

# CORPS' PONDENT



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Portland District

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 2 Commander's message
- 4 Inspections reveal damaged spillway gates at Foster Dam
- 6 T2 optimizing a dam near you
- 8 District participates in National Public Lands Day efforts
- 10 Employees recognized by DOJ for role in criminal conviction
- 11 John Day Dam upstream nav lock gate repaired
- 12 A public servant's tale
- 14 Another childhood adventure
- 15 IDP a great tool for mapping your career

*John Day Dam upstream navigation lock gate repair.  
Photo by Jennifer Sowell.*





# Maintaining Our Reputation

As a well-respected public service engineering agency, our integrity and accountability is the keystone to maintaining our reputation. Unlike a private company, our value does not rise or fall based on profit and economic conditions. Our underlying value resides in the trust and faith from the American people we serve.

Our annual ethics training last month inspired me to think about how we are doing across the District in this area. I believe that question is best answered by our stakeholders, customers, and Congressional leaders, who tell me we are doing great as a District. But like any large organization we have anomalies, and I would ask for your support and extra vigilance as we move into 2009.

We government employees don't talk much about integrity because we assume we all have it. It's just those high rollers in the private sector who walk all over the rule book, right?

You might think that we in the Portland District wouldn't engage in behavior like that, but we do award millions of dollars in contracts each year and make decisions that affect hundreds of thousands of people. There are lots of groups and individuals who would love to be able to influence us, collectively and individually.

As we were reminded in ethics training, even relatively minor violations can turn into major problems. For example, a District employee was recently let go for claiming hours on their time sheet that they didn't work. Quickly careers are lost and reputations damaged.

One specific element of integrity and responsibility I'd like to stress this year is government property accountability. We are stewards of the tax dollars entrusted to us, and we must properly account for and safeguard the government property those tax dollars buy.

In our District, we have a strong Command Supply Discipline Program (CSDP) overseen by me as the District commander, with direct involvement from all employees and supervisors. We have property book officials, hand-receipt



*Col. Steven R. Miles, P.E.*

holders, detailed procedures, training classes and much more to track government property.

However, no matter how solid the system is, the last line of defense is the conscientious employee who looks after the property as if it were their own.

I have also heard that there may be a misperception based on the Chief's memorandum regarding accountability of property less than \$5,000. While such items may not make it to the official property books, they are still tracked with the same intensity and vigilance. Periodic inventories, timely reporting and properly documenting any transfers are key practices to safeguarding our resources.

## CORPS'PONDENT



US Army Corps of Engineers - Portland District

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Obviously, we're in a line of work where some things are going to break – it's the cost of doing business. Even in those cases, I've been alarmed by how often we fail to follow proper procedures to document and investigate those losses in a timely manner.

Even worse, we've been losing things that have no business being lost – like cameras, laptop computers, GPS devices and testing equipment – and returning damaged property like GSA vehicles with no documentation or explanation for the harm done.

These types of incidents cost a lot more than just money: They jeopardize our credibility with our co-workers, our superiors and our stakeholders. If we can't be accountable for the little things, how can they trust us to deliver on the big things? Property accountability should be nested into every employee's annual rating objectives.

So let's make a resolution to stay on our guard, stand firm in the face of pressure, and do the right thing even when it sometimes means doing the hard or unpopular thing. That will help us safeguard that important part of who we are as individuals and an organization – our integrity and reputation.

**Building STRONG – Essays!** 

## Commander's Safety Message

As we go about our work at our projects and offices, and on our vessels and long hours on the road, please take the time to deliberately think through the risks and dangers involved and then take action to mitigate and reduce the safety threats. Everyone is empowered to take action – Just do it! “Murphy” is out there 24-7; don't let your guard down!

*Editor's note:*

*We received several phone calls about last issue's Commander's Column, claiming that we misidentified one of the retirees in the photo. Actually, we got all three names right, but we did list Russ George (left) and Bud Ossey (right) in the wrong order. We apologize for the error.*



## Commander's Holiday Message

2008 proved to be another high-performing year for Portland District and I thank each and every member of the Team for their dedication and devotion to our public mission. As we enjoy the holiday season here in the beautiful Northwest, please keep those deployed heroes in your thoughts and minds as they forge a better future for us and so many others less fortunate.

