

Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works' visit focuses on sustainability

By Mississippi Valley Division Public Affairs

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, visited the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Mississippi Valley Division Jan. 22, 2015, to discuss sustainability issues, mainly the new energy savings performance contract (ESPC) that was awarded for the region. The U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville (Ala.) is managing the ESPC.

"The Corps is... actively carrying out President Obama's 'Performance Contracting Challenge' to help federal agencies accelerate progress on energy and water conservation and greenhouse gas reduction," said Darcy.



The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, visited the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Mississippi Valley Division Jan. 22. Also pictured are MVD Commander Maj. Gen. Michael C. Wehr; Kate Brandt, senior advisor in the Office of the Under Secretary for Science and Energy, U.S. Department of Energy; Tom Holden; Jim Bodron; Pat Hemphill; Amy Bourne; DeAnna Prestwood; Tonya Acuff; Renee Turner; Danny Ward; Dr. Barbara Kleiss; Stephen Gambrell; Lt. Col. Stephen Rhudy; John Coho; Lt. Col. Deschenes; Vicksburg District Commander Col. John Cross; Brian Chewing; and Charles Shadie. (Photo by Alfred Dulaney)

"To date, the Corps has awarded \$3.2 million in our Mobile District and additional ESPC projects are underway in five other districts.

"To achieve this \$12.5 million goal, we need to change our mind-set. With the fiscal realities we face as a nation, alternative financing must become our FIRST option in financing and accelerating progress on energy and water efficiency.

"The bottom line is climate change is happening and is not magically going to go away. It carries enormous costs to our economy and to our way of life. Superstorm Sandy cost us \$66 billion in damage in 2012 and destroyed families and businesses.

"We can't just keep replacing our damaged berms, sea walls and bridges, and paying out big disaster relief and flood insurance claims. We have to change the way we do business and plan for the future.

"The Corps is and has been doing so for decades and I am proud of the advancements we have made to address the existing and future risks and vulnerabilities of climate change and promote the long-term sustainability of communities and ecosystems."

"The challenge reflects the President's recognition that federal agencies lack the resources - in terms of appropriated funds - to achieve the aggressive goals he established in 2009 with the Executive Order titled Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance.

"Taking on this challenge the Corps and I have committed to awarding \$12.5 million in energy savings performance contracts by the end of December 2016.

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Around the Bend



Maj. Gen. Michael C. Wehr
Commander
Mississippi Valley Division
President-designee
Mississippi River Commission

MVD Team,

“Be the Leader you wish you had!” Simon Sinek wrote this in every book he signed after giving a presentation at USACE HQs during our 2nd Quarter Executive Governance Meeting January 27-30. “Leaders Eat Last” is the title of the book that every senior leader picked up during this governance meeting.

Effective teams thrive with great leadership and great followership, and all of us can do both. However, this does take dedicated effort through learning and putting into practice. I encourage all of us to learn from our daily interactions with each other, and to study and discuss information found in books like “Leader Eat Last.” In this case, Simon Sinek describes

the critical importance of the work environment we create based upon empathy, respect and trust. He also develops an interesting story that explains what motivates us to do what we do.

I wholeheartedly agree that great leadership enables great followership for creating a culture where people work well together to deliver remarkable projects and services.

I’ve worked with MVD’s district commanders and senior leaders over the past few months to align our leadership focus with the chief’s goal of making USACE one of our nation’s “Top 100” places to work. I’d ask you to confirm with your leadership and followership if we’re making progress on the recently signed R5 focus areas:

- Completing IDPs, evaluations and support forms on time with active employee involvement and clear communication.
- Developing strategic listening plans to ensure employee concerns are heard.
- Developing proactive, internal strategic communication plans for employee related issues.
- Increasing participation rates on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, then continuously assessing weaknesses and developing action plans to address those weaknesses.
- Developing focused recruiting issue talking points and maintaining pressure on policy makers to allow USACE to recruit the best.

All of these actions will make MVD an even better place to work. I need every leader’s help, and I do believe in your ability to achieve this goal.

Building Strong,

Maj. Gen. Mike Wehr



Edward Belk

Belk reassigned to Washington, D.C.—Mr. Edward E. Belk, Jr., is being reassigned by the Secretary of the Army from the position of director of Programs for the U.S.

Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division and the Mississippi River Commission in Vicksburg, Miss., to the position of chief of the Operations and Regulatory Community of Practice within the Directorate of Civil Works at Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C., effective April 5, 2015.

