



More work force shaping options added to list

By Curt Biberdorf
Public Affairs Office

Operation Crossroads work force shaping options now include a Reduction In Force and furlough.

These possibilities were discussed during a town hall meeting June 12

to update employees on the progress of Alaska District's plan to meet the challenges of an evolving mission and declining budget through 2017.

District leadership decided June 8 to request authority to execute these two options at a future undetermined date but will implement them only if

necessary, said Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander.

"We don't know whether we need to do it, but we're going to work to put those tools in the toolbox just in case," Koenig said.

Prompting this measure is an
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New truck-mounted drill rig deepens district capabilities

By Curt Biberdorf
Public Affairs Office

A new truck-mounted drill rig rolled into the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District this spring.

The Mobile Drill International B60 joined 10- and 20-year-old Central Mine Equipment 850 tracked drill rigs in the fleet operated by the Engineering Division's Geotechnical and Materials Section.

Purchased with Plant Replacement and Improvement Program funds, the district celebrated the acquisition of the nearly \$343,000 rig and \$44,000 worth of accessories during a barbecue lunch May 4 at its first job on the future site of a battalion headquarters building at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

PRIP money allows the district to pay for the equipment over time with funding from projects that use it. The two older drill rigs have been fully depreciated, which makes the new rig affordable, said Marcus Palmer, Geotechnical and Materials Section chief. The features and mobility of the new machine increase the district's capabilities.

"This gives us the chance to do more jobs and serve more customers," said Lyle Cain, senior drill rig operator.

Cain traveled to the factory in Indianapolis, Ind., to inspect and correct any problems before the drill rig, 11 months in the making, was trucked to Washington and barged to Anchorage.

"It's been a labor of love to get

it built," Cain said. "It's a welcome addition. It brings us into the 21st century."

The drill rig's continuous sampling device, auger and bit, and down hole hammer tooling accessory options will assist in more efficiently digging into some of the most diverse geology in the United States with silts, sands, shale, bedrock and marble that can change drastically within a few miles, said Cain.

Those tools and others can be stowed in two custom compartments on each side of the truck bed that swing out for
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Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Lyle Cain, senior drill rig operator, touches a trip switch used to quickly and easily shut off the engine on the truck-mounted drill rig during an emergency.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

The Mobile Drill International B60 joins 10- and 20-year-old Central Mine Equipment 850 tracked drill rigs in the fleet operated by the Engineering Division's Geotechnical and Materials Section.

Work force

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anticipated \$11 million income shortfall impacting the project-funded organization next fiscal year. As a result, affordable full-time equivalent employees is expected to decline from 431 to 350.

Counting retirements and other attrition through the end of this calendar year, the number will fall to about 380. Furthermore, the district plans to request voluntary separation incentive pay for 30 more positions after Jan. 1.

One of the ongoing shaping options is leveraging in-house staff to backfill vacancies. Koenig said the district has made "some great progress" but

encouraged employees to reposition themselves when possible. That includes looking to positions available in the Japan and Far East districts.

Still, if all other options fail to achieve the sought-after downsize in work force numbers, a RIF or furlough would be available.

A minimum of 240 days is needed to receive approval to act, but there is no timeline for executing these measures.

"We are asking authority, we will receive that authority at some point in time, and during that process if it becomes apparent that we are going to have to use it, then we will take the

appropriate steps, another process in itself," Koenig said. "We don't know when to expect it."

A furlough would reduce the number of hours logged by the work force in order to balance the budget. This option was bundled with a RIF because it requires the same approval process, but it is a last resort and a poor option since it is not a shaping tool, he said.

Many questions cannot be answered now because of so many unknowns, but the leadership will share as much information as possible to help individuals and teams make important decisions ahead, Koenig said.

Escaped buffaloes recovered on Chena Project

By Curt Biberdorf
Public Affairs Office

"Free-ranging" buffaloes were discovered on the Chena River Lakes Flood Control Project June 6, nearly three weeks after the office received a call from a North Pole resident who informed the staff that her bison escaped from her pasture on Plack Road.

Project Manager John Schaake told her he would not be surprised to see them show up there because the floodway was "perfect" buffalo habitat.

Sure enough, Ranger Jacob Kresel spotted three of four missing animals grazing in the floodway.

Schaake assumed they had already returned to the owner, but it was the first sighting of the animals since they escaped. The owner was relieved to learn that the Chena Project staff found and kept them for her until she could return from a trip out of state.

