



Chena Project opens updated, expanded office

By Curt Biberdorf
Public Affairs Office

The Chena River Lakes Flood Control Project in North Pole now has an office in keeping with the quality of the dam and recreation area it supports.

Guests, dignitaries and key people involved in the construction project celebrated the official opening of the renovated and expanded 23-year-old facility during a ribbon-cutting ceremony Aug. 10.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District was both customer and manager of the \$5.4 million project that remodeled existing office, kitchen, restroom and conference room areas while adding 2,250 square feet for an entrance foyer, visitor reception area, emergency response bay, meeting room and interpretive exhibits.

A masonry heating unit in the reception area is a prominent contributor to the modernized facility's enhanced energy efficiency. Furthermore, it is now compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 and all environmental laws.

The project was funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, designed by PDC Inc. and



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

(From left) Sen. Mark Begich, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy and Alaska District Commander Col. Reinhard Koenig cut a ribbon to officially open the renovated and expanded Chena River Lakes Flood Control Project office during a ceremony Aug. 10. The \$5.47 million project features a new visitor reception area, remodeled office space, increased energy efficiency and building compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990.

constructed by Bristol Design Build Services LLC.

Sen. Mark Begich said he is impressed with the building from many perspectives, including how it will help increase public awareness and understanding of the Corps mission.

"This (guest reception area) will once again attach people to what the Corps is doing, not in a time of crisis, but on a regular basis," he said.

It was a crisis that spurred construction of the Chena Project.

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Agency moves into new satellite operations facility

By Curt Biberdorf
Public Affairs Office

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fairbanks Command and Data Acquisition Station officially opened a new operations facility during a ceremony Aug. 24.

Secluded in Alaska's Gilmore Valley on an 8,500-acre federal reservation away from radio and television wave interference, the station daily records satellite information for its national and international customers.

The 20,000 square-foot, \$11.9 million operations facility project was managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District and constructed by Alcan Builders Inc. of Fairbanks.

Before cutting a ribbon to open the facility, Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presented a ceremonial key to NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco.

"It's a great day for the Corps of Engineers as well as for NOAA and (to reflect on) the great partnership that we have had over the past several years to get this facility constructed," Koenig said.

The facility was made possible by \$9 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Sen. Mark Begich said he sometimes hears complaints about the Recovery Act's effectiveness, but the building is evidence of its success.

"People around the globe will never understand that small amount of money in the big picture has a huge impact on their lives every day," he said.

The station collects data from 26 spacecraft operated by NOAA, NASA, Department of Defense, Europe, France, Japan and Taiwan.

Because the station is farther north than any other satellite communications facility in North America, it receives more

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62nd Engineer Detachment changes command

By Curt Biberdorf
Public Affairs Office

The 62nd Engineer Detachment welcomed a new leader during a change of command ceremony at Alaska District headquarters Aug. 16.

Capt. Corey Warren assumed command from Maj. James Thompson in the first change in leadership for the unit, which serves as a Forward Engineering Support Team-Advance under the Army's Field Force Engineering program.

The unit activated in February 2010 and returned from its first deployment in March, marking the first FEST-A detachment to deploy in support of an Army brigade combat team.

Warren was the right choice for this position, said Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander.

"When Corey's file came through, we knew we had a leader, and as we talked to folks who have worked with him in the past, we knew we had somebody special who was going to lead the team to further greatness," Koenig said.

Warren thanked Koenig for his trust and confidence, and Thompson for his friendship.

They met in Iraq, where Thompson helped introduce Warren to key people and made him feel like part of the team.

"I will always remember your friendship and mentorship," Warren said. He added that he looks forward to integrating himself into the detachment and supporting the mission.

With a need exposed early in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, Forward Engineering Support Teams were created to bridge the Army's capability gap with planning for construction in combat, said Koenig.

He said the selection of Thompson three years ago was just as important as choosing a leader who could take the FEST-A from an idea to a reality.

Koenig congratulated Thompson and the team for making a positive impact on the long-term viability of Iraq as a nation, and in the bigger picture, proving the concept of an Army field unit that combines military and civilian personnel to accomplish a mission.

"We basically provided an incredible capability in a very small package to the U.S. Army," Koenig said. "So that is a legacy that you, Jim, as a commander will continue to carry with you day in and day out."

Thompson said the FEST-A has been an evolving program from the start and is still in a constant state of flux.

"What that really indicates and gives credit to is the great flexibility of the team that we have standing here before you, and the great flexibility and patience that everyone here has offered to us as we built this team," he said.

