



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
Vicksburg District

THE

# Water's Edge

Winter 2013



“Drew”  
(EMT and Galley Foreman)



### US Army Corps of Engineers®

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

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COL Jeffrey R. Eckstein

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#### Need to Know

##### PEOPLE

Lt. Col. John T. Tucker, III, Ron Goldman, Marneshia Richard,  
Charles Stokes, DeAnna Prestwood, Thomas Hengst,  
Andrew Williams, Noah Vroman, Vince Kirtley, and Leon Morgan

##### PROCESS

##### DeGray Lake

A pump-back capable hydropower impoundment

##### PROJECTS

Recycling-Good for the environment and the community



### On the Cover

Andrew Williams is pictured with the ambulance  
and the galley crew of the Mat Sinking Unit.

Photo by Kavanaugh Breazeale  
(Story on page 11)

## Commander's Corner

with Colonel Jeffrey R. Eckstein



### Greeting again to everyone,

We have made it through the initial rounds of the sequester. This has been an up and down rollercoaster. For the most part, we have avoided the furloughs and significant cuts to the MR&T program. We do have cuts in our O&M program and the impacts are potentially significant. We will work through the short-term impacts and seek a sustainable long-term solution. We are at the point of making changes to the missions we deliver. I greatly appreciate everyone's patience and understanding as we continue through the process. To your credit, you stayed focused on delivering the mission rather than on the impacts to yourselves.

We continue to get more guidance on measures designed to reduce our spending. A few of the measures include the conference approval process, elimination of monetary awards, and limits on overtime. Many of these rules will cause us to relook our budget and the activities we undertake. We must remain flexible and adjust to these changes. Our ultimate goal in the District is to provide more funding at project level. Project level is where we deliver the value to the nation and make a difference for the local communities. We should stop doing some activities that do not add value to the project. Stopping an activity is difficult because we do not just start an activity for no benefit. It is more about priorities and affordability. Again, we are not through this yet but we will get through it together.

This is my last Water's Edge. I will pass command to Colonel John Cross and move over to The Engineer Research and Development Center. I am fortunate to get to stay in Vicksburg for another two years. I have enjoyed my time with you here in the Vicksburg District. We have a wonderful mission. We have also gone through some historic times. The flood of 2011 followed by near record low water, the budget reductions, no earmarks, etc., are events I never imagined I would undertake while in the District. Add to that a complete change out of our senior leaders in the District. I have enjoyed the entire 3 ½ years. It was challenging, both personally and professionally. Thank you for your support and opportunity to work with so many of you.

My family is totally integrated into the Vicksburg community. The number of you that are so engaged in your local community has impressed me. From Boy Scouts, gymnastics, swimming, soccer, church, professional organizations, and the list goes on. I expect to continue to see many of you in these endeavors in the coming years. Thank you for being terrific citizens and welcoming my family into the community.

*Best wishes for a safe and prosperous summer.*

# DeGray Lake

*A pump-back capable hydropower  
Impoundment -  
A perpetual motion machine?*

**By Brian Westfall**

**Photos by Brian Westfall and Ron Austin**

DeGray Lake is located adjacent to the National Scenic 7 Byway, just north of Arkadelphia, Arkansas. DeGray Lake is widely known for its recreational opportunities. However, the lake and associated structures offer services that are mission essential for our nation's infrastructure. DeGray Lake, Dam and Power Plant provides dependable flood damage reduction, hydropower and water supply.

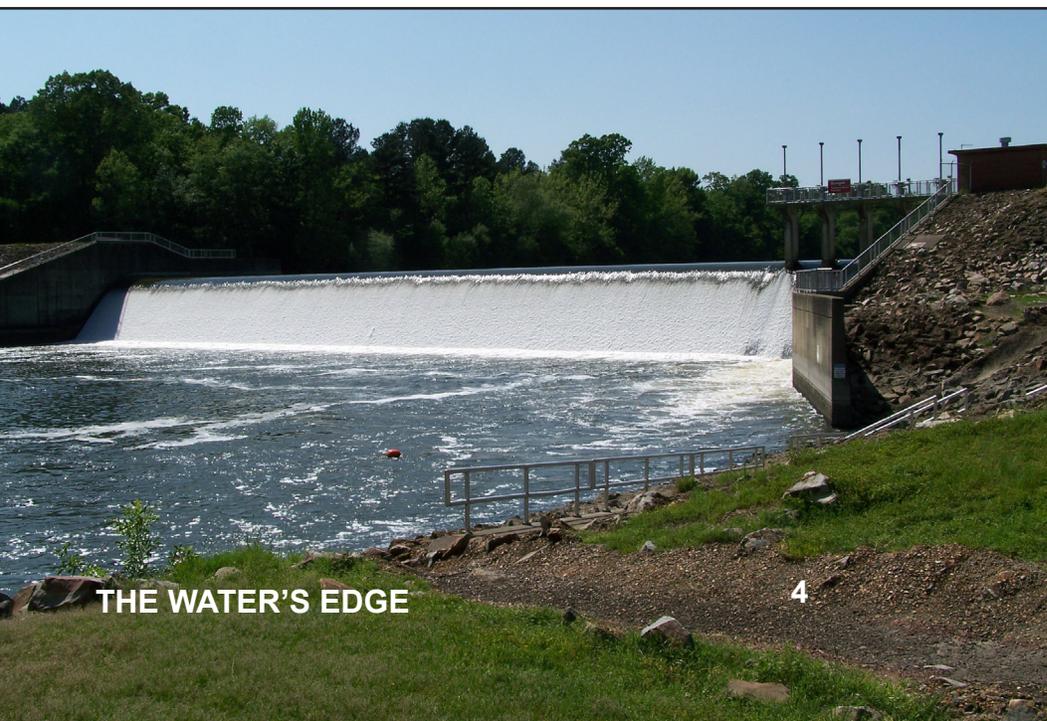
The DeGray Dam and Power Plant has the distinction of being one of the first pump-back capable impoundments in the history of the Corps of Engineers. This system is not only ingenious, but has environmentally friendly benefits as well. The design consists of a four-hundred acre re-regulation pool below the main lake. This pool serves as a storage basin for pump-back capability. The re-regulation pool, also known as the Lower Lake, is impounded by a concrete low-head dam built across the Caddo River, approximately 3-miles below the DeGray Dam.

During designated times, the 28 Megawatt (MW) generator can be reversed. The reversible generator pulls water out of the Lower Lake back into the main lake to be used again for hydropower generation. This renewable, efficient feature uses the same water more than once to generate

power. The system is especially beneficial during the drier summer and fall months when the main lake is low, typically from August through November. Hot summer and early fall temperatures bring huge demands for electricity. During the day, the electrical grid is heavily tested by heavy energy needs. During the evening hours as temperatures cool and family household and business energy needs lessen, excess lower cost electricity on the electrical grid provides for the opportunity to engage the pump-back feature.

The DeGray Dam and Power Plant has always been a model of hydropower efficiency. The plant exceeds the industry standard of 94% availability rate. On average, the plant efficiency results in producing over 80,000-kilowatt hours of clean dependable energy for Arkansas, serving almost 9,000 homes with clean renewable hydropower. This translates into considerable revenue, saving over 140,000 barrels of precious crude oil which at the present time costs over \$100 per barrel, an average dollar savings of over \$14,000,000. "A comparison of power produced in relationship to the average American home is 1 megawatt or 1,000,000 watts is equal to the power used for 1 house for a month", stated Brian Bean, Ouachita Project Power Plant Superintendent.

The 400-acre impoundment also serves as an ideal waterfowl refuge and fishing destination. The innovative DeGray Lake hydropower pump-back system is a great example of economic and environmental synergy. The Arkansas Lakes are widely known for the recreational opportunities they afford. Yet, they are lesser known for the authorized purposes that make our way of life safer, sustainable and more pleasant. ◀



*Shown on left is a photo of the re-regulation dam, and photo above shows an aerial view of DeGray Dam.*

## Critical repair work along Ol' Man River causes unusually long revetment season

By Shirley J. Smith  
Photos by Kavanaugh Breazeale

Try visualizing 3x2 feet 3-inch-thick concrete blocks stacked about 21 miles high. After imagining that, think about how much manpower might be required to accomplish stacking those blocks in eight months. Then, think about the acreage that these blocks would cover if they were laid flat on the ground.

