



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Mississippi Valley Division



Corps Hurricane Response

Task Force Hope Status Report Newsletter

July 2, 2012

New Chief of Engineers comes to New Orleans, tours HSDRRS



USACE Photo
by Alfred Dulaney

Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, left, the new U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Commanding General, boards a plane in Vicksburg, Miss. for New Orleans and his tour of the HSDRRS. The new Chief of Engineers is followed by Maj. Gen. John Peabody, Commanding General of the Mississippi Valley Division; and Col. Edward Fleming, Commander of the New Orleans District.

by Susan Spaht

On June 22, Team New Orleans hosted a visit by the new Chief of Engineers, Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, who assumed command on May 22 as the Corps'

53rd Commanding General. This was the Chief's first official visit to the area, his first flyover of New Orleans District projects and first onsite

Continued on page 2

Also in this issue:

Chief visits IHNC Surge Barrier.....Page 2
 WCC gates/pumps demonstrated.....Page 3
 Media DayPages 4-5
 Letter from the CG.....Page 6
 Faces of Hope.....Pages 7-8

Chief of Engineers visits IHNC



Above: Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, Chief of Engineers, addresses the media and other visitors at the IHNC Surge Barrier wall on June 22. At left is Col. Ed Fleming, Commander of the New Orleans District; and at right is Sen. David Vitter.

Right: Lt Gen. Bostick, left, gets a briefing from Col. Ed Fleming while Maj. Kenneth Reed, the Chief's Aide-de-Camp, assists with the boards.



Continued from page 1

tour of the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System, the Corps of Engineers' number one domestic mission.

After briefings by New Orleans District leaders aboard the flight to New Orleans and at the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Surge Barrier project, the Chief and his entourage travelled by boat to the Bayou Bienvenue lift gate, then walked along the IHNC structure's great wall where news media representatives were waiting to interview him.

The Chief was joined on his tour by Corps personnel, local and state offi-

cial as well as Louisiana Senator David Vitter.

Lt. Gen. Bostick spoke to the group about the importance of Louisiana to our nation, and how the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System is a vital instrument in preserving the state's land and resources. Here is an excerpt from his remarks:

"It is estimated that Louisiana is losing the equivalent of a football field of land each hour. Because the port

of South Louisiana is the largest bulk cargo port in the world; and, because it is estimated that the coast off of Louisiana produces 80% of the Nation's offshore oil and 30% of the Nation's domestic seafood, this multi-purpose project (the IHNC Surge Barrier) helps protect existing infrastructure, sustain the environment, reduce the risk of hurricane storm surge and maintain the regional economy, among other things."



USACE Photos by Anne Marino



**Gulf Intracoastal Waterway
West Closure Complex
June 22, 2012
demonstration**

**The sector gates
closed
in 15 minutes**



**The Pump Station
pumped water
via its emergency
generators as it would
during a hurricane.**

Note: When all 11 pumps are utilized, it can pump 8.6 million gallons of water per minute.



USACE Photos by Kenny Parsons

Media Day June 1, 2012

On June 1, the start of hurricane season, the Corps of Engineers participated in a Media Day event which highlighted the preparedness coordination that is ongoing among the local, state and Federal agencies which are responsible for risk reduction in the Greater New Orleans area.

The lead-off event was a press conference at the Port of New Orleans which was attended by all five parish leaders (see page 5) as well as representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard, the State's Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority, the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority East and West, the Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans, FEMA, the New Orleans and Louisiana State Police, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

The media and elected officials were then invited to visit several projects that are part of the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System. The projects which were on the tour and staffed by Corps personnel included: the IHNC Surge Barrier, the West Closure Complex, the Seabrook Floodgate Complex, the West Return Floodwall, and the 17th Street Canal.



US Army Corps
of Engineers



Chris Accardo, Chief, Operations Division, oversees activities at the Seabrook Floodgate Complex on Media Day. USACE Photos by Paul Floro



Members of the news media get a firsthand look at the construction progress being made at the Seabrook Floodgate Complex.



