



US Army Corps
of Engineers
New Orleans District

Riverside

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May 2002

Offices On the Move

Regulatory's
hard-choice mission

Vignes: three
siblings adopted



Carrollton Gage



Col. Thomas F. Julich

USACE: A Learning Organization

This past week I attended the ENFORCE conference at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. Lt. Gen. Flowers, chief of engineers, brings all his district engineers and SES's together once a year to discuss the latest issues inside the Corps. One of the key themes discussed by the chief at this year's ENFORCE was the need for USACE to become a "learning organization." He will be emphasizing this theme in the coming year. I want to at least introduce you to what the chief means by this, and then provide more information about it later.

So what is a learning organization? According to a recent USACE document, it is one that "learns from its experience of what works and what does not work. The goal of learning is increased innovation, effectiveness and perfor-

mance. A learning organization is a non-threatening, empowering culture where leadership, management and the work force are focused on continually developing organizational competence."

Why is this something that USACE needs to pursue? And why will the chief place so much emphasis on this? The reality is that there are a number of things changing around us. Like what? There is increased scrutiny of our efforts by Congress, OMB, the media and interest groups. We are taking on increased responsibilities as stewards of the environment. We have more multi-stakeholder planning and collaboration to deal with. And we have challenges maintaining talent in the Corps, with the loss of experienced people and too few mid-level replacements (as well as more competition for the available talent). We must be able to respond given the realities of this new environment. These realities all affect us here within our district, some more so than others. In order to adapt to these changes the Corps must become a learning organization.

How will this affect us here in our day-to-day efforts? An example might make it clearer.

Take a look at how we're incorporating some of the concepts of a learning organization in our district through our efforts on the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) Study. You already know of the tremendous loss of coastal marsh in Louisiana. LCA is the effort we have developed, along with the state and our federal partners, to get a large-scale program authorized and implemented to address these tremendous losses. A program like this requires large appropriations over multiple years, and it means the national will must be there for it to become a reality. Early on in the LCA study process we realized that an example already exists of how a large program like this can be authorized. The Everglades in Florida was a program authorized by WRDA 2000. We set out to find what we could learn from their successful effort. We met and shared ideas with state and local officials from the state of Florida, Jacksonville District, and some of our federal partners. We have applied many of the lessons learned that came out of

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Engineering's Chris Alfonso moves boxes in preparation for office enlargement and new carpet installation.

Communities, Corps utilize LCA public scoping meetings

By Terri Jackson

The Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) Comprehensive Study recently got started with goals to sustain functions and values of the coastal ecosystem, restore the ecosystem to the highest practical acreage of productive and diverse wetland, and attain multiple-use benefits for all wetlands, communities and industries on the coast.

“The National Environmental Policy Act requires the Corps to carry out a scoping process,” said William Klein, EIS manager. The process is designed to provide early and open means of determining the scope of issues to be identified and addressed in the draft programmatic supplemental environmental impact statement (PSEIS).

To get started, a series of public scoping meetings were held April 15-24 to solicit input from the public on which regional ecosystem restoration strategy should be given the highest priority. The six meetings were held in locations that represent the major hydrologic regions of the coast.

“We wanted to have meetings in places that would be directly affected by our studies and ac-

tions,” Klein commented.

Each evening’s scoping meeting began with a brief description of the PSEIS, the Corps’ study process and the many study strategies under consid-

eration. Corps employees were joined by other federal and state representatives; members of the public were divided into smaller groups. “With audiences ranging from 15-50 people, dividing them into small groups gave everyone the opportunity to voice their opinions,” said Klein.

Group participants were given the following focus questions to discuss:

✿ *What are the most important issues, resources and impacts that we should consider in the PSEIS and the study process?*

✿ *Are there any other Coast 2050 coastwide or regional strategies or modifications to existing strategies that we should*



Thibodaux citizens listen to Bill Klein explain Coast 2050 strategies at one of six recent LCA scoping meetings.

consider in the PSEIS and the study process?

