager at the dam. "Juvenile fish that go through the dam's

bypass systems can be routed either directly back into the river below the dam, or to the fish facility for loading into transport barges."

Barges carry the fish past the remaining dams for release downstream of Bonneville Lock and Dam. Throughout the two-day, almost 300-mile trip, a District biological technician rides along on the barge, checking water quality in the tanks, and adjusting water flow as needed.

"The first day, I check the tanks every two hours. After that, every four," said Suzette Frazier, a 'barge rider.' "I sleep a little bit between my checks until we get them to the release point."

The Corps runs the Juvenile Fish Transportation Program in cooperation with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries.

NOAA Fisheries runs tagging operations at the District's fish facilities. A tiny microchip, about the size of a grain of rice, is inserted into the abdomen of an anesthetized fish.

Information about the fish is recorded and linked to the tag number: species, size, weight, body condition and whether the fish is released or barged downstream. During the last week of May, Lower Granite's facility processed about 100,000 fish daily for barge transport. Typically, 15 to 20 million salmon and steelhead are transported from District dams each year.

To obtain a better, scientific understanding about salmon, the Corps sponsors many studies to help improve passage conditions for fish at the dams and through the river system.

For example, at Lower Granite this year, the Corps funded studies to gather data about kelts, spawned-out steelhead that are returning to the ocean, and the downstream migration of juvenile salmon once released past the dams.

Fish passage facilities and operations on the river have been developed and refined based on results of various studies. These include adult fish ladders, fish bypasses with turbine intake screens and the smolt barging program.



Biological technicians, Suzette Frazier, left, and Carla Hurlbert exchange information before the fish barge starts its journey downstream.



Above, Doug Marsh, a research fisheries biologist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries, examines one of the juvenile salmon to be transported. Below, Floyd Hunt, maintenance worker, fills a barge's holding tank with smolts to be transported below Bonneville Dam.



Above, Suzette Frazier, biological technician and 'barge rider,' adds oil to one of four engines that run pumps to keep water flowing in the holding tanks on the barge transporting smolts downstream. Barge riders tend the fish around the clock during the two-day trip downstream. Right, the tug boat, Mary Jane II, steers a barge full of young salmon and steelhead away from the fish facility dock at Lower Granite Lock and Dam on the lower Snake River. The fish take a nearly 300-mile trip downstream and are released just past Bonneville Lock and Dam on the Columbia River.



Oregon State University biology students place sonic transmitters into juvenile salmon to collect migration data for a Corps-funded study.



Water safety program gets new spokesperson *serpent*

Story and photo by Gina Schwetz

The District's newest water safety education expert made his public debut May 17 at Walla Walla's annual Duck Derby near the Mill Creek project office.

Seamoor, a three-foot-long purple robotic sea serpent, parked his personal water craft next to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' information booth set up at the derby site. Throughout the afternoon, he drew a crowd of children and adults with interactive conversation, movement and occasional sprays of water from his PWC.

The Corps' first Seamoor robot was added to the National Water Safety Program in August 2001 to promote water safety education. The almost-\$10,000 Robotronics creation, originally donated to the NWSP by Kawasaki, was centrally located in the Saint Louis District for use nationwide.

The demand for Seamoor to appear at events increased – his national schedule quickly booked up, explained NWSP coordinator Lynda Nutt, who manages the national program from the Walla Walla District headquarters.

"With transporting Seamoor all over the country, it proved more cost effective for some Districts with a greater demand for water safety outreach programs to buy their own robot," said Nutt. "Acquiring a Seamoor exclusively for Walla Walla District means they'll be able to use him whenever they have the opportunity to promote their water safety program."

While it's the sea serpent that gets all the attention, Seamoor's success hinges on his operator's talent. While the audience focuses on Seamoor, a behind-the-scenes



Seamoor the Sea Serpent, the District's newest water safety education tool, made his first public appearance at Walla Walla's annual Duck Derby held May 17 at Mill Creek.

operator controls his movements and uses a microphone and headset to maintain the interactive quality of the conversations. The operator's speech is modified, giving Seamoor's voice a somewhat-squeaky, childlike quality.

From inside a vehicle parked nearby the District's booth at the derby, Tiffany Hardinger, a Mill Creek Project employee, made Seamoor 'come to life.'

"Usually, it's very difficult to keep folks' attention, but Seamoor really can hook an audience," said Nutt. "The interactive function of an operator improves our ability to reach out to the public and make a lasting impact."