This is exactly what the Mat Sinking Unit (MSU) accomplished during its eight-month revetment season. During this longer, eight-month, revetment season, the MSU placed 442,786 squares covering approximately 1,018 acres. If these 3 feet by 2 feet, three-inch-thick concrete blocks were stacked, they would extend almost 21 miles high.

The revetment season was longer due to the shorter than usual revetment season of 2011 when the work was hampered by the 2011 historic flood. Thus, reset and recovery came into play. The 2012 revetment season was extended because of the damage to channel improvement features, making it critical that the repair work be accomplished as quickly, efficiently, and as effectively as possible.

How much manpower was required to accomplish the job? "The workforce for the sustaining program is about 275 persons, and that number was increased by 25, making the total workforce 300," stated James Ross, chief of Operations Division. Did the need for additional workers present challenges? Yes, it did.

The revetment workforce is composed of permanent, seasonal, and temporary workers. Almost half of the workers were temporary workers, totaling 135, who could not work more than six months in a 12-month timeframe. At the end of the six month period more temporary workers had to be recruited - then the hiring process, and the training.

The recruitment process included having applicants apply online for MSU jobs, with the Human Resources Office evaluating applications and making selections. Then the hiring process, which was done mostly from bank hiring in Delta, Louisiana. Selected applicants met at the casting field in Delta, filled out the necessary paper-



*Joel Brown, acting chief of revetment section, is interviewed by media regarding the unique work of the Mat Sinking Unit.*

work with the assistance of a human resource specialist, and then traveled to District Headquarters building here in Vicksburg for further in-processing which included completing a physical examination.

Upon arrival at the work site of the MSU, training was held on proper usage of equipment, and safety training had to be completed to ensure that all are made aware of and adhere to safety practices and procedures.

Was the longer season more costly? More usage of the equipment means more repairs. "It was costly, but our Commander, Col Jeffrey Eckstein, was not as concerned about how much money was spent as he was about how much work was accomplished," stated Ross.

A longer season also lends more time for accidents. The crew had three loss time accidents during the season. One accident is too many but considering the length of the season, the number could have been higher. A longer season also causes a short layup season before the next revetment season, and less time for equipment repairs.

Working on this unique, one-of-a-kind job, is unlike the work and working conditions of fellow team members at District Headquarters. The crew of the MSU works 10-hour shifts, for 12 consecutive days before a trip home, and they live and dine on the quarter boats that tie off to the bank near the work area.

The galley cooks provide three exceptional meals a day to satisfy the hungry appetites of this hard working crew. There are two large dining rooms designed to accommodate more than 200, who must eat and be back at work within an hour. Other seasonal professions on the MSU include clerks, deck hands, drag line operators, electricians, gantry crane operators, mechanics, quarter boat util-

*(Continued on page 22)*

# District's new website enhances capabilities and navigation

By Bucky Wall

The District recently launched a newly designed website ([www.mvk.usace.army.mil](http://www.mvk.usace.army.mil)) that provides more information in a multimedia, easily navigable format. The site is number 34 of 58 Corps sites to be migrated this year to a cloud-based system hosted by the Department of Defense (DoD) agency, Defense Media Activity (DMA).

These new sites will enable the Corps to create a consistent look and feel across all districts and divisions to provide viewers with technologically enhanced capabilities and easier navigation controls. The end result: more news in a more appealing design about the Corps and the District's projects and programs that bring value to the nation.

## New Feature - RSS Feeds and Contact Form

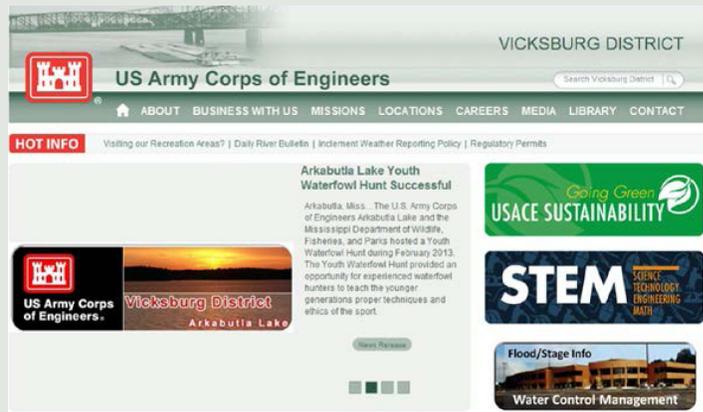
One of the new features of the District's website is the addition of Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds. A RSS feed can be read using software or app called a "RSS reader" and this can be desktop-based or mobile-device-based. The user subscribes to a feed by entering the feed's URL or by clicking a RSS icon in a web browser.



*This is a typical RSS icon and would be clickable in a web browser.*

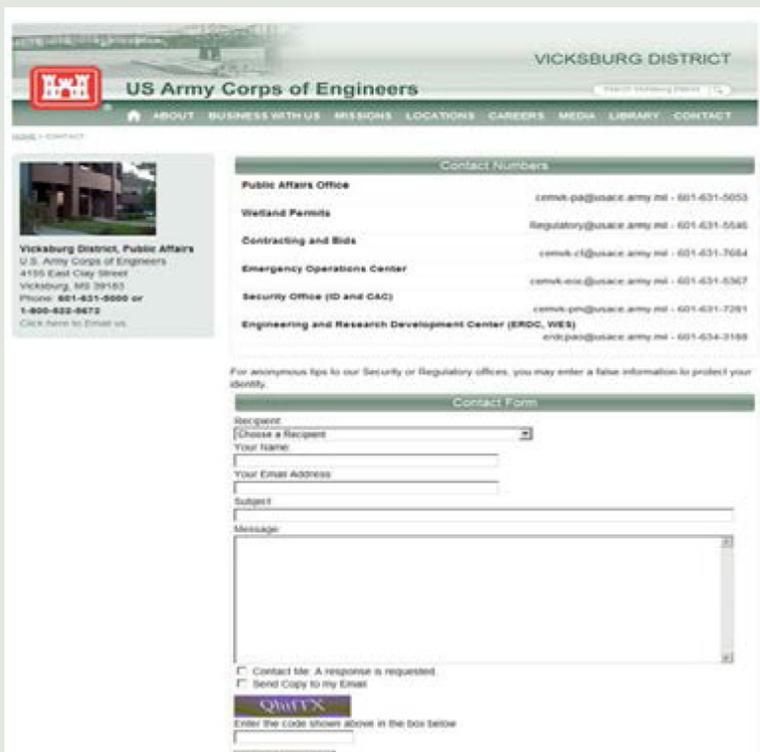
The RSS reader app checks the user's subscribed feeds regularly for new work, downloads any updates that it finds, and provides a user interface to monitor and read the feeds. RSS allows users to avoid manually inspecting all of the websites they are interested in, and instead subscribe to websites so that all new content is automatically checked for and displayed by their browsers as soon as it is available. For example, as soon as Public Affairs issues a new press release; your RSS reader would automatically look for it, download and show it to you on your cell phone or computer with no additional action after you set up the app.

Another new feature of the website is a contact page that allows the public to email the district thru the Defense Media Activity (DMA) system. The



*The headline section of the new website showing the Hot Info section, a rotating banner, the three web ads, the search field and the graphical navigation bar (menu).*

user can pick from a pull down list of offices, including field and recreational sites. To facilitate anonymous tips to our regulatory and security offices, a note has been added to the page allowing false contact information from the user to protect their identity. ◀



# Recycling - good for the environment and the community

By Cori Shiers

Photos courtesy of MIDD-West Industries

Do you recycle paper here at the Vicksburg District? Have you ever wondered why there are restrictions to what is acceptable to be recycled? Many people have asked why can't we recycle stapled paper or shredded paper? This is the second year to have the recycling program at the District. However, many employees do not know the value of the program.

The recycled paper is donated to MIDD-West Industries. MIDD-West is a private, non-profit, sheltered work center that teaches employment training to disabled adults. MIDD-West Industries is a partnering agency with United Way. They provide a complete range of rehabilitation, employment, and skills training to the handicapped adult population (age 16 and up) of Warren and Claiborne Counties. They also strive to decrease dependency upon the public and family by enabling handicapped adults to function at their maximum potential within their community, social, and work settings. They accept all grades of paper and #1 and #2 plastics. In addition to their recycling activities, MIDD-West has other business enterprises in the area to employ disabled adults that include operation of federal mail rooms, bulk mail services, packaging, sorting, and janitorial services. Through all of their various business



enterprises, MIDD-West generates 97.1% of their entire budget. Due to the varying abilities of their staff, they are limited to what items they can accept. Having limitations on acceptable items allows MIDD-West to streamline their process. Currently, MIDD-West accepts newspapers, staple-free office paper, magazines, and phone books from the District.

