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Vicksburg District

LOViT Trail

THE

Water's Edge

Fall 2014





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Commander and District Engineer

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On the Cover

Col Cross, center, assists the Trail Dogs with cutting the ribbon at the Lake Ouachita Vista Trail.

Photo by Greg Raimondo

Commander's Corner

with Colonel John W. Cross



Hello Vicksburg District Team Members

I hope everyone had a safe and happy holiday season all across the District. I would like to thank everyone for the support you gave to our outreach efforts. We were very successful in both our Combined Federal Campaign as well as our Angel Tree project. Helping others while being thankful is a great way to celebrate the season and remind us of how much we have. We also sponsored Wounded Warrior/Disability hunting and fishing events across the District.



One of the Wounded Warriors with his harvest.

The holiday season also gave us a few moments to reflect on all of the great work the District accomplished in 2014. We had much success throughout the District due to the hard work and dedication from each of you. To name just a few examples: We made exceptional progress on Plaquemines Parish work awarding over \$120 million of critical projects that will reduce flood risk for citizens in South Louisiana. We completed the ERDC Information Technology Laboratories building – a very modern, state of the art facility! MG Michael C. Wehr was with me at the dedication ceremony as well as the three District Engineers who worked on the project! Our staff at the lake offices, including park rangers and the water safety team, is

commended for a full year of zero water fatalities. This is an exceptional accomplishment and is the first time the District accomplished this goal! The Mat Sinking Unit (MSU) successfully completed its seasonal work allowing ample time for those team members to spend the holidays with their families. The MSU completed critical work this year in New Orleans (some of it across from the French Quarter) and flood damaged areas at Fair Landing and Sarah Island.

I am looking forward to all the challenges and opportunities that we will face throughout 2015. In the spring, we will prepare for possible flooding and bad weather events, including hurricanes, so that we will be ready to support our region and our Nation when duty calls. We are already preparing for the dredging season and beginning preparation for another mat sinking season. At our lakes, we will begin working on water safety and public outreach for the spring and summer. I am confident that 2015 will be another great year within the District and that we will overcome any challenge with technical expertise, compassion, and spirit!

I am very proud of all of you! Thank you for everything you do!

COL Cross



The MSU working across from the French Quarter in New Orleans.

Why Interpretation?

By Brian Westfall

Photos courtesy of Brian Westfall

George Tabb, retired Corps chief of Natural Resources, adamantly proclaimed during his career: “When people tell me they can’t afford to do interpretation, I tell them they can’t afford to NOT do interpretation!”

From the top down, interpretation is important, but what is interpretation? Interpretation is not just something we do for water safety or for children’s programs and is definitely not just a nice thing to do. Interpretation is the voice or boots-on-the-ground communication tool for natural and cultural resource managers. The Corps uses this definition in modified form and focuses on the mission of the Corps. The EP 1130-2-248 definition of Interpretation is: Communication and educational processes provided to internal and external audiences, which support the accomplishment of Corps missions, tell the Corps story, and reveal the meanings of and relationships between natural, cultural, and created environments and features. The Corps also has an outreach program that involves the interpretive services program. Outreach is defined as: Communication efforts involving interpretive programs that reach diverse populations such as students, teachers, organized groups such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H and general public beyond the physical boundaries of Corps projects and facilities.

Interpretive services and outreach program goals are designed to serve as the blueprint or playbook for all Corps employees, not just park rangers, to follow. Interpretation is a management tool to achieve management objectives. Interpretation improves overall interagency communication and performance. Likewise, interpretation serves as our voice so that others understand what our agency has to offer. It is not “something extra” we have to do. Interpretive programming gives our staffs the ability to better communicate with park visitors, customers, stakeholders and community leaders on a wide variety of management issues. The goal is to promote faith and understanding, and ultimately, voluntary compliance with organization’s operating principles, rules and regulations.

Interpretation reduces accidents and fatalities, vandalism, degradation of recreational areas, erosion, graffiti, gray and black water dumping, prevents invasive species proliferation and theft. Conversely it improves compliance, resource protection, partnerships, ownership, understand-

ing, support, donations, sponsorships, volunteerism, energy reduction and community pride.



Natural resource management.

Every dollar spent on interpretation pays significant dividends. How much return has our national forests received from the U.S. Forest Service’s “Only YOU can prevent forest fires” campaign? How about Woodsy Owl’s slogan, “Give a Hoot, Don’t Pollute?” Both examples have made huge differences for protection and sustainability of public lands. Interpretation is the voice of the present and future of public lands!

An outstanding example of interpretive excellence is the annual DeGray Lake Shoreline Cleanup. The program fosters environmental awareness and stewardship sustainability. For decades, community support and commitment from the staff have helped make DeGray one of the cleanest lakes in the nation. The interpretive team helped visitors develop a mindset to care enough not to litter. Positive results have been realized as children that helped clean up the lake are now bringing their children back to DeGray. Thousands of volunteers have removed tons of litter and now, more volunteers pick up less trash. This longstanding public awareness program continues to be a viable environmental program and is now a best management practice for Corps lakes and rivers across the nation.

(Continued on page 5)

(Why Interpretation, concluded from page 4)

Through interpretive programming, our personnel sing the praises of Corps Civil Works programs. The Corps is the 4th largest electrical utility, has reduced flood damages in the amount of 19.7 billion dollars over the last 10-years, maintains 25,000 miles of commercially available naviga-



Environmental stewardship. Park ranger discusses the environment.

tion channels, protects wetlands and waters of the United States, provides dependable water supply, and serves as a land steward for almost 12,000,000 acres. Corps employees are also making a positive impact nationally in our emergency response mission, in our global war on terrorism and in support of the Wounded Warrior program. All these missions are of great value to the nation.

Utilizing interpretive techniques is a fantastic way to promote and enhance safety programs for both employees and visitors. When safety becomes interpretive, team members' interaction and accountability increase. The results are lower accident rates. An outstanding example of the power of interpretation in visitor safety is the Corps' water safety program. Before the boating and water safety program was enacted in 1973, an average of 500 visitors perished annually while recreating on Corps lakes and rivers.



Civil works, navigation.

Now, the number of fatalities has diminished dramatically and the overwhelming majority of visitors return safely to their homes after a weekend of recreation.

Interpretation entices families to spend more time outdoors. Sedentary lifestyles are now the norm. It is the duty of interpretation to support the Get Outdoors campaign, which has proven to positively impact physical and mental health. Effective interpretation educates the public and helps improve visitors' grasp of natural resource management strategies. Outreach enables them to better benefit from what we do at our recreational sites, their public lands.

As these management strategies are absorbed, stewards entice our youth to become our next generation of rangers, scientists, engineers and mathematicians. The Corps' Science, Technology, Engineering and Math awareness program (STEM) is a great example of interpretive services outreach, encouraging great young, creative minds to be the stewardship leaders of tomorrow!



Westfall at 2005 National Scout Jamboree.

As stated, interpretation is not just something we do for water safety or for children's programs. It is a communications process that we use to make business practices more effective and integrated. The role of interpretation has been re-directed. Interpretation can help with marketing, water safety, environmental stewardship/sustainability, compliance, shoreline management, off-road vehicles usage and anything else that relies on more efficient communication with the public. Interpretation is our boots-on-the-ground communication tool for natural and cultural resource managers. It should be the first tool you grab for in your toolbox! ◀

Boy Scouts Build Wood Duck Nesting Boxes for Waterfowl at Arkabutla Lake

By Kevin Kramer
Photo by Robert Hoff

Due to federal and contractual cutbacks, the ranger staff at Corps lakes and facilities has adapted to doing more with less. Many tasks have been accomplished by finding creative new methods and forming new partnerships. The need for wood duck nesting boxes for waterfowl at Arkabutla Lake was one such task accomplished through partnering with Boy Scouts of America.

Nine boy scouts from Troop 41, Hernando, converted 40 1x10x12 rough cut cypress planks into luxury suites for waterfowl at Arkabutla Lake. This project also provided an opportunity for the scouts to earn their badges.

Ranger Robert Hoff coordinates scout projects for Arkabutla Lake and also performs wood duck egg count surveys and nest box maintenance around the lake. Hoff stated, "With many of our wood duck nesting boxes beginning to show signs of aging from several years of exposure to the elements, they needed to be replaced and installed in different areas. The project of building wood duck nesting boxes was born when Cubmaster, Danny Vanpelt, inquired about opportunities for younger scouts. The project proved to be mutually beneficial."