**Happy Holidays from my Family to your Family!**







# Inspections Reveal Damaged Spillway Gates at Foster Dam

## Corps Balances Repairs and Winter Operations

By Amy Echols, Public Affairs Office

Routine climbing inspections of two spillway gates at Foster Dam on Oregon's South Santiam River in June revealed what dam safety engineers look for but hope never to see: buckled and bent structural steel in both gates.

A second inspection in July showed damage to the two remaining gates.

"These gates are critical for safely storing and releasing water. Structural damage could mean the gates fail to open and close during flood season," stated Travis Adams, a structural engineer in Portland District's Structural Design Section.

The Corps began lowering the water in the Foster reservoir east of Albany, Ore., which did not sit well with the local recreation community. However, with less head, or pressure, from stored water on the gates and all available stoplogs in place, structural engineers could investigate the gates in more detail and perform maintenance activities to determine the extent of damage.

Erik Petersen, operations manager for the Corps' 13 Willamette Valley dams, explained that periodic inspections under the Dam Safety Program worked as intended.

"Detecting problems before a gate fails gives us time to lower the reservoir, relieve pressure on the gates, assess the problem and design the right solution," stated Petersen.

### Discouraging news

Meanwhile, Mark Dasso was appointed project manager to lead a team to analyze the detailed inspection data. The team concluded that small but significant deformities spread among all four gates meant the Corps couldn't reliably operate them to hold and release water this winter and spring.

The damage, likely caused by friction in the hinges, increases the risk that the gates could fail during a release, causing unexpected flooding.



*Climbers are lowered to inspect the steel struts, members and hinges on the Tainter gates at Foster Dam. Corps of Engineers Photo.*

With help from the GIS team, Julie Amman and Laurie Ebner, engineers from Portland District's Hydraulics and Hydrology Branch, modeled countless water level and flow scenarios. This helped the project team develop recommendations for operating the dam and managing river flows over the winter and during various repair scenarios.

### What comes in must go out

Considering this information plus available funding and equipment, the team concluded that repairs to Gate 1 should begin as soon as possible. The Corps will release water as it comes into the reservoir through limited operation of Gates 3 and 4, and intermittently through the Foster Dam powerhouse.

Gate 2 will remain closed and provide a safety buffer between repair activities at Gate 1 and the flow of stormwater through Gates 3 and 4.

With the dam's ability to store water during the early months of the flood season reduced by almost 50 percent, the project team held media tours and two open houses to educate the downstream communities of Sweet Home, Lebanon and Jefferson, Ore., about initial repair plans and the higher river flows expected downstream after heavy rains.

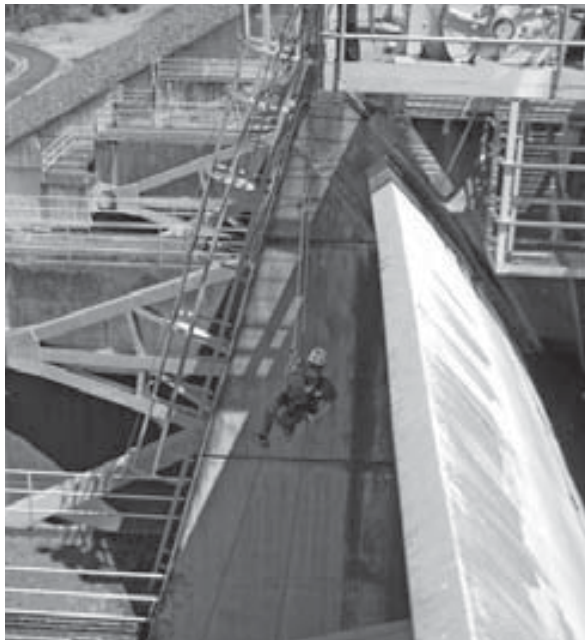
"The bottom line is that what comes into the reservoir during repairs must go out immediately," Petersen told reporters during a tour of the dam in October. "There might be a lot of water to release or there might be a little, depending on inflows."

"We explained to our open house visitors and local reporters that the risk of higher river flows early in the season will be balanced by the completion of repairs to Gate 1 in mid-January," explained Dasso. "This gives us a fully operational gate for the remainder of winter and spring when the risk of flooding is highest."

Using the powerhouse, the Corps lowered the reservoir in November to its lowest possible level, where it will remain until repairs are complete.

