



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
Vicksburg District

# THE Water's SUMMER 2017 Edge



Saving our animals from the  
slippery slope of extinction. - pg 8

Z-Boat - Coming to a stream near  
you? - pg. 12

Volunteer and meet folks from  
across the globe! - pg. 14

Ever try hand-grabbing?! - pg. 30

HISTORY MADE! MRC visits Red River and  
Grand Ecore Visitor Center. - pg 4



### US Army Corps of Engineers®

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

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• Authorization: The Water's Edge is an authorized magazine of the Vicksburg District. The Water's Edge is published quarterly in accordance with provisions of Army Regulation 360-1, is designed on a desktop publisher and is printed by offset.

• Circulation: 1000 copies per issue. News, features, art, and photographs are welcome.

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**On the Cover**  
 Col. Rich Pannell, Deputy Commander of Mississippi Valley Division, far left, is shown with left to right, MG Michael C. Wehr, Commander of Mississippi Valley Division, Kit Parker with the Grand Encore Visitor Center, and Col. Michael C. Derosier, Commander of Vicksburg District, during the trip along the Red River Waterway. Photo by Jared Eastman.

# Commander's Corner

with Colonel Michael C. Derosier



## Vicksburg District Team -

Happy New (Fiscal) Year! I'd like to begin this column by letting you all know how much I appreciate your hard work in FY17 along with your professionalism, enthusiasm, and positive attitude. I appreciate the opportunity, every day, to serve with you as we set the standard for Civil Works mission delivery in Mississippi Valley Division and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in so many ways!

The District did a great job with EXECUTION in FY17. Here are some (but certainly not all) of the highlights:

- We met 30 of 32 scheduled milestones for the year
- Contracting processed 564 actions and obligated over \$167 million
- Zero public fatalities at our recreational areas (phenomenal results from our water safety efforts!)
- Met ALL of our Small Business goals
- The District was Amber (14%) in carryover
- Regulatory achieved all performance metrics
- Our Civil Works customer satisfaction composite score is EXCELLENT (plus 100% Response to our surveys)
- Our FY17 FEVS results are very POSITIVE (plus 53.5% response to surveys)
- Total direct labor was executed at 97.8%, \$1.9M under budget; total overhead, \$30.3M was executed, which would be 99.5%, \$147K under budget; total Departmental OH, we executed \$19.7M in expenses at 100.2%, over budget by just \$49K
- In September alone we had more than 30 team members deployed to Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico for hurricane response and recovery, while our MMC has developed invaluable inundation products to support hurricane response efforts and decision-making
- Dr. Fredric Auston and Daniel Carney are deployed to Afghanistan...Hooah!!!

In late August, the District conducted an off-site strategic planning forum to develop the details for the District's FY18 OPLAN. A primary goal of mine for the OPLAN remains for each and every one of you to see yourself reflected somewhere in the OPLAN – if not, then we have a gap that needs to be addressed. As equally important as the OPLAN itself is a mindset of innovation and continual improvement! I am convinced it is this mindset that enables the USACE to live up to the motto "ESSAYONS" and to solve the Nation's toughest engineering challenges! To that point, I challenge each and every one of you to challenge yourself, and your teammates, to improve upon something each and every day!

FY18 will certainly prove to be another exciting year for the Vicksburg District! Here is a preview of only a few of our major focus areas:

\*Navigation – The JADWIN and contract dredging are out working hard to stay ahead of a rapidly falling Mississippi River; and the Mat Sinking Unit is scheduled to place mat until January for a total of over 240,000 squares this sinking season.

\*Flood Risk Management – Several MRL projects are either in design or project contracts have been awarded for levee enlargement and seepage control.

\*Environmental Stewardship – The District seeks approval on the Quiver River study- a project that will provide both ecosystem restoration and agricultural water supply benefits.

\*Hydropower – Transformer installation at Narrows Dam.

\*Emergency Management – EMAP accreditation planned in 2018.

\*Recreation – several projects (such as fishing piers, lift stations, shower facilities, and road repairs) to maintain premier customer experiences; our Wounded Warrior and special events for the physically challenged remain a real source of pride for the District; displays will be updated this year at the Jesse Brent Lower Mississippi River Museum in Vicksburg.

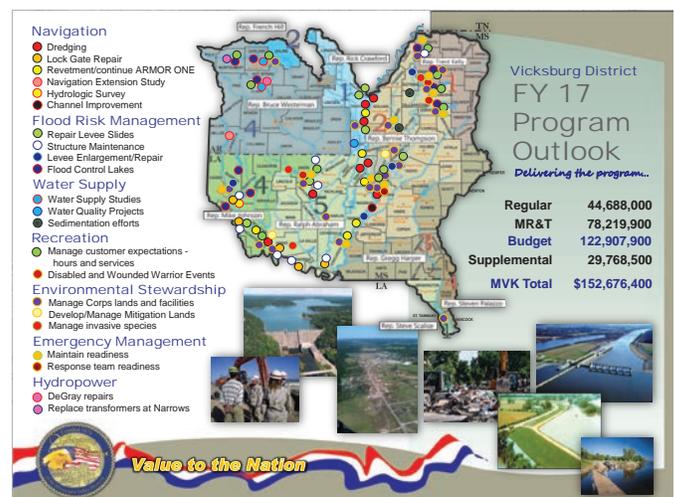
\*Regulatory – Continued interagency coordination to ensure that our regulatory processes are efficient and effective in enabling economic development while protecting the Nation's water resources.

\*Water Supply – Efforts continue on advancing water supply withdrawal requests at DeGray Lake.

\*Supplemental – Bank stabilization work on the Red River and Ouachita-Black/Monroe Floodwall, along with levee slide repairs.

As many of you read this, we will be well into football (and hockey) season and the holidays will be fast approaching. I hope your sports teams are doing well, but even more importantly I hope that you and your families are doing well!

Beat Navy!



# Low Water Inspection Trip on the Red River

By Catherine Jennison  
Photos by Jared Eastman and Catherine Jennison

The Mississippi River Commission (MRC) was organized in 1879, with a mission to develop plans to improve the condition of the Mississippi River. In mid-August 2017, Maj. Gen. Michael C. Wehr, President of the MRC and Commander of the Mississippi Valley Division, other MRC members, Corps commanders, Corps personnel and other civilians, embarked on an historic trip. They traveled down the Red River, also known as the J. Bennett Johnston Waterway, aboard the Motor Vessel (MV) MISSISSIPPI. As members of the MRC boarded the boat, the annual low water inspection trip began.

Over the course of four days, the MRC members listened to comments and concerns about the Red River Waterway during open public meetings. They also attended several panel discussions and witnessed firsthand the works of the locks and dams that support the Red River Waterway.

During the first panel discussion held on board the MV MISSISSIPPI, the MRC members met with Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards. Governor Edwards stated that deepening the Red River navigation channel from 9- feet to 12-feet would be a “critical” step in the waterway’s competitive development.

Governor Edwards also stated, “Deepening the channel to 12-feet would increase the capacity of cargo by about 3,000 tons for a six barge tow. Barges have to be loaded differently if they are coming up the Red River instead of an alternative route.”

Tommy Clark, Office of Multimodal Programming and Don Pierson of Louisiana Economic Development, shared their concerns about not having a 12-foot channel and what the economic growth would be if the channel was deeper.

The MV MISSISSIPPI’s second stop was at the Red River Port. The MRC members and stakeholders from the surrounding areas joined for further panel discussions.

While on this trip, the MRC members and several team members had the opportunity to visit important recreational areas at each stop. One of those locations was the Grand Ecore Visitor Center and Rec area. At the rec area, there was a panel discussion with stakeholders from the Red River Port, Natchitoches Port, and mayors from both Natchitoches and Coushatta, Red River and Grant Levee Boards and Louisiana legislators.

Col. Michael C. Derosier, Commander of the Vicksburg District, opened the panel discussion on the Mississippi River and Tributary Projects. He spoke of the basin improvements, levees, floodways and channel improvement. He expressed his view of the Red River, stating, “This is a young river, and it has lots of potential growth in its future.”



*Maj. Gen. Wehr addresses questions from the audience during the public meeting of the low water inspection trip.*

As the historic trip continued down the Red River Waterway, the MRC members traveled through Locks and Dams 1 and 2 during the day. Between passing through Lock and Dam 1 and Lock and Dam 2, the MRC members listened to a panel discussion on navigation.

Richard Brontoli, executive director of the Red River Valley Association, spoke to the panel about the Navigation Committee Organization, the high water actions, lock operations, 2015 and 2016 flood damage and the 12-foot channel. Brontoli stated, “Our whole goal is to keep the Red River safe, reliable and efficient.”

The lock and dam systems are currently operated on a 24/7 schedule but there were several comments and concerns about the impact of operation if the hours are reduced in the future. Gabe Gatte with the Terral River Service stated, “Hundreds of dollars are lost each hour for a fully crewed barge that has to stop and wait at a lock and dam that is not staffed.” Another concern came from panel

participant Kirk Landry with Florida Marine, who stated, “It becomes a safety issue when the barges get backed up at a lock waiting to unload or for the gates to open.”

