



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Vicksburg District

THE Water's Spring 2012 Edge

Improving aquatic habitat on the Lower Mississippi





US Army Corps of Engineers®

News magazine of the Vicksburg District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Commander and District Engineer
COL Jeffrey R. Eckstein

Public Affairs and Communications Team

Acting Chief

MAJ Robert Wolfenden

Deputy Chief

Kavanaugh Breazeale

Managing Editor

Shirley J. Smith

Bucky Wall

Alice Bufkin

Robert L. Miller, Jr.

Magazine Layout by

Colleen Cummins

• Authorization: The Water's Edge is an authorized magazine of the Vicksburg District. The Water's Edge is published quarterly in accordance with provisions of Army Regulation 360-1, is designed on a desktop publisher and is printed by offset.

• Circulation: 2000 copies per issue.

• Submission: News, features, photographs, and art are welcome.

Contact:

Kavanaugh.Breazeale@usace.army.mil

or Phone (601) 631-5052

Shirley.J.Smith@usace.army.mil

or Phone (601) 631-5223

Fax (601) 631-5551

• Contents: Views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army or this Command. News copy is prepared in accordance with AP (Associated Press) Style Guide. All photos, unless otherwise credited, are official U.S. Army photos.

Commander's Corner Colonel Jeffrey R. Eckstein	3
Restoring America's greatest river.....	4
Building on team work.....	6
Commitments for the future	7
Workers' compensation fraud, waste, and abuse can affect us all	8
District hosts annual Engineer's Day awards ceremony in conjunction with Town Hall meeting and Army birthday celebration	10
Engineer's Day awards ceremony and Army birthday photo features.....	12
Engineer's Day picnic photo features	13
Electronics technician at Blakely Mountain Dam and Power Plant only female in such capacity with district	14
Sardis Lake's natural resources specialist wins Top Dove Bander Award	16
Lake Ouachita hosts Oden School field trip	17
Park rangers promote water safety at National Sustainable DesignExpo.....	18
Arkabutla Lake affords students valuable boating knowledge and experience.....	19
Sardis Lake hosts 40th annual St. Jude Bass Classic	20
Students from University of Mississippi's Big Event volunteer at Sardis Lake	21
District archaeologists show great respect for the past	22

Need to Know
PEOPLE
Sarah Morrison
PROCESS
Workers' compensation fraud, waste, and abuse can affect us all
PROJECTS
Restoring America's greatest river



On the Cover

Personnel with Mississippi Limestone, USFWS, and the Corps compare plans to site conditions for making field adjustments to the placement of notches at dike #2.

Commander's Corner

with Colonel Jeffrey R. Eckstein



Hello to everyone once again,

We are into summer now and the construction season is in full swing. We continue to make excellent progress on our designs as well as our construction on the work items related to repairs from last year's flood. The largest dollar value of work we have underway is with the Mat Sinking Unit. It will be a full and very productive season.

All of this work should make us think about safety, for our contractors and ourselves. There is a sense of urgency to get as much work completed as possible before the river rises again. Every day of work gets us closer to restoring the level of protection the system provided prior to the flood. I am asking everyone to take some time and review their activity hazard analysis worksheets and insure safety is not just a word; we need it to be an action. We had one accident to occur, and that was the result of our workers not following the manufacturer's recommendation in the operator's manual. Reviewing our safety plans to that level of detail is required as we continue to execute our mission. Nothing we are doing is worth someone losing his/her life or being seriously injured.

With your personal life, I also ask that you give your attention to respect for safety. Many things that we do are around water and we need to take the same actions that we ask of our visitors at our recreational sites. Wear a personal floatation device. Do not drink and drive or operate boats and equipment. Get plenty of rest if you're going to be a driver on a long trip. Plan your route so you do not need to bother with the GPS, use the cell phone, or text a friend for directions. As with our vehicle accidents at work, go slow in confined areas and watch out for the wildlife. The deer are out to get you.

We had a wonderful Engineer's Day ceremony and picnic. Thank you to everyone that participated and helped work the various events. We recognized several groups and individuals for their outstanding work and contributions to the District's mission for the past year. Congratulations to all the awardees. The children's activities brought many smiles to children and parents alike. That is what makes the Vicksburg District so special: the quality people committed to delivering our mission.

Stay safe and have a wonderful summer. I know we will achieve our milestones for this year and continue to deliver value to the Nation.

Colonel Jeff Eckstein

Restoring America's greatest river

By Ron Nassar and Ray Emerson

Contributing to this article were Freddie Pinkard, Anna Prestwood, and Steve Coleman

Photos by Ray Emerson and Anna Prestwood

Historically, the highest priorities of the Corps of Engineers Civil Works Program have been navigation, flood damage reduction, and watershed planning. However, since the 1980's, the Mississippi Valley Division has been assessing the environment in the Mississippi River leveed floodplain and incorporating environmental features into its project planning process. In the early 1990's, Corps Headquarters directed that environmentally friendly designs be considered in the development of civil works projects. In 2003, the Corps adopted seven environmental operating principles that focused on incorporating environmental sustainability into its civil works projects. Corps Headquarters subsequently designated ecosystem restoration as one of the Civil Works Program's four highest mission priorities.

In 2000, the Mississippi Valley Division (MVD), Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee (LMRCC), and the Southeast Region of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) established an informal partnership. Its goal was to develop a plan for rehabilitating the aquatic resources in the 954-mile reach of the Mississippi River from Cairo, Illinois to the Head of Passes in the Gulf of Mexico. During the period 2001-2004 the partnership conducted state-level planning meetings in each of the six LMRCC-member states - Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. The participants in these public meetings identified 239 habitat rehabilitation and public access projects. These projects are needed to conserve the Mississippi River's nationally significant natural resources and increase public use of the river. Currently, the partnership is compiling these projects into a landscape-scale conservation plan - "Restoring America's Greatest River".

One of these projects was Island 70, which is located on the east bank of the Mississippi River in Bolivar County, about one half mile south of Dennis Landing (River Mile 610). The District constructed timber pile dikes in the Island 70 secondary channel in the 1960's to maintain the alignment, width, and depth of the commercial navigation channel. Quarried stone was used to fill these dikes in the 1970's, converting them to low-maintenance, impermeable structures. These dikes reduced the amount and velocity of flow going through the secondary channel, causing sand

to be deposited in what had previously been permanent aquatic habitat. As a result of this accretion, much of the secondary channel was filled with sand during the last 49 years, causing it to be identified as a potential rehabilitation project.

