Southwestern Division

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How Interdependent Teams are Meeting SWD's Goals

Saying Goodbye to Brig. Gen. Thomas Kula

SOUTHWESTERN

DIVISION

PACESETTER

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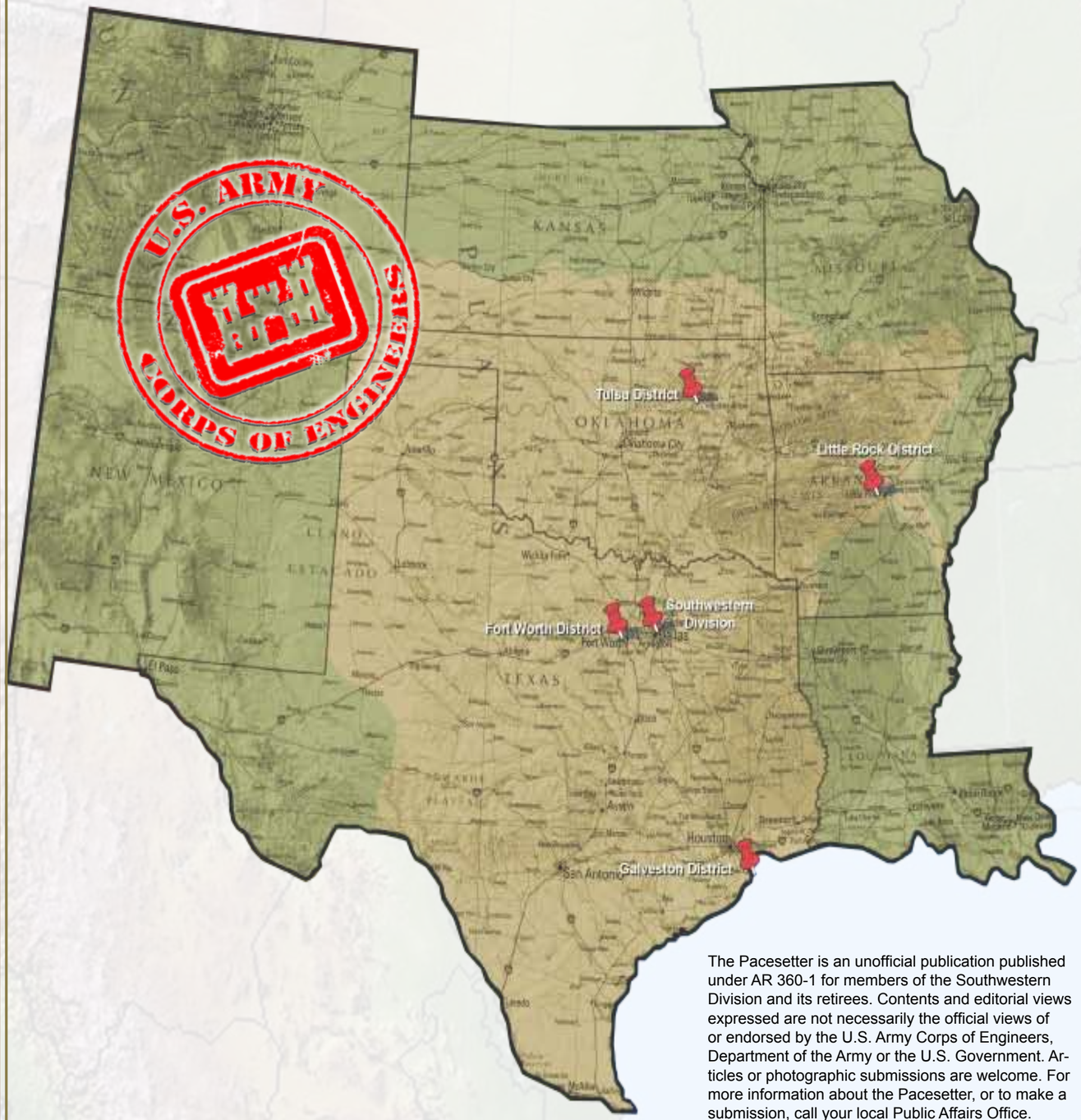

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It's so hard to say goodbye

Brig. Gen. Thomas Kula
Southwestern Division Commander

It's always hard to say goodbye, especially to friends and colleagues when we have been through so much together. Some people might think that it is easier for those of us who have served in the military, since we move frequently. But it is never easy, and definitely not after almost a four-year assignment such as I've had as commander of the Southwestern Division. This Division has been my home for double the time that most commanders have had here, and that means I've had twice the time to get to know you and know the many skills and talents that you all have brought to your jobs within this region, and the passion and commitment that you all have shown for our Army Corps of Engineers and for our Nation.

It is fitting that the focus of this Pacesetter Magazine is our Value to our Partners and Stakeholders. This has always been a priority because "relationships matter." You have seen relationships highlighted in our Regional Priorities, and in our strategic matrix. These have been more than words. Relationships are what turned around the Dallas Floodway project; relationships allowed us to build a stronger partnership for the future of the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System; set the conditions for the rapid progress and development along the Texas coast; and ensured we provided the best for our Warriors at the installations we support. They helped us train together for a better response to hurricanes and disasters. Relationships and partnerships have enabled us to take the campaign for water safety to our citizens, and they helped us work together through both floods and drought.

I know that each of you has been there for our stakeholders, and given your all on the many projects, whether civil works or military programs, for our stakeholders, always bearing in mind that the ultimate stakeholders, the ones we all serve in the end, are the American people. What has set you apart is your devotion to duty that has kept you going through furloughs and government shutdowns, shrinking budgets and changing national priorities. Your dedication to getting the job done, seeing the project through to completion, has been a shining light that has inspired all of us in leadership positions.

As I relinquish command to Colonel R.J. Muraski in April, I do so knowing that I will fondly remember and miss every one of you, but also knowing that I am leaving this Division in the great hands of our regional leadership team of Col. Muraski, Bob Slockbower, and Pete Perez. Moreover, our Districts could not be in better hands. The Districts are where the rubber meets the road, where the projects are executed, and where the maxim of "relationships matter" is put to the test most frequently and strenuously.

Thank you for all that you have done for our Districts, our Division, our Corps and our Nation. Those of us who have served in the military know that we never really say goodbye, because we so often see old friends again. So Jeannette and I wish the very best to you until we meet again! We are remaining in Rockwall, TX for our next adventures.

I leave you all with a final comment, something I shared when I first took command, about how I hoped you would look at your time as a Pacesetter. Army Strong, Building Strong! Essayons!

'Now and years from now, we want our people to beam and say that they were proud to be a Pacesetter. That we made a difference, it was a rewarding experience, that we had fun, and it was a great unit!'

Heading into spring with great accomplishments

Col. Richard P. Pannell
Commander, Galveston District

Fellow Coastal Custodians,

February was a busy month with many milestones reached. The district celebrated its 134th birthday, marking more than a century of positive impacts we've had on the Texas coast since the district's founding in 1880. Fittingly, we also celebrated the completion of the La Quinta Channel Deepening Project Feb. 7 and the opening of the $41 million extension. This federal project provides the infrastructure to support development at La Quinta Terminal by allowing the Port of Corpus Christi to develop strategic business partnerships with companies from around the world. Former Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson, Texas Department of Transportation Commissioner Jeff Mosley along with state and local officials were present to celebrate this occasion with us and the port.

"As we move into spring we'll continue to remain focused, working with stakeholders and partners to keep commerce moving along the Texas coast while being responsible stewards of the coast."

We had the opportunity to highlight our engineers during National Engineers Week Feb. 16-22 (E-week), a week-long observance dedicated to promoting the field to ensure a diverse and well-educated future engineering workforce by increasing understanding and awareness of engineering and technology careers. Working diligently to support Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) efforts Tricia Campbell, Franchelle Craft, Brenda Hayden, Kim Townsend and Sheri Willey participated in "Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day" at Ball High School; Paul Cox attended the Career Day at Early Childhood University; Mario Beddingfield represented the district at the annual Prairie View A&M University Spring Career Fair and Angel L. Perez, Terry Bautista, Karl Brown, Terri Carlson and Lawrence Oyelami conducted interviews with Ball High School STEM students to discuss careers in engineering. Additionally, we featured stories of our very own engineers on the district's Facebook and Twitter sites.

On a related note, Franchelle Craft, Eddie Irigoyen and Tosin Sekoni earned the Southwestern Division's first STEM Group Award. They were recognized for outstanding achievement in executing the district's STEM Awareness Program. The innovative program included partnering with nationally-recognized STEM organizations and higher education institutions to help close the performance gap in minority students' educational achievements, encourage students to secure technical jobs of the future and keep our nation on the edge of innovation.

Our Water Safety Program Manager, Kris Brown was also recognized in Dallas with a water safety award for her outstanding contributions in communicating the USACE water safety mission to the public.

As we move into spring we'll continue to remain focused, working with stakeholders and partners to keep commerce moving along the Texas coast while being responsible stewards of the coast. While the challenges remain great, the significance of our contributions to the nation increase every day.

Keep up the great work!

Tulsa 2014 is off to a great start

Col. Richard A. Pratt
Commander, Tulsa District

The Tulsa District kicked off the New Year with a visit from the Chief of Engineers during the first week of January. Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick visited the High Explosive Pressing Facility at the Pantex Plant in Amarillo, Texas, where he met with Department of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration senior leadership and received a tour of the HEPF project. Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers considers HEPF to be a model project for a strategic customer. Michael Hickman, Director, NNSA Enterprise Construction management provided an overview of his vision to transfer the construction of NNSA facilities from the maintenance and operations contractors to USACE, Naval Facilities Engineering Command or in-house project management. The on-going project at the Pantex HEPF demonstrates how a collaborative effort between USACE/NNSA/M&O contractors/construction contractors can work to provide a high quality facility, and further exemplifies the value that the Corps provides to other federal agencies as each agency focuses on how we can best utilize each other's core competencies.

The beginning of spring will be just as exciting as the Southwestern Division will host a Relinquishment of Command Ceremony Friday, April 4, 2014, at which Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Kula, Commander, U.S. Army Engineer Division, Southwestern will relinquish command to Col. Richard J. Muraski, Jr. followed by a retirement ceremony in honor of Kula.

Brig. Gen. Kula has served as the division commander for almost four consecutive years, and has left an indelible mark on the division, as well as the diverse region that hosts the four SWD districts. He has strongly encouraged and endorsed regionalization efforts through several venues in order to encourage the sharing of limited resources and retention of critical technical skills that will be required in the future. His untiring leadership in these endeavors has set the tone as SWD leads USACE in the civil works transformation activities essential for the Corps to remain viable and relevant in the years and decades to come and to continue providing valued services to our civil works, military, and tribal stakeholders.

It is appropriate to celebrate some of the initial victories we have seen in our regionalization efforts. First, the Dam Safety Production Center continues to prove itself as a great divisional asset. The team has addressed several critical infrastructure challenges throughout SWD including the Canton Lake auxiliary spillway project, the Pine Creek rehabilitation, a review of challenges at the Addicks and Barker Dam, as well as the Lewisville Dam. The Canton Post Construction Risk Assessment was presented to the Dam Senior Oversight Group in Galveston, Texas, Jan. 29. The risk assessment was a joint effort between the Tulsa District, Northwestern Division Risk Cadre, and the SWD Dam Safety Production Center throughout FY13 to ensure that the project will fall within tolerable risk guidelines when construction is completed. A decision was made to incorporate remedial repairs along the far left section of the embankment in the final phase of design to address a potential failure mode identified through the risk assessment process. This highlights the benefit of incorporating risk methodology into dam safety projects to ensure public risk is minimized to the greatest extent possible for existing and future dam modifications. An update was also presented on the total project cost and future schedule. A Dam Safety assurance supplement report will be prepared this calendar year to formally document the final project schedule and cost for USACE Headquarters.