In this position, Mr. Belk will be charged with oversight of operations and maintenance programs for the nation’s civil works infrastructure portfolio (locks, dams, levees, channels, Corps field facilities, marine fleet, etc). He is also responsible for national Corps operational programs such as hydroelectric power, public recreation, environmental restoration, wildlife management and the regulatory oversight of waterways and wetlands. He was selected by the Secretary of the Army into the Senior Executive Service in 2012. The Senior Executive Service is comprised of the men and women charged with leading the continuing transformation of government.



SAME Small Business Conference



The Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) Small Business Conference was held Dec. 9-11, 2014, in Kansas City, Mo. The conference provided an opportunity for small businesses to meet and network with government agencies and large businesses. In addition to the networking sessions, other educational and career development opportunities were offered. Approximately 1,800 attendees and more than 220 exhibitors were at the conference. Pictured (left to right) are Grace Fontana, USACE chief, Small Business Office; Gwen Davis, St. Paul District, Small Business specialist; Ned Foley, New Orleans District, Small Business specialist; Col. Rick Hansen, New Orleans District commander; Lenneia Jennings, HQ, Small Business Office; Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, USACE chief of Engineers; John Dengler, Rock Island District, Small Business specialist; Karen Brady, Memphis District, Small Business specialist; Demetric Erwin, Vicksburg District, Small Business specialist; Lynnieste Cosey-Mayfield, Vicksburg District, Contracting chief; and Priscilla Sweeney, Memphis District, Contracting chief.



Remembering Rodger D. Harris, the man I call “The Mechanic” *(continued on page 5)*

By Stephen Gambrell, Mississippi River Commission Director

Rising through the ranks from a clerk typist in 1958 for the Memphis District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to the rough and tumble bank grading unit on the mighty Mississippi River, and then ending his career as the executive assistant for the Mississippi River Commission in Vicksburg, Miss., Rodger “The Mechanic” Harris made important contributions to all who live within the lower Mississippi River valley. His efforts to secure funding for critical infrastructure projects helped protect millions of people and billions of dollars in property value, while also maintaining a vital economic engine for our nation’s continued prosperity.

Following his work in Memphis, Rodger moved to Vicksburg in 1969 and worked in the Programs office. In 1973, he took over at the Mississippi River Commission following the death of Ernest Blankenship.

According to colleagues who worked with Rodger, he was absolutely the best at taking ideas and moving them from concept to reality. And then, most importantly for a federal project, he closed the loop by securing the funding.

Long-time friend and colleague, George Grugett, told the story about the time he first met Rodger, who was then working as a contractor on the mat sinking unit. George recalled that Rodger was

just 19 years old and filled with youthful exuberance and enthusiasm. Rodger’s foreman asked him to retrieve a couple of metal tie rods. Eager to impress, Rodger picks up the entire, extremely heavy, package of 10 rods. George laughed as he recalled the incident, “Rodger walked over to the end of the mat barge ... jumped off onto the muddy river bank with the heavy package on his shoulder ... and proceeded to sink knee deep into the mud!”

Somehow, after Rodger was hired by the Memphis District, George was able to convince Rodger to move to Vicksburg to advance his career. Rodger quickly became homesick for Memphis. George recalled, “He must have thought he was too far from his folks in Hickman, Kentucky.”

Even though homesick, Rodger quickly made a name for himself in Vicksburg as a person who could get things done, in spite of numerous bureaucratic obstacles.

Following Blankenship’s passing, 52 people applied for the key MRC job for which Rodger was ultimately hired. Grugett recalled that Rodger was the youngest, and perhaps the least qualified on paper, but he already had a reputation for making things happen in lightning fashion.

George Grugett also recalled that, “Rodger was always building relationships with powerful people.” Early on, Rodger earned the

respect and admiration of several key Washington leaders, to include U.S. Representative Jamie Whitten, U.S. Senator John C. Stennis, and a number of key congressional staffers. “He knew who to see, he knew who to connect with, and he knew how to let them know what the nation’s greatest river and the valley needed,” Grugett added.

In 1994, Rodger retired from federal service after working alongside eight presidents of the Mississippi River Commission, including generals Noble, Koisch, Marshall, Read, Sands, Williams, Stevens and Witherspoon.

Five years ago, I asked Rodger to stop by the MRC office to meet with and answer a few questions from a group of five Harvard students who were gathering research data from the Corps and partners for a lower Mississippi River project. Never intimidated and always on target ... Rodger asked the first and most pointed question: “Who is funding your research?” He still had the touch.

Residents of the lower valley, the Corps, partners and many people living along the great river have benefited from the work and funding that Rodger Harris championed. In fact, we are still benefiting today. Thank you, Harris family ... for loving, supporting and being a part of so many lives through Rodger and Faye Harris. May God Bless the Harris family and the nation’s water-based “public works” that continue today!



