CONSTELLATION

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In this issue

page 4
Time to get your records in order for taxes

page 6 & 7
Mail Room personnel continue work as usual

page 8
District librarian publishes novel

page 9
Post Office honors black writer with stamp

A recent view of the Hart-Miller Island south cell. *(File photo)*

Corps to improve wildlife habitat at Hart-Miller Island

by Doug Garman
Public Affairs Office

In a project cooperation agreement signed last month between the Baltimore District and Maryland Port Administration, the two agencies agreed to re-create hundreds of acres of bird habitat on the south cell of Hart-Miller Island.

Located in open waters of the Chesapeake Bay in Baltimore County, Hart-Miller Island is a 1,110-acre, man-made island that is divided into two cells formed by dikes.

Since the mid-1980s, the cells have served as placement sites for dredged material from the port of Baltimore.

The island's north cell is still in use and has become known for its extensive bird populations. However, the 300-acre south cell, which was closed by the state in 1991, experienced a significant decrease in the quantity and quality of bird habitat due to the placement of dredged material.

Over time, as more material was added to this south cell, it lost its mudflats and shallow wetlands, which by some estimates, provided habitat for over 267 species of birds.

''We have learned that wet dredged material provides excellent bird habitat,'' said Steven Kopecky, Corps project manager.

''This project will, in essence, allow us to re-create many of these wetlands and mudflats. By rewatering the site, we will be able to provide seasonal flooding

(Continued on p. 3)

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Commander's Comment

What it means to be a public servant

by Col. Charles J. Fiala, Jr.
Commander & District Engineer

The term "public service" is sometimes used with little respect. However, I want you to know that what the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers does adds value to the quality of American life.

Here's a story that illustrates that fact. Although the Army is a good steward of the environment today, in the past, it was accepted practice to bury unwanted items, including chemicals, munitions and potentially contaminated paraphernalia.

As part of an environmental cleanup of those former disposal methods, we are excavating pits at Fort Detrick, Md. We've found several buried items.

Over strenuous objections, our Environmental Remediation Resident Office personnel have insisted that these items be tested. It's the *right thing* to determine what they are, so they can be dealt with in a manner that safeguards the environment and future generations.

Most of you have heard another similar story. Baltimore District engineers pushed hard for, and ultimately succeeded in, adding structural reinforcements to the exterior walls during renovation of the Pentagon's Wedge 1. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of lives were saved Sept. 11, 2001, by their professional insistence on doing the *right thing* instead of the expedient thing.

A less dramatic but very far-reaching example comes from our Regulatory Branch. Traditionally, developers would seek Corps permits near the end of their planning process after they had already invested a lot of thought and money in their projects.

They would naturally resist when we required changes for environmental reasons.

Recognizing and accepting this fact, Regulatory Branch set out several years ago to encourage developers to involve us earlier in the process. We could then influence decisions before investments in time and money made altering plans more costly and difficult.

Regulatory evaluators formed relationships with local governments and development consultants, because developers go to them first. They also pressed for early involvement in road corridor planning with Maryland and Pennsylvania state highway departments.

These proactive efforts were not required, but they were the *right thing* to do.

All three examples embody public service. They demonstrate good stewardship of the environment, taxpayers' pocketbooks and our responsibility to America.

I'm sure your division, office or section can easily offer other examples of doing—not just the minimum requirement or only an adequate job—but the *right thing*.

The Regulatory Program uses a public service creed that advances this principle. To summarize, the creed says that public service is a public trust that is earned. To keep that trust, we must conduct ourselves professionally, fairly and reasonably, knowledgeably and honestly. And we must act with timeliness, accountability and respect for our customers.

These are more than just words. They are our culture—they separate us from many others. They are the way we do our business.

The Corps' strategic goals further emphasize the point. To paraphrase: we are professional people, working in teams, to deliver quality goods and services to our customers and to build relationships that serve the nation.

That is "public service." It's what we do every day, and it has value without price.

Essayons.

Project Cooperation Agreement signing to fund Hart-Miller project for better habitat

(continued from cover)

and habitat during the key spring and fall migratory seasons.''