Regulatory team members volunteered to provide a mechanism to reduce waste within the District by starting the recycling effort for Earth Day 2011. They set up an effective recycling program for paper products in order to motivate and encourage a change in the organization's recycling and waste reduction efforts. The Regulatory Branch Recycling PDT planned, executed, and currently maintains the paper product recycling effort for the District. Building maintenance personnel assist in the effort by collecting the recycling once a week and transferring it to the recycling dumpster provided by MIDD-West Industries. The donated recycled paper products are picked up from the District on a weekly basis by MIDD-West.

The District's support of the recycling initiative provides a means for the District to reduce waste and give back to the community, facilitating a stronger community relationship with MIDD-West Industries. The District recycles approximately 6 tons of paper products annually. For every ton of paper recycled, 17 trees are saved. As employee participation and awareness increases, the Recycling PDT would like to build on the current initiative and provide a venue for the recycling of additional products in the future. ◀



## District names new Chief of River Operations



*Hengst speaks to the media in Monroe, Louisiana, about Ol' Man River.*

Thomas L. Hengst has recently been chosen as the chief of river operations branch of Operations Division.

As chief of river operations, Hengst will be responsible for executing the management, planning, operations and maintenance of all navigational projects within the three-state area of responsibility of the Vicksburg District, which includes Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

Hengst's career began as a cost engineer in Engineering Division. Prior

Story and photos by  
Kavanaugh Breazeale

to his new appointment, he served as the chief of flood control and hydro-power. He has also held the positions of project manager and senior project manager in the programs, projects and management section of Planning Programs and Project Management Division.

Hengst is a native of Sharkey County and grew up in Rolling Fork. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree in civil engineering from Mississippi State University. He is a Registered Professional Engineer and Professional Land Surveyor in the state of Mississippi. He and his wife Pamela are the parents of three children and are members of the Rolling Fork Methodist Church.

The river operations branch is responsible for channel improvement, dredging, and navigation activities on the lower Mississippi, Red, Ouachita/Black, and Pearl rivers. This work is accomplished by utilizing specialized floating plant, dustpan and cutterhead



*Hengst discusses river operations.*

dredges, towboats, survey boats, and various other river-related equipment. The scope of work encompasses four Corps districts, seven states, multiple watersheds, and utilizes the latest technology in river engineering and operations. The river operations branch is home to the Mat Sinking Unit and the dredging unit which consists of the Motor Vessel (MV) William James, MV Benyaurd, MV Harrison and the Dredge Jadwin. ◀

## Director of Modeling, Mapping, and Consequences Production Center receives 2013 USACE Federal Engineer of the Year Award

By Shirley J. Smith

Photo by Francis Thomas Eyre III



The National Society of Professional Engineers recently presented Ronald Goldman with the 2013 USACE Federal Engineer of the Year Award at the Federal Engineer of The Year ceremony at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. He was also named a top 10 finalist for the Federal Engineer of the Year Award. Goldman is director of the District's Modeling, Mapping, and Consequences Production Center.

Goldman was presented the award due to his development of engineering processes that exceed industry standards. He directed a high volume of production on engineering products significant to critical infrastructure protection and to dam and levee safety.

Goldman developed flood simulation software that determines real-time flood mapping estimates. The software  
*(Continued on page 22)*

## District's Deputy Commander gets promoted

By Kavanaugh Breazeale  
Photo by Kavanaugh Breazeale



*Pictured left to right are Maj John Peabody, Commander of Mississippi Valley Division, Lt. Col. Tucker and his wife Courtney, and Lt. Col. Tucker's father, John T. Tucker, Jr.*

Vicksburg District is very proud to announce the promotion of Major John T. Tucker III to Lieutenant Colonel.

A native of Glencoe, Alabama, Major John T. Tucker III was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army after graduating from Auburn University in 1996. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in mechanical engineering from Auburn University and a Master of Science Degree in engineer management from the University of Missouri-Rolla. His military education includes the Engineer Officer Basic and Advanced Course, the Combined Arms and Services Staff School and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

Major John Tucker's military awards and decorations include three Bronze Star Medals, two Meritorious Service Medals, five Army Commendation Medals, three Army Achievement Medals, the Combat Action Badge, and the Parachutist Badge. Lieutenant colonel Tucker is married to the former Courtney Montesse and they have one daughter and three sons.

## District team member receives Young Engineer of the Year Award

By Shirley J. Smith  
Photo by Alfred Dulaney



*Prestwood Young Engineer of the Year*

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) recently selected Deanna Prestwood for the Young Engineer of the Year Award. Prestwood serves as chief of the river stabilization section of the Engineering and Construction Division.

She is responsible for directing, supervising, and providing guidance and technical advice to three engineering interns and four senior engineers in activities associated with the Mississippi River, Red River/J. Bennett Johnston Waterway, Mississippi Delta Headwaters, and other District properties. She is a consultant for matters concerning navigation, flood control, and bank stabilization.

Prestwood was selected for the award not only for her expertise in the field of engineering, but also for her continuing promotion of engineering, science, and technology. She teaches engineering classes at the Corps'

Engineering Research and Development Center. She further encourages the advancement of the civil engineering profession through her teaching and mentoring to students at local school districts and the Boy Scout and Girl Scout organizations.

The Award is presented to a member of ASCE who is 35 years of age or younger who advances the profession, exhibits technical competence, high character and integrity, and contributes to public service outside their professional careers.

She received the 2011 Department of the Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service for her design efforts involving the Mississippi River 2011 Flood of Record.

Prestwood, a native of Vicksburg residing in Clinton, is a graduate of Porters Chapel Academy, and earned her civil engineering degree from Mississippi State University, and is a Licensed Professional Engineer in the State of Mississippi.

She is married to Craig Prestwood, and they are the parents of two children. She is the daughter of Larry and Jean Calloway of Raymond, formerly of Vicksburg.

## District selects Vroman as Chief of Levee Safety Branch

Story and photo by Kavanaugh Breazeale



Noah Vroman

Noah Vroman was recently named the new levee safety branch chief of the Dam and Levee Safety Modifications Production Center. As the levee safety branch chief, Vroman will function as the regional authoritative source of theoretical expertise and practical knowledge in the subject matter areas of levee safety, engineering risk analysis and public works infrastructure safety.

Vroman began his career at the District as a civil engineer in the geotechnical branch in 2003. He has served as a research geotechnical engineer, dam safety program manager and as the chief of the investigation and inspection section. He also served on the Interagency Performance Evaluation Taskforce (IPET) and the Southeast Louisiana Hurricane Protection Project following the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and received the Superior Civilian Award in 2007.

Vroman grew up in Tupelo and graduated from Tupelo High School. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in civil engineering from Mississippi State University and is currently pursuing a Masters Degree in civil engineering at Mississippi State University. He is a Registered Professional Engineer in the state of Mississippi.

Vroman is married to the former Ashley Wages from Pontotoc County and they have three children.

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## Two District team members receive Modern Technology Leader Awards

By Shirley J. Smith  
Photos by  
Alfred Dulaney



Marneshia Richard

Two District team members, Marneshia V. Richard and Charles E. Stokes, Jr., recently received the Modern-Day Technology Leader Award sponsored by the Council of Engineering Deans of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Lockheed Martin Corporation, and U.S. Black Engineer and Information Technology Magazine.

Modern-Day Technology Leaders are men and women who demonstrate outstanding performance and exhibit potential to shape the future course of engineering, science, and technology.

Richard is a structural engineer in the Engineering and Construction Division and is responsible for performing structural engineering design work for conventional type structures. She performs designs of steel and concrete structures in connection with flood control, navigation, and multi-purpose projects, and prepares plans and specifications for the projects.

A native of Ashland, Richard is a graduate of Ashland High School. She earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in civil engineering from Mississippi State University. She is a member of the Society of American Military Engineers, and is an engineer-in-training for

her pre-certification as a Registered Professional Engineer in the State of Mississippi. She is the daughter of Kervin and Martha Richard of Ashland.