## Repairs begin

While the ink dried on the approved repair specifications, Adams and Dasso took the contract out to bid. In mid-November, Knight Construction



*Inspecting the steel struts, members and hinges on the Tainter gates at Foster Dam. Corps of Engineers Photo.*

of Deer Park, Wash., began the job by locking Gate 1 into place, after which they built scaffolding and will remove and replace bushings at the two huge gate hinges.

The contractor will replace two horizontal struts and 10 bracing members with steel of increased strength and size compared to that used in the original 1968 gates. During repairs, engineers will watch for additional indicators of the cause of the steel deformities.



*Emergency response staff from the Corps and Linn County (far left and far right, respectively) provide information to local residents about the expected high river levels below Foster Dam. Corps of Engineers Photo.*

## Looking ahead

When the Gate 1 repairs are complete, the Corps will fill the reservoir to its maximum pool elevation for the 2009 summer recreation season. Meanwhile, Dasso and his team will work to gather funding and put the pieces in place to repair the remaining three gates.

The District's Dam Safety Program will oversee climbing inspections of nine additional spillway gates in the next year at Lookout Point, Blue River and Detroit dams in the Willamette Valley.

"We're hoping to find only good news at these facilities," stated Petersen. "Foster was a reminder not to take our safety processes for granted. Each part of the program and team member plays an important role, and it's good to know it works." ❏





# T2 optimizing a dam near you

By Jennifer Sowell, Public Affairs Office

People are constantly looking for ways to improve efficiency and reduce waste, from adjusting driving habits to improve gas mileage, to recycling more products, to conserving energy by turning off lights and appliances.

The Corps of Engineers is working to do the same, but on a much larger scale. As part of a regional interagency team, the Corps has devised an innovative system to make 11 of its dams along the Federal Columbia River Power System capable of producing more power using the same amount of water.

The Corps recently installed the Type 2 Optimization System at the largest 11 Corps dams in Portland, Walla Walla and Seattle districts. These dams in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana comprise about 95 percent of the Corps' power generation capability in the Columbia River Basin.

The dams average 6,000 megawatts of power generation. That number varies with the time of day and season, but it makes up about one third of all the power produced in the Pacific Northwest.

The T2 system calculates algorithms that identify which generator unit should respond to constantly changing power requests. That may not seem like much, but knowing a bit about the inner workings of the dams will help show the benefit.

There are more than 100 generators at the 11 dams that have the T2 system. Typically, the generators are grouped into families. Each family operates differently, mainly due to variations in technology at the time of installation. And as with any family, each individual unit operates differently.

“Like children, each unit has different characteristics and their peak efficiencies are all slightly different,” said Mike Roll, deputy director of the Hydroelectric Design Center.

The T2 system takes advantage of these differences by identifying the most efficient mix of units so the family operates at optimum performance. Before T2, the operators used their best judgment to choose which units to run and at what levels.

For instance, if BPA requested a power increase of 300 MW, before T2 the operator may have chosen to run three units at 100 MW each. However, those units' peak efficiencies may not have been 100 MW, resulting in a less than optimal use of water.

Each unit has an efficiency curve: the amount of water it takes to produce a certain amount of power. The T2 system knows each unit's efficiency curve; by combining that with reservoir conditions, it determines the number and combination of units that will most efficiently generate the required power.

“This is innovative, cutting edge technology,” said Dick Nelson, chief of HDC's



The 11 Corps dams equipped with the T2 system are part of the Federal Columbia River Power System.

DISTRICT PERFORMANCE



Electrical Branch. "This is the kind of stuff engineers love to do: being challenged to get more with less," he said.

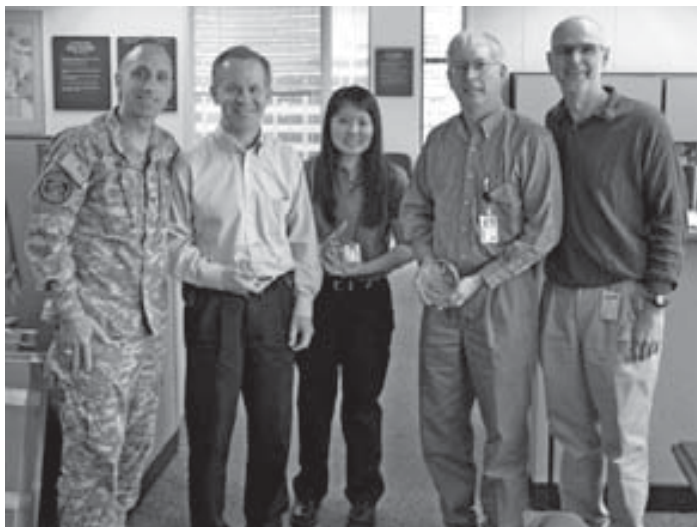
The Corps' direct-funding partnership with BPA allowed the agencies to work closer, providing the opportunity to function more as a power utility geared toward maximizing power benefits, investments and efficiency.

