



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
New Orleans District

Riverside

www.mvn.usace.army.mil

February 2006



Resuscitating the coast

Above and beyond
award nominees

Pinpointing Stuart Waits



Carrollton Gage

I appreciate this opportunity to share some of my thoughts with all of the members of the district. Every day I see extraordinary things being done by some very special "ordinary people," namely, the people of the New Orleans District. For this, I am truly grateful and inspired. I am also equally grateful for the help that we continue to receive from our extended Corps family and others.

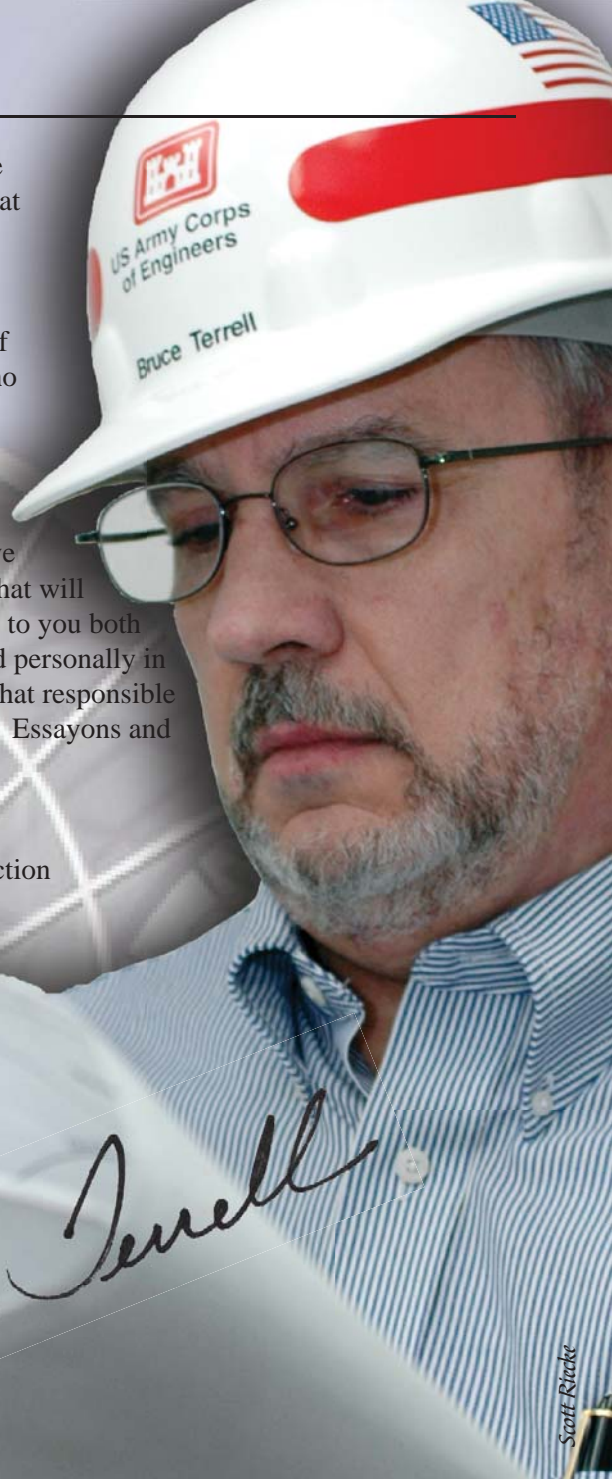
We face enormous challenges and we have accepted responsibility for achieving them. We are a little battered, bruised, and leg-weary. Nonetheless, we continue to work our hearts out in restoring our home territory to its former stature. This is truly inspiring. In spite of the heartache and agony around us and in our midst, our accomplishments will provide memories to treasure the rest of our lives.

Construction folks are fully engaged across the board—repairing, rebuilding, removing debris, providing blue roofs, and civil works. In our end of the business, there is one thing that always comes first – safety. Yes, we work hard to achieve quality construction, on time, and within budget, but the safety of the workers and users of the end product comes first. It is about putting people first and taking care of them.