In October 2011, the Vicksburg District completed rehabilitation of the Island 70 secondary channel, its most recent ecosystem restoration project. The District conducted several meetings with its three partners (USFWS, LMRCC, and Wildlife Mississippi, a conservation organization in Stoneville) to develop a plan that would restore flow through the ~3.5 mile-long channel. The plan had two environmental goals - improving aquatic habitat in the channel by reintroducing a controlled amount of flow into it and providing ingress and egress for riverine fishes and other aquatic organisms into the area. This required constructing notches with top widths ranging from 150-280' and a 100' bottom width in four rock dikes. Stone was removed from the two upstream dikes (dikes 1 and 2) to an elevation of +5 low water reference plan (LWRP), which provides flow through the notch during ~90% of the river's annual hydrological cycle. Due to ground conditions on the work site, notches in dikes 3 and 4 were excavated to an elevation of +7 LWRP (flow ~86% of the year). More than 46,000 tons of stone were removed from the dikes during



Looking upstream in the Island 70 secondary channel prior to degrading dike 1 to allow flow to inundate the channel.



Timber piles that were placed in 1963 are being removed at dike 2.

construction of the notches and pulled downstream to form a rectangular apron at least 3' thick x 100' wide below each notch. These stone aprons absorb energy from the water flowing through the notch, preventing development of a scour hole that might compromise the structural integrity of the dike. A 10'-12' wide pilot channel connecting the notches between dikes 2, 3 and 4 was also constructed.

Vicksburg District's river engineering team personnel Anna Prestwood, Steve Coleman, and Freddie Pinkard, Mississippi River channel improvement coordinator and chief of the District's river engineering section, provided the engineering design for the project as well as technical assistance during its construction. The USFWS Fish Passage Program and Wildlife Mississippi provided \$150,500 to fund construction of the project and the LMRCC awarded the contract to Mississippi Limestone, Inc., (Friars Point). Ray Emerson, construction inspector from the District's Engineering & Construction Division, was on site throughout the construction process coordinating with the contractor to answer design questions, adjusting designs to meet changing field conditions, and ensuring that each component of the project was constructed according to the design plans.

"The Vicksburg District has constructed 75 dike notches in the Lower Mississippi River. Integrating the biological expertise of the USFWS, LMRCC, Wildlife Mississippi, District, Engineer Research & Development Center's

aquatic ecology and invasive species branch, and MVD's environmental team into our planning process helps us build more productive ecosystem restoration projects. It's a win-win situation for the river and the public recreation community," Pinkard said.

"Building these projects without Corps of Engineers' involvement, especially in the areas of planning, engineering design, and project oversight, would not have been possible. The USFWS, LMRCC, and Wildlife Mississippi do not have the river engineering expertise to design large-scale aquatic habitat rehabilitation projects such as Island 70," said Ron Nassar, LMRCC coordinator.

The LMRCC is a coalition of 12 natural resource management and environmental quality agencies representing the six states in the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley. The organization meets annually to provide a permanent forum for state and federal agencies and the public to address natural resource issues related to the Lower Mississippi River. Nassar is the project leader for the Southeast Region USFWS Lower Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office in Vicksburg. He has worked with the Vicksburg District for several years to include its ideas in the LMRCC's "Restoring America's Greatest River Plan" and identify aquatic habitat rehabilitation projects that could be incorporated into Corps' structures without adversely impacting the Corps' navigation mission. ◀

Building on team work

By Sam Horton, Emily Sykes, and Jonathan Boone
Photos by Tommy Fowler

If you travel to the north end of Arkabutla Lake Dam you might be in for a surprise. The once impassable Arkabutla Lake Emergency Spillway now has a new bridge across it. This area was once rather remote and only visited by a few people who knew where they were going. The stunning views of Arkabutla Lake offer an ideal spot for sighting the Arkabutla Lake Field Office which was constructed in 2011. The increased attention in the area warranted the design of a bridge that would offer lake personnel quick access to the north side of the emergency spillway for maintenance purposes and future development. The project is an excellent example of teamwork by Engineering and Construction Division, Operations Division, and construction contractor personnel.

The District executed American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding to award a construction contract in May 2010 for this much anticipated project. For many years, Arkabutla Lake personnel and the public have used Pratt Road to access the area north of the spillway, but it can be quickly overwhelmed and washed out when the water tops the spillway crest. The spillway has been used 10 times since the lake was constructed. One of the overtopping events occurred last year resulting in Pratt Road being closed for two weeks so rebuilding could begin. When this occurs, a more than 30-mile detour is required to access critical areas on the government's property surrounding Arkabutla Lake.

The Greenwood Area Office performed construction administration services on the contract which was awarded to Babcock Construction, LLC of Starkville. Shortly after the notice to proceed was issued, layout began for holes that would be cut into the spillway approach slab for the support piers. Originally, the piers were to be founded on footings that were supported on earth only. At that time new guidelines were issued causing structures such as the bridge to meet more stringent seismic or "earthquake" criteria. This new guidance required the foundation to be supported on steel "H" pilings as well as a redesign of the support piers for the bridge superstructure. To avoid delaying the contractor and also to take advantage of available funding, the contracting officer issued a notice to proceed with the available information on the new design and a "not to exceed" price for the change. This allowed the contractor to

continue working with those funds while he and the Greenwood Area Office personnel crunched necessary numbers to reach a settlement price.

Deciding to put "H" piling under the piers was not as simple as going to the piling store, buying a bunch, and driving them. The contractor had to get test pilings rigged out with all sorts of sensors to monitor the driving. After going through a stop/start/wait and start again process that information was plugged into formulas; and engineers from the geotechnical branch determined the pile lengths required for this project. This had to be accomplished before Babcock Construction could order piles and have them delivered.



Construction of bridge piers in April 2011.



Greenwood Area Office Project Engineer, Adam Staples inspecting bridge at pre-final inspection.