Stokes is a civil engineer in the Engineering and Construction Division and is responsible for performing design work for a variety of bank stabilization projects on rivers and streams. He is also responsible for channel improvement structures providing flood control and navigation along the Mississippi River within the boundaries of the Vicksburg District.

A native of Utica, Stokes is a graduate of Hinds Agricultural High School, and earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in civil engineering from Jackson State University. He is a member of the Society of American Military Engineers, and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He is the son of Rachel and Charles Stokes, Sr. of Utica.

They received the awards at the 27th annual Black Engineer of the Year Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Global Competitiveness Conference held February 8 in Washington D.C. This conference recognizes outstanding accomplishments in STEM in industry, education, and government.



Charles Stokes

## Mat Sinking Unit's galley foreman wears two hats

By Shirley J. Smith  
Photo by Kavanaugh Breazeale

"It's just like riding a bicycle, once you learn you never forget." That is a comment by Andrew Williams, foreman of the Mat Sinking Unit's (MSU) galley. No, he is not referring to his culinary skills; he is referring to his ability as a skilled emergency medical technician (EMT). Having been the only EMT on the MSU since 1995, Williams was recently selected for the duties of foreman of the galley, and a co-worker assumed the duties of the EMT for the MSU. Now, the MSU employs an EMT and a paramedic.

Saturday, February 2, 2013, began as any other working day for Williams; his thoughts were concentrated on doing the chores of galley foreman. So when the horn was sounded for the unique group of men and women with the MSU to begin their daily jobs, Williams went to the galley to begin his galley duties, and Charles Hillard, a revetment worker also rose to the sound of the horn, but suddenly fell to the ground. Soon afterward, another MSU worker rushed to Williams to inform him that Hillard had become ill and had fallen. Williams put the duties of galley foreman in the back of his mind when he received the call for help and rushed to Hillard and saw that he showed symptoms of suffering a stroke. "His speech was slurred and the right side of his body was weak. I immediately contacted a licensed ambulance driver and the paramedic on board the MSU; we proceeded to administer medical attention to him until we put him in the ambulance assigned to the MSU," Williams stated.

Williams said that within thirty minutes the stroke victim was transported to a hospital. Williams drove behind the ambulance all the way to the hospital. Hillard was driven to Baton Rouge General Hospital where he was treated for a stroke and placed in the intensive care unit. "We stayed there with him until the medical staff there stabilized him. I went there every day to check on him," Williams stated.

The MSU employs a group of professionals who do a unique job, like none other anywhere. Williams previously worked as an EMT with the Vicksburg Fire Department (VFD). "During my years with the VFD I saw a lot of that, and being the only EMT on the MSU for quite a few years, I gained experience for such situations, so my EMT skills just kicked in." He said that although he is now foreman of the galley, he is still an EMT and always will be. "I plan to maintain my license as an EMT because I never know when those skills will be needed and I definitely want to be licensed to do what I need to do at the time. In this case, I did what I had to do."

After a five-day stay in the hospital, Hillard was discharged and his prognosis is good. The quick actions of Williams might have saved Hillard from a lifetime of paralysis. At the end of the day, did Williams think about the fact that he left his newly assigned duty to perform duties of his former position? "No, the MSU employs talented individuals who usually rise to the occasion when called upon," Williams stated. This is exemplified through Williams' actions on February 2, 2013.

So, is it safe to say that Williams wears two hats on the MSU? You bet! ◀



Andrew Williams, left, explains how he handled the emergency situation with the stroke victim to David Jenkins, center, deputy chief of Operations Division, and right, Greg Raimondo, chief of Public Affairs Office.

# COMMUNITY



Photos by  
Kavanaugh Breazeale



During Job Shadow Day at the District, archaeologist Sarah Koepfel, standing, explains an archaeological find to Morgan Ainsworth, a senior at Vicksburg High School.

Vicksburg High School senior, Justin Galloway, gets first hand information on engineering techniques from engineers Colby Bankston, left, and David Randolph, seated.

## *High School Students Get Inside Scoop on the Corps*

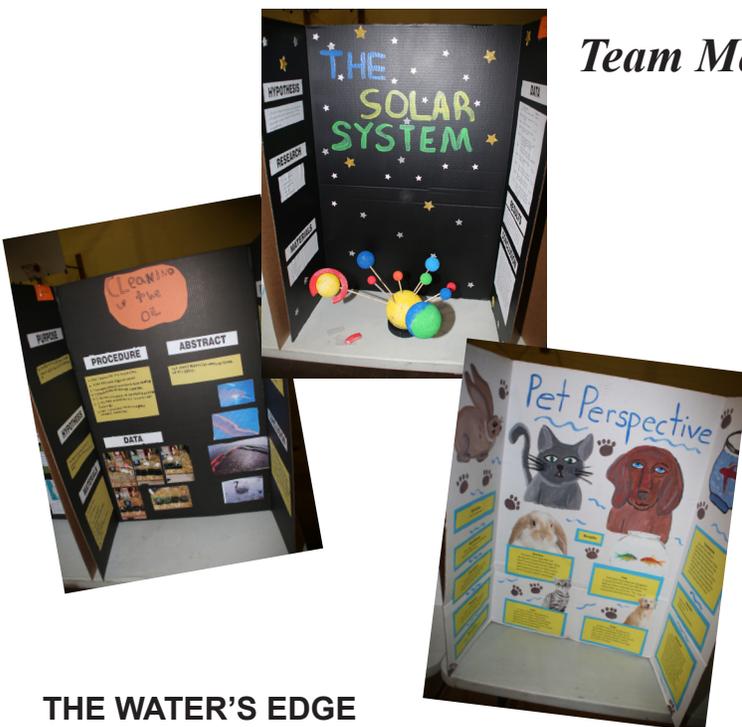


Speakers to students during Engineer Week included Keith Flowers, left photo, and Deanna Prestwood and Charles Stokes, Jr., right photo.

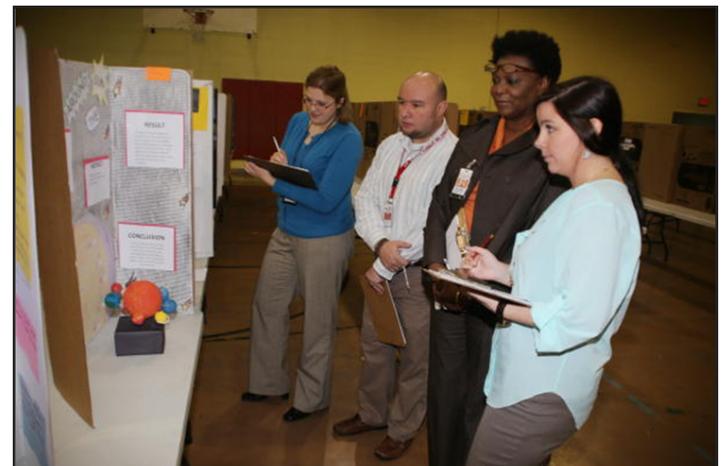


## *Team Members Help Judge Local Science Fair*

Photos by Alfred Dulaney



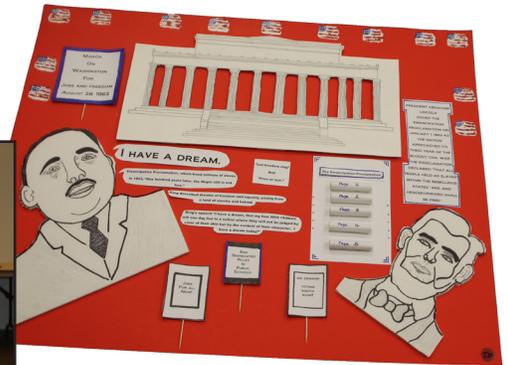
THE WATER'S EDGE



Team members are left to right, Sarah Koepfel, Colby Bankston, Ella Huey, and Cori Shiers.

