



New York District FEST-A activates after Hurricane Ike slams into Texas

By Christopher Gardner, Public Affairs

PASADENA, Texas – New York District sent its Forward Engineering Support Team-Advanced (FEST-A) to Southeast Texas to help with the Corps of Engineers' overall recovery effort in the regions battered by Hurricane Ike in September.

The FEST-A is made up of highly skilled Corps of Engineers Civilians and Soldiers with a wide range of engineering backgrounds. They are trained to deploy and provide quick engineering expertise and support to combat engineers throughout the U.S. and abroad.

After Ike, the New York FEST-A made its way to Texas to help assess the infrastructure of impacted critical public facilities. The teams inspected approximately 300 public facilities around Southeast Texas, including fire stations, police stations, schools and hospitals.



New York District's Forward Engineering Support Team-Advanced (FEST-A) was one of two districts that deployed to Southeast Texas in the wake of Hurricane Ike. More than 25 members of the District volunteered to help with the disaster recovery. Photo Credit: Christopher Gardner, Public Affairs

"Typically, our team will come in and take a look at what you need, quick fix, to get you operational so that you can actually operate in your building," said Maj. Mike S. Ruppert, team leader, New York District FEST-A.

Ruppert said the team focuses primarily on structural integrity, then critical mechanical, power, water, security and ventilation issues that would allow facilities to at least get back to operational status.

While many facilities had already taken steps to return to operational status, the teams did find others struggling to reopen and in need of assistance.

For example, the New York FEST-A came across a fire department in a small town about 60 miles east of Houston that had serious structural integrity issues, plus its bay doors were all ripped off leaving the facility wide open. The building was still without power – leaving the community without a key public service at a bad time.

"The local area they were supporting had debris accumulation alongside the streets, pine trees piled five-foot high, six-foot wide at the bottom lining every street on both sides – dried out," said Richard Lavoie, project engineer, Fort Drum. "They had a burn ban in place, but if a fire started, it would have been catastrophic. We asked FEMA to make getting this facility back up and running a priority."

It's this type of training and expertise that makes FEST-A such a key member of New York District's emergency response initiative.





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U.S. Army Corps
of Engineers
New York District



In This Month's Issue



The FEST-A assumed the identity and colors of the 553rd, which has been activated and de-activated several times since it was initially formed in 1943 as a firefighting platoon in WWII. Photo Credit: Dan Desmet, Public Affairs

Maj. Mike Ruppert, team leader, New York District Forward Engineering Support Team-Advanced (FEST-A) stands with his team during an activation ceremony Oct. 31 in New York City. The activation will not change the FEST-A's mission of providing quick engineering expertise and support to missions in the U.S. and abroad, but now the team will officially be considered an Army unit (though still made up of Soldiers and Civilians) and assignments will come from both Headquarters USACE and U.S. Army Forces Command. Anyone who is interested in joining the FEST-A should contact Maj. Mike S. Ruppert at (845) 938-8315.

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The New York District Times welcomes submissions:
Please send articles & photos to: kenneth.wells@usace.army.mil



Colonel's Corner



District Team,

The year is coming to an end and while we're in the process of recovering from Thanksgiving and getting ready for the holiday season, I wanted to take this opportunity to write to you again in preparation for what's to come in 2009. As I said at our town hall meeting in October, 2008 was a fantastic year. We encountered numerous challenges and overcome them with a can-do attitude that is the essence of our Building Strong motto.

That being said, I have no doubt that the District will continue to excel in 2009 when we take on even bigger and more demanding projects. Chief among them is the Washington Headquarters Services project, a \$965 million facility scheduled to be completed by 2011.

The District will also start laying the groundwork for the new science center up at West Point while continuing our military construction efforts at Ft. Drum and Picatinny Arsenal. All of this work is vital to our country's efforts to keep providing our Soldiers with everything they need in order to face the challenges that lie ahead, and I am proud of the fact that New York District will play such a vital role in that process.

The District will be equally as busy on the civil works side of the house as well with the East River Bridges project, wetland restoration at Gerritsen Creek/Liberty State Park and beach nourishment missions in West Hampton, N.Y. and Long Branch, N.J. We will also oversee the completion of the ring levee in Bound Brook, N.J. and the beginning of the 50-foot deepening project in Port Jersey.