The MRC members listened to all that was discussed during the panels, while diligently taking notes on all topics. Whether it was a suggestion or concern, all of the panel meetings were positive and informative. The open public meetings and panel discussions allowed the public and stakeholders the opportunity to express concerns to the MRC members and get feedback. MRC member R.D.

James stated, “I am very happy to be a part of history and I think it is about time the commission looked at the river system.”

As the historic four-day trip concluded, the MRC members departed the MV MISSISSIPPI and returned to their respective locations. The MRC will continue to meet and review everything that was proposed and discussed during the panels. The MRC members will eventually take their suggestions and ideas and meet with Corps personnel to consider further actions on the Red River Waterway. ◀



*Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards, left, and Tommy Clark, right, with the Office of Multimodal Programming listen as MG Wehr makes statement regarding the Red River Waterway during public meeting.*



*During a break, Col. Derosier and a member of the MRC, R. D. James, discuss an article in the spring 2017 edition of the District’s magazine that captures a special hunt at Grenada Lake for persons with physical impairments.*



*Rich Brontoli addresses the audience on navigation along the Red River.*



*K.C. Ellis of the Monroe Navigation Project Office, discusses Corps facts with members of the public while they toured the MV MISSISSIPPI.*

***Brontoli stated, “Our whole goal is to keep the Red River safe, reliable and efficient.”***



*Maj. Gen. Wehr briefs cadets on river navigation.*

## West Point Cadets Visit the District

**By Catherine Jennison  
Photos by Jared Eastman**

On a wet and rainy Thursday morning in August, 2017, seven West Point Cadets accompanied by retired 3-star Lt. Gen. William T. Grisoli, arrived in Vicksburg. They then began the adventure of a lifetime. The cadets were involved in a summer internship program, the Academic Individual Advanced Development (AIAD). Lt. Gen. Grisoli stated that he arranged this specific trip because, “I feel that it is important that the cadets see the work and teamwork of the Corps. It is rewarding, and these professionals enjoy their jobs. They also learned about the Corps’ history and its importance to the nation.”

The trip for the cadets began two weeks earlier in Washington, D.C., where they visited the Corps Headquarters (HQUSACE). They had the opportunity to attend briefings, hear about different projects and ongoing programs and were able to visit several civil and environmental



*Dr. Norma Mattei, civilian member of the MRC, discusses the mission of the MRC with the cadets.*

engineering departments.

From there, the cadets stopped at the Olmsted Lock and Dam in the Louisville District. The cadets had the opportunity to get a close up view of construction being done to replace the aging locks and dams. Cadet Cortez said, “At the Homestead, we got to see Locks and Dams 52 and 53, which were in the process of being replaced. The mix of old construction and new technology is fascinating.”

While the cadets were traveling, they learned about the policies in place at the locks and dams and then met a historian who gave them an insight into the past history of the locks and dams. The historian explained how prior knowledge and data is helping the Corps today as they continue to improve on the locks, dams and other structures.

The next stop on the cadets trip was New Orleans. At the New Orleans District, the cadets learned about the flood risk reduction system and current flood lines. The cadets



*The Cadets witnessed the one-of-a-kind work of the Mat Sinking Unit, as the Commander of the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, Brig. Gen. Mark Toy, gets a close-up view of the MSU work.*

saw major construction on the New Orleans Pump Station Project and parts of the station that have already been completed. Next, they visited the Bonnet Carre’ Spillway. They saw the hopper dredge Wheeler in full effect, keeping the waterway channels clear of silt and sediment. Cadet Krupp stated, “Visiting New Orleans was more of a hands-on application of the ideas and policies the cadets had already learned about.”

Before the cadets and Lt. Gen. Grisoli arrived in Vicksburg, they made one more stop - the Old River Control system where they witnessed the auxiliary structure working together with the low sill structure to maintain a 70 – 30 flow distribution between the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers.

In Vicksburg, their first stop was at the Engineering Research and Development Center (ERDC), where they learned about the ongoing research and development in the hydraulics laboratory. Three of the senior cadets had already taken a hydrology class and the four juniors attending the trip will be enrolled in the class in the fall of 2017.

The opportunity to see a Corps laboratory up close was something the cadets would not have experienced if it was not for this AIAD internship. During their final stop at ERDC, the cadets toured UROC – Reach Back Operations Center. This center provides rapid, reliable and relevant solutions to war fighters and civilians.

After visiting ERDC, the cadets embarked on their “once in a lifetime opportunity,” touring the Corps Mat Sinking Unit. Cadet Munoz said, “I really feel like this is a once in a lifetime event and it truly lives up to my expectations.”

If you have never heard of or seen the Mat Sinking Unit, you should take the time to watch the YouTube video, *Managing the Mighty Mississippi*. The Mat Sinking Unit is one-of-a-kind - there is nothing else like it in the entire world. Unless you get to experience it first-hand, it is hard to comprehend the size and manpower it takes to operate such an amazing vessel. From the quarters unit where the crew eats and sleeps every day to the actual sinking of the mats, men and women are consistently working to keep things in order.

After the cadets departed the Mat Sinking Unit, they boarded the Motor Vessel MISSISSIPPI. The cadets were given a tour of the MV MISSISSIPPI by Thatch Shepard, senior program manager of the Upper District Support Team of the St. Paul, Rock Island, and St. Louis districts. The cadets had the opportunity to see the living quarters, where they were pleasantly surprised to see that each room had bunk beds, an office area, small closet and single bathroom. The cadets also toured the pilot house and engine

*(continued on page 17)*

# Interagency Cooperation Yields Landmark Achievement and Increased Efficiency for Regulatory Permit Seekers Throughout Mississippi



*The Piping Plover, an endangered species.*

© 2009 Mike Morel

**By Mike Stewart and Jennifer Brown**  
**Photos courtesy of USFWS and Mike Morel**

The Regulatory Branch is happy to announce the June 28, 2017, signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that initiated the implementation of Mississippi Standard Local Operating Procedures for Endangered Species (MS SLOPES). Consistent with 50 CFR 402, the Corps' Vicksburg, Memphis, Nashville, and Mobile districts' regulatory offices, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Mississippi Ecological Services Office (ESO), now have an effective, efficient, programmatic consultation framework in place to use for fulfilling their respective responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

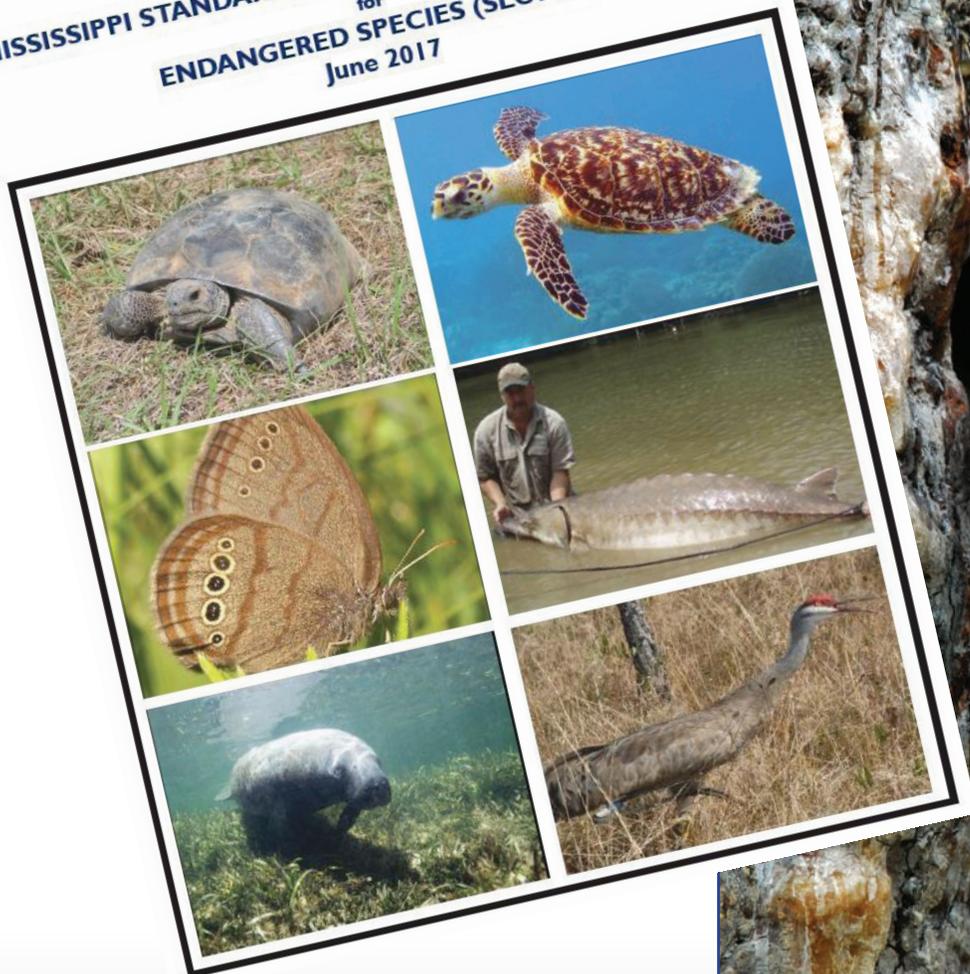
The concept of SLOPES is not unique to the Corps or the USFWS. The interagency cooperation through development and the sheer scope and scale of the tool is what makes MS SLOPES a landmark achievement. There

are 46 listed endangered species in Mississippi. The MS SLOPES currently addresses 43 of those species, collectively serving four Corps districts and three divisions.