The 66 boxes will be placed on 4x4 posts around the backwaters and coves of Arkabutla Lake and the Coldwater River channel and sloughs scattered throughout the Askew Wildlife Management Area. Wood ducks are one of two North American duck species that roost and nest in trees. Knot holes and key cavities are their natural nesting sites, but due to abundant hunting and loss of habitat in the early 1900's wood ducks were labeled a threatened species. Through conservation efforts and the implementation of nesting boxes, wood duck numbers are higher than in the last 100 years.

The wood duck nest boxes have an ovular shaped entry hole designed to accommodate the shape of a wood duck's body. Occasionally, screech owls, squirrels, wood peckers and other animals claim these boxes as their homes, but the majority of the nest boxes are utilized by the intended host. Each February, Hoff wades through swamps to perform the eggshell count from the previous year and replace the used nesting material with fresh wood shavings in preparation for the upcoming nesting season which usually begins in March. A female wood duck will lay 10-11 eggs and, unlike other duck species, hatch out two separate broods each year.

As the state duck of Mississippi, the wood duck is an important symbol to protect and support through efforts like those exhibited by the young men of Troop 41 in the construction of the nest boxes.

The Corps is the largest federal provider of outdoor and water-based recreation in the nation. The primary mission of the Mississippi lakes is to provide flood risk reduction. With approximately 4.9 million visitors each year, these lakes also contribute approximately \$99.5 million into the local economy. For more information visit our website at www.mvk.usace.army.mil.



Boy Scout Troop 41

Reburial Ceremony Brings Peace and Fulfillment

By Shelia Kirven

Marketing Development Assistant, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Photos by Alfred Dulaney

Recently, I had the privilege of being asked to be a member of a small group from the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma to travel to Mississippi for a tribal repatriation and reburial. I was humbled by the opportunity and knew being a part of such an event would be one of the most honorable things that I would ever get the chance to do in my lifetime.

Before the trip, I decided to look up the word “repatriation”. The word’s meaning is defined by Merriam-Webster’s dictionary as “to return (someone) to his or her own country”. The definition was proper and fitting, as we would be reburying ancient unearthed remains in the Mississippi homeland from which they came. Many times human remains are unearthed due to events such as construction or highway expansion. On this particular occasion, the remains were donated back to the Choctaw Nation by a private individual with the assistance of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. A partnership between the Corps (USACE) and the tribe allowed for the repatriated remains to be reburied.

Dr. Ian Thompson, Director of the Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation Department and Tribal Archaeologist explained, “The remains came from an individual who lived in what is now western Mississippi before European contact. He or she did not call themselves Choctaw, but was nonetheless ancestral to today’s Choctaw people, through subsequent mixing of his or her descendants with Choctaw communities. Through this mixing, this person’s genes and culture live on in the Choctaw community today.”

Before arriving at the burial site, we stopped at the Corps office where Chief Batton, assistant chief Jack Austin and Cultural Preservation executive director Sue Folsom were greeted by Sarah Koeppel, District archaeologist and Tribal Liaison, and Chris Koeppel, environmental section team leader for the Vicksburg District. The group then met with Colonel John W. Cross, District Commander. We were informed as to how the Corps became involved in this particular reburial project. We were also informed of what their division does for the State of Mississippi and

how they work in conjunction with the tribes. Colonel Cross stated that he was happy with the relationship that the Corps and the Choctaw Nation share. He stated that they have always had a good relationship with us and we partnered well on the different issues. Colonel Cross also stated that the Choctaw Nation was very helpful in the flood of 2011 and he expressed his heartfelt gratitude.



Colonel John W. Cross, Chief Gary Batton and Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. study a map of the Mississippi River and how it has changed over the years.

After the visit at the Corps, the group, including the two archaeologists from the District who had been instrumental in this project, traveled to the reburial site to join Dr. Thompson and three of his staff members who had already been there doing the preparation work.

As we gathered around and the reburial ceremony was conducted, I couldn’t help but think of how this burial was different from any other that I had ever attended. Because I didn’t know the identity of the individual, I found myself wondering who the person had been. What was his/her story? Did he/she somehow realize that their earthly body had been disturbed from its rest? I was hoping that now this person would finally be at peace, knowing that they

(Continued on page 8)

PROJECT

(Reburial Ceremony, continued from page 7)



Collaborating staff members for the reburial were left to right Historic Preservation Senior Section 106 reviewer Lindsay Bilyeu, Historic Preservation Section 106 reviewer Daniel Ragle, Cultural Preservation Executive Director Sue Folsom, Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr., Environmental Section team leader Chris Koepfel, District Archaeologist and Tribal Liaison Sarah Koepfel, Director of Historic Preservation and Tribal Archaeologist Dr. Ian Thompson, Senior Heritage Resource Technician and Tribal Chaplain Olin Williams and Chief Gary Batton.

had been carefully prepared once again for burial and that the persons who had laid them to rest at their final destination were the leaders of our great tribe.

As the Chief and Assistant Chief placed the first shovels of earth into the ground, I will never forget the sound of the dirt as it fell and how the earthen wall looked inside the grave, each layer of soil representing centuries of time and different eras.

I couldn't help but wonder if the remains could even have been one of my ancestors. I often think about my Choctaw ancestors from Mississippi. I wonder about their lives and how the removal affected them. I wonder how they lived; think about their heartaches, about the things that made them happy and even the simple things of life that were taken from them. I always wish that I could know more. As I stood at the grave that day, I couldn't help but wonder if that could have been one of my people. And then I realized that it was, because the Choctaw people are one family.

What remains with me is the thought that Olin Williams expressed, that something good was done that day. Much effort went into making sure that the event was carefully and strategically planned to be the most honorable that it could be for the reburial of this ancestor. I know that these events have happened before. There have been other repatriations and reburials, and I know that as much effort and great care had gone into each one of those, as did the one that I had the privilege to be a part of.

Following the burial, a great rain occurred about a half hour later on a perfectly sunny day. One within the group stated that the rain was a cleansing and we all agreed that the rain was fitting for what had just taken place.

On the way home, I asked Chief Batton how he felt about the day's event. He said, "It was humbling and emotional. We don't know if this person was female or male, a brother or a sister, but I do agree with Ian and Sue that to bring the remains home is honorable and hopefully he/she is now at peace. I also think that it brings peace for the tribe too. Just think what that ancestor did for us. As sure as there is death, there is life. It makes me reflect on the people who have gone before us, grandmas, grandpas, fathers, brothers, in some ways it is a sad thing. But it is the way of life. There's hope for our tribe, hope for our people, and hope for our families."

Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. stated, "For me I felt the sense of honor in what we were doing and I felt closure. We don't know about the individual person, but what we do know is that it was something right and honorable. As Ian stated, it was making a wrong a right."

My heart ached for the person whose remains were disturbed. At the same time, I rejoiced that they were buried at a location where they will not be disturbed again. Hopefully they are now at peace and rest, and I hope that somewhere, somehow they were looking down upon us and were proud of what took place that day in their honor. ◀

River Operations: Providing Value to Inland Navigation and the Nation

By Gloria Piazza

Photos courtesy of Gloria Piazza, Andy Metts, and Maintenance Section personnel

Our external website describes the mission of the river operations branch as being “responsible for channel improvement, dredging, and navigation activities on the lower Mississippi, Red, Ouachita/Black, and Pearl Rivers. This work is accomplished by using specialized floating plant, dustpan and cutterhead dredges, towboats, survey boats, and various other river-related equipment.” Somehow, that doesn’t seem to scratch the surface or tell the Corps story on the services provided by this branch.

What makes the District’s river operations unique to the whole nation? Is it because we have a one-of-a-kind Mat Sinking Unit? Is it because we have the Dredge JADWIN that was retrofitted from previously running on steam? Is it our maintenance section that supplies support across the country? Or is it all three that supply the most value to the nation for inland waterway navigation on the 3rd largest

watershed in the world, supplies a skilled workforce in emergency operations, and supports the nation on other navigation and flood damage reduction issues?

