



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Rock Island District

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Spotlight on the District

By Mark Kane

Mike Cox

Operations Manager, Illinois Waterway

Prior to joining the Corps of Engineers, our paths vary greatly from person to person, and in some cases it involves sacrifices and risks in the pursuit of a career with the Corps. Mike Cox, operations manager for the Illinois Waterway, said he worked for three years to get his foot in the door and a job with the Corps, and while it got him in, it came at a price ... literally.

"Before I started with the Corps, I was still trying to find myself," said Cox while he laughed and jokingly said he still doesn't know what he wants to do when he grows up. "I was working for the Illinois Tollway system and received a job offer from the Corps for a survey technician, GS-03. While I really liked what I was doing on the Tollway (roadwork and mechanic duties, including tuning up and test driving state police cars), I decided I did not want to do the mechanic job for the rest of my life and I really wanted an outside job, so I took a 40-percent cut in pay to start with the Corps. Boy, did I really get the ribbing from family, co-workers and friends for making that decision, but it seems to have turned out okay so far."

For Cox, taking that risk has resulted in earning the position as the District's operations manager for the Illinois Waterway where he supervises and leads the Illinois Waterway Project Office, Peoria Boatyard, maintenance crews and dredging crew, eight locks and seven dams along the ILWW, the Illinois Waterway Visitor Center at Starved Rock Lock and two flood reduction reservoirs along Farm Creek in East Peoria.

"My main function is to help make sure that leaders and crews get what they need to operate and maintain our waterway and structures to fulfill the Corps missions of navigation, recreation, flood damage reduction and others," said Cox.

While those duties fill his day, Cox said it's the people he works with that he likes most about his job.

"The people – the Corps employees, here in Peoria and along the waterway (the very best), on the other projects and elsewhere (yes, including the Clock Tower), the customers and users of the waterway, and our partners who work with us toward a balanced approach for using the waterway system – these partners can be environmental advocates, state and federal resource and regulatory agency reps, local and regional users of the waterway and/or its products and many, many others," said Cox. "I



thoroughly enjoy working, meeting, and helping any part of the diverse population living and working along our project. I am always fascinated by people I meet along the system; people often have such passion, incentive and vision – this can be so contagious and I never stop learning from these people about our project."

Cox was born in Los Angeles and moved to southeast side of Chicago when he was five.

"About a mile and a half from Lake Michigan, would you believe?" said Cox. "So, I'm a big city boy, and I like metro areas when I visit them, but I fully enjoy living in

smaller communities."

That shows since Cox now lives in Geneseo, Ill., with his wife Laurie. Cox and his wife have two daughters, Debbie, who is 25-years-old, a physics major, and in her third year as a graduate student at the University of New Mexico, in Albuquerque, N.M.; and Katie, who is nearly 22, a trombone performance and linguistics major, and in her senior year at Truman State in Kirksville, Mo.

Away from his job, Cox enjoys a number of hobbies.

"We all still love to fish, but for some reason Laurie and I have been out only three times this year, so far," said Cox. "We like house and yard work and I love bike riding, swimming, and running boats; I still have a Coast Guard license and try to keep it active. I took a week and a half off last month and got to steer on two tows; one went into the north side of Chicago a couple of times, and the other went from just below Starved Rock down to Alton, Ill. And last year, I had the honor of helping run the LST (Landing Ship Tank) 325 from Alton back to its home port in Evansville, Ind. I take lots of pictures at work and at home, and actually catalog them, sort of. I also help lead an adult

Sunday school class in Geneseo, and that helps keep me on my toes and my life in perspective."

Cox's advice to anyone reading this article is, "There is always a bright side; no matter what is happening, no matter what is tearing your life, or your family or your job apart, no matter how bad things are getting for you or with your family or friends, I firmly believe that there is always a bright side. Whether you believe in God, or family or friends or work or outside work or hobbies, with the right attitude you can find good in any situation; and that will help you get through the bad times – really." 🙏

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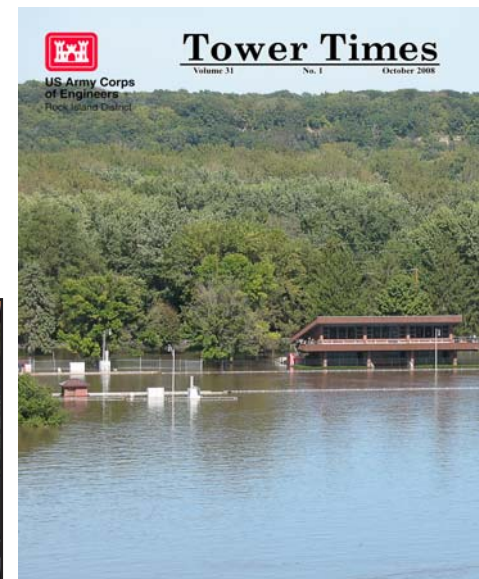
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On the Cover

The Illinois Waterway Visitor Center and Starved Rock Lock and Dam experience record flooding from the Illinois River during the morning hours of Sept. 18.