Remembering Rodger D. Harris...(continued from page 4)

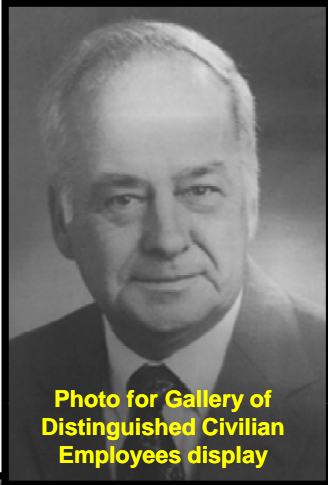


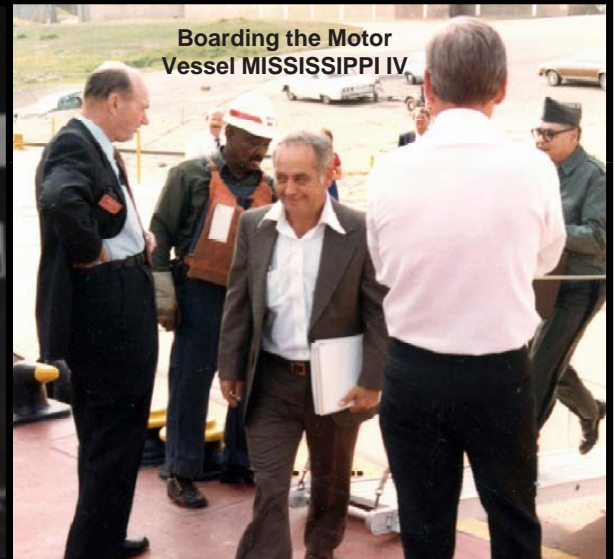
Photo for Gallery of Distinguished Civilian Employees display



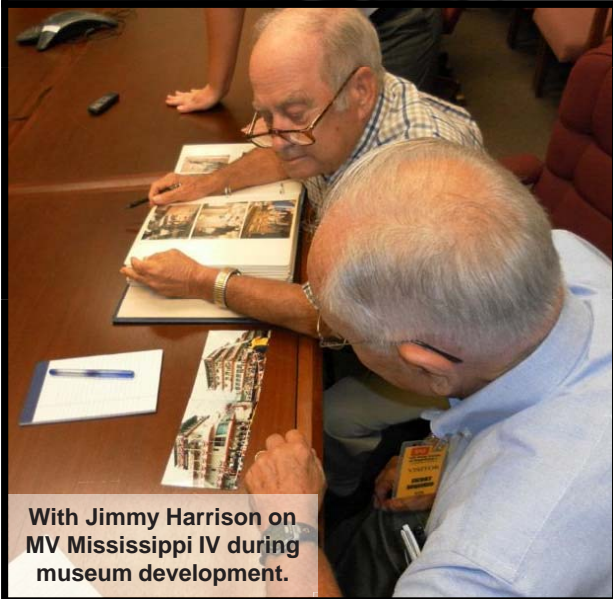
During Mississippi River Commission public meeting (far left)



Rodger & Maj. Gen. Charles Noble



Boarding the Motor Vessel MISSISSIPPI IV



With Jimmy Harrison on MV Mississippi IV during museum development.



Welding signature for keel plate of the Motor Vessel MISSISSIPPI V



Deputy Chief of Engineers/Deputy Commanding General-USACE visits MVD

Deputy Chief of Engineers/Deputy Commanding General-USACE Maj. Gen. Richard Stevens (left) visited the Mississippi Valley Division Jan. 21, 2015, to gain a better understanding of the division. During his visit, he also toured the Vicksburg District's Mat Sinking Unit and Dredge Jadwin, met employees and made coin presentations. Pictured (right) is Andy Metts, Revetment Section chief of the MSU, explaining to Maj. Gen. Stevens how the launching cables connect to the mat. (Photo by Alfred Dulaney)



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Former Teacher of the Year keeps Mississippi River studies class on course

By Kim Schneider

Ed Wong, former Mississippi Teacher of the Year, helps Vicksburg High School students learn about the importance of the river and how it has helped shape the history and prosperity of our nation.

“It’s a class without a textbook,” Ed said. “We might have one presentation on historic floods, another on levees, another on the physical characteristics of the river. Speakers from the Corps come, and they don’t just talk construction and floods, but also navigation and wildlife.” Ed added, “The kids like the wildlife aspect and the economic aspect too. It wows them. That and the force of the river, the idea that it’s not a static entity, but that it has a mind of its own and that it has mood swings. We also cover the river’s culture.”

The Corps’ Vicksburg District makes the class possible by arranging for speakers and by coordinating field trips on the river. According to Ed, he’s also learned a great deal about the river since taking the class helm. “I used to think the river was one gigantic ditch that flowed from point A to B. I have a lot better appreciation for it now, a lot more respect for it and more appreciation of the challenges the Corps has while trying to control it. That is not an easy task.”



