



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Walla Walla District

# Intercom

Serving the military and civilian members of the Walla Walla District

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**District volunteers  
support community  
emergency services,  
p. 4-5**

# FROM WHERE I SIT

## Operations' reorganization streamlines processes

I have seen many "good-idea" initiatives come and go during my career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Some seem to truly make a difference, and some turn out to be experiments that we hope won't be repeated.

Initiatives currently on our radar screen include Communities of Practice, 2012, Competitive Outsourcing, PMBP, Learning Organization, Environmental Operating Principles and probably others that didn't come to mind as I typed this note. All of these have an honorable motive, which is to improve the way we do business to more effectively execute our missions. History will judge whether or not they really hit the target.

Several months ago, our commander, knowing that reinvention of the Corps was in the works, challenged the Operations Division leadership to provide options for change which would make a positive difference in how we do business and which were within our sphere of influence. So, it was our turn to reinvent, that is, to create and implement some "good ideas."

Our preferred proposal involved flattening the division's organizational structure. The Eastern Area Office, which provided oversight of Dworshak, Lower Granite and Little Goose projects, and the Western Area Office, which directed activities at Lower Monumental, Ice Harbor and McNary projects were abolished providing a more streamlined communications path for many of our routine processes.

The operations managers, for projects mentioned above,



**Wayne John**

now report directly to me as their supervisor. They are each fully responsible for all operations and maintenance activities within their geographical footprint. These missions include hydropower, navigation, flood damage reduction, recreation and environmental stewardship.

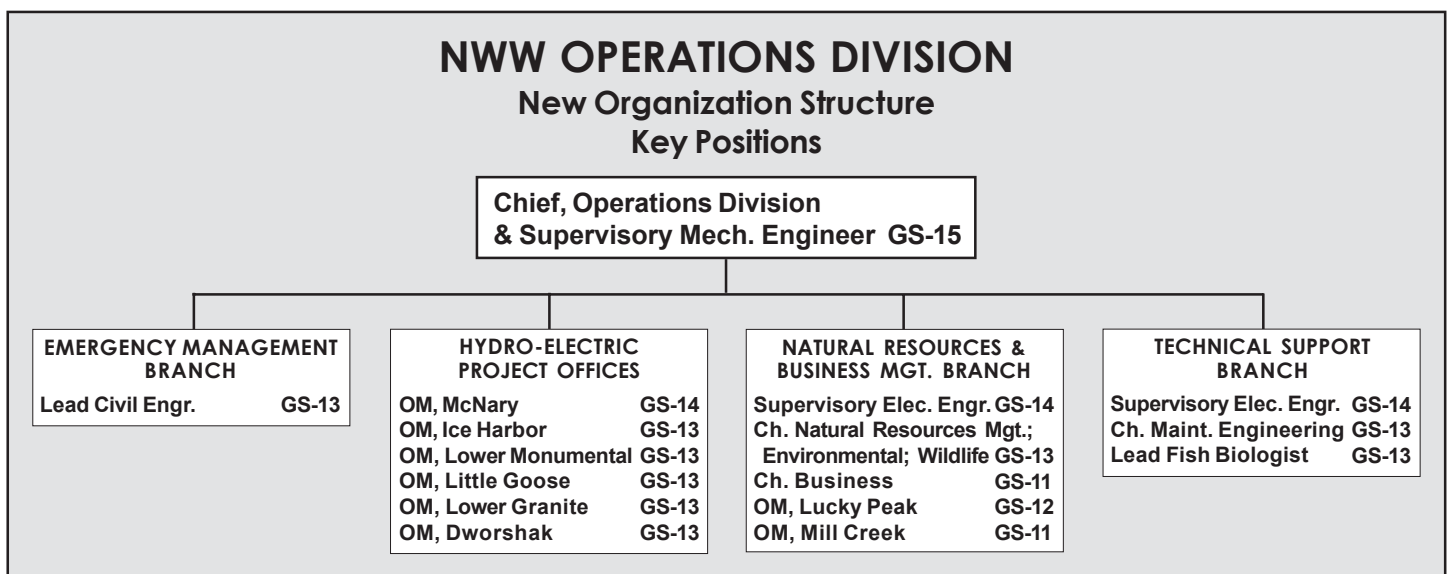
An additional element of this change was the abolishment of Regulatory Branch under Operations Division and the establishment of a new Regulatory Division under the Executive Office. The regulatory chief now has direct access to the commander, which streamlines communications and decision making for this often controversial and politically sensitive program.

