US Army Corps of Engineers
Alaska District

GOLD NUGGETS

'Building and preserving Alaska's future'

September 2012

System cuts costs of remote flood monitoring

By Pat Richardson
Public Affairs Office

Thirty years ago, sending weather data from Fairbanks to Anchorage via meteor burst energy seemed like science fiction coming true, Star Trek technology right here in Alaska.

Time marched on and technology evolved. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District is again embracing new ideas. This time it's a government satellite that matches the Earth's orbit allowing it to hover continuously over one position and high enough to allow a wide view.

Alaska District is the first in the Corps to receive data via the satellite's new Low Rate Information Transmission (LRIT) system. The LRIT works like a radio station that is used to transmit Chena River Lakes Flood Control Project data from the satellite to a dish antenna installed this summer on the district headquarters roof. Other Corps offices use a commercial satellite scheduled to be turned off in 2013.

Photo by Robert Tedrick

Crane Johnson, hydraulic engineer, checks connections to the geostationary satellite antenna on the district headquarters roof. Data collected from the Chena Basin in Fairbanks is relayed by a federal satellite system to a data-processing computer in the Hydraulics and Hydrology Section for real-time monitoring of flood conditions.

"This is a great new tool for the district that is economical, state-of-the-art and reliable," said James Sauceda, Geotechnical and Engineering Services Branch chief.

Reliable transmission technology is critical for operating the Chena Project in North Pole because dam operators need early warning to divert high water in the Chena River to prevent flooding in nearby downtown Fairbanks.

Weather and water-level data are collected by gauges planted in the Chena Basin upstream from the dam. During flood season, that real-time data must be continually available 360 miles south in Anchorage where hydraulic engineers tell dam operators when to lower the flood control gates.

Space-age technology is the vehicle to get data from field collection sites in Fairbanks to the Hydraulics and Hydrology Section's computer in Anchorage.

However, the existing system is out of production, and replacement parts are unavailable, said Crane Johnson, hydraulic engineer. "(It) performed well for 30 years, but it was time to upgrade."

The section's engineers researched several options before choosing a geostationary satellite (GOES) owned and operated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

NOAA operates two GOES dedicated to government-only use. For backup, they have a spare satellite stored in a space orbit, which is cheaper than storing it on Earth where it would have to be kept clean and dust free.

This year NOAA added the LRIT system to its satellites. The GOES circle 22,300 miles above the Earth, giving them a "full-disc" view. Because they stay above a fixed spot on the surface, the satellites provide a constant vigil for atmospheric triggers of severe weather conditions, according to the NOAA Web site.

GOES are able to monitor storm development and track storm movements. Imagery from these satellites also is used to estimate rainfall and snowfall accumulations, and overall extent of snow cover.

While the district spent $50,000 on the base system installation and training, another benefit is that the new product will save the district money because of no data transmission fee.

"The GOES system will pay for itself in two and a half years," Johnson said.

Four years ago, the district began field transition to become compatible with the GOES. It spent $90,000 to update ground equipment data collection platforms, but some of that expense was general maintenance.

The flood control project now has 12 data collection sites: six to gather climate and weather information and six to measure water heights in streams and rivers in the Chena Basin. Access to the weather stations requires chartering a helicopter.

These locations are part of 26,000 worldwide sites sending environmental data to the GOES.

Women's Equality Day employee spotlight

What's your hometown?

I was born in Federal Way, Wash., and moved to Oregon when I was nine, so I consider Tigard, Ore., as my hometown. I moved to Alaska during high school when my dad's job transferred to Anchorage.

How do you describe your job?

I'm a budget analyst in the Resource Management Office. I input the budget, analyze data and track expenses to make sure we don't exceed our overall budgets.

I am the new special emphasis manager for the Federal Women's Program. My role as program manager for federally-employed women is to be a resource for the district's female work force by promoting networking and identifying barriers to gaining and maintaining employment for women.

Lynn Maurer

What do you like about your job?

I like learning new things, helping others and being able to make a difference no matter how small it may be.

How do you see your job contributing to the Corps' success?

We continually try to improve our budget process, be fiscally responsible and continually look for new ways to save money.

What has been your career progression?

I started as a "stay in school" administrative assistant, what we know today as the student career employment program, for the Environmental Protection Agency in Anchorage alongside my parents.