# PARTNERSHIPS

## Judging Black History Month Posters

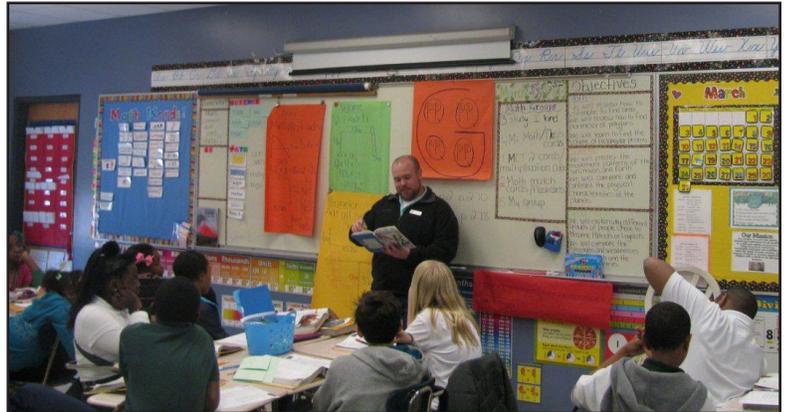


Photos by Alfred Dulaney

Linda McDonald, Samantha Claypool, and Ramona Warren judge posters.

## Reading Across America Initiative

Photos by David Randolph



Pictured reading to students at Vicksburg Intermediate School are David Randolph, top left, Chad Bounds, top right, Dustin Herr bottom left, and Charles Stokes, bottom right.

## District team member returns after 21 month deployment

By Shirley J. Smith  
Photo by Robert Upchurch



Vince Kirtley

A water treatment plant operator has returned to his normal duties at DeGray Lake after a 21-month deployment to Afghanistan. Charles V. (“Vince”) Kirtley was deployed to Kabul, Afghanistan from March 6, 2011 until December 15, 2012.

During his deployment to Afghanistan, Kirtley served as deputy chief of operations and maintenance execution branch in operations and maintenance division, Transatlantic District North (TAN), Kabul. He supervised as many as 20 Corps contracting officer’s representatives and local national quality assurance representatives. He was responsible for tracking all major contractual and maintenance issues for approximately 350 sites in North Afghanistan. His duties also included reporting the status of site additions and transi-

tion of sites to the Afghan National Security Forces and reporting security issues in the vicinity of the sites.

Prior to assuming the deputy chief duties in TAN, Kirtley managed 36 Afghan National Security Forces sites in four provinces as contracting officer’s representative in Kunduz. He made hundreds of site visits and inspections to remote bases outside the wire in four provinces in northern Afghanistan to ensure strict contractor compliance with the operations and maintenance contract. He also managed five Afghan local national quality assurance representatives, and approved contractor purchases and work requests. He ensured work requests were completed correctly and within the scope of the operations and maintenance contract.

Here at home, Kirtley’s duties at DeGray Lake include the operations and maintenance of lake utilities and facilities.

For more than two centuries, the civilian and military employees of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have been committed to providing comprehensive engineering, management, and technical support to the Nation in peace and war. ◀

## District recognizes Black History Month with poster contest

By Shirley J. Smith  
Photos by Kavanaugh Breazeale and Alfred Dulaney

The overall 1st place winners of the District’s Black History Month Poster contest were, left to right, Derrick Davis, Vicksburg Junior High School, Viraj Patel, Vicksburg Intermediate School, Kallie Willingham, Warren Central Intermediate School, Tyrione Ross, Sherman Avenue Elementary, and Destiney Swartz, Warren Central Intermediate School. Not pictured is Jay Stirgus, Vicksburg High School. Presenting the awards were far left, Gregory Jackson of the District’s Equal Employment Office, and far right, Maj John T. Tucker, III, Deputy Commander of the Vicksburg District. These students received a plaque and \$50.00 to open a savings account; the money was donated by local banks Britton & Koontz, Bancorp South, Trustmark, Guaranty Bank and Trust, River Hills, and Regions. ◀



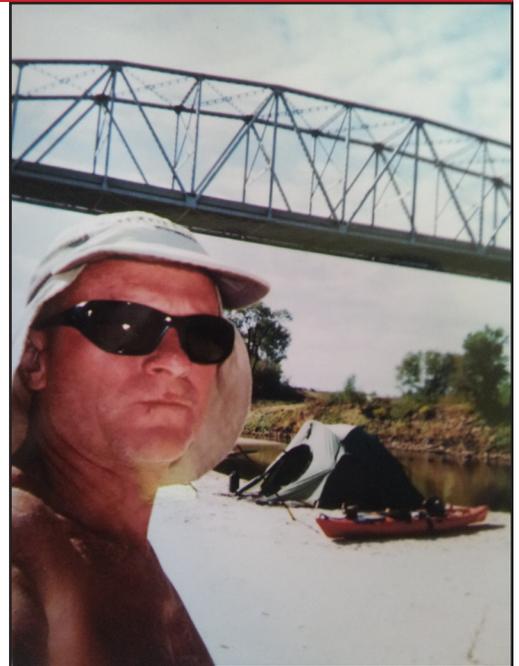
Betty James, left, explains the judging process to Sissy Carter, center, and Linda Brown, right.

Dustin Herr judges posters.





Story and photos courtesy  
of Greg Barrington



## Exploring the solitude of the Red River can be an adventure

My name is Greg Barrington and I'm from Austin Texas, where I have a small business called "Can Do". I was very excited to have the opportunity to Kayak through the State of Louisiana via The Red River. It would be a challenge in the winter, but, snakes and alligators would be hibernating, thus decreasing the risk factor. However there was still plenty of wild life to be seen. It was like being at the zoo, but with no bars.

Ground zero was Hwy 2 Bridge at Hosston where I paddled 190 miles southeast to Lock & Dam 2 around Marksville. I have kayaked 840 miles of the Red River. It was freezing the first 3 days. The only trees with green were the Conifers. The river was running high and the air crisp and cold. The sounds of hawks screeching and fish flipping in the water would echo between the river banks. The geese would fly over in formation with their calls to each other. And deer would scatter as I came around bends in the river. There were many sand bars on which to camp. I took all my trash out with me to make it just as nice for someone else. The beavers would slap their tails on the water if you invaded their space for long. In the early mornings I would paddle close to the banks to see one den after the other. At times beaver and nutrias would be spooked and would dart out straight at you. I had one jump from 15 feet up and almost landed in my lap. And with the size of their teeth it can be most sobering. I would paddle past rock out croppings where otter would play all day. They would make up games and were lots of fun to watch.

I would talk to any fishermen I saw and asked them of

their catch. Bass were running and large catfish as well. One fellow told me of a 91 lb catfish he landed that almost broke the record. And as we were talking he landed a fresh water muscle on shad on his rod. The muscle was fist size and had closed on his hook. He said he would smoke it on the grill.

Some mornings the fog was so thick the visibility was 1/8 of a mile. Thanks goodness for the river channel markers and the Red River Waterway Commission that helps make the river friendlier to navigate. I would have loved to see a canoe and sit on top of Kayak Rentals in Shreveport and Alexandria. I feel that it would be good healthy recreation for everyone to enjoy. And in the summer months it's a great way to slow down and cool down, which would bring in more business to the area.

As I paddled on I saw pelicans and their gracefulness. They didn't seem to have to flap their wings as much to keep flight. About sundown the river would come alive - the owls hooting and the coyotes were thick the whole trip. Bring down cows and calves every night. The cows would seek safety by bedding close to my tent. But the coyotes would still come in as close as 20 yards. I would spook them with my air horn. Most of the people that traveled the Red River knew of its history. So there were many stories people shared with me. That offered a kind of southern comfort feel. Songs would come to mind as I paddled on like "Blue Bayou" by Linda Ronstadt and movies like "Red River" with John Wayne and Montgomery Clift. As tugs

*(Continued on page 16)*

*(Red River, concluded from page 15)*

and trains would pass they would sound their horns and wave. As I came around the bend there was Shreveport - a real eye opener with the casinos' lights lighting up the sky. And the feel of vibrancy and innovative creativity filled the air.

As I paddled on through Natchitoches I met a gentleman named Sonny who told of Natchitoches being the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase. And he had a lot of interesting facts. Getting through the locks and dams on the Red River was Easy Breezy and the lock operators' superior caution to attention makes passage through these locks and dams very simple. YouTube offers instructions on the lock & dam procedures. As I paddled on to Alexandria they had some pretty cool railroad bridges that could be lifted up and down with a large pulley system, great architectural style bridges, and great urban parks. I ended my river journey at Lock & Dam #2 Recreational Area, where you could camp for up to 7 days free! All in all, I found the Red River to be most educational and spiritually uplifting.