Development of MS SLOPES was led by the Vicksburg and Mobile districts' regulatory offices, and the USFWS MS ESO. The approach focused on routine regulated activities that both agencies agreed would result in predictable consultation outcomes. Historical experiences indicate that timeframes for project-specific ESA evaluations by Corps project managers, combined with standard ESA Section 7(a)(2)/(4) consultation with USFWS, for these routine regulated activities have typically required 30 or more days to complete. Under the programmatic MS SLOPES, the District's regulatory office anticipates the time durations for similar activities will be reduced by more than half.

MS SLOPES has the potential to create significant

MISSISSIPPI STANDARD LOCAL OPERATING PROCEDURES  
for  
ENDANGERED SPECIES (SLOPES)  
June 2017



Cover of a binder compiled by technical team members showing endangered species.

The Red Cockaded woodpecker, an endangered species.

workflow efficiencies for all of the Mississippi Corps districts and the USFWS MS ESO. These efficiencies should allow each agency to place more focus on those regulated activities which have greater potential to cause an adverse effect to ESA protected species/critical habitats. The technical format of each MS SLOPES also provides a line-of-thinking about the potential for effects which may result from regulated activities, and, therefore, can be used as a useful training tool for new staff members. Importantly, MS SLOPES is expected to streamline the ESA review for a significant number of permit evaluations and could shorten permit decision timeframes for many prospective permittees across the state of Mississippi.

The MS SLOPES was made possible through a high-level partnership between the Corps and USFWS local leadership to support the conceptual effort and the technical team members. Funding was provided by the Mississippi Valley Division and Vicksburg District; technical data, tool development, and oversight was provided by the USFWS

MS ESO, Vicksburg and Mobile districts' technical team members; contract management was provided by the Mobile District; and project management and deliverable production support was provided by an external contractor.

During the signing ceremony for the MOA, Vicksburg District Commander, Col. Michael C. Derosier, presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Stephen Ricks, MS ESO field supervisor, and David Felder, USFWS MS ESO Team Lead.

Jeffrey Weller, USFWS Southeast Region program supervisor, stated, "I have been waiting 20 years for this day." With the assistance of Ricks, Weller presented a USFWS Southeast Region Program Manager coin to the Vicksburg District Technical Team that includes Cori Carraway, Jennifer Brown, and Mike Stewart, and the Mobile District Technical Team that includes Munther Sahawneh, Aimee Smith, and Allison Monroe. Each Corps Technical Team member also received a Commander's Award for Civilian Service. ◀

# Natchez National Cemetery - Bluff Stabilization

By Kimberly Cruz-Fernández  
Photo by Iván Esquilin-Diaz

The Natchez National Cemetery (NNC) is located on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River in Natchez. The site's topography and subsurface soils influenced its unique layout of irregular shaped burial sections, terraced hillsides, and gravel and grass pathways.

In 2006, the cemetery expanded its burial site and made other site improvements including the construction of a retaining wall at the top of the bluff on the southwest corner of the site near the committal service shelter. Due to the geology of the site, the bluff has continued to erode along the west side. For this reason, the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) under the U. S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) reached out to the Corps' Vicksburg District to develop a slope stabilization project on the west bluff of the cemetery. In order to meet all requirements set by the VA along with an accelerated schedule and delicate onsite operational constraints, the District used its in-house drilling and lab testing capabilities to gather data as quickly as possible. The bluff stabilization design itself was awarded

to an architect-engineering (A-E) firm, BCG Engineering and Consultant, Inc.

As part of this effort, the District's data section of the geotechnical branch drilled five undisturbed borings. The depths of undisturbed borings ranged from 100 to 200 feet. Soil samples were retrieved by using a mud-rotary drilling and thin-walled extraction tubes along with split-spoon samplers. The District's drill crew completed five subsurface exploration borings and collected all soil samples within 11 days. Chris Woodward, drill crew leaderman stated, "As the drilling work advanced, soils samples were visually inspected and classified in the field. After all boring operations were completed and samples collected, laboratory tests were assigned to determine engineering properties to be used in the design."

Laboratory tests consisted of determining natural water content of the soil, Atterberg Limits, particle size analyses, and in-depth strength tests. All laboratory tests have been completed, reviewed and analyzed for design purposes. Soil

data from previous stabilization measures that have been constructed in the Natchez area have been included as part of the design parameters.

Currently, the Natchez National Cemetery—Bluff Stabilization project is under design. District engineers are working closely with the A-E and the NCA in order to deliver an on-time and high quality product. This project is extremely important due to its impact on the individuals who have given so much through their service to our nation. This project will allow the NNC and NCA to maintain and preserve the premises of where our unforgettable veterans and their families rest. We look forward to a successful completion of this extraordinary work.

The District's geodata team consists of geologist Bradley Ulmer; drill crew leaderman Chris Woodward; drill rig operator Chris Bontje; drill rig helper Roman Embry; and laboratory technician Hattie Johnson. This effort was completed under the direction of Kimberly I. Cruz-Fernández, the geotechnical team lead. ◀



# District Hosts Fourth Annual Blessing of the Fleet

By Shirley J. Smith  
Photos by Oscar Reihsmann,  
ERDC

*Motor Vessels JADWIN and WILLIAM JAMES are the two twoboats in the fleet of the Mat Sinking Unit.*

*Rev. Sam Godfrey does invocation for blessing of the fleet.*

The District hosted the fourth annual Blessing of the Fleet ceremony on May 25, 2017, at the Vicksburg Harbor. A tradition that dates back to medieval times, the Blessing of the Fleet originally started in early European fishing communities. A blessing bestowed by a local priest was meant to ask for an abundant and safe season.

Greg Raimondo, chief of Public Affairs Office stated, "This annual event is done in recognition of the departure of the one-of-a-kind Mat Sinking Unit's (MSU) crew. Although this year's Blessing was done prior to the MSU's departure date of July 11, 2017, its significance remains." The ceremony was performed at the Vicksburg Harbor, the home site of the MSU. This change was due to the high level of the river at Vicksburg City front where the ceremony is usually held. The Dredge JADWIN and its crew are usually deployed for dredging during the Blessing ceremony but due to the early date the Dredge was available for this year's ceremony.

This revetment crew of men and women per-

forms one of the most important jobs within the Corps' river stabilization program. They place articulated concrete mats along the river banks of the Mississippi River to control erosion.

Sometimes referred to as a floating city, the MSU fleet consists of towboats, quarter boats, and a floating factory. The fleet includes the motor vessels BENYAURD, WILLIAM JAMES, AND HARRISON, and other floating plant. It houses and feeds at least 300 team members and has the capabilities to provide all of the electricity and potable water necessary.

These men and women travel the Mighty Mississippi placing the mats in the Memphis, Vicksburg and New Orleans districts from Cairo, Illinois at mile 953 to Head of Passes at mile 0, working in seven states along the route. ◀





*Mike Leblanc launches the SenseFly eBee RTK.*

**By Paul Richards**  
**Photos by Paul Richards and Bucky Wall**

The advancements in technology of unmanned systems creates the ability to collect aerial imagery; produce photogrammetric products of survey grade accuracy; and collect multibeam bathymetric data at a fraction of the cost with less inherent risk than traditional methods. The use of unmanned systems has become a timely and cost effective solution within the geospatial community, making it a valuable in-house resource.

To take advantage of this new technology, the District's technical services branch of Engineering and Construction Division, developed a business case to integrate unmanned systems capabilities into our in-house survey services in August of 2015. At this time, the District is currently operating the SenseFly eBee RTK (fixed wing UAS), and the Teledyne Oceanscience Z-Boat 1800 (Multibeam Hydroboat).