The other regionalization efforts include the hydropower and McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System Regional Governance Boards. These initiatives have renewed the interoperability between the Districts and formalizes our efforts to apply best practices and increase the consistency across the division. In the hydropower function, nine product delivery teams were established. The current and forecasted workloads have been developed, as well as determining the hydropower technical competencies required for a potential Hydropower Production Center. The next task is to determine current hydropower expertise within the division and then perform a gap analysis. The hazardous energy, training, staffing, and construction management teams are refining their proposed courses of action as presented at the initial Regional Hydropower Governance Board meeting. The contracting, supervisory control and data acquisition, and O&M practices matrix teams are currently formulating their initial proposals, as well. The team has really moved out on these two endeavors, and I am extremely pleased with the energy that our team has dedicated to this initiative.

The major regionalization enterprise impacting the Tulsa District is the completion of the Regional Planning and Environmental Center. Thirty-four of Tulsa District's employees have been reassigned to the Fort Worth District, but continue to work virtually from their desks in Tulsa. This reorganization masses the planning and environmental resources in our region, giving us increased capacity to perform critical work and meet our commitments while providing more opportunity for our employees to increase their technical competency and improve potential career progression.

It is great to finally be on the downside of winter, where the recent snow and ice storms were a little more prevalent this year than the recent past. As we get ready for the upcoming warmer weather, we begin our preparations for an increase in our recreation mission. With lots of tree damage left by the harsh winter weather, this is no easy task.

We also continue to respond to challenges associated with the low-levels of precipitation and the impacts the drought conditions play in the southwestern sector of the district. Unusually dry conditions have greatly impacted the Red River inflows, resulting in low-lake levels at Lakes Waurika and Texoma, while, further north, Canton and Skiatook continue to be in drought status. Using our drought management plans, we have actions at each lake to minimize drought impacts and be proactive in our communications with other agencies and the public.

Col. Richard Pratt and John Roberts, Deputy of Program Management provided Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin with the current Tulsa District reservoir conditions as a result of Oklahoma's existing drought conditions Feb. 17, 2014, at the Oklahoma State Capitol. Also in attendance were Ms. Deby Snodgrass (Oklahoma Secretary of Tourism), Mr. Jim Reese (Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture), Mr. Mike Teague (Oklahoma Secretary of Energy and Environment), Mr. J.D. Strong (Oklahoma Water Resources Board), Mr. Richard Hatcher (Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation), and Mr. Chris Turner (Director for Southwestern Power Administration). Topics discussed included Lake Texoma's hydropower operations, pool elevations, current situation, concerns and the way ahead, as well as the current conditions at Waurika, Skiatook, and Canton Lakes. It was an extremely valuable engagement and positive engagement that Governor Fallin and her staff greatly appreciated. Governor Fallin stressed the need to continue to communicate with the public. We will continue to keep open and transparent lines of communication with the States of Oklahoma and Texas, congressional offices, our partners, stakeholders, customers and the public on the existing drought conditions within the Tulsa District.

Tulsa District and the Tulsa SAME post hosted the FY14 Meet-the-Corps Day on Feb. 12, 2014, at the Owasso Campus of the Tulsa Technical Center. Oklahoma Lt. Gov. Todd Lamb and Col. Pratt welcomed nearly 300 participants from 25 states. Following a district overview brief, participants were able to speak face-to-face with John Roberts, DPM and Col. Pratt, in addition to 20 SWT staff members from Program Management, Engineering and Construction, Contracting, Operations, Safety, and Small Business offices. This one-day event was conducted at no cost to the district and raised more than $20 thousand for the SAME post's scholarship obligations. Overall, it was an incredible event that Tulsa District plans on replicating in the future.

Tulsa District Natural Resource/Park Rangers participated in their annual required training workshop Feb. 11-12, 2014, with sessions held at the Tulsa District Office and the Broken Arrow National Guard Armory facility. Subjects presented included annual personal protection and pepper spray usage updates, use of a revamped Real Estate tracking system, environmental conditions reporting, visitation/operations and maintenance business information link data collection, and reporting and safety concerns.

We will certainly miss Brig. Gen. Kula and wish him well in his future endeavors. We have irreversible momentum in the many initiatives that will enable us to continue to provide valued services to the region. Our regional team is strong, and Col. Muraski will continue the charge to make us the Corps PACESETTERS.

Regional, interdependent teams are the way of the future

Col. Charles Klinge
Commander, Fort Worth District

Team Fort Worth – There are many characteristics and practices that make the Fort Worth District one of the best in USACE.

As a key entity within the Department of Defense and Army, we continue to evolve and reshape our organization and mission to deliver value to our customers, key stakeholders and partners.

As the numerous projects we acquired under the Base Realignment and Closure Act near completion, our district leadership has recognized that in order to obtain new projects we must protect future customer needs and reshape our district to fill those needs.

While the Fort Worth District has always utilized the 'team' concept for project work and delivery, that mission was heightened after BRAC with the formulation of regionally interdependent teams better positioned to deliver on-time and even more excellent projects to our customers.

The Regional Planning and Environmental Center, the Standardization and Sustainability Branch and the Regional Energy Center of Expertise, illustrate how this regional, interdependent team concept is already being successfully used. Over the next several months, specific members of those successful teams and their roles will be highlighted.

The RPEC formally stood-up the second week of February 2014 with 105 SWF employees located in Fort Worth, Tulsa, and Galveston. Their primary mission is to serve the regional planning and environmental needs of the Southwestern Division and the Nation by building and enhancing planner capability, producing quality planning products, and ultimately executing the region's planning mission efficiently and effectively in accordance with the goals and processes of USACE's ongoing planning transformation.

The RPEC will achieve this through use of fully integrated Project Development Teams and close coordination with SWF and SWD leadership. Our metric for success will be the delivery of planning efforts on time and on budget with increased efficiency at the division level.

A second SWF mission that is successfully utilizing the regional interdependent team concept is the continued work of our new Standardization and Sustainability Branch.

The Fort Worth SSB stood up in 2006 in support of a USACE initiative to identify efficiencies and processes to meet challenges of the largest 'footprint' change in the Army since 1942. USACE instituted a process called Military Construction Transformation and established eight centers of standardization nationwide within USACE to accomplish it.

Fort Worth District is responsible for the standardization of 12 facility types to include basic training complexes, central issue warehouses, and unaccompanied enlisted housing. This transformation is the project delivery process the Army is using to provide quality, adaptable and sustainable facilities in less time and at a lower cost.

Central to being able to achieve this is the standardization of processes and facilities as well as the adoption of private sector best practices. The SSB has fully embraced this process transformation and is on the glide path to exceed the standard needed for mission success.

Finally, Fort Worth District serves as the Regional Energy Center of Expertise for SWD. This mission directly supports our MILCON program with our military customers by providing them with tools to help meet the Army's mandates for sustainable design and overall energy reduction in Army facilities, thus saving DoD money in the long run. This will be one of our key business lines in the future as BRAC funds are exhausted and large scale MILCON projects reduced for the foreseeable future.

Our energy mission is a shining example of value we provide to our military customers and to the Nation. We are providing and promoting realistic sustainable and renewable energy solutions to meet Federal mandates and customer goals by using in-house district/division tools while simultaneously leveraging industry resources.

While the new missions I briefly highlighted may seem distant from what many of you do in your positions, they are actually directly related to every member of team Fort Worth.

They exemplify that we are transforming with the rest of the Army, we are relevant and will continue to be a value to the Nation for many years ahead. We have found the need and are filling it!

"Our metric for success will be the delivery of planning efforts on time and on budget with increased efficiency at the division level."

"The SSB has fully embraced this process transformation and is on the glide path to exceed the standard needed for mission success."

BUILDING STRONG collaborative partnership communities

Col. Courtney W. Paul
Commander, Little Rock District

Conflict prevention is an important goal for every organization, but in every business conflict is inevitable, especially when you're talking about managing water resources. One way to ensure conflict is constructive rather than destructive is to build relationships with our stakeholders before we meet them in a courtroom or on opposite sides of a congressional conference room.

The Little Rock District manages nearly 750,000 acres of public lands and water to include 12 reservoirs, 13 navigation locks and dams, seven hydroelectric power plants and 308-miles of navigation channel surrounded by the beautiful Ozark Mountains and productive Delta Region.

With this type of infrastructure and landscape it's inevitable that there will be competing interest in how to use the water and resources. People above the dams want water for recreation, increased real estate values, drinking water and so on. It's the same downstream and then some; like the trout fisheries created by the cold water releases from deep beneath the reservoir and farming in the flatlands that occasionally flood creating the rich soil, which feeds the growing rice and soybean demands for our country and world.

"As the engineers of our infrastructure it's our job to bring these stakeholders to the table so we know who they are and they know us."

The lists of competing uses for our resources go on and on creating an extensive community of stakeholders that have to lobby for every drop. It is imperative that the Little Rock District get out in front and meet our stakeholders on every platform to build the valuable relationships necessary to operate our infrastructure in concert with all their competing needs in mind.

As the engineers of our infrastructure it's our job to bring these stakeholders to the table so we know who they are and they know us. This is how strong relationships are built and how big picture ideas and large projects become realities.

Take the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System 12-Foot Channel Study for example. For years the navigation industry pitched the economic impact of a deeper navigation channel to anyone who would listen and lobby for their cause. The increase in depth would result in shipper savings of more than $43 million annually all while decreasing commodities transported by rail and truck, thus decreasing pollutants and damage to the country's highway and rail systems.

It wasn't until the towing industry sat down with a recreational boating community and explained to them why the 12-foot channel was their top priority and how it could help them both. As the story goes the phones and e-mail accounts of the Arkansas Waterways Commission and congressional offices were bombarded with questions and demands. At that time a partnership was born that would secure legislation for the 12-Foot Channel. Although complete funding hasn't been secured for the project, the two groups are still working together towards a common goal that will benefit both parties financially.

With communication technology advancing rapidly our stakeholders are finding common grounds together and it's our job to make sure we're facilitating the majority of discussions. Not because we want to control them, it's because we want our ideas to morph with their thoughts and become realities. If we don't work together the processes can get drawn out longer than necessary because we're not working together towards common goals.

"With communication technology advancing rapidly our stakeholders are finding common grounds together and it's our job to make sure we're facilitating the majority of discussions."

One of the most effective force multipliers we have in our communications toolbox is social media. In an attempt to cover as many of our stakeholders needs the Little Rock District has adopted seven social media platforms from Smartphone apps to Flickr and Facebook.

We built a Smartphone app that caters to dock owners, fishermen, paddlers and navigators. We use Facebook to send out news releases and stories from the district that targets our recreation and water safety audiences. Twitter is used to throw out quick ideas and facts that can be shared in under 140 characters that normally hit the news gathering and real-estate types while About.me serves as a landing page for all of our platforms.

One of the tools I personally like to use and engage our stakeholders with is LinkedIn. Several months ago, I created the MKARNS Business Cluster to meet as many of the river system's stakeholders as possible. This is a place where anyone interested can have their voice heard and have their comments engaged by me and other stakeholders.

If you're interested in this 445-mile inland waterway system originating at the Tulsa Port of Catoosa and running southeast through Oklahoma and Arkansas to the Mississippi River please consider joining the group: http://goo.gl/cuGXjx

I believe it's one of our responsibilities as good stewards of the government to create an open avenue for any of you to engage us daily. I cannot stress how important is for this world-renowned engineering organization that's funded by tax-payer dollars to share our challenges and successes with everyone who has a stake in our projects.