It was truly a great adventure. My thanks go out to the support of my loving wife Karen Barrington and my brother-in-law Nelson Alberthal. And a special thanks out to Luke and Mike at The Red River Waterway Commission, Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries Enforcement Division, the Lock and Dam Operations Division. Also a special thanks out to park ranger Larry Baum from Marksville, Louisiana, for going above and beyond the call of duty.

**Greg Barrington**

## Rain doesn't delay waterfowl hunt at DeGray

By Jeffrey Lockwood

Photo by Steve Rodgers

To say the weather didn't cooperate with the mobility impaired hunt held in January at DeGray Lake would be an understatement. That Saturday was unusually warm with a high temperature around 75 degrees. High temps usually equal low duck numbers and this was the case. In typical Arkansas fashion, temps plunged into the 30's on Sunday, accompanied by steady rainfall and high winds. Despite these setbacks, six hunters from across the state braved the elements and made it a point to stick it out to have a successful hunt. They managed to harvest twenty birds in only four hours of hunting. That's pretty good considering Mother Nature just wouldn't give us a break. But hey, that's hunting!

The 400-acre lower lake serves as a great location for the event. The shallow depth, backwaters and adjacent hardwood stands provide ideal habitat for wintering waterfowl. Hunters are transported to selected sites and placed on modified shipping pallets which provide a dry, level surface. As the only Corps sponsored duck hunt in the state, the demand for the slots are high. As always, dedicated volunteers stepped up to the plate to lend a hand providing 72 hours of service.

Thanks to local sponsors, plenty of food was donated for some good eatin' through the weekend. Brookshire's Food Store and WalMart of Arkadelphia and Rothwell Marine of Hope provided donations for the hunt.

"After spending a weekend with these guys you really appreciate and begin to un-

derstand just what they go through on a daily basis. Normal everyday tasks that most of us take for granted can prove to be quite an obstacle for them. But they persevere and press on", stated park ranger Josh Voss.

Toney Lequieu of the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission said it best, "We all work together to give individuals with disabilities the chance to prove to themselves that they can accomplish many things. We all hope this opportunity will open an interest in other activities while reducing the anxiety of trying something new." Not only do the hunters look forward to this annual event, but so do DeGray Lake staff and volunteers. New friends, as well as memories are made every January around breakfast, a spread of decoys or a campfire.

Events such as these are great avenues for the Corps to provide unique, worthwhile recreational opportunities to the public. Although fate has dealt these guys hardships, they press on and enjoy life fully. The sincere thanks and appreciation expressed by the participants as well as their friends and family truly make for a meaningful and valuable experience for everyone involved. ◀



## Friends of Lake Ouachita Partnership expands

By Amy Shultz

Photos by Amy Shultz and Bill Jackson

Since January 2012, Lake Ouachita has partnered with the Friends of Lake Ouachita in a Cooperative Agreement in the management of the Crystal Springs Recreation Area. Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO) is the non-profit organization affiliated with the Lake Ouachita Citizen Focus Committee. The relationship between the Corps and the Focus committee has been on-going since 2002, and has grown into a full partnership dedicated to improvements at Lake Ouachita.



Colonel Eckstein signs Cooperative Agreement with the Friends of Lake Ouachita. Front row left to right are Arnold Habig, Al Gathright, Col Eckstein, Steve Jones. Back row left to right are Tom Butler, Jerry Shields, Robert Cavanaugh, David Doty, and Rick Stokes.

The Cooperative Agreement in the management of Crystal Springs has been a tremendous success, and has garnered over \$120,000 of use fees collected to be utilized for enhancement of facilities in the Crystal Springs Recreation Area. FOLO manages the fee collection program, performs minor maintenance, and carries out beneficial projects intended to upgrade area facilities. The Corps remains present in the area performing visitor assistance duties, major maintenance projects, and oversees the overall operations. FOLO and the Corps have worked jointly to establish a list of enhancement projects projected and planned for the Crystal Springs area. During the winter camping season months, Corps personnel and FOLO-hired contractors will work to accomplish these improvements.

A few of the more notable improvement projects include the installation of a campground playground located near the swim beach, converting underutilized tent only campsites into RV/tent campsites, grouped together for group camping, increasing the number of pull-through accessible sites, installing circulation vents in comfort stations to improve air flow, leveling campsite pads and improving drainage issues to help control and prevent erosion issues in the campground.

As additional funds are collected each year, more improvements are planned for the recreational area. The Lake Ouachita/Friends of Lake Ouachita Cooperative Agreement is the first for the Vicksburg District and Mississippi Valley Division. Through this partnership, members of the public have seen a smooth transition and experience no disruption of use in the area. As the fees are collected, those fees will be utilized in the area to make the needed improvements and upgrades to benefit visitors for years to come.



FOLO fee collector contractors, Coy and Louellen McLemore register campers Sharon and Dale Murrah at Crystal Springs.

Due to the tremendous success of this partnership, FOLO requested to expand their area of operation to include the Tompkins Bend Recreation Area, Lake Ouachita's largest campground with 77 campsites, which became effective on November 1, 2012. Those visiting the Tompkins Bend Campground will see an immediate improvement in the area. Individual water connections have been installed

(Continued on page 23)

# Henderson State University students upgrade bluebird nest boxes at Arkansas lakes

By Johnny Cantrell

Photos by Johnny Cantrell, Dan Funderburk, Dave Pennington, and Andrea Mcae

If you've visited any of the three Arkansas Corps lakes recently you might have seen some "bird" houses attached to trees. Well, the bird houses are actually bluebird nesting boxes. These three Arkansas lakes currently have over 200 bluebird nest boxes in place on Corps lands which offer suitable habitat. The annual maintenance and monitoring of these boxes can require several man-days of effort to insure their success.

For the past 10-12 years most of the Corps personnel involved in natural resource management, and a large number of volunteers, have been concentrating on gaining control of Hydrilla, a highly invasive aquatic plant, which was indirectly responsible for the Avian Vacuolar Myelinopathy outbreak and the deaths of more than 60 bald eagles in Arkansas. During this time, the bluebird nest box program had been placed on the back burner as far as maintenance and monitoring and the number of young birds in the campgrounds had decreased from previous years.

This year, with the help of six students from Henderson State University (HSU) in Arkadelphia, we hope to invigorate our bluebird nest box program on all three lakes. These students will each donate at least 100 hours of volunteer service as part of their Practicum, a graduate level course consisting mainly of field work in natural resources management. They will

work on the bluebird nest box program as well as assisting in wildlife surveys, wildlife opening maintenance, native aquatic plant establishment and construction and placement of fish attractors at Lake Ouachita, DeGray Lake and Lake Greeson.

Lake Greeson has two student volunteers working on their Practicum this year. Derek Lynch and Garrett Gills are both juniors at HSU pursuing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Natural Resources Recreation Management. DeGray Lake has three student volunteers, also working on their Practicum at HSU. Kelly Warren, Lain Janes, and Melissa Vickers have been volunteering at DeGray since the start of the spring semester. Tiffany Kriigel is currently working on the bluebird nest boxes at Ouachita. She has completed the inventory and has begun to construct new boxes to replace those which are no longer suitable for nesting activities.



Henderson State University student Tiffany Kriigel builds a new bluebird nest box to be placed in one of the campgrounds at Lake Ouachita.

One of the most popular songbirds in the United States is the Eastern Bluebird. They are commonly found near open parks or fields. Most often there are woodlands nearby where



Henderson State University student Garrett Gills places a bluebird nesting box on a steel T-post for predator control at Lake Greeson.



Henderson State University volunteer places a small piece of a flea collar in the top of a bluebird nest box to repel wasps.

## LAKES AND RECREATION

they prefer to nest in cavities which have been hollowed out by some other species of bird or mammal. This makes the Corps campgrounds especially attractive to this small thrush. While there are always a few natural nesting cavities in some of the different species of hardwood trees found in our parks, there aren't nearly enough to accommodate the number of birds which tend to establish a resident population.

It may be difficult for some of our campground visitors to understand the importance of placing bluebird nest boxes in our campgrounds and day use areas without fully understanding how changes in habitat can affect a population of birds or mammals. In most cases, the existence of humans in the bluebird's natural environment usually will have an impact on their survival. This impact can be either positive or negative depending on the circumstances causing the impact. In the case of the Eastern Bluebird it was a change in a farming practice in the 50's and 60's, namely switching from the use of wooden fence posts, many with natural cavities, to the use of steel T-posts. While the steel posts were favored by the farmer, the bluebird population suffered a loss of nesting cavities. Also, during this time, the

insecticide DDT was used to spray road banks to kill off large numbers of insects thought to be the cause of some human diseases. This practice was detrimental to the bluebird, not only by severely reducing their food supply, but by limiting their reproductive capability by causing thinning of their egg shells. These two practices led to the number of bluebirds decreasing in the 1960's to the point that many bird lovers feared they might eventually become extinct.