Photo by Kevin Ewbank, Illinois Waterway Visitor Center.

Illinois Waterway Responds to Record Flooding

By Mark Kane

In September, as a result of the remnants of Hurricane Ike, significant rainfall fell across north central Illinois and northeastern Missouri, causing rapid rises to water levels on the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers and several tributaries.

Both Rivers experienced high water, but the flooding occurring on the Illinois River was record breaking from Dresden Island Lock and Dam to LaSalle, Ill., a distance of more than 50 miles of Waterway. At the crest, the river exceeded flood stage at those locations by approximately 10 feet.

In response, the Rock Island District dispatched 10 Flood Area Engineers to impacted communities along the Illinois River Basin to provide technical assistance and information.

The District's Emergency Operations Center coordinated requests for emergency supplies. The flood-fight materials distributed by the District included more than 82,000 sandbags and 25 rolls of polyethylene sheeting. More than 200,000 sand bags were supplied from the District's Flood-Fighting Center of Expertise, located on Rock Island Arsenal, to DuPage County, Ill., to support the Chicago District's flood-fighting needs in response to flooding in the Chicago metropolitan area.

Lock closures on the Illinois Waterway included TJ O'Brien, Dresden Island, Marseilles, and Starved Rock, which suffered the most extensive damages due to flooding.

The Illinois Waterway Visitor's Center located at the lock had to be closed for a number of weeks. Floodwater filled the basement and flowed into the main floor of the center. Bob Petruney, Illinois Waterway Visitor Center, said there was sewage, dead fish and mold in the basement.

Jeff Blazekovich, the lockmaster at Dresden Island Lock and Dam, said, "This is the highest I have seen it and I have been here 22 years."

Mike Zerbonia, chief of the Illinois Waterway Maintenance Section, was the lead Flood Area Engineer on the ILWW from Ottawa, Ill., to Beardstown, Ill., during the flood event.

"We got people out right away on the 14th," said Zerbonia. "We mobilized people, assigned them to different areas on the river, started patrols ... I think our response was real good. We interacted with the media, held daily meetings with river carriers and the Coast Guard, and coordinated traffic on the river."

Zerbonia has worked on the ILWW for 23 years and said while he remembers high water events on the Illinois River such as those experienced in 1995, 2002, 2007, and as recent as March, he said this flood was a record breaker.

"The river levels were raising 7 to 8 feet in 24 hours, in one case 10 feet," said Zerbonia. "Our lock people were going crazy getting things up and out and protected from getting damaged. The Illinois Waterway lock and dams all contributed man hours pulling equipment out of the water's way. People at the Visitors Center have been working late hours during the weekend pulling



Starved Rock Lock and Dam on the Illinois River experiences record flooding in this photo taken the morning of Sept. 18. Photo by Bob Petruney, Illinois Waterway Visitor Center.

stuff out; it's been a total team effort."

On the ground in the communities, Zerbonia said there was a lot of interaction and coordination.

"The event was exhaustive, but we were able to interact with a lot of people," said Zerbonia. "We talked with levee commissioners, visited and patrolled levees, coordinated with the Coast Guard, and looked at pictures of past flood events to see what was done in the past to relate it to what was going on today. That was on top of balancing it with existing work."

On top of the challenges presented by the flood, an ILWW repair crew working at the Starved Rock Lock and Dam on June 18, rescued a 44-year-old Ottawa man from the surging waters of the Illinois River. About 6:30 a.m., an unidentified man fell into the river near Ottawa, floating downriver until he was seen about 10:30 a.m. by John Burger.

Burger, Steve Bielser, John and Lisa Perrault and Ken Mulally immediately got in a boat and reached the man as he floated within 150 yards of the dam. The crew threw the man a life buoy, pulled him onboard and brought him to safety where he was given food, coffee, dry clothes and a blanket.

Starved Rock Lock and Dam lockmaster, Mark Witalka and Corps employees Jay McNall and Matt Dillon later gave the man a boat ride to Utica, Ill., where emergency medical services were waiting to take him to Ottawa Regional Hospital.

Kevin Ewbank, lead ranger, Illinois Waterway Visitor Center, said he had the Utica Ambulance Dispatch contacted to respond to the event.