There will also be additional opportunities for deployment in keeping with the District's mandate to continue supporting the GRC. As I said during our town hall, anyone interested in deploying should speak with our District representatives at their earliest convenience. We will also be introducing a new Strategic Communication Policy, which will be in keeping with a directive given to us by LTG. Van Antwerp during the 2008 Summer Leaders Conference.

New York District is currently working on a plan to improve communication on all levels throughout the organization. Some of the new requirements will ensure project managers receive annual media training and every employee receives general guidance on what to do if contacted by the news media. New employees will also receive additional information and guidance during employee orientation briefings.

Lastly, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy and healthy holiday season. I am very proud of all of you and the great work you do. Thank you for your service to our country.



Col. Aniello L. Tortora
Commander

Essayons!





NJMC, Corps Rehabilitating the Meadowlands

By LaDonna Davis, Public Affairs

Over the past 38 years, the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) has been able to turn what was once an unsightly dumping ground into a breathtaking oasis that promotes natural wildlife, residential communities and business complexes. All of this is being done while also preserving one of the nation's most valuable assets: the environment. This is possible due to a partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District and the NJMC.

In recent years, the District has taken on a new mission: environmental restoration. By providing NJMC with engineering, technical studies and tools, the District is able to fulfill its environmental mandate and play a key role in restoring and preserving the environment's ecosystem. The District is currently heading up two studies with regards to meadowlands.

The first is the Hudson Raritan Estuary- Hackensack Meadowlands Restoration Feasibility Study, which focuses on restoring the environment in and around the meadowlands by carefully eliminating fill and undesirable vegetation that can



Working in tandem with the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission, the Army Corps of Engineers, New York District, has helped transform the meadowlands from a dilapidated wasteland into a prosperous conservation area. Photo Credit; LaDonna Davis, Public Affairs

hinder growth of new indigenous plant life, remedying contaminated areas and restoring tidal flow to enhance fish and wildlife habitat value and water quality. The second study is the New Jersey Environmental Improvement Project, which focuses on the improvement of current ecological sites while accommodating all the existing residential and commercial uses in this area and the Hackensack Meadowlands.

“Environmental restoration is an essential part of our mission,” said Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite, commander and division engineer of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, North Atlantic Division, during a meeting with the NJMC leadership.

“We’re very proud of our record when it comes to finding beneficial uses for dredged material and this project is a prime example of what can be accomplished. I want to continue to be a partner on the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission’s team and whatever the Corps can do to help, we will do.”

The purpose of the NJMC is to serve as trustee of the natural resources of the Meadowlands District and to foster a sustainable regional economy. What was once considered an inhabitable wasteland has now been redefined as a conservation area that is home to more than 260 species of birds and wildlife.

“Fifty years ago the meadowlands was significantly degraded and environmental features such as clean water, thriving wildlife and recreation and beneficial wetlands were just not there,” said Joe Seebode, deputy district engineer, New York District. “But, today with the hard work of agencies such as the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission and the Corps of Engineers along with other state agencies, we have turned that around.”





You Killed My Daughter

By Scott D. Harris, Public Affairs

“You killed my daughter!”

What do you say to someone who publicly accuses you of something you had absolutely nothing to do with? Army Corps employees frequently find themselves on the defensive when it comes to explaining study results, permitting decisions, flood control projects and the like to elected officials and the general public. That’s what risk communication is all about and the Corps is moving forward with an aggressive plan to provide risk communication training to all employees who interact with the public on a regular basis.

New York District senior leadership recently participated in a workshop on risk communication in Baltimore. They were so impressed that plans are now in the works to bring the training to New York District early next year.

Some of the concepts taught during the course explain how to deal with anger and emotion. If someone who just lost a daughter in a flood screams “you killed

my daughter” for instance, simply showing empathy for their loss rather than denying the statement is a much more effective way to diffuse the situation.



Learning how to deal with difficult situations during public meetings is one of the issues covered during a Risk Communications class that will be coming to New York District in 2009 on April 29th & 30th. Photo Credit: Vince Elias, Harbor Programs

These kinds of situations are the focus of the workshop with several role-playing opportunities for participants to practice different techniques.

The target audience for this training will be project managers, planners, regulators, other product delivery team members who serve as subject matter experts and public affairs specialists.

Col. Aniello Tortora, commander, New York District, would like to begin training District personnel immediately. As a result, New York District has extended an invitation to the very same trainers who taught the three-day workshop in Baltimore.

“I see this training as critical to meeting the communication goals outlined in the USACE Campaign Plan and our engineers should have access to this training sooner rather than later,” he said.

