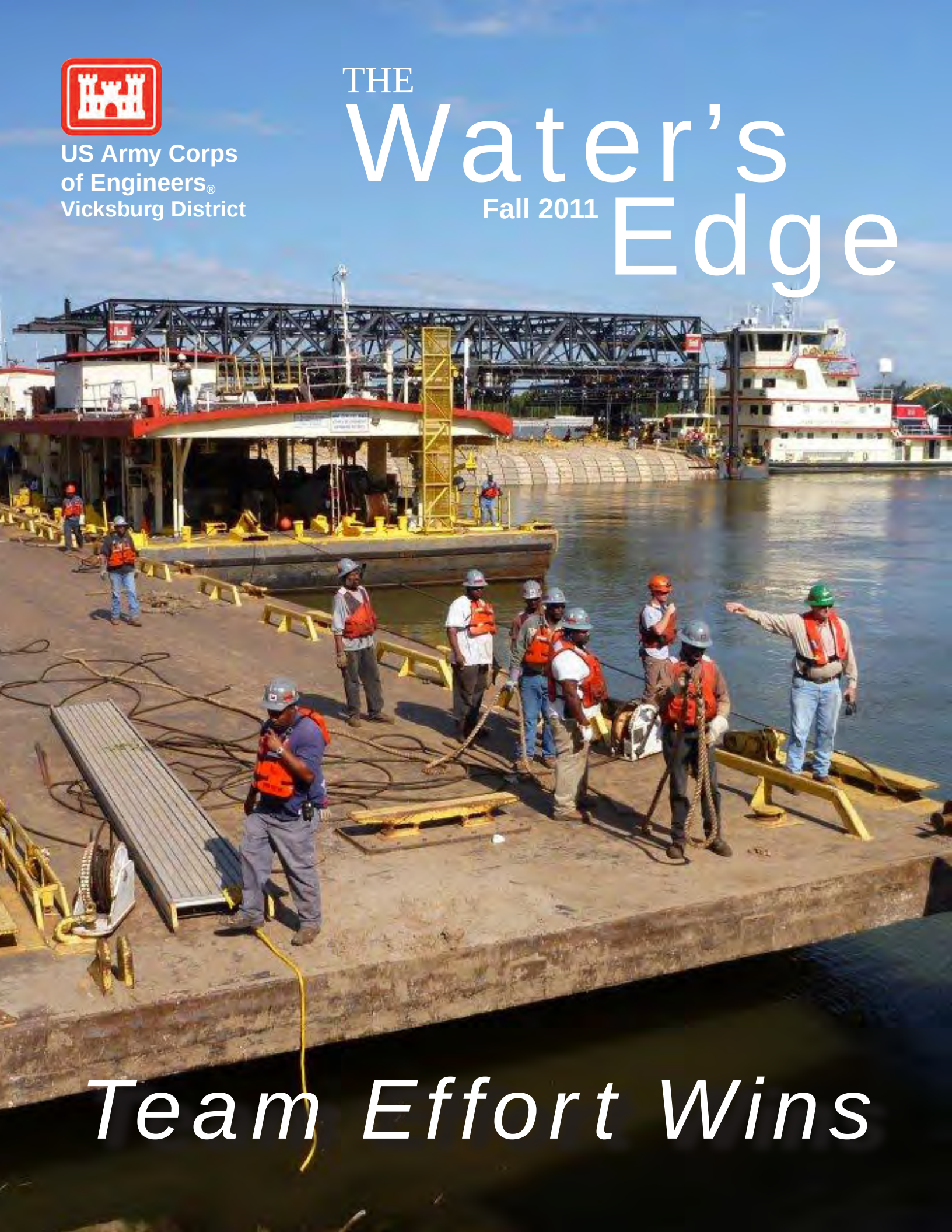
US Army Corps of Engineers®
Vicksburg District

THE Water's Edge

Fall 2011



Team Effort Wins

The Water's Edge

US Army Corps of Engineers®

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

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The Mat Sinking Unit at Avondale Bend, where they are moving the plant onto the spot using the M/V William James and M/V Harrison.
Photo by Joel Brown