As we continue this marathon to restore and improve the hurricane protection system in the region, we must take care of people. This includes taking care of each other and ourselves. I am referring to more than just physical safety. We have all been affected in some way by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Some of us face profound personal challenges. We all face professional challenges. I encourage each of you to choose to face those challenges in healthy and constructive ways so that we can not only fulfill our commitments, but also create a personally fulfilling future. Share

those burdensome feelings about what you are going through with a trusted relative or friend; visit one of the counselors who are here to help us. Make the changes that occur within you reflect positive personal growth that will make a difference to you both professionally and personally in the future. It is what responsible people like us do. Essayons and take care.

Bruce Terrell
Chief, Construction



Scott Rucke

Riverside

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Commander

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Acting Public Affairs Chief
Susan Jackson

Editor

Amanda S. Jones

Winner: The "J" Award, the highest Department of Army journalism honor, 2000 and 2003.

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Lane Lefort

Donald Powell, White House Coordinator for Gulf Coast Recovery, Lt. Gen. Carl Strock and Dan Hitchings discuss the \$1.46 billion funding proposal for the hurricane protection system.



Fred Wallace reviews FOIA requests.

Not all documents are created equal

by Amanda Jones

When the “Collection and release of Katrina-related records” e-mail came out on Nov. 14, it was the first time many MVN employees had heard the term “FOIA request.” Was this another new process put into effect following Hurricane Katrina?

No, surprisingly it’s not, according to Frederick Wallace, the district’s FOIA coordinator. “We’re one of the busiest districts as far as FOIA goes. We usually have around 120 to 130 requests per year. There are other districts who get seven.”

The Freedom of Information Act or FOIA was enacted in 1966 and is a federal law that allows the public to obtain records from federal agencies, including print documents, photographs, videos, maps, e-mails and electronic records. To obtain such information from the Corps, it is best to send in a FOIA request.

“There are a lot of people in the building that are in constant contact with the public and have good working relationships with them, and there are documents and information that would be helpful to the outsider. Sometimes the relationship gets strained because they start asking for more and more information and workload prevents a person from responding immediately. At what point do you say no? It’s always safe to tell the requester to send a

FOIA request. It makes it so much more efficient because there’s some control on what information is being released,” said Wallace.

When the request is filed “the research is actually done by the people who are most familiar with the documents. But it’s not their job to make a decision on releasability; that’s our job,” said Wallace. He also warns, “If it’s in the files, it’s subject to FOIA, so momma’s brownie recipe written on the back of a document could get out there.”

However, not all documents are releasable. There are nine exemptions, which include documents that are of national security, internal personnel rules and practices, information exempt under other laws, confidential business information, internal records that are deliberative in nature, litigation and other privileges, personal privacy, law enforcement records that implicate one of six enumerated concerns, financial institutions, and geological information.

“When a FOIA is requested we collect everything from the employees concerned,” said Wallace. “Then they can tell me the things they think fall under the exemptions so we can take their advice into consideration.”

see FOIA, page 10



by Amanda Jones

The Saturday before the storm I was watching the weather on the news and I told my wife they might be right this time,” said Stuart Waits, who, like many, had hoped this evacuation would turn out to be another one of those unexpected “vacations” taken nearly every hurricane season. “I’ve lived in this area most of my life, so the big one is something I’ve been willing to risk all these years.”

Waits grew up in Reserve, La., but moved to the metro area after leaving the Army to pursue a civil engineering degree at the University of New Orleans. He started planting his roots here when he accepted a co-op position with the district’s Engineering Division at the Corps in 1995. In 1997 he graduated college, got married nine days later, and then accepted a permanent, full-time position in Construction Division, where he stayed for the next nine years.

Now a veteran of hurricane seasons, when Hurricane Katrina moved closer to the New Orleans metro area, he followed the standard procedure to prepare on Aug. 28. He made plans to stay with a friend in Osyka, Miss., boarded up the windows and packed everything he could fit in his Trailblazer, including three cats, his three-year-old son, and his pregnant wife. Waits remained in Osyka until Labor Day, the first “look and leave” day in Jefferson Parish, which is when he found his home fairly intact. It had sustained some roof damage and the fence had fallen, but there was no flood damage.

On the way back to Mississippi he received a call from Bruce Terrell, Chief of Construction Division, asking if he would join a team returning to the district the following day. The team would later become part of Task Force Unwatering.

“I asked a lot of questions. He did tell me that I would be sleeping at the district. I told him that I had to make sure my family was set, but I would report in and stay flexible,” said Waits, who was actually eager to get back to work.