In keeping with the campaign implementation guidance introduced by LTG. Van Antwerp during this year’s Summer Leaders Conference, New York District is also working on a plan to improve communication on all levels throughout the organization.

Once fully implemented, the communication plan will make it easier for District personnel to communicate both strategically and transparently with the news media, stakeholders and the general public.

“These new communication initiatives are exciting and something we’ve needed for a long time,” said Anthony Ciorra, chief Civil Projects, PPMD. “Now maybe we can make some real progress reaching the right audience with the right message at the right time.”





Plugging the cracks and looking for leaks

By Christopher Gardner, Public Affairs

Ask a cadet at West Point how much water is in the Lusk Reservoir on campus and he or she should be able to tell you right off the bat – 78-million gallons. It's one of several factoids they have to memorize and be prepared to recite at any given moment on the campus.

What they may not think of, is how exactly those 78-million gallons are held in place at the Lusk Reservoir Dam, and what might happen if that dam were to fail.

“If it fails, it fails catastrophically,” said Marty Goff, dam safety specialist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District. He said if the dam failed, the wall of water released would not only do serious damage to parts of the campus nearby and cause loss of life, but would also threaten the town of Highland Falls just south of West Point.

Possibilities like that are why West Point and New York District have been operating a dam safety program together since 2003 to keep on top of any potential issues.

“It's working out great,” said Alan Zytowski, chief of engineering and plans in West Point's directorate of public works. “We've really gotten to a point where we're starting to get ahead of the curve on our dam infrastructure.”

Goff oversees the dam safety program at West Point for New York District and the Lusk Reservoir Dam, which was built in 1895. It is just one of the dams on campus that he checks on regularly.



Marty Goff, dam safety specialist with New York District, examines a wet spot on the Lusk Dam at West Point. He regularly checks dams at the installation for signs of potential trouble, such as the wet spots above. Photo Credit: Christopher Gardner

Along with Lusk, there are two other “high hazard” dams at West Point which means they would likely cause catastrophic property damage and loss of life if they failed. The academy is home to a total of 29 dams of varying sizes, making West Point home to more than 10 percent of the 212 dams found on Army installations worldwide.

Every few weeks Goff, armed with a camera, examines dam walls and looks for any possible trouble signs, such as new wet spots, growing cracks, nearby animal burrows or potentially harmful root systems.

Armed with the information gathered and his dam safety expertise, Goff regularly meets with West Point leaders and helps keep them informed on their dam situation. He also offers ideas for solutions to their dam-related problems and prioritizes related spending and projects.

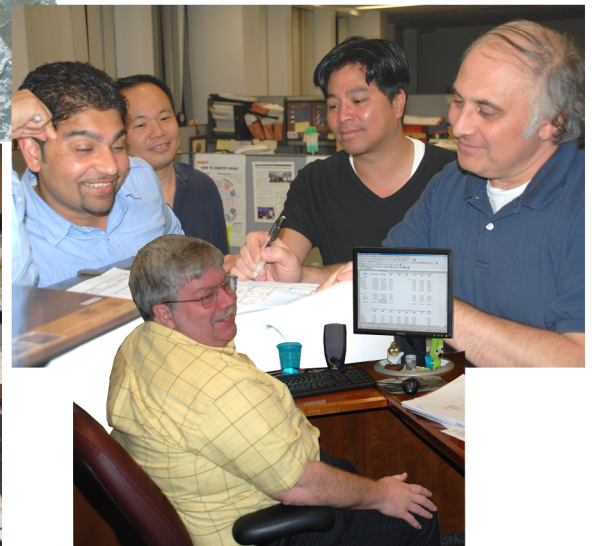
Zytowski said having the program in place also helps keep the importance of maintaining the dams on leaders' minds.

“It's too easy to kind of forget about your infrastructure and especially your dams,” Zytowski said. “That could end up being very costly and not just costing money, but lives.”





It's A Wrap



Everyone working together to closeout "08 Fiscal Year."

By Mary Stavina, Public Affairs

Photo Credit: Lt. Col. Kenneth McDonald

September 30th has a special significance for many in the New York District. It is that time of year when the financial obligations and operations for the last twelve-month period, commonly called the "fiscal year" are balanced out. Fiscal Year '08 enjoyed a very successful year-end closeout due to the effort put forward by everyone in the District. "Throughout the year the work is a continuing process, although it picks up in the third quarter," said Joe Hirschy, chief, resource management. "The District's financial staff knows what needs to be done at year's end and what has to be addressed," he said. "CEFMS has helped to make the year-end process go smoother."