“I was highly impressed with how knowledgeable the audiences were,” said Klein. “The scoping meetings were more than successful. [They] possessed an unprecedented interagency cooperation between the Corps and outside agencies I have never seen before.”

The public had until May 9 to submit their written comments. The Corps will now distribute a scoping report summarizing the significant issues and concerns expressed at the scoping meetings.

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these meetings to our efforts here on the LCA.

Becoming a learning organization also means freely sharing our efforts with others. Recently we held an LCA meeting here with personnel from MVD, USACE headquarters, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army

for Civil Works, and the state Department of Natural Resources. One of the ASA(CW) representatives indicated to me that it is very possible that our work on LCA will be replicated across the country on a number of restoration efforts that are just getting underway. When we are successful with LCA, we will share our lessons learned with

others.

I don’t use the examples above to say that we have already arrived as a learning organization. But I do believe that we already have many of the concepts embedded in our district culture, and we will be ready to support the chief to make the Corps a learning organization.



Vignes adopts foster child, his two sisters

Kaila, Christian and Kaycee are the newest members of the Vignes family.

By Amanda McLain

Julie Vignes, operations manager for the Atchafalaya River Basin, recently celebrated the adoption of three children.

The three children are siblings, and were separated in foster homes for several years before the adoption.

Although Julie and her husband Ray did not set out to adopt three children, they did not hesitate to take them all. The boy had already lived with them for two years when all of the children became eligible for adoption.

Julie said adopting these children is the most rewarding thing she and her husband have ever done.

The couple first decided to adopt a child several years

“It is the absolute most rewarding thing you could ever do.”

ago after Julie found out she was unable to have children. Julie said, “I guess more than wanting to deliver our own baby, we wanted to raise a family and adoption is a great way to do that.” No one in their families had ever adopted a child before, so they did not know what to expect, but they agreed it was the best thing to do.

Julie said they tried several adoption groups before finally deciding to adopt through the state where there were more children available. “We were also taken in by the fact that there were children out there just basically waiting already,” she said. After going through a state training program, they were given the opportunity

to be foster parents, which the state first encourages for people who want to adopt.

Julie and Ray took in Christian, now age 9, their first foster child, when he was 4, hoping they could eventually adopt him.

Julie was at work when she found out. “An hour later, I was at home with a 4-year-old boy,” Julie said. The help of her family and friends made the transition of getting Christian overnight easier.

Christian also had two sisters in another foster family, and two years later, Julie and her husband adopted all three.

It took another two years, for a total of four, to finalize everything in January this year.

All three children handled the change well and were happy to be reunited. The girls, Kaycee and Kaila, ages 5 and 6, were also happy for another reason. Their foster parent was a single mom with another child of her own, and the girls said she treated them like foster children instead of members of the family. They feel the adoption has given them a real family for the first time. The children’s biological mother raised them alone, so this is the first time they’ve ever had a father. They had some visitation with her earlier, but they view Julie and her husband as their parents.

Julie said her and her husband’s families have been very supportive, treating the children like anyone else in the family. The couple has received a great deal of support from their friends, including Julie’s co-workers, who’ve helped by giving them much needed toys and clothes.

Julie added, “I would encourage anyone who enjoys children and has the greatest gift of all to offer – love – to consider taking in a child. It is the absolute most rewarding thing you could ever do.”

Real Estate's reorganized Acquisition Branch has Esprit de Corps

By Janet Cruppi

Real Estate Division has undergone some big changes in the last few years and is now composed of four branches:

1. Local Sponsor and Inleasing Acquisition Branch (previously a section of Acquisition Branch)
2. Direct Federal Acquisition Branch (also previously a section of Acquisition Branch)
3. Appraisal & Planning Branch (previously Appraisal Branch, now with the planning function)
4. Management, Disposal & Control Branch, (previously Management & Disposal Branch, now with the control function)

In May 2001, Janet Cruppi was promoted to chief of LS&I Acquisition Branch after 23 years of service with the district. She se-

lected two new team leaders: Dawn Lambert, Team A leader with over 22 years at MVN; and Gloria Just, Team B leader with 21 years. In this article, Cruppi explains the specifics of the LS&I Acquisition Branch.