He arrived at the district at 10 a.m. on Sept. 6. By noon he and his team, Chad Rachel and project manager Mark Gonski, were already in a helicopter viewing their new assignment, the Inner Harbor Navigational Canal (IHNC). They quickly learned that they would only be able to access the area by boat since most of the area was under water. There were

two breaches that contractors were already building access roads to and there were several barges blocking the canal.

“Where do you start?” asked Waits. “There was so much work to be done.”

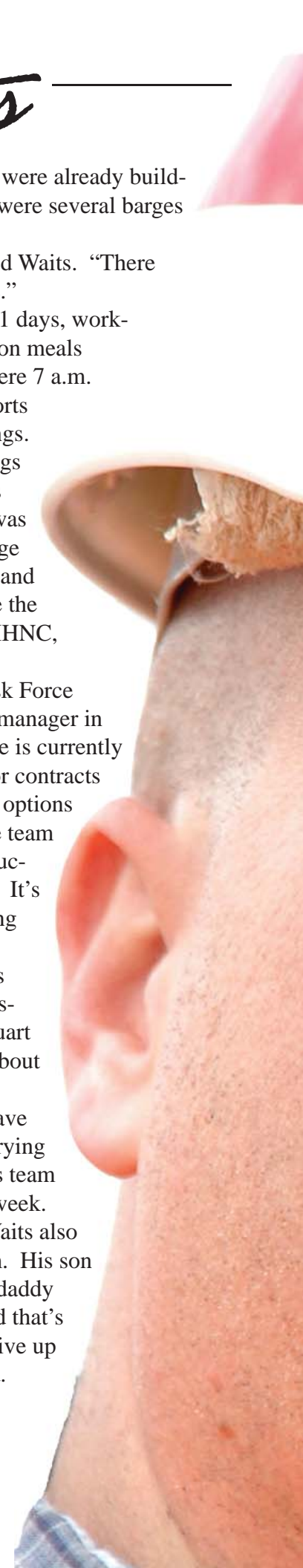
He slept at the district for 11 days, working long hours and surviving on meals ready to eat (MRE). There were 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. meetings, and reports to do after the evening meetings. Sometimes there were meetings after the meetings. His duties also increased when Gonski was pulled from his team to manage the Plaquemines Parish work and Waits was volunteered to take the project manager position for IHNC, which he gladly accepted.

Waits transitioned from Task Force Unwatering to IHNC project manager in Task Force Guardian where he is currently assigned. “We have our major contracts out and we’re keeping all our options open for IHNC. I have a core team from Engineering and Construction. We’ve got a good team. It’s a lot of work, but we’re driving forward,” Waits said.

Even though his family was able to safely return to their essentially untouched home, Stuart hasn’t felt at all complacent about his work on the levees.

“This is still my home. I have pride in my work and we’re trying to do our best.” Waits and his team are working 60 – 70 hours a week.

Besides loving his work, Waits also has his family rooting for him. His son Zachary tells everyone, “My daddy is going to fix the levees,” and that’s something Waits is trying to live up to – for his son and Louisiana.





US Army Corps
of Engineers
STUART WAITS
NEW ORLEANS
AREA OFFICE

"This is still my home. I have pride in my work and we're trying to do our best.

— Stuart Waits

District nominates six for Meritorious

At the District Award Ceremony Jan. 26, Col. Richard Wagenaar recognized New Orleans District employees who have gone above and beyond to ensure the Corps' success in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. He announced six nominees for the Meritorious Civilian Service Award, including Walter Baummy, Richard Flores, Neil Lalonde, Kenneth Landry, James Moreau, and Michael Salyer. This award is the second highest civilian award. Col. Wagenaar started the nominations, which were then forwarded to Brig. Gen. Robert Crear, who sent the nominations to the Corps Headquarters' Incentive Award Committee for submission to Lt. General Strock. Unfortunately the process is a laborious one and final word on the nominations has not been received yet.

Neil J. Lalonde's heroic act above and beyond the call of duty provided support for several missions Aug. 31 thru Sept. 1, putting safety first. Because of his dedication, knowledge and skill, he was able to successfully complete and rescue missions, bringing citizens to safety.



Walter Baummy served as the Lead Engineer for the Crisis Action Team during emergency operations in support of the New Orleans District from Aug. 30 to Sept 25. He distinguished himself through his selfless acts and achievements while providing the New Orleans District with essential acquisition strategy and engineering expertise in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita.