"I arrived at the intersection of Dee Bennett and 178 before Utica EMS and the lock boat reached the location," said Ewbank. "After they arrived, Utica EMS and I assisted the man from the boat and walked him to the ambulance. He was transported to Ottawa Regional Hospital where he successfully recovered." 🇺🇸



Left, LST 325 enters Lock 15 on Aug. 28, on its way to Moline, Ill., where it was docked for several days. Photo by Troy Larson, Safety Office. Below, LST 325 prepares to exit Lock 15 on its trek up the river. Photo by Mark Kane.



By Mark Kane

RESTORED WARSHIP LOCKS THROUGH DISTRICT

Some U.S. Navy veterans living in the Midwest kid around about the fact they're landlocked and refer to themselves as the "prairie navy" because it's not like you're going to see an ocean-going vessel on the waterways of middle-America ... until now.

Thanks to the restoration of one of the only LST, or Landing Ship Tank, ships still operating in the country, the LST 325 has given the prairie navy some hope of seeing an ocean going ship right here in the Midwest.

In late August, the decommissioned World War II amphibious vessel – turned floating museum – traveled from its homeport in Evansville, Ind., down the Ohio River then up the Mississippi River with scheduled stops in Hannibal, Mo., Moline, Ill., Clinton, Iowa, and Fort Madison, Iowa.

During the ship's voyage up and back down the Mississippi it locked through Locks 14-22, a sight that had Corps

employees breaking out their cameras to document the war ship.

The LST was designed to land battle-ready tanks, troops and supplies directly onto enemy shores. It's almost as long as a football field, and measures 329 feet in length, is 50-feet wide, has a height to the top mast of 65 feet, and travels at 12 mph. These ships were useful during World War II, the Korea and Vietnam wars and belonged to all services including the Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, Air Force and Merchant Marine.

Most LSTs were scrapped or given to other countries. In the summer of 2000, LST-325 was saved from the scrap yard in Souda Bay, Crete, Greece, by an aging crew of 50 Navy veterans. That number dwindled to just 30 by the time they left Crete on Nov. 14 for the 6,200-mile voyage. After 13 days on the Mediterranean Sea, a stop in Gibraltar became necessary for major repairs. On Dec. 12, a crew of 29 sailed for home, arriving Jan.

10, 2001.

The men of the USS LST Ship Memorial have a mission to educate everyone about the role the LST played in keeping America free and to preserve the memory of these ships and the men who served and died on them. The names of all who died while serving on LSTs will be displayed on the ship.

The Memorial Board has one goal — to be able to sail the ship under its own power, up the inland rivers, and along the coasts, allowing all to set foot on her decks and to become a museum and learning tool for all ages.

The LSTs were built in a little over three years.

One was produced every five days and there were a total of 1,005 LSTs at the end of World War II.

Only 23 LSTs were lost to enemy action, a total of 46 lost for all reasons.

For additional information regarding LST 325, visit www.lstememorial.org.



Investing In Our People

Around the District

Red Rock Volunteers Earn President's Award

The annual volunteer appreciation picnic sponsored by the Red Rock Lake Association was held Aug. 28.

Twenty-five volunteers donated more than 7,400 hours at the reservoir this summer and have reached a cumulative total of more than 27,000 hours.

In addition to the local awards, Marilyn and Jerry Lester were awarded the President's Volunteer Service Award. A minimum of 4,000 hours is needed to receive the President's Volunteer Service Award and the Lester's reached 5,834.50 hours this year.

Saylorville Hosts Prairie Festival

Saylorville Lake celebrated fall at Redfeather Prairie.

Park rangers and maintenance staff designed and mowed a maze that opened

to the public from Sept. 13 through Oct. 5.

In cooperation with the Polk County Conservation Board, a separate event was held to celebrate heritage and natural life on the prairie. Leah Deeds, park ranger, Saylorville Lake, said that event, held Sept. 16-18, exposed approximately 600 4th graders from area schools to plants, animals, and life on the prairie.

District Earns Planning Awards

Jodi Staebell, Programs and Project Management, earned the Corps' 2007 Planning Excellence Award, which she formally received in a ceremony at District headquarters Sept. 8.

The District's Illinois River Basin Restoration Comprehensive Plan Study Team earned the Corps' 2007 Outstanding Planning Achievement Award at the same ceremony. Team members included **Ron Deiss, Karen Hagerty, Sharryn Jackson, Lonn McGuire, Marshall Plumley, Mary**

Rodkey, Jodi Staebell, and Brad Thompson, Programs and Project Management; **Heather Bishop and Troy Hythecker,** Engineering and Construction; and **Joanne Lieving,** Real Estate.

Retirements ...

Delmar Burk, maintenance worker, Lake Red Rock, Operations Division, retired Sept. 30, after dedicating 14 years and 2½ months to the federal government.