Specifically, this project involves the creation of seven acres of trees, a three-acre pond, a bird nesting island, 184 acres of wetlands and mudflats for shorebird habitat and 110 acres of upland grasses designed as habitat for songbirds.

A pumping system will also be added to manage water levels in the project area.

Kopecky added that because this habitat is on an island, access by both people and natural predators is limited. This makes the site particularly suited for nesting terns, migratory shorebirds and waterfowl. As a result, the area has become a key stopover site during the annual migrations.

The project is expected to cost $5.4 million, which will be shared by the Corps and state. Construction is scheduled to begin this summer and take about a year to complete.

Once built, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources will operate and maintain the project.

In addition to support from other resource agencies, the Hart-Miller Citizens Oversight Committee, the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Commission and the Maryland Ornithological Society endorse the project.

Corps, New York partner to restore hundreds of acres of wetlands

The Baltimore District and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation plan to endorse a feasibility cost-share agreement in several weeks.

This agreement could result in the restoration of several hundred acres of wetlands in the Upper Susquehanna River basin.

As part of the agreement, the two agencies will conduct a comprehensive study to identify areas that would be suitable for wetland restoration.

Areas where officials will look are in the Otsego Lake watershed and along the downstream Susquehanna River mainstem to approximately Colliersville, N.Y.

Once restored, the wetlands will perform valuable functions, such as capturing harmful sediments, reducing nutrient pollution, enhancing water quality, reducing nuisance flood damages, enhancing recreational and educational opportunities, and providing important nesting habitats for wildlife native to Susquehanna's headwaters.

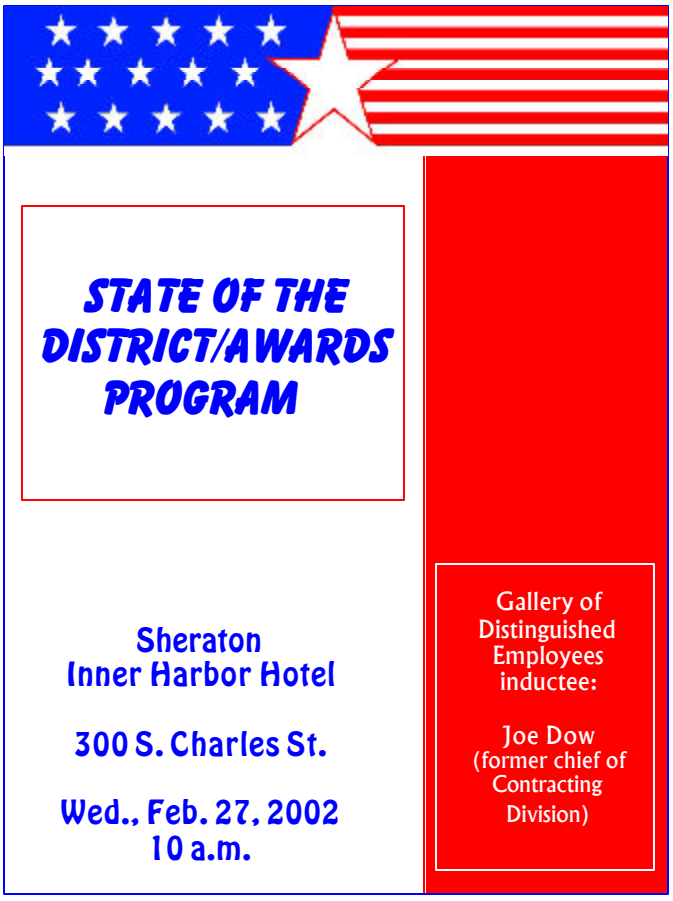
"We are initially looking at about 500 acres of restored wetlands and related grassland habitats, but there could be more," said Amy Guise, Baltimore District project manager for the study.

"In this study, we will identify those areas within the watershed that are most suitable for restoration."

The study, known officially as the Upper Susquehanna River Basin-Cooperstown Area Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study, is the first phase in a larger effort to restore wetland habitats and improve soil and water conservation practices within the river basin.