The SenseFly eBee RTK is a fully autonomous fixed wing system controlled via radio from a laptop computer with a 1.86 mile radius. The flight path is generated in flight planning software and is based on the coverage area required. The use of the laptop computer allows for real-time monitoring of position, altitude and speed. Mike LeBlanc, geodetic technician stated, "The eBee RTK has the ability to create products such as high resolution imagery, oblique photography, point clouds and digital elevation models." While similar to Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR), the eBee RTK does not utilize the active laser sensor found on LiDAR platforms. The eBee RTK utilizes ground control and high percentage image overlap to create the photogrammetrically derived three dimensional point clouds containing elevations of the existing terrain. The high

*Boat collecting hydrographic survey data between barges in the Vicksburg Harbor while operating in autonomous mode.*

## **Unmanned Systems are Valuable Resources within the Vicksburg District**

densification of topographic data allows precise elevations to be determined in the open work area. Although, in overgrown or wooded areas, the eBee RTK is unable to penetrate to the ground surface and conventional survey techniques are required to collect the missing data. The combination of conventional survey methods and the eBee RTK allows for efficient data collection while ensuring data quality.

Another unmanned system within the District is the Z-Boat 1800, a remote controlled hydrographic survey boat that is equipped with a MB1 multi-beam echosounder. The District has the ability to deploy the Z-Boat for site monitoring, small stream hydrographic surveys, scour and bank deformation detection, and inspection and evaluation of water control structures. The Z-Boat is typically used when access is restricted or conditions are unsafe and conventional methods are not feasible. It can be controlled remotely and also has an autonomous mode available once the working area parameters have been defined.

A multibeam echosounder is combined with onboard GNSS to provide continuous measurement of the depth under the boat as it follows the survey lines created by the operator. However, instead of having this equipment directly connected to the survey laptop or data collector like on a typical survey launch, a long range wireless link is used. It transmits survey data to the shore, where soundings and GNSS position are acquired using software such as HYPACK. Once the hydrographic data collected by the Z-Boat has been processed, it can then be merged with conventional overbank survey data to provide the end user with a complete package.



*Teledyne Oceanscience Z-Boat floating while setting the working parameters in the Vicksburg Harbor.*

The incorporation of unmanned systems in the Vicksburg District increases the capacity of survey projects completed in house and, in many instances, on short notice. It also allows the district to easily and accurately conduct assessments in areas that would normally require significant efforts. The technology associated with the unmanned systems can be utilized as an essential asset to the success of the Vicksburg District in fulfilling its navigation, flood risk management, emergency management, and regulatory missions. ◀



*Joshua Beam utilizing Hypack software to observe the remote live feed of hydrographic survey data being collected by the Z-Boat.*

# Volunteerism a Plus for Jesse Brent

By Shirley J. Smith

April 8, 1993, "Decommissioning-Commissioning Day," the Corps retired Mississippi IV. The vessel was stored for more than a decade while plans developed for the Lower Mississippi River Museum to be built in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Mississippi IV was cosmetically restored in Morgan City, Louisiana, and moved by barge to Vicksburg in 2007.

In 2012, the Museum became a reality and was managed by contract employees until 2014 when the Corps resumed operations and maintenance of the Museum, renaming it the Jesse Brent Lower Mississippi River Museum.

Due to budget constraints, the Corps could no longer afford the contract employees and advertised for volunteers to work during operating hours, and, that effort proved to be successful.

Now, gently perched atop a concrete cradle near the city's waterfront, volunteers ensure that Mississippi IV continues her role as a public ambassador and as a centerpiece of the Lower Mississippi River Museum.

Through a partnership with the City of Vicksburg, Corps personnel, and the dedicated efforts of volunteers, the Museum is open Sundays 1:00-4:00 p.m., and Monday thru Saturday 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

The public as well as students, near and far, frequently visit the museum. "We have thousands of local, out of town and out of state students who visit our museum, especially on their spring field trips. I enjoy the work here, especially presenting a short water safety interpretive program to the visiting elementary students. Local organizations and groups reserve our two conference rooms for special events. We enjoy all of our visitors, partners, and volunteers. Without the latter, there is no way that the JBLMRM would be able to operate seven days a week," stated Kathy Mabry, a Corps park ranger who also works at the Museum.

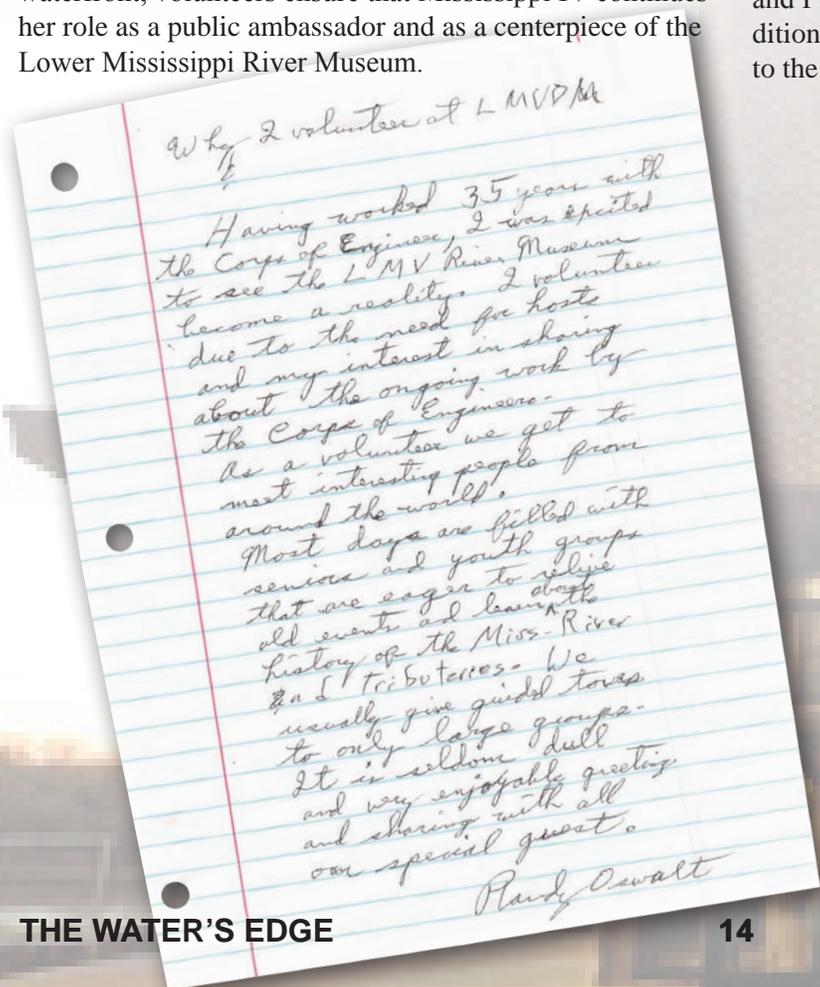
Randy Oswalt stated, "Having worked for the Corps for 35 years, I was excited to see the Museum become a reality. I volunteer to share knowledge about the ongoing work of the Corps. Most days are busy with senior citizen and youth groups who are eager to relive events and learn about the history of the Mississippi River and tributaries."

David Haworth, a Corps retiree, stated, "I like people and I like the Corps. The Museum is an outstanding addition to Vicksburg. The days are always interesting due to the people who visit us. A couple from the Netherlands

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***"The thing I enjoy most about volunteering at the JBLMRM is seeing the collaborative efforts of many come together. Being able to build the pilot house simulator, and bringing an experience of river life into a tangible experience for visitors, has been very fulfilling. The feeling of community and the importance of sharing conversation of our river environment is very important."***

---



# Lower Mississippi River Museum

who owns a boat and hauls cargo all over Europe, said that their boat was longer than the MV Mississippi IV but not as tall."

Paul Banchetti stated, "It all started when I read the article in the newspaper stating there was no funding to continue to pay staff at the Museum and that volunteers were needed to continue its operation. The LMRM is far too great an asset to the city of Vicksburg to allow it to close. I volunteered because it is fun and exciting to welcome the visitors literally from all over the world. Most of their comments are favorable about the Museum."

Paul Miller, a Corps retiree stated, "I volunteer to be able to interact with visitors and volunteers. To help others learn about the river, the Corps, and Vicksburg. I enjoy working with the staff and seeing things change to make the museum better."

Every deck of the M/V Mississippi IV has been brought back to life through the use of original pieces, staged items, and soundscapes. The exhibits include a boat simulator, interactive kiosks, information about the vessel's working life, and the Mississippi River Commission. There are activities for all ages, and much to see and explore!

Justin Waya, although employed elsewhere, troubleshoots and rebuilds the simulator game and computer system, stated, "The thing I enjoy most about volunteering

at the JBLMRM is seeing the collaborative efforts come together. Being able to build the pilot house simulator, and bringing an experience of river life into a tangible experience for visitors, has been very fulfilling. The feeling of community and the importance of sharing conversation of our river environment is very important."

There are five themed tours of the M/V Mississippi IV for individuals and groups. These tours are self-guided and highlight the architecture of the M/V Mississippi IV, the working life of the vessel and communications used aboard the vessel. The tours also include a scavenger hunt and trivia hunt.