Above—Vicksburg District Deputy Commander, Lt. Col. Stephen Rudy, visits Ed Wong’s Mississippi River class. **Below**—The Mississippi River studies class visits the Mattress Sinking Unit working near Grand Gulf, Miss. (Photos by Alfred Dulaney)





Welcome Aboard! *(continued on page 9)*



Shirley Yarbro
Procurement Analyst
MVD Contracting Office

Ms. Shirley Yarbro has been hired as a procurement analyst in the MVD Contracting Office.

Prior to this position, Ms. Yarbro served as one of ten US-ACE Regional Contracting chiefs with her primary responsibility being for the Engineer Research and Development Center and the Army Geospatial Center. As the senior contracting official, she provided expert contracting advice to the senior leadership responsible for the successful execution of and overall quality of contracting support for seven geographically dispersed research laboratories and the geospatial center located throughout the continental United States.

Prior to serving as an RCC, she served as the chief of the Vicksburg Consolidated Contracting Office. While in this position, she deployed to Iraq as the chief of Contracting

for the Gulf Region Division. Soon after her return from Iraq, Hurricane Katrina devastated the Mississippi Gulf Coast and New Orleans, La. She immediately deployed to Biloxi, Miss., where she led the Contingency Contracting Team. Upon returning to Vicksburg, she established the Contracting Office for the Hurricane Protection Office located in New Orleans.

Throughout her 37 years in the acquisition workforce, Ms. Yarbro has served in many diverse and significant assignments. She is a Certified Acquisition Professional and holds a Level III Certification from the Department of Defense. She has been a member of the National Contract Management Association since 1985, serving as President of the Magnolia Chapter from 1993-1994. She is a former member and past officer for the Vicksburg Post Society of American Military Engineers.

Ms. Yarbro received her bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University and is a 2001 graduate of the Army Management Staff College.

If you have a new employee in your office, or if you ARE a new employee to the Mississippi Valley Division, please contact the Public Affairs Office at cmvdp-a@usace.army.mil, so that we can introduce you to everyone in Open Channels.



Jim Bodron
Interim Chief
MVD Programs Directorate

Mr. Jim Bodron has been hired as interim chief in the Programs Directorate.

Mr. Bodron is the deputy district engineer for Project Management for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Memphis District. As the district's senior civilian, he is responsible for the development and execution of a \$130 million annual civil works construction and maintenance program across the six-state, 25,000-square-mile area served by the Memphis District.

Mr. Bodron deployed to Afghanistan in November 2008, where he served as the deputy project manager and acting director of the Kandahar Program Office, Afghanistan Engineer District. He stood up this important office, directing a budget of \$900 million in military construction efforts in support of overseas contingency operations. He also worked with NATO and U.S. forces to design



Welcome Aboard! *(continued from page 8)*

and construct a wide variety of facilities.

Immediately prior to his current position, Mr. Bodron served as the Memphis District chief of Operations Division, leading a widely diverse workforce of 300 engineers, biologists, emergency managers, river pilots, mechanics, technicians and laborers. He was responsible for the Memphis District's river fleet, including six towboats and tenders, a dustpan dredge and three floating drydocks.

He has also served as the Memphis District's assistant chief of Planning, Programs and Project Management Branch, a project

manager and senior study manager. In addition to working in the Memphis District, Mr. Bodron has also held positions with the Corps in the Little Rock, Tulsa and Rock Island districts.

From 2002-2005, he served as the national liaison between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. There, he worked cooperatively with that agency's leaders on watershed planning and project implementation efforts.

Mr. Bodron is a graduate of Tennessee Tech University where he earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1986, and the

University of Memphis where he earned a master's degree in civil engineering in 1994.

He is a licensed professional engineer in the state of Tennessee; a past officer and director of the Society of American Military Engineers, Memphis Post; and a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers.



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Around the Division



MVD Commander Maj. Gen. Michael C. Wehr (right) presented Joseph Willging, acting division counsel for MVD, with a commander's coin during a farewell ceremony in Willging's honor. Willging served a temporary duty assignment during the absence of Ms. G. Rogers Sloan, who was on detail to Headquarters, USACE, as the deputy chief counsel. Willging is the district counsel, St. Paul District, and has held that position since June 2008. Hooah!

Open Channels

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mississippi Valley Division



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Open Channels is an unofficial publication, authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1.

It is published monthly and distributed electronically, by the Public Affairs Office, U.S. Army Engineer Division, Mississippi Valley.

Views and opinions expressed in the publication are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army.

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