Both the male and female bluebird are very colorful. As with most avian species the male exhibits brighter colors than his female partner, which is Mother Nature's way of protecting her from predators. The male has brighter blue coloring on his wings and head and a rusty red colored breast and throat. The females are lighter blue on the wings and tail, a brown colored breast and throat with a grey head and back. Eastern Bluebirds are found east of the Rockies, from southern Canada to our gulf states and southeastern Arizona to Nicaragua.

In 1973, the Endangered Species Act was passed by Congress which offered protection to any species thought to be in danger of extinction, which included the Eastern Bluebird. This act brought to the attention of bird lovers everywhere the plight of the bluebird and the devastating effect on their numbers. The banning of DDT use in the United States in 1972 and the volunteer efforts of countless bird lovers constructing and placing bluebird nest boxes have allowed the Eastern Bluebird population to slowly begin to increase.

All six students seem to enjoy the opportunity to get out of

the classroom and enjoy the beautiful scenery offered by the Corps campgrounds. When asked to explain how the volunteer experience has helped her in the pursuit of her degree, Tiffany replied, "Working with the Army Corps of Engineers has been a positive educational experience. The park rangers on Lake Ouachita have given me the tools to further my natural resource recreation degree with field work. It has been a pleasure working with each one of them." Kelly Warren, who is volunteering at DeGray, states, "The most important thing I have learned is that the classroom is very different from the field. We learn what to expect, but working in the field with the rangers exceeds those expectations. The experience has been amazing." Melissa Vickers adds, "Working with the Corps of Engineers has been a real great experience. I enjoy working outdoors and being around Mother Nature." Lain Janes may have summed up his field experience the best by describing a visit to one of the many wildlife management areas at DeGray. "A few days ago, I was fortunate enough to check on an eagle's nest with a park ranger. We used binoculars to observe a baby eaglet moving around in the nest. I am very thankful to be involved with this agency at DeGray and I highly value these relevant experiences."

While the weather has been less than desirable on a few occasions lately, these students are learning that when you work with wildlife you have to enter their environment and be subjected to the same conditions, both good and bad, that wildlife must deal with on a daily basis. This enables these students to better understand their needs and how to improve their chances of survival. Today, thanks to continued volunteerism, the Eastern Bluebird population is alive, well and increasing. ◀

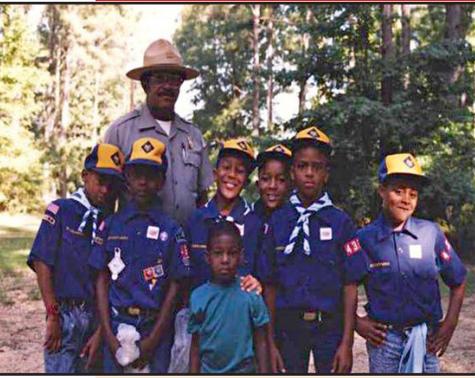


*Henderson State University students clean a bluebird nest box at DeGray Lake. Left to right, are Melissa Vickers, Kelly Warren, and Lain Janes.*

## One of District's first African American park rangers retires

*Leon Morgan leaves a legacy of service at Sardis Lake*

**By Torick Frison  
Photo by Kavanaugh  
Breazeale**



Leon Morgan was born in rural Panola County on December 21, 1937. Early in life he realized times were hard but he was determined to beat the odds. He has always been a hard worker and because of his tenacity, he has chartered new territories that laid a foundation for others to follow.

At one point in his life, Morgan worked three jobs: juggling responsibilities as a teacher, bus driver, and park ranger. He still found time to coach both boys and girls sports at the local junior high school where he taught. In 1996 he retired from teaching, but continued his career as a park ranger at Sardis Lake until his recent retirement.

Morgan was one of the first African American park rangers hired at the Vicksburg District. He and his friend, Albert Evans, began their careers together with the Corps in March of 1971. Morgan is not sure how Evans began his career with the Corps, but reflected on his own beginnings. Morgan recalled teaching with the wife of the Sardis Lake's resource manager, James McBroom. McBroom was at the school one day and asked Morgan if he would be interested in working at Sardis Lake. Morgan accepted the offer and thus began a career that has spanned more than 40 years.

Morgan has seen many changes and personnel changes during his career. He has worked under a total of four resource managers. Each one had a different management style, but he states that he enjoyed working with each of them. He always tried to take negative situations and look at them positively. He has seen areas go from segregated to integrated, and witnessed other African Americans assume managerial roles within the Vicksburg District. He distinctly remembers the early 1970's when illegal drugs were rampant and drug users somehow always found their way to the lake. He feels that he was able to be a positive influence on some of the young people he observed in negative predicaments throughout his career by always showing discipline and professionalism.

Over the years Morgan has had to adapt to some seri-

ous changes. During the time he was in college the age of technology at the workplace hadn't advanced very much. He's had to adapt over the years by keeping up with some work tasks electronically. He has accepted the changes with open-mindedness and made it a point to adapt to those changes with a positive attitude and willingness to learn. Yet, he still reflects about the "good old days".

In addition to his multi-faceted career, he is also a family man. He is a loving husband and father to two wonderful children. When asked what makes a good park ranger, Morgan stated, "In anything you do you must love people, master your assignment, and keep a positive attitude." By demonstrating these attributes, he has received numerous certificates and awards throughout his career. His extraordinary life has been a very positive influence in my life, and I can only hope that one day I will be a positive influence on someone as Mr. Morgan has been to me. There is a favorite quote of Morgan's that I'd like to share, "Ever to see the unusual in the usual and the extraordinary in the ordinary." This is indeed a superlative challenge in life.

On April 4, family, friends, and coworkers gathered to celebrate Morgan's more than 40 years of dedicated service. We wish him all the best during his retirement. ◀



*Alton Pollan, resource manager at Sardis Lake, presents Commander's Award for Civilian Service to Logan at his retirement ceremony.*

# Corps provides unique deer hunt

By Alice Bufkin  
 Photos by Aaron Posner

It was an inaugural event when the Louisiana Field Office (LFO) recently held its Patriot's Hunt on the 350-acre site at the Columbia Lock and Dam.

The Patriot's Hunt was held in conjunction with the Wounded Warriors Project (WWP) that works to provide outdoor experiences to military service veterans with injuries and supports the need to raise awareness of the needs of the men and women who have paid physically and mentally towards the freedom of our country. To be eligible to participate in the hunt, the hunters were required to be registered as WWP alumni. The hunters selected for the hunt were all military veterans, which included Purple Heart recipients and disabled soldiers.

The idea for the hunt originated from an article that appeared in the Monroe News Star. The story titled, "Local veteran wants to organize hunt", was written about veteran John Nolan, Jr. of the WWP. As soon as the LFO rangers read the article, plans for the hunt began. They called Nolan that same week, held a meeting, and from then on everything just came together. They made it happen. "Putting the local support together was a team effort. The LFO has existing great relationships with the locals. They canvassed and garnered most of the support without my help. I did some begging and then the gift bags and donations poured in," said Nolan.

Activities began on Friday when hunters were given the opportunity to sight-in their muzzleloaders at the Ouachita Parish Sheriff Office's gun range. On Saturday at 5:45 a.m., the hunt began when the rangers transported the hunters by trailers to their covered box stands. After having been picked up for lunch, hunters were taken back to their stands for the afternoon hunt. Eight deer were harvested, three which included "first" deer and a "first" buck.

Daniel W. Jackson II of Terrytown, Louisiana, was one of the eight selected to participate in the hunt and he had hopes of harvesting his first buck. Jackson had served one tour in Iraq and received a Purple Heart after suffering a severe concussion from a roadside bomb. He works for the Veteran's Administration and deals with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) daily.

However, Jackson bagged a doe early that morning. But, the afternoon hunt went even better. At about 3:20 p.m., the buck he had been waiting for walked out of the brush about 35 yards away. It was a nice six-point!