"We appreciate the Corps getting behind this and making it a priority," said Tom Murphy, project representative for BPA.

With its greater efficiencies, T2 can decrease reliance on fossil fuels, help lower the cost of integrating other types of renewable power and keep consumer prices from rising as quickly.

The T2 system even benefits fish. Most dam-related fish kills come from negative environmental conditions such as pressure changes and water vortices, so when generators run at peak efficiency, those harmful conditions are minimized, improving the environment for fish bypass.

The T2 software was first installed at Seattle District's Chief Joseph Dam in 2006, at a cost of \$838,000. After one year of operation, T2 saved enough water to produce an additional 14.1 MW of power, worth \$7.4 million.



District Commander COL Steven Miles (left) and HDC Director Brent Mahan (right) congratulate HDC employees (from left to right) Larry Haas, Showin Fu and Alvin Carlson for earning the Secretary of the Army Energy and Water Management award for superior achievement for installation of innovative new technology. Photo by Matt Rabe.




George Huff, senior chief operator at Chief Joseph Dam, mans the controls of the first dam to receive the T2 Optimization System software. The dam saved enough energy in 2007 to power more than 8,400 additional homes. Corps of Engineers Photo.

This savings and efficiency boost earned the team the Secretary of the Army Energy and Water Management award for superior achievement for installation of innovative new technology.

"This was clearly a team effort and it does wonderful things for the region," said Roll.

While the T2 system is installed in all Columbia River Basin dams, it will be almost a decade before each dam can operate it based on individual unit efficiencies. Data from every unit must be identified and fed into the software – a significant amount of work. Until then, the system will operate based on generator-family efficiency curves, choosing the best family of units to run rather than individual units.

T2 can offer even more possibilities in the future, as data from all the variables that affect power production are gathered, said Alvin Carlson, Generic Data Acquisition and Control. "We've only touched on what is possible if we had more information."

The hydropower optimization team sees T2 as just the first step in an ongoing process of helping the Corps do its part in becoming more efficient, reducing waste and helping to make renewable energy an even larger and more affordable part of powering the Northwest. 



# DISTRICT PERFORMANCE





# Portland District operating projects participate in National Public Lands Day efforts



## Over 90 volunteers improve campground on Cottage Grove Lake

By Christie Johnson, Willamette Valley Projects

Over 90 volunteers dedicated the afternoon of Sept. 27 to planting trees and shrubs in Pine Meadows Campground at Cottage Grove Lake.

Most of the volunteers were from the local communities of Cottage Grove and Creswell, with a few from Eugene, and one from the Portland area. The majority of the volunteers were associated with local Girl Scout and Boy Scout groups.

Park Ranger Josh Gormley planned and organized the project, and three other rangers assisted with implementation.

Pine Meadows Campground is heavily used during the summer, so the trees will provide buffer zones and boundaries between campsites, provide shade for campers and protect riparian areas from erosion.

In addition to planting trees and shrubs, volunteers removed weeds and blackberry vines around existing trees, applied mulch around the base of trees and trimmed overgrown bushes.

Park rangers were extremely pleased with the number of volunteers who showed up – although they had planned for four hours of work, they were able to get everything done in half the time.



Amy, Alex and Luke Swearingin of Cottage Grove plant a vine maple at Pine Meadows Campground.

## Sixth grade class plants trees at Hamilton Island

By Tim Darland, Bonneville Lock and Dam

More than 40 sixth graders, teachers and parents from Dallesport Elementary School in Lyle, Wash., joined park ranger staff from the Bonneville Lock and Dam on Sept. 26 to plant native plants and trees at Hamilton Island.