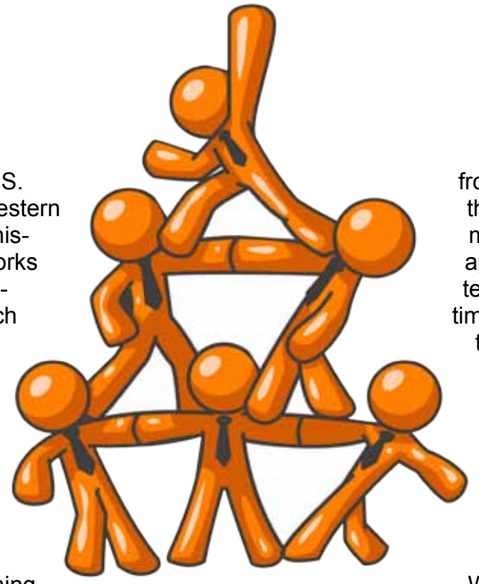
You can find all of our social media and web address here: http://about.me/usacelittlerock

With all that being said I truly hope that if you have an interest at stake with the Little Rock District that you will engage me and my staff with your needs. It is our goal to partner with you with an eye towards future successes. Our goals need to align with yours to ensure our visions are alike and both our needs are met.

Teaming up for long term success

How interdependent teams are building a stronger SWD

by LaDonna Davis



Over the last 10 years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Southwestern Division successfully executed a historic program across their Civil Works and Military Missions portfolio. Today, Military Construction is a much smaller part of the program; and while the numbers of Civil Works projects remain about the same, the overall program budgets have consistently been reduced. This shift in workload and budgets presented SWD with a regional challenge to continue its track record of delivering high quality products,while sustaining technical capability across four SWD Districts.

To deal with this uneven distribution of workload and technical capability, the SWD Regional Management Board implemented several initiatives that enables SWD to meet customer needs through the full utilization of interdependent project delivery teams.

"The RMB looked at projects, work load, and completion schedules with the districts to identify current impediments and come up with a better solution," said Ray Russo, SWD chief of civil works and integration. "One of the main focus areas was our Civil Works Planning studies. The RMB found that with the uncertainty of funding at the District level, we weren't able to always deliver quality products as scheduled. Our solution was implementing a regional interdependence solution to ensure we have the ability to adequately resource our project development teams."

"No longer do we have everything in one place," said Brian Kamisato, SWD chief of military programs. "The size of our program and workforce is driving us to be interdependent. We must bring the right expertise to bear on our projects, no matter where that expertise sits."

Project managers can draw team members from various regional centers throughout SWD that will match the people with the appropriate technical competencies to deliver projects on time, within budget and with the quality that customers and stakeholders come to expect from the Corps.

"Each team should be seamless and transparent to partners with the districts owning the projects, but with a regional cadre," said Russo. With the new regional centers, communication and transparency are vital. The regional leadership continues to engage SWD customers and stakeholders at all levels to build trust-based relationships and shape our regional capabilities to match the needs of our stakeholders. Recently, SWD conducted a series of Civil Works visioning sessions with their customers and stakeholders to help build and strengthen new and existing relationships and discuss priorities.

As part of these visioning sessions, SWD focused on determining the value that our projects/systems provide to our customers and how projects impact investment decisions made by our customers. From this, new ways were identified in which SWD could jointly improve their business processes and mission execution in order to sustain the benefits provided by their projects and identify capital investments required to sustain and meet future demands.

"SWD continues to set the pace in adapting to the new reality of reduced workload," said Kamisato. "Through regional interdependence and the development of trust-based relationships, we are positioned to deliver value to the Nation and our region, now and into the future."

The following regional centers are currently operating within the Southwestern Division:

Dam Safety Production Center

Regional Planning and Environmental Center

Regional Vertical Design Center

Regional Energy Center of Expertise

USACE Real Estate Acquisition Production Center

SWD has also established two regional governance boards to operate interdependently for two key parts of our Civil Works program:

Regional Hydropower Governance Board

McClellan Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System Governance

Standing up the Regional Planning and Environmental Center

by Jim Frisinger
Fort Worth District Public Affairs

For a couple years Emily Seidel, a program manager, has worked the environmental cleanup program at Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant in Texarkana, Texas. Still does.

Her supervisor, Dave Bowersock, was just around the corner in the Fort Worth District office.

In February she got a new boss, Scottie Fiehler, who works from the Tulsa District -- 300 miles away.

All three are part of a major restructuring that created a new unit, the Regional Planning and Environmental Center, whose director, Eric Verwers, works near Seidel back in Fort Worth.

RPEC joins together 105 employees across three different districts: Tulsa, Galveston and Fort Worth. There are branch or section chiefs in each district, even though everyone is now a Fort Worth District employee. This is what this virtual organization, officially launched Feb. 9, looks like.

RPEC supports a wide variety of USACE military and local sponsor missions. These include cleaning up formerly used defense sites, managing flood risk, restoring ecosystems and supporting new navigation projects. RPEC technical and study managers lead economic, environmental and planning components required to support civil works projects. They prepare National Environmental Policy Act or feasibility study documents for such projects as the Dallas Floodway, the Sabine Pass to Galveston Bay coastal flood risk management, and Brazos Island Harbor navigation near Brownsville, Texas.

The driving force behind it all? To improve product delivery to USACE customers while maintaining core competencies of the planning and environmental staff.

But why the change now?

Because the battlefield changed.

"In general, the government is tightening its belt," said Verwers. "The Civil Works and Military Programs are declining."

Under Civil Works Transformation, there is a pressure to streamline processes to deliver quality products to customers -- and do so in less time.

"You can't have these robust organizations unless they have meaningful work or else they are going to reduce in size," said Verwers. That, in turn, is a threat to the districts' core competencies -- disciplines and abilities in the environmental and planning fields. So discussion on how to respond began more than two years ago.

A lot is at stake

"The potential for future funding of our regional projects are highly dependent on our ability to demonstrate success in these challenging times," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Kula, Commander Southwestern Division, in an email to all division staff last month. "RPEC is an absolutely critical component of gaining the trust and confidence needed for the Corps to remain a valued partner in the planning and development of the future water resource infrastructure needs of the Nation."

Regional collaboration happening elsewhere in USACE, but breaking with tradition isn't easy. RPEC functions have typically been organized inside districts strictly along military or civil works product lines. Under RPEC, they straddle district borders and coalesce around common competencies – putting military planning tougher with civil works planning, said Southwestern Division Director of Programs Robert Slockbower.

Jake Walsdorf, a planning lead, at Sims Bayou tree contract project in Houston. He is in the Plan Formulation Section, Planning Branch, Regional Planning and Environmental Center. (USACE photo)

"This provides the flexibility for us to be able to use people's skills in multiple ways instead of just putting themselves in one narrow funnel," said Slockbower. It helps managers adapt to the ebb and flow of demand within each district by providing work opportunities, in a disciplined way, throughout the entire region.

Building a new structure

"To the best of my knowledge, this has never been done by the Corps – a deliberate blending of the reimbursable military and civil works all into one organization," said Kevin DaVee, chief of the RPEC Environmental Technical Services Branch in Fort Worth. "This is a complete paradigm change for everybody. Their whole career they lived in districts where the mission work area was defined by geography."

The mechanics of the launch have been a handful for many – and given heartburn to some.

"We put a lot of time into planning it, but like everything, there's always something you didn't plan for," said Ken Kebbell, who is Military and Interagency Environmental Branch chief based in Tulsa. "We got through it. Everybody's getting a paycheck."

In Tulsa, all the new RPEC members had to switch labor from an M5 to an M2 org code, since they became Fort Worth District employees. Then there were changes to a different database, CEFMS and P2. Lack of face time is an issue, with supervisors being so far away. From Tulsa's viewpoint, their staff in Fort Worth is essentially teleworking five days a week. While Fort Worth has been used to teleworking, Tulsa has not. Tulsa managers plan to start making regular trips to Fort Worth.

Many employees are also dealing with what Seidel calls a "blended chain of command" – where Fort Worth people tend to communicating with people nearby – not necessarily up the chain.

"If I need to get something signed, and it gets stuck in someone's email box, I'll get it signed here," she said. People still stop by DaVee's office daily with questions because they were used to doing so.

"I still answer those questions, I can point them in the right direction, but I have to remind them about reality. I'm not in their chain of command anymore," said DaVee.

One of DaVee's new responsibilities is to anticipate and plan for keeping adequate technical resources to support the full range of environmental services required by the region.

"That means I have to worry about everything from archaeologists to ordinance and munitions guys. We've got environmental engineers, NEPA specialists, biologists, chemists, geologists, geophysicists. It's a long list," he said.

Slockbower said this is one of RPEC benefits: building a community that works more closely together instead of a pickup team gathered together for a project. RPEC can provide a focused structure for staff to collaborate, nurture, train and develop valuable capabilities to meet the needs of the future.

"In developing talent, it needs to be in a way that each and every one of our members gets value for themselves -- and the pleasure both of doing the work and serving our country," said Slockbower.

"One of the things we have to get used to is viewing all of this not as Tulsa or Fort Worth work but as RPEC work," said Kebbell, whose environmental branch joined Tulsa and Fort Worth projects that serve not just the Army and Air Force but also U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Defense Logistics Agency.

Kebbell tells customers that combining the Fort Worth and Tulsa District military reimbursable programs, under a single management, will deliver more resources and expertise into solving their problems and supporting their programs. Their reaction so far has been positive.

In the end, "it's not about us," said Slockbower. "It's about delivering value to our customers and being relevant to our customers moving forward. That's the driver behind every decision we make moving forward with the RPEC."

Galveston District celebrates completion of La Quinta Channel Extension dredging project

by Galveston District Public Affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District celebrated the Port Corpus Christi's completion of the La Quinta Channel Extension Project Feb. 7, 2014, in Portland, Texas, with partners and stakeholders.

The Corps approved funding for the construction contracts in 2011 as part of the 2011 work plan for the Army Civil Works program. The cost-shared project for navigation and ecosystem restoration, was part of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel – Channel Improvement Project authorized by Section 1001(40) of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007.

"This project allowed us to partner with the Port of Corpus Christi, improve the existing channel system and deliver a project that promotes vital economic activities for the nation," said Col. Richard Pannell, USACE Galveston District commander. "This was a team effort. Collaboration with the Interagency Coordination Team allowed us to maximize environmental restoration opportunities while minimizing environment impacts. Anytime we work in close partnership with our federal, state and local resource agencies, we end up delivering the best value for the taxpayer."

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District and Southwestern Division leadership joined officials from the Port of Corpus Christi, including former U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, to celebrate the completion of the La Quinta Channel Deepening Project. (Photo by Galveston District)

As the primary economic engine of the Coastal Bend, Port Corpus Christi is the 5th largest port in the nation in total tonnage and is strategically located on the western Gulf of Mexico, providing quick access to the Gulf and the entire nation's inland waterway system.

The project included extending the La Quinta Ship Channel approximately 1.4 miles to a depth of 41 feet (Mean Low Tide); constructing an ecosystem restoration feature and creating a breakwater and shallow water habitat beneficial use site.

According to port officials, extending the La Quinta Ship Channel will enhance the economy of the region by providing deep channel access to the Port's La Quinta Gateway project and will provide support to the development at La Quinta Terminal as well as the voestalpine Texas Holding's HBI production plant, TPCO American Corp. Steel Pipe mill in Gregory, Texas, Cheniere Energy's proposed gas processing plant and the Gulf Compress Cotton Storage Facility.