While most of the M/V Mississippi IV is available for self-guided tours, private tours are led by voluntary museum staff. Private tours are available to individuals and small groups who would like to learn more about the history of the M/V Mississippi IV. ◀

## Mabry, Mary K CIV CEMVK CEMVD (US)

From: Paul Banchetti <paul\_banchetti@gmail.com>  
Sent: Friday, April 21, 2017 8:35 AM  
To: Mabry, Mary K CIV CEMVK CEMVD (US)  
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Re: Article To Be Published in "The Water's Edge" About You and the JBLMRM Soon

It all started for me when I saw the article in the newspaper saying that there was no funding to staff the museum after the initial year or two, and that volunteers were needed to continue its operation. The LMRM is far too great an asset to the city to have allowed that to happen. And I continue to volunteer because it's fun and interesting to see and welcome the visitors, literally from all over the world, most of whom comment very positively about the museum as they leave.

Sent from my iPad

- > On Apr 21, 2017, at 8:11 AM, Mabry, Mary K CIV CEMVK CEMVD (US) <Mary.K.Mabry@usace.army.mil> wrote:
- >
- > Good Morning Dedicated and On the Go Volunteers!
- >
- > Just wanted to ask each of you some questions for you to elaborate regarding the above-mentioned article. Could you please take a moment today if possible in your busy schedules to write a paragraph as to "why did/do you volunteer at the JBLMRM and what do you enjoy the most when here or any other comments you wish to share (hopefully all positive...ha)?" Thank you Randy Oswald and David Haworth for your comments already! They were quite entertaining.
- >
- > Thank you for all that each of you do for me and the Corps at the JBLMRM! Every single donation, snack, lunch, your time, your many talents, your caring, putting thousands of water safety packets together (thank you partners for that and all each of you do too), your encouraging words, your expertise, showing up in desperate times to help and showing up after hours to help, etc. is so very much appreciated! Each of you are priceless treasures to me!
- >
- > Hope each of you had a fun and safe Easter holiday. Volunteer newsletter coming soon! I am sure your eyes are beginning to glaze over right now just thinking about having to read it...ha!
- >
- > Thanks,
- >
- > Kathy
- >

Why do I volunteer at the museum?

I like people and I like the Corps of Engineers and the museum is an outstanding addition to Vicksburg. When I heard that volunteers were needed to operate the museum, it seemed like a good match for me. I signed up and have really enjoyed the work.

The days are always interesting because of the variety of people who come to town. The MV Mississippi IV really makes the museum special and is of real interest to many of the visitors. A couple from the Netherlands who own a boat and haul cargo all over Europe said their boat was longer but not as tall and diesel mechanics enjoy the engine room.

David Haworth

# Engineering Organizations Hosts Fifteenth Annual SAME Camp

By Henry Dulaney, Chief of Engineering and Construction Division  
Photos by Lane Vargas and Angela White

The fifteenth annual Engineering and Construction Camp was held June 11-17 in Vicksburg. As in the previous fourteen years, this one-week program was sponsored by the Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) and was supervised by professional engineers and volunteers from engineering organizations in the lower Mississippi Valley.

The Engineering & Construction Camp is designed to provide high school students with the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in engineering and construction skills in Vicksburg's wide-ranging engineering community. The campers, 14 girls and 25 boys, participated in various activities to provide insight into available career choices in the fields of engineering and construction. Topics covered in this year's curriculum included civil, environmental, construction, computer, mechanical, geotechnical, river, and military engineering.

The Mississippi Army National Guard 168th Engineer Brigade Headquarters housed the campers for the sixth consecutive year, affirming the strong relationship the 168th and the camp have had since the camp's inception. This year's group of 39 students were from Mississippi, Florida, Arkansas, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Texas, California, Virginia, Louisiana, Maryland, Kentucky, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Alabama, Indiana, Missouri, and Georgia.

Captain Dan Harder, an Army engineer officer assigned to ERDC, served as this year's camp director. He and the camp counselors, known as pilots and firstmates, led the students during their week-long journey into the field of engineering. Campers were divided into teams, competed against each other during each activity, and scored points

for accuracy and team spirit. This year's winning team members earned a North Face backpack.

The campers not only worked hard on the engineering activities but also engineered some fun during the week. They participated in a Mardi Gras-themed jambalaya party, a pool party, a collegiate themed bowling night, a karaoke night, and an activity modeled after NBC's Survivor. Three counselors were former SAME campers and reflected on their camp experiences to help lead this year's group. Those three were Chuck Wehr, an ERDC employee and a senior mechanical engineering student from Harvard; Jordan

Klein, a computer engineer at ERDC's ITL Lab; and Mandy Cote, a mechanical engineer from the Southern Company. Counselors Austin Runnels, Sabrina Gell, and Logan Yann are all Department of the Army interns working as civil engineers at the Vicksburg District. This year's counselors also included Katie Bryant, a civil engineer at Waggoner Engineers, and Elizabeth Hayes, an electrical engineering intern at Mid-South Utilities.

One camper, Jalen Ray, stated, "I can't thank you enough for giving me the opportunity to get a better outlook on the career I wish to pursue in my future. Your love for civil engineering really showed over the full week of camp and has rubbed off on me tremendously. The camp gave me a chance to really decide what I plan to do in the future. It also helped me to find a path I desire to take. Thank you again for everything."

Another camper, Sarah Beason, stated, "Thank you for putting together this extraordinary camp, it was one of the best experiences I've ever had. This camp is a hidden gem and it was an honor to have been selected to attend. Thank you again for everything."

This camp is one of three SAME national camps. The Air Force Camp is at the Air Force Academy in Colorado, and the Marine Camp is at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. The Navy Camp was at Port Hueneme in California until a few years ago and will relaunch next year on the Mississippi gulf coast. The Air Force will also host a second camp starting next year at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois. The Army is in discussions about hosting a second camp at West Point Military Academy. SAME also supports two regional camps in Atlanta and Savannah. This year, 306 campers attended the five active camps with each camp having a long stand-by list.

The fee for the Engineering and Construction Camp is

\$50, and the operating cost of the camp is about \$350 per camper. The camp relies heavily on the volunteer efforts of those associated with the camp to decrease costs. The funds for the camp were provided by contributions from individuals, Society of American Military Engineers (SAME), sustaining member firms, SAME posts, and other professional societies. The local engineering community all pitched in to make this camp affordable.

The Mississippi Army National Guard 168th Engineer Brigade, the Vicksburg Warren School District, Entergy, the Engineer Research and Development Center, Mississippi Valley Division, Vicksburg National Military Park, Mississippi State University's Center for Advanced Vehicular Systems, Mississippi Materials, Nissan America, and the Vicksburg District, each played an active role in the planning and execution of the camp.

The parents of the campers stayed abreast of the week's activities by visiting the camp's Facebook page, where photographs were uploaded daily. The camp's staff has received calls and e-mails expressing appreciation for the positive influence that the camp has had on the campers. They were also impressed with the encouraging words of Maj. Gen. Michael C. Wehr, Commander of the Mississippi Valley Division, who served as the guest speaker at the graduation ceremony, as well as those of retired Lt.

Gen. Robert Flowers, former Commanding General of the Corps of Engineers. Retired Lt. Gen. Flowers proudly pointed out that he was also the guest speaker at the inaugural camp graduation fifteen years ago when he was Chief of Engineers for USACE. Col. Michael C. Derosier, Commander of the Vicksburg District and Col. Bryan S. Green, Commander of ERDC, also participated in the graduation ceremony and provided valuable insight to the campers.

The camp staff is committed to providing prospective engineering students with the information and experiences they need to make an informed career choice. An opportunity at the Engineering and Construction Camp can be instrumental in the enrollment of students in the field of engineering, which forms a critical aspect of the nation's future prosperity and security. ◀



*Maj. Gen. Wehr speaks to the campers at their graduation ceremony.*



*Henry Dulaney, chief of Engineering and Construction Division, far left, stands with the group of SAME campers.*

*(West Point Cadets Visit the District, concluded from page 7)*

room, learning about the systems that keep the boat operating. After their tour, the cadets were welcomed by the MRC members and heard the integration of military and civilian ideas as MRC personnel engaged in a small closed panel discussion. Lt. Gen. Grisoli felt this part of the trip was an important first step for these young army engineers to better understand our nation's engineers.

As the cadets' trip ended, their final endeavor included attending an open public meeting on the MV MISSISSIPPI.

The cadets were introduced to the public by Maj. Gen. Wehr. During the public meeting the cadets heard fifteen speakers give testimony on areas of concern and importance, such as locks and dams, levees and river drainage. Cadet Hassan stated, "The Vicksburg District was the most interesting out of all the site visits, there was so much to see, including the mat sinking unit, which was by far the best day of our trip." ◀

# Project Management Student has Off Site Tour with the Deputy Program Manager

Story and photos by Chandria Murrell

For the past year, I have worked under the direct supervision of Patricia R. Hemphill, Chief of Programs and Project Management Division. I was recently given the opportunity to shadow her for a full day outside of the Vicksburg office!