(Continued on page 16)

Commitments for the future

By Jonathan Boone
Photo by Colby Bankston

“You probably have never seen a project area as flat as this one” is what the Vicksburg District engineers heard when they first arrived in Fargo, North Dakota for the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Flood Risk Management project team meeting.

Little did the rest of the regional project delivery team (PDT) know that flat ground for the District’s PDT was like throwing a rabbit into a briar patch. The Vicksburg District’s Headquarters is at the foot hills of the Mississippi Delta which falls completely within the District’s boundary. Elevation change in the Mississippi Delta is as sparse as trying to find a Paula Deen recipe that does not include a stick of butter or more. This experience will be vital as the District executes the mission as the lead district for the design of three miles of diversion channel, levees, and associated structures to help reduce flood risk in the Fargo, North Dakota, and Moorhead, Minnesota areas.

The regional site visit was a critical step in the overall design planning process. Teams throughout the Mississippi Valley Division (MVD) gathered with other local government representatives for two days in Fargo to define strategies for accomplishing the project goals. The purpose of the project is to reduce flood risk for the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area. The economically diverse area is the home of more than 200,000 people and happens to be a regularly used floodplain for the Red River of the North and the Sheyenne River. The local governments and community volunteers have been very successful defending the area using emergency measures

and a lot of teamwork; however it was evident during the trip how exhausted the town residents are becoming due to this routine problem.

During one meeting, a sense of concern filled the room as the city engineer for the City of Fargo described a 20-foot-high earthen levee, typically constructed on Main Street, in downtown Fargo to provide protection from the floods. He described how this frequent construction activity destroys the city’s infrastructure, costing them millions of dollars to repair. Some families have begun to move their homes to safer areas as the city takes steps to prepare for the next big event.

Regional work has been the key to executing MVD’s mission for the last six years, requiring significant business strategy changes for each of the six districts within MVD. The exciting part is the Vicksburg District and its sister districts have built relationships that help deliver work seamlessly while maintaining consistent quality. The Moorhead Metropolitan Flood

Risk Management project will be a benefactor of this prior experience. One of the contributing factors to this success has been the development of the quality management system (QMS). Key business processes have been input into the QMS and incorporated as regional processes which means key business processes are executed the same at each district providing for better communication and consistency of work products.

The Vicksburg District’s design team is proud to be supporting the St. Paul District in delivering the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Flood Risk Management project. The similarity in terrain between the Mississippi Delta and the plains of North Dakota will aid the engineers in making design decisions that might be less familiar to others. The Corps has a tradition of keeping commitments and the trip to Fargo, North Dakota was reaffirmation for the District’s design team that, despite obstacles, through hard work they accomplish the mission. ◀



Ray Wilson, hydraulic engineer with the Vicksburg District stands in front of interstate 29 in Fargo, North Dakota, surveying the terrain to determine its impact on the project’s design.

BY JOHNNY KISNER

WORKERS' COMPENSATION FRAUD, WASTE, AND ABUSE CAN AFFECT US ALL

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has been actively combating a costly and persistent crime since 1994. Workers' compensation fraud and abuse of the federal workers compensation system by our employees are estimated to cost the Corps of Engineers approximately \$1.5 million a year, funds that come directly from the USACE Construction General budget at Headquarters USACE. The Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) Fraud Investigation Program, a Corps-wide and command-mandated waste, fraud and abuse program is USACE's primary weapon in this battle.

U.S. Code (USC), Title 5, Chapter 81, "The Federal Employees Compensation Act," provides medical and compensation benefits to USACE employees who are injured in the line of duty. The U.S. Department of Labor (DoL) manages the FECA on behalf of all federal agencies through the DoL Office of Workers Compensation Programs (OWCP), paying for medical bills associated with on-the-job injuries and replacing the injured party's salaries and wages while they are recuperating. In the case of those personnel who are so severely injured that they cannot return to work, the FECA will replace their wages for life.

As with all good-intentioned programs, however, there are those who will seek to enrich themselves at the cost of others. Workers compensation fraud and abuse negatively affects USACE's mission capability by reducing the amount of funds available for completion of projects vital to our nation's infrastructure and war fighting capability. We also have to consider that when knowledge of individuals who are defrauding or abusing the system becomes common in the workplace, morale suffers and others consider the ease of abusing the system.

As federal employees, we understand that injuries do occur in the workplace. We should expect that injuries sustained in the line of duty will be paid for by the employer, and if those injuries incapacitated us to the extent that we were not able to work, we should be compensated accordingly. The FECA, envisioned as a fairness measure that would ensure that injured employees are still able to have a livelihood despite injuries that occur on the job, is a well intentioned but flawed law. Passed with no mandatory cutoff dates or real provisions for returning the injured parties to work, the law and the funds it provides are at risk of serious abuses and blatant fraud.

Fraud is typically defined as a willful intent to take something by lying or obscuring the facts. Very few cases of workers compensation fraud start off as blatant fraud. Rather, fraud cases develop when employees get legitimately injured and they decide that they will not have to return to work if they remain injured, thus they begin to exaggerate the extent of their injury to continue to receive benefits. Benefits for an employee with a dependent are 75 percent of the employee's original wages, tax free. As there is no mandatory removal date from the workers' compensation program defined in the FECA, this flaw allows unscrupulous employees to claim injuries for decades.

Numerous USACE workers' compensation recipients are in their fourth decade of receiving compensation benefits. If the employee is legitimately injured and deserves to be on the workers' compensation rolls, then there is no need or tool to force them into retirement. However, commanders may want to consider return-to-work efforts whenever possible to help reduce workers' compensation costs.

The flaws in the FECA law and DoL's policies for handling FECA injury claims have left other Army agencies scrambling to develop workers compensation programs capable of reducing the abuses of the FECA. The Corps' tool in this fight is the FECA Fraud Investigation Unit (FIU). The FIU is a highly specialized group of individuals dedicated to the deterrence of workers' compensation fraud and abuse of the program. Exaggerations of injuries, falsely claimed injuries and under-reporting or failure to report wages earned while receiving workers' compensation benefits are just a few of the types of fraud the unit investigates.