The Corps and state are sharing the costs of the study, which total $1.6 million. Officials estimate the study will be completed in December 2004.

In addition to receiving congressional support, the study is supported by other federal resource agencies and local universities and environmental groups.



Groundhog Day:

Phil, Jimmy seem to get better with predictions each year

If you are inclined to believe the prediction of a groundhog, you'll do better on Feb. 2 than believers did 20 years ago and before.

Whether you check a local critter, or rely on one of the more famous prognosticators like Punxsutawney Phil and Sun Prairie Jimmy, you have a 59 percent chance that the not-too-pretty creature will be right.

The National Climactic Data Center concludes that the animals' predictions since 1887 had an overall accuracy rate of just 39 percent.

Over the last 20 years, however, they have become more skillful and have raised their average correctness by 20 percent.

Punxsutawney Phil of Punxsutawney, Pa., started predicting in 1887.

More recently, Sun Prairie, Wisc., a town that is rich in groundhogs, declared itself to be the official "Groundhog Capital of the World" in 1950, with Sun Prairie Jimmy looking for his shadow each year.

Ways to motivate without spending a dime

Money as a motivator has limitations, according to Cal LeMon, Ph.D., president of The Creative Edge, Inc. He says money as a motivator is unavoidable because no one can live without it, but it is overrated, ineffective, expensive and complicated. Instead of motivating employees with money, LeMon suggests the following 14 ways:

Practice your principles. Have integrity.

Verbalize your values. Make them plain.

Scream your satisfaction. Recognize employee achievement as soon as possible.Use recognition programs, such as courteous employee, in your division or office.

Manage your mania. Only you can rein in your counterproductive problems and issues and prevent them from affecting your employees.

Raise the bar for your most difficult employee(s). Higher expectations often pay off.

Bring wonder to your work. Make things interesting. Find non-linear ways to get jobs done, particularly the ones no one likes.

Publicize your problem-solving. If you have a business problem, let your employees know; they might have the right solution. Key: remain optimistic especially in tough times.

Master your mentoring. Spend time with new employees.

Employ your empowerment. Share your authority.

Mine your minds. Reward creativity among employees.

Train your toughest. Provide education and training opportunities for all.

Grab your garbage. Practice ''dirty hands'' leadership. Don't expect your employees to do jobs you won't touch.

Vent your vision. Talk strategically; then walk the talk.

Dance your dream. Throw a party for absolutely no good reason.

Courtesy Pages

''This wouldn't have happened if you had read the snow blower owner's manual.''

Courteous employee of the month

Janet Harvin

Janet Harvin, secretary in the Hazardous, Toxic and Radioactive Waste Branch, has been named courteous employee for the month of February.

''Janet has consistently demonstrated outstanding professional, courteous and caring qualities when working with co-workers, supervisors and external customers. She provides proactive and timely responses to internal and external customers' needs. Janet's pleasant disposition, can-do attitude, outstanding efficiency and courteous manners have been a tremendous asset to the HTRW.''

– Stan Gembicki
Chief, Engineering Division

EAA's holiday family

The Employees Activities Association sponsored a holiday family again this year—a family of four children, a granddaughter and mother.

Individuals in Baltimore District and the EAA contributed over $200 to buy clothing, toys and blankets for the family.

''Thank you for your support; we really appreciate your gifts,''said the mother. Her daughter added, ''Thank you for the gifts; it was really a blessing to my mother.''

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Official Business

Harvest for the Hungry

The annual food-giving program of the District, Harvest for the Hungry, will run through March. Key persons in each office have been designated and boxes have been placed for donations.

Employees are urged to contribute canned or boxed food. Perishables cannot be used in this program.

Answers to Olympic Quiz:

1. Jim Thorpe, who had received money for playing baseball.
2. 1916 (World War I); 1940 and 1944 (WW II).
3. Jesse Owens. By winning, he showed that Germans were not the "master race."
4. 1968 in Mexico City. Tom Smith and John Carlos did it to protest racism.
5. Palestinian terrorists killed 11 Israeli athletes.
6. 1980, in protest of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In 1984 Soviets retaliated claiming poor security arrangements.