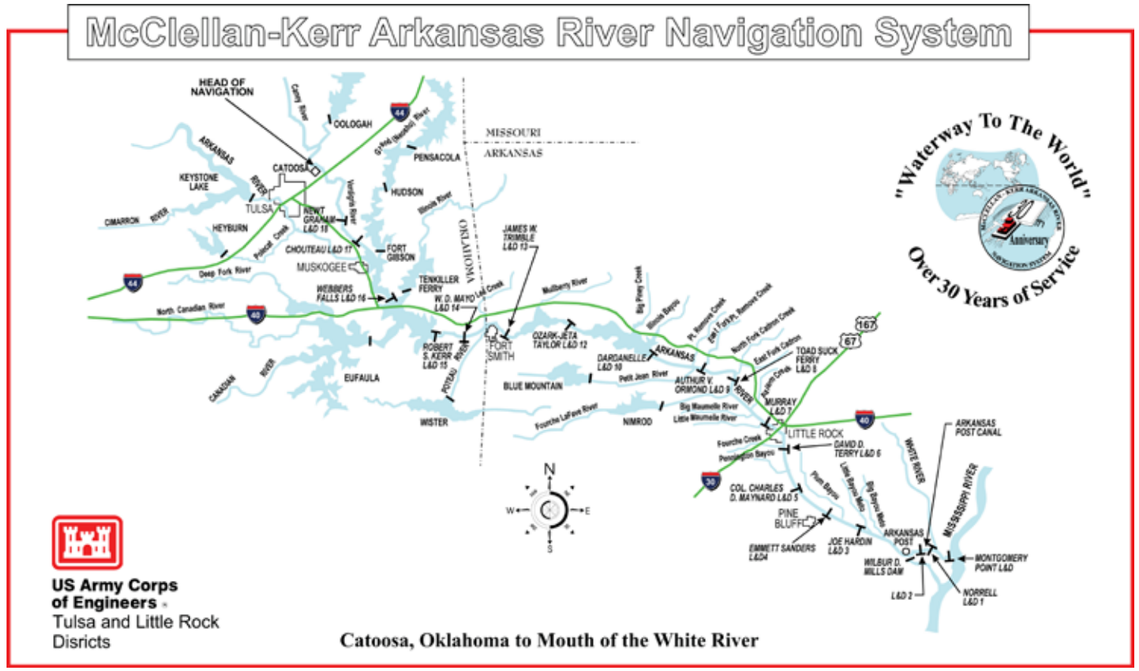
Project Manager Sharon Tirpak, USACE Galveston District, notes that the ecosystem restoration component constructed near Ingleside-on-Bay, Texas, consists of an offshore rock breakwater and shore protection to protect and enhance approximately 45 acres of seagrass habitat. The improvements also included the construction of approximately 200 acres of shallow water habitat created by the beneficial use of dredged material.

"We coordinated with our partners including the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife to manage resources and dredging activities in a sustainable manner, one in which would leave the smallest footprint behind," said Tirpak.

The $41 million construction contracts for extension and ecosystem restoration projects were awarded in 2011 to King Fisher Marine Service LP and LECON Inc.

"As we continue to develop strategic business partnerships with companies from around the world, the completion of the dredging of the La Quinta Channel extension marks a step forward in providing the infrastructure needed to support the port's diversification of cargo efforts." said Judy Hawley, Port Corpus Christi commission chair.

The district is directly responsible for maintaining more than 1,000 miles of channel, including 270 miles of deep draft and 750 miles of shallow draft as well as the Colorado River Locks and Brazos River Floodgates. Partnering with federal and non-governmental agencies, staff provides quality planning, design and construction services that benefit 28 ports handling more than 500 million tons of commerce annually. District projects and programs work to keep waterways open for navigation and commerce and oversees the maintenance of three of the top 10 U.S. leading ports (in millions of short tons) that contribute to regional and national economic development.



A map of The McClellan-Kerr Arkansas Navigation System (USACE graphic)

Who and what is the Board of Governance?

By Jay Townsend, Little Rock District Public Affairs

Within U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Southwestern Division a board of governance for the 445-mile McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System has been established to corporately manage the system.

Historically, the two districts responsible for operation and maintenance of the system, Little Rock and Tulsa, have done very well in teaming up to establish priorities and execute work that is critical to maintaining a reliable system.

In times of flat or decreasing budgets and increasing needs for maintenance and repair, the Corps must ensure the system is managed to be as effective and efficient as possible, that strategic plans are in place, and that stakeholders are active participants in the planning and communication of system activities.

"We're basically doing everything we can to maximize the federal investment," said MKARNS Program Manager John Balgavy. "We're looking for better ways to streamline our processes and polices across the board to ensure we're working efficiently and applying as much of our funding to maintenance as possible."

The board developed the following objective to give stakeholders a better idea of the regional partnership's goals.

"The goal of the MKARNS Board of Governance is to transform the outstanding working relationships of the "Northern Alliance" into a structured, disciplined MKARNS Regional Governance Board that performs as one entity to make the MKARNS reliable, resilient and relevant and promote growth for future generations."

"One thing to note about that statement," said Balgavy "Is that Little Rock and Tulsa wrote it together and then modified it after a meeting with several stakeholders."

The stakeholders added the words "promote growth for future generations."

The board consists of the commander, deputy district engineer for project management, and chief of Operations Division from each of the two districts; the chief of Operations and Regulatory Division from Southwestern Division; and the MKARNS program manager. The district commanders co-chair the board with the Little Rock commander assigned as the executive director.

Pantex:

A success story

by Ross Adkins,
Tulsa District Public Affairs

The Tulsa District has an enviable history of providing value to its partners and stakeholders. One recent example that illustrates the districts efforts to provide those virtues to its partners was a visit from the USACE Commander, Lt. Gen. Bostick, to a project nearing completion at the Department of Energy's Pantex facility located near Amarillo, Texas.

After his tour, Bostick was interviewed by local Amarillo newspaper reporter Jim McBride. McBride wrote, "A top general on Tuesday toured the Pantex Plant's new high-explosives pressing facility and said the massive construction project could serve as a model for other cost-cutting projects."

In January of 2013, Bostick had heard of the work at Pantex and requested a detailed evaluation of the project to capture lessons learned. In his interview, Bostick told the reporter, "You can see (the project has) been a very collaborative process. I have been informed and read about the teamwork, but it's good to see it firsthand on the ground."

The Corps is performing the work for the National Nuclear Security Administration who took over operations of the Pantex plant in 2000 for the Department of Energy.

Crews are putting the final touches to the High Explosive Production Facility complex on Department of Energy's plant near Amarillo. The project is expected to provide a consolidation of several buildings on the plant grounds for higher efficiency and safety. (Photo courtesy of Sydney Brainard)

The project, when completed, consolidates several activities that are currently scattered around the plant grounds for the National Nuclear Security Administration. Although non-nuclear, the facilities deal with high explosive materials and required complex planning, citing, design, and construction in a highly secure area. The contract for this 43,250 square foot High Explosive Pressing Facility was awarded to Kiewit Construction for $65 million and will be turned over with only a two percent cost growth and a zero percent time growth.

Dan Johnson, Tulsa District's Area Engineer said, "Our relationship and partnering with National Nuclear Security Administration and other contractors have made the difference. We all went into this project in 2011 with the mutual goals of improving cost and time growth on this project, and the willingness to listen to each other. And it paid off. We'll be turning over the facilities to them in May of this year." Johnson also pointed out that despite the complexities of the project and based on their efforts and successes Kiewit Construction won the District's Eagle Eye Safety Award for 2012.

A good example of how Tulsa District has become added value to our partners at Pantex comes from Terry Zimmerman, Pantex Site Assistant Manager for Environmental and Site Engineering. In the 2013 customer survey he wrote, "We have excellent working relationships with USACE on a very unique complex High Explosive Production Facility Construction Project. USACE interfaces well with National Nuclear Security Administration and the Managing and Operating Contractor. This project is the construction model for projects across complex."

Mark Dixson, a supervisory electrical engineer with the Little Rock District, explains his specialty to a group of Cub Scouts at a science, technology, engineering and mathematics event in Bryant, Ark. Dixson showed the Scouts how to produce an electrical circuit with a battery. (Photo by Don Balch)

District volunteers plant STEM seeds

by Kent Cummins
Little Rock District Public Affairs

Several employees with the Army Corps of Engineers Little Rock District volunteered their weekend time and expertise to plant seeds.

These weren't run of the mill seeds.

In November, Mike Biggs, Daniel Smith, Mark Dixson, and Keith Cook planted seeds of knowledge in the minds of 28 local Cub Scouts with hope of harvesting an interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in the future.

The volunteers participated in a scout STEM event at the First United Methodist Church of Bryant, Ark., which helped the scouts earn merit badges.

The district's Real Estate Division Chief Don Balch, who is also a local Cub Scout Master, organized the event. He reached out to his district teammates and his efforts ensured the Scouts learned about a variety of subjects including geology, forestry, environmental science, electrical and civil engineering, as well as communication skills.

Biggs, chief of the Reservoir Control Section, talked to the Scouts about civil engineering. He presented a special bridge kit demonstration to afford them an awareness and appreciation about the importance of structural integrity and failure, as well as other aspects of engineering.

"As a Boy Scout growing up, I had a great Scouting experience partially because the leaders of my troop were Georgia Pacific engineers and foresters who shared their knowledge and experience with our troop," said Biggs. "My Scouting experience helped me prepare for college and influenced my decision to become an engineer. My participation in the STEM program is my way of paying those positive influences forward."

The geologist of the group, Smith, who was also a Scout in his younger days, taught the Cub Scouts about the Earth's surface and subsurface. He brought along numerous samples of local and regional rocks for hands-on instruction.

"It felt good to have the opportunity to give back to the Scouts and teach them about geology," said Smith, who is also the district's Dam Safety Program manager. "I think it is very important for children to learn about geology and other sciences."

Smith said the STEM-related activities allow children the chance to learn how geology and science impact their daily lives.

"They were able to interact with a professional geologist and ask questions, which may be their only opportunity to do so," he added. "They gained a deeper appreciation for science as a whole."

Dixson, a supervisory electrical engineer, explained his specialty to the Scouts and let them experiment with producing an electrical circuit with a battery.

"I have worked with the Boy and Cub Scouts for more than 20 years," said Dixson. "I believe I get more enjoyment out of teaching them, than what the scouts get by learning about electrical engineering."

Dixon's volunteerism brought back memories about who inspired him to become an electrical engineer…his high school physics teacher.

"I love being able to help these young men learn about engineering and hope I can inspire them in some way to study engineering and science," he said. "It is very important that we train our next generation to fill the numerous engineering jobs that will be vacant with the retirement of the baby boomers. We need scientists and engineers to maintain our existing infrastructure and to develop new technologies that will be more energy efficient and earth friendly."

As the district's forester, Cook passed along his knowledge about natural resources, environmental science and conservation to the Scouts. He described to the eager learners "how everything in the ecosystem tends to show amazing design and purpose."

"I enjoy passing on a few things to the next generation that are meaningful to me, and most kids do enjoy learning, as long as you keep it interesting, give them some hands-on opportunities," said Cook.

The forester believes it is important for children to understand the big picture when it comes to natural resource management.

"If they can see how all the parts best work together as a unified whole, they start to sense a need to take more ownership and to manage from a wise-stewardship perspective," he said. "For instance, showing them how an out-of-control wildfire can cause damage to both us and the forest, but how prescribed burning and timber thinning benefit wildlife habitat and forest health at the same time, while producing tangible products for human use."

"Our country used to pursue these things (STEM) much more zealously than it does today, and was consequently a greater leader in new discovery and innovation," said Cook. "I'd like to hope the STEM program can help our kids catch the wonder of the world we've been given, and help them point us toward that greater leadership role again."