The students planted more than 100 ponderosa pine and Douglas fir trees along with other native shrubs as part of National Public Lands Day – one of the nation’s largest hands-on volunteer efforts to improve and enhance the public lands Americans enjoy.

“The kids raised over \$600 and contributed the money towards the restoration effort, but saved enough for a twelve-foot long Subway sandwich as a reward for all their hard work,” reported Tim Darland, park ranger at Bonneville Lock and Dam.

The day wasn’t all about planting trees though. Darland also took the students for a short hike along Tanner Creek where they watched spawning Chinook and coho. Along the way, he discussed the salmon’s life cycle and the importance of environmental stewardship.

The project was a huge undertaking involving planning, site preparation and other coordination efforts. Two other park rangers, Jason Sharp and Chelsie Morris, helped plan the NPLD event and also assisted students as they dug, planted and mulched around the new trees.

“The day turned out great! The kids were really interested in the environment, especially through some of the hands-on exercises they got to participate in. They’re hoping this will happen annually and are already looking forward to next year’s effort,” said Darland.

Students from Dallesport Elementary already have next year’s National Public Lands Day of Sept. 26 on their calendars. 📅



Creswell Boy Scout Troop 28 and other volunteers with a freshly planted tree at Pine Meadows Campground.



Dallesport elementary sixth graders joined park ranger staff from the Bonneville Lock and Dam on Sept. 26 to plant native plants and trees at Hamilton Island.



Viewing spawning chinook in Tanner Creek.



Michael and Rowan Orloff of Eugene plant a fir tree at Pine Meadows Campground.





# District employees recognized by DOJ for role in criminal conviction

By Scott Clemans, Public Affairs Office

Corrie Veenstra, policy and compliance section chief in the district's regulatory branch, and Misty Latcu, assistant district counsel, received certificates of achievement from the local U.S. Attorney's Office Nov. 18 for their role in the conviction of Ivan Cam.

Cam had dammed a creek on his and his neighbors' property in Gervais, Ore. The Clean Water Act prohibits discharging fill into waters of the United States, including their adjacent wetlands, without a permit.

"Typically the EPA takes the lead in these cases, but I wanted to keep it," Veenstra said. "I wanted the challenge, but I was also personally offended by his impacts to the wetlands and the neighbors."

Veenstra made about 30 visits to the site as lead investigator on the case, documenting Cam's activities, which included burying an excavator in mud up to the cab and excavating on his neighbors' property.

When Cam's attorney and consultant later questioned the Corps' jurisdiction over the stream, Veenstra also documented – and later testified in court – that it qualified.

"I think the judge believed me over the consultant," she said.



*The scene at Cam's property in Gervais included an excavator buried up to its cab (left). Photo by Corrie Veenstra.*

Cam's flagrant violations and refusal to cooperate with authorities led to the first criminal prosecution of a CWA violation in Oregon.

"We don't enter into criminal prosecution lightly," Latcu said. "There could be huge legal and policy repercussions if a case goes bad."

Latcu served as the legal liaison between the various agencies, gathered affidavits and drafted the Corps' arguments for the prosecuting attorney.

Her role increased significantly in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's Rapanos decision regarding the scope of CWA jurisdiction.

"This wasn't something the prosecutor knew – there wasn't a lot of precedent and established procedure for what we were doing," Latcu said. "He really relied on us to make the best possible argument."

"We could not have done this case without Corrie and Misty," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott Kerin. "Corrie stepped into the role of case agent without any previous experience or training, and Misty helped us tremendously in understanding the intricacies of Clean Water Act jurisdiction." 🇺🇸



*Fraud Unit Chief Lance Caldwell presented Corrie Veenstra and Misty Latcu with certificates of appreciation for their role in convicting Cam. Photos by Scott Clemans.*

FROM THE FIELD

# A tough but speedy fix to John Day navlock gate

Story and photos by Jennifer Sowell, Public Affairs Office



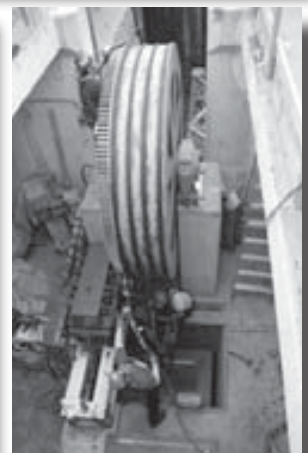
The John Day Dam upstream navigation lock gate was recently repaired and reinstalled after a barge floated into it earlier this year.

