



100 YEARS OF HISTORY

New Initiatives and Civil Works Program Challenges

The Kansas City District's civil works mission faced daunting challenges in the late 1970s and 1980s. Most challenging were the environmental concerns and the necessity to respond to environmental legislation and activism.

The District's leadership had to address issues raised by new public demands and changing values. The demands were exacerbated by soaring federal deficits, attendant budget cuts and inflation that drove up the District's costs.

Extensive public involvement in the Kansas City District's dam and reservoir operations in the Osage River basin vividly illustrated the changing conditions of the civil works program.

The District operational plans for the Harry S. Truman and Stockton hydropower projects were challenged by the state of Missouri, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and by landowners downstream of the dams.

The state filed lawsuits, and its congressional delegation succeeded in getting oversight hearings before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works. The litigation effort failed when the U.S. courts upheld the authority and actions of the COE.

The special interests, basin public and legislators agreed to negotiate. They wanted what the Kansas City District wanted – a quality environment in the Osage basin. Paul Barber, chief of the Engineering Division, sat with opposition leaders and appeared at many public meetings in the basin communities.

“We did not know the slanted turbines would draw the fish,” Barber said. Amidst the gnashing of teeth and fish, the District patiently explained the operational complexities of the basin's dams and reservoirs.

The first suit against the Kansas City District's Harry S. Truman Dam and Reservoir was filed in spring 1972. In 1990, the District Engineer announced that, through an alternative dispute-resolution process, the Osage basin interests and the COE had finally agreed on an Interim Operating Plan.

All participants recognized how the dam and reservoir projects, initially designed for flood control, had expanded to an encompassing water and related land resources

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program, which markedly changed their environment, affected their lives and altered how they would proceed to work together for a promising future.

In the swirling evolutionary upward spiral of the civil works program changes, the District was assigned to embark on another complex and new national environmental initiative. In May 1982, the Kansas City District was designated a design center to fulfill the COE's work for the Environmental Protection Agency.

The District was assigned to select, contract, and monitor the private architectural and engineering firms providing the design packages for selected hazardous and toxic waste sites. "The Corps' field experience and in-place capabilities throughout the country are just what EPA needs to carry out certain aspects of the Superfund program," EPA Administrator Anne M. Gorsuch said.

From 1966 to 1982, the Kansas City District's Frank Bader was a dam builder. Then he got assigned to head the newly created District branch to manage Superfund projects. "Now we're not building things, as such," Bader said. "We're getting rid of things."

The hazardous and toxic waste mission was an entirely new way for the Kansas City District to do business, and it welcomed the extraordinarily challenging opportunities that came with the expanding program.

From 1982 to 1987, the District supervised a total of \$48 million in Superfund work. In 1988, the District's budget contained \$140 million in Superfund work.

Four employees were in the District's hazardous and toxic waste branch in 1983; by 1988 there were 22, most of them transfers from dam-building functions.

While the Kansas City District was engaged in new environmental initiatives of national consequence, it was assigned the mission to help sustain the nation's preparedness in the Cold War era.

The District managed an extensive construction program at the 1st Infantry Division's Fort Riley home. It created modern housing complexes and living amenities intended to increase attractiveness of Army life to both single and married Soldiers and dependents.

The District contributed to the 1st Division fulfilling its global rapid-response mission through design and construction of a new engineer battalion headquarters and maintenance facilities for technologically advanced weaponry.

At Fort Leonard Wood and Fort Leavenworth, the Kansas City District performed similar but even more extensive upgrades to provide the professional environments and suitable ambiance for our nation's Army to sustain its readiness and enjoy a quality life.