17th Street Canal

Parish Presidents pose for picture at press conference, June 1



In a show of hurricane preparedness coordination, five parish presidents and mayors appeared at Media Day, June 1, at the Port of New Orleans. They were joined by representatives of other local, state and Federal agencies which are involved in public safety during storms. From left are Mayor Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans; V.J. St. Pierre, Jr., President, St. Charles Parish; David Peralta, President, St. Bernard Parish; Billy Nungesser, President Plaquemines Parish; and John Young, President, Jefferson Parish.

USACE Photo by Paul Floro



A "trunk show" was presented to the media at the West Return Floodwall by Corps Project Managers.

USACE Photos by Kristen Kendrick



West Return Floodwall

Letter from our Commanding General



Maj. Gen. John Peabody (right) Commander, Mississippi Valley Division, gives a pre-briefing to Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, Chief of Engineers, before their entourage departed Vicksburg for New Orleans.

USACE Photo by Pamela Harriou

I just completed an aerial, boat and ground tour of the incredible Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System with Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, our new Chief of Engineers. He was extremely impressed and filled with the same sense of awe that I experienced the first time I viewed this system.

Now, as tropical storms begin to form in the Gulf and the Atlantic, the Mississippi Valley Division is working resolutely to prepare for any possible land fall so that our response will be swift, effective and safe. Public safety is always our top priority, and an effective evacuation of any threatened area must come first. And after the winds calm down and storm waters recede, our emergency response teams will be ready and able to reduce further risk to life and livelihoods.

In particular, our professionals in New Orleans who comprise the Emergency Operations Center Team are a specially-trained group who prepare all year for the possibility of a major storm or hurri-

cane hitting the greater New Orleans area. Their intense and comprehensive preparations include inspecting flood-fighting structures and rehearsing their individual duties. The team continuously tests pumps, gates and equipment year round to ensure the hurricane system's integrity and viability. They also conduct realistic exercises with local, state and Federal agencies to ensure seamless coordination and teamwork, and this year rehearsed the over 500 closings required as hurricanes approach, getting an early actual test as Tropical Storm Debby churned out in the Gulf recently. I commend the entire team for their dedication and readiness.

The Corps and our partners have raised and strengthened virtually all of the levees, floodwalls and surge barriers that form the 133-mile Greater New Orleans HSDRRS perimeter. Construction of surge barriers at Lake Borgne, Sea-brook, the New Orleans Outfall Canals, and the West Closure Complex have pushed the first line of protection outside

of the city and removed about 68 miles of interior levees and floodwalls from direct exposure to storm surges.

And this year is definitely different for the people of the New Orleans area because the infrastructure in place is stronger and more resilient than it has ever been, reducing the risk of flooding from hurricane storm surge to its lowest levels ever. Still, we must continue our stance of ready vigilance as we complete all construction over the next few years.

Team New Orleans continues to make history and I am honored to be a part of this organization, just as I know Lt. Gen. Bostick is.

Essayons, and ...
Building Strong!



John Peabody

Maj. Gen. John Peabody, Commander
Mississippi Valley Division

Faces of Hope

by Susan Spaht

Donna Catron began working for the Corps of Engineers in 1987 in Omaha, Nebraska, her hometown. She was hired as an Administrative Assistant in the Programs and Project Management Branch. She figured she would continue working there at the Omaha District until she retired. Then one day she was approached with an idea by her co-worker and good friend, Ruth Barry, a Program Analyst.

Ruth suggested the two friends should volunteer for disaster assistance in Tampa, Florida following hurricanes Ivan, Charlie, Frances and Jeanne in 2004. "I said 'yes'," Donna recalled. And the friends were off for their first volunteer assignment, a 180-day TDY. "I ended up at Fort Pierce," Donna recalled, "and Ruth went some place else! We never saw each other the entire time," Donna giggled. "That's not the way I thought things would work out, but it was fine."

Donna and Ruth completed their volunteer tour in Tampa and returned to their regular jobs in Omaha.

In 2005, the year Hurricane Katrina beat up the Gulf Coast, Donna had to deal with a fight of her own. That was the year she was diagnosed with cancer. When Donna discusses her bout with cancer, she talks about it just like she does any other challenge – with optimism and humor. "I kept working the whole time I was

When it comes to volunteering, Donna Catron always says "yes."