Daniel Jackson did harvest his first buck, but there were other positive results. He had observed during the activities that there was not much communication among some

*(Continued on page 23)*



*Deanna Mentzel, left, and Josh Drodgy, right, arriving at the Ouachita Parrish Rifle Range with their service dogs. They train dogs to assist veterans with post-traumatic stress disorders.*



*Eight Wounded Warriors ready to go to the stands. Some of the hunters were accompanied by Corps employees or T. P. Outdoors film crews.*

## LAKES AND RECREATION

*(Goldman, concluded from page 8)*

provides the ability to share daily inundation estimates with outside agencies and the general public and offers a visual representation of structures in the risk zone. These maps were used for Hurricane Katrina search and rescue missions and the flood-fighting efforts during the historic 2011 Mississippi River floods.

He also led a committee of modelers that developed specialized tools, published standard operating procedures and produced training guidance for dam and levee infrastructure modeling. This enhanced hydraulic and hydrological modeling engineering competencies across the Corps, which resulted in highly trained, rapidly deployable professionals to support significant floods.

Goldman, a native of Philadelphia, earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in civil engineering from Mississippi State University, and is a Registered Professional Engineer in the State of Mississippi. He is an active member of Crossway Church, a member of the Chi Epsilon Honor Society of Engineers, and the Vicksburg Post Society of American Military Engineers.

He and his wife, the former Rita Dickinson of Carthage, are the parents of two daughters, Heather Hood of Southaven and Holly Porter of Vicksburg.

*(Long revetment season, concluded from page 5)*

ity operators, stewards, surveyors, tying tool operators and repairers, tractor drivers, river boat pilots, and winchmen.

Although seasonal, these men and women perform one of the most important jobs in the Corps of Engineers river stabilization program. The MSU is the only one of its kind in the world and consists of the Motor Vessel Benyaurd with the quarter boats, the Motor Vessel William James with the mat sinking plant and the Motor Vessel Harrison which all work together to distribute articulated concrete mat squares on the banks of waterways. These concrete mats assist with the prevention of erosion and protect submerged river banks. The scope of work encompasses three Corps' districts, seven states, and multiple watersheds, and utilizes proven technology in river engineering and operations.

The MSU crew began working in July at Cairo, Illinois, and worked down to below New Orleans, worked back up to Vicksburg, where the work ended. However, during this longer revetment season, the crew had a second pass where they worked along the way enroute back to Vicksburg. "The second pass repair work was not as critical as that of the first pass," stated Ross.

What can the crew expect of the next revetment season? The plan is to leave Vicksburg on June 24, which is a three month timeframe, a short layup season. The layup season is usually 6-7 months which allows more time for equipment repair. Naturally, the more usage, the more repairs necessary.

Ross thinks that the next revetment season will be back to normal when the crew leaves

in June. "High water can shorten a season but we expect a six-month season with good weather conditions and good river levels," he stated. Ross stated that if the work of the next revetment season requires more than six months, they will get a Waiver asking for an extension for the temporary workers already working, and if the Waiver is not approved, then the plan of this past season will be implemented.

"This was almost like a deployment overseas," stated Joel Brown, acting chief of the revetment section. "All of the team members were ready to see their families and friends."

To learn more about the Mat Sinking Unit and the Vicksburg District, visit [www.mvk.usace.army.mil](http://www.mvk.usace.army.mil). ◀



*Motor Vessels William James and Benyaurd work together to distribute the concrete mats along the banks of the Mississippi River.*

*(Deer hunt, concluded from page 21)*

of the veterans at first. He had been aware that some of his fellow service members had been coping with difficult aspects of their daily lives since becoming wounded warriors. However, according to Jackson, “They seemed to change after the weekend. They opened up and we all got to really know them. There were two hunters who had never shot a deer in their lives and both came away with a deer each. It had been a great opportunity for fellow service members to meet and get to know each other.”

In a letter to the LFO rangers, Jackson said he would remember the funny stories that were told, photos taken from crazy angles, the deer processing – all lifetime memories. Daniel stated, “All went above and beyond for us. The warmth, gratitude, love and admiration that were shown to us was unbelievable.”

Nolan summed it up by saying, “The Corps of Engineers is full of patriots, great people, all over this Nation, and the Louisiana Field Office staff embodies that.” ◀

*(Friends of Lake Ouachita, concluded from page 17)*

for each campsite, in addition to the 50 amp electrical service and campground area road improvements scheduled to begin during Spring 2013. Crystal Springs and Tompkins Bend Recreation areas are very popular Class (A) recreational areas that, due to public demand, have remained open for year-round camping over the past few years.

Henry Ford once said, “Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success!” The Cooperative Agreement established with the Friends of Lake Ouachita and Corps of Engineers is a “win-win” solution to providing recreational opportunities to the visiting public, especially during these times of ever challenging budgets. Unlike a commercial lease to operate a campground, the Cooperative Agreement allows the Corps to maintain a presence in these recreational areas on a day-to-day basis. ◀

*The beautiful  
Crystal Springs  
Recreation Area*



ABOVE: *Lake Ouachita*

## Non-profit partners key to keeping Corps-run recreation areas

Campers who flock to Arkansas's scenic Lake Ouachita each year, many to pitch a tent along a clear mountain lake notable for its some 200 islands, have likely taken little notice of a recent change in who collects their camping fees. What they will likely notice, though, is the campground improvements that the change will soon bring.

A relatively new method of operation, called Cooperative Agreements, allows for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to partner with non-profit organizations for the operation and maintenance of recreation areas. If a non-profit collects the fees, those funds can be channeled directly back to the particular campground or recreation areas as opposed to the cash-strapped federal general fund. This benefits both campers and surrounding communities dependent on that visitor spending, says Greg Raimondo, Public Affairs Chief for the Corps' Vicksburg District.

“The idea is that through these kinds of partnerships, we’re preserving the opportunity for people to enjoy these lakes,” he said. “Without these outside partnerships, we might have to close campgrounds or restrict the time they’d be available throughout the year.”

Through a pilot program at Lake Ouachita, fees at two of the 20 recreation areas are now collected by the non-profit group, Friends of Lake Ouachita. The Corps first partnered with the group in the management of the 74-site Crystal Springs campground, which also boasts a boat launch and day use area, then added a second recreation area—77-site Tompkins Bend—to the program in early November.

The collected fees are being used this winter to build a new playground at Crystal Springs and to combine some individual sites into a group campground area long requested by frequent campers, said Rick Dwyer, the Deputy Project Manager, Ouachita Project Management Office. Similar improvements will likely be made at Tompkins Bend. This fall, the Corps and Friends group will meet to determine if other Corps-run recreation areas on the lake should be similarly managed, Dwyer said.

The cooperative agreements are a win-win, he said. The non-profit takes care of minor maintenance, the Corps anything major. “If we have a big water leak or something, we take care of that. If a toilet broke or something, we’d replace that.”

Lake Ouachita is one of 27 recreation complexes managed by the Corps' Vicksburg District. It was originally built between 1946 and 1954 as part of a flood control and hydropower project but evolved to include recreation, water supply and fish and wildlife management as parts of its mission.

Last year, approximately 4 million people visited the project near Hot Springs, Ark., to explore its 20,000 acres of public land, camp in one of its 1,100 campsites or use one of the 18 Corps-run boat ramps. Boating, fishing, scuba diving and island camping are especially popular. According to a recent study, visitors to Corps sites spent \$18.62 million within 30 miles of the project, with 62 percent of that funneled into the local economy. —K.S.

### IF YOU GO:

Camping is available on Lake Ouachita's 200 islands, but “Leave no Trace” rules apply; if you carry it in, carry it out, and protect water sources from contamination by using only biodegradable soaps. To reserve a site in Class A camping areas (\$10-20 night), visit [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov).

## District Field Offices & Services

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Vicksburg, MS 39183  
www.mvk.usace.army.mil  
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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) 631-5546  
*Apply, ask questions, or report violations*  
Contracting & Bids (601) 631-7706  
*Vendors, status of bids, specs*  
Community Support (601) 631-5223  
*Tours, speakers, volunteers*  
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## Other Vicksburg Engineer/Federal Organizations

Mississippi Valley Division  
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Vicksburg National Military Park  
(601) 634-5760

Engineer Research and Development Center  
(601) 634-2504

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

412th Engineer Command  
(601) 636-1686

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

168th Engineer Group  
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U.S. Army Recruiter  
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