Generally, LS&I acquires rights-of-way and performs relocation services for the non-federal sponsors. They also perform the inleasing function for NOD—their realty specialists search for office, radio tower and warehouse space that NOD needs to lease for offsite equipment and offices (e.g., the Lafayette office, special land use permits, etc.).

Some currently ongoing projects include SELA, hurricane protection, CAP, Coast 2050, maintenance

dredging, Support for Others, and CWPRA.

The goal of this branch is to service customers effectively and efficiently. In support of the Project Management Business Process, they have just recently published right of entry guidelines to assist customers in requesting rights of entry in the most complete and expeditious way. A copy of these guidelines was sent to Engineering Division, Operations Division and PMD in November 2001.

Once fully staffed, the branch will consist of a secretary, typist, paralegal, three attorney-advisors and 11 realty specialists who work closely with PMD and MVN's non-federal sponsors in the acquisition of all

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the big picture. We often make decisions based on the financial bottom line. The problem is that the bottom line most people use is an incomplete accounting sheet. It doesn't include debits from soil erosion, loss of water quality, loss of wildlife habitat, and many other minute details that add up to a huge loss. It also doesn't include the deposit made by good practices toward these same items.

We complain when a gallon of gas costs us \$1.50. In reality, the cost should be \$2, \$3 or even \$5 per gallon if we figured in the environmental losses involved in finding, pumping, transporting, refining, then releasing the exhaust and fumes back into the atmosphere. If we had to pay the true cost, we might decide that we

can't afford that gas and there might be a truly less costly alternative like walking, biking, solar, wind or hydrogen energy. The true cost of our dream home on three acres of lawn in the country with two SUV's in the garage and a 60-minute commute to work may convince us of the foolishness of that dream and motivate us to buy smaller homes in smaller, more manageable and sustainable communities where we can work, play, raise our families and sustain ourselves more independently.

We can choose to take responsibility as individuals, make better choices in each of our own lives and work to educate and encourage others through our example. If individuals don't want that responsibility but still want environmental protection, they will continue to complain to the government and

pass laws and regulations to solve the problem. Then they will complain about the inconvenience of the laws in their lives and the bureaucracy of big government. Personally, I've come to recognize the relative ineffectiveness of regulations and government agencies toward the problems they were meant to solve. I also don't want to lose the liberties guaranteed by the Constitution. Therefore, I choose to try to make environmentally responsible choices even when the law doesn't require them. I try to remember to keep my eye on the environmental bottom line and keep the balance in the black. That way my children won't have to pay the debt I've accrued through foolishness.

Cody S. Wheeler
Regulatory Branch, Lafayette

MVN offices on the move



Scott Riecke



Lane Lefort



Scott Riecke



Lane Lefort

Ripped-up carpet, Magic Movers, temporary directional signs and piles of stuff are all over the district lately, symbols of the office relocations many employees are facing.

By Eric Lincoln

The recent opening of the new Coast 2050 office, plus other demands and additions in PMD, have resulted in an ongoing massive relocation of other offices in the building, from sections in Engineering Division to the district library.

Affected offices so far include Information Management, the library, PMD, Real Estate, Engineering Division, Public Affairs, Office of Counsel and Contracting Division.

According to Shelton Kennedy, chief of Facility and Services Branch, the moves were primarily needed to make room for the Colocation 2050 Team, now in Room 137.

IM was the first to reorganize its office space and become more centralized, compressing itself into Room 196.

ED was already in the process of structuring its offices to keep its branches all on one floor. General Engineering, for example, which was split between the third and first floors, was moved to the second

floor.

The map room is the exception, having moved from Room 205 to 106 to be co-located with the library.