Commander's Corner

with Colonel Jeffrey R. Eckstein

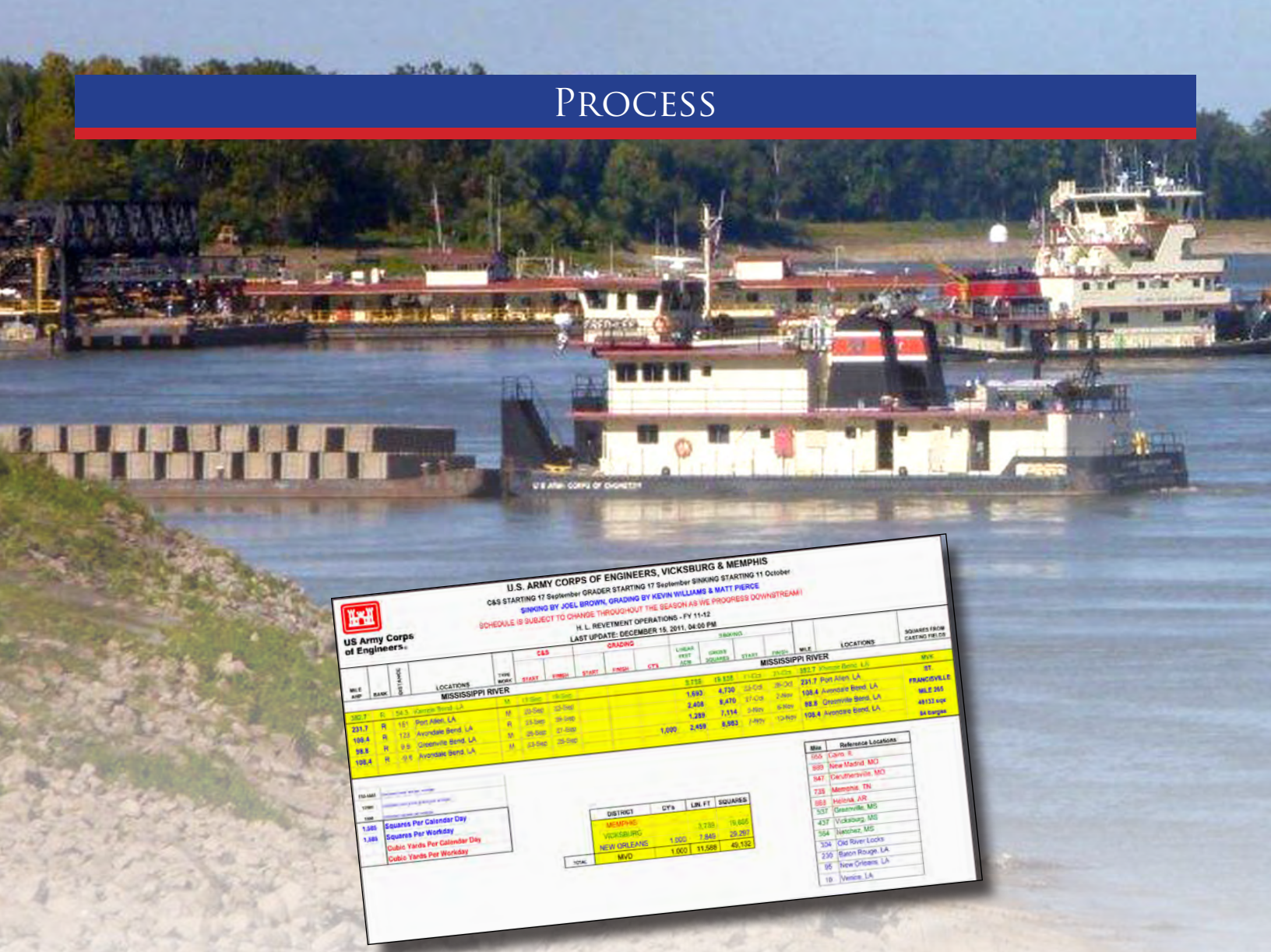
Greetings to all,

I hope you enjoyed the Christmas Season and have started the New Year in good cheer. At my house, we are back to school, wrapping up the basketball season, and getting ready for Spring. It is the rhythm of the year. Within the District, we continue with our rhythm. We have upcoming mid-year adjustments, FY 13 budget briefings, and preparations for the emergency operation and construction seasons.

As we continue to adjust to reduced funding levels, we strive to balance our workforce changes, use of contractors, and levels of service at our projects. The leadership of the District spent considerable time over the past few months exploring the three options for differing organizational structures in order to understand what is possible and identify the risk-associated changes. Any changes to our workforce will be a regional decision.

Our work on the three options provides us with several viable ways to adjust our workforce and deliver our mission. We have specific advantages, disadvantages, and risks in which to inform the regional decision makers. Our District will shape the future and not just react to changes. Some of the immediate impacts folks should notice in FY 12 is the slow backfill for retirees. We remain in a hiring pause, only backfilling critical positions and leaving others vacant. We are changing the levels of service at our projects which includes the hours of operation at visitor centers and our locks on the Ouachita River. We must insure the changes to levels of service are clearly communicated to our users, partners, and stakeholders.

We also need to insure we maintain the Corps' standard for the services we provide. Each campsite or flood control structure must be safe, operational, and manned when required for operation. This becomes more difficult as funding is reduced. As overall levels of service decline, each project will identify one significant item to highlight our stewardship and the benefit to our users. In keeping with the balanced approach, we can't stop working on our backlog of maintenance. We must, however, select items that make a difference. We must demonstrate value to our Nation.



Mat Sinking Unit has one

By Shirley J. Smith **Photos by Joel Brown**

With the purpose of the Mat Sinking Unit (MSU) being to maintain the riverbanks of the Mighty Mississippi for levee protection while providing a safe navigational channel, the work of this unique, one-of-a-kind, crew can sometimes be a struggle.

Although low water on the Mississippi River primarily determines when the mat season begins, one can count on it, just like clockwork. The MSU season rolls around about the same time annually, and usually lasts throughout the months of August, September, October, and November. However, this year, the floating hotel was gone for only 31 days; the crew had 31 days of actual sinking operations. The crew also usually includes more than 300 working personnel, compared to the 248 personnel directly involved with sinking operations this season.

This was the shortest season in recent memory for the MSU. Steve Jones, acting chief of Operations Division, stated, “The 2011 season was the shortest that I can remember, and I have old records that go back to 1960 and none of those seasons were as short as this year. Coupled with the fact that it was a short season, it was also a challenging year due to difficulties posed by numerous docks and infrastructures.”

MSU laying mat at Kempe Bend with heavy traffic. In background are Motor Vessels Fred Lee, William James, and Muddy Water, and a large commercial tow.

Location at Avondale Bend, beginning to secure plant to begin laying mat.

The Mat Sinking Unit at Avondale Bend, where they are moving the plant onto the spot using the M/V William James and M/V Harrison

of *shortest* seasons ever

According to Joel Brown, chief of the MSU, "There were only four job locations, one within the Vicksburg District (MVK) and three within the New Orleans District (MVN). These locations were chosen because they were deemed the most critical areas in need of repair. The three jobs in MVN were all located in heavy industrial areas with docks and infrastructure on the bank being protected: Port Allen, directly across the river from Baton Rouge, and Grenville Bend and Avondale, both located in New Orleans."

Despite the disadvantages of a short season, the crew sank 49,132 squares, 4913200 sq ft or 112 acres of surface area, 11,588 linear ft or 2.19 miles of river bank. During revetment season the MSU crew, who during normal seasons sank at least 160,000 squares, lives and dines on the quarter boats and many of them return year after year to lay mat on the Mighty Mississippi. These seasonal professionals include deck hands, truck drivers, tractor drivers, river boat pilots, mechanics, electricians, cooks, and much more. Although seasonal, they provide one of the most important jobs within the Corps - stabilizing the banks of Ol' Man River. ◂

States of Disaster:

How engineering has helped the Southeast through a year of record-setting natural disasters

The states in the southeastern part of the country have many names, but from the Volunteer to the Bayou, the Magnolia to the Yellowhammer, recently they've all simply been called states of disaster.

This spring, the region was inundated by unprecedented weather events that caused widespread devastation. Snowmelt from a record-breaking blizzard in the Northeast combined with heavy rain to cause historic levels of flooding in the Mississippi River Valley. Meanwhile, a massive storm system sparked tornadoes in seven Southeastern states, making it the country's most deadly outbreak in 79 years.

Mississippi alone has approved more than $9.25 million for rebuilding following the spring storms. The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency said that number only included initial flood damage estimates and that it will grow as they continue to process request for assistance from both the flood and tornadoes.

"Hurricane Katrina was a significant disaster on its own, but I don't remember ever seeing multiple disasters on the scale of what we've seen this spring," explained Henry Dulaney, chief of engineering and construction division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Vicksburg District.

Dulaney is one of many Bagley College of Engineering graduates who sees this kind of destruction firsthand as the corps works to protect people, their livelihoods and the infrastructure from natural disasters. Whether they are ear deep in schematics, navigating floodwaters in hip waders or managing debris removal in steel-toed boots, these engineers have become the first line of defense against Mother Nature's wrath.