In addition, the unit works with Injury Compensation Program Administrators (ICPA) in Civilian Personnel Advisory Centers throughout USACE to standardize injury-handling practices, train supervisors to be aware of potentially fraudulent claims and encourage the individual commands to actively pursue return-to-work efforts for those individuals who can be returned to the workforce. Since the FECA law has been in place, it has provided the Department of the Army (DA) and the U.S. government with a cost savings of more than \$60 million.

The mission of the FECA Fraud Investigation Program is "to identify fraud, waste and abuse in the area of worker compensation benefits and to reduce the cost associated with those benefits through the conduct of investigations and subsequent criminal, administrative or civil actions." This mission statement encompasses a holistic two-fold approach to reducing costs and is supported by a single objective – to verify and validate injury claims. Administrative inquiry, audits, and preliminary criminal investigation are tools used by the FECA FIU to ensure fraud and abuse is rooted out.

The FECA FIU works with the Corps' Human Resources Directorate, DA's Civilian Human Resources Agency and DA G-1 to implement a program of proactive claims management. This includes frequent reviews of potentially fraudulent injury claims, and the auditing of subordinate commands programs for signs of abuse while maintaining a sustained observance of USACE's overall workers' compensation program. The FECA FIU continues to set the example as the Corps' subject-matter experts (SME) in the field of investigating workers' compensation fraud and abuse, and ensures the pursuit of every avenue available to reduce costs related to the USACE FECA program.

To assist subordinate commands, the FECA FIU participates in workers' compensation working groups throughout USACE. These working groups are directed by the Office of the Secretary of the Army and USACE command. Each district, division, and lab should have its own workers' compensation working group. The FECA FIU is available to participate in these working groups at the command's request. The unit is capable of providing a fraud

SME who can attend the meetings in person or via teleconference. The SME can help discuss potentially fraudulent claims, and share processes and best practices used throughout USACE.

Workers' compensation fraud and abuse is often considered a victimless crime by commanders and supervisors. For years, the workers' compensation program was considered a "dumping ground" for unsatisfactory or unwanted employees, and there was no or little effort to bring injured employees back to work. Injured employees were stigmatized as being unwanted or less effective because they were on workers' compensation and away from the workforce for long periods of time. The cost of this type of abuse was commonly overlooked by commanders since costs related to employees who were civil funded were paid by Headquarters USACE. Although ICPAs verify the personnel on the workers' compensation rolls annually, there is no direct action required by the subordinate commands to pay the compensation bill. The funds used to pay the annual compensation bill are taken straight off the top of the construction general funds at the Headquarters USACE level, leaving less for projects.

Recently, through the efforts of the FECA FIU, a former USACE employee pled guilty to one count of violation of Title 18, US Code Section 1920; "False Statements Regarding Federal Workers Compensation Benefits." The former employee had claimed his elderly mother as a dependent despite the fact that she was never his dependent and had been deceased for several years. This blatant fraud allowed the employee to receive 75 percent of his salary from DoL tax free opposed to the 66.6 percent he would have received with no dependents. The plea agreement states that the employee knowingly and willfully made false statements to DoL OWCP to receive benefits he did not deserve.

If the individual had not pled guilty to the single count, he faced possible conviction of six counts for violations of Title 18, Section 1920. The conviction could have included penalties of imprisonment for up to five years and a fine of up to \$250,000 for each count. The plea allowed the individual to repay \$47,803 of fraudulently received compensation, and uncontested permanent removal from the compensation rolls, saving USACE an additional \$833,092 in lifetime compensation costs.

FECA fraud affects us all in a negative manner, and every employee has a responsibility to report any incident of fraud or abuse, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.

To report suspected workers' compensation fraud, contact the FECA Fraud Unit through the Operations Office of the FECA Fraud Investigation Program at (601) 631-7285, by email at [HYPERLINK "mailto:john.kisner@us.army.mil"](mailto:HYPERLINK) john.kisner@us.army.mil, or contact the FECA FIU Fraud Hotline at (800) 831-2018.

District hosts annual Engineer's Day awards ceremony in conjunction with Town Hall meeting and Army birthday celebration

By Shirley J. Smith

Photos by Alfred Dulaney and Kavanaugh Breazeale

The District's annual Engineer's Day Awards ceremony was held recently at District Headquarters along with a Town Hall meeting and a cake-cutting ceremony in honor of Army's 237th birthday.

Jennifer Mallard, acting strategic planner, facilitated the program; Shirley Smith, public affairs specialist, served as mistress of ceremony; Ella Lewis, human resource specialist and member of the 2012 Vicksburg Leadership Development Program, led

the audience in reciting the Pledge; Brian Crawford, chief of Information Technology (ACE-IT), rendered the Invocation.

At the conclusion of the Awards ceremony Col Eckstein began the cake cutting with one of the District's longest tenured employees, Barbara Petersen, chief of programs management branch of Programs and Project Management Division, (PPMD), and the least tenured employee, Freteshia Johnson, student in Office of Counsel.



DeGray Lake staff received the Team Safety Award.



Calvin E. Reed, Jr., engineering student at Jackson State University, working in the hydraulics branch of Engineering and Construction Division, received the Student of the Year Award.

The following team members received awards:



Buck Chute-Lake Albermarle Seepage Control Project Delivery Team received the Vicksburg District Team Award.



Patricia R. Hemphill, deputy chief of Programs and Project Management Division, received the Commander's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Equal Employment Opportunity.



Lake Greeson Field Office staff received the Wage Grade Team Award.



The Regulatory Earth Day Team received the Commander's Public Service Award.

PEOPLE



Sissy A. Carter, Engineering and Construction Division, received the Volunteer Leadership Award.



James H. Hughes, Equal Employment Opportunity Office, received the Professional Award.



Lanny Barfield, Engineering and Construction Division, received the Employee of the Year Award.



Robert E. Ford, Jr., Operations Division, received the Wage Grade Leadership Award.



Deborah M. Hall, Engineering and Construction Division, received the Administrator Award.



Benny D. Pettit, Operations Division, Enid Lake Field Office, received the Commander's Special Emphasis Award.



Glenda J. Hill, Engineering and Construction Division, received the Engineer Award.



Darrell R. Mitchell, Operations Division, DeGray Lake Field Office, received the Park Ranger Award.