I took a long break to rear my kids and returned to work for the Directorate of Logistics on Fort Richardson in 2004 as an administrative assistant.

I began working for the Corps in September 2006 for the Environmental Engineering Branch, where I started learning budgeting. I wanted a nonadministrative career field, and since I got my feet wet with the budget process, it seemed like the perfect fit.

I became a full-time budget analyst for the Construction Operations Division in November 2009 for 18 months and then moved to the Resource Management Office where I have been since June 2011.

Why did you choose to work for the Corps?

I was able to receive a promotion and wanted to start a career.

What kinds of opportunities/ benefits are available for women with the Corps?

Every year we have special events for Women's Equality Day and during Women's History Month.

All federal women employees gather for the career challenge seminar in March. It brings awareness that women are not alone in their careers. It is a way to reach out to others who you may not have met before and bond. We're able to share our experiences and strengths.

What's the biggest thing you learned in your career?

The better the teacher, the more you learn. So look for the best and glean knowledge from them.

Do you have any favorite memories in your time in the Corps or district?

One amazing moment was working with the Management Support Branch for Construction Operations, where I was very fortunate to be part of the Celebrate Safety team. It allowed me to show my strengths and see that I was a pretty good negotiator too.

The second wonderful memory was putting together the retirement ceremony for Trish Opheen and Mike Redmond. Trish was my first boss with the Corps, and I found it fitting that Mike became my boss at a later time.

What are your hobbies?

Cooking, traveling and spending time with my kids.

What's the best part about living in Alaska?

I can live close to my kids.

GOLD NUGGETS

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E-mail inquiries may be sent to: public.affairs3@usace.army.mil or Curt Biberdorf. View the Alaska District Web site at www.poa.usace.army.mil, Facebook page at http://facebook.com/AlaskaCorps and YouTube page at http://youtube.com/user/AlaskaCorps.

Equality day celebrated during luncheon

By Curt Biberdorf
Public Affairs Office

Women's Equality Day was celebrated at a seminar luncheon in Anchorage Aug. 27.

Nine of the event's 50 attendees were from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District, which provided a professional networking opportunity.

A female executive from either the public or private sector sat at each table to lead a discussion on career strategies and exchange information. Afterward, Maria Downey, KTUU Channel 2 news anchor and assistant news director, addressed the audience.

"It was really good," said Lynn Maurer, Resource Management Office budget analyst and Federal Women's Program manager. "She talked about about her experiences with learning how to balance career and family through the years while redefining what 'having it all' meant at different stages of her life."

Congress designated Women's Equality Day Aug. 26 starting in 1971 to ensure that the history of American women is recognized and celebrated in schools, workplaces and communities throughout the country. Workplaces, libraries, organizations and public facilities now participate with Women's Equality Day programs, displays, video showings or other activities.

The date was selected to commemorate the 1920 passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, granting women the right to vote. It culminated a sizeable yet peaceful civil rights movement by women formally begun in 1848 at the world's first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, N.Y.

The observance of Women's Equality Day not only commemorates the passage of the 19th Amendment, but also calls attention to women's continuing efforts toward full equality.

The effort to secure the right to vote was not simple and even landed a group of women in prison in Lorton, Va., in 1917.

At the Seneca Falls convention, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, with the help of Frederick Douglas, passed the resolution to establish the right to vote. However, progress was slow, and as late as 1913, women had full suffrage in nine states and the territory of Alaska, which had no presidential electors.

Courtesy photo

More than 50 people attended the Women's Equality Day luncheon in Anchorage Aug. 27. From the left, Alaska District employees participating are Lynn Maurer, budget analyst; Chelan Schreifels, environmental engineer; Jana Allen, administrative support clerk; Heidi Clay, senior budget analyst; Myrna Crafton, work force management specialist; Amy Burke, work force management specialist; Jennifer Sprott, administrative support clerk; and Celia Veasy, realty specialist.

A shift in the modest approach came with establishment of the National Woman's Party in 1916. It put pressure on the presidential administration for approving or denying the Susan B. Anthony amendment, first proposed in 1878, authorizing women's right to vote.

When the party started picketing the White House in June 1917, scores of women were arrested, found guilty of unlawful assemble, and sentenced to pay a fine of $25 or serve a term in jail.