The seeds of knowledge planted in the young Scouts by these district volunteers may help the Corps and country in the future by taking root and growing into STEM careers.

Tulsa engineers help judge Cookie Games

It's Girl Scout Cookie time, and while they are delicious to eat, what to do with the empty boxes? Build something of course! Girl Scouts competed in the 2014 Girl Scout Cookie Games Cookie Construction competition Jan. 25 in Tulsa and Tulsa District Engineers Michelle Lay and Allison Shoopman mentored the scouts and judged the competition as part of our STEM outreach program. Troop members 4th grade and up were required to build something out of cookie boxes with a 2014 Winter Olympics theme. Competitors submitted designs prior to construction and several teams used computer modeling software for their designs. Looks like there are definitely some budding engineers among Tulsa-area Girl Scouts!

Photos by Tulsa Dstrict Public Affairs

Congressman Veasey and Brig. Gen. Thomas Kula inspire local Dallas middle school students

by LaDonna Davis
SWD Public Affairs

Congressman Marc Veasey, TX-33, and Brig. Gen, Thomas Kula, commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Southwestern Division, visited Hector P. Garcia Middle School students, Feb. 21, to engage, motivate and inspire youth to pursue a field in science, technology, engineering and math.

"It was such an honor to work with the wonderful students at the Hector P. Garcia Middle School," said Kula, "Our Nation needs degreed engineers, scientists, technicians and mathematicians. By interacting with these young students and explaining the importance of STEM, hopefully we have encouraged them to pursue degrees and careers in those fields of study. It's never too early to spark a child's interest in STEM!"

Nearly 500 sixth, seventh and eighth grade students participated in the assembly where Veasey and Kula emphasized America's need for more graduates with degrees in STEM fields. Students were then given the chance to participate in an activity focusing on various ways to insulate hot water with everyday materials such as cotton and straw. The activity taught students the importance of science when designing and building efficiently.

"I am proud to partner with the Army Corps of Engineers to showcase the myriad of career opportunities for our youth that derives from the STEM curriculum," said Congressman Veasey. "A hands on experience with STEM encourages our youth that jobs in the STEM fields are fun and can be the key to reaching their dreams."

Congressional representative Mark Veasey and Southwestern Division Commander Brig. Gen. Thomas Kula speak to students from the Hector P. Garcia Middle School about the the importance of pursuing an education and degree in the science, technology, engineering and math fields. (Photo by LaDonna Davis)

Students from Hector P. Garcia Middle School take part in a science experiment as part of a science, technology, engineering and math presentation by Southwestern Division Commander, Brig. Gen. Thomas Kula and Representative Mark Veasey. (Photo by LaDonna Davis)

Building a more energy efficient Corps

by Randy Cephus

Fort Worth District Public Affairs

As we construct new buildings, modern technologies are being implemented that make these structures very energy efficient. But what about those older structures that have been around for a while? How do we make them more efficient? No problem, just call the team at the Forth Worth District, Corps of Engineers office for Energy Audits and Assessments.

"We have come up with a program that helps our customers learn the state of their energy consumption in the older buildings," said Chevron Blond, regional energy manager. "We then make recommendations on ways to improve energy use and lower consumption so they can become more energy efficient."

According to Blond, the district has been involved with energy sustainment for years. However, those sustainment initiatives focused on new construction, where the innovations were easily incorporated into the design of the various structures.

The challenge is to look at the older structures to find substandard areas, and then provide renovation alternatives that will meet or exceed the high performance sustainable building requirements.

"In these older buildings we conduct a building audit so we can find out if the building is leaking," said Blond. "We want to see if doors and windows are hung in such a manner that causes high energy loss. We also look at the current lighting situation to see if they are using current technology as well as look for equipment such as outdated boilers and chillers."

As with many situations, there is also the human factor. The assessment team attempts to account for this variable as well. They look at the operational behavior of the work force and assess whether or not building occupants are energy conscience.

Finally the team looks at historical energy usage. They develop graphs depicting trends such as high and low energy use over the course of an extended period of time. This is similar to what one receives with a statement from a private energy provider at a home residence.

"We define success as meeting the customer's needs," added Blond. "If we can provide a thorough assessment with viable recommendations and then the customer acts on these and achieves real savings we have accomplished our mission."

"Currently, we are working with two customers, The Marine Corps Reserve, where we are assessing 32 facilities and Customs and Boarder Security, where we are reviewing 18 facilities," Blond said.

The major challenges that face the team are logistics, maintaining a rigid schedule and keeping the lines of communication flowing, according to Blond. The leaders work hard to get team members to and from the various installations with the proper equipment while maintaining constant communications on the progress and status of the projects.

"I communicate constantly with the teams for status updates and coordinate logistics of each site visit," said Chelsey Click, energy project coordinator. "It's also important for me to communicate with our customers to ensure we meet their needs."

The team consists of members of the Fort Worth and Buffalo District, along with a private Architect and Engineering firm, broken down into four to five member sections. The sections usually are comprised of a mechanical, electrical and civil engineer and an architect.

"We trained everyone during the first assessment so that everyone knows the standard," asserts Blond.

A key figure to the whole operation is Bruce McMillan, the district's energy subject matter expert, who provides guidance and oversight on all technical matters.

"The team has not completed a project yet, but we've completed some of the assessments and now we're focusing on the reports," Blond said. "We are currently approximately 60% complete with the boarder protection project and 30% complete with the Marine Corps Reserve project."

Chevron Blond, regional energy manager and Chelsey Click, energy project coordinator, review historical power usage for the Marine Corps Reserve Energy Audits and Assessments project.

At the end of their current projects, the team will compile a "Lessons Learned" to capture best practices when it comes to issues like how to create and use certain forms, carry out their methodologies and how to conduct training.

Blond and the rest of the team then hope to leverage the lessons learned into a thorough and efficient process as they go about their business of making older building and structures more energy efficient.

USACE partners give scary looking fish another chance

by Clay Church

Fort Worth District Public Affairs

“That's a scary looking thing,” said Anita Branch, senior geotechnical engineer with the Dam Safety Production Center in Tulsa, Okla., after viewing pictures in an article about reintroducing paddlefish into the Big Cypress Bayou Watershed upstream of Caddo Lake. It’s known as the only natural formed major lake in Texas even though it straddles the Texas-Louisiana state line and has a dam controlled by USACE’s Vicksburg District in Mississippi.

A member of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prepares to release a paddlefish into Caddo Lake, March 5. Forty-Seven paddle fish were released into the watershed as part of a demonstration program designed to show increased diversity to help meet the environment flow criteria and ecological needs of the downstream floodplain and river system between Lake O’ the Pines and Caddo Lake. (USACE photo)

Forty-seven paddlefish were released on a cold afternoon in early March. The plyodon spathula are a threatened species in Texas. The releases are part of a study and project that are a result of more than a decade of Corps of Engineers co-funded work efforts in the watershed with the City of Jefferson as the non-federal sponsor.

“Roughly 1,800 linear feet of in-stream gravel bars were placed in the Big Cypress Bayou below Lake O’ the Pines as part of the Big Cypress Bayou Fish and Wildlife Habitat Restoration Section 1135 project,” said Senior Environmental Planner with the Fort Worth District Marcia Hackett. “The project seeks to restore spawning and nursery habitat for multiple aquatic species, including the paddlefish, which had been lost to the river system as the result of the construction and impoundment of Lake O’ the Pines.”

Hackett said early science, research, data collection, and modeling efforts undertaken as part of the Cypress Bayou Cross Sections Planning Assistance to States study led to development of a set of environmental flow criteria for the watershed that were ultimately submitted to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for approval as part of Senate Bill 3 environmental flows legislation.

“The paddlefish experiment is part of a larger five-year project with the Corps and the Northeast Texas Municipal Water District to provide increased diversity to how water is released from Lake O’ the Pines to help meet the e-flow criteria and ecological needs of the downstream floodplain and river system,” said Hackett.

Caddo Lake Institute President Richard Lowerre said it is a big deal to have land owners like Bob Sanders and others to let us on their land. “We are realizing that with increasing competition for water resources, we need to understand how these water systems work to determine how we can make the best use of what we have,” said Lowerre.

The fish were common in Big Cypress Bayou and Caddo Lake until the mid-1900s according to a brochure produced by the Caddo Lake Institute. The brochure explains that each two-to three-foot long fish will have an implanted radio transmitter. Radio signals will be unique, tracked by towers placed along the watershed.

The Paddlefish Project is important to the ecology of Caddo Lake and Big Cypress Bayou and can be a boon to the region’s tourism economy. An educational component will include teacher professional development, middle and high school student activities and curricula, and adult volunteer opportunities. Schools, scout troops, and other groups will be invited to adopt and

Reef material is staged at the jobsite in preparation for the construction of the $1.3 million Half Moon Reef project to restore 12 acres of sub-tidal reef and habitat located within the northernmost extent of the Half Moon Reef in Matagorda Bay, Texas – one of the largest restoration projects around the country.

Half Moon Reef construction completed

by Galveston District Public Affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District will complete construction of the $1.3 million Half Moon Reef project in April to restore 12 acres of sub-tidal reef and habitat located within the northernmost extent of the Half Moon Reef in Matagorda Bay, Texas – one of the largest restoration projects around the country.

The cost-share project is the second segment of a larger 60-acre reef restoration project led by The Nature Conservancy to restore one of the largest oyster reefs in the Gulf of Mexico. The total cost of the project is estimated to be around $5 million, with the remaining funding provided by the Texas General Land Office.

"This is the first design-build ecosystem restoration project of this kind in the Galveston District,” said Byron Williams, a project manager with the USACE Galveston District. "We used 3,900 cubic yards of recycled concrete consisting of various sizes of boulders and placed them in a specific pattern to encourage the reef to grow vertically and to try to replicate a real reef.”

The Galveston District oversees the 367-mile Texas coastline and often partners with agencies such as The Nature Conservancy in Texas and the GLO on construction projects to implement components that strike a balance between ecosystem preservation while serving the industries that fuel commerce.

According to Mark Dumesnil, associate director of coastal restoration for The Nature Conservancy in Texas, experts anticipate that Half Moon Reef will provide ecosystem benefits within months of completion of the new habitat for oysters and other key marine life. Additional expectations include the reefs serving as a natural barrier to protect the shoreline from storms, decreasing erosion and helping to protect coastal communities from tropical storms.

"When you have healthy oyster reefs, you have excellent habitat for small fish and other reef-dependent species, reliable food for bigger fish and water filtration,” said Dumesnil. “All of that leads to healthier commercial and recreational fisheries, a first line of defense against storms and hurricanes, cleaner water and a more resilient ecosystem overall."

In addition to its partnership with The Nature Conservancy in Texas, the district worked with the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Coast Guard, Natural Resource Conservation Service and state entities including the Office of the Governor, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas General Land Office, Texas Railroad Commission, Texas State Historical Preservation Office, Texas Soil and Water Conservation Board and the Galveston Bay National Estuaries Program.

Williams says the project is a great example of partnering among agencies to achieve a common goal and added that the site will be monitored for a minimum of five years to determine when the reef becomes self-sustainable.

“We believe that sustainability may be achieved as early as 12 months,” said Williams. “We’d like to see the underwater oyster colony flourish and once again become a perfect habitat for one of the most productive fisheries for blue crabs, oysters and shrimp in Texas.”