The 125-ton lock gate was barged up the river from Oregon Ironworks in Vancouver, Wash., to the dam in the early morning of Oct. 28. Corps contractor Knight Construction lifted the gate into place with a 250-ton crane and a 500-ton crane positioned on either side of the lock.

National Geographic's 'World's Toughest Fixes' filmed the delicate maneuvering of the massive gate for an episode which will air in early 2009.

The damage to the lock gate brought river traffic to a halt in late February. In only 72 hours the Corps removed the damaged gate and a put temporary floating bulkhead into place, which allowed vessels to lock through, although at a considerably slower pace.

The excellent cooperation and coordination between the Corps and numerous contractors allowed the gate to be repaired, reinstalled and back to normal operation in just 251 days, making this tough fix one of the Corps' fastest efforts to address a critical infrastructure repair.



PROJECT NEWS





# A public servant's tale: Never underestimate your impact on others

By Tracy Van Hee, Rogue River Basin Project

I was a young sailor aboard the USS Midway, an aircraft carrier that deployed in 1979 to “Gonzo Station” in the Indian Ocean during the Iran hostage crisis. Life was 15-plus hour workdays, standing watches and just doing as I was told.

Months at sea punctuated by brief port visits finally ended when we returned to our home port of Yokosuka, Japan in December 1980.

I often unwound at the nearby Christian Servicemen’s Center when we were in port. During one of my visits the pastor of a youth group from nearby Yokota organized a trip to the Servicemen’s Center for his young people, which turned into a tour of the carrier to see what life was like aboard a warship.

A shipmate and I told the kids what launch and recovery of aircraft was like – one pilot described it as similar to being a human BB in a slingshot. I related what life was like in the less-than-hospitable environment aboard an aircraft carrier.

One of those young people I spoke to was a 15 year-old named Tobi, who decided that the Navy was the life he wanted. However, I quickly forgot that meeting and those eager young people who were not all that much younger than me.

The long hours, incredible homesickness and single-minded focus necessary to accomplish my everyday tasks blinded me to the impact my life had on others: How could the activities of an insignificant third-class petty officer with a high school education ever make an impact? Why would the mundane details of life aboard a ship impress anyone?

I served four years in the Navy and worked several years in the civilian sector. I am now once again proudly serving my nation as a materials handler at the Rogue River Basin Project.



*Petty Officer Tracy Van Hee.*

Life has changed considerably. I am now happily married and the father of three grown children. I still face challenges, but nothing like the days of the Iran hostage crisis.

As for the Midway, she is now a museum in San Diego harbor. The Christian Servicemen’s Center was given to the people of Yokosuka, and most of those faces and people I knew during those tumultuous years of the Cold War have faded into distant memory.

The other day, my daughter came to me as I was unhooking the trailer after a camping trip and said, “Dad, you have got to hear the answering machine.”

Curiosity turned to wonder as I heard the voice of the man on the machine tell me that he was looking for “Tracy Van Hee -- a man I met on aircraft carrier Midway in the port of Yokosuka in

1979 or 1980.” He left a Pearl Harbor telephone number and asked me to return his call.

Imagine my shock when Chief Petty Officer Tobi Bledsoe told me that he had never forgotten that meeting on the flight deck of the Midway, and had never forgotten my name or face or those of my shipmate, Aviation Electrician Chuck Fitts.

He told me he had been looking for me for years, and finally found me after a Google search turned up an article I had written for the Corps’ pondent several years ago.

He told me, “As soon as I saw your picture, I knew I had found you. I never forgot your face or your name, despite your beard.”

I had to sheepishly apologize and admit that I did not remember him or that meeting.



*Petty Officer Tracy Van Hee and Petty Officer Scott Graham.*




*Petty Officer Tracy Van Hee, left, and Petty Officer Chuck Fitts, right, with colleagues in 1979 in the Philippines.*



*Petty Officer Chuck Fitts.*

He decided it was time to contact me to let me know what an impression I had left on his young life, and how it resulted in a wonderful Navy career spanning 24 years. He is planning to retire this spring.

I was humbled in a way I have not been in a very long time. Almost 30 years after that divine appointment on the flight deck that day, a telephone call proved to me that we can only imagine the profound implications of the words or actions of a common man or woman on another person. 