Dredge JADWIN

The Dredge JADWIN is a dustpan dredge that was built in 1933. It was originally steam powered, but was converted to modern diesel-electric power in 1985. All upgrades and maintenance to the dredge are done in-house with our own skilled workforce. The JADWIN ladder was extended in 2008 so it can dredge to 72 ft depths. During this work, bulwarks and water-tight doors were placed on the main deck to prevent flooding compartments when working in the offshore, tidal waters for New Orleans District. The main pump was replaced in 2010 with a newly designed

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Dustpan dredge at work.

(River Operations, continued from page 9)

high efficiency pump, and during this pump replacement, the old pilot house was removed and the crew built the new pilot house, from ground up. A new ladder, pan and A-frame will be installed during layup season 2014/2015.

It is one of only four dustpan dredges in the U.S. The dredge is capable of dredging both shallow draft and deep draft navigation channels. The M/V SANDERFORD is vital support to the dredge operations. The JADWIN usually works with a 1000 ft of pipeline most of the year but is capable of pumping up to 2600 ft of line if needed. On average, the JADWIN works for 135 days. However, following the great flood in 2011 was the great drought of 2012 and the JADWIN was out for 190 days. Eighty percent of the work is done for the New Orleans District to support deep draft navigation. This year alone, the JADWIN moved nearly 4 million cubic yards of material in the New Orleans District to maintain deep draft navigation. Approximately 65,000 cubic yards of material are moved per day. The JADWIN, and its crew of about 50, are an irreplaceable resource and are vital for keeping the navigation channels open on the Lower Mississippi River.

Sometimes saying thank you is just not enough. Much appreciation and gratitude to the following team members for dedicated service and hard work. Enjoy retirement: Trey Allen, Andy L. Burt, and Ben A. Glover.

Mat-Sinking Unit

The Mat-Sinking Unit is a unique floating plant that places articulated concrete mat on the riverbanks of the Mississippi River to control erosion. Each autumn the Mat Sinking Unit begins several months of work on the Mississippi River for the annual construction program. Before the Corps began to place mats on the banks, the Mississippi River wandered back and forth across the valley. Stabilizing the banks in a permanent location stops the river from meandering and provides both levee protection and safe navigation channels. The Mat Sinking Unit has three towboats; the M/V Benyaurd, M/V William James, and M/V Harrison. They also use the M/V Mississippi and at least one contract towboat. Their crew boat, the Muddy Water, serves as a water taxi to ferry workers to and from jobsites. The towboats bring loaded mat barges from mat casting fields at Richardson Landing Tennessee, Delta, Louisiana, and St. Francisville, Louisiana. They take empty barges back to the

casting field to be reloaded and also move the Mat Sinking Unit from one job site to another.

Mat sinking is not an 8-to-5 job, but rather, seasonal work conducted during the traditional low water months of August, September, October and November. Their work season consists of 10-hour shifts for 12 consecutive days with two days off. The mat-sinking crew lives and dines on quarter boats that travel with them to the work area. In fact, many of the crew members work season after season laying mat on the mighty Mississippi. Although its hard work, the galley cooks provide four exceptional meals a day. The two large dining rooms are designed to feed a crew of over 250, who must eat and be back at work within an hour.

The Mat-Sinking Unit provides erosion control on the banks of the Mississippi River throughout the valley. On average, they move upstream and begin laying mat as they come south. This year the MSU will place 219,000 squares. That's 21 million square feet, or 502 acres of concrete, or enough to cover 459 football fields. It would pave a two lane highway for 172 miles. These measures fortify the banks to assist in channel maintenance, increase the integrity of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) system, and reduce risks for future floods.

We thank the following team members for years of dedicated service and wish them well in retirement:

Robert T. Moses, Cameron S. Smith, Robert L. Tenner, William H. Baxter, Billy F. Stokes, Larry A. Maloid, S.V. Kimbrough, Elbert Williams, Charles W. Bell, and Lonnie R. Baites.

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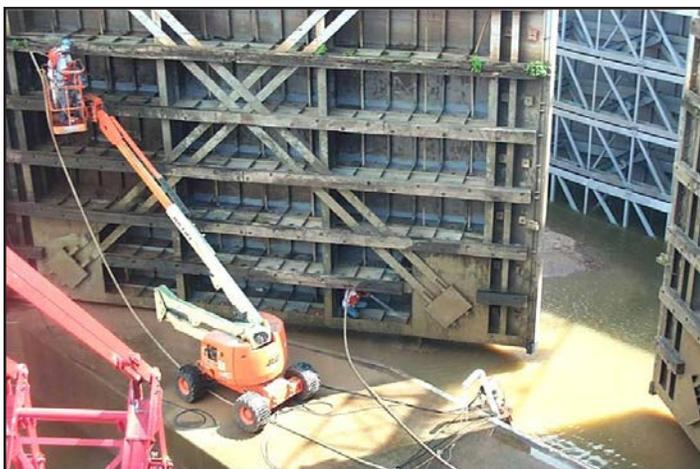


Crew members of the Mat Sinking Unit at work.

(River Operations, continued from page 10)

Maintenance Section

The maintenance section members are our unsung heroes. When they are working, there is no fancy dredge or one-of-a-kind sinking unit to visit; just hard work and results. Their number one priority is navigation and flood control structure repair. They are responsible for five lock and dams on the Red River, four lock and dams on the Ouachita/Black Rivers, and three locks on the Pearl River. In order to inspect and maintain the flood control structures, the maintenance section has a certified dive team, and has the M/Vs Fred Lee and Strong for support. Also important to the navigation mission are their channel clearing and snagging efforts, as well as channel bank protection.



The miter gate at Lindy C. Boggs Lock and Dam

Levee slide repairs are the second highest priority. To date, 95% of the necessary repairs on the Mississippi River levees (MRL) have been completed. The maintenance section provides for other necessary requirements for MRL or Yazoo projects. They also maintain levees and dams throughout the district at the dam and reservoir projects, to include any maintenance and repair to the recreational sites in Louisiana.

Emergency response is next on the list of priorities and they have stepped up to the challenges during hurricanes and flood fights in the past. During the 2011 flood, our maintenance section was responsible for repairing a portion of the Birds Point-New Madrid floodway; the number one flood damage priority within Mississippi Valley Division. While a team was working Bird's Point-New Madrid, still other teams were concentrating on damages within the district and beginning interim repairs on MRL projects that were listed in the top 10 flood damage priorities in the val-

ley; Buck Chute and Albermarle. Because of their efforts, they reduced the risks to life, health, safety, and economics by making critical repairs to our compromised system.

Last but not least, the maintenance section supports other Corps districts and labs. Currently, we have personnel working in the following places:

- Re-constructing an earthen embankment and excavating blast pits to support ERDC - GSL explosive testing at Fort Polk ranges.
- Clearing/grubbing and slide repairs at two sites for MVN.
- Repairs to slide at Wright Patman Dam, Southwest Division, Fort Worth (SWF)
- Waco Lake dewatering for outlet structure inspection, SWF
- Railroad erosion repairs on levee, Southatlantic Division, Jacksonville

In addition to the work mentioned above, they have to maintain their own equipment. Routine maintenance needs to be made, repairs made, and equipment replaced. Keeping track of all the projects and personnel across the nation is challenging, but the maintenance section staff is a multi-skilled and dedicated workforce; they make it look easy. Word is getting out that we have a 1st class maintenance section and they are in demand.

Bobby J. Stokes, who will soon retire, is taking with him knowledge that is unimaginable but we wish him many years of health and happiness in retirement. Thanks for your service Bobby.

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MRL work at East and West Bank near Shaw, Louisiana.

OCO Deployment - Challenging, Exciting, Life-Changing

By Pamela Smith
Photos courtesy of
Transatlantic Afghanistan District

Volunteering for deployment to Afghanistan in support of the Corps' Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) does not mean all work and no play. In fact the leaders at the Transatlantic Afghanistan District (TAA) recognize that extracurricular activities and special events are critical to the productivity and morale of their dedicated task force of Army, Civilian and Afghan National personnel.

Halloween festivities at TAA presented fun opportunities for workers to kindle their imaginations and lifted their spirits. After long hours on the job, many looked forward to a change of pace and the chance to escape the monotony of the workplace. The Bagram Airfield Spooky 5K Run and pumpkin carving challenge were just the ticket for building team spirit and showcasing the myriad of talents that thrive in this OCO family.

The TAA Muppets were superstars in the Bagram Airfield Spooky 5K Run. And these finished pumpkins attest to the amazing artistic skills of TAA craftsmen.