"Engineering has a major impact in risk reduction and mitigating the damage that does occur," said Dulaney, who holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and a master's in engineering management.

Taming Mother Nature when they can…

One of the engineers' most ambitious protection projects is the 3,700 miles of levees protecting more than four million people when the Mississippi River overflows its banks. The levees, along with four floodways and numerous backwater areas, are part of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) project, which, to date, is credited with preventing more than $480 billion in flood damage.

"You can't tame Old Man River with levees alone," explained Tom Minyard, of the corps' Memphis District. "The MR&T project was created as a comprehensive design to help control flooding. In addition to the mainline levees, there are backwater areas with levees that are designed to overtop in certain conditions to accommodate floodwater. For severe high-water events, the four floodways can act like relief valves to reduce the height of the river as it travels south into areas with larger populations."

Minyard, who serves as chief of engineering and construction for the district, explained that the 2011 Mississippi River flood was the most thorough test of the MR&T system since its creation. The project was created in response to the flood of 1927, which held the high water record on many stretches of the river until this year's flood.

The 1927 flood inundated 16.8 million acres and took the lives of 500 people, according to the official record. This year's flood, which involved a larger quantity of water, only affected 6.8 million acres—nearly all of which was backwater areas and floodways—and no lives were lost. Minyard believes this is a testament to the strength of the system and the engineers who maintain it.

"I believe this year would have exceeded the devastation of the 1927 flood, if not for the systems we have in place," the 1980 civil engineering graduate said. "Now we have to evaluate the damage that was caused to the system so that we can reset and be ready for the next high-water event."

Unlike other natural disasters, floods can be more accurately predicted, especially in the Mississippi River, which drains 41 percent of the continental United States.

"Once heavy rain falls on part of the river, that water is coming south," Minyard said. "We knew this was going to be a wet year, and even though we didn't know exactly how bad it would get, we knew what to do to prepare."

Dulaney said that the corps works closely with other agencies to monitor the river so they can evaluate the situation and distribute any important information. At the first sign of high water, each district mobilizes teams of engineers that check the status of the system and make necessary preparations, including installing high-density polyethylene plastic to prevent levee erosion and sand bags.

Minyard explained that once the river begins to reach flood levels, the districts implement their second stage of attack. For this phase, engineers work in 12-hour, two-person shifts to monitor the levees for potential problems. The men and women also work closely with local emergency responders to make sure anyone in the path of the floodwater is evacuated safely, which sometimes means going in to people's homes to explain why they can't "ride out" the water.

"Floods are emotional events because it effects the lives and livelihoods of people. It's a slow disaster

"Floods are emotional events because it effects the lives and livelihoods of people. It's a slow disaster and for those who live in the backwater areas or the floodways it can be painful to have to sit back and watch it happen," Minyard explained.

"Hurricane Katrina was a significant disaster on its own, but I don't remember ever seeing multiple disasters on the scale of what we've seen this spring," explained Dulaney.

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Minyard was on hand during this year's event when Missouri's Birds Point-New Madrid (BPNM) floodway had to be activated to protect Cairo, Ill., and other population centers down river.

"The decision to operate the BPNM floodway was not made lightly, but conditions on the river simply left us no other choice in the end," Minyard explained. "By opening a two-mile section of levee and allowing the floodway to serve its purpose, we were able to avoid more severe flooding in more densely populated areas along the river."

He added, "Knowing that it helped save New Orleans or Memphis doesn't really ease the suffering of those people whose homes or farmland was flooded, but that's what happened—the system operated as designed. And now the corps is helping them recover and rebuild."

And paving the road to recovery when they can't

When engineering can't completely control Mother Nature, such as when the floodway was opened, the corps has planning and response teams that can step in and help start the recovery process.

"The corps is a key part of a number of emergency support functions," Minyard said. "Different districts around the country have specialized teams that are part of a national response framework. They provide support for the efforts of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and state and local officials."

These teams fill a vital role, especially in the wake of disasters that can't easily be prepared for or predicted. They provide temporary roofs for houses, debris removal, and emergency ice, water and power, as well as helping to re-establish critical public facilities such as hospitals and school.

Such assistance became very important in late April when a storm system produced more than a dozen tornadoes across the Southeast, leaving hundreds dead, thousands injured and millions without power.

"We helped the residents see a path to rebuilding," Lummus said. "We helped clean the land so they could start restoring their town and be able to stay in the area that has been their home."

The small Mississippi town of Smithville recorded the strongest storm of the outbreak. The National Weather Service rated it an EF5, the highest on the tornado rating scale. Although most reports say the tornado lasted less than a minute, it still was able to destroy approximately two-thirds of the town.

Jasper Lummus, a subject matter expert with the corps' Vicksburg District, was sent to Smithville just days after the storm as part of a planning and response team.

"We walked into a meeting with city and county officials and said 'What can we do for you,' and they just said 'We want it all,'" the 1979 civil engineering graduate recalled.

Unfortunately in that instance, "it all" referred mostly to debris removal. There wasn't enough of a town left for emergency repairs, and only people with government identification were allowed into the city limits for the days immediately following the storm.

While teams from the Memphis district were dispatched to hard-hit Alabama towns to assist with the "blue roof" temporary structures project, Lummus and others from the Vicksburg office set about the process of cleaning up the storm damage so Smithville could begin to heal.

Stationed in North Mississippi for two months, Lummus helped the city and county file requests for assistance and prepare contract specification for solicitations of debris removal and disposal contracts so that they might be awarded. He also was working as the liaison between FEMA and the corps.

"We helped the residents see a path to rebuilding," Lummus said. "We helped clean the land so they could start restoring their town and be able to stay in the area that has been their home."

Many Bagley College of Engineering alumni used their engineering expertise to help during this spring's disasters. To see some of their personal accounts, scan this code with your mobile device or visit www.bagley.msstate.edu/momentum/2011/statesofdisaster.html.

Work moving along on Lower Mississippi River Museum and Interpretive Center

By Mike Renacker
Photos by Alfred Dulaney

If you've been downtown to Rusty's during the last month, you've probably seen the progress that has been made on the museum. The walls are up, most of the windows have been installed, and work is focusing on the building's interior. It seemed an eternity before construction began, and despite all of the project issues, we can say that we are over the hump, and heading towards a successful project completion.

Without a doubt, you can see that the building is now closer to being completed. Crews are diligently working to complete as much of the outside tasks as they can before the rainy season. The inside work has already begun, with crews putting up sheet rock and completing the installation of the windows and doors. We are on track to have the building completed by May 2012.