*Photos courtesy of Tracy Van Hee.*







# *The Crow's Nest:* One last summer adventure

By Brian McCavitt, Bonneville Lock and Dam

*Editor's note: Remember all the fun you had as a kid? Last summer, the District asked you to share your stories about your childhood adventures in order to encourage others to get outdoors. We included some stories in the May/June Corps'pondent, and displayed others in the lobby at Robert Duncan Plaza.*

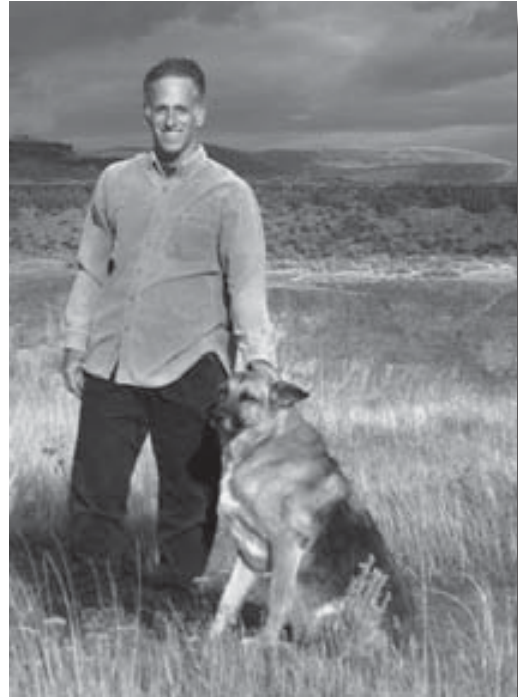
*To continue encouraging everyone to get outdoors no matter the season, we offer Brian's tale.*

Having teachers as parents allowed my family to stay all summer near our hometown of Mount Union, Pa. When I was about six years old, my dad bought an old isolated hilltop house known as the Crow's Nest. It was built in 1928 by the president of the Pennsylvania State University. From then until I turned 15, I spent my summers playing in the surrounding woods. No one else lived up there. I had the woods to myself.

Central Pennsylvania woods consist of oaks and maples with a scattering of hickory, walnut and pines. These trees were made for climbing. But I didn't spend all my time like a monkey in the branches. I spent a lot of time on the ground looking at the small stuff like bugs, box turtles and snakes.



*The Crow's Nest.*



*Brian McCavitt.*

Snakes were my favorite. Along with the black racer, black rat, ring neck and hog-nosed snakes that I'd occasionally come across, two of the friendliest snakes I knew lived under the front porch of the Crow's Nest. They were a pair of garter snakes. One of them had turquoise blue eyes. I think I named that one Sammy.

When we arrived at the Crow's Nest every summer, I'd go looking for these snakes. I would always set a little food out for them. I don't know if they ate it, but it was always gone when I'd check back. They stuck around for a few years before moving on.

My dad had a profound fear of snakes, so I was often called upon to remove the big black snakes that found their way into the house while we were away. I learned that black snakes shake their tail in the dry leaves to mimic the sound of a rattlesnake. They also hissed loud enough to make me jump. Four-foot black rat snakes do not like to be disturbed.

My intense interest in snakes led to reading everything I could find about them. I was even willing to suffer the consequences of well-timed rubber snake practical jokes on my dad.

Alone in the woods, I listened to and learned bird songs. The wind rustling the leaves, cicadas buzzing, trees squeaking as they rubbed against each other, squirrels chattering and grouse thumping were sounds I would never tire of hearing. To this day I cannot understand why someone would go outside then turn on a radio or walk around with ear buds in his or her head.

The woods were my gymnasium. I not only climbed trees, I was convinced that I could run faster through the woods than anyone else. And I practiced a lot. I could dodge around trees, swing from branches and bounce from rock to rock. I had two different grapevine "Tarzan" swings on my circuit. I had no interest in organized sports. This was my sport.

As I ventured further away from the house I often got out of range of the supper call. So my



dad hung a bell that he or mom could ring when it was time to come in.

Unless I was very hungry, my response to the dinner bell was usually slow, especially at dusk. As the sun got low, lightning bugs started flashing. Flying squirrels came out and glided through the trees. Birds, especially chickadees and robins, would get active for a while then quiet down. Crickets, katydids and frogs started to sing. The temperature usually dropped to provide some relief from the humid heat of the day.