One of MVK's recent redeployed volunteers, Drew Smith, came home with many experiences to share, tales to tell and memories to cherish. Like so many others before

him, Drew discovered the rewards of knowing you're improving the lives of others and that making a difference makes the challenges and heavy workload worth all the effort.

At the request of the Commanding General and the Mississippi Valley Division's emergency manager, Smith addressed the R5 workshop at District Headquarters on November 5, sharing his biggest take away from overseas deployment. He explained, "The Marmal, Spann and Kunduz Resident Offices of the Bagram Area Office championed a program that used local Afghan Nationals who held degrees in engineering to serve as local national quality assurance representatives (LNQAs). Due to the long distances to our projects and the security issues involved in getting to those projects, the LNQAs served as our technical eyes and ears on the job sites. They provided invaluable information regarding the daily progress of a project."

Impressed with the determination and attitude of the Afghan Nationals employed as LNQAs, Smith bragged, "They took great pride and ownership in the work due to most of the projects being in their villages and neighborhoods. They performed exceptionally well in these positions. Corps personnel were able to build great relationships with and train numerous Afghan engineers and technicians."

What was Smith's fondest memory? "I was able to supervise a group of about 15 LNQAs and gained a great deal of experience dealing with the daily challenges of doing construction work in that environment."

Since 2003, the District has deployed 189 employees. More than 40 of those extended their tours or returned for additional tours. In FY2014, the District supported 14 deployed personnel. At the time of this writing, one District employee is enroute to the Kandahar Area Office where he will serve as civil engineer and one is enroute home after a 25-month tour in Afghanistan.

Being a part of the Corps' Overseas Contingency Operations can be exciting, rewarding, and even life-changing. Civilian employees serve a vital role in supporting the

(Continued on page 24)



TAA Muppets were superstars in the Bagram Airfield Spooky 5K Run.



Tiger Paw Pumpkin



Cat Pumpkin

Resource Management Office Manages District's Money Issues

By Carol Watkins, Chief, Resource Management Office
Photo by Alfred Dulaney

The Resource Management Office (RM) provides professional financial, budget, and quality management in support of the total mission accomplishment of the District. Our purpose is to ensure proper stewardship of funds, independent analysis and integration of resource data. We provide policy interpretations and furnish sound advice on resource policies in order to maintain fiscal integrity while servicing our customers.

Finance and Accounting Branch

The Finance and Accounting Branch (F&A), staffed with accountants and financial management specialists, provides various accounting services to the District and Mississippi Valley Division (MVD). They review all financial transactions (commitments, obligations and expenditures) to insure they are within limitations of appropriations, allotments, apportionments, work allowances, and other purposes established or authorized by statute.

The accounting staff acts as the liaison between the USACE Finance Center (UFC) in Millington, Tennessee and District operating elements. They are constantly involved in resolving Corps of Engineers Financial Management System (CEFMS) issues and maintaining many aspects of the CEFMS data base. This includes insuring appropriate roles are assigned to employees and proper training is obtained by employees to support those roles. The accounting staff certifies funds availability on purchase requests,

Resource Management Office team members pictured are : Front row left to right: Crissy Neal, Kecia Baker, Wanda Stevens, Pat Upton, Brooke Southerland, Cynthia Lee, Lynne Welshans, Sharon Barnett, and Tamara Rutherford.

Back row left to right: Carol Watkins, chief of RM, Rusty Emrick, Kimberly McGaheran, Shirley Allen, Ed Bryan, Caleb McNair, and Philip Hite.

reviews and analyzes accounting reports, and performs fiscal reviews on civil works funds. They prepare financial statements for the multi-purpose power projects and administer the fiscal aspect of cost sharing agreements. They must also perform self assessment of Chief Financial Officer's (CFO) issues to ensure compliance with the CFO Act and coordinating CFO requirements with the District, MVD and Corps Headquarters, Washington, D.C. Management of the revolving fund accounts is another important aspect of the F&A branches' responsibilities. They provide guidance and assistance in all areas of financial management. The F&A branch also serves as Agency Program Coordinator (APC) of the CITI Bank Travel Card program.

The financial management specialists are responsible for time, attendance, and payroll functions for the District and MVD. This includes submission of payroll to Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) and resolving payroll issues.

Budget, Manpower, and Management Branch

This branch is staffed by budget analysts and management analysts. The budget analysts are responsible for

(Continued on page 14)



District Celebrates Founder's Day

By Shirley J. Smith
Photos by Alfred Dulaney

The District recently celebrated its annual Founder's Day in recognition of its 141 years of service to this nation.

The District, founded in 1873, is one of 41 Corps districts worldwide and one of six districts within the Corps' Mississippi Valley Division. The Vicksburg District has been recognized as Vicksburg's second oldest business, and is a center of expertise for many engineering and environmental solutions.

The Vicksburg District employs a diverse workforce of more than 1,000 professionals headquartered in Vicksburg and in eleven field offices spread over the tri-state area of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Covering a 68,000-square-mile area, it operates and maintains more than \$2 billion in real property and projects.

While the Founder's Day ceremony recognizes the Vicksburg District's many years of accomplishments, it also serves as recognition of former and current team members for their career achievements and length of service. ◀



Col Cross addresses District team members and guests.



Col Cross, center, cuts the cake with Wayland Hill, left, and Donny Weaver, right.

(Resource Management Office, concluded from page 13) developing and maintaining the district operating budget and providing advice and guidance to the District Commander and District supervisors concerning the formulation and execution of the operating budget. The budget analysts are also responsible for receipt of all funding into the district, both direct and reimbursable and loading funding into CEFMS.

Management analysts provide staff assistance to the District/Division Commander on all aspects of the Manpower Management Program and Management Analysis. The manpower officer provides staff supervision for manpower management functions. The manpower officer in coordination with the District elements develops the yearly manpower requirements submission, and tracks and reports manpower execution.

District organization charts are also developed in this branch. They also coordinate any reorganization that may be required for district elements. They are responsible for

coordination of the Managers' Internal Control Program (MICP) for the District Commander and submission of the Commander's annual assurance statement. Management analysts perform Internal Control Administrator (ICA) functions advising the Commander on the implementation and status of the District MICP and keeping managers informed on internal control matters. They facilitate the process for identifying and reporting material weaknesses, development of corrective action plans, and status reporting in accordance with regulatory and program guidance. They coordinate the preparation and publication of the Commander's policy letters and serve as the District training officer. This branch also facilitates District honorary awards and recognition program.

The Resource Management Office has been updating the RM page on the District INET. All of the employees are listed on the website in addition to pertinent RM guidance, forms, and information. ◀

District Signs Adoption Certificates at Elementary and Junior High Schools

By Shirley J. Smith
Photos by Alfred Dulaney

Col. John W. Cross and other District personnel recently participated with adoption ceremonies at their two adopted schools, Warren Central Junior High and Sherman Avenue Elementary through the Adopt A School Program (AAS). This is the 16th year for the adoption partnerships among the Vicksburg District and local schools. While the partnership with Sherman Avenue is in its fifth year, this is the first year for the partnership with Warren Central Junior High.

Not only is the District's partnership with Warren Central Junior High new, each school has a new principal, Cedric Magee at Warren Central and Curtis Ross at Sherman. Ross stated, "I'm elated to know that the Corps has

agreed to adopt us; that speaks volumes for the Corps and your commitment to this community, and for this we thank you. We look forward to working with you while we both strive to enhance the education of our youth - our most valuable resource."

The AAS Program has proven to be a very effective tool within our community. Our team members have assisted numerous students and faculty members through this worthwhile endeavor. The AAS Program could not have been and will not be successful without the dedicated efforts of our team members. The program is executed through an annual plan that is developed each year at the beginning of the school year among the District's committee members and the faculty and staff of the schools. The plan outlines specific goals to be achieved through the partnership during the school year.

Col. Cross, along with Warren Central's principal, Cedric Magee, and Sherman Avenue's principal, Curtis Ross, signed adoption certificates certifying the industry/school partnerships. The adoption agreement will have volunteers from the District and other local industries supporting the schools through various activities including tutoring, mentoring, speaking engagements, assisting with state testing and career development plans according to the annual plan.