"I told her not to worry as we were in no hurry for a buffalo roundup and that the public would likely love to have another watchable wildlife opportunity," Schaake said.

Chena Project staff anticipated that they would stay in the floodway and reservoir area where there was abundant food, water and cover, but they had walked over to the road side of the dam. Therefore, the bison had to be moved because they were a potential hazard to the public, Schaake said.

Using ATVs, Kresel and Hutch Hutchison, volunteer host, successfully herded the bison a couple of miles down the Moose Creek Bikeway and maneuvered them through the Chena Project compound gate to their temporary home.

The next challenge will be removing the bison from the



Courtesy photo

Escaped bison from a nearby pasture graze by the Chena River Lakes Flood Control Project wheelchair hunter cabin June 6. The buffaloes were contained in an area by the administrative office until they could be returned to their owner.

holding area as they are not trailer trained. Until a plan could be developed, they were safely confined in the construction materials storage pasture behind the bunkers near the administrative office.

"The owner was quite pleased with the outcome and the range of skills demonstrated by the Chena staff," Schaake said.

He added that the owner is going to let them name the baby, expected to be born within days, and provide them with a bison barbecue for their skillful range work.

GOLD NUGGETS

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Drill rig

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easy access. Auger and tooling storage racks, along with the hydraulic vice and wrench, also enhance efficiency by allowing the machine to do the work instead of the junior driller.

Safety was a priority. Trip switches on each side of the drill as well as push-button switches on the drill console and inside the cab instantly turn off the engine when touched or pressed in case of an emergency. A disconnect prevents the drill rig from being moved with the tower in the upright position, and electrical systems for the drill and the carrier can be connected in the cab if there is insufficient power to start either engine.

The Mobile B60 is twice as powerful as the other drill rigs and can dig to about 300 feet with a standard auger—about 100 feet deeper than the tracked rigs—although it can core a hole into rock down to several thousand feet under ideal conditions, Cain said.

The new drill rig's peak height of 32 feet is 12 feet taller than the others, but it drops to 13 feet when the tower is folded down so that it can cruise under highway overpasses. Extra height allows the drillers to hoist and hang a greater length of drilling rods, allowing them to finish a job faster, Palmer said.

"I'm extremely pleased with it," Cain said about the first new piece of drilling equipment he has used in his 20-year career with several employers. "It will serve us well and should last for at least 20 years as long as it's taken care of."

Its mobility saves time and money. Besides capable of being driven on roads, the new rig can travel by ferry or barge to job sites across the state. In contrast, tracked drill rigs must be transported on a shipping pallet or flatbed trailer.

The team's plan is to store one of the older rigs at the Chena River Lakes Flood Control Project at North Pole, which could save nearly \$10,000 in trucking costs every season. Then they will drive the new rig to supplement the northern or southern regions of the district as required.

The Alaska District has served as the Pacific Ocean Division's Regional Geotechnical Center since 2007. Drillers collect preconstruction soil samples for geotechnical and environmental investigations to support the military program, civil works dam and levee



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Lyle Cain, senior drill rig operator, accesses sections of auger from a storage rack found on each side of the truck-mounted drill rig.

safety improvements, and international and interagency services projects.

With its newfound flexibility, the team wishes to take on the full range of projects across the district, some of which might have been contracted in the past, Palmer said.

One drill rig is going to install monitoring wells in Nome this summer, a type of job the drillers have not done in years. This project is now possible because the section can afford to have a



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Chris Bean, junior drill rig operator (front left), confers with Ken McNally, geotechnical engineer, while Lyle Cain, senior drill rig operator, takes the controls in collecting soil samples on the site of a future battalion headquarters building at JBER-Richardson May 4. The day marked the first use of the Geotechnical and Materials Section's new truck-mounted drill rig.

rig in transport for several weeks. It also lowers the project cost by eliminating standby charges during shipping. In addition, the team plans to accomplish more work at Formerly Used Defense Sites, and is available to handle Army and Air Force environmental projects, Palmer said.

The new drill rig also allows the opportunity to set up one site while working on another. Although aging, the tracked rigs still are functional and needed, particularly in heavily wooded areas with no roads, he said.

"Everything (in construction) starts here in learning about the physical and chemical properties of the soil, which dictates if or how a structure can be properly built on that location," Cain said.

They work as a team with a geotechnical engineer, and when conditions warrant environmental sampling, a chemist to record and store each sample for laboratory analysis. The drillers know what the engineers expect and ensure they take enough quality samples for an accurate evaluation, Cain said.