Preferring jail time rather than paying what they considered to be unjust fines, the women were sentenced 30 to 60 days and in some cases six months. While some went to District of Columbia jails, most were incarcerated at the Occoquan Workhouse, now named the Lorton Reformatory.

Among those imprisoned were graduates of distinguished educational institutions, students, teachers, nurses, physicians, a geologist and a professor of history.

These women were denied mail delivery, slept with unwashed blankets, ate contaminated food, dressed as prisoners and performed prison work. Protesting the poor treatment and prison conditions, the women insisted they were political prisoners and should be treated accordingly. Some refused to work. They were sent into solitary confinement and given bread and water.

Others, led by Lucy Burns of the executive committee of the National Woman's Party, started a hunger strike but were forced to eat. As news of their treatment emerged, public indignation and demands for an investigation of conditions forced their release late in 1917. Upon appeal, officials reversed the sentences of the women imprisoned at Occoquan in 1918.

By Aug. 26, 1920, the Susan B. Anthony Amendment was ratified, ending a struggle for basic political rights lasting 72 years. The women suffrage prisoners at Occoquan contributed to that victory.

Information was taken from the National Women's History Project and Historical Marker Database Web sites. More history about Women's Equality Day is found at http://www.nwhp.org/.

Courtesy photo

Greg Schmidt, Engineering Division deputy chief (far left, back row), is joined by his Leadership Anchorage classmates and class director after graduating from the program in May.

Leadership program focused on community

By Curt Biberdorf
Public Affairs Office

A different type of leadership training outside the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Leadership Development Program (ULDP) is open to Alaska District employees in the Anchorage area.

Greg Schmidt, Engineering Division deputy chief, graduated with 12 other area residents from "Leadership Anchorage" in the latest class that ended in May.

Leadership Anchorage started in 1997 as a program of the Pew Partnership for Civic Change to expand representation of various community populations on boards and commissions, according to the Alaska Humanities Forum.

The program was "an eye-opening and wonderful time," said Schmidt during an information session for prospective participants at district headquarters Aug. 20. "It allowed me to network and reach out to areas I would have never thought of before. I think it will be of value to the Corps of Engineers."

Unlike ULDP, Leadership Anchorage is community-focused and was an opportunity for him to participate in humanities-based training with people outside of the engineering career field.

Schmidt was encouraged to try it after he received a note from Trish Opheen, former Engineering Division chief. She enclosed a newspaper article about the program and wrote that he should consider it.

He applied and was accepted into the course last year. The program starts in September and requires a time commitment of 100-120 hours outside of meetings.

Meetings are scheduled for one Saturday per month. Students discuss two or three readings, which consist of a broad selection of books in the humanities. Guest speakers also share their insights on leadership. Schmidt's class included the Anchorage Police Department chief and University of Anchorage chancellor.

During a field trip, the group visited the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra to observe the unique way a conductor leads his musicians.

Besides academics, the class is divided into teams for a community project. Schmidt's team recruited Anchorage residents to volunteer at McLaughlin Youth Center. As a result, the center received more than 40 new volunteers and reached its capacity for people filling these roles, he said.

A third component is working with a mentor in either the volunteer or professional realm. Schmidt found a mentor with the Executive Service Corps of Cincinnati because it fit into his involvement with scouting.

"It's a fairly intensive course but not overly demanding. You get out what you put into it," he said.

To learn more about Leadership Anchorage, visit http://www.akhf.org/programs/leadership-anchorage.

Deputy becomes acting Pacific Ocean Division commander

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Pacific Ocean Division deputy commander and chief of staff assumed the duty of acting commander July 25.

Col. Gregory J. Gunter took command from Brig. Gen. Richard Stevens, who was assigned as Joint Engineer Division, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan director and Transatlantic Division Forward Afghanistan commander.

"Col. Greg Gunter has my complete trust and confidence to lead this organization and to carry forward the ideology that defines who we are—trusted engineering, service excellence, measurable performance, and work force fulfillment," Stevens wrote in a message to the POD work force.

Before joining the Pacific Ocean Division, Gunter was operations officer for Task Force Hope, part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Mississippi Valley Division. In this position he was responsible for supporting the $14.6 billion civil works mission in New Orleans, La.