It is important for readers who are in some way affected by this change to understand that the new structure, which was approved by the commander, has the full support of the operations managers, the two past area managers, the regulatory chief and I. The reorganization is now essentially complete. All displaced employees have been reassigned to appropriate and challenging positions.

We think this is one "good idea" that will stand the test of time.

Anyone having additional questions about Operations Division's restructuring and its effect on people and processes in the District can call me at (509) 527-7101.

**Wayne John**  
Chief, Operations Division





# New Mill Creek trail enhances visitor safety

by Gina Schwetz

The road to Mill Creek Project's Bennington Lake just got safer for pedestrians and cyclists. A newly constructed 1.1-mile trail running along Reservoir Road offers a motor vehicle-free path for visitors to the lake.

"The road is narrow, steep and full of blind turns – it can be hazardous to people on foot or bicycling to the lake," said Steve Thompson, natural resource specialist at Mill Creek.

When planning the new trail, project officials wanted more than just a path right next to the road. Working with operations, engineering, construction, planning and contracting personnel at Walla Walla District headquarters, a plan developed to design the trail to meet the needs of a more diverse public.

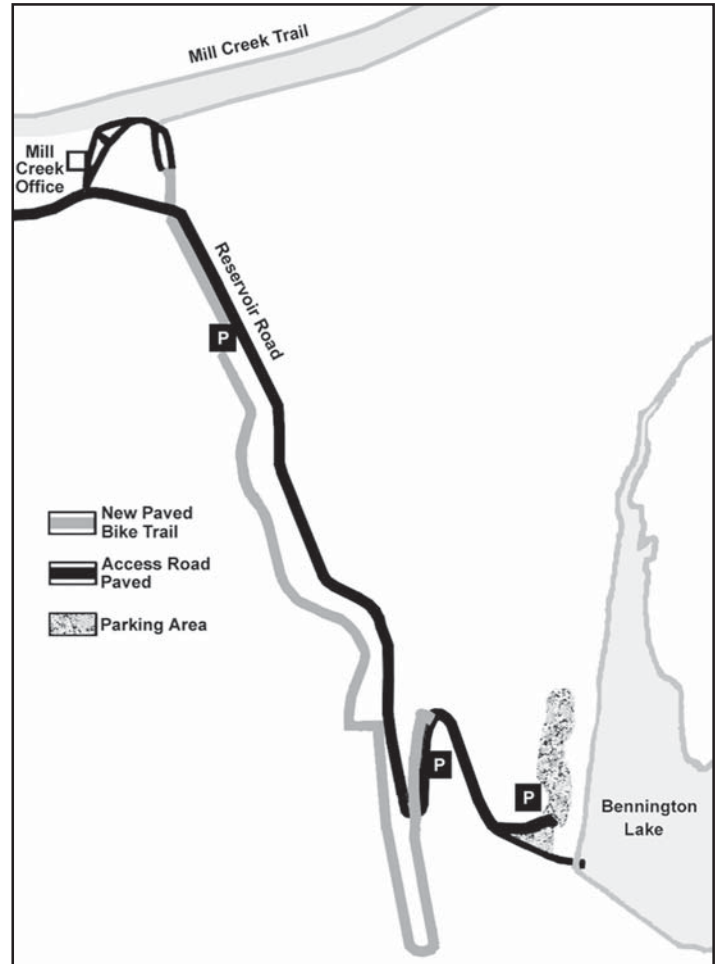
"We wanted the trail to have an easier slope than the road," Thompson explained. "We reduced the grade of slope so it would meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards, making it safe for strollers, people with disabilities and young kids on bikes and the elderly."

The blacktop-paved trail begins near the Mill Creek

Project office and end at the final curve of Reservoir Road leading to the Bennington Lake parking area. A few final touches remain before the trail can be considered done.

"The trail is open for visitors right now, but we'll have to wait for warmer temperatures to paint the bicycle lane on it and rehabilitate disturbed vegetation," said Thompson.

For more information about Mill Creek Project, its trail system and other outdoor recreational opportunities, call (509) 527-7160.



Duane West, a project engineer in Walla Walla District's Construction Division, and Jim Phillips, owner of Phillips Construction, inspect the new trail leading to Bennington Lake as workers touch up a paint job (photo by Steve Thompson).