The MV Mississippi IV's exhibit contractor searched for historical photographs, documents, and artifacts that will be a part of the displays that will be aboard the vessel. In November, the contractor presented the findings to the project delivery team and has now proceeded to the exhibit design phase. While the actual displays are still being developed, we have some idea of what to expect. The entire team is excited about the end product and feels confident that it will be a popular attraction.

The flood model display is being designed by the Engineering Research and Development Center (ERDC). The original intention was to rehabilitate the actual ERDC flood model that is in Clinton, but after several meetings and discussions, the team determined the costs were too expensive for rehabbing and moving a portion to the site. ERDC presented the team with a project proposal that was found to be better than expected.

For many of us here at the District, we understand how the Mississippi River levees work. In fact, we understand the levee relationship to other Mississippi River and Tributaries features, as well as its impact on the lower Mississippi Delta. For the public, however, this concept is not very well understood. The new model will demonstrate exactly how the levee system helps manage high water within the Vicksburg vicinity. We are hopeful that the public will walk away from the model with a clearer understanding of what happens to the Yazoo Backwater area during flood events.

None of the work would have been possible without the team's efforts. Despite an abnormal amount of adversity, the design and construction teams found a way to continue moving forward, even when the project faced time crunches, schedule issues, and a severely constrained budget. So, we're all looking forward to a productive 2012 and are ready to celebrate the opening of this unique feature in downtown Vicksburg. ◂

Looking eastward at the future museum from the Levee Street side, the upper floor will house the displays, from where the Yazoo River Diversion Canal can be seen.

Looking eastward from Levee Street, the upper level will be a display area; the bottom level will be storage and office spaces.

Corps' Regulatory Branch participates in video vignettes filming

By Jennifer Mallard
Photos by MVK personnel and Multi-Media staff

The District's regulatory branch recently participated in the filming of regulatory program video vignettes. As part of the regulatory branch's continuing outreach initiative, the regulatory program concepts such as wetland delineations, cumulative impacts, and mitigation, are featured in the videos. The video vignettes serve as visual reference tools which point the way to more detailed, in-depth, information.

The purpose of these videos is to ensure that members of the public remain informed of regulatory program permit requirements associated with work in waters of the United States, which may occur on public or private property.

Funding was provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act at the request of Corps' headquarters. Multi-Media Marketing of Pembroke Pines, Florida, was awarded the contract to shoot, edit, and produce the videos, each of which encompasses approximately five minutes. The project was a Corps-wide effort which included contributions from many team members. District filming participants included Charles Allred, Randy Holder, Jennifer Mallard, and Jeremy Stokes. The Corps' Jacksonville District team was particularly instrumental in this outreach effort.

The mission of the Corps' regulatory program is to protect the Nation's aquatic resources, while allowing reasonable development through fair, flexible, and balanced permit decisions. Pursuant to Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the District reviews hundreds of permit applications and conducts thousands of jurisdictional determinations annually. The efforts of the regulatory office have resulted in being rated 4.8 out of 5 in customer service and satisfaction. This is determined from surveys sent out with every regulatory action and online feedback.

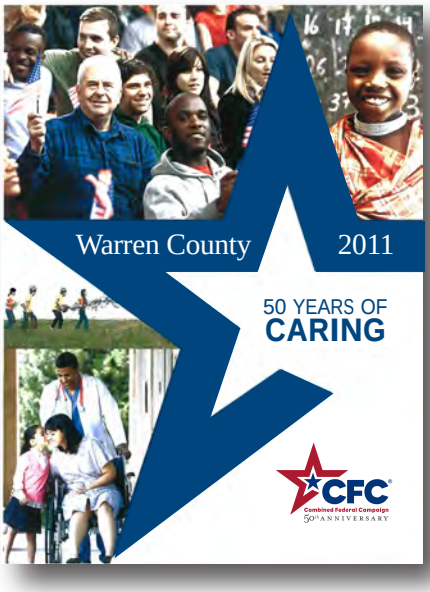
The District was the first of four sites for the vignettes to be filmed. The other locations included Alaska, Hawaii & Jacksonville. ◂

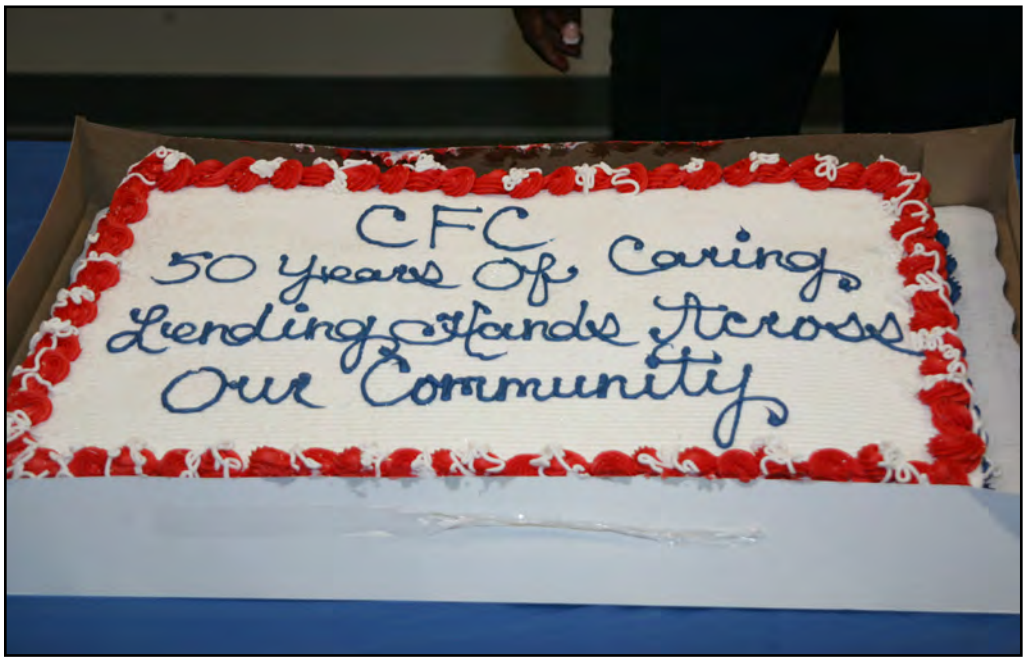
Left to right are Kelly Unger (SAJ), Nancy Sticht (SAJ), Randy Holder (MVK), Jennifer Mallard (MVK), Jeremy Stokes (MVK), Kelly Finch (SAJ) and Charles Allred (MVK).