Richard Sharar, park ranger, Lake Red Rock, Operations Division, retired Sept. 30, after dedicating 18 years and 10 months to the federal government.

Sympathy ...



Carl Cole, 92, of Wilton, Iowa, died Aug. 22, at Unity Hospital in Muscatine.

Cole was a lock operator at Lock and Dam 16 and later worked as a construction inspector for the Rock Island Arsenal where he retired.

He served his country in the U.S. Navy during World War II in the Pacific Theater.



GOLF CHAMPIONS – The Rock Island District Golf League's end-of-the-year outing, held Sept. 22, awarded first place honors to the championship team of **Dan Johnson,** Engineering and Construction, **Steve Russell,** Operations Division, **Jon Warren,** Real Estate, and **Jerry Skalak,** Programs and Project Management.

NOTE

Please send achievements, births, and obituaries for this page to the editor at: cemvr-cc@usace.army.mil.

Without your input, we may not receive the information that enables us to inform the District.

SUPPORT, SACRIFICE FOR CORPS

Thanks to our employees who are deployed or have completed duty in support of the Global War on Terrorism, as well as those who are deployed or have completed duty in support of Natural Disaster Relief Operations

Thank You For Serving!



A listing of all the current District employees who are, or have been, involved in supporting the Global War on Terrorism and Natural Disaster Relief Operations can be seen on the District's Internet at:



www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/TowerTimes/support-for-corps/support-for-corps.htm



Watershed Planning Pilot Studies Completed Presentations Available on the Web

By Camie Knollenberg, Planning and Programs Management

Final presentations for the five watershed planning pilot studies were made in a briefing to the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) John Paul Woodley, Jr. and to Headquarters Civil Works senior leaders on Sept. 3. Study managers for each of the studies (Middle Mississippi River Corridor Study, Great Lakes Habitat Initiative, Virgin River Watershed Study, Western States Watershed Study, and the Delaware River Basin Study) discussed study results, products and tools produced, lessons learned, and collaborative efforts of each study. Additionally, stakeholders representing the study basins were present and provided their perspectives on the studies, the future use of products, and the importance of the Corps leadership role in each of the watershed studies.

The presentations and final reports can be found on the Planning Communities of Practice website at:
www.usace.army.mil/cw/cecw-cp/news/watershed_06.html

Provisions of these two-year studies were provided by the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, 2006 (PL 109-103), which directed the Secretary to conduct a full federal expense comprehensive analyses that examines multi-jurisdictional use and management of water resources on a watershed or regional scale. Funds of \$4.45 million were provided in the General Expense account.

The response to the presentations from senior leaders was overwhelmingly positive. The take-away points as summarized by Planning Community of Practice Deputy Harry Kitch are:

- The studies all involved partnerships with pre-existing organizations, which allowed these efforts to further build on regional collaboration within the watersheds.
- Communication prior to the efforts was frequently cited as poor.
- There were substantial benefits to establishing a forum and bringing stakeholder groups together such as: improved communication, sharing of information, learning each other's capabilities, leveraging of resources, and better coordination.
- This is a slow process. Sound planning and collaboration takes time.
- Local groups valued the Corps' expertise.
- USACE needs to figure out how to continue participating, either in the lead or in keeping a seat at the table.

Secretary Woodley stated he had envisioned these pilot studies as "proof of concept" exercises, and that he was proud to say we have proved this concept. He sees the Corps as a convener in watershed collaboration and cites its unique capability to perform at the watershed scale with disparate stakeholders. He emphasized that the Corps plays an important role as a decision support agency, developing and assessing alternatives so that everyone can have a common picture of what the alternatives are, and how they stack up. Having proved the concept of what we need in water resources management, Woodley stated that he will try to institutionalize this approach. He has encouraged the Corps to find ways to execute similar efforts in the future. ■

Bobber Finds a Home at Saylorville Lake

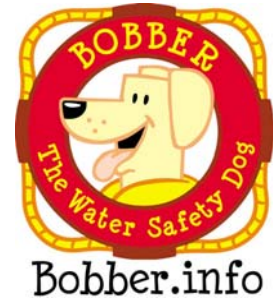


Saylorville Lake now has its own Water Safety Dog costume, which was put to immediate use during Labor Day weekend where he made his debut with reservoir visitors.

Emily Coffin, Saylorville Lake, said Bobber was a big hit with children and adults, and drew a large crowd at boat ramps, the shoreline, and at the Bob Shetler Picnic area.

Bobber is the Corps' official mascot and gives the reservoir rangers a new opportunity to spread the water safety message throughout the year.

Photo by Emily Coffin. 📷



Bobber the Water Safety Dog finishes giving a Corps water-safety flying disc to a young reservoir visitor during the Labor Day weekend events held at the lake.

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