Though we had an old black and white television at the Crow's Nest, it only got turned on at night.

I picked up the Johnny Carson habit from dad. It was rarely on during the day. There was just too much to see and do outside in my woods.

Every summer I got tanned, dirty, cut, bruised, bug bit and stung. The freedom I enjoyed outdoors as a kid would be hard to find these days as more and more land is developed, fenced and posted. Even the Crow's Nest has neighbors now. 📷

Photos courtesy of Brian McCovitt.

# IDP: a great tool for mapping your career

By Erica Jensen, Public Affairs Office

If you're like most government employees, you probably have a good idea how many years you have left until you're eligible to retire, and may have mapped out what you'll do afterwards.

But what about the time between now and then? Can you imagine working in your current job until you retire? Will you meet your retirement goals if you remain at your present pay grade?

Many employees use an individual development plan to track their current and future professional growth and meet their career and retirement goals.

"An IDP is required for all Corps employees," said Jennifer Cannard, Portland District training specialist. "All training paid for by the government should be approved by management on the form in advance. But completing an IDP is really an advantage for the employee, too."

You can access an IDP form (ENG 5055-R) in FormFlow, but spend some time setting goals before getting started.

Think about your current career. What do you like about it and what would you change? Does your current path lead you to the retirement lifestyle that you have pictured?

Next, set some goals based on those reflections, then get out your IDP.

*Continued on page 16*





Identify your strengths, noting the skills and knowledge that you want to maintain. Then note skills, knowledge and abilities that you need to develop or improve. Jot down any certificates or licenses that need renewal.

Ask others to assess your skills and provide feedback on what you do well and what you could do better. Those around us often see qualities that we haven't considered.

Review the District's and other training resources (see below) to identify courses that will help you develop, maintain or improve the skills you've included in your IDP.

You should also consider special projects or developmental assignments that will help you meet your career goals.

Another good idea is to get a mentor – someone in a senior position outside your chain of command who will offer support and advice on work issues and your future career goals.

Finally, include activities to pursue on your own time that will help you excel in your profession, like college courses, professional associations and books and journals.

An IDP isn't just for your benefit; you should consider the District and its organizational needs when determining what skills and knowledge you need.

Once you've completed your IDP, share it with your supervisor during your mid-year performance review. Together you can lay out a schedule of training and other developmental activities for you to complete throughout the year.

Make it a habit to review your IDP every year against your personal and career goals. Don't put it off – just ask anyone who's now on the verge of living out their retirement dreams.

### Portland District Training Resources

FY09 Portland District Training and Development Courses  
<https://w3.nwp.usace.army.mil/docs/FY09Trainingcourses.pdf>

Leadership Development Program  
<https://w3.nwp.usace.army.mil/de/leadership/home.asp>

Power Plant Training Program  
<https://w3.nwp.usace.army.mil/op/ppt/home.asp>

Proponent-Sponsored Engineer Corps Training Program (PROSPECT)  
USACE Learning Center  
<http://ulc.usace.army.mil>

Civilian Education System (CES)  
<http://www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil>

Army Training & Leader Development  
Civilian Personnel On-Line Training & Leader Development  
<http://cpol.army.mil/library/train/>

Army Civilian Training Education and Development System (ACTEDS)  
Civilian Personnel On-Line Training & Career Development  
<http://cpol.army.mil/library/train/catalog/>

Army e-Learning Program  
<https://usarmy.skillport.com/SkillPortFE/login/usarmylogin.cfm>

West Region Civilian Personnel Operations Center, Human Resources Division, Training and Development  
<http://cpolrhp.belvoir.army.mil/west/FunctionalAreas/CHRA/hrd/training.htm>

Defense Acquisition University (DAU)  
<http://www.dau.mil/>

Oregon Federal Executive Board (OFEB) - Education & Training  
<http://www.bdiweb.org/oregon.feb.gov/>

Office of Personnel Management - The Federal Executive Institute and the Management Development Centers  
<http://www.leadership.opm.gov/>

Project Management Institute (PMI)  
<http://www.pmi.org/Pages/default.aspx>

USDA Graduate School  
<http://grad.usda.gov/>

Seminar Information Service, Inc.  
<http://www.seminarinformation.com/>