Charles Allred and Jennifer Mallard key soils for jurisdictional determination.

Multi-media staff and Jeremy Stokes capture commerce/barge on Section 10 navigable water.

Photos by Alfred Dulaney





District reaches 102% of 2011 goal.

District adopts 150 Angels

Photos by Alfred Dulaney

New Charter includes District team members

By Davita Baloue
Photo by Christopher Barnett

The Mississippi Chapter of the National Contract Management Association (NCMA) hosted a celebration in November for achieving its new charter. Mark J. Lumer, NCMA Fellow, presided over the ceremony.

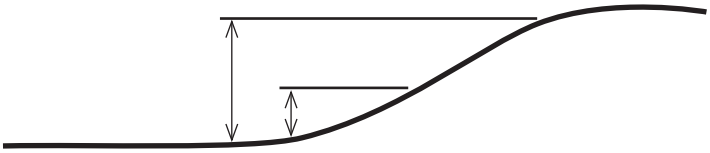
NCMA is a non-profit association of individuals from industry, government, and academia who deal in the fields of acquisition, contracting, and procurement. NCMA membership and participation are avenues to continuing educational and professional growth in the contract management community.

Current membership in the Mississippi Chapter consists of professionals from the Vicksburg District Corps of Engineers, Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC), L-3 Communications, Jackson State University, and Stark Aerospace.

Typical functional areas of members include contracting, legal, project/program managers, finance, contracting officer representatives, and anyone else involved in contract management.

For membership information, please contact davita.s.baloue@usace.army.mil. Additional information can be found at http://www.ncmahq.org/index.cfm. The promotional code: **MBR: NEWMBR25CHPTER** is applicable for "Regular" and "New Professional" memberships. ◂

Charter members for NCMA are left to right, Tracey Lowe, Darrel Johnson, Melodie Fisher, Davita Baloue, Erlean Murray, Sean Lenz, Adrienne Bingham, Vincent Durman, Lynniese Cosey-Mayfield, Paul Tuccio, William Cantrell, Trudy James, Sandra Pittman, Joshua Marks, Laurie Bagby, Markeda Mims, Anitra Wilson, Scott Humphreys, Sandra Pittman, and Jamaya Smith.



District working to restore levees to pre-flood condition

By Jonathan Boone

Today's engineers are faced with challenging issues. America's infrastructure is aging and in need of expensive maintenance. The funds to maintain and rehabilitate these issues are in shorter supply than ever before.

The District is challenged with the issues described above, but remains committed to completing the necessary work to protect the investments that have been made under their guidance. Spring flooding in the Mississippi River Basin has highlighted an increasingly complex and expensive problem regarding water management. The levee systems in the District's boundary functioned as they were designed, protecting much of the flood plain surrounding the Mississippi River.

The District has been working diligently to evaluate the damage caused by the flood and to restore the levee systems to pre-flood conditions. The forecasted river crest made the District engineers take additional precautions along the Yazoo Backwater levee by installing polyethylene sheeting along the slope of the earthen levee. This temporary sheeting protected the levee that is designed to overtop from scour and erosion.

The normal rainfall expected in the Mississippi Valley during the flood event was less than the forecasted amounts which resulted in a slightly lower river crest than predicted. The Yazoo Backwater levee was not overtopped by the floodwaters and the polyethylene sheeting required removal after the river returned to normal levels. The District contracted to have the polyethylene sheeting removed and recycled. Following the removal of the polyethylene sheeting, seeding was required to reestablish the turf that acts as the permanent protection for the earthen levee slopes. This work has been completed and will continue to protect the investment that the District has in the Yazoo Backwater levee system. ◂

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Vicksburg District hosts Boy Scout Troop 102

By Jonathan Boone

The District's Construction Division has a lot of responsibilities including planning, designing, and constructing civil works projects. Another highly regarded responsibility of this division is community involvement.

Team members of the Engineering and Construction Division recently briefed Boy Scout Troop 102, Vicksburg, at the Delta Mat Casting Field in Delta, Louisiana. The Troop met District engineers and construction contractors to learn about the Corps' commitment to provide levee protection and safe navigation channels along the Mississippi River. The engineers discussed how revetment is a facing (such as stone or concrete) that, when used properly, can sustain an embankment from future erosion.

The flexible concrete mattress revetment that is made in Delta, Louisiana, involves a unique process of mixing sand, aggregate, cement and water along with other chemicals to make concrete. After the concrete is made in batches, the workers set the 100-square-foot forms and tie-in the welded wire reinforcement. The workers then pour the concrete in the forms and the final product is a flexible concrete mattress. This process is repeated thousands of times a day by skilled workers.

The Troop also watched a video of the District's Mat Sinking Unit placing the flexible concrete mattresses along the banks of the Mississippi River. The mattresses form a protective overcoat to shield the riverbank from erosion and sloughing caused by channel currents and turbulent water associated with high river stages. Everyone that supported the event recognizes the benefits of investing in their community and how it will positively impact the Corps' mission of Building Strong. ◂

Sardis Lake arboretum receives certification

Story and photo by Chris Gurner, park ranger

The Sardis Lake Arboretum has been officially certified by the Mississippi Urban Forestry Council (MUFC) and will be formally recognized during the MUFC annual conference in February 2012. The recognition is the culmination of many hours of work by park ranger Cody Scruggs and Co-op students Kyle Donlevy and Houston Hartley.

The MUFC certifies arboreta throughout Mississippi. The purpose of the certification program is to define what the word arboretum means in Mississippi and set standards for what can be called an arboretum. In order to obtain certification, an application was submitted with details of tree species, availability to the public, and management practices for the sustainability of the arboretum.

Sign showing the certification of Sardis' arboretum.

The Green Ash tree in the Sardis aboretum.

The Black Cherry tree in the Sardis aboretum.

(Continued on page 23)

Mississippi Valley Division changes Command

Courtesy of Mississippi Valley Division
Photo by Alfred Dulaney

In a formal Change of Command ceremony, Major General Michael J. Walsh transferred Command of the Corps' Mississippi Valley Division (MVD) to Major General John W. Peabody, on November 10. The ceremony was officiated by the Corps' Acting Chief of Engineers, Major General Meredith "Bo" Temple, at the Vicksburg Convention Center.

MG Temple passes the flag to MG Peabody. Also pictured is outgoing MVD Commander, MG Walsh.

Maj. Gen. Walsh had been MVD Commander and President of the Mississippi River Commission (MRC) since February 2008, and was assigned as the Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Washington, D.C.