His troop assignments include service with the 7th Engineer Battalion, 5th Infantry Division at Fort Polk, La. and 2nd Engineer Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, in Korea. He served at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., as the division engineer, live fire exercise officer and engineer

Col. Gregory J. Gunter

company trainer, Live Fire Division, followed by an assignment as a small group instructor for the Engineer Officer Advanced Course, U.S. Army Engineer Center and School at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

He then served in the Los Angeles District as project engineer at Nellis Air Force Base, project manager Civil Works Branch and as resident engineer at Fort Irwin, Calif.

He was the Albuquerque District deputy commander and was later assigned as the Installation Management Division chief for the Saudi Arabian National Guard Modernization Program in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

From September 2004 to July 2007, he was the Directorate of Civil Works for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Washington, D.C., assistant director. During this time, he was assigned as the Gulf Region North District deputy commander in Mosul, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, with a follow-on assignment as the Louisville District deputy commander.

Gunter is a graduate of the Engineer Officer Basic and Advanced courses, the Combined Arms Services Staff School, and the Command and General Staff College.

He holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Arizona and a master's degree in engineering management from the University of Missouri at Rolla.

His military decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Korean Defense Medal and Humanitarian Service Medal. He wears the Army Parachutist Badge.

He is married to the former Jacqueline Purrington from New Orleans, La.

Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Farewell

Rusty Rubeck, facilities manager, receives his certificate of retirement from Lt. Col. Bobby Stone, deputy district commander, during a ceremony at the district's logistics warehouse Aug. 30. Rubeck also received the Army Commander's Award for Civilian Service for his 42 years of federal and military service, and a certificate of appreciation.

Across the district

Engineer selected for ULDP Level 3

Monica Velasco, program engineer in the Engineering Division, was selected for the Pacific Ocean Division USACE Leadership Development Program Level 3 Class of 2014. She joins nine other POD employees for a two-year program starting in October 2012.

Contracts awarded

Topsoil and seeding—The district awarded this FY2012 Missile Defense Agency Sustainment Restoration Modernization design-build contract at Fort Greely to Weldin Construction for $1,911,621 Aug. 9. The project will process topsoil, place it and seed the remaining areas of the Missile Defense Complex to decrease dust.

Heating Hot Water Distribution System—Alaska District awarded this FY2012 Missile Defense Agency Sustainment Restoration Modernization design-build contract at Fort Greely to Weldin Construction for $999,946 Aug. 14. The project will install heat exchangers at Missile Fields 2 and 3.

Donlin submits permit application

The Regulatory Division received a permit application for the more than $8 billion Donlin Creek Mine. The project consists of two ports on the Kuskokwim River, a 312-mile-long 14-inch-diameter natural gas pipeline from Cook Inlet to north of Crooked Creek, navigation and a pipeline crossing of the Kuskokwim River, diesel storage at Dutch Harbor and Bethel, a 30-mile long road, C-130 aircraft-capable airstrip, a worker camp, 157 megawatt power generation, an open mine pit 2.5 miles long by 0.75-mile wide by 1,800 feet deep, a tailings impoundment/waste treatment facility 1.5 miles long by 1 mile wide, and 6,900 acres in wetlands and waters of the United States. The mine and all related facilities have a total footprint of 16,300 acres. It is projected to mill 59,000 short tons of ore daily to obtain 1.3 million ounces of gold annually during a 27.5-year mine life.

Upcoming events

Sept. 15	Hispanic Heritage Month Through Oct. 15
Sept. 26	FEST-A Deployment Ceremony
Oct. 1	Quarterly Awards Ceremony
Oct. 2	Suicide Prevention Training
Oct. 9	Year-End Soup Luncheon at Headquarters

Deployments

Afghanistan—Linda Arrington, Juliet Brown, Roger Green, Heather Moncrief, David Purdy, Jessica Skinner, Sharon Thomas

Returned—Jim Wolfe

Jessica Skinner, engineering technician in the Engineering Division, deployed to Afghanistan Engineer District-North as an engineering technician June 19 and is scheduled to return June 19, 2013.

Linda Arrington, Real Estate Division deputy chief, deployed to Afghanistan Engineer District-North Aug. 5 as a realty specialist and is scheduled to return Aug. 4, 2013.

Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Phone refresh

New Voice Over Internet Protocol phones are prepared for distribution in the headquarters building Aug. 20. The phones were installed in all local district offices except for the Regulatory Division and bring many more features, such as caller ID and choice of ring tones. Using the Internet network, the phones place voice mails also into email. A backup network is in place in case the main one is down to ensure continuous operation. With all the new settings and options, training sessions were available to acquaint employees with its operation.

Photo by Greg Vernon

Underwater repair

Divers with the Army's 544th Engineer Detachment from Fort Eustis, Va., prepare to go underwater to repair two floating breakwaters at Bar Harbor Point in Ketchikan Aug. 6. During an inspection in March, Alaska District engineers noticed that the northwest module of a large breakwater separated from the other three components. The Army divers were tasked to identify and fix the problem, which was believed to be a broken anchor cable. Besides the repair, the detachment also inspected the concrete, and anchor chains and blocks; removed marine growth; replaced spacers between modules and module-to-module connections; provided new cover plates for anchor chain lockers; and documented repairs and inspection results.

Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Commo care

Victor Boskofsky (left) and Mark Godfrey, maintenance contractors with Ancor Inc., dig a trench from an Emergency Management Office communications trailer to a high frequency radio tower near district headquarters Aug. 22. The crew dug three trenches that will be used to bury and protect new coaxial cables connecting the trailer radio to primary and backup antennas as well as a weather antenna. The office tests the radio monthly, which is capable of communicating with places around the world if a disaster disables regular services.

Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Golf champs

The team composed of (from left to right) Dave Spence, Sabino Vasquez, Lt. Col. Bobby Stone and Herschel Deaton finished in first place by shooting a score of 51 during the annual U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District Golf Tournament at Eagleglen Golf Course on JBER-Elmendorf Aug. 24. Thirty-five teams played with door prizes distributed to all 138 players and extra prizes for competitors making the longest drive, shot closest to the pin and longest putt. This year's event was played in memory of longtime tournament organizer Joe Williams, of the Construction- Operations Division, who died June 12.

Photo by Caitlin Volsky

Fair outreach

Jake Kresel, Chena River Lakes Flood Control Project park ranger, greets visitors at the Chena Project booth during the Tanana Valley State Fair Aug. 4. The annual event is an opportunity to promote the project and remind the public about water safety. This year's booth displayed a model of the project, photos of its expanded and remodeled administrative office and sponsored a children's coloring contest in two age divisions with a water safety theme. Prizes for the top three contestants were a $50 department store gift card, life jacket and fishing pole, all donated by Ed "Hutch" and Margarita Hutchinson, Chena Project volunteer hosts.

Long-range knockdown

Pieces of the last Coast Guard Long Range Aids to Navigation (LORAN) tower in Alaska at Narrow Cape, Kodiak, are lined up on the ground during its disassembly and removal, which was completed Aug. 1. Twelve towers ranging in height from 695 to 1,350 feet were successfully demolished or disassembled under this program managed by the Alaska District. The LORAN system began as a radio-based navigation system during World War II and provided the Allied forces with a reliable and accurate means of navigation at sea in any weather. As a result of its effectiveness, LORAN was expanded for aircraft and merchant use with Coast Guard broadcast stations being established throughout the world. Because of technological advancements, LORAN became an antiquated system no longer required by the armed forces, the transportation sector or the nation's security interests and is used only by a small percentage of the population.

Photo by David Prado

Accolades

Photo by John Budnik

Lt. Col. Bobby Stone, deputy district commander, presents Sara Gray, assistant district counsel, with the Superior Civilian Service Award during a ceremony at district headquarters Aug. 1. Gray was recognized for her legal counsel to the district that saved the government more than $35 million. She also created and taught a two-day litigation course to the district staff, which greatly improved the understanding of legal requirements to enable successful mission accomplishment.

Photo by John Budnik

Lt. Col. Bobby Stone, deputy district commander, presents B.J. Verrier, Office of Counsel paralegal, with the Commander's Award for Civilian Service during a ceremony at district headquarters Aug. 1. Verrier was recognized for being the consummate team player and mentor to other paralegals, Office of Counsel junior attorneys and other Corps employees.