Kenneth Landry assisted with recovery activities, Regional Field Office and FEMA site setups, and assembled a search and rescue team with boats from field sites. However, Ken put himself at great personal risk when he traveled to dangerous areas of the city to deliver and set up pumps at the Superdome. At the district and various areas around New Orleans, he also maintained district vehicles and sanitation facilities, participated in sandbagging operations at the 17th Street Canal, worked at Harvey Lock and then returned to Port Allen to assist with recovery work. Following Hurricane Rita, Mr. Landry deployed to Calcasieu Lock and assisted with lock repairs until the lock returned to operation.



ous Civilian Service Award

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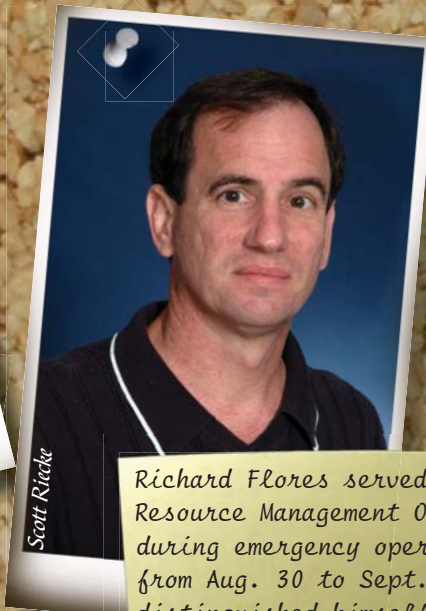
Congratulations!



Michael R. Salyer served as the New Orleans District Rescue Operations Liaison Officer to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service during emergency operations from Aug. 30 to Sept. 25. He distinguished himself through heroic and selfless acts while participating in and coordinating rescue operations in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.



James T. Moreau's heroic actions provided support for several critical missions in response to the District's and the Corps' needs between Aug. 31 and Sept. 13. Because of his dedication, knowledge and skills, successful search and rescue missions were conducted, resulting in nine citizens rescued.



Richard Flores served as the Resource Management Office Chief during emergency operations from Aug. 30 to Sept. 25. He distinguished himself through his selfless acts and achievements while providing the New Orleans District with expert understanding of regulations, policies, and procedures that benefited all employees across the district. His experience and knowledge were indispensable to the District.

Resuscitating Coastal Louisiana

Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration (LACPR) begins an emergency endeavor

Eric Hughes

Loss of property and life...two such significant impacts felt this past year by hurricanes Katrina and Rita are now making waves to address the need for increase protection along coastal Louisiana.

After both hurricanes ripped through the Gulf Coast and devastated millions of people, Congress directed the

Corps to conduct a comprehensive hurricane protection analysis and design to develop and present a full range of flood control, coastal restoration, and hurricane protection measures for south Louisiana within a two-phase, 24-month endeavor. The effort is targeted at protecting coastal communities, along with the city of New Orleans, from future catastrophic hurricanes.



Vann Stutts, Tim Axtman, Wayne Naquin, and Zoltan Montvai look at topographic change map showing the greater New Orleans area.

The Corps is preparing a preliminary technical report for comprehensive “Category 5 equivalent” protection due June 30, while a final technical report is due December 2007. This effort, known as the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration (LACPR) Project, is being conducted in close coordination with the State of Louisiana’s newly designated Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority.

According to Al Naomi, Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity project manager, the initial hurricane assessment, which was prepared and produced three weeks after Katrina, will serve as a starting point for the technical reports that Congress has now requested from the Corps.

The development of the reports is intended to be a collaborative, comprehensive and integrated partnership among the State of Louisiana and representatives from the private sector, academia, international experts including the Dutch Rijkswaterstaat and other federal, state and local agencies

In order to prepare these reports, LACPR is hosting a series of workshops. The first of these workshops was held last December, stimulating discussion among scientists and engineers to develop a “design storm” for producing a Category 5 protection plan.

The group discussed hydrodynamic modeling requirements to evaluate performance of alternatives for increased hurricane protection against surge and waves, as well as coastal engineering needs for building robust hurricane structures and restored coastal features.