Maj. Gen. Peabody comes to Vicksburg from Cincinnati, Ohio, where he was Commander and Division Engineer of the Corps' Great Lakes and Ohio River Division. As MVD Commander, Maj. Gen. Peabody is responsible for the Corps' water resources programs in a 370,000-square-mile area that includes portions of 12 states; its boundary extends from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. District offices are headquartered in St. Paul, Rock Island, St. Louis, Memphis, Vicksburg, and New Orleans.

In addition, Maj. Gen. Peabody is also president of the MRC, the presidentially appointed agency that oversees the comprehensive Mississippi River and Tributaries flood control and navigation project, as well as the entire Mississippi River and its tributaries.

As MVD Commander, Maj. Gen. Peabody is responsible for a $7.5 billion civil works program. The programs and activities, overseen by the MVD and MRC, are conducted by the six district offices. He also serves as Commander of Task Force Hope (TFH) that was established in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. TFH is responsible for delivery of the nearly $15 billion construction program that will provide the 100-year level of storm surge risk reduction to the greater New Orleans area in 2011.

A northern Ohio native, Maj. Gen. Peabody entered military service in 1980 upon commissioning as a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers, and has spent most of his career as a combat engineer.

Staff assignments include Company Executive Officer and Aide-de-Camp in the 193rd Infantry Brigade, instructor at the US Army School of the Americas; Assistant S3 in the 307th Engineer Battalion (Airborne); the 13th Corps Support Command Engineer, Fort Hood, Texas; the logistics support command engineer in Somalia; S3 of the 17th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Armored Division; Pol-Mil Division Chief of the J5, US Southern Command in Panama; senior engineer trainer at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California, and Programs Division Chief of the Army's Office of the Chief, Legislative Liaison.

Previous commands include the 618th Engineer Company (Light Equipment) (Airborne), 82nd Airborne Division; the 299th Engineer Battalion, 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood, the Engineer Brigade for the 3rd Infantry Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom I, and the Pacific Ocean Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal with "V" device, Purple Heart, Joint Meritorious Service Medal, Army Meritorious Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, Joint Unit Commendation Award, Army Superior Unit Award, Master Parachutist Badge, Ranger Tab, and Army Staff Badge.

Maj. Gen. Peabody is a graduate of the United States Military Academy, the Command and General Staff College, and the Army War College with a Master's Degree in strategic studies. He earned his Master of Public Administration Degree from Harvard University and studied international relations and political sociology as an Olmsted Scholar at El Colegio de Mexico, Mexico City. ◂

District Commander makes presentation at Mississippi Water Resources Association's annual meeting

By Shirley J. Smith
Photo by Alfred Dulaney

District Commander, Col. Jeffrey R. Eckstein, recently spoke to various representatives with local and state government officials at the annual meeting of the Mississippi Water Resources Association.

Col. Eckstein's topics of discussion were the future of river navigation, and how the Vicksburg District is adjusting operations to execute missions in light of reduced funding for this year.

His presentation focused on overall funding allocations for the District's various programs including lock operations, Mississippi River levees and ports, channel improvement, support to contingency operations, and the Great Spring Flood of 2011. He discussed a detailed plan describing how the District will prioritize its current funding in order to continue operating the various locks within the District. The plan is based on the usage rates necessary to maximize support to river traffic. This plan will allow the District to adjust lock operating schedules and minimize impacts on local government and business.

The District continues to provide focused support to river commerce by maintaining the channels of the Mississippi River and other rivers within its boundaries. The District is keeping businesses and government informed of changes in lock operations so that, despite a reduction in funding, the impact on river traffic will be minimal.

The Vicksburg District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers encompasses a 68,000-square-mile area across portions of Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana that holds seven major river basins and incorporates approximately 460 miles of mainline levees. The District is engaged in hundreds of projects and employs approximately 1,100 people. Last year, the District awarded $66.6 million worth of contracts to Small Businesses in the area. This included $24.2 million to Small Disadvantaged Businesses, $11.7 million to Woman Owned Businesses and $6 million to Service Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses. The District supports disaster response throughout the nation. To learn more about the Vicksburg District, visit our website, www.mvk.usace.army.mil. ◂

Col Eckstein prepares to make presentation at MWRA meeting at Natchez.

Vicksburg team receives prestigious award

By Ben Robinson

Vicksburg District's project delivery team involved in the Task Force Hope recovery effort was recently recognized for their superb achievement and dedication towards the recovery effort of the 2005 devastation by hurricanes Katrina & Rita.

Paul Eagles, senior project manager in Programs Project Management Division, accepted the prestigious Medallion of Innovation, Excellence, and Service on behalf of the entire project delivery team. The team was honored for their unprecedented teamwork, leadership, and innovation in helping to build the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS) for Greater New Orleans, the largest civil works program in the history of the Corps. ◂

Leadership Vicksburg class receives briefing on mission of the District and the Corps

By Brian Crawford
Photos by Alfred Dulaney

The 2011 Leadership Vicksburg class recently visited the District as a part of the annual program geared towards enhancing participants' knowledge of area businesses and industry.

The Chamber of Commerce sponsored program is composed of a group of specially selected individuals from our local and surrounding communities who exhibit exceptional leadership qualities.

During their visit to the District, participants were oriented on the mission of the District and the Corps, and the many valuable resources the District provides the Vicksburg-Warren community, states, and the Nation.

District Commander, Col. Jeffrey R. Eckstein gave an overall briefing on the mission and scope of the 68,000-square-mile area District that encompasses Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi; Pat Hemphill, Programs and Project Management Division (PPM), briefed on the responsibilities of PPM. In addition to the general orientation, Col. Eckstein and Pat Hemphill each spoke on topics of leadership and the unique differences between leadership and management.

Robert Simrall, modeling, mapping, and consequences production center, Jonathan Pennington, emergency operations center, and Brad Martin, geotechnical branch, spoke to the group about the 2011 Flood and the many responsibilities that are a part of flood fighting. The group was also led on a building tour by Shirley Smith and Alice Bufkin of the Public Affairs Office. ◂

Col Eckstein briefs the group on the mission of the District.

Brad Martin briefs on the role of the District during the Great Spring Flood of 2011

District team member completes Emerging Leaders Program

By Shirley J. Smith
Photo by Alfred Dulaney

Col Eckstein presents Certificate of Graduation to Harris.

William G. ("Gabe") Harris IV, civil engineer in the Programs and Project Management Division, recently successfully completed all requirements of the Corps' Mississippi Valley Division's Emerging Leaders Program.