We traveled to El Dorado, Arkansas, where she was guest speaker at the Girls Learning about Math & Science (GLAMS) conference held at South Arkansas Community College. Upon our arrival to the college, it was show time! She gave a motivational speech to several groups of 8th grade girls. She spoke words of wisdom and assured the girls that they could become whatever they wanted to as long as they were dedicated and willing to work hard to achieve their goals.

Each session ended with a team building activity, and one of these activities was titled Paper Tower. The girls were instructed to work together to make a paper tower using only the newspapers that they were given. The looks on the girl's faces were priceless, they thought we were joking and began to giggle among each other and asked us for scissors, glue, tape, etc. After being given motivation and a brief demonstration, the girls sprang into action...and later, one paper tower was 8ft. tall! I thoroughly enjoyed our visit with the girls, each and every one had bright personalities and aspired to be the best that they could be to make a difference in the world today.

Later that afternoon Patricia and I met with Sherrel Johnson for lunch. Johnson is the Grants and Special Projects manager of the Union County



*Hemphill supervises students while they build the paper tower.*

Water Conservation Board in El Dorado. During lunch, we discussed the newest South Arkansas Sparta Aquifer.

After lunch, we toured the downtown area and the Aquifer. Johnson led us to the control room where we were able to view the data being recorded as the aquifer worked its magic. We reviewed charts, graphs, maps, numerical, and chemical readings, etc., all providing important details needed to ensure that the aquifer continues to run efficiently.

After touring the control room, we were taken to see the new Sparta Aquifer, I was honestly intrigued by the mechanism. The water from the aquifer is pulled in from both the ground and Ouachita River and is filtered rapidly to supply drinking water for several counties in Arkansas and parishes in north Louisiana. The aquifer filters millions of gallons of water per day, being able to witness the process of muddy water from the river being filtered in minutes was absolutely amazing!

# District Names Chief of River Operations Branch

By Shirley J. Smith  
Photo by Alfred Dulaney



The District recently selected Joel Brown as chief of its river operations branch, Operations Division.

In this position, Brown will be responsible for the work of the Mat Sinking Unit, Dredge Jadwin, Vicksburg Harbor facility, maintenance section, navigation and dredging on the Mississippi, Red, and Ouachita/Black Rivers, and operation and maintenance of nine locks and dams on the Red and Ouachita/Black rivers.

Prior to this selection, he served as the assistant chief of river operations branch, and chief of navigation section of Operations Division. His duties included supporting the chief of river operations with an emphasis on navigation, surveys, and dredging.

Brown began his career with the Corps in 2004 as an intern mechanical engineer for the Mat Sinking Unit, where he was responsible for creating and managing contracts, supporting maintenance, and providing technical expertise.

A native of DeKalb, he is a graduate of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science. He earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in mechanical engineering from Mississippi State University. He is an engineer intern with the Mississippi Board of Licensure. Brown is a graduate of the Vicksburg Leadership Development Program and a 2014 graduate of Mississippi Valley Division's Emerging Leaders Program.

He and his wife, Sandra, are residents of Vicksburg. ◀

That evening, Patricia and I headed back to Vicksburg. During the drive back, we talked, we laughed, and I learned a lot more about the District. Upon our arrival back to headquarters building, we should have been tired - but we were not! I really enjoyed my day with my supervisor, and I truly appreciate being given the opportunity to shadow her, especially away from the office.

Our DPM is an expert on many projects/issues within the Corps, which made my trip with her even more interesting. I definitely look forward to our next trip together, her motivation and advice for achieving are extraordinary. "Pat, I'm ready when you are!" ◀



Hemphill measures the height of tallest paper tower.

The Vicksburg District app for your cellphone or tablet has now been downloaded over 10,000 times in over 28 countries. The app is available, at no charge, on the App Store for iPhone, iPad, iPad mini and iPod touch. It is also available for all Android devices on the Google Play Store and Amazon App Store. (Search for "USACE Vicksburg")

**Do you have it?**

Just search on "USACE Vicksburg" To find in your app store

Available on the iPhone App Store  
Available on Google play  
Available at amazon

- Current river levels
- Contracting info
- Social media
- Permits info

**FREE**

- Recreation info
- Office locations
- Map Downloads
- Water Safety info

Rated Over four stars on Android & Apple  
10,000+ downloads in 28 countries

# District Names Channel Improvement Coordinator

**By Shirley J. Smith**  
**Photo by Angela White**



The District recently selected Viviana Berrios Williamson as Engineering and Construction Division's channel improvement coordinator.

In this position, Williamson will be the District's specialist for matters pertaining to Mississippi River channel improvement and stabilization for flood control and navigation. She will be responsible for managing, conducting and coordinating all phases of work required for developing and maintaining the approximately 280 miles of the Mississippi River within the authorities of the Channel Improvement, Mississippi River and Tributaries Project.

Prior to this selection, she served as the District's river navigation specialist and as chief of the navigation unit. In that position she was responsible for planning, directing, and coordinating river operations branch's hydrographic surveys, field investigations, dredge layouts development and channel patrols along the Mississippi River and Tributaries. She directed the Dredge Hurley operations in June 2016 while it was dredging within the District at Victoria Bend (LMR Mile 595).

Williamson began her career with the Corps in 2009 in design branch of Engineering and Construction Division where she was responsible for developing civil site designs, plans, and drawings for multiple projects for the Vicksburg and New Orleans districts.

She serves as secretary for the Vicksburg Post of the Society of American Military Engineers. She is a graduate of the Vicksburg District's Leadership Development Program and is currently serving in the Mississippi Valley Division's Emerging Leaders Program.

A native of Orocovis, Puerto Rico, she received her Bachelor's Degree in civil engineering from the University of Puerto Rico and a Master's of Engineering from Mississippi State University. She is registered as a Professional Engineer in the State of Mississippi.

She and her husband, Bryan, are the parents of a son. ◀



# River Operations Chief Retires

**By Bucky Wall**  
**Photo by Angela White**

After more than 23 years of service to the federal government, Tommy Hengst, Operations Division, retired June 30, 2017. Hengst's retirement brought closure to a successful career spent serving the public with the Vicksburg District.

During his tenure, Hengst held a variety of positions and leadership roles. His career began at the Vicksburg District on May 31, 1994. He worked in cost engineering, Project management, project resources management, and retired as the chief of river operations.

After having served as chief of river operations branch, Hengst stated, "About 4 1/2 years ago, I was given the opportunity to lead the river operations branch. Of all of the other things that I did in my Federal career, that proved to be the most challenging as well as the most rewarding." Throughout his many accomplishments, he strived to lead by example and encouraged others to serve the public to the best of their abilities.

Hengst lives in Rolling Fork and is married to his lovely wife Pam. They have a daughter and a son and many grandchildren. ◀

## District Names Chief for Resource Management Office

By Shirley J. Smith • Photo by Peggy Thorne



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District, recently selected Cynthia Lee as chief of its Resource Management Office.

In this position, Lee will serve as the resource management officer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District, with responsibility to develop and administer finance and accounting, budget, manpower, and management analysis activities designed to meet organization needs. Her responsibilities include leading a staff of 16 government employees who provide resource management services to the Vicksburg District totaling over 1,000 employees in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. She is also responsible for planning and executing programs in all District functional areas to include financial, budgeting, organization leadership and manpower management.

Prior to this selection, she served as the District's finance and accounting officer. In that position, she served as the staff advisor to the resource management officer and Deputy Commander, as well as operating officials on fiscal matters pertaining to the Vicksburg District.

Lee began her career with the Corps in 2006 in the finance and accounting branch of the Resource Management Office. She was responsible for providing professional accounting service to the Vicksburg District and Mississippi Valley Division. Prior to her career with the District, Lee served overseas as a quality assurance accountant for Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), Japan, for six years.

She serves as an active member of the American Society of Military Comptrollers (ASMC). She is a graduate of the Vicksburg District's Leadership Development Program (VLDP) and a member of the Corps Chapter Chamber of Commerce (C3).

A native of Montgomery, Alabama, she received her Bachelor's Degree in accounting from Alabama State University. She is a certified defense financial manager (CDFM) and has a Level II DoD FM certification. Lee has over 18 years of financial management experience.

She and her husband, Robert, are residents of Vicksburg. ◀

## VLDP Celebrating 15-Year Anniversary and New Curriculum

### Leadership and Team-Building Exercises

By Jamie Baker

Photos by Jamie Baker and Gay Saxon of Hinds Community College



VLDP 2017 class members include, left to right, Michael Warren, Josh Neisen, Lance Gullet, Cherrie Collins-Burks, Matt Engebretson, Porter Holliday, and Angela White.

After being selected for the District's Strategic Planner position in July of last year, I soon discovered that one of my first collateral duties as Administrator of the Vicksburg Leadership Development Program (VLDP) was the selection of a new VLDP class.