Left to right, **Ben Robinson**, **Glenda Hill**, **Jack Smith**, **Mike Renacker**, and **Joey Windham** (not pictured), were each presented a Certificate of Appreciation for their work with Operation Watershed Recovery.



Eric G. Woerner, Engineering and Construction Division, received the Scientist Award.



Andrew K. LaPrairie, Operations Division, received the Paddle Wheel Award.

ENGINEER'S DAY CELEBRATION

Photos by Alfred Dulaney
and Kavanaugh Brezeale



ENGINEER'S DAY CELEBRATION

Photos by Alfred Dulaney



Electronics technician at Blakely Mountain Dam and Power Plant only female in such capacity with District

By Shana Thomason
Photos by Daniel Valovich



Sarah stands ready for her work at Blakely Mountain Dam



Beautiful Blakely Mountain Dam

Generators, power grids, electrical systems are all in a day’s work for the Vicksburg District’s only female hydropower employee at Blakely Mountain Dam and Power Plant. Sarah Morrison started working for the Corps two years ago as an electronics technician and has since fallen in love with the hydropower world and the service it provides to our nation. Growing up a few miles from DeGray Lake, Sarah was familiar with the Corps of Engineers, but knew very little about the hydropower aspect of the Corps. “I spent a lot of my summers camping with my family at Corps lakes so I was aware of their recreational sites, but was unfamiliar with the hydropower mission. Now, every day I learn more about the services the Corps provides to our nation and I’m proud to be a part of it,” she stated.

On an average day, Sarah, along with senior electronics mechanic Brian Bean, maintains Blakely, DeGray and Narrows Power Plants with supervisory control and data acquisition systems (SCADA). SCADA is the starting and stopping of generators and loading and unloading of generators to supply power to the grid. When asked if she thought her career would take her down this path after obtaining an education degree, she replied, “I must admit that I had never thought about working in a power plant before I started this job, but I am very thankful that the opportunity presented itself, and I was not afraid to take it. I firmly believe that everything happens for a reason and all work that I’ve done prior to my employment here has helped me get to where I am today.”

The daily functions of a power plant require a lot of hands-on learning

as well as in-depth electrical training courses. “The best training I get is the every day on-the-job training from my fellow power plant maintenance co-workers. I work with some of the most knowledgeable individuals in the hydropower community and they help me learn numerous things every day.” Her supervisor, Dustin Wilson, supervisory power project manager said, “Sarah is an industrious and versatile individual, she is particularly adept working with others. She actively continues to further her education in the hydropower field.”

When asked what she thought about being the only female in the hydropower community within the District, Sarah said, “My parents reared me to never be afraid of accomplishing whatever I wanted in life. I was never told that I couldn’t do something ‘because I am a female.’ Thanks to them, I have never had the ‘can’t do’ attitude because of my gender. I am very fortunate to be where I am, and I am going to continue to work hard and perform well in my job just like any other employee should.” Scot King, power plant senior mechanic says Sarah is one of the most unique persons he’s ever met, “What makes her unique is her willingness to accept any type challenge facing her, whether it is fixing something I did wrong to a computer or solving complicated electronic issues with our SCADA system. You might find her threading pipe or welding something, or you might see her nearly upside down tightening loose bolts on something....in a cramped and greasy space. Sarah’s abilities range from organizing retirement parties, to climbing to the top of a 200’ foot tall surge tank, to pulling thousands of feet of communication cable through muddy ditches; she does it all with a smile. She really knows how to make working fun.”

Sarah states, “Working in a power

plant is like working with a moving object – literally! Things change daily with water levels, power needs, and voltage testing, and it takes teamwork to make sure things are accomplished. There are a lot of things I like about my job, but probably the best thing is the teamwork attitude. Sometimes we have jobs that need to be accomplished that require ‘all hands on deck’; everyone works together to get the job done. No two days are ever the same at a power plant. Each power plant is different from the other and has unique characteristics. It is amazing how different yet alike these projects are. For example, Blakely and DeGray dams are earthen filled, Narrows is concrete. Narrows doesn’t have an intake structure like Blakely and DeGray, but it is the oldest plant. DeGray is the youngest plant, having been completed in 1972 and it has a pump back unit and re-regulation dam. Clarence Cannon is a sister plant to DeGray by design and it also has a pump back unit and re-regulation dam.

“Blakely Power Plant remotely operates two additional hydropower plants, DeGray and Narrows. Blakely is in the process of integrating a third plant to be operated from Blakely and that is Clarence Cannon Power Plant in Hannibal, Missouri. I am excited to be involved in the initial phase of the process; it’s a huge learning opportunity for me.” Currently, Sarah and Brian are in the design and installation stages of the new SCADA system for Clarence Cannon. The new SCADA system is scheduled to be online and operational by August 31, 2012.

Last year, Sarah volunteered for the 2011 flood fight as a levee “stomper.” She stated that she learned a lot about the Mississippi River Levee System and what to watch for during a flood event, that it was an amazing experience that she would never forget. She spent most of her days checking

for sand boils whether it was from a helicopter, boat, or on foot. During her deployment time, Sarah learned a lot about the role hydropower plays in maintaining our lakes and river systems especially during floods. “It was a great opportunity to spend some time in another area and be a part of other missions within the Corps. Due to the flood fighting mission I developed new friendships within the District. As we all know, the Corps employs varied professionals with a wide range of skills, and it requires teamwork to accomplish its missions.”

To sum it all, whether it is pulling wire, monitoring the switch yard, or assisting with a 50-year re-wind process, Sarah feels at home among the turbines and generators. “I am lucky that I get to do some very exciting and unique things every day at my job. I look forward to learning new things and being a part of the hydropower community for the duration of my career,” Sara stated. ◀



Sarah prepares to check for sand boils from a helicopter

(Team work, continued from page 6)



Bridge during high-water shutdown in 2011.

In spite of the challenging start, battling high water, and the immense design change, the more than \$5 million dollar project was completed a couple of months ahead of schedule. Attention to safety and cooperation by contractor and government personnel to keep the project moving forward were two key items that made this project a success according to Tommy Fowler, the quality assurance representative for the Greenwood Area Office.



Completed bridge with south approach road.