The year-end process involved a lot of team work with employees from Resource Management, Contracting, Office of Counsel, and many technical workers laboring into the early morning hours of October 1st to get the job done. "We had good performance indicators, green in most categories, getting the awards done and finishing with positive performance indicators." Hirschy said.

"Everyone did a great job," said Col. Tortora





Marine Life from the local bays and estuaries a big hit at Estuary Day Events in Elizabeth, N.J.

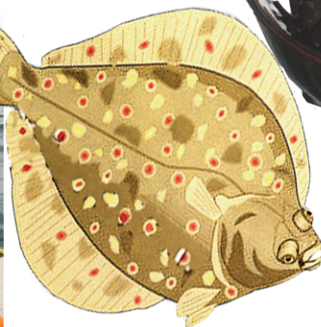
Story and photos by Dan Desmet



Here Come the Critters

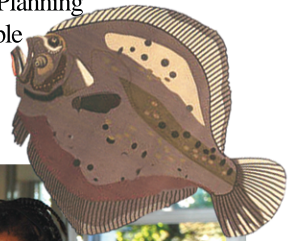
Collection of marine life, a.k.a. "Critters" for use in displays at local schools and community centers has become one of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District, most popular attractions. Photographs, charts and maps just can't compete with holding a live marine animal such as a spider crab or hermit crab. You hear lots of squeals and commotion when one of the school children picks up a crab for the first time but they keep coming back for more.

Netting all kinds of marine life in lower New York Harbor.



Tom Wyche, Project Manager New York District, holds up a horseshoe crab.

"Making the local students aware of the marine life and its importance, which is just outside their doors is really rewarding," according to Ronald Pinzon a biologist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District, Environmental Planning Branch. Pinzon was one of a host of District people who attended the Estuary Day Event in Elizabeth, N.J. He explained the life cycle of marine invertebrates to the curious students.



Students at Peterstown Community Center in Elizabeth, N.J. learn about Marine Life living in New York Harbor.





FENIB Column

Health Plan News: Open Season for Federal Health Plans ends on Dec. 8, 2008. If you are currently enrolled in the Federal Flexible Spending Account (FSAFEDS) you must re-enroll to participate in 2009. A change has been made in how dependent care claims will be processed beginning Jan. 1, 2009. IRS regulations stipulate that participants cannot be reimbursed for care to be provided in the future, even if the provider requires payment in advance for the entire period. Participants will need to submit expenses only after the dates of service have passed. If submitted before the dates of service have passed, the claim will be denied and resubmission will be necessary.

Thrift Savings Plan: The Federal Thrift Investment Board is conducting a cost-benefit study on the pros and cons of offering federal and military investors a Roth option within the TSP. A final recommendation to the Board is expected in early 2009 but Legislation would be required to implement it.

Pay Changes: The Office of Personnel Management recently issued a final rule that will allow some General Schedule employees to be promoted faster. The rule does away with the one-year time-in-grade requirement for promotions for employees at or above the GS-5 level. It will become effective March 9, 2009.

Federal Law Change – Rendering Salute During National Anthem: A change to federal law allows U.S. veterans and military personnel not in uniform to render the military-style hand salute during the playing of the national anthem. This provision builds on a change that went into effect last year. That change authorized veterans and military personnel not in uniform to render the military-style hand salute during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag.

The Federal Employee and the New Commander and Chief: President-elect Barack Obama has proposed several reforms that focus on the Federal workforce. Among the plans are more teleworking and flexible schedules; fewer middle managers in Washington, the end, perhaps, of pay-for-performance programs and dramatic cuts in contract spending. He also pledged to order the Office of Personnel Management to implement tougher quality and efficiency standards for participating health plans which he said would further drive down employees' cost.





Awards & Acknowledgements



Jean Lau (EEO) and Fernando Bautista (CO) recently attended the Hispanic Scientist and Engineer Career Fair (HENAAC) which was held in Houston, Texas. The fair provides New York District with an excellent opportunity to meet and recruit college graduates who have majored in various science and engineering fields of study.