Fort Worth Deputy Commander gets promoted to Lieutenant Colonel

by Randy Cephus, SWF Public Affairs

(from top left), Brig. Gen. Thomas Kula (right), commander of the Southwestern Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, provides remarks during the Feb. 28 promotion ceremony as Lt. Col. W. Neil Craig looks on. Lt. Col. W. Neil Craig III pledges the oath of office during his promotion ceremony in Fort Worth, Texas. Brig. Gen. Thomas Kula (left), Lt. Col. W. Neil Craig (center), and Col. Charles Klinge, commander of the Fort Worth District, pose after the completion of Col. Craig's promotion ceremony. (Fort Worth District photos)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District deputy commander, William N. Craig, III was recently promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel during a Feb. 28 ceremony at Sundance Square.

A crowd of approximately 100 people witnessed the promotion of the Fort Worth District deputy on a mild and sunny Friday morning where the Southwestern Division Commander, Brig. Gen. Thomas Kula pinned the new rank to Craig's left shoulder, while Craig's wife pinned it to the right.

Sundance Square, the centerpiece of downtown Fort Worth, complete with a mural depicting a herd of cattle as well as changing waterfalls and cascades provided a fitting venue for the ceremony. Many passers-by stopped and witnessed the event, where men in uniform stood tall during the formal ceremonial proceeding.

Craig is a native of Lufkin, Texas, and 1997 graduate of Texas A&M University, where he earned a Bachelor's in Mechanical Engineering. He also holds a Masters in Construction Management from North Carolina State University and is a licensed Professional Engineer through the state of North Carolina.

"This is a momentous day in the lives of the Craig's as it was a team effort that resulted in this promotion," said Fort Worth District Commander, Charles Klinge. "Spouses play a significant role in the careers of our Soldiers. They are there through the many relocations, deployments and conflicts; keeping the family connected."

The Fort Worth deputy has over 16 years of service with mostly combat units. However, from 2007 to 2009, Craig served as a project engineer with Savannah District. There, he managed projects worth approximately $50 million that supported the unique training needs of airborne and special operations forces.

"I wouldn't be standing here today if it weren't for some very special people that I had the fortune to be surrounded by during my career," said Craig. "I thank all my non-commissioned officers, peers that I worked with as well as my leaders who coached and mentored me along the way. Lastly, I want to thank my wife and family for the undaunted support you provide."

Craig has been with the Fort Worth District for six months and with his promotion, has been selected for battalion command.

James McKinnie (USACE photo)

McKinnie named SWL 2014 Engineer of the Year

by Little Rock District Public Affairs

James McKinnie earned the Little Rock District's Engineer of the Year honors for 2014 for his exceptional work as chief of Navigation and Maintenance.

His leadership resulted in the first-ever regional McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System strategic maintenance plan. During the year, McKinnie also served as the mechanical and electrical section chief for the Engineering and Construction Division; a navigation section chief in the Operations Division; and as the district's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics coordinator.

Throughout 2014, McKinnie's reputation flourished as a technical expert and leader in the local community, district and the region because of his civic involvement, wide-ranging knowledge and skills.

McKinnie and his team provided traditional maintenance engineering support to the district's project offices, as well as asset management and budget development for the district's navigation and flood risk management business lines.

Before joining to the Corps, McKinnie worked at NASA's Johnson Space Center where he was involved in the design and operation of life support systems for the International Space Station. He also served with the 314th Civil Engineer Squadron at Little Rock Air Force Base as a mechanical engineer, chief of contracts, and chief of the Engineering Flight.

McKinnie earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering at Texas A&M University in 1990. He is a registered professional engineer in the state of Arkansas.

Galveston selects deputy district engineer for programs and project management

by Galveston District Public Affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District announced the selection of Dr. Edmond Russo Jr., as its new deputy district engineer for programs and project management – the highest attainable civilian position in the district.

"I'm honored to serve this district and provide leadership that will take delivery of our products and services to the next level of performance for our partners, customers and stakeholders," said Russo. "This district has a rich history of working with partners to manage resources in a sustainable manner along the Texas coast and I look forward to being part of this effort."

A 21-year veteran of the Corps, Russo succeeds Pete Perez, who was inducted into the Senior Executive Service during a ceremony in Washington, D.C., Jan. 30, and will join the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Southwestern Division as the director, regional business directorate.

In his new position, Russo will oversee concept to delivery of projects and services in an area spanning 50,000 square miles of the Texas coast from Louisiana to Mexico, encompassing 16 congressional districts (valued at approximately $350 million) to sustain navigation economics that are vital to the nation, while managing coastal risk reduction, ecosystem restoration, regulatory functions, emergency operations, military construction and international and interagency services mission areas.

"He is already working with the Galveston team to understand the district, the priorities and the challenges," said Col. Richard Pannell, USACE Galveston District commander. "Edmond has fantastic credentials and will be able to pick up right where Pete left off as our deputy for Programs and Project Management. We look forward to him joining the team and I know he will continue to serve this organization well in his new role."

Russo previously served as chief, Ecosystem Evaluation and Engineering Division in the Environmental Laboratory of the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC), in Vicksburg, Miss., from June 2009 to January 2014. In this role, he supervised and managed product and service delivery to develop and deliver innovative solutions that address complex, high priority Corps dredging problems.

From 2005 to 2009, Russo held the position of chief, Coastal Engineering Branch, Navigation Division, ERDC Coastal and Hydraulics Laboratory. There he supervised and managed a branch of research scientists and engineers, in coastal, navigation, and dredging engineering research and development for provision of sponsored technical support in water resources project

Edmond Russo (USACE photo)

planning and execution.

Previous to this position, Russo performed engineering and management activities on coastal navigation and ecosystem restoration projects and studies at the USACE New Orleans District from 1992 to 2005.

A native of New Orleans, he graduated from Louisiana State University in 1990 with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. He earned a Master of Science in Civil Engineering with a geotechnical engineering emphasis from University of New Orleans in1997. From 2002 to 2005, he completed doctoral course work at Tulane University. Following the closure of Tulane University after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Russo transferred his doctoral studies to Louisiana State University and completed a Doctor of Philosophy in Civil Engineering with a coastal engineering emphasis in 2009.

A licensed Professional Engineer in Louisiana and is a board-certified Diplomate in Coastal Engineering and Navigation Engineering of the American Society of Civil Engineers, he is a 1999 graduate of the Army Management Staff College. Additionally, he serves as vice chair and secretary of the Environmental Commission, Permanent International Association of Navigation Congresses, which supports international development and distribution of technical information on contemporary topics for sustainable navigation infrastructure management practice.

With its rich heritage in Texas history, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District plays a key role in America's well-being by keeping waterways open for navigation and commerce and serves the nation as part of the world's largest public engineering, design and construction management agency.

A Monument Man

by Ralph Allen & Jay Townsend

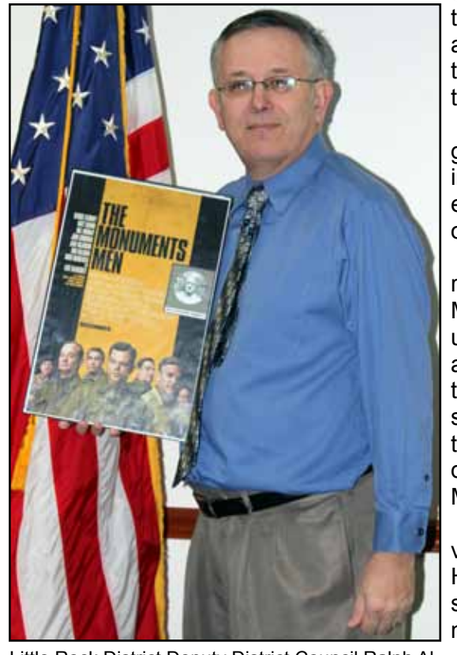
Little Rock District

When Deputy Council Ralph Allen from the Little Rock District Corps of Engineers was 13-years-old his grandfather took him on a tour through Europe explaining what the United States and Allies endured during World War II. What Allen didn't know as boy is that his grandfather was a Monuments Man charged with preserving the history and architecture of the war torn country during the world's darkest hours. The recent release of George Clooney's new film "Monuments Men," has propelled Allen and his family to research the legacy of their beloved grandfather.

"If I could take a tour of Europe with my grandfather knowing what I do now… man… It would be totally different and I'd have hundreds of questions," said Allen, who is a collector and self- proclaimed history buff.

So when George Clooney's new film "The Monument Men" started advertising the release of the movie, members of Allen's family started looking more into the past of their relative's life as a real Monument Man.

While Allen's grandfather, Ralph Hammett, does not appear to be portrayed in the film, it chronicles the work of about 185 Monuments Men who fought to protect historical and cultural artifacts during World War II.



Little Rock District Deputy District Council Ralph Allen stands with a movie poster for "The Monuments Men," a current film about the dangerous job his grandfather, Ralph W. Hammett, held during World War II. (Photo by Little Rock District)

Hammett became a Monument's Man in his late 40s after taking unpaid leave from the University of Michigan from 1943-1945 to serve in the Army. He used his education and experience as an architect to help identify and save significant buildings in northwest Europe.

Prior to the release of "The Monuments Men" a member of the Allen family discovered Hammett's military notebook and diary earlier this month.

"It's so fascinating to see the similarities and accuracies in the movie by comparison to my grandfather's journal," said Allen. "Watching the film was so amazing for me and my family, it was almost like we had a little more time to sit and listen to my grandfather."

Hammett's papers document the set- up and assignments for Monument Officers after D-Day as the Allies spread across France and Europe. Hammett lists what officers were Monument Men and what units they were assigned to assist.

Hammett wrote about the procedures and what Monuments Men do when they discover lost, looted or damaged artwork and architecture. At the same time he added personal touches of what they saw and who they met in the newly liberated areas.

"It's crazy to think that my granddad was a part of saving history and was at several events that shaped the outcome of the war," said Allen.

After the war, Hammett returned to The University of Michigan and remained there until 1965. He continued to work as an architect and wrote Architecture in the United States, a survey of architectural styles in the United States, in 1976. He died in June 1984 in Rochester, Minn.

Ralph W. Hammett is survived by his daughter, Dorothy Hammett Allen and his grandson and namesake, Ralph Hammett Allen.

Allen cherishes and keeps many of his grandfather's collections and history interests.

In the few days that Monuments Men has been in theaters Allen has uncovered several misplaced stories from his grandfather's life, but rediscovered the monumental man that he truly was.

Information for this article and more information about Ralph W. Hammett and the Monument Men can be found on the Internet at:

1. http://www.monumentman.org/about-ralph-warner-hammett/
2. http://learyjournalism.wordpress.com/2014/02/04/ralph-w-hammett-ann-arbors-monuments-man-full-article/

SWD Deputy Counsel honored with Corps of Engineers Public Service Award

by Martie Cenkci

SWD Public Affairs

Deputy Southwestern Division Counsel Walter J. Skierski, Jr., was recently honored with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers 2013 Bert Pettinato Award for Public Service. Skierski, who has been an attorney with the Corps of Engineers for eight years in addition to serving as a judge advocate in the U.S. Air Force for 22 years, was selected for his leadership, concern for people, and his devotion of his entire career to the calling of public service. The Corps' Chief Counsel presents the award annually to an individual within the Corps of Engineers legal services community who demonstrates pride in public service through such leadership, concern for people, and a personal belief that government service is a noble calling and a public trust.

"Walt exemplifies the traits that this award is built upon," said Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Kula, Southwestern Division commander. "Through 30 years of service to this nation, both in the uniform of the U. S. Air Force and as a civilian Army employee, he has shown a commitment to the ideals that support this award, as well as outstanding legal expertise and leadership."

Most recently, Skierski provided outstanding leadership while serving as the Acting Division Counsel for the Southwestern Division from Nov. 30, 2012 to March 10, 2013. He led the office through significant issues, including a period of sequestration and planning for the possibility of civilian employee furloughs.