## On the Cover...

Corps employees at Ice Harbor Lock and Dam join other local first-responders to train for emergency medical situations that may occur in nearby areas. Walla Walla County fire departments near Burbank, Wash., often train together during mass casualty exercises (photo by Gina Schwetz).



## Intercom



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Laurie Newsome, an electronics systems control craftsman at Ice Harbor Lock and Dam and volunteer wildland firefighter and emergency medical technician for Walla Walla County Fire Station Number 54, reassures two young mock accident victims trapped inside an overturned van during a training exercise (photo by Gina Schwetz).

# Corps volunteers augment community response team

by Heather Humphreys and Gina Schwetz

Their paths seldom cross during a typical workday at Ice Harbor Lock and Dam. But, these five Walla Walla District employees know how to pull together in an emergency – they even practice for it.

Randy Reynolds, Lanell Adams, Laurie Newsome, Richard Lloyd and Heather Humphreys hold vastly different jobs at the dam. Off duty, they share a common bond of volunteerism in their community and emergency medical expertise.

When an emergency strikes, they join career firemen, medical personnel and other volunteers at local fire departments near Burbank, Washington.

“It’s often a mix of the five of us from Ice Harbor who meet at the ambulance bay,” said Newsome, an electronics systems control craftsman at the dam. “We work together on emergency calls and during training.”

“Community volunteers are essential for small town fire departments,” said Don Perry, Walla Walla County Fire District Number 5 chief. “My full-time staff is small. Volunteers like the Corps folks can sometimes make the difference between life and death for an accident victim.”

Ice Harbor’s emergency medical service training for project employees expanded over recent years to include cooperative training with local emergency service organizations.

During the past year, fire, police, divers and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers personnel trained together at the dam and got certified on in-water dive, confined space and high-to-low angle rescue techniques.

The combined training benefits all parties, according to project officials.

“Ice Harbor relies on the response of the Walla Walla Fire District Number 5 personnel. It is important that we are familiar with the fire department’s capabilities,” said Adams, natural resources manager at the dam. “We also need them to be just as familiar with our facilities and the challenges they may face, for example, when going down into the generator turbine pit to save the life of one of our own who has become sick or injured.”



Richard Lloyd, a volunteer first responder firefighter's helmet as he suits up for training







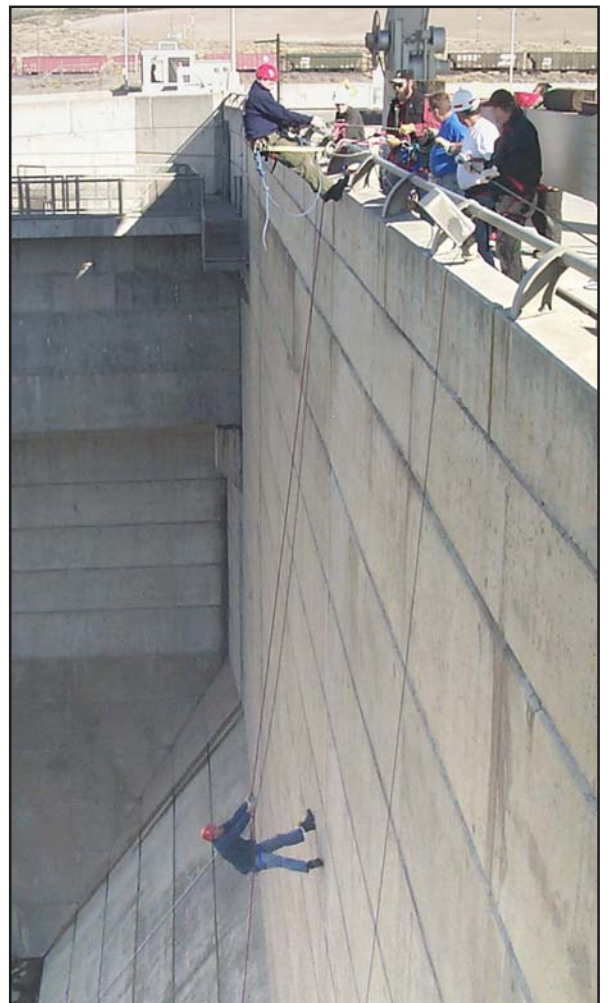
Wildland and structure firefighter, switches his Corps park ranger hat for a firefighter helmet at Walla Walla County Fire Station Number 51 (photo by Heather Humphreys).



Emergency response volunteers, including several Walla Walla District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, employees join full-time firefighters during training to rescue mock accident victims and prepare them for ambulatory transport (photo by Gina Schwetz).