An in-house crew brings flexibility because changes can be implemented to the work plan without a contract modification. Quality is improved because one drilling crew works with the same engineers on the job every day allowing them to develop team cohesion and help each other to "choose the best methodology available," Palmer said.

"If we screw up, that can seriously affect the project," Cain said.

With their new machine, other problems can be avoided as well. Wood boards or mats are no longer necessary to protect pavement and sod from steel tracks when the surface is not covered by snow and ice.

Though unplanned, the drill can be removed from the Kenworth T470 series medium-duty truck chassis and placed onto a skid or tracked vehicle.

If Cain could further expand the drill rig fleet, he would acquire a smaller unit either skid mounted or self propelled and transportable by small aircraft to expand their work for civil works projects in remote villages.

In the meantime, the drill crew will roll out to serve customers with what the manufacturer describes as "the workhorse for the geotechnical and environmental industries."

Across the district

In memoriam

Former Alaska District employee and Hall of Fame inductee Erwin Long, 91, died at his home June 13. Long began working for the Alaska District in 1948 and retired as the Engineering Division's Foundations and Materials Branch chief in 1976. Long was known for inventing systems for stabilizing foundations in permafrost. The American Society of Civil Engineers named him Alaska Engineer of the Year in 1978, and he received the national Harold R. Peyton Award for Cold Regions Engineering from the same organization in 1991. After his retirement from the Corps, Long founded Arctic Foundations Inc. to further develop and sell his foundation inventions.



Emerging leader selected

Michael Schroeder, assistant district counsel, was chosen as an emerging leader and will participate in the 2012 USACE Emerging Leader Conference in early August. The 10-day intensive program introduces future leaders to the strategic decision-making process in the Corps. He and his fellow leaders will also study various issues facing the Corps and make recommendations to its military and civilian leadership.

Alaska named top safety district

The Alaska District won the 2011 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Commanding General Safety Award of Excellence in the district category. The award reflects significant achievements in managing government and contractor workplace safety programs.

Contracts awarded

Brigade Combat Team (Light) Phase 1A Barracks—The district awarded this fully-designed FY2012 project at JBER-Richardson to Kiewit Building Group Inc. June 7 for \$53,805,300. The project will construct one 480-person, 186,000-square-foot barracks building. Part of the project is demolition of 200,252 square feet of existing facilities consisting of four old hammerhead barracks.

Aviation Task Force Complex Phase III—The district awarded June 7 this design-build FY2012 project to construct a general support aviation battalion aircraft maintenance hangar at Fort Wainwright to Watterson Construction Co. for \$70,591,000.

Deployments

Afghanistan—Juliet Brown, Roger Green, Patricia Lora, Heather Moncrief, David Purdy, Jessica Skinner, Sharon Thomas, Jim Wolfe

Returned—Annette Crend, April Shepherd

Upcoming events

July 2 Change of Command Ceremony
July 4 Independence Day Holiday
July 28-29 Arctic Thunder Air Show and Open House



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Farewell

John Whittington, assistant district counsel, receives the Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, at headquarters June 12. Whittington served the district from Feb. 2, 2009 to June 15, 2012, and was a prominent member of the Bassett Army Hospital litigation team, which is credited with saving the government \$15 million and ending litigation at least two years earlier than anticipated, further saving resources. His new position is with the Air Force at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Picture perfect

Luis Menendez, visual information specialist, finishes the hallway display project at the headquarters building June 12. Seven murals showcasing the Alaska District's major programs are featured. To remain timeless, the displays may be updated with photos of recent projects.

Division chief receives national award

By Pat Richardson
Public Affairs Office

Pat Coullahan, Construction and Operations Division chief, received the Wheeler Medal from the Society of American Military Engineers at a national awards ceremony May 23 in St. Louis, Mo.

The national award is named in honor of Lt. Gen. Raymond A. Wheeler, a former U.S. Army Corps of Engineers commanding general, for outstanding contributions to military engineering by an Army soldier or civilian.

Coullahan received the award for creating a renewed emphasis on understanding and implementing

standardized business practices for military and civil works customers.

He worked successful improvements and conclusions for the Missile Defense Agency Ground-based Midcourse Defense system; Air Force military construction mission modernization for multiple F-22 and C-17 facility beddown projects; and Army Transformation projects for positing of Airborne and Stryker brigades in Alaska.

Coullahan led several American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 projects throughout Alaska, including work for the Marine Corps, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Port of Anchorage and multi-year construction of the new

Akutan Harbor in the Aleutian Islands.