The second, a hurricane protection plan formulation workshop, was held Feb. 13 and 14 at the Cajundome in Lafayette, Louisiana. The two-day event was attended by a spectrum of over 100 participants of diverse interests from across coastal Louisiana including parish representatives, levee boards, coastal environmental organizations, ports and university scientists.

The two-day workshop included several key speakers from various coastal Louisiana organizations and industries that provided presentations of existing proposed levee alignments and coastal features. The agenda included brainstorming, filtering out and/or combining duplicate ideas, discussion of pros and cons of ideas, and narrowing them down to the consensus-driven top alternatives. An interactive computer system was used to develop, describe, rank and illustrate the multiple points of views from all participants.

Edmond Russo, Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) project manager for LACPR, said the preliminary report includes a “screening component” on possible alternatives to assess performance of protecting populations and developments from storm surge and waves. Screening will also involve identifying any adverse environmental impacts that could harm the coast. The final report will contain further development and evaluation on the synergistic interoperability between engineered structures and coastal features.

“The objective of integrating coastal restoration into the project will be to prevent the engineered structures from having to face the open coast with continued wetlands loss,” said Russo, “This is intended to reduce the risk of engineered structures from undue deterioration over the project life cycle, thus leading to reduced risk of loss and costs to the project.”

According to Gregory Miller, one of the Planning, Programs and Project Management Division project managers for LACPR, these reports to Congress are different from previous coastal restoration and hurricane protection studies. “This is not a traditional study, but rather Congress has asked us for technical reports that will include plans for integrating Category 5 hurricane protection with coastal ecosystem restoration. It specifically establishes a look at multipurpose components for a Category 5 storm

see LACPR, page 11

Active for Life kicks off third session

Amanda Jones and Eric Hughes



Ree Anderson and Roger Gonzalez kick off Active for Life with a healthy snack.

Active For Life (AFL) is running towards a healthier lifestyle once again! Sixteen AFL teams gathered in the DARM to kick-off the third 20-week session Feb. 16. Employees snacked on healthy fruits and vegetables as they listened to District Commander Col. Richard Wagenaar give his message on what it means to be healthy.

“It’s very obvious what physical conditioning and staying in shape does for you and how important it is. That’s important to me as a commander because we’re in the business of producing something for somebody. If we can be more productive and do it safely with a great attitude, it creates a good, positive organization. I applaud all of you for participating in the Active for Life program,” Wagenaar said.

Peggy Plaisance, Wellness Program Coordinator, and Cheryl Fourcade of the American Cancer Society praised members for joining AFL and taking the right steps towards a healthier lifestyle.

“You’re going to know you’re in the right place when what you’re doing is doing good,” said Fourcade, who also thanked the “excellent leadership and excellent employee membership” for continuing the AFL program.

Teams are competing in the following categories: highest team cholesterol reduction, highest team inches reduced, highest team pounds lost, and highest team average of minutes exercised. Winners will receive \$100 savings bonds at the AFL in July.

Door prizes from supporting vendors concluded the kickoff with Fred Pitts winning a \$100 Savings Bond.

Budget news: Not business as usual

Funds appropriated for fiscal year 2006

Task Force Guardian (TFG) will repair Hurricane Katrina damaged levees and floodwalls by June 2006. About 41 miles of levees and floodwalls were damaged along the system protecting New Orleans. Money was provided under the Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies (FCCE) appropriation to fund the work to restore previous levels of protection, including repairing damaged levees and floodwalls, and correcting any design and construction flaws that may be found as a result of ongoing investigations. This work also includes placing temporary gate closures and pumping stations at the three outfall canals in Orleans Parish. Task Force Guardian work is estimated at \$900 million.

The Fiscal Year 2006 Civil Works Program received \$311 million for the major projects in General Investigations, Construction General, Operations and Maintenance (O&M) General and Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T), which was \$21 million less than received in FY 2005. In the General Investigations appropriation the district also received funds for General Regulatory, the Continuing Authorities Program and other remaining projects. CWPPRA trust funds will be received later in the fiscal year.

Reprogramming, moving funds from one project to another within an appropriated account, is restricted this year along with the use of continuing contracts for all contracts over \$100,000 to help eliminate construction backlog. Continuing Contracts now require the Assistant Secretary of the Army's approval; last year it was the district's Regional Integration Team at HQUSACE who approved con-

tinuing contracts. O&M General and MR&T maintenance project managers will be able to award continuing contracts but contracts still require approval and if the funds are available, they should be obligated to the contract. In the Continuing Authorities Program (small construction projects), no new project cooperation agreements are allowed to initiate construction or feasibility cost share agreements.