Now, the next hurdle is to secure funding for the Pratt Road relocation to tie the bridge into the public road system. According to Arkabutla Lake personnel, the locals are constantly asking when will the bridge be opened and are anxious to know when there will be a dependable route to the area north of the spillway..... even during a high water event. ◀

Sardis Lake's natural resources specialist wins Top Dove Bander Award

Natural resource specialist at Sardis Lake, Ramon Pierce, was honored as the top dove bander in the state of Mississippi at a ceremony held recently at the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks. Pierce banded 123 doves in Grenada, Webster, and Carroll counties. He started participating in the dove banding program three years ago and has since spent time banding birds here at Sardis Lake and on various private lands.

“Banding” is a process by which a bird is captured. After capturing the bird, a metal band with a unique tracking number is fitted around its leg, after which the bird is released. If the bird is later harvested during a hunting season, the information on the band can then be reported via telephone number, address, internet site, etc. Afterwards the person reporting the information will usually receive a certificate of appreciation with the person's name and where the bird was harvested.

The dove banding program is done as a cooperative effort between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who supplies the banding supplies and the MDWFP, the agency that administers the program. When banded birds are harvested during dove season, hunters can report the information on the band to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for their usage of studying migration patterns. ◀



Scott Baker, left, migratory bird program coordinator with the MDWFP presents the award to Ramon Pierce.

Lake Ouachita hosts Oden School field trip



Park ranger Bill Jackson speaks to the students on the history of the Lake Ouachita area and points out the types of local vegetation.

The students walk along the Lake Ouachita Vista Trail during the nature hike.

By Amy Shultz

Photos by Pam Herrin and Amy Shultz

Lake Ouachita recently hosted a field trip for a group of 4th grade students, their teacher, and two chaperones from Oden School, Oden, Arkansas. Natural resource specialist Joe Bailey presented a water safety program and gave instructions on how to build bluebird houses. The students successfully constructed three bluebird houses to be placed in the Tompkins Bend Recreation Area. The students also assisted with planting dogwood trees in the Tompkins Bend Recreation Area. Topics discussed during these activities were environmental stewardship and the “Leave No Trace” land ethic.

Park rangers Pam Herrin and Amy Shultz escorted the students on a nature trail hike. During the hike the group picked up litter and learned about trees, how to identify poison ivy, different types of plants, and wildlife native to the area.

The next stop was at the Lake Ouachita Vista American Disabilities Act elevated trail where supervisory park ranger Bill Jackson discussed Lake Ouachita’s history, fisheries management, and early settlements along the Ouachita River. The students toured two late 1800’s homesteads where the root cellars and old wells are still visible. The importance of

protecting our environmental and cultural resources was the focus during this hike.

After lunch, donated by Subway, the students returned to Tompkins Bend Recreation Area where their teacher, Kay Banta, organized a project wild relay game. The purpose of the game was to gain an understanding of the importance of natural camouflage for wildlife.

It was a beautiful day for the field trip, and all the activities promoted Children in Nature and Get Outdoors Healthy Lifestyle initiatives. The students enjoyed a great day in the outdoors at Lake Ouachita! ◀

Park Rangers promote water safety at National Sustainable Design Expo

By Amy Shultz

Photo by Marlene Love-Jones

Lake Ouachita's park ranger Amy Shultz and DeGray Lake's park ranger Renea Guin recently attended the Eighth Annual National Sustainable Design Expo in Washington D.C. The Corps' Headquarters (HQUSACE) hosted water safety, environmental, and public affairs exhibits at the Expo, which was held on the Washington Mall in the shadow of the Washington Monument. Shultz and Guin worked at the water safety exhibit with four other Corps team members from HQUSACE, Kansas City and Mobile districts. The exhibit featured water safety handouts, recreational brochures of Corps lakes, and a video detailing the Corps story including information regarding a career with the Corps.

The National Sustainable Design Expo is a unique competition that is sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency. The purpose of the Expo is for the display of solutions/exhibits designed for a sustainable future. Students, scientists, non-profit agencies and governmental agencies each display exhibits/innovations designed to advance economic growth while reducing environmental impact. Exhibits displayed at the Expo included a showcase of alternative fuel sources, innovative water treatment systems, and rice as an alternative building material. The display judged to be the best overall, based on creative

invention, earn a grant to aid with the continuation of research on the innovation.

Bobber the Water Safety Dog was a big hit at the Corps booth! Rangers took turns donning the Bobber costume; for ranger Shultz it was the first time to do so and she loved seeing the looks on the children's faces as they approached to greet the water safety mascot! Several kids gave Bobber bear hugs, and had to be persuaded by parents to say goodbye!

Jo Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, visited the Corps booths and showed support for our water safety education efforts by having her picture taken with Bobber. Lisa Jackson, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency also posed for a photo.

Many visitors stopped by the Corps booth and expressed appreciation for the work that the Corps does.

At the conclusion of the Expo, Candice Walters and Steve Austin of HQUSACE escorted the group on a tour of HQUSACE's building, where an after-action meeting was held to discuss the expo.

For Shultz and Guin, the visit to our Nation's Capitol and HQUSACE was a wonderful experience- new friendships were formed, and the water safety message was shared - *thanks to Bobber!* ◀



Sharing the spotlight with Bobber are, left to right, Shultz and Darcy.

Arkabutla Lake affords students valuable boating knowledge and experience

By Shirley J. Smith

Photos courtesy of Arkabutla Lake

Seven students from Hernando Middle School, Hernando, and Strayhorn High School located in Sarah, proudly received their certificates for completing the Spirit of America Youth Boating Program. The program spanned three Saturdays of learning and fun for the youth.

This marks the fifth year for the event when students are exposed to hands-on training of several different kinds of vessels. The students, who previously completed the Mississippi Boater Education class, were given the opportunity to operate sailboats, john boats, canoes, kayaks, and power boats at the Hernando Point Recreation Area at Arkabutla Lake. Spirit of America is spearheaded by the Corps' Arkabutla Lake in cooperation with the Delta Sailing Club.