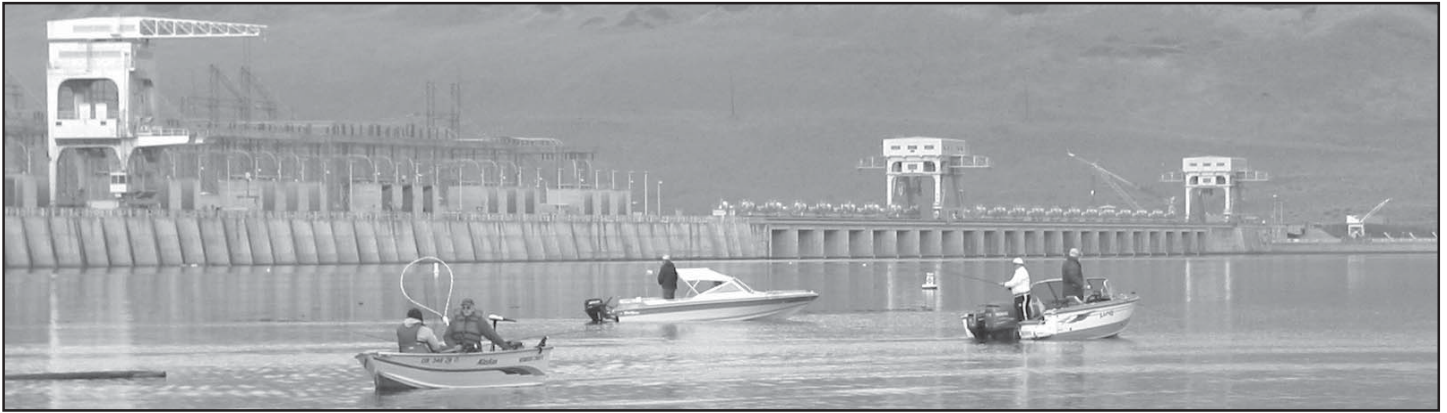


Above, Laurie Newsome, at right, and fellow volunteer emergency responder, Megan Perry, carefully maneuver a mock accident victim from a vehicle. Left, volunteers for Walla Walla County Fire Station Number 54 Heather Humphreys, environmental protection specialist, and Lanell Adams, natural resources manager, both from Ice Harbor project, treat a fellow volunteer's cuts after the training exercise (photos by Gina Schwetz).



Ice Harbor Lock and Dam's 100-foot walls present an unique opportunity for local emergency response teams to practice high-to-low rescue techniques (photo by Laurie Newsome).





High numbers of returning salmon and steelhead draw fishermen to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dams on the Columbia River.

## Fall chinook runs lure fishermen to McNary

Story and photo by Gina Schwetz

Fish counts for 2003 indicate numbers of inland-migrating chinook and steelhead passing McNary Lock and Dam remain well above the 10-year average. The returning fish appear to be luring high numbers of fishermen to project waters.

“On weekends, it’s not unusual to have about 100 boats with lines in the water out on the upstream side of the dam,” said Dave Coleman, McNary operations manager.

Fish counting at McNary ended Oct. 31. Project officials reported 421,359 chinook passed the dam

this year, making 2003 the second-highest passage on record. Steelhead totaled 297,337 – a fourth-highest count for that species. 2001 held the highest passage numbers on record for both species. The 10-year average for chinook is 199,800; steelhead is 187,802.

## Open season lets employees change TSP contributions

Army Benefits Center - Civilian  
(Sept. 2003 newsletter)

Thrift Savings Plan participants can change their contribution amounts through Dec. 15.

This open season, FERS employees can elect to contribute up to 14 percent of basic pay each pay period, up to the 2004 IRS annual limit of \$13,000. CSRS employees and uniformed services members can contribute up to 9 percent of basic pay, up to the IRS limit.

All changes made between Oct. 15 and Dec. 13 will be made effective during the Dec. 14-27 pay period. All elections made after Dec. 13 will be effective at the start of the pay period after the election is made.

Hard copy TSP forms will not be accepted. Even though the TSP website refers to completing a TSP-1, Election Form, that information is for all agencies other than Army. Army employees must use ABC.

To enroll or change your contribution amount, go to the ABC website [www.abc.army.mil](http://www.abc.army.mil) or contact ABC by telephone at 1-877-276-9287.

All changes to distribution of money between funds in your TSP account or allocation of future contributions must be made through the TSP website at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov).