Col. Cross stated, "We are happy to have you for our adopted schools and definitely look forward to serving you with our available resources. Being the organization that we are, we have a strong interest in the STEM fields especially and have the expertise to assist you in those fields and many more," he stated.

As one of the community's leading technical organizations, the Vicksburg District traditionally supports local and surrounding educational institutions through the varied expertise of our diverse workforce. The District's involvement in local and surrounding schools is critical to the success of our educational systems and our success in Building Our Future Workforce. Successful educational programs such as the Adopt A School Program help to build the necessary skills of our future leaders, and introduce many students and educators to the Corps for the first time. ◀



Warren Central Junior High principal, Cedric Magee, and Col. Cross sign the adoption certificate.

LTC Stephen M. Rhudy, Jr., Deputy Commander for the District, Cpt. Ryan Alarcon, and Cpt. David M. Kenna, read to students at Sherman Avenue Elementary.



FOUNDER'S DAY

Photos by Alfred Dulaney



FOUNDER'S DAY

Photos by Alfred Dulaney



District Trains Liaison Team Members for Disasters

By Cindy Mathes
Photo by Alfred Dulaney

The definition of liaison is a link, connection, contact, cooperation or relationship. A liaison is a facilitator of communication and one who creates a close working relationship between people or organizations. A person who facilitates success!!

Several years ago, the District's Office of Emergency Management began a local government liaison program and the definition above is exactly the purpose for this program. Our Liaison Cadre is comprised of volunteers from across our district that have a desire to assist local communities within Mississippi during times of disaster. Our liaisons use their organizational, communication, and professional skills to provide important links, connections, contacts, cooperation and relationships between the Corps, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), and the affected communities. Liaisons are the conduits through which information flows among the Corps and other agencies.

The Corps has the primary responsibility of carrying out Emergency Support Function #3 (ESF #3) when assigned by FEMA. This support could include: (1) providing temporary emergency power to critical public facilities, (2)

debris removal, (3) temporary roofing, (4) temporary housing, (5) providing some commodities, and (6) infrastructure assessment. These are the same missions the Corps performed after Hurricane Katrina.

Our liaisons are the eyes, ears, and boots on the ground during disasters. Their purpose is to integrate themselves into the communities and work with local governments to determine mission scopes, assignments and to address any significant issues following a disaster. They keep the locals informed on processes to request Federal assistance and keep FEMA and the Corps informed of any needs arising in the communities.

Members of the liaison cadre successfully completed training in September 2014. The training provided each liaison with working knowledge of typical missions under ESF #3 and the authorities under which the Corps can respond. The liaisons must have great communications skills, be able to work long hours in stressful environments, and above all, be able to facilitate success between the Federal responders and the local governments.

When tasked by FEMA, the liaisons can respond to
(Continued on page 20)



District liaison cadre for 2014-2015 from left to right are: Karen Prosser, Chad Phillips, Joelle Handy, Ella Huey, Cindy Mathes, Randy Holder, Cori Carraway, Jimmy Coldiron, Steven Finch, Charles Stokes, Jr., and Jana Jacobson. Not pictured are Leroy Dee, Dustin Herr and Rob Green.

Projects within Vicksburg District Reach Zero-Fatality Year

By Johnny Kiser, Deputy Chief Operations Division

Zero – a number of which to be proud!

There were zero water-related fatalities at lake projects operated by the Vicksburg District in Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana during the 2014 recreation season. This marks a great milestone at these lakes and recreation areas where more than 15 million visitors recreated this year.

“This achievement is attributed to a conscientious effort by visitors who wore their life jackets; who watched their children carefully while at the beach; who used a kill switch to travel to their favorite fishing hole; who used a designated boater, or who swam with a buddy while swimming.

This landmark of zero fatalities is also a testament to the many park rangers who reminded users about water safety, both on and off the project, at boat ramps and beaches, in schools, at fishing clubs, civic meetings and boat shows.”

Corps personnel have been driving home safety messages for many years, such as “Are you next? Expect the unexpected”, “Wear your life jacket” and “Don’t exceed your swimming abilities.” Zero fatalities mean these efforts are working, thanks to visitors who make the effort to be safe, and are able to go back to their homes after an enjoyable weekend at the lake!

Drowning is the nation’s second leading cause of accidental death. Swimming in non-designated areas is the single highest type of water-related fatalities, and the majority of aquatic fatalities involve 18-35 year old males. Two thirds of drowning victims are poor or non-swimmers.

The Corps is the nation’s leading provider of water-based recreation. “The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is strongly committed to reducing public recreation accidents and fatalities at all of our facilities”, stated Major General Peabody, Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations. “One fatality is too many.”

The Corps thanks our visitors for this tremendous effort. With your help, we can do it again in 2015!

Ouachita Project Management Office

Rick Dwyer, deputy project manager

“Zero” is heard a great deal nowadays. Zero calories!

Zero tolerance! Zero turn radius! Zero Gravity! Zero percent financing!”

What about zero water-related fatalities? That is exactly what happened at lake projects operated by the Vicksburg District in Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana during the 2014 recreation season. This marks a great milestone at these lakes and recreation areas where more than 15 million visitors recreated this year.

“One fatality is too many. Zero is right where we want it.”

Arkabutla Lake - Michael Carter, lake manager

“Arkabutla’s success in having a zero fatality year is likely a culmination of a number of different reasons. Luck would claim the title as the single one contributing factor but a lot of hard work by a dedicated staff would be a close second. Contributing to the zero fatality are the mandatory wear policy, the life jacket loaner boards, and boat patrols, and the fact that this has been a high water year with only one beach being open.

“The day-to-day vehicle patrols of our parks, explaining rules to visitors, water safety presentations in schools and at other special events, foot patrol and an ever present presence on our beaches were very effective in the public’s adherence to water safety, resulting in the zero fatality year. If it were not for the dedication of our park ranger staff educating the public about water safety I don’t think we would ever have a zero fatality year. Arkabutla Lake had zero fatality last year also.”

Enid Lake - Billy Samuels, lake manager

“The life jacket mandate is the number one factor that attributes to the success of having zero fatalities. The park rangers have spent countless hours since its inception educating the public on the policy through face to face contacts, public service announcements, newspaper articles and billboards throughout our project. The many continual

(Continued on page 20)

PROCESS

(Zero-Fatality Year, concluded from page 19)

years of teaching the Mississippi Basic Boating Course in the public/private schools throughout this region has educated our youth in the importance of practicing water safety when they visit our lakes. The success can be attributed to our park rangers and outreach programming.”

Sardis Lake - Chris Gurner, natural resource specialist

“I believe that two key factors play a big role in water-related drowning prevention here at our lakes. First are our relentless efforts to make face-to-face contact with our visiting public. Billboards, articles, and social media all play an important role, but nothing replaces a beach demo, a school visit, or a conversation with a park ranger at a ramp before launching a boat. Second, for the Mississippi lakes I believe that the mandatory Wear Policy continues to be a big reason that number of fatalities are down.”

DeGray Lake – Renea Guin, chairperson for the water safety project delivery team

“We have had a phenomenal year in water safety! The fact that we had no drownings is a beautiful thing! The Vicksburg District employees have done an outstanding job in promoting and preventing any drownings for our 2014 year! Everyone has worked super hard to get the word out

on staying safe while on our waters and it has paid off. We did not have any water fatalities in FY 14.

“All of our staff has worked very hard at promoting water safety and continues to do so with limited manpower. Vicksburg District’s Water Safety PDT Team communicates regularly with each other and throughout the nation to share and exchange ideas and are doing great things in promoting water safety.

“ We remain diligent on getting the water safety message to as many people as we can. It takes everyone’s hard work and diligence plus a lot of luck to promote water safety!” ◀



(District Trains Liaison Team, concluded from page 18)

disasters anywhere within Mississippi, but the biggest disaster that we currently prepare for is a hurricane along the Coast. Primary and alternate liaisons have been assigned to specific coastal counties so they can develop a working relationship with the local authorities prior to any disasters. The liaisons will be a familiar one-on-one contact for those areas when help is needed the most.