On Dec. 30, 2005, the President signed into law P.L. 109-148, the Department of Defense Appropriations Bill for FY 2006, which also provided Emergency Supplemental Appropriations to address Hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico. This is the third supplemental appropriations bill since Hurricane Katrina struck in August, and the first of fiscal year 2006. In this bill, \$1.9 billion was appropriated for the New Orleans District to repair and rehabilitate hurricane protection projects to their design heights and to accelerate completion of ongoing hurricane protection projects.

On Feb. 16, the White House requested an additional \$19.8 billion for hurricane recovery. Of this, \$1.36 billion is to strengthen and improve hurricane and storm protection for the greater New Orleans and surrounding areas. Projects include permanent closure structures and pump stations at the three outfall canals; storm-proofing existing interior pump stations; improving the structural design and performance of the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal; armoring all hurricane protection structures at their most critical areas; incorporating Plaquemines Parish west bank non-federal levees into the Federal levee system; and, providing coastal wetlands restoration.

FOIA, from page 3

In the months since Katrina, the district has received about a year's worth of requests. Before Wallace evacuated in August he closed out over 140 requests for FY05 and was working on about 30 open requests. Requests are handled on a first come, first serve basis according to Corps regulations. Federal regulations mandate a response within 20 days.

"That's a response, not the final documents," said Wallace. "There are FOIA requests in DoD (Department of Defense) that have been going on for years. It just takes that much time to review all the documents." For Wallace it's a personal goal to get them out as quickly as possible.

Current releasable data pertaining to Hurricane Katrina is posted on the internet at ipet.wes.army.mil and all requestors should be referred to this website first if looking for information on the levee protection system, design memo-

randums dating back to the 1960s or associated reports on project plans, hydrology and hydraulics, geology and foundation investigations. Everything on this website, which currently contains over 400 documents, was approved for release by a DoD task force, that was established to oversee DoD's response to requests for Hurricane Katrina related records. However, Office of Counsel advises that it is always best to contact their office and confirm approval before releasing any information through any venue, including websites. But to ensure the most appropriate coordination with Office of Counsel, have the requester file a FOIA request and allow Wallace to handle the rest.

Requests can be made by faxing 504-862-2827, e-mailing oc-foia@mvn02.usace.army.mil, or sending snail mail to the New Orleans District Office of Counsel, attention FOIA Coordinator, P.O. Box 60267, New Orleans, LA 70160-0267.



Around the district

Congratulations

to **Tony Bettes** (OD), on the birth of his first grandchild, Brier Nyx Betts Dec. 26, 2005.

to **Tracy** (OD) and **Sid Falk** (ED), on the birth of their twins, Kendall Mary and Daniel Maurice Feb. 2.

Farewell

to **Allen Calliham** (Ct), who departed Feb. 18.

to **R. C. Carlin** (OD), who retired Jan. 31.

to **Francis Carroll** (OD), who departed Jan. 9.

to **Kyonda Cooper** (LM), who departed Jan. 17.

to **Frank Deboer** (RM), who transferred to MVM.

to **Osborn Demas, Jr.** (ED), who retired Dec. 3.

to **Patricia Forbess** (Ct), who departed Feb. 18.

to **Christopher Fraim** (OD), who departed Jan. 29.

to **Joseph Horn** (OD), who retired Dec. 10.

to **Charles Kellar** (CEIWR-NDC-CQ), who departed Jan. 10.

to **David Labruzzo** (OD), who departed Jan. 8.

to **Cecil Moreau** (OD), who retired Jan. 3.

to **Anna Penna** (Ct), who retired Jan. 3.

to **Bonnie Pouyadou** (CD), who transferred to the Memphis District.

to **Carolyn Price** (IM), who departed Feb. 4.

to **Felton Prosper** (PM), who transferred to the Albuquerque District.

to **Henry Smith** (OD), who retired Jan. 3.

to **Timothy Spence** (OD), who departed Jan. 25.

to **Cassandra Thigpen** (OC), who

departed Feb. 3.

to **Donald Williams, Jr.** (RM), who departed Jan. 30.

to **James Syrdal** (LM), who departed Feb. 10.

to **Jennifer Knowles** (OD), who transferred to Fort Worth District Feb. 3.