He also helped develop the Arctic Warfighter Training Program for soldiers assigned to the Warrior Transition Battalion-Alaska to work in district offices as they transition to civilian life.

Coullahan has been responsible for construction and operations throughout Alaska for the Corps since 2008.

He is a retired Air Force colonel, where he served a 29-year career as a civil engineer followed by three years as a private sector senior engineer supporting the Missile Defense Agency Ground-based Midcourse Defense system in Alaska and four years as chief of operations for URS Alaska.

Engineering technician remembered for his charm

By Pat Richardson
Public Affairs Office

Joe Williams Jr., civil engineering technician in the Construction and Operations Division's Construction Support Branch, died unexpectedly at Providence Medical Center June 7, five days after his 63rd birthday.

Williams came to the Alaska District in 1984 as a construction representative at the Richardson Resident Office. A year later, he changed career fields to become a civil engineering technician, which he continued until his death. He was the district's disabled employment program special emphasis manager.

"Joe was a people person gifted with charisma, charm, a great sense of humor and a positive attitude no matter what the circumstances," said Roger

Hess, civil engineer and a longtime colleague. "His broad experience and knowledge of construction and engineering was respected and acknowledged by his co-workers and the construction community."

Williams started working at the age of 12 for his family's construction company. His private construction career was interrupted in 1968 when he was drafted into the Army during the Vietnam War. He served on active duty in Korea and as a heavy equipment operator at Fort Richardson before receiving an honorable discharge in 1971.

His early employment also included brief stints as an Alaska Railroad laborer and U.S. Postal Service letter carrier.

In 1979, he worked for the Navy as a construction representative at Adak for Naval Facilities Engineering Command Contracts-Western. While on the Aleutian Islands, Williams took classes through the Adak Rural Education Center of Anchorage Community College (now absorbed



Joe Williams Jr.

into the University of Alaska), receiving an associate's degree in 1983.

In 2001, he earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Wayland Baptist University on Elmendorf Air Force Base.

During his 28-year career in the district, Williams worked in the Quality Assurance Branch for supervisors Jack Vellinga, Jim Hassell, Billie Pearson, Barbara Burg, Chris Dalsfoist, Rich Hancock and Dennis Mitchell. He worked in the Contract Administration Branch for supervisors Terry Johnson, Mike Redmond and Kathy Prentki.

When the two offices consolidated in 1998 into the Construction Support Branch, he worked for supervisors Kathy Prentki, Dennis Mitchell, Dean Broek, Dale Hartmann, Jackie Fabrizzio and Chuck Livers.

"With his background, Joe excelled as the district's liaison with the Associated General Contractors, a trade association for the construction industry," said Livers, his last supervisor. "He was very effective at getting things done because he knew the procedures and he knew how to relate to people. We all miss him."

At various times, he was responsible for reviewing contract change order requests; fiscal closeout of construction projects; predicting placement and funding requirements for future programs; coordinating bidability/constructability/operability/environmental reviews; coordinating with field offices; reviewing shop drawings, samples and submittals; coordinating the district's Architecture-Engineering Responsibility Management Program; and resolving technical issues.

His position required detailed knowledge of contract plans and specifications, federal specifications, standards and codes.

Accolades



Photo by John Budnik

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents Erica Wilson, Office of Counsel legal technician, with the Army Commander's Award for Civilian Service June 18 during a ceremony at the district headquarters. Wilson manages all administrative aspects for one of the busiest Corps legal offices while simultaneously handling various other matters that keep the Office of Counsel "running like a clock."



Photo by John Budnik

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents Rob Stolzman, Office of Counsel attorney, with the Army Commander's Award for Civilian Service June 18 during a ceremony at the district headquarters. Stolzman was recognized for his stellar counsel in all aspects of military construction contract formation and administration in the district's northern area.



Photo by John Budnik

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents Carl Olson, Office of Counsel attorney, with the Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service June 18 during a ceremony at the district headquarters. Olson's work to reduce issues concerning ethics and strong standards of conduct through education resulted in the Alaska District being the first Corps of Engineers organization to win the prestigious U.S. Office of Government Ethics Education and Communication Award in 2009.



Photo by John Budnik

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, congratulates Debra McGinnis, Office of Counsel senior paralegal specialist, for receiving the Army Superior Civilian Service Award June 18 during a ceremony at the district headquarters. McGinnis directed three paralegals and one legal assistant in their work to support one of the heaviest litigation case loads in the entire Corps of Engineers.