The intent of the Leadership Development Program (LDP) is to identify and develop a cadre of potential leaders who can operate effectively at the highest levels of leadership within the Corps. The program complements and builds on regional leadership programs, with the objective being to develop future managers with a perspective on leadership.

At the District, Gabe serves as a project manager for the Plaquemines Parish Federal levees.

He is a Vicksburg native and a graduate of Vicksburg High School. He earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in math from Alcorn State University. He also earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in civil engineering from Mississippi State University, and a Master of Science Degree in engineering management from Mississippi State University.

Gabe is a member of the Society of American Military Engineers, and is a Licensed Engineer for the State of Mississippi.

The son of the late William G. ("Bill") Harris, III, and Sharron Harris, he is married to the former Andrea Johnson, and they are the parents of a daughter and twin sons. ◂

Women of Color selects District employee for 2011 Technology All-Star Award

By Shirley J. Smith

Vicksburg District team member, Patricia Hemphill, Deputy Chief of Programs and Project Management Division, recently received the 2011 Technology All-Star Award. She received the award at the Women of Color Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Conference that recognizes outstanding women in the STEM fields.

The conference provides excellent opportunities for professional development, networking, and recruiting. The conference, co-hosted by Career Communication Group's Women of Color Magazine, focuses on the development of STEM women and ensures that the superior achievements and importance of these outstanding women in STEM are highly visible to all conference participants.

A Vicksburg native, Hemphill is a graduate of Warren Central High School, and earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in civil engineering from Mississippi State University. She completed the Army Management Staff College Program of Sustaining Base Leadership Management, and Harvard University's Executive Education Program. She is a registered professional engineer in the State of Mississippi. ◂

Dr. Tyrone D. Taborn, publisher of Women of Color Magazine (left), and Dr. Roy G. Perry, Dean, College of Engineering, Prairie View A & M University (right), present Patricia Hemphill the 2011 Technology All-Star Award.

Commander presents Achievement Medal for Civilian Service to Ebersole

By Kavanaugh Breazeale
Photo by Alfred Dulaney

Ashley Ebersole, emergency management specialist for the District, was presented the Achievement Medal for Civilian Service for exceptional performance during the 2011 Alabama spring tornadoes response and recovery efforts.

Ebersole was attached to the Mobile District and was the local government liaison officer who coordinated the staffing of local government agencies throughout seven sectors of the impacted area. She led a team that directed the local governments with proper procedures in requesting assistance and identifying available resources for mission execution with debris reduction sites, rights-of-entry with collection sites and structure demolition.

Her efforts were instrumental in helping the counties and cities plan their strategy for demolition of uninhabitable properties. Her positive attitude and professional performance reflect credit upon herself, the Mobile District, the Vicksburg District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Ebersole, a native of Fairfield, Pennsylvania, resides in Clinton. She earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in emergency management from Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama. She is the daughter of Johnny Johnson, Fairfield Pennsylvania. ◂

Col Eckstein presents an Achievement Medal for Civilian Service to Ebersole.

District employee returns from support of Operation Enduring Freedom

By Shirley J. Smith
Photo by Alfred Dulaney

District team member, Kisha Craig, contract specialist with the Contracting Division, recently returned to the District after serving nine months with Operation Enduring Freedom.

While in Afghanistan, Craig served as a contract specialist in support of the Overseas Contingency Operations. Her duties included handling numerous contract actions exceeding $70 million in support of Afghanistan's National Security Forces. She provided guidance and support to project managers, new contracting personnel, and other Project Delivery Team members.

Upon her return, Craig was presented the Commander's Award for Civilian Service by District Commander, Col. Jeffrey R. Eckstein.

Craig is the daughter of Delores Flaggs and Gene Bell. She is a native of Vicksburg and a graduate of Vicksburg High School. She earned Bachelor and Master Degrees in management from Belhaven University. She is married to Samuel Craig, Jr., and they are the parents of two sons. ◂

Col Eckstein presents a Commander's Award for Civilian Service to Craig.

Veteran's son's personal perspective of World War II

By Robert L. Miller, Jr.

We recently observed and, dare I say, celebrated the infamous and horrific attack on Pearl Harbor (called Hawaii Operation or Operation Al by the Japanese). December 7, 2011, marked 70 years since that tragic event occurred - 2,402 Americans were killed and 1,282 were wounded. Numerous air, sea and land vessels were destroyed. The U.S.S. Arizona received some of the worst damage, with nearly half the casualties of the day occurring onboard that Battleship, having been attacked at least four times by Japanese airplanes.

Following that infamous attack on Pearl Harbor, recruiting, drafting and volunteering were urgent calls of the day. Everyone - young or old, male or female, rich or poor, pitched in to do whatever they could to aid in the second world war of this nation.

My father was a lad of only 15 years of age when the United States entered World War II. He was simply a country boy from Vicksburg, with "down home values" deeply rooted in the Baptist faith. In 1944, at the tender age of 18, he joined the U.S. Army as Pfc. Robert L. Miller, Sr.

When the opportunity presented itself, he quickly joined the medical corps as a field medic, serving in the "1949 Engineer General Service Medical Service Corps", where he served two years, before returning home in August, 1946.

As we look back and recall these historic dates it is necessary to recognize the intrinsic value of all the dedicated women and men, alive or deceased, active or inactive who have dedicated their lives to the protection and preservation of our great nation. "Lest we forget" the turmoil, sacrifices, and hardships these brave servicemen and servicewomen endured in protection of our great nation, *The United States of America.* God bless America. ◂

Swim well, live to tell

By Brian C. Westfall
Ouachita Project Management Office

"How many of you can swim?

According to safety professional Richard Hawk, about 93% of the people who go swimming every summer can't swim more than 40 yards at a stretch, if at all! Yet, with the start of each recreational season, millions of swimmers, who are marginal at best, flock to water. Not so long ago, I would have disagreed with this prolific statement, but not now. The unfortunate fact is that most swimmers grossly overestimate their swimming ability. Furthermore, many families don't recognize the critical importance of providing swimming lessons to their loved ones. The solution to this problem is that every boating and water safety education program needs to promote learning to swim well.

Have you taken swimming lessons?"

Swimming well is the vital ingredient in saving lives on the water. Whether one supports mandatory life jacket wear or prefers life jacket advocacy by enticement, swimming well is the common denominator in preventing drownings. The reality is that most often boaters and swimmers make the conscious decision not to wear their life jacket whether it's law or not. The ability to swim enhances any life jacket program, adding to the drown-proofing toolbox. Knowing how to swim and swimming well give the boater or swimmer faced with the possibility of drowning an increased probability of survival.