The Spirit of America program, totally voluntary, was scheduled for the three Saturdays after the classroom portion was completed. Natural resource specialist park ranger Rob Hoff teaches the Mississippi Boater Education class each year to seventh and eighth grade students at Hernando and Strayhorn Middle schools. The class affords the students the opportunity to acquire their Mississippi Boat Operator License free of charge. Upon successful completion of the Boater Education written test, students are given the opportunity to participate in the Spirit of America program, held at the Hernando Point Recreation Area at Arkabutla Lake.

"Low lake levels were a slight obstacle for us this year but we were able to use it as a teaching aid and make the best of the situation," park ranger Sawyer Hunt said.

The program is highly recognized by the students, who gain new skills and greater confidence in operating the vessels. For most students, this was their first time on certain types of vessels, and for some, it was their first time on any vessel! Volunteers from the Delta Sailing Club taught students the basics of sailing, and even allowed each of them to man the controls while Hoff, Hunt, and fellow team members Colby Pullen, Kyle Lock, and Clayton Burford educated students on canoes, kayaks, john boats, and power boats.

"Overall, the program was a great success again this year. I think everyone involved had a lot of fun and I look forward to teaching next year's class," Hoff said. ◀



Hoff presents the graduation certificate to Manuel Washington, one of the Youth Boating Program graduates.



Pictured from left to right are Rob Hoff (USACE), Clayton Burford (USACE), McKenzie Berry, Colby Pullen (USACE), Daniel Owen, Manuel Washington, Zacary Grimm, Dustin Fraley, Kristina Brown, Daniel Pilgrim, and Sawyer Hunt (USACE).



Boats crowd Engineer Point for the tournament weigh-in.

Sardis Lake hosts 40th annual St. Jude Bass Classic

Story and photos by
Chris Gurner

In 1971, volunteers from the Memphis Bass Club rallied together to devise a plan as how to help support St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. This decision was made after a club member's daughter became a patient at St. Jude. In 1973, they hosted the first St. Jude Bass Classic at Sardis Lake. Forty years later it has become the longest running charity fishing tournament in the nation. During that time they have raised approximately \$2.5 million dollars for St. Jude.



A crowd relaxes at beautiful Sardis Lake during the tournament.

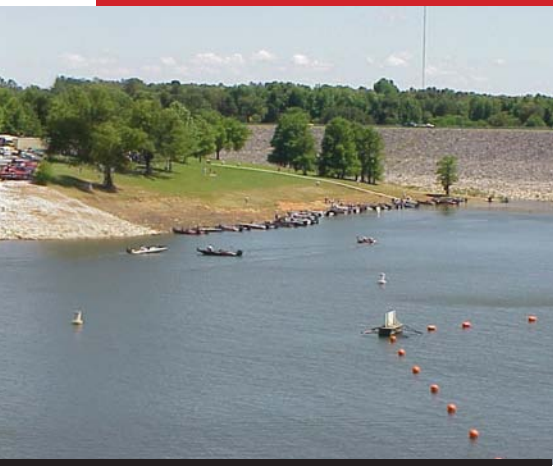
The pick-your-partner style tournament is held each year at Engineer Point recreational area. Funds are raised from entry fees and sponsorship. Rick Lesley, the 2012 tournament director, says that all persons planning the event are volunteers, and all prizes are donated. This ensures that 100% of the money goes to St. Jude.

The 1973 St. Jude Bass Classic, being the first sports-related fundraiser, has led the way for other sports related fundraisers including the Great Urban Race, the St. Jude Memphis Marathon, and the FedEx St. Jude Classic stop on the Professional Golf Association tour.

This year's tournament featured some celebrity appearances and great prizes. Troy Landry from the History Channel's popular reality show "Swamp People" made an appearance at a pre-tournament registration and packet pick-up event held at Performance Marine in Sardis on Saturday May 26th. Bill Dance, one of the most recognized fishermen world-wide and host of "Bill Dance Outdoors", emceed the tournament weigh-in along with popular FLW tour pro Mark Rose.

A crowd of several hundred gathered to watch the weigh-in and visit many booths set up by tournament sponsors. Corps park rangers manned a water safety booth and made many contacts during the event.

Two hundred thirty teams competed this year for the \$1,500 grand prize and two fully rigged war eagle boats. During the weigh-in, many team members said that the fishing was tough because of the hot weather and low water conditions. The totals certainly seemed to agree with them as the weights weren't as high as they have been in past years.



Students from University of Mississippi's Big Event volunteer at Sardis Lake

By Shea Staten and Ramon Pierce

Photo by Ramon Pierce

Three students from the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) recently volunteered to help construct and place 20 wood duck boxes at the Sardis Lake Waterfowl Refuge. Normally this sort of volunteer work, although much appreciated, wouldn't be very news worthy, but these three volunteers were part of a much larger effort in Oxford and Lafayette County. Their work was done in conjunction with the University of Mississippi's Big Event.

Though conditions weren't very favorable, Kris Shumway and Dustin Gordon fished hard enough to take first place with a five fish limit of 13.56 lbs. Gary Conklin of Bartlett, Tennessee took the prize for biggest fish with a bass weighing 5.45 lbs.

The Big Event is a student-based community volunteer effort that started 30 years ago at Texas A&M University. It has since spread to 75 college campuses across the nation. This was the second year that Ole Miss participated in The Big Event and this year more than 3,000 students volunteered for more than 260 different projects around the Oxford/Lafayette County area. Projects ranged from working in the yards of local citizens to cleaning area churches.

The prizes were great, but the goal of the tournament is to raise money for patients of St. Jude and total monies raised for this year's tournament is over \$130,000. Major sponsors of the event were Wolfchase Nissan, Strike King Lure Company, War Eagle Boats, Sportsman's Warehouse, Cars & Trucks Etc., and Performance Marine in Sardis. All registered fishermen were entered into a drawing for the grand attendance prize. This year's grand attendance prize was a new Nissan Frontier pick-up and a fully-rigged War Eagle boat. ◀

After learning about the event, natural resource specialists Ramon Pierce and Shea Staten submitted a project that was accepted. Having constructed and checked many wood duck boxes around the lake already, Pierce welcomed the help. "These opportunities provide a way to help strengthen relationships among Ole Miss, the surrounding communities, and the Corps of Engineers," he said. All three volunteers seemed to enjoy the work, and Pierce and Staten are already eyeing other projects they can submit for next year. ◀



Shumway and Gordon display their first place ribbons.