This past year, the District expanded its liaison program through an agreement with the Mobile District. Because our liaisons are assigned to specific coastal counties for ESF #3 missions and have already established a working relationship with those communities, we thought it best to provide the “One Door to the Corps” concept for Mississippi’s coastal counties within Mobile District’s boundaries for Public Law (PL) 84-99 work as well. So, during these

missions, our liaisons will report to the Mobile District. PL 84-99 is a Federal law which gives the Corps the legal authority to conduct emergency preparation, respond to supplement local and state efforts, and limited recovery activities for floods and coastal emergencies, including the repair of active Federal and non-Federal flood damage reductions projects that are damaged by disasters. The Corps can respond with PL 84-99 authority prior to events and then change to ESF #3 missions through FEMA following the event.

The links, connections, contacts, cooperation and relationships our liaisons provide before, during and after disaster events epitomize the Corps’ professionalism and service to the Nation during the most difficult times. Liaisons are great *Facilitators of Success!!!* ◀

District Inducts Hill into Gallery

By Shirley J. Smith
Photo by Alfred Dulaney



Wayland Hill

The District recently inducted Wayland Hill into its prestigious Gallery of Distinguished Employees at its recent Founder's Day ceremony.

Hill, a former team member with the hydraulics branch of Engineering and Construction Division, is the 2014 inductee into the Gallery. His career spanned more than 40 years, all spent working in the Engineering and Construction Division.

His career with the District began in 1969 as a draftsman in the minor structures section of design branch of Engineering Division. His duties included drafting for execution of structures. In 1974 he transferred to Lower Mississippi Valley Division, now known as Mississippi Valley Division

(MVD), working in the water control branch of Engineering Division until 1978 when he returned to the District.

In 1978, Hill began working in the hydraulics branch of the reservoir regulation section of Engineering Division. He became an expert at forecasting river stages and was responsible for overseeing the work of the other reservoir regulation sections of other divisions. Other duties included work with the locks and dams within the Vicksburg District. He was also responsible for the operation of nine reservoirs, ensuring that each operated according to the water control plans, and for river forecasting for all rivers and streams within the District for operational purposes.

Throughout his career with the Corps, Hill was a valuable member of the District team. He exemplified the Army values in his approach to achieving solutions to problems within his areas of expertise and assisting his team members. He was an exemplary role model and mentor who continuously demonstrated personal character, integrity, and leadership abilities.

"Forecasting the river stages assisted many people, especially farmers, and gave residents forewarning about flooding. I communicated with folks all the way from Kentucky to New Orleans, so I enjoyed coming to work each day. My team members at the District were great; my more than 40-year career was very rewarding.

"Fishing and hunting are some of my favorite pastimes,
(Continued on page 23)



William Bradley

District Announces New Deputy Chief for Engineering and Construction Division

By Shirley J. Smith
Photo by Bob Anderson, Chief/PAO, MVD

William Bradley has been selected as deputy chief of its Engineering and Construction Division. In this position, Bradley is responsible for execution oversight of the diverse engineering and construction mission of the Vicksburg District.

Prior to this selection, Bradley served as lead structural engineer on stoplog rehabilitation designs on the Ouachita River; river engineering section chief in design branch; investigation and inspection section chief in geotechnical branch; and deputy chief/regional workload manager of the

Business Technical Division at Mississippi Valley Division.

A native of Vicksburg, Bradley is a graduate of Vicksburg High School. He 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 a member of the Society of American Military Engineers.

He is married to the former Carolyn Plemons of Vicksburg, and they are the parents of two children, Beau and Mary Helen. ◀

Mississippi Valley Division Gets New Commander

Courtesy of MVD Public Affairs Office



Maj. Gen. Michael C. Wehr

On Aug. 29, 2014, the Mississippi Valley Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, welcomed a new commander. During a formal change of command ceremony, Brig. Gen. Peter A. DeLuca transferred command of the division to Brigadier General (P) Michael C. Wehr, now Maj. Gen. Michael C. Wehr. The ceremony, held at the Vicksburg Convention Center, was officiated by

the Corps' Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick. Close to 200 MVD staff, Mississippi River Commission members, stakeholders and members of the community attended the event, which was open to the public.

MG Wehr returns to Vicksburg from Afghanistan where he served as director of the Joint Engineering Directorate

for the United States Forces-Afghanistan, and commander of the Transatlantic Division (Forward), Afghanistan.

As MVD's 38th commander, MG Wehr will be 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, MG Wehr, who was the 53rd Commander of the Vicksburg District (2007-2009), will be president-designee of the Mississippi River Commission, the presidentially appointed agency that oversees the comprehensive Mississippi River and Tributaries project, as well as the entire Mississippi River and its tributaries.

DeLuca, division commander and president-designee of the Mississippi River Commission since September 2013, retired after more than 32 years of service with the U.S. Army. ◀



Brad Arcement

Dam and Levee Safety Production Center Gets New Chief

By Shirley J. Smith
Photo by George Arcement,
Brad's Dad

Brad Arcement was recently selected as chief of its Dam and Levee Safety Production Center of Engineering and Construction Division's levee safety branch. In this position, Arcement is responsible for oversight of non-routine levee safety modification studies, engineering risk analysis, and serves as a technical expert on matters of levee safety.

Prior to this selection, Arcement served as lead geotechnical engineer for the Plaquemines Parish Project, as Mississippi Valley Division's geotechnical regional technical specialist, and as chief of the analytical section of Engi-

neering and Construction Division's geotechnical branch.

His previous work experience included working for private consulting firms in Mississippi for 11 years as a geotechnical engineer.

A native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Arcement is a graduate of Baton Rouge High School. He earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in civil engineering from Louisiana Tech University, and a Master's Degree in civil engineering from the University of Texas at Austin. He is a member of First Baptist Church of Jackson, National Society of Professional Engineers / Mississippi Engineering Society, American Society of Civil Engineers, Association of State Dam Safety Officials, and Deep Foundation Institute, and is a registered professional engineer in the State of Mississippi.

He is married to his high school sweetheart, Roxanna Martinez, and they are the parents of a son, Joseph. ◀

District Selects Holcomb Student of the Year

By Shirley J. Smith
Photo by Alfred Dulaney



Eric Holcomb

A Mississippi State student majoring in wildlife management was named the District's 2014 Student of the Year.

Eric Holcomb, a senior at Mississippi State, is also working as a student trainee of biological sciences at the Mississippi Project Management Office located at Sardis Lake. His duties include assisting with the wildlife management program which consists of a variety of techniques such as performing annual surveys, main-

taining existing wildlife habitat, and other habitat improvement tasks. He also assists foresters with applying herbicide and marking timber as well as assists the park rangers at the Corps' recreational facilities.

Holcomb's selection was based upon his demonstration of excellence during his performance of duties and for exhibiting a tireless work ethic, and is an exemplary role model for other students.

Holcomb, a native of Saltillo, began working with the Corps in 2010 and is a graduate of Saltillo High School. He is a member of the Society of American Foresters, Game Keepers, and National Wild Turkey Federation.

He is married to the former Candace Coggins, and they are the parents of two children. ◀

(District Inducts Hill, concluded from page 21) and now that I am retired I do what I want to do...or what my wife allows me to do. Recently, I was engaged in a remodeling job at my church, and doing that was enjoyable and very rewarding," Hill stated.

A native of Water Valley, he is a graduate of Water Valley High School, and earned an Associate Degree in Applied Science from Northwest Mississippi Junior College.

He is married to the former Glenda Justice from Mantachie, chief of the District's design branch of Engineering and Construction Division. They are the parents of two sons. ◀

Captain of Motor Vessel Key Woods Receives Award

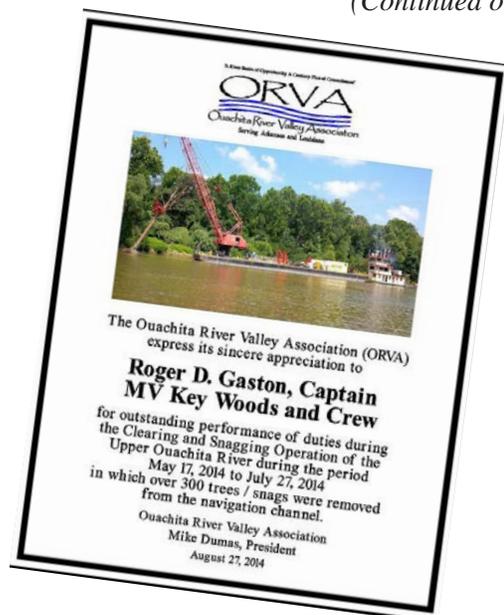
By Alice Bufkin
Photos courtesy of
Ouachita River Valley Association

When the captain and crew of the Motor Vessel Key Woods went above and beyond performing clearing and snagging operations on the Upper Ouachita River, they received special recognition. Captain Roger D. Gaston was awarded a plaque for outstanding service at the Ouachita River Valley Association's 49th annual convention recently held in West Monroe, Louisiana. Mike Dumas, president of the Ouachita River Valley Association, presented the award to Gaston.