I also learned that this year's class (2016-17) is the 15th VLDP class that the District has selected since the program's implementation in 2002. With that in mind, and with the assistance of the three VLDP Champions David Jenkins, Jacob Brister, and Will Bradley, they decided it was time to review the program's composition and make a few curriculum additions to celebrate this important milestone.

Now one year later, we are preparing to wind-up a great year packed full of excellent leadership training, mentoring,

*(continued on page 29)*

# District Recognizes Team Members at Annual Engineer's Day Awards Ceremony

By Shirley J. Smith  
Photos by Leon Phillips

The District recently hosted its annual Engineer's Day awards ceremony at District Headquarters.

① **Darrell W. Sorrels**, chief of the office engineering section of Engineering and Construction Division, received the **Vicksburg District's Employee of the Year Award**. Sorrels received this award for his exceptional performance in support of the District's challenging construction mission. While interfacing almost daily with field offices, Office of Counsel, Contracting Division, project managers, and engineering personnel, he diligently and reliably provided sound construction management leadership.

Among other team members and teams receiving Honorary Awards were:

② **Michael W. Sorrels**, hydraulics branch, Engineering and Construction Division, was the recipient of the **Commander's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Equal Employment Opportunity**.

③ **Danny L. McPhearson**, technical support branch, Engineering and Construction Division, received the **Engineer of the Year Award**.

④ **Brandy B. Morrow**, Sardis Lake Field Office, was the recipient of the **Park Ranger of the Year Award**.

⑤ **Alexis L. Murrell**, student aide in the hydraulics branch of Engineering and Construction Division, received the **Student of the Year Award for Headquarters Building**.

⑥ **Kevin K. Blann**, student aide at the Arkabutla Lake Field Office received the **Student of the Year Award for Field Offices**.

⑦ **David R. Johnson**, water quality section, Engineering and Construction Division, received the **STEM Employee of the Year Award**.

⑧ **Lorenzo Minter**, design branch, Engineering and Construction Division, received the **Scientist Award**.

⑨ **Marla G. Sigman**, Ouachita Project Management Office, Operations Division, received the **Administrator Award**.

⑩ **Jasper, E. Lummus, Jr.**, Engineering and Construction Division, received the **Emergency Management Award**.

⑪ **Billy R. Dunn** of the Mat Sinking Unit and ⑫ **Steven K. Harmon**, Engineering and Construction Division, received the **Paddle Wheel Award**.



**13** Brian E. LaBarre, Programs and Project Management, received the Professional Award.

**14** Charles F. Ashley, Dredge JADWIN, and Jesse A. Huskey, Operations Division, not pictured, received the Wage Grade Leadership Award.

**15** The Technical Support Branch Team received the Commander's Public Service Award.

**16** The Rope Access Inspection Team, Engineering and Construction Division, received the Team Safety Award.

**17** Enid Lake Wage Grade Staff received the Wage Grade Team Award.

The **18** Delta Headwaters Project Team, **19** N.O.V. 13 Empire Lock Floodgate Team, and the **20** Mississippi SLOPES PDT, each received a Team Award.

**21** Kirk J. Ross, project resources management branch, Operations Division, received the Mississippi Valley Division Commander's Special Emphasis Award.

Team members receiving Division Honorary Awards/Achievement Medal for Civilian Service with Engineering and Construction were: **22** James R. Cumberland, **23** Brandon M. Griffin, **24** Robert E. Hite, **25** Kathryn W. Hulsey, **26** Nathan W. Morrow, **27** Ronnie Morrow, **28** Jason Paschal, **29** John Stouffer, and **30** Ryan T. Wood.

Operations Division: **31** Nathanael J. Jabour, **32** Adrian Davis, **33** Janice Allen-Flowers, and **34** Jeffrey L. Lockwood.

Team members receiving Commander's Award for Civilian Service were:

Real Estate Office: **35** Lesley C. Smith, and **36** Timothy J. Riggs.

Certificates of Appreciation were presented to: John Waters III, Ronnie Mackey, Darrell Mitchell, Ramon Pierce, Huey Mace, Shannon Herrin, Bennie Montgomery, Ed Claypool, Byron Erickson, Jonathan Pennington, Robin Lammers, Jasper Lummus, Jr., William Richards, Gary Lammers, Ryan Wood, Emilio Aguiar, Roger Arnold, Richard Fisher, John White, Arthur Hoff, Stefanie Crow, Michael David Tate, Karen Prosser, David Muselwhite, Larry Banks, Brett Whittington, Chance Rebert, Willie Jackson, Tammy Fant, Anthony Miller, Randy C. Young, Rose Jackson, Brett Holloway, Dexter Morgan, Edna Lee-Jackson, Maj. Jeffrey Shultz, Linda Barfield, Jonathan Harrell, Johnny Kiser, Jessica Strider, Rosa Hill, Mike Carter, Tonya Nathan, Brian Johnson, Leah Moring, Mike Robinson, Heather Jackson, Cheryl Wolfe, Chris Terry, Amanda Hanks, Andy Strickland, Matt Pierce, Shelly McDowell, Diane Golden, Theresa Combs, Joseph Minter, Thomas Jones, Tommy Hengst, Bengamen Nyegaard, Marla Sigman, Dustin Wilson, Stacy Sigman, Cindy Tucker, Derick Walker, Jody Dvorak, Rick Dwyer, Scott Corbitt, Jimmie Ward, Gloria Piazza, Joel Brown, Eric Jenkins, Stefanie Crow, Neal Lewis, Jenny Parker, Jonathan Pennington, Larry Raborn, Cheryl Boyd, Ashley Richardson, Marie Hartley, Janice Allen-Flowers, Skip Martin, K. C. Ellis, Chad Bounds, Sue Wolfe, Nita McKenzie, Jack Hinton, Lanny Barfield, Jason Mooney, Craig Mcraney, Ryan Reves, Michael Sorrels, Drew Smith, Kent Parrish, Gina Channell, Robert Wood, Chrystal Spokane, Lynniese Cosey-Mayfield, Joyce Mayfield, Mary Beth Quimby, Jamie Stubbs, and Cassie Love. ◀





## *Corps and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Partnership Benefits Many*

By Brian Westfall, Ouachita Project Management Office  
Photos by John Veverka and Brian Westfall

### *Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge Enhances Corps PROSPECT Interpretive Services Field Studies*

The Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, named after Civil War General “Fighting Joe” Wheeler, is managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The refuge, located near Decatur, Alabama, was established in 1938 under an Executive Order by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The order created a 3,500-acre wildlife refuge designed to protect, manage and create habitat for wildlife, fisheries and plants. Wheeler is the first national refuge to be overlain by a multi-purpose hydroelectric reservoir, supporting approximately 30,000 geese and 60,000 ducks. In addition to waterfowl, Wheeler is home to more than 100 species of fish, more than 290 species of birds, 74 species of reptiles and amphibians, and close to 50 species of mammals.

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge is located in close proximity to Huntsville, Alabama. Huntsville has long served as the Corps’ Learning Center (ULC), the center for learning and training for Corps team members. The facility is under the supervision of Headquarters Directorate of Human Resources. The ULC manages and implements the

Proponents-Sponsored Engineer Corps Training (PROSPECT) program.

An amazing avian show can be viewed from the wildlife observation building, where hundreds of waterfowl can be seen taking advantage of their wintering home - the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. Whooping Cranes, nearly five feet tall, towered above the smaller Sandhill Cranes. Although heavily outnumbered by hundreds of Sandhill Cranes, the two Whooping Cranes stole the show! Whooping cranes are the tallest birds in North America. With a wingspan of over 7-feet, they have a distinct appearance due to their snowy white plumage, the crimson head cap and their signature bugling call.

One of our country’s rarest birds, the endangered species declined to about 20 birds during the 1940’s. However, through habitat restoration and dedicated conservationists, the Whooping Crane population has risen to about 600 today. During the winter of 2012-13, twelve Whoopers utilized the refuge along with thousands of geese, ducks and other waterfowl.

In 2007, Interpretive Services PROSPECT course instructors and Corps team members, Pat Barry, Nancy Rodgers, and John Veverka of John Veverka & Associates, selected the Wheeler Refuge as the new home for the Interpretive Services field excursion studies. The 10-year partnership with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has been a tremendous success and still flourishes today. Pat Barry, certified interpretive trainer and lead instructor, Interpretive Services 2001 -2015, stated, "Interpretive Services needed a new field trip location near Huntsville. For several years we used the Earlyworks Children's History Museum and Alabama Constitution Village, but they did not resemble facilities at most Corps sites. The nearest Corps sites were too many hours away.

"Corps instructor Nancy Rogers found the nearby Wheeler Wildlife Refuge and it is a perfect fit. Facilities include a visitor center, basic self-guided trails, a classroom, theater, wayside displays, and the best bird observation building I've ever seen. The best part, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rangers Teresa Adams and Daphne Moland welcomed us and included us in their busy schedules. Without fail, they met with every class, made students feel welcome, and at the end of the day, helped provide feedback on the student's products. It was a great place for our students to apply what they learned in the classroom and get practical experience in developing interpretive displays before returning to their sites."