Robert Fairless, assistant chief of engineering, said that since their office was asked to provide some of its existing space for OC and PA, they wanted to develop a plan that provided a decrease in ED's space requirements and allocated remaining space more equitably among their various branches.

"To minimize the disruption as much as possible, we were able to combine these moves with the re-carpeting of the offices and the installation of partitions with upgraded electrical circuits," Fairless said.

Additionally, Public Affairs moved from 350 to 326 to allow Office of Counsel to expand and make room for four new lawyers.

According to Denise Frederick, deputy district counsel, Counsel needed more space to accommodate the new lawyers and part of an administrative support staff.

The walls between 348 and 350 "have come tumbling down," said Frederick, and though the entrance to OC will still be at 348, "the look will be different."

"The additional space finally allows for an entrance

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The Environmental Side of Regulatory

By Amanda McLain

The Regulatory Branch is not an easy place to work for its 50 or so employees. As Pete Serio, chief of the Western Evaluation Section, said, “You have to like Regulatory to work in it.” This is because of the large work load (the branch issued 4,063 permits last year alone) and the controversial nature of the job.

Everyday, they make decisions that don't make everybody happy. Although not every permit application has problems, about 600 a year do. They are the individual permits that can take three or four months to go through, instead of the two or three weeks it usually takes for a general permit. For these individual permits, they feel pressure from the public, government agencies and special interest groups.

The permit applicant argues that the regulations are too strict and the process takes too long, while the environmentalists say the Corps issues too many permits. The employees of the Regulatory Branch must deal with this pressure and balance what is good for the environment with what is good for the public.

“You're trying to get the applicant a viable project, but at the same time trying to avoid impacting as many wetlands as possible,” Serio said.

When a new permit application comes in, Regulatory evaluates it to see what modifications may need to be made before the permit can be issued. The quality of air and water, as well as noise considerations, drainage and the impact on fish and wildlife are all part of the decision.

“You're trying to determine that the benefits of the proposed action are going to outweigh the detriment that's caused to the wetland resources,” said Ronnie Duke, chief of the Eastern Evaluation Section. They look at the long and short-term effects of any permit before coming to a decision.

Permit applicants often complain to the branch. Serio said, “A big challenge is trying to give the people a fair and timely decision.” A large work load and the environmental considerations take time, he said. That, along with the modifications that are frequently made to the applicant's original plan, upsets many people.

Applicants are not the only people who may be upset with Regulatory during the application process and about the result. Despite the consideration the branch gives the environment, there are often many people who feel the environment is suffering too much because of the permits being issued. Many environmentalists complain that the Corps never denies a permit. It is true that less than

one percent of the permit applications that go before Regulatory are denied. However, about 80 percent of the permits are



Pete Serio (left) and Ronnie Duke (bottom) and their two branch sections handle over 4,000 permits a year.



modified before they are approved. Many people do not realize this fact and continue to worry that the branch is carelessly impacting the environment. These concerns come from other government agencies as well as groups of private individuals.

Some federal government agencies, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and EPA, have commenting rights on permits and participate in the public notices. They are able to comment on or object to any application being considered. The branch takes these agencies' comments into consideration when it makes its final decision, but sometimes comes to a different conclusion. When any of these state or government agencies disagree with the decision, they can appeal to a level higher than the district.

Other government agencies are given special responsibilities as custodians of natural resources, such as endangered species, that may be impacted by development. Private environmentalist organizations, however, or other groups formed by members of the public, can only object to a permit or suggest changes; they cannot have the final decision appealed. The decision is ultimately in the hands of Regulatory.

Everyone has an opinion about which permits Regulatory should issue, and they have no problem letting their opinions be known. It can be difficult to work at a job where no one is ever completely satisfied. Duke said, “You know you have a job to do, and you have certain regulation guidelines that you've got to follow.” They use these guidelines and comments from the public and other agencies to make a fair decision. This does not stop any of the phone calls from angry people who disagree with these decisions, but it does help to make this very difficult job a little easier to handle.