Captain Gaston and crew members were cited for outstanding performance of duties during the clearing and snagging operations of the Upper Ouachita River for the period May 17, 2014 to July 27, 2014, in which over 300 snags were removed from the navigation channel.

Gaston stated, "The crew is a great bunch of guys. We all come from different areas that include Louisiana, Mississippi, and Illinois, and are all from different back-

(Continued on page 24)



Plaque being presented to Gaston by Mike Dumas, president of the Ouachita River Valley Association.

PEOPLE



Pictured is the crew of the MV Key Woods, top row left to right, Lewis Wilkes, Roger Gaston, captain, and Kery Hatcher. Bottom row left to right, Jonathan Perrault, Matobby Burks, and Anthony Sisson.



The MV Key Woods removing trees from the Upper Ouachita River during clearing and snagging operations.

(Captain Receives Award, concluded from page 23)
grounds. The best thing about our crew is we come together as a team, especially when we have a breakdown or have to change a greasy boom cable that could be as long as 1,025 feet. As a crew, we have more than 115 years of experience among us in the river industry.”

They worked a schedule of 12-on, two-off, which meant crew members were able to be home only four days a month. The days began as early as 5:00 a.m. and ended sometimes as late as 8:00 p.m. during probably some of the hottest days of the year. The length of a workday depended on how far they had to snag that day and the amount of time needed to find a landing for the evenings.

“The job was very interesting because you never knew what or how big the snag might turn out to be. It could begin as a twig sticking up in the middle of the river and end up being a whole tree lying just under the water. We removed several different kinds of trees: oak, cypress, willow, sycamore, and cottonwoods. We pulled one tree that weighed as much as 68,000 pounds. We snagged over 300 trees in a period of three months,” Gaston continued.

When it became known that the Key Woods crew was accomplishing snagging on the river, the locals, towing industry, sportsmen, and pleasure boaters and skiers provided a tremendous amount of support and help.

The Motor Vessel Key Woods’ crew performs the maintenance for the Ouachita and Black rivers, the Red River, and at the District’s locks and dams. They also clear trees and obstacles that fall into the rivers that create hazards for barge traffic, sportsmen, and recreational crafts.

“The best thing about working for the Vicksburg maintenance section is the wide variety of types of work we do. It is always something different,” Gaston stated.

Captain Gaston is a native of West Monroe, Louisiana. He has over 37 years of experience working on the river and has been employed with the Corps for 17 years. He has a 1,600 ton Inland Master’s License and a Tankerman’s license.

There is a saying of the motor vessel crew: “There is no job too big or too small, the Key Woods crew can snag ‘em all!!!” ◀

(OCO deployment, concluded from page 12)

Army mission. They provide the skills that are not readily available in the military, but are crucial to support military operations. The Army integrates the talents and skills of its military and civilian members to form a Total Army.

To learn more about the TAA District, check them out

on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/UsaceTransatlanticAfghanistanDistrict> or on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/USACETAA>.

Challenge Yourself – Be an Army Civilian – Make a Difference – Go Army! ◀

Vicksburg District's Team Assists Thousands Through Charitable Efforts

By Shirley J. Smith
Photos by Alfred Dulaney

The District recently ended its Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) and the Salvation Army's Angel Tree project.

The District garnered \$46,378.99 in total contributions of its \$50,000.00 goal for 2014.

The mission of the CFC is to promote and support philanthropy through a program that is employee focused, cost-efficient, and effective in providing all federal employees the opportunity to improve the quality of life for all. It is the world's largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign. It provides health and human service benefits throughout the world.

Another workplace charity benefit is the Salvation Army's Angel Tree Program. This program provides underprivileged children aged 12 and under and seniors 62 years and older who are nursing home residents, with holiday gifts. The Salvation Army performs and executes a screening process to verify need, and to determine whether applicants are qualified for this assistance.

The District has participated with the local Salvation Army's Angel Tree program since 1990, and is Vicksburg Warren County's largest single contributor towards the local Angel Tree program. In the past, the District has

adopted as many as 250 Angels but due to downsizing and retirements for the past 5-6 years we have adopted 150 Angels, and 125 this year. These numbers result in the District having assisted thousands of children in hundreds of families during the past 24 years.

The Angel Tree program has been the District's Community Outreach Committee's priority holiday project for numerous years due to the enormous effects of the project. It is far reaching and provides assistance to those in need, especially for the Christmas season. This meaningful resource touches many, many families in a huge way.

Just like with CFC, the District hosts a Kickoff program for the Christmas project. Although the CFC has a six-week period, this Christmas project has a two-three week span for adopting Angels and delivering them to the Salvation Army's distribution center.

District team members are to be commended for workplace volunteerism and dedication towards helping others—a proud and honorable tradition. ◀



LTC Stephen M. Rhudy, Jr., Deputy Commander, presents certificates to United Way staff for the CFC.



"And that's *all* that you want for Christmas?"

C F C A N D



ANGEL TREE PROJECTS



Photos by
Alfred Dulaney
and Bucky
Wall



Forty-Five Mile Lake Ouachita Vista Trail Completed!

By Amy Shultz

Photos by Jerry Shields and Robert Cavanaugh

Twelve years ago the Trail Dogs, a group of hard working volunteers dedicated to the construction and maintenance of the Lake Ouachita Vista Trail (LOViT) began an epic journey. They planned, flagged, and assisted with constructing the LOViT with the dream of providing a premier hiking and biking trail. The trail connects Denby Point Recreation Area on the west end of Lake Ouachita with Blakely Mountain Dam on the east end of Lake Ouachita.

Their overall goal was to bring added tourism and revenue to Garland and Montgomery counties while providing hiking and biking enthusiasts a place to visit and enjoy

fishing pier, six outdoor exercise stations placed along the ADA trail, numerous foot bridges, parking lots, trail heads, and a pavilion built by the Trail Dogs. Benches have been installed by the Trail Dogs for visitors to rest and enjoy the beautiful scenery. Several benches are located on scenic overlooks of Lake Ouachita providing picturesque views of the area.

Trail Dog, Robert Cavanaugh, stated, “One of the most memorable days on the trail was during the winter of 2014 when we were cutting and clearing trees downed by the ice storm on Bear Mountain. The trail and the trees were covered in snow and ice and it was an amazingly beautiful scene high on the mountain overlooking the lake.”

Cavanaugh continued, Even though the construction is officially finished, I know that the ongoing work to keep the trail in good shape, adding signage, along with a good chance of adding some side loops, will give us plenty of work in the future. This has been, and will continue to be, a bright star in the attractions of this lovely part of Arkansas. A bunch of old guys working together can do some wonderful things when the community helps.”

Those utilizing the trail are able to experience the beauty of the Lake Ouachita area, in some cases from scenic overlooks that few have the chance to experience. “Trail Dog Vista” is one of those overlooks that allows hikers and bikers to enjoy the wide open spaces, enjoying the bright blue

(Continued on page 29)



Jerry Shields, a Trail Dog, enjoys a picturesque view of Lake Ouachita.

the beauty of the Natural State. With over 12,000 hours of blood, sweat, and surely some tears donated to the LOViT, the Trail Dogs accomplished their dream by completing the multi-use trail in April 2014.

Approximately 30 Trail Dog volunteers donated their time to LOViT’s construction. Their work included the initial layout of each section of trail, assistance in construction of the trail, installing benches and signage along the trail, marking the trail with signs and blazing, and the ongoing trail maintenance. The Trail Dogs have also established a website and Face Book page featuring the LOViT and Trail Dog activities to promote and enhance the trail’s popularity while providing updated trail information and maps.

The LOViT includes an 800-foot American with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible elevated walking trail with ADA



Trail Dogs working at Bear Mountain along the trail.

LAKES AND RECREATION

(LOViT, continued from page 28)

waters framed by the dark green pine trees surrounding the lake.