IFPTE Local 98 Election Results

President: Stanley Nuremberg(RE)

Vice President: Franco Di Croce(CO)

Secretary: Jeanette Jones (PL)

Treasurer: Denise Butts (OP)

Financial Secretary: Jannie Butler (RM)

1st Trustee: Frank Tangora (OP)



Ronald Pinzon, (center) project biologist, planning division, has completed the 2008 Planning Associates Program. Mr. Pinzon was selected from amongst a number of highly qualified applicants to represent the New York District. The Planning Associates Program is an advanced training opportunity in water resources planning. The goals of the program are to broaden planners' competencies in solving complex water resources problems and challenges, and to strengthen their leadership abilities. The curriculum is rich in team building and leadership training; experiential training in USACE Civil Works business programs; communications and presentation techniques. It also provides exposure to leaders in public and private water resource interest groups, Federal agencies, Corps Districts, MSCs, HQUSACE,

and Congressional members. For more information regarding the Planning Associates Program go to <http://www.iwr.usace.army.mil/inside/products/train/trnplanningassoc.cfm>



On Thursday, Oct. 16th, Operations Division staff from Technical Support, Dredged Material Management, and Surveys Sections spent the afternoon side-by-side with Contracting Division staff and a representative from the Small Business Administration onboard the M/V Hocking for a team-building exercise. The group visited several on-going dredging projects in New York Harbor to see dredging in action. The goal of the effort was to build a common understanding of the challenges faced in executing a dredging project in the harbor. Present in the photo (from left to right) Patrick Racine (OP-SS), Chip Postiglione (OP-SS), Sandy McDonald (OP-SS), William Vanterpool (OP-ST), Debra Libow (SBA), Kelly Naito (OP-DM), Loretta Parris (OP-CT), Veronica Gordon (OP-ST), Elizabeth Stanley (OP-CT), Randy Hintz (OP-S), Wei Lugin (OP-CT), Monte Greges (OP-DM), and Gerlyn Perlas (OP-ST)





Around The District

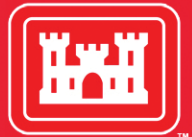


Taps...

John Petrovich, formerly of Planning Division passed away unexpectedly on August 29, 2008. He had many years of service and wonderful memories at St. Peter the Apostle R.C. Church in River Edge, a community he dearly loved. John worked for Engineering Division and then Planning Division for the District for over 45 years. John was the District liaison with FEMA on Floodplain Management issues.



Wedad Youssef (OP) and her pot winner of the Halloween door and costume contest.



Thanks to those who deployed overseas and during disaster relief (Hurricanes Ike & Gustav)

Hurricane Ike

Operation Division...

Rich Campbell - Liz Finn - Mike Ganley - Walter Grauling - Steve Knowles
Tim LaFontaine - Beth Nash - Ron Rhea

Construction Division...

Lucia Capowski - Mark Kucera - Dick Lavoie - Mike Ruppet - Seila Stewart

Engineering...

Juan Escajadillo - Allan Ford - Sean O'Donnell - Mike Ortega - Anthony Schiano

Planning... Mark Burlas Security... Sharoyah Fernandez

Public Affairs... Christopher Gardner

Hurricane Gustav

Engineering... Marty Goff



Sotalia Townsend (RE)
Afghanistan



Joseph Humet (Op) Richard Dabal (Pl) Miguel Surage (Op)
Hurricane Ike





New York District Years of Service Awards

*Certificates will be presented at the 2009 Summer Townhall

5 Years of Service

Kearns, Patrick K - Lau, Jean - Jernstadt, Nelson L. Klemensits, Margaret - Stumpf, Sean D. - Smith, Daniel J. Gardner, Bruce J. - Schiano, Anthony - Gould, Alicia F. Varghese, Anil - Emigholz, Matthew W. - Cresitello, Donald E. Fraenkel, Naomi R. - Cackler, Olivia - Butler, Brian Sherwood, Bradley J. - Cheng, Danhung - Ryan-Stumpf, Susan, L. Sloss, Brandi L. - Peterson, Kenneth L. - Johnson William, C. O'Donnell, Sean B. - Lo, Raymond - Trotto, Angelo R. Farber, Anastasiya

10 Years of Service

Wrocenski, Edward - O'Connor, John A. - Mraz, John L. Debari, Ralph L. - Rumph, jr Albert C. - Dunaway, Adriana A.

15 Years of Service

Rounds, Stuart M. - Nerges, Edward J. - Stlaurent, Ronald Postiglione, Francis M. - Kenney, John W..