Friends and co-workers Donna Catron and Ruth Barry take a streetcar ride.

going through my treatments," she said proudly, "and I am now in, what they call, 'clinical remission.'"

In 2007, Donna got a call from Jimmy Mack, who worked in Human Resources at the Omaha District. Jimmy was doing recruiting for Col. Jeff Bedey who had just accepted command of the Hurricane Protection Office in New Orleans. Col. Bedey was the District Commander in Omaha before taking the HPO command, and the Colonel asked Jimmy to fill some of the jobs needed to conduct the important work of building the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System for the Greater New Orleans area. Jimmy called Donna and asked her to take the Administrative Assistant position in HPO on a 180-day TDY term. "I said 'yes' again," Donna said with a shrug. "I had never been to New Orleans before and I wanted to help."

When her TDY ended, Donna returned to Omaha and her regular job once again.

"A few months later, I got a call from someone in HPO asking me to come down to New Orleans for a month to fill in for Col. Bedey's Admin. while she was on medical leave," said Donna. "'Yes, I'll be happy to,' I told them."

Donna stayed the month and, again, returned to Omaha.

Six months later Donna got the first call from Task Force Hope. Henry Bordelon, a Program Analyst with TFH, called Donna and asked her to take over their Administrative Assistant position on a 180-day TDY. "Of course, I said 'yes' again!" Ruth Barry, Donna's friend, was already working for Task Force Hope, so the two friends found themselves working on the same disaster relief mission again. But this time they were actually working together in the same office.

When her TDY at Task Force Hope was up, Donna returned to Omaha.

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

But not for long. A few months later she got a call from Mike Smith, the Deputy G-3 with Task Force Hope, who asked her to come back and stay for six months this time. "Donna was the best Admin we ever had," said Smith. "Everyone wanted her to come back and stay for a longer period." Her answer? "Yes."

During that TDY, Donna was approached by Col. Greg Gunter, the G-3 for TFH, who asked Donna if she would be willing to relocate to New Orleans and the Task Force Hope staff for a three-year temporary assignment as their Administrative Assistant. Donna's answer? "Make me a deal I can't refuse," she jokingly replied. "And he did! And I did!" That temporary position actually lasted for three and a half years. The Task Force Hope staff just didn't want to see her go.

But now the work is almost done on the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System, and temporary staffs, including those at Task Force Hope, are dwindling. Donna's extended tour is coming to an end in a few weeks. Task Force Hope kept Donna for as long as they were allowed.

All totaled, Donna has worked in New Orleans for nearly five years. "It's been a wonderful experience, a learning experience" she said. "The work has been stressful at times, but it has been very fulfilling.

"I am very proud to have been part of this mission and watched the New Orleans area recover from near disaster to a more normal life while the Corps was building their hurricane defense system.



Donna receives a Commander's Award for Civilian Service from Mike Park, Chief of Task Force Hope.

"I've done things here I might never have normally been able to do. I got to work with an SES (Karen Durham-Aguilera) and lots of military personnel. And I've met so many interesting people – dignitaries, political figures, foreigners, and I've worked with people from all over the world.

"I've enjoyed the food in New Orleans, the plantation homes and all the exciting things that go on here. I've made lifelong friends. I'm going to bring some of my family members down here to experience all of this.

"And you know what? If they ask me again, I would say YES!"



Donna gets a farewell hug from Mike Smith, the TFH G-3. USACE Photos

Contact Information

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Task Force Hope
(504) 862-2593

New Orleans District
(504) 862-2201

The Task Force Hope *Status Report Newsletter* supports the information program for Task Force Hope and its stakeholders.

It also serves as the primary tool for accurately transmitting the Corps' hurricane risk reduction efforts to stakeholders.

This is an online publication that is open to public distribution.

This issue and past issues can be found at:
<http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps>

Comments and questions may be sent to the Status Report Newsletter editor at:
b2fwdpao@usace.army.mil

The Status Report Newsletter is an unofficial publication authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1. Views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Corps of Engineers or the Department of the Army.



US Army Corps
of Engineers.

Status Report Newsletter
Task Force Hope
Strategic Communications
7400 Leake Ave., Room #388
New Orleans, LA 70118
(504) 862-1949