Janice Williams (RE), Take our Daughters / Sons to Work Day organizer, with the Federal Women's Program Committee, said that the 37 children who arrived this year to experience an adult workday at the Corps had "an enthusiastic response."

The group started off the morning April 25 with Michael Maples (IM) who gave a brief overview of the Corps. Then with the help of Tutashinda Salaam (ED) and Judy Arnold (ED) the kids built their own Web pages that answered the question, "What would you do if you were principal for a day?" (Almost everyone wanted the day off.)

Tina Landry (ED) and Don Schneider (OD) next led several groups on a walk around of the district, demonstrating one of the ways we can use the Global Positioning System, and Steve Russo (ED) had a surveying rod and level set up for the students to look through. Susan Hennington (OD) then demonstrated how to properly

wear a personal flotation device, and from there the group split up and went for a tour, organized by Stephen Slumber (OD), of either the Dredge Wheeler or Motor Vessel Alexander. Captain Pat Dempsey piloted the Alexander while Michelle Spraul (OD) explained the equipment for hydrographic surveying. Beatriz Perez (OD) and Annette Chioma (OD) spoke about different career options.

With Mike Ducarpe (OD) chaperoning, the kids returned to the meeting room and answered questions for door prizes on what they learned. Williams said, "We tried to incorporate Lt. Gen. Flowers' Strategic Vision, 'People, Process and Communication,' in all of the planning for this."

Wheeler crewmembers who participated were: Montague Hall III, John Bochynski Jr., John Shinnors, Vivian Gianelloni III and William Rhea.



Take our Daughters/ Sons to Work Day enjoyable for all

Though kids agree a day
off is best medicine





All photos, Lane Lefort

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area which we hope our visitors will find more inviting,” Frederick said.

Frederick also cited some of the pros and cons for moving. While her staff will have more work space (some are currently utilizing part of the law library as “offices”), they will also have the disruption that comes with packing supplies, relocating employees and inevitable down time—and all on top of a burgeoning work load.

However, Fredrick remains upbeat. “With the end in sight, we are happy to suffer through the growing

pains and grateful that our employees have maintained a sense of humor and admirable tolerance for cramped working conditions,” she said. “Our thanks to LMO for their ongoing assistance during the renovations.”

Contracting Division has obtained additional staff allocations as well, and needs more space.

Plans are for the district library to move from Room 389 to the first floor within about six weeks.

Offices that still need to be re-located include OC, ED and PMD (PMD and RE will soon utilize the space vacated by the library).

Kennedy says that all offices should be moved to their new positions by Oct. 30.

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lands, easements and rights-of-way needed for construction of civil works projects.

Branch employees are dedicated to the Corps vision of People, Process and Communication. The branch conducts monthly meetings with all branch members to discuss areas of concern, along with the standardization of processes. These meetings provide training in the real

estate acquisition process and how to better service customers, thereby expanding the expertise level throughout the branch.

The branch has a very diverse work force and is constantly sharing lessons learned with each other, other elements of MVN and sponsors. Branch members strive to show esprit de Corps at every opportunity.

Operations

SUNKEN BARGE — Operations Division was forced to seize a sunken barge on April 12 along the Algiers Canal, near the intersection with the Harvey Canal, after the owner failed to remove it and another barge carrying sulphuric acid struck it, spilling about five gallons. The Coast Guard closed the entire Algiers Canal around the barge to allow a contractor about 10 days to cut it up for removal. Attempts to get it out in one piece failed. Since the Corps was forced to intervene, barge owner James Elliot will be responsible for about \$92,000 in costs.

SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS — The award for most on-site student presentations in one month goes to **Emile Jacobs** (park ranger), who gave presentations in April about the Bonnet Carré Spillway to a combined total of about 500 kids at Meisler, Henry W. Allen, Audubon, Hurst and Norco middle and elementary schools. **Mike Saucier** and **Casey Rowe** participated in the Henry W. Allen field trip and presentation as well. A letter of appreciation from Madge Borne, teacher at Audubon Elementary, reads, "Thank you, Corps of Engineers, for instilling in our young people a real appreciation of our tax dollars at work." — **Lynn Tinto** gave a presentation on coastal erosion and the Mississippi River to five classes at Ben Franklin High School on Feb. 27. — **Chris Brantley** and **Bob Martinson** provided public outreach at the annual Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration on April 20 at the Grand Isle School. About 300

people came to learn more about enhancement and habitat protection for migratory birds on Grand Isle, the importance of Grand Isle for birds during migration, and the economic importance of nature-based tourism. There was a lot of interest in several of the Corps projects at Grand Isle, including the breakwaters, marsh creation at Grand Terre Island and the restoration of Queen Bess Island.

Project Management

ATCHAFALAYA BASIN WATER IMPROVEMENT — The Buffalo Cove area of the Atchafalaya Basin will be the sight of many water improvement projects this fall, including the blocking of some channels and removal of water obstructions, such as the levees of dredged material left over by pipeline companies after digging canals. Ben Skerret, committee chairman, said the work in Buffalo Cove has been discussed, planned and debated for more than 30 years. Seven million dollars in federal funds has been secured for the projects. The Old River Control Structure, as well, began diverting more river water into the basin on May 9 in response to Gov. Foster's request to increase water flow to prevent possible excessive fish and crawfish kills.

SCOPING MEETINGS — **William P. Kline Jr.** presented the general strategies of the Louisiana Coastal Area Comprehensive Study on April 16 at a public scoping meeting at McNeese State University. The meeting gave the public an opportunity to suggest amendments and additions to a list of 23 regional ecosystem strategies

for Region 4, which includes Calcasieu. Klein and Senio Study Manager **Troy Constance** made stops last month for other public meetings in Belle Chasse, Hammond, Thibodaux and Morgan City.

Public Affairs

CAREER LUNCHEON — Partners in Education arranged for a free meal and career discussion on April 18 between UNO students and engineers **Christopher Alfonso** and **Wilson Maloz**. They talked with the students informally over lunch about their careers and academic preparation. Alfonso said, "The experience was enjoyable and I would recommend it for anyone interested in fostering development of young engineering talent ... There was a definite interest in coming to the Corps from students at my table."

AROUND THE DISTRICT, *from page 11*

that life is not about what we want from others, it is about what others need from us that we can give. And you have certainly given to us in our time of need. Thank you."

Farewell

to **James Hill** (SSO), whose last day as chief of Safety, Security and Occupational Health was April 25. Hill was promoted to the position of "retired" and moved to El Paso, Tex.

to **Terri S. Jackson** (PA), who moved to the University of Vermont on May 18 to begin work on her master's degree.

Around the District



MVN has a new face these days with the placement of river rock and azaleas across the front of the building.

Congratulations

to the CWPPRA section, elevated to branch level on May 5 when Col. Julich signed permanent orders and renamed the group the "Coastal Restoration Branch" of PMD.

to **Thomas Podany** (PM), who was promoted to assistant chief of Planning, Programs and Project Management Division in April.

to **Ann Donnelly** (OD), whose sister, Jacqueline Crepeau, was recently given the Civilian Service Medal from the Department of the Army.

to **Rob Dauenhauer** (ED) and his wife, Jessica, on the birth of their first child, Kevin Michael, born April 3, weighing 9 lbs., 2 oz.

to **Robert Schroeder** (OD), the district's nominee for the Lt. Gen. John W. Morris, Corps of Engineers Civilian of the Year Award. Schroeder was recognized for, among other things, his 39 years with the Corps, his skill as a leader, his work with the Breton Island restoration and the Mentoring Program, and his dedication to the success of projects such as the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System, for which the Corps received its first-ever award from the Sierra Club. "He is an asset to the

Corps and exemplifies leadership in the 21st Century," the nomination states.

to **Terri S. Jackson** (PA), who received her bachelor's of arts degree in English from Dillard University on May 11. She graduated magna cum laude with a 3.7 GPA.