National programs are tackling this problem head on. "Make a Splash" with Olympic swimmer, Cullen Jones, is a rising child-focused water safety initiative created by the USA Swimming Foundation. The USA Swimming Foundation works by aligning the nation's top learn-to-swim resources in an effort to save lives.

Regional and local grassroots efforts in learning to swim are making a difference as well. The Corps' Arkansas lakes are partnering with the Hot Springs, Arkansas, YMCA to promote learning to swim well. At summer swim camps, rangers teach water safety tips while the Y instructors teach swimming lessons. Annmarie Kaylo, associate director, proclaimed, "The Hot Springs Family YMCA's partnership with the Corps has been beyond valuable for young students attending our day "out of school" activities. The excellent instruction and fun activities keep our kids engaged and coming away with a deeper understanding of water safety and the importance of personal responsibility. We all know that in these times collaborations are imperative to successful recreation programming. This partnership has taken collaboration to a higher level! We consider the Corps friends who share an interest in truly driving the cause of stronger communities!"

Similar partnering efforts, when reproduced locally and regionally, will become entwined in a national effort- and drowning rates will drop. Learn to swim advocates are eager to join forces to prevent drownings. Most often, the partnership is only a phone call away. "Learn to swim campaigns rank right up there with the "Wear It" life jacket message. Now, when our park rangers give water safety presentations or are talking with park customers they have available YMCA, Red Cross and other local swimming instruction locations, phone numbers and dates of swimming lessons," stated Joe Haller, natural resource specialist at Ouachita.

While having conducted thousands of water safety programs, I have always begun my presentations with the questions, "How many of you can swim? Have you taken swimming lessons?" Always, all the hands go up with a resounding, "Yes we can!" But, in reality, statistics revealthat more than half of the class couldn't even tread water or swim a mere 40 yards.

In reviewing far too many drowning scenarios, drowning reports usually reflect that the victim was a poor or non-swimmer. We can change this by endorsing learn to swim programs which will, complemented with existing life jacket campaigns, save lives. ◂

Arkabutla Lake hosts 21st annual Physically Challenged Hunt

By Ernie Lentz
Photo by Jamie Richmond

The largest event in this area is the Arkabutla Lake Physically Challenged Hunt. The hunt, for persons with disabilities, is conducted in the natural area below the dam. The hunters use muzzle loading primitive rifles or shotguns and are placed on specific stands within the natural area below Arkabutla Dam. The hunters are taken to the woods at 5:30 a.m. and normally checked on before lunch, but some like to stay in the woods and not be bothered until after dark. The hunters are an integral part of the wildlife management plan for this area. Without them, the deer population would spiral out of control, which can cause diseases and starvation.

The second benefit of the hunt is to provide a unique opportunity to a very special group of citizens. The participants come from all over the southeastern U.S. with the farthest coming from Florida. The hunt has become therapeutic in nature as each year there are new hunters who must adjust to their new environment.

This year's hunt, while not the most bountiful, was great due to the superb attitude of both the hunters and volunteers. The hunters bagged a total of 12 deer, and to insure that the hunt was safe and successful, 13 volunteers worked a total of 329 hours.

An event of this magnitude requires community support in addition to the volunteer help. Without the support of the Arkabutla Lake Physically Challenged Hunt Association, Sportsmen's Warehouse, Big Delta Honda and the Barton's Power Sports, the hunters would not have enjoyed the hunt as much as they did. These organizations and their members made this hunt effortless for both the volunteers and the hunters by taking care of the everyday needs which allows the hunters to focus entirely on getting a deer.

This hunt continues to bolster support for the wildlife management practices in place at Arkabutla Lake because all parties involved understand each other's part in maintaining a viable, sustainable resource to view, educate and recreate. ◂

An event of this magnitude requires community support in addition to the volunteer help.

Eugene Christopherson, from Gulfport, bagged this 8 point at the hunt. With him are, right, ranger Coleman Pullen and, in the background, Danny Graham and Charlie Ingram, Mississippi conservation officer.

Headquarters building for Muscadine Farms Wildlife Management Area.

District constructs headquarters building for Muscadine Farms Wildlife Management Area

By Jonathan Boone
Photo by Joseph Matthews

The Vicksburg District's commitment to conservation and the public is coming full circle with the construction of the Muscadine Farms Wildlife Management Area headquarters building near Greenville.

The conservation effort began in 2002 when the District purchased mitigation property that included a 700-acre catfish farm in Washington County. In 2009 an additional 700 acres of catfish ponds and approximately 1,400 acres of woodland were added to the Muscadine Farms Wildlife Management Area property.

The 90 retired catfish ponds are managed to attract waterfowl heading south during the annual migration period. The majority of the ponds are managed for moist-soil vegetation with beneficial native plants including smartweed, sprangletop, wild millets, and various sedges. These native species produce large numbers of seeds that are vital food for waterfowl in the winter months.

The benefactors of this investment by the Corps include the public. Waterfowl hunting on this area is managed by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP) to maximize hunting opportunities without reducing waterfowl use, hunter harvest or hunter satisfaction. Waterfowl hunting is by draw hunt only, with a combination of pre-season draws and stand-by opportunities. The early stage of growth for the woodland tract creates an ideal habitat for rabbits, and can be hunted by the public.

The new 4,300-square-foot headquarters building will provide a common area for game wardens and public hunters to meet before and after hunting trips in the Mississippi Delta. The construction of the headquarters building was managed by the District's Greenwood Area Engineer Office and includes bunk rooms for men and women that work for the MDWFP, bathroom facilities, office space, a kitchen area and a conference room for meetings.

The porches that surround the building's perimeter will certainly invite the telling of hunting stories, fond memories from the past and future dreams. The District remains committed to preserving mitigation property and partnering with the MDWFP to manage it for public use. ◂

(Concluded from Sardis Lake arboretum receives certification on page 15)

The site was inspected by George Byrd, a member of the MUFC board of directors and a certified arborist. Certified arboreta receive an urban forest tool kit, publicity through state and local news releases, official signage, and a listing on the MUFC web page. The Sardis Lake Arboretum has already gained attention from students, scout groups, and visitors. The Sardis Lake ranger staff hopes that the interest will continue to grow. ◂

District Field Offices & Services

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Vicksburg District
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www.mvk.usace.army.mil
email: cemvk-pa@army.us.mil

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

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

Other Vicksburg Engineer/Federal Organizations

Mississippi Valley Division
(601) 634-5760

Engineer Research and Development Center
(601) 634-2504

412th Engineer Command
(601) 636-1686

168th Engineer Group
(601) 313-5290

Vicksburg National Military Park
(601) 634-5760

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

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

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

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