Phil Benge, outdoor recreation planner, manages Walla Walla District's Seamoor robot. He schedules Seamoor's appearances around the District, trains operators and maintains his robotic functions.

"He's a great water safety tool. The kids seem to think he's real, and even the adults are intrigued," said Benge.

Seamoor's next appearance is slated for June 21 at 'Play-it-Safe Summer,' at the Columbia Center Mall in Kennewick.



Above, Dave Hays, Mill Creek Project manager, introduces a curious, young derby attendee to Seamoor the Sea Serpent. Right, kids and adults seem dazzled by Seamoor, Walla Walla District's new water safety education robot. With a behind-the-scenes operator, Seamoor holds conversations, moves and his personal water craft can squirt a narrow stream of water into the crowd.



Organization Day activities mark 228th Army engineer anniversary

U.S. Army Engineers celebrate their 228th anniversary during June with activities throughout the Corps. In the Walla Walla District, Organization Day events are slated to commemorate our engineer history.

The existence of Army engineers traces back to June 16, 1775, when the Continental Congress organized an army with a chief engineer and two assistants. It was not until 1779 that Congress created a separate Corps of Engineers. At the end of the Revolutionary War, the engineers were mustered out of service. In 1794, Congress organized a Corps of Artillerists and Engineers, but it was not until 1802 that it reestablished a separate Corps of Engineers.

As in our earliest days, Army engineers are still building the nation's infrastructure. Our historical strengths in program management, construction,

engineering design and research and development will prove invaluable as they tackle the challenges of tomorrow (from *A Brief History*, USACE, Office of History).

For more information on Engineer Day events around the District, call these contacts in your area:

- June 12 Ice Harbor**
Pat Slape, (509) 543-3255
- June 13 Headquarters and Mill Creek**
Samantha Handcox, (509) 527-7527
- June 19 McNary**
Merlene Freels, (541) 922-2254
- June 26 Lower Monumental**
Shawna Schafer, (509) 282-7255

At the projects...

After performing maintenance on a turbine at Lower Granite Lock and Dam's powerhouse, workers remove massive tailrace "stoplogs" to allow water to flow through the turbine's scroll case and put the generator back into operation. Right, Mike Heaton, crane operator, stands ready to use the gantry crane to hoist the logs out of the turbine's water discharge opening. Below left, Darwin Livingston and Matt Dinoto, utilitymen, secure the log to the crane for lifting. (Photos by Gina Schwetz)



District members set new goals

Story and photos, NWW Public Affairs

Take a mix of Walla Walla District members, sprinkle in some ideas from around the organization, add a lot of dedication and cooperation and you come up with the recipe for a new batch of business objectives for the coming fiscal year.

That's what happened when more than 40 people from District project locations and the headquarters gathered for four days in Worley, Idaho, in mid-May. Teams were formed to consider objectives submitted from the work force and leaders, along with a few developed at the District's third annual off-site meeting for fiscal 2004. More than a dozen objectives were crafted in the subject areas of "People, Process and Communications." Several bonus objectives were also identified.

After developing the business objectives, members of the District's Quality Steering Group will meet to assign champions and project managers. The PMs will develop teams to accomplish the objectives and present the proposed project management plans to the QSG for acceptance before rolling up team sleeves and going to work. PMs and

champions will report regularly on progress throughout the business year until the District commander (who serves as QSG president) accepts each objective and awards points for completion toward the 100-point total possible in the plan. It is possible for the District to achieve a score over 100 if each objective earns its maximum possible points and bonus objectives are also met.

The Worley off-site meeting agenda included some leadership training topics and time for District members to interact on levels not usually possible. Participants attended a barbecue, walked and bicycled together, and attended a Native American drumming ceremony by members of the Couer d'Alene Tribe. Attendees weren't just spectators, though. Tribe members got District participants up out of their seats for a greeting ceremony and to try their hand at some dancing, Native American style.

More information about the fiscal 2004 objectives will be announced to District members as it becomes available, and each person should receive their own copy of the objectives booklet after being published.



Krina Allery, a Couer d'Alene Tribe member, performs a shawl dance for Walla Walla District offsite attendees in Worley, Idaho.



Above, the Rose Creek Drummers of the Couer d'Alene Tribe gave District members at the offsite a chance to experience Native American dancing and singing. Right, District employees shake hands with all offsite attendees as tribe members lead them in a 'welcome song.' The winding, circular, parade-like ceremony ensured each person greeted everyone else in the room.