to **Margaret Tucker** (CD), whose grandchildren Ashley Arabi and Justin Bonnette graduated, respectively, from Ursuline Academy and St. Agnes Grammar School.

to **Ron Legendre** (CD), whose son Scott was married to Kathleen McAndrew on April 6.

to **Michael Maples** (IM), **Anne Marino** (IM) and **Elena Napolitano** (IM), for receiving Commanders Awards for Civilian Service.

to **Jim Flock** (ED) on the birth of his granddaughter, Jordan Williams, 7 lbs., 8 oz., 19 inches, born on April 22 to his daughter, Denise, and her husband Guy Williams.

to **Larry Hayes** (CD-Lafayette) and wife Peggy, whose daughter, Laurie, was accepted into the Louisiana School for Math, Science and Arts in Natchitoches for her junior and senior years of high school. Laurie scored a 34 composite out of a possible 36 on her ACT and 1460 on her PSAT.

Condolences

to **Mike Pinto** (ED), whose father, Manuel Pinto, died April 29.

to **Rex Castleberry** (OD), whose father, James "Shorty" Castleberry, died April 5.

to **Shannon West** (credit union) whose three-year-old son, Patrick Jr., died in an automobile accident on May 7. Condolences also to Shannon's sister **Jamie Kober** (credit union), Shannon's mother, **Bonnie Obiol** (OD) and stepfather, **Barry Obiol** (OD). An S-all email from Barry read: "It is in these times that it becomes obvious

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DILBERT® by Scott Adams



Talk Back

Last month we solicited your comments on "Saving the Coast." Cody Wheeler (Lafayette, Regulatory Branch) believes it starts with focusing on the "environmental bottom line."

Take responsibility



The loss of coastal wetlands can't be attributed to any single cause. We all contribute to their destruction in many different and often unapparent ways. The solution can't come from any single individual, organization, project or effort. The solution will require that each individual, family, business, organization, community and state recognize their contribution to the problem, accept responsibility for it, and take action to correct their mistakes.

As a botanist in the Corps' wetland Regulatory Branch, I have the opportunity to interact daily with individuals and businesses regarding wetland regulation and protection. Many people are understanding, cooperative and responsible in their dealings with the Clean Water Act and wetland regulations. However, the majority of citizens I deal with are fair weather conservationists at best or selfish, greedy, ignorant or uncaring at worst. Wetland regulation and protection is great for many people when it conserves their neighbors wetlands but is unfair, unconstitutional, un-American, unnecessary and too

expensive when required of themselves.

Just yesterday, a gentleman who illegally logged and cleared some longleaf pine savannah wetlands in northern Calcasieu parish asked me what he did wrong. "Why did this work matter when we are losing acres of coastal marshes everyday? After all, nothing lives in those little puddles" he said. I explained to him that the actions of himself and everyone else from the coast up to Canada contribute to the loss of coastal wetlands. The sediment from his property could be washed into the local stream during a thunderstorm then flow downstream to the Calcasieu River then down to the bay where that sediment would be deposited. That sediment would muddy the water; encourage algae and phytoplankton growth, death and decay; reduce dissolved oxygen levels in the water; kill fish and macro invertebrates; deprive ducks and geese of needed food, causing them to deplete food reserves and stress the plant communities in the area causing marsh vegetation to die and become open water. The interactions are very complex and endless.

If we really want to address coastal wetland loss specifically and environmental problems in general, we have to look at

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TO HAVE YOUR IDEAS PRINTED IN THE NEXT ISSUE

AND

WIN A RESERVED PARKING SPOT FOR AN ENTIRE MONTH

RESPOND BY JUNE 14

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT THIS MONTH'S TALK BACK TOPIC:

IMPROVING THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

>WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT CHANGES TO OUR WORK AREAS, BOTH INSIDE AND OUT?

THE EDITOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO PICK WHICH RESPONSES TO PUBLISH AND AWARD.

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