Ole Miss students Alex Kynerd, Mona Foshee, and Taylor Robinson place wood duck boxes at Sardis Lake.

District archaeologists show great respect for the past

By Sarah Koepfel

Photos by Sarah Koepfel and Chris Koepfel

The Mississippi Valley has a long, rich cultural history. From the great prehistoric mound builders and vast American Indian trade networks to the Spanish and French explorers and missions, steamboat driven commerce, fighting Ironclads of the Civil War, and population expansion westward, people have thrived along the river for thousands of years.

Evidence still exists of prehistoric residents when mounds, projectile points and arrowheads, and pottery are observed. Pieces of whiteware ceramics, bottle glass, brick and metal may indicate a historic farmstead once presided. Remnants of the Civil War are visible in trenches and embankments or in the occasional bullet, cannon ball, or button. Steamboat and other watercraft wreckages are scattered along the banks. And thousands of undisturbed cemeteries and burial sites

overlook the River and its tributaries. With all of this great history around, it is no wonder the Corps receives so many visitors each year at its 33 lakes within the Mississippi Valley Division (MVD). Within MVD, the Corps operates 9,526 camp sites, 44 recreation areas, 278 boat ramps and 14 visitor centers.

An estimated 50 million visitors enjoy Corps recreational sites in the Mississippi Valley each year. The Corps encourages the public to visit all our interpretive centers to learn about local history. But while enjoying our natural resources, we ask that you remember to respect our shared cultural resources and heritage. Once an artifact has been removed, the information it could provide has been lost. If you are interested in what you have discovered, please take a picture, draw your location on a map and send that information to us.

Artifacts, including prehistoric and historic items, should not be removed from any federal lands, including those owned and operated by the Corps, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forestry Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. States also have antiquities laws that require permits to remove human remains from non-federal property and misdemeanor penalties for damaging or removing artifacts from state, county or city property.

Each District has several archaeologists and historians who love to talk about their favorite subject; the past. They are available to talk to school groups, professional associations and vocational archaeological groups about a variety of topics and time periods.

Should you encounter any human remains, we ask that they not be disturbed. Contacting your local law enforcement officials and Corps personnel within that boundary as soon as possible will ensure these items are handled with respect and care and in accordance to the law. Federally-recognized tribes ascribe great importance to the areas of their ancestors, especially those containing human remains.

If you enjoy metal detecting, please keep in mind that several laws prevent the damage, theft, removal and/or transportation of any item from federal lands. Additional historic preservation laws are in place to further protect historic properties, sacred sites and traditional cultural properties. Penal-



Vicksburg District archaeologist Jennifer Ryan investigating a stern wheeled steamboat wreckage site in Arkansas.

LAKES AND RECREATION

ties for violating these laws include fines depending on the value of the item removed, seizure of equipment used during the act, and imprisonment. Offenders can be tried for a misdemeanor or felony. When in doubt, contact your local Corps District or the Mississippi Valley Division who can direct you to the appropriate expert(s).

The word Mississippi, as perceived by the French, comes from the Algonquian word for "Great River," Misi-zibi. The natural and cultural resources present within the River Valley attest to that greatness. The Corps takes pride in assuring that this greatness continues.

Did you know?

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may best be known as providing vital engineering services domestically through flood protection projects since its official inception in 1802 by President Thomas Jefferson, although the first Corps of Engineers position was created in 1779. The Corps is also tasked with the planning, construction and operation of locks and dams, beach nourishment projects, dredging navigable waters, designing and constructing military facilities around the world, and environmental regulation and ecosystem restoration, among other missions. The Corps has aided in the restoration, protection or creation of more than 38,000 acres of wetlands, provides 24% of the nation's hydropower capacity (3% of the total electric capacity), operates and maintains 12,000 miles of commercial inland navigation channels, prevents an estimated \$21 billion annually in damages through flood risk management projects, and is at work in more than 90 countries.

In addition to these missions, the Corps is also an environmental steward. Part of our environmental stewardship practice includes taking into consideration potential effects to cultural resources prior to any undertaking. Corps archaeologists and historians work with State Historic Preservation Offices, federally-recognized tribes, other federal and state agencies and the public to comply with Preservation Laws and Corps Regulations. ◀



Vicksburg District archaeologist Sarah Koepfel working with local Boy Scouts for a mock excavation at a historic Mississippi Plantation.

Vicksburg District archaeologist Rodney Parker talking to a local Boy Scout troop during a mock excavation.

District Field Offices & Services

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
Vicksburg District
4155 E. Clay Street
Vicksburg, MS 39183
www.mvk.usace.army.mil
email: cemvk-pa@army.us.mil**

Lake Ouachita (501) 767-2101
Lake Greeson (870) 285-2151
DeGray Lake (870) 246-5501
Sardis Lake (662) 563-4531
Arkabutla Lake (662) 562-6261
Enid Lake (662) 563-4571
Grenada Lake (662) 226-6391
Bayou Bodcau (318) 322-6391
JBJ Waterway (318) 322-6391
Ouachita-Black Rivers (318) 322-6391

Aerial Photography (601) 631-5709
Corps Wetland Permits (601) 631-5289
Apply, ask questions, or report violations
Contracting & Bids (601) 631-7706
Vendors, status of bids, specs
Community Support (601) 631-5223
Tours, speakers, volunteers
Historical Questions & Research (601) 634-7023
Mississippi River History Center
Real Estate Issues (601) 631-5220
Corps impacts to your property
Employment Questions (601) 631-5859
Vacancies, status, qualifications
Historical Photographs (601) 631-5021
Environmental (601) 631-5410

Other Vicksburg Engineer/Federal Organizations

Mississippi Valley Division
(601) 634-5760

Vicksburg National Military Park
(601) 634-5760

Engineer Research and Development Center
(601) 634-2504

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Kickapoo
(601) 636-8304

412th Engineer Command
(601) 636-1686

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
(601) 629-6607

168th Engineer Group
(601) 313-5290

U.S. Army Recruiter
(601) 618-1203

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Vicksburg District PAO
4155 Clay Street
Vicksburg, MS 39183-3435

First Class Mail
Postage & Fees Paid
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Vicksburg District
Permit NO. 56