20 Years of Service

Camishion, Madonna L. - Brown, Kenya D. - Ettinger, Sophie Alton, Mark C. - Lauetta, Janice A. - Orzel, Brian A. Austin, Annette L. - Johnson, Kenneth W. - Johnson, Michael C. Benson, Mark - Weinberg, Steven R. - Strogach, Lev B. Postol, Kathleen J. - Kochan, Jeanette D. - Lopez, Maritza Sim, Edward R. - McManus, Tyra F. - Giacchetti, Gerald Mc Namara, John C. - Woolford, Vanessa A.

25 Years of Service

Hlad, Dawn - Mastorakis, Nikolaos - Carter, Carolyn Bocamazo, Lynn M. - Milkiewicz, Joseph A. - Swain, Dennis E. Harimohan, Premkumar - Forte, Mark C. - Marco, Stella Alexoudis, Milagros - Black, Constance - Lauria, Anthony R. Spiegelberg, Anne - Shea, Thomas J. - Daniels, Sterrett W. Michalowski, jr Stanley - Higgins, Paula J. - Dicroce, Franco Wong, John M. - Garcia, Jacqueline G. - Goepfert, Gregory J. Kimmerly, Elizabeth A. - Purcell, Linda J. - Mordan, Jane E. Roche, Thomas P. - Dannemann, Thomas R. - Butler, Jannie Campbell, Richard J. - Franco, Paul C. - Montagne, Sandra



Keeping Your Christmas Safe



A fire on any day seems bad, but a fire on Christmas seems to be the worst. Some 300 Christmas trees caught fire in one recent year, with electrical problems the most common culprit. Here's how to keep your tree green and your presents safe.

- When you buy your tree, have the vendor make a fresh cut an inch from the bottom; this will help the tree drink.
- Don't buy a tree that is dry and dropping needles. To check for freshness loosely grip the end of a branch and pull your hand over it. Only a few should fall off.
- Make sure your tree stand holds plenty of water, and don't let it run out.
- If you buy an artificial tree, make sure it is fire-retardant.
- Don't use electric lights on a metal tree.
- Keep your tree at least three feet from, furnaces, radiators and fireplaces.
- Try to position it near a n outlet so that cords are not running long distances. Do not place the tree where it will block exits.
- Keep a close eye on small children when they are around the tree; many small decorations and ornaments are sharp, breakable and can be swallowed.
- Unplug your Christmas tree before you leave or go to bed.





October 31, 2008

LTG Van Antwerp Townhall



On Oct. 31, 2008, Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp visited New York District and conducted a townhall. During his visit, Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp praised the good work being done by District personnel and talked about some of the challenges ahead in 2009. Brig. Gen. Semonite (lower left) also attended the townhall and delivered the opening remarks before introducing Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp.



USACE Transactions



New York District recently bid farewell to Monique Wiggins. Ms. Wiggins worked in Resource Management for 20 years. The District wishes her well in her future endeavors. Photo Credit: Dan Desmet, Public Affairs

Retirements

Ralph Karpel, RE
James J. Valianos, PP

New Employees

Jerry Byrne, CO
James Jarbeau, CO
Kim Young, CO
Luis Rasorio Lluveras, EN
Charles Paray, EN

Farewells

Sterrett Daniels, CO

New York/New Jersey Harbor Site Visit

Dozens of engineering undergraduates from New Jersey colleges got a first-hand look at some of New York District's projects during a New York/New Jersey Harbor site visit aboard the drift collection vessel the Hayward in October 2008. "We are in the process of hiring the next generation of engineers, and to do that, we must attract graduating students and get them to consider us as a viable employment option." said Maj. Estee Pinchasin, who organized the event.





Tidbits Did you know?

By
Mary Stavina



Did you know that “The Deegan”, an 8.4 mile part of Interstate 87 in New York City was named for William Francis Deegan, who served as a staff officer in the 105th Field Artillery during World War I. Later during the war, he served as a major with the Army Corps of Engineers. Deegan supervised the construction of military bases in the New York area under the command of Gen. George W. Goethals, the builder of the Panama Canal. After the war Deegan became a distinguished public servant. He helped organize a support network for and played an important role in the founding of the American Legion and in 1921 was named New York State Commander. Maj. Deegan died on April 4, 1932 following an appendectomy. The six-lane Major Deegan Expressway follows the Bronx shore of the Harlem River from the Triborough Bridge to the New York Thruway. In 1956, Parks Commissioner Robert Moses officially named the highway the Major Deegan Expressway. Today more than 125,000 vehicles travel the Major Deegan on a daily basis.



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