In planning the construction of the LOViT, the Trail Dogs ensured they were following the specifications set forth by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in their polices for trail construction. Construction requirements ensured that the trail service was wide enough to accommodate bicycles riding along the trail and hikers they may encounter during their ride. Trail Dog volunteers had to perform the “dress up” work following the machinery, removing rocks and roots from the trail’s pathway. Where possible, Trail Dogs provided a border along the trail with materials found along the trail. In other areas along the trail where machinery could not access the area, the trail’s pathway had to be dug out of the mountain-side completely by hand. Trail Dogs used Pulaski’s, fire rakes, hoes and McCloud’s to clear the trail.

Thousands of visitors will now enjoy the LOViT, and hiking and biking organizations are scheduling annual events including marathons, ultra marathons, and the annual “Hike for a Cure” event. The LOViT has been sanctioned by the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) and in 2014, named an “Epic Ride Trail”, making the LOViT one of only four trails in Arkansas to attain this status.

The LOViT trail has benefitted the local economy by providing a place for avid hikers, mountain bikers, and nature enthusiasts to visit and enjoy. A number of the hikers and bikers visiting the area to traverse the Ouachita Trail, which spans 192 miles from Oklahoma to Pinnacle Mountain State Park near Little Rock, Arkansas, have stopped in the Lake Ouachita area to ride the LOViT before moving on along the Ouachita Trail. While visiting the area, the hikers and bikers temporary stops benefit local businesses



Irons-Creek Cascades, just one of the many beautiful waterfalls along the trail’s route.

The original plan for constructing the LOViT was proposed in 2002, and a leadership coalition of partners was formed in 2003. Without the assistance from all the wonderful partnerships, this project would not have been possible. Partners who have supported the funding and construction of the LOViT include: the Lake Ouachita Citizens Focus Committee (LOCFC), Friends of Lake Ouachita (FOLO), Corps personnel, U.S. Forrest Service, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Arkansas Parks and Tourism, Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, Montgomery County and the Mount Ida Chamber of Commerce, Lake Ouachita Resort Owners Association, Montgomery County Health and Education Advisory Committee, National Trails Program, Student Conservation Association, Boy Scouts of America, and many private citizens. More than \$2 million dollars were raised in grants, donations, land transfers, and in-kind services to create the LOViT.

Without strong partnerships, and the dedication and commitment of the Trail Dogs, none of this would have been possible. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held October 28, 2014 at Avery Recreation Area to celebrate completion of the last segment of the 45 miles of trail. For more information on the LOViT Trail, you can contact the U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers, Lake Ouachita Field Office at (501) 767-2101 or visit the LOViT website at <http://lakeouachitavistatrail.com>, or The Lake Ouachita Vista Trail Face Book page. ◀



Section 8 of trail from Brady Mountain to Avery Recreation Area.



ADA elevated trail near Denby Point.

Ouachita River Water Sweep

Story and photos by Joe Haller

The District's Louisiana Field Office (LFO) natural resource staff along with navigation co-hosted the Ouachita River Water Sweep on September 20th. Natural resource specialist Ben Nyegaard took the lead for LFO in coordinating this very large and extensive volunteer clean-up mission.

The clean up area consisted of more than 40 miles along the banks of the Ouachita River. Volunteers were asked to "help make a difference" by bringing their boat, all-terrain vehicles or just themselves to have a fun-filled day picking-up trash and doing something that really benefits their community.

Supervisory ranger Diane Golden said that "We all have a great time during the event, and when the work is over there is a feeling of pride knowing that we have helped our community and the environment." Golden initiated this event in 2006 along with other co-sponsors including Keep

Monroe Beautiful, Keep West Monroe Beautiful, Angus Chemical and Keep Ouachita Parish Beautiful. This year's sponsors also included Delta Disposal, CCA-Louisiana, Radio People in memory of Chuck Trascher and the Moon Lake Marina.

Several Corps and community parks along the river were the starting and coordinating points. Dumpsters were used at these staging locations for easy unloading of trash and waste. Corps park rangers also contributed by picking-up trash and manning park locations. The efforts of 404 volunteers resulted in the collection of 4.8 tons (10,000 lbs) of trash and waste products! Golden stated "I like the fact that the tonnage of litter was less than in previous years; that is encouraging as I believe it shows that the message of *Don't Litter* and *Pick up your Mess* is getting out."

Bringing the community together for this effort not only intensifies the beauty of the river but it also raises community awareness regarding the affects of trashing the environment, which is the source of the local water supply. It also gives the Corps a positive image within the community and serves as an indicator of togetherness with the community. ◀



Joe Haller, park ranger, cleans along the Ouachita River near Monroe.



David Oliver in boat cleaning the Ouachita River.

(River Operations, concluded from page 11)

Navigation has always been a priority for the Corps. Inland navigation is the most economical and environmental sound mode of transportation for goods and services. Did you know a single 15-barge tow can carry 26,250 tons of cargo, the equivalent to 240 train cars or 1,050 tractor-trailer trucks? Now, the Corps' navigation priority includes the aging infrastructure that supports it, such as our locks and dams. River operations in the District adds value to the nation everyday but supporting inland navigation. Having the Dredge JADWIN, the Mat-Sinking Unit, the maintenance section, and the amazing workforce behind it, makes us a triple threat! ◀



Navigation work.

Columbia Lock and Dam Hosts Third Annual Patriot Hunt

By **John Savell and Joe Haller**, natural resource specialists, Columbia L&D
 Photos by **Joe Haller and Wounded Warriors**

The Louisiana Field Office (LFO) in partnership with the Patriots Alumni & Louisiana Sportsmen (PALS) and Warrior Hunts conducted the third Annual Wounded Warrior Hunt at Columbia Lock and Dam.

During December 6 - 8, twelve Warrior hunters kicked off the event sighting-in their muzzleloaders and crossbows at the Ouachita Parish Rifle Range. John Nolan, leader of the local PALS/Warrior Hunts and U. S. Air Force special operations veteran recruited all the hunters who came from Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington, and some were accompanied by family members.

Columbia Lock and Dam hunting area consists of a 368-acre tract adjacent to the lock and dam facility.



The 12 hunters gathered for breakfast and a safety meeting before the Saturday morning hunt.



Cpt. Nathan Nelson and John Savell team up for the hunt.

During the morning hunt, deer activity was very slow. The temperature was warm and the Warriors were hunting under a full moon. The afternoon hunt was more bountiful as a total of 7 deer were harvested! Five Warriors were able to harvest as did a couple of family members of the hunters. Trey Laffitte, a Marine Corps veteran, witnessed his daughter harvesting her first deer, a 90-pound spike. When we picked them up at the stand, father and daughter were both smiling from ear to ear.

Scott Heyford harvested a healthy doe (125 lbs) with a crossbow. It was his first harvest with a crossbow! Stephanie Roberts, wife of active duty Warrior Dustin Roberts, harvested a 100-pound spike with a muzzleloader.

Some hunters were fortunate to be a part of an outdoor television show being taped for TP Outdoors. Corps personnel and volunteers processed deer for the hunters for easy transport back home. We were pleased and honored to have the presence and support of

LTC Stephen M. Rhudy, Jr., Deputy Commander for the District, and Neil Lewis at the hunt. State Senator Neil Riser also supported the hunt with his presence and pledged to help with future events.

In addition to the hunters, we had several LFO staff members and volunteers who assisted with the hunt. Caleb Jones (14 years old), son of forester Tommy Jones, worked very hard getting the hunters to their stands, cleaning deer, and helping other staff, volunteers, and warriors in accomplishing their missions. Thanks Caleb!

The number of volunteers and contributors are so numerous that we cannot mention them all in this article but we must give special thanks to Billy Mitchell, Kyle Christy, Bobby Booth, Henry King, and Brad Gilmore of the Columbia L&D for their support before and during the hunt. Also, Bo Aarons, retired Corps workers and Vietnam veteran who has supported us in every deer hunt since 2005 stayed with us through-out the day. Thanks to Bo and Monroe navigation, Vicki Mitchell of "I Dream Cake" of West

Monroe, Mr. Butts Barbecue of Columbia, and our neighbor, Courtney Dunn, deputy sheriff for Caldwell Parish for volunteering during the day before his night shift began. Special thanks to John Nolan for his relentless energy, motivation & leadership that he provides coordinating this event. ◀



LTC Rhudy cuts the Warrior Hunt cake for the event.

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