## Honey, I'm home!



U.S. Army Spc. Jon Zak surprises his wife, Kelli Zak, an architect in Engineering Division, by making an unannounced, fresh-from-the-desert visit Oct. 29 to her work cubicle in the Walla Walla District headquarters building. Jon serves with the 94th Engineer Battalion, deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He and Kelli’s mother planned the surprise when Jon’s unit gave him a short-notice opportunity to take leave from his Baghdad-based company (photo by Gina Schwetz).

# 'Top Dog' named during competition at Mill Creek

Story and photos by Dutch Meier

Sometimes you just have to speak the language. Using a vocabulary of whistles, chirps, hand signals and oral commands, members of the Inland Empire English Springer Spaniel Club held their 32<sup>nd</sup> annual two-day field trials recently at the Mill Creek Project near Walla Walla, Wash.

"We've had a long relationship with this group out of Spokane, Wash.," said Steve Thompson, park manager at Mill Creek. "Since they first came to use this facility, they've always taken great care of the resources. They keep coming back, and they tell us there's nowhere else in the region that gives them a chance to work these dogs like they can here."

Hunting dogs with spotted coats of liver or black, mixed with white patches spent the weekend racing about, sniffing for scent, then flushing pheasants to be brought down by professional shooters and retrieved by the dogs. The hatchery-raised birds were planted up and down the hills so the spaniels could respond to the commands of the dog handlers as they sought and delivered the harvested birds.

Dogs and handlers from around the Pacific Northwest gathered Sept. 27 and 28 to compete in categories for "Amateur All-Age" and "Open All-Age" English Springer Spaniels.

"We love having this event here at Mill Creek because it's such a wonderful place to test the abilities and training of these magnificent animals," said John Prideaux, club president, from Spokane. "The terrain here, with its mix of grasses, bushes, trees and other cover, gives us a chance to really put these dogs through their paces. It's the best we have available to us along the entire Pacific Coast. This year we had about 40 dogs competing in the amateur category and 35 in the open competition."

Regardless of how each animal did, every dog won praise, some earned ribbons, others trophies. The event closed with the presentation of the Randy Barke Memorial Gunners' Choice Trophy, which is awarded to the dog judged by the professional shooters as the dog they'd most want to work with on a regular hunt. This year's trophy went to three-year-old "Missy," owned by Gary Hanvey from White Sulphur Springs, Mont., who also brought home the award last year with another spaniel.



Gary Hanvey and Missy show off the "Gunners' Trophy" for being the dog most popular with the professional shooters.



Benji, delivers a rooster pheasant to handler Jeff Miller, Rochester, Wash.



This hatchery-raised rooster pheasant was found and flushed by an English Springer Spaniel in the 32<sup>nd</sup> annual competition.



# Workers scramble to restore service after boat hits gate

Story and photos by Gina Schwetz

A boat accident Oct. 22 in the navigation lock at Ice Harbor Dam stopped traffic on the lower Snake River for 43 hours, according to Walla Walla District officials there.

The lock was closed to all vessels at about 5:30 p.m. when a cruise ship exiting the lock struck the upstream gate. The boat's 188 passengers disembarked and were bussed to Portland, Oregon.

The *Empress of the North*, operated by American West Steamboat Company of Seattle, Wash., was authorized to leave the lock on Oct. 23 by the U. S. Coast Guard. Engineering experts from the District headquarters, working closely with project maintenance personnel rushed to get the lock back in service. The lock reopened to commercial river traffic at about 12:30 p.m. on Oct. 24.

"The damage to the boat was only cosmetic," said Joel Perry, a spokesman for American West. "None of the passengers or crew were injured."

The gate is being inspected to determine the amount of damage sustained. District members came up with an interim solution using a floating bulkhead that allowed the lock to go back into limited service for commercial traffic only.

"The lock will be closed to recreational boats indefinitely," said Scott Sutliff, operations manager at Ice Harbor.

Sutliff added that accidents in the lock are rare. The last lock accident there occurred in 1995.

The investigation into the cause of the accident is ongoing.



Ice Harbor workers move the bulkhead into position so the *Empress of the North* can leave the navigation lock.



Above, Ice Harbor workers use a World War II landing craft to maneuver the bulkhead into the navigation lock. Left, Bill Rose and Marvin Cramer, get an up-close look at the damaged upstream gate as they are lowered into the lock to rescue two salmon stranded between the bulkhead and the gate.