His position at SWD also includes the role of Counsel to the Corps' Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting-Dallas (PARC-DAL). In that position, and as the Acting Division Counsel, he provided legal advice on numerous contracting and policy issues, including the litigation on a contract that repaired damaged Iraqi Oil Infrastructure and provided fuel for the Iraqis (Project RIO). He also was involved in protests to issuance of contracts for the Division's MILCON (military construction) Program, and has responded to numerous audits and Congressional inquiries. He handled claims and litigation, and provided legal advice on issues associated with the new Centers of Standardization approach to real estate and planning. Prior to coming to SWD, Skierski was an Assistant District Counsel at the Corps' Fort Worth District.

Southwestern Division Deputy Counsel Walter J. Skierski, Jr., stands next to the Corps of Engineers 2013 Bert Pettinato Award for Public Service. (Photo by LaDonna Davis)

Nancye L. Bethurem, SWD Division Counsel, said, "Walt's leadership has been responsible for guiding the office through a period of transition that was replete with major issues requiring skilled and professional handling. His success led to the success of the entire office of counsel program for the Division."

While on active duty with the U.S. Air Force, Skierski served as a base-level assistant Staff Judge Advocate, deputy Staff Judge Advocate, and Staff Judge Advocate; a Numbered Air Force chief of Military Justice and as the Air Force's s chief, Legal Assistance, while assigned to Headquarters U.S. Air Force, the Pentagon. He deployed as a Staff Judge Advocate for Operations DESERT SHIELD/STORM and UPHOLD DEMOCRACY. His final assignment was as the Commander, Air Force ROTC Detachment 410, and Professor of Aerospace Studies at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn. He retired at the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Skierski is a native of Wilkes-Barre, Penn., and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from King's College, a Master of Strategic Studies from the Air War College, and a JD from the Temple University School of Law. He is licensed to practice law before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, and the United States Supreme Court.

Craft awarded SAME RVP Medal

by Galveston District Public Affairs

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District Civil Engineer Franchelle Craft was recognized with the Society of American Military Engineers' Regional Vice President's Medal, Jan. 15, during the Houston-Galveston Post's Public Agency of the Year Banquet for her outstanding service to the society.

SAME's Regional Vice President's Medal is presented to individuals who demonstrate consistent and outstanding service to SAME. The award is typically presented annually to only one individual in a SAME post as a way of recognizing their service and contributions to the society.

"I would like to thank the Houston/Galveston Post of the Society of American Military Engineers for this recognition for my work with the STEM program," said Craft. "I am truly grateful for this award and I hope that I can continue to inspire youth to pursue the engineering/ technical fields."

Craft earned a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering from Prairie View A&M University in 2006 and a master's degree in Engineering Management from Missouri Science and Technology University in 2012. As part of her volunteer efforts within the USACE Galveston District, Franchelle has spent the last seven years sharing her passion of math and science with students, helping and encouraging them to pursue STEM-related career fields, dedicating more than 500 hours to help close the performance gap in underrepresented students' STEM educational achievements.

"The SAME Houston-Galveston Post is pleased to award Franchelle the SAME Regional Vice President's Medal," said 2013-2014 SAME Post President Ramon Herrera. "Through her hard work and dedication, Ms. Craft has excelled in supporting the society's mission of promoting K-12 and STEM programs. Her work with middle and high school students will no doubt have a positive impact on students who are considering careers in STEM fields of study and her work with the USACE Galveston District's STEM Program has raised the bar for the Houston-Galveston Post and continues to "Build the Bench" for the future."

According to Craft's supervisor, Ralph Steiner, she oversees a variety of engineering projects, operation and maintenance construction contracts, that vary in size and scope up to several million dollars.

"Franchelle is a talented engineer and a capable leader who leverages her engineering and leadership experience to guide young students considering an engineering profession by serving as the STEM Awareness Program liaison for the Galveston District," said Steiner.

A native of Houston, she is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, Chi Epsilon Civil Engineering Honor Society and has been a member of the SAME for four years. In addition to this recognition, Craft will be honored at the 28th BEYA STEM Global Competitiveness Conference, Feb. 6, 2014, in Washington, D.C., with a 2014 BEYA STEM Conference, Science Spectrum Trailblazer Award for her efforts in STEM.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District Civil Engineer Franchelle Craft was recognized with the Society of American Military Engineers' Regional Vice President's Medal Jan. 16 during the Houston-Galveston Post's Public Agency of the Year Banquet for her outstanding service to the society. (USACE photo)

Galveston District:
Dwayne Johnson

by Galveston District Public Affairs

Q: Discuss your role at the Corps. As a senior regulatory project manager I have been involved in complex environmental decisions, various legal actions, and scientific testing and reports.

A: What do you enjoy most about working on your particular project(s)/tasks? Managing projects to their completion, seeing those projects implemented and the resulting public benefits.

Q: What do you like about your current job?

A: I would say, the connections with people that we make every day. By working with engineers, environmental consultants/attorneys, and the general public, I have built personal and professional relationships that continue to this day.

Q: What's the most interesting thing you've encountered or who's the most interesting person you've worked with during your tenure at the Corps?

A: I have met many different folks that make the Corps family. I met the most interesting people during TDYs, emergency deployment and public speaking events.

Q: What's your most memorable moment working with the Corps?

A: There are so many. I guess the one that sticks out is a field visit to the Port Arthur area.

Dwayne Johnson

While hiking down a steep berm in my rubber boots on a rainy day I slipped and fell on my back landing right next to a curled up water moccasin just 2 feet away. I shot up fast and avoided that area. Now I wear boots with good traction!

BioStats

Current Title/Position: Biologist--Regulatory Project Manager
How long have you held this position?: Approximately 20 Years
Number of Years with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: 22 Years
Number of Years with the Galveston District: 22 Years.

Q: Why did you choose this field?

A: My love for anything outdoors (esp. aquatic and terrestrial plants) lead me to becoming a biologist.

Q: How do you feel your work is making a difference in the district?

A: My involvement during outreach and educational opportunities has provided a "face" to the Corps for the public. It has made a positive difference in how public perceives our organization.

Tulsa District:
Chris T. Baker

by Jamie Wilson

STEM Volunteer, Tulsa District

Q: What do you do as an Economist?

A: Right now, I've been working with levy safety. So we have levy screening at the district level, rate the levy on how it will perform for a flood and come up with consequences that would happen if the levy breached. In general, what we do as economists are benefit calculations such as for a levy or a dam to show how much of a benefit they are to their surroundings and the project.

Q: What do you love about your job?

A: I really love that I get to travel a lot. I was in Sacramento in December and then New Orleans a couple of weeks ago and I'm leaving again for Seattle soon. I love being able to meet all the different people and I also love the national level on which we get to work on projects.

Q: What inspired you to pursue this career?

A: In one of my under-grad classes Ed Rossman [a Tulsa District Social Scientist with the Economics Section], who is my supervisor now had just gone to New Orleans and they were doing research on the populations impacted by Katrina. After the presentation I thought, "Oh my gosh, that was really cool I can't believe someone gets to do that for work." So I went and got his contact information. There was an opening at the Corps and I was offered to come and work with them while I was in Grad school and loved it. I moved into full time about a year ago.

Q: What is your favorite project that you have been involved with?

A: Right now I am currently working on a pilot project were they are working on a public involvement and communication plan for social involvement and communication plan, for reaching out to socially venerable populations in Tulsa. By socially vulnerable I mean low income, language barrier, elderly populations, or people who are more at risk during flooding. We are working to develop a communication strategy increasing awareness with these populations of their flood risk and to help improve evacuation effectiveness for Tulsa. This project is still in its beginning stages but it is very interesting so far.

Chris T. Baker

Q: How did you get where you are today?

A: Through a lot of hard work and a little bit of luck! In high school, I took a lot of advanced placement (AP) classes. Then when I was an under grad, just making sure to to do my best and to work hard. The luck part being Ed Rossman coming and speaking to my class and there being a position open that led me to this. I put in the work and when the opportunity showed itself, I was ready to step up.

Q: Where do you think you would be without the Corp right now?

A: Well I was working at a convenience store as a night manager, so that's probably where I would still be. So, I am much happier here!

Bio Stats

Current Position: Economist
Education: Oklahoma State University
Years with SWT: 3.5
Hobbies: fixing up my new house, attending concerts

Little Rock District:
Darrell L. Montgomery

by Little Rock District Public Affairs

Q: Can you explain what a contract specialist does and how important it is to the Corps and Federal Government?

A: A contract specialist plans and conducts the contracting process from the description of requirements through contract delivery while negotiating agreements through discussion with contractors on the performance terms. The contract specialist serves as a business advisor to the project delivery team. A contract specialist also implements contracting procedures to oversee and monitor contractor compliance with the terms of the contract to determine reasonableness and to negotiate claims and resolve disputes. The contract specialist processes contract modifications and contract closeouts.

Q: What's the most rewarding contract you've ever worked on?

A: The most rewarding contract I worked on was the new Veterans Affairs long term care center in Temple, Texas for veterans in need of such care.

Q: Are you working on anything now that will have major impacts?

A: I served as the contract specialist for the Clearwater Major Rehabilitation Project at Clearwater Lake in Piedmont, Mo. This project provided for the construction of 277 concrete panels of a cutoff wall designed to strengthen the dam and reduce seepage. The wall spans 4,100 feet of the 4225-foot dam and extends as much as 195 feet deep.

Q: You are very active in the community. Can you tell us your roles and responsibilities and why you chose to become a public servant?

A: I chose to be a public servant in an effort to facilitate or create better conditions or improved opportunities for others. A question that I consistently ask myself is "will it matter that Darrell Montgomery ever existed?"

Darrell L. Montgomery

I was elected to serve on the North Little Rock Board of Education in 2006, 2009 and 2012. I currently serve as the Board of Education's disbursing officer which means that all checks issued by the district must bear my signature and the superintendent's.

I also serve on the Pulaski County, Ark. Juvenile Crime Prevention Coalition board. The board examines issues in relation to juvenile crime, recidivism, and other environmental stressors affecting youth within Pulaski County to ensure that these issues are being addressed.

I also work with the Arkansas Stop the Violence Coalition. We bring awareness to the senseless crimes occurring on the streets of Pulaski County and ask city leaders to intervene.

Bio Stats

Position: Contract Specialist
Years with SWL: 5.2
Years of federal service: 12
Hometown: Tucker (Jefferson County, Ark.)
Born in Little Rock
Education: Masters of Public Administration, Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science
South Central Public Health Leadership Institute Graduate, Tulane University
Arkansas Public Health Leadership Institute Graduate, University of Arkansas Medical Sciences

Southwestern Division:
Tony Roberson

by SWD Public Affairs

Q: What are some of the challenges of being the supervisor of IIS and environmental? How do you best overcome them?

One of the biggest challenges of the Environmental and IIS work is identifying each client's requirements and ensuring we provide quality and value on a recurring basis. The missions of our clientele are "unique and complex." Essentially, the work we perform is cost reimbursable and our clients have a choice when it comes to service providers. The primary keys (and in some cases challenges) to success are relationship building, trust and our ability to provide acquisition solutions to assist them in meeting their missions. A large part of our success is forming and building partnerships with the clients and the districts commitment to meeting the client's requirements and metrics. Having the right person with the right skill set in the right position is a critical factor.

Q: How did your career with the Corps start?

After I graduated college, a friend encouraged me to challenge myself, as a result,I applied for a position as a Potable Water Chemist for the Navy Public Works Center, Guam. I did not have high expectations and was actually surprised when I got the call offering me the job (no interview needed). I moved my wife and two young sons over 8,000 miles to a new place. During my time in Guam, I worked in various environmental positions before being selected as the Head, Environmental Services Department in 1999.