"We have certainly enjoyed hosting the Corps Interpretive Services field trips over the past 10-years. The students always produce some great interpretive ideas for exhibits and trails. We always hang onto their project ideas in anticipation of upgrading our exhibits in the future. It's a win-win partnership," stated Teresa Adams, Wheeler Refuge supervisory park ranger.

John Veverka, the Corps contract Interpretive Services instructor for 20 plus years, stated, "Our relationship with the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge is a win-win for everyone. Our students work on real world interpretive planning and design projects. Also, Wheeler has received thousands of dollars in free interpretive consulting services. Everyone wins!"

Wheeler provides a tremendous setting for Interpretive Services students to get hands-on interpretive planning experience. The learning opportunities gleaned from

Wheeler build skill sets that benefit their respective Corps projects throughout the nation. Interpretive practical applications such as theme-based learning, nature trail design and visitor center exhibit design are paramount in providing our customers a quality nature based experience. With current climates of budget and manpower constraints, these hurdles are easier to overcome as the students actually design panels that can be adapted for use at their sites. This knowledge saves time and precious funding resources. Wheeler Refuge park ranger, Daphne Moland, stated, "The ideas developed during the interpretive workshop allow

alternative perspectives from professionals from all over the country. The numerous exhibit plans are stored for "Times of Plenty". When the



*An informative poster alerts visitors of the presence of poison ivy near the trail and how to identify the vine.*

possibility of updates occur, we will have numerous wonderful interpretive exhibit ideas to choose from!"

"The Interpretive Services course continues to be a huge success for the Corps' Learning Center Training Program. Students again provided excellent feedback for the course to include excitement for the field trip, practical exercises and course presentations. The Interpretive Services course is consistently a bright star in the Corps' Learning Center training program," stated Constance Tiller, lead instructional systems specialist course manager with the Huntsville District.

We all benefit from working together; common causes are the essential building blocks for all partnerships. Together we are stronger and the quote by Margaret Mead expresses the power of working together, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." This kind of common cause certainly brought the Whooping Crane back from almost certain extinction. With a "failure is not an option" attitude, a group of people bound together by similar mission statements can make a difference! In this case, albeit pales in comparison to the efforts that it took to save an endangered species, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Corps' interpretive partnership is making a difference for the betterment and appreciation of public lands. ◀



*Renea Guin, park aranger at DeGray Lake, stands near the water where she saved a child's life.*

## DeGray Lake Park Ranger Puts Safety

**By Brian Westfall,  
Ouachita Project Management Office  
Photos by John Veverka and Brian Westfall**

At most Corps events you will probably see a Corps team member(s) in uniform. Just what does that person or those persons do? Yes, they write tickets and yes, they direct traffic...at times. Other times, they just might be making presentations on the importance of safe boating or demonstrating how to properly wear a life jacket. All of these messages are geared toward staying safe and possibly saving a life-even your own life.

While spreading these safety messages, park rangers are aware that there is a possibility that one day they might have to demonstrate what they're trying to convey in a real life situation.

For Renea Guin, park ranger at the Corps' DeGray Lake, that real life situation occurred on July 4th. Her day began as any other holiday at the lake...people relaxing on the beach, boating, fishing, and enjoying other family outings. So, she began her usual water safety sweep at DeGray Lake at Highway7 Recreation Area. During the sweep, fate

proved that this would not be a typical sweep for her. She observed a young boy showing signs of drowning.

Guin stated, "I was patrolling the beach, spreading water safety messages to our visitors. I had just finished speaking with a small group of kids when I continued on around the beach. I suddenly saw a young boy having trouble in the water. He was about three years old and was having problems staying above the water.

"As I was walking into the water I yelled out for someone to grab him, but no one was close enough. He was in about 3.5 feet of water, about a foot+ over his head. I grabbed him just as he went under the water again. He was coughing and crying, but just to be sure, I gave him a few back thrusts to help clear anything that might have been obstructing his passageway as I was carrying him to the shore. After getting him to shore, he was crying and I saw that he was breathing ok. By this time, the parent had rushed over and I asked if she wanted to take him to the hospital. Seeing that he was breathing and doing ok, she decided not to do so.

"I explained the after effects of drowning and asked her to go to our Facebook page and read the info I recently posted about drowning, and if she notices any of those



*Guin makes presentation on water safety to Arkadelphia's Perritt Primary School students on water safety.*

## **Messages to Practice ... Saves a Child's Life**

symptoms in her son to get him to the hospital. I told her I would call her in the evening to check on the boy. At 7 p.m. he was still doing ok and I asked her to keep a check on him throughout the night. This was the first time I had to save a life! All went well this time and I hope all my water safety messages have saved more!”

Guin also stated, “An accident like this can be avoided by paying very close attention to your kids and having an individual wearing some kind of lifesaving device. It takes less than 30 seconds for a child to drown and if your attention is distracted for that short amount of time, your child can drown. 30 seconds! Think about it, it is not that long!”

Guin became a park ranger in 1999 at DeGray Lake. She says that she loves the outdoors and being that a park ranger does so many different things indoors and outdoors, it was a great fit for her.

“I have given many tips on water safety throughout the years, and there is never just one piece of advice you can give the public. I always want to give them as much information as I can to keep them safe. As I am out patrolling our beaches and campgrounds, I will adapt the messages to what I see happening at the moment.”

This incident occurred on July 4th, when a lot of people

were in the water and on the beach, but no one noticed the child struggling. “You have to learn the signs of a drowning victim. It is not the typical TV drama scenes. My job in providing water safety has always been meaningful to me. I am just so thankful that the good Lord put me in the right place at the right time,” Guin stated.

“I have another story that I like to tell because I see it so much on our beaches. There was a lady sitting in the shade on the beach. I asked her if she had family out in the water and she stated ‘Yes that is my grandson out there swimming.’ He was a young teenager. I asked why she was not out in the water and she stated she could not swim. I presented a scenario of him drowning and asked what she would do and she said she would go in after him. I said, “Yes, you would, you love him-but guess what, you would both probably drown.” I asked her to do something she didn’t even think of and that was to keep a lifejacket by her chair for him and her just in case. (And to take swimming lessons!). She was surprised by that simple idea and how easy it was to do! I think I made her feel a little better and more aware of water safety.”

We all know...not all stories have such a happy ending. Be safe! ◀

# Corps Partners with Arkansas Travelers Baseball to Promote Clunker Boat Night

## *Clunker Boat Night – another water safety tool*

By Brian Westfall, Ouachita Project Management Office  
Photos courtesy of Little Rock District, PAO

On June 8, 2017, park rangers from the Little Rock and Vicksburg districts, teamed with Texas League Baseball's Arkansas Travelers, to host the 3rd annual Clunker Boat Night at Dickey-Stephens Park in Little Rock, Arkansas. The festive atmosphere proved to be an outstanding venue to promote boating and water safety education, as the Travelers, the AA Affiliate of the Seattle Mariners, hosted their longtime rival, the Tulsa Drillers.

Similar to the longtime Clunker Car Night promotion, Clunker Boat Night is a part of the Travelers summer promotional series. The Little Rock District water safety team seized the opportunity to partner with the Travelers to promote boating and water safety during the height of the summer's recreational season. The team provided seven clunker boats to ballpark spectators, giving them a chance to win a pre-owned semi seaworthy vessel, some had motors and some didn't.

Tyler Price of Lake Ouachita and Josh Voss of DeGray Lake, teamed with Little Rock District rangers to

*Top photo:*  
*Ace and Bobber the Water Safety Dog.*

*Bottom photo:*  
*USACE ranger Lisa Owens with Travelers baseball fans*



work the boating and water safety information booth stationed at the entrance to Dickey-Stephens Park. Team rangers interfaced with Travelers fans, young and older, to promote water-wise use on the Arkansas lakes and rivers. Boating and water safety promotional items that were given to fans included Frisbees, floating keychains, fish measurement rulers, and coloring books.

Youth activities included life jacket relay races and a “live” appearance by the life jacket clad Bobber the Water Safety Dog who made an appearance with Ace, the Arkansas Travelers mascot! Brian Westfall, natural resource specialist at Ouachita Project Manage-

ment Office stated, “Hopefully, during the Travelers 2018 campaign, Ace will don a Life Jacket provided by Bobber! Life jackets won’t work unless we wear them and Ace is no exception! Public recreation fatality data in 2016 on Corps lakes and rivers reveals the importance of wearing life jackets.” Of the 139 water-related fatalities during 2016, **88% of the victims were not wearing a life jacket.**

Each day, approximately ten people die from unintentional drowning in our country. Of these, two are children aged 14 or younger. Drowning ranks fifth among the leading causes of unintentional injury deaths in the United States. In 2016, 139 visitors lost their

lives while swimming and boating on Corps lakes and river projects. The loss of one life is one too many. Drowning is preventable!

Public outreach is an essential