Thompson said people in the civilian world are shocked when he tells them that the Army is an experimental organization.

"(Field Force Engineering has been) an experiment of delivering exactly what the Army needs on the battlefield, getting closer every iteration, and we couldn't be in the position we are today without all the help that we have received along the way," he said.

Thompson thanked everyone who provided "the help I really didn't know I needed just yet," which included the legacy FEST-A members, Emergency Management Office team, and lastly, his team members.

"They are a great bunch of people and will always help you out if it's within their power," Thompson said.

He agreed with Koenig that Warren is the right officer for the detachment and that the unit is going to "reach new heights" under his leadership.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Capt. Corey Warren, 62nd Engineer Detachment incoming commander, receives the colors from Col. Reinhard Koenig (left), district commander, during a change of command ceremony at the Alaska District headquarters. Warren assumed command from Maj. James Thompson (second from right). Also participating in the ceremony is Sgt. 1st Class Keith Baltozer, noncommissioned officer-in-charge.

GOLD NUGGETS

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In 1967, nearly 85 percent of North Pole, Fairbanks and Fort Wainwright was destroyed when the Chena River overflowed its banks.

In 1971, Congress authorized and appropriated construction of an 8.5-mile-long dam and outlet system to reduce the flood risk.

Since it became operational in 1981, the Chena Project has controlled flows of the Chena River 20 times to either regulate floodwater or divert it to the Tanana River for the protection lands in the floodplain downstream of the dam. Total flood damages prevented to date are estimated at \$259 million.

“The biggest (flood) was in 1992 when we would have probably had the same level of destruction in the Fairbanks area and Golden Valley had it not been for the Chena risk-reduction facility,” said Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander.

He said the establishment of the Chena Project is a major milestone in Alaska’s history. Two years ago, the Recovery Act opened up a chance to improve it.

“We had a project that wasn’t shovel-ready. It was nail-ready,” Koenig said. “This team here made it happen and seized that great opportunity.”

The Corps designed the recreation area, which consists of two parks and a small lake outgranted to a local cost-share partner, the Fairbanks North Star Borough. More than 165,000 people visit the area annually.

“We have a beautiful facility for everyone to use into the future, and it is providing a great opportunity for everyone here in Fairbanks as well as people around the country to come and visit,” said Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy.

Corps of Engineers recreational facilities nationwide receive more than 370 million visitors, which outnumbers the Department of Interior, she said.

Darcy also talked about the president’s initiative called “America’s Great Outdoors” and how the Chena Project supports this effort by giving people the chance to enjoy outdoor recreation by volunteering and partnering with the community.

For instance, volunteers built a cabin on the project that will be used for the annual Paralyzed Veterans of America Moose Hunt. In addition, people in the community donated materials to the new office, such as items for interpretive displays in the guest-reception area.

These kinds of partnerships are needed, especially in times of limited resources, Darcy said.

Meanwhile, the new Chena Project office is compliant with the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, which requires federal agencies to reduce energy intensity by 30 percent by FY2015.

The increased energy efficiency also will contribute to the Army Corps of Engineers objective to reduce the agency’s carbon footprint by 22 percent by 2020, said Darcy.

Energy upgrades in the project office include thickened exterior walls, radiant heating, extra ceiling insulation, and energy-efficient doors, window and lighting. Other resources reducing the need for fossil fuels are solar panels and a masonry heating unit.

“This (project) is one example of how we’re going about doing that,” Darcy said. “So thank you to all the people who contributed to this innovative as well as creative way to help us save energy and be more efficient within the Corps and within the country.”



Courtesy photo

Harboring joy

Andrea Elconin (front left), Alaska District project manager, and Jacob Mercurief, City of St. Paul vice mayor, participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the completion of the community’s new small boat harbor Aug. 4. In the back row from left are: Phillip Lestenkof, Central Bering Sea Fisherman’s Association (CBSFA) president; Myron Melovidov, CBSFA chairman of the board and city council member; Jason Bourdukofsky Sr., CBSFA board member and city council member; and Linda Snow, city manager.

Operations facility

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environmental data than any other station. From its seven onsite antennas and two antennas in Barrow, the facility makes nearly 60,000 contacts annually, said Lubchenko.

Staff members work around the clock to send global data to clients for dozens of activities, such as providing information to forecast weather, develop temperature profiles of the atmosphere, monitor coastal sea ice or wildfires, and track volcanic ash and iceberg movement.

Missions include national security and defense as well as saving lives and property.

Data gathered at the Fairbanks station has saved the lives of hunters and fishermen in Alaska and around the world. The station is part of a global ground system that detects signals from people in distress who have activated their emergency beacons. In turn, these signals are transmitted to the Coast Guard, Air Force and local emergency departments to support a rescue.

These examples provide a hint of the facility's diversity and importance Lubchenko said.

A Corps assessment in 2005 determined that the original building's lifespan was quickly winding down. The mission remained uninterrupted, but continuing operations in the 50-year-old facility was not an option.

Trailers were brought in for contingency operations in case the facility needed to be abandoned after a damaging earthquake.

"The old building was becoming a real problem," said Larry Ledlow, station manager. The roof leaked, doors shifted out of alignment, dust gathered on the electronic equipment and temperatures reached uncomfortable



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents a ceremonial key to NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenko for the NOAA Fairbanks Satellite Operations Facility during a dedication ceremony Aug. 24.

levels.

Besides solving the structural troubles, the new facility is more energy-efficient and built to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Silver rating.

"Not only is this facility going to be functional, it really is an example of the leadership it's going to take in the future for us to become more energy-efficient

and have more sustainable designs in all of our facilities throughout the U.S. government," Koenig said.

The staff is still making adjustments after the move into the new building, but the positive change in attitudes is noticeable, Ledlow said.

"It's been a real pleasure working with the Corps," he said. "Their project management is amazing. The Corps really delivers for us."



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

The NOAA Fairbanks Satellite Operations Facility was built to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Silver rating.

Around the district

Construction Branch chief named



Chuck Livers was selected as the Construction Support Branch chief in the Construction-Operations Division.

Livers started with the Alaska District in February 1987 as a structural engineer. After three years, he left the Corps to work for two architecture/engineering firms and Alyeska Pipeline.

He returned to the district in December 2002, where he has investigated requests for equitable adjustments and claims, supported the field offices, and performed bidability, constructability, operability and environmental reviews.

Finance, accounting officer selected



Mark Hackworth was selected as the Resource Management Office finance and accounting officer. Since 2009, Hackworth was the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division finance and accounting officer. Before moving to Ohio, he served as the district's lead military accountant. He is a certified defense financial manager.

Consultants talk teams

The Military and Family Life Consultants will present

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Former Engineering Division chief remembered

By Pat Richardson
Public Affairs Office

The former Engineering Division chief for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District died suddenly and unexpectedly Aug. 18 at Alaska Regional Hospital in Anchorage.

Trish Opheen, 55, became the district's first female Engineering Division chief in January 2005 and served in that capacity until her retirement June 1.

"Trish was a wonderful teammate, an incredible engineer and a shining example of how to live a purpose-filled life," said Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander. "She will be missed by all."

Opheen graduated from the University of Minnesota with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1978.

She joined the Corps through the Engineer-In-Training program at the St. Paul District the same year. She earned a master's degree in civil engineering from the University of Alaska Anchorage in 1990 through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Long-Term Training Program. She was a Registered Professional Engineer.

Throughout her career, she maintained an interest in helping young engineers develop their careers.

Opheen worked on construction projects in North Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin before transferring to the Western Area Office at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., where she worked in contract administration for the MX Missile Program.

She joined the Alaska District in 1984 as the office engineer

at the Elmendorf Resident Office. She taught construction contract negotiation classes from 1985-1990. She served as the onsite administrative contracting officer and resident engineer for the Snettisham Hydroelectric Power project in Juneau in 1988 and 1989.

During Opheen's years of service in Alaska, she held positions as Air Force program manager, Department of Defense programs and project manager, chief of technical management for the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system and the Site Activation Command-Alaska.

Opheen helped establish the Corps of Engineers Cold Regions Directory of Expertise, combining the research and development capabilities of the Cold Regions Research and Engineering Lab with the project execution and practical experience of the Alaska District.

Opheen oversaw the 2005 congressionally-mandated Coastal Engineering Research Board in Anchorage, bringing subject-matter experts from federal, private and educational organizations focused on the engineering challenges of accelerating coastal erosion.

She participated in many public meetings with communities across the state in her additional roles as the district's expert on climate change and as the district's dam safety officer.

She is survived by her husband of 28 years, Mike Redmond, who retired June 1 from the Alaska District as deputy chief of the Construction-Operations Division.

A celebration of her life was held Aug. 27 at Chugiak High School. Donations may be made in her memory to the Patricia Redmond Memorial Fund, Alaska Botanical Garden, P.O. Box 202202, Anchorage, Alaska 99520.



Trish Opheen

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“Working in Teams” during a brownbag lunch Sept. 15 at noon in the Talley Room. A licensed counselor will discuss characteristics of effective teams, team development, diversity and the member’s role in maintaining effectiveness. The MFLC program provides free nonmedical short-term situational problem-solving counseling to service members, Department of Defense civilian employees and their families.

Contracts awarded

Eielson AFB Military Family Housing Utilidor and Water Line—The district awarded this FY2011 design-build project to Patrick Mechanical Inc. Aug. 12 for \$2,345,525. This project repairs and upgrades about 620 linear feet of utilidor along Arctic Avenue in the family housing area along with replacing almost 600 feet of direct buried water line.

Feasibility Study at Ketchikan—The district awarded a \$620,996 contract to conduct a feasibility study for the Coast Guard’s Base Support Unit. The study is intended to identify any data gaps and offer solutions to the metals contamination in sediment associated with historical activities at the marine railway. The work is scheduled to begin this fall.

Projects completed

Fort Wainwright Aviation Task Force Phase I Airfield Perimeter Fence—The district held the final inspection and achieved beneficial occupancy date on this FY2010 project Aug. 20.

Fort Wainwright Aviation Task Force Phase I Troop Equipment Maintenance Facility/Vehicle Maintenance Facility—The district held the final inspection and achieved beneficial occupancy date on this FY2010 project Aug. 16.

Upcoming events

- Sept. 15** Hispanic Heritage Month begins
- Sept. 21** Pan Dulce Sale
- Sept. 27** Breakfast Burrito Sale
- Sept. 28** Salsa Recipe Contest
- Oct. 3** Year-End Celebration (Headquarters)
- Oct. 4** Welcome Home Ceremony
- Oct. 6** Year-End Celebration (Northern Area Office)
- Oct. 11** Quarterly Awards Ceremony
- Oct. 15** Hispanic Heritage Month ends
- Oct. 24** Renaming of 2nd Street for B.B. Talley

JBER Elmendorf Construct F-22 Munitions Load Crew Training Facility—The district held the final inspection and achieved beneficial occupancy date on this FY2010 project Aug. 5.

The project constructed a facility consisting of an aircraft bay, offices, training classrooms and restrooms. This facility provides space to train crews in techniques and procedures for loading weapons. It is the last F-22 facility constructed on the Fighter Town East Campus.

Fort Wainwright Child Development Center—The district achieved beneficial occupancy date of this FY2008 project Aug. 8. The project constructed a 195 capacity school age services center for children 6-12 years old.

Deployments

Iraq—Sheldon Longnecker

Afghanistan—Warren Colburn, Leanna Dagley, Lt. Col. Matthew Dooley, Capt. Daniel Fox, Scott Haan, John Keys, Patricia Lora, John Mitzel, Heather Moncrief, David Purdy, Carmon Roy, Gary Weiler, Jim Wolfe

Returned—Roger Green, Sterlin Hill

Farewell



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Bill Goodwin, Engineering Division information technology specialist, receives a certificate of retirement from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, during a ceremony in the headquarters building Aug. 30. Goodwin departed with 21 years of federal service, 10 of those with the Alaska District.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Christy Everett, Fairbanks Regulatory Field Office supervisor, receives the Superior Civilian Service Award from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, at district headquarters June 23 upon her retirement with 21 years of federal service.

Timeout: Strategies aim to improve task management

By Curt Biberdorf
Public Affairs Office

Improving time management starts by prioritizing tasks into three categories: essential, important and nice-to-have.

Time management was the topic at the Family Readiness Group's "Third Thursday" session presented by the Military and Family Life Consultants at district headquarters Aug. 19.

Susan Niman, licensed counselor with the MFLC at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, said everyone views time management differently, but there are some common ways to improve.

She divided activities into three categories.

Essential are the critical tasks that must be done. Important are the tasks that contribute to improved performance but don't have immediate deadlines. Nice-to-do can be postponed and scheduled during less busy periods or eliminated. These activities can be anything from exercising first thing in the morning to reading before going to sleep.

"Do I need to worry about Aunt Ethel visiting in three months? Do I

need to think about cleaning the house for company arriving next week? No, but it's taking up space in my mind," Niman said.

Using lists, charts, tables or calendars all can provide reassurance and help determine what's essential or important. People should always try to tackle the hardest daily task at peak energy, Niman said.

"Understand your energy, rhythm. Have the hardest conversation, do hardest project, then you can do the rest of the tasks easier," she said.

Some people claim to be able to do multiple tasks at once, but she discourages it.

With children in the household, regular schedules are helpful for time management, and even adults find routines comforting.

Three pages of the seven-page handout Niman provided dealt with using leisure time well.

"When you feed your muse, you are taking care of body and spirit," she said. "It is essential. Leisure impacts us hugely. Work, relationships and health suffer without leisure."

Work, misguided fun and negative influences are considered distractions

to personal growth. Some people think doing things for themselves is unimportant, but it makes time management so much easier, Niman said.

Military and Family Life Consultants is a Department of Defense-sponsored program started in 2006 that gives service members, family members and civilian employees who work for the military access to free nonmedical, situational problem-solving, educational and counseling service by licensed counselors.

The advisors serve individuals, couples, families and groups. They can meet with clients at most places, including at work in the district.

The confidential service allows up to 12 sessions per topic. Counselors remain at an installation from one to six months and don't use e-mail in client communication to help protect confidentiality.

MFLC presentations are scheduled from noon to 1 p.m. in the Talley Room. Upcoming topics are working in teams, relaxation and stress relief, how to cope with winter blues, avoiding and stopping gossip, and conflict resolution.

ACEing it

(From left) Dave Spence, Lt. Col. Bobby Stone, Herschel Deaton and Sabeano Vasquez of the ACES prepare to tee off at the first hole during the 2011 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District Golf Tournament Aug. 26 at Eagle Glen Golf Course on JBER-Elmendorf. The team earned first place with a score of 51. Thirty-two teams played in the competition. Fish and Feds took second and Medical Hacker was third.

Meanwhile, Rodney P. Kinney Associates Inc. won the 2011 Corps of Engineers League trophy by finishing the season with 114.5 points. RPKA beat 13 other teams for the championship.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Accolades



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents a certificate of promotion to Maj. Jesse Anderson, project engineer in the Northern Area Office, at the Chena Project Office Aug. 9.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Capt. Daniel Fox, project manager in the Environmental and Special Programs Division, receives the Army Commendation Medal from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, at district headquarters Aug. 29 for his service in the Humanitarian Assistance Program from December 2009 to August 2011. Joining Fox at the presentation is his wife, Amanda, and daughter, Ella.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents the Army Engineer Association's Bronze Order of the de Fleury Medal to Dave Frenier, chief of the Engineering Division, during a ceremony at the headquarters building on June 23. Frenier was honored for his superior leadership, service and contributions to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over the course of his career. After retiring from the active-duty Army with 24 years as a commissioned officer, Frenier joined the Alaska District in July 2000. From there, he worked in a series of challenging roles and achieved stellar results in each. In June 2011, Frenier was promoted from chief of the Military Technical Engineering Branch to his current position.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Pat Richardson, public affairs specialist in the Public Affairs Office, is recognized by Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, at district headquarters June 23 for taking second place in the feature writing category for a publication/magazine/supplement for general or specialized publication in the 2011 Alaska Professional Communicators communications contest. Her story on the permafrost tunnel was published in the district's Arctic Engineer magazine.

Accolades



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents the Commander's Award for Civilian Service to Allen Churchill, Operations and Maintenance chief, Aug. 9 at the Chena Project Office for work during the past two years in budgeting for projects providing critical navigation, flood risk management, environmental stewardship and recreation.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents the Commander's Award for Civilian Service to David Gerland, Construction Operations Division deputy chief, Aug. 9 at the Chena Project Office for his service from December 2007 to March 2011 as the Fort Greely resident engineer and Denali resident engineer.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents the Commander's Award for Civilian Service to John Schaake, Chena Project manager, Aug. 9 in the Chena Project Office reception area for leading the Chena Project Office staff through many accomplishments during the past three years. They include the planning, design and construction of the new project office, his support to the Corps dam safety screening portfolio and risk analysis safety team, and the rapport he has fostered with the North Pole and Fairbanks North Star Borough communities in protecting them from flooding by the Chena River.



Courtesy photo

Roger Green, resident engineer in the Northern Area Office who served as a resident engineer in Jalalabad from Nov. 15, 2008, to July 31, 2011, accepts a farewell photo from Col. Christopher Martin, Afghanistan Engineer District-North commander, during an awards ceremony in Afghanistan. He received the Army Superior Civilian Service Award, Global War on Terrorism Civilian Service Department of Defense Medal and NATO Medal for his work overseeing the construction and opening of the Gamberi Afghan National Army facility in eastern Afghanistan.