We made a decision to return to CONUS and I signed up for the Priority Placement Program. In 2000, I was offered an opportunity to come work for SWD as a PgM forward assigned to EPA Region 6. After, 11 years working at EPA R6, I was promoted to my current position as the Chief, Environmental and IIS Branch in 2012.

Q:Have you always been interested in science? Who inspired you to pursue a career in STEM?

Tony Roberson

Bio Stats

Position title: Supervisory Chemist
Years with SWD: 13 years
Years with the Corps: 13 yrs (10 with NAVFAC)
Education: B.S. in Chemistry, M.S. in Environmental Science
Hobbies: Science fiction, organic gardening, sports

My interest in science really took off in 1966 when the first Star Trek episode was launched. At that time, I watched every episode that I could because I thought it was actually happening. I knew from that point on I was a "trekkie' and destined to be a scientist, just didn't exactly what. I identified more with Mr. Spock, so I guess I can say he influenced me to become a scientist. Ironically, I have been accused at times as acting like Mr. Spock.

Being a chemist gave me a totally different perspective. I could read all of the ingredients in a can of soup and know what it meant. Some people look at license plates and see letters and numbers. When I read the license plate of the car in front of me, I see elements and molecules. I am and will always be a lab rat at heart. I even have a mini laboratory (legal of course) set up in my garage.

Fort Worth District:
Brent Jasper

by Denisha Braxton, Fort Worth District

Q: What is your role at the Fort Worth District?

A: I am a Regulatory Project Manager with my primary role as the Fort Worth District Mitigation Banking Coordinator.

Q: What are some key initiatives that you are working on? Why do you think it is so important to the Corps' mission?

A: As the Mitigation Banking Coordinator for the district, I work with my team members to provide quality aquatic resource compensatory mitigation through mitigation banking. More specifically, lately we have been establishing district mitigation banking guidelines to help ensure more complete mitigation bank submittals while providing more predictability for the banking community. These initiatives are important in meeting the national Regulatory Program goals by improving the timeliness of permit decisions and ensure the most effective aquatic resource compensatory mitigation is available.

Q: What are some of your day-to-day duties at the office?

A: My day-to-day duties include reviewing and evaluating stream and wetland mitigation bank proposals. This seems to require lots of phone calls, tele-conferences, and meetings with mitigation bank sponsors, and state and Federal resource agencies. Mitigation banking has evolved since the 2008 Compensatory Mitigation Rule. Prior to the Rule a review of a mitigation bank proposal was primarily a biological/ecological evaluation. Now it's not only that, but also a review of utility and pipeline easements, real estate instruments, conservation easements, financial proposals, escrow accounts, performance bonds, and casualty insurance policies. As mitigation banking has evolved, so has the mitigation bank project manager. We are now also part real estate specialist, financial planner/economist, and attorney. Thankfully, in the Fort Worth District we have great resources in those areas that we can go to for their expertise.

Brent Jasper

Bio Stats

Position: Regulatory Project Manager
Years with the SWF: 14 years. I worked as a Park Ranger at Navarro Mills Lake from 87-91 (4 yrs). I moved to the District in 2004 (10 yrs).
Hometown: St. Peter, Illinois
Education: B.S. in Forest Resource Management from Southern Illinois University
Hobbies: Predominantly Boy Scouting. I am the Scoutmaster for Troop 11 in Burleson. So obviously I enjoy camping, backpacking, hiking and other outdoor activities.

Q: Tell us about your most rewarding experience, your proudest moment, since joining the Fort Worth District.

A: I don't know if I can really pick a most rewarding experience. Between my time working in Operations with the visitors and youth groups at the lakes, and my time as a regulatory project manager helping restore wetland resources, there have been many great moments. I would have to say my proudest moment professionally was receiving the Don Lawyer Award this year.

Saying farewell to a great leader

On July 2, 2010, Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Kula become the 35th commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Southwestern Division.

During Kula's tenure, the SWD was heralded as a true "Pacesetter" of Civil Works Transformation, which sought to modernize planning, budget, infrastructure strategy, and methods of delivery.

As champion of change within the Division, he led the organization through a cultural and organizational change with passion and resolve, earning him accolades from Congressional Members, local leaders and stakeholders.

In order to balance Federal funding shortfalls, Kula challenged his operations division to hunt for dynamic funding in the form of public-private investment and State-Federal partnership opportunities, maximizing the benefits of the SWDs top priorities.

A result of developing relationships with port directors operating on the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System and state officials from Arkansas and Oklahoma, Kula cultivated a partnership which provided the aging system infrastructure flexibility in maintenance and operations.

Kula also facilitated a State-Federal partnership with the Texas General Land Office, resulting in the funding of a Texas Coastal Storm Risk Management and Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study which will investigate storm damage reduction and ecosystem restoration alternatives along six counties of the upper Texas coast. He also used relationships with the Texas Water Development Board, Oklahoma Water Resources Board and the Kansas Water Office to foster a tri-State alliance for maintaining, planning and developing water resource plans for his region.

Kula's vision and superior leadership have been critical to the execution of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers many complex missions throughout the SWD.

Brig. Gen. Kula through the years

[1] In 2012, Brig. Gen. Thomas Kula, Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, commanding general of USACE, and other SWD leadership visit the newly built San Antonio Medical Center. [2] Brig. Gen. Thomas Kula, left, stands on the sidelines with Col. Bryan Newkirk, deputy commander for FEMA Region 6 during the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl held at Ford Stadium in Dallas, Texas Dec. 30, 2011. [3] Brig. Gen.Thomas Kula, center, and Tulsa District USACE senior leaders and workers stand in the dewatered Chouteau Lock 17 in Chouteau, Okla. August 28, 2012.The Tulsa District team replaced the pintal ball on the gate to the lock's dam, completing the work ahead of schedule and with minimal disruption to navigation traffic along the McClellan-Kerr Navigation System. (Photo by Capt. Ian Minshew). [4] Leadership from the Galveston District and Southwestern Division visited the Port of Harlingen and Brownsville Public Utility Board, in addition to meeting with congressmen Rep. Nick Rahall, Rep. Timothy Bishop, Rep. Gene Green and Rep. Filemon Vela, at the Port of Brownsville. (USACE photos)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[6] In 2011, former Col. Thomas W. Kula makes a brief stop at Hope Park to view the progression of a 604-feet segment of fence in Brownsville where USACE provided real estate, engineering and construction services in support of the Department of Homeland Security's Border Fence Project. [7] During the summer of 2011, Brig. Gen. Kula talks to local news media during a water safety media day at Lewisville Lake. [8] Brig. Gen. Kula addresses attendees at last year's Little Rock District change of command ceremony for Col. Courtney W. Paul. [9] Little Rock District held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Dewey Short Visitor Center located at Table Rock Lake, Branson, Mo., April 27, 2012. The $10.8 million, two-story structure has three functional areas which include a multi-purpose room and wet lab, an educational area and an administrative office area. [10] Sirak Bahta, from the city of Dallas, tells Brig. Gen. Kula about the Pavaho Pump Station, then under construction, in 2012 next to the Dallas Floodway's West Levee in West Dallas. [11] In 2012, Brig. Gen. Kula visits with leadership at Altus Air Force Base, Altul, Okla., after a site tour of the multiple facilities that SWD built for the Air Force. (USACE photos)


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[12] Brig. Gen. Kula toured the destruction after the tornado outbreak in May 2013 in Oklahoma. Here he visits USACE emergency responders at the FEMA JFO in Oklahoma City, June 2013. [13] Brig. Gen. Kula, center, outgoing Tulsa District commander Col. Mike Teague, left, and incoming SWT commander Col. Richard Pratt pose in front of the Great Seal of Oklahoma following the Change of Command ceremony July 15, 2013. [14] Former U.S. Senator, Kay Bailey Hutchison celebrated Brig. Gen. Thomas Kula's retirement, March 19, during a Trinity Commons Luncheon in Dallas yesterday. Under Kula's leadership, SWD is credited for playing an instrumental role in the Trinity River Dallas project. [15] Brig. Gen. Kula participated in the 2012 Veteran's Day Parade held in downtown Dallas on Veteran's Day. Former and current service-members marched in the parade and new recruits from all services raised their right hand as they were sworn in to their new military organization. [16] Brig. Gen. Kula spends some time talking with Project Manager Denis Duke about the mission out at Truscott Lake Red River Chloride Control Project. [17] The Southwestern Division celebrated Take your Sons and Daughters to Work Day at the Division headquarters in Dallas April 25, 2013. More than 20 children ranging in ages from five to 16 participated in fun, educational activities led by Division employees. (USACE photos)

Pacesetter Points

Congratulations

Congratulations to the following Galveston District employees on their achievements: **Franchelle Craft, Eduardo Irigoyen and Tosin Sekoni** were recognized as the SWD STEM Outreach Group of the Quarter. **Simon DeSoto** received the National Water Safety Congress Award of Merit for his efforts to effectively serve as a key USACE spokesperson to communicate critical information about the district's Water Safety Program. **Kris Brown** received a water safety award from Southwestern Division for her outstanding contributions in communicating the USACE water safety mission to the public. **Galveston District Public Affairs** earned * first place Kassner Awards and * Honorable Mention Awards for increasing the publics' understanding of our various missions along the Texas coast.

Congratulations to the following Little Rock District employees: **Randall Townsend** for his honorable mention in the "Community Relations Individual Achievement" category of the Keith L. Ware awards for his Mobile Application and his win in the COMREL category of the USACE Herbert A. Kassner Public Affairs competition. **Dennis Pistole,** Clearwater Project Office, has been selected as the Supervisory Engineer Technician for the Nimrod-Blue Mountain Project Office and **Connie Johnson**, Contracting Division, has been selected as the Administrative Officer for the Nimrod-Blue Mountain Project Office. **Chad Crain**, civil engineer from the Russellville Project Office received a Peer Recognition Award for his outstanding work ethic.

Congratulations to the following Tulsa District employees: **Rick Gardner** selected for 120 day temporary assignment as Chief of Acquisition Branch, Real Estate Division. **Cassie Ramsey** selected as Lead Realty Specialist for Red River Northern Kansas area in the Management and Disposal Branch. Ramsey will also take on Mr. Gardner's duties as Lead Realty Specialist for the Eastern area while he is detailed to the Acquisition Branch. **Courtney Perry** selected as the first Administrative Officer for the SWD Dam Safety Production Center (DSPC). **Daniel Foyil**, selected as Supervisory Procurement Analyst for the Business Operations Branch in Contracting Division

Congratulations to **Martie Cenkci** of the Southwestern Division for her USACE Herbert A. Kassner Competition win in the Commentary category. **Ray Russo** and **Brian Kamisato** were awarded a Superior Civilian Service Award for serving as Acting Regional Business Director in 2013 for six month terms each.

Arrivals

Welcome to Galveston District: **Brooks Anacker, George Dabney (redeployed), Stephen Elder, Dawn Harrison, Keokuk Jones, Alfonso Moreno, Dr. Edmond J. Russo Jr.**

Welcome back to the Southwestern Division **Lynn Ray.**

Departures

Best wishes to the following retired Galveston District employees: **John Barnett, Joyce Gonzales,Robert Howell, John Machol, Kenneth McDonald, Jose Moreno, Michael Mosby, Lawrence Redd, Orlando Rosas.** Farewell to **Robert VanHook, MichaelHouston, Reagan Richter, Paul Szempruch**

Farewell and good luck to the following SWD employees in their retirement: **Colleen Alford, Bruce McMurray, Linda Webster and John Morris.** Goodbye **Ted Nettles and Courtney Nadig.**

Goodluck to the following Tulsa District retirees: **Maggie Fletcher, Manager, Nick Osier, Kelita Stephens**