Condolences

to the friends and family of **Patricia Broussard** (ED), whose son, Mark, passed away.

to the friends and family of **Helois M. Alphonse** (CD), whose grandfather, the Rev. Dr. Henry Williams, passed away Dec. 27, at the age of 96.

to the friends and family of **Steve Finnegan**, whose father, Albert Forrest Finnegan Jr. passed away in January.

LACPR, from page 8

surge protection system," said Miller, who emphasized that the strategy is to use state of the art technology and the best scientists and engineers available for laying out the plan. "Once the plans are put together, Congress may choose to use it as a blue print on how to restore and protect the Louisiana coast."

The total cost to develop such plans includes \$8 million in federal funds, which have already been appropriated, and an additional \$12 mil-

lion contingent on the state legislating a single, local sponsor for the project. "As it stands now, Louisiana must establish a state or quasi-state board responsible for construction, operation and maintenance for southeast Louisiana and the Metropolitan New Orleans area hurricane protection projects so that work can proceed beyond the six-month report on a cost-shared basis," said Russo.

The next workshop, March 2 and 3 in Vicksburg, Mississippi, discusses critical building issues of south

Louisiana, as well as innovative design and construction approaches, which should be leveraged as the best available technologies for planning increased hurricane protection across south Louisiana. The public will also be given an opportunity to voice their involvement on these ideas at a series of public scoping meetings scheduled in March in New Orleans, Thibodeaux, Lafayette and Lake Charles.

For more information on LACPR, go to www.lacpr.usace.army.mil.

BULL\$ 'N' BEAR\$® by William Wells & Jack Lindstrom



Eyewitness accounts of Hurricane Katrina flooding by relocated residents sought to assist with study

Relocated residents of the greater New Orleans area who stayed during Hurricane Katrina and personally witnessed flooding due to levee overtopping or floodwall breaching before relocating are asked to provide information, photos, and any other related data to the Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force (IPET). This information will assist with IPET's efforts to provide engineering answers to questions about the performance of the New Orleans hurricane and flood protection system during Hurricane Katrina.

Since September, IPET team members have been gathering data in the New Orleans area, including eyewitness accounts related to the hurricane protection system and the impacts from Hurricane Katrina. To expand this fact gathering effort, IPET is attempting to contact displaced residents who might have information useful to this critical study.

IPET is particularly interested in receiving information about Monday morning, Aug. 29, 2005, when Katrina made landfall. Valuable information includes personal observations of levees and floodwalls overtopping or breaching (photographs or videotape with date-time code would be of special interest); descriptions of water levels and wave activity in the

areas of 17th Street, Orleans, London Avenue or Inner Harbor Navigation Canals or the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet; and descriptions of flooding, particularly when the flooding began, how fast the water rose, and the direction of flow.

Anyone with information may contact the IPET at <https://ipet.wes.army.mil>. There's a link where people can electronically submit info or it can be e-mailed to Katrina.

Accounts@usace.army.mil. Eyewitnesses can also call toll free by dialing 1-866-502-2570, extension 5004 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. (EST)

Or information can be mailed to the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center, ATTN: IPET - Katrina Accounts, 3909 Halls Ferry Road, Vicksburg, MS 39180.

Persons providing information will be asked to supply their name and contact information should the IPET have additional questions. The information provided will be combined in a general IPET summary.

IPET, established by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is comprised of some of the nation's leading engineers and scientists from government (federal, state and local

agencies), academia and private industry. The IPET team includes approximately 150 engineers, scientists and other professionals, representing more than 50 independent organizations. The IPET includes 10 analysis teams; almost all are jointly co-led by professionals from independent organizations and the Corps.

All releasable IPET documents, including design and construction records on the New Orleans hurricane

protection system, are posted on the public Web site, <https://ipet.wes.army.mil>. Various interim IPET reports and data will be released and

posted on there as they are validated and verified. IPET's Report 1 was released on the site Jan. 10 and the final report will be completed June 1, 2006.

All IPET reports and data are being reviewed by an external review panel of experts from the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). A National Research Council panel of experts will review and provide comments on the IPET and ASCE efforts. The National Research Council panel will report its findings in the summer of 2006. All of these reports will be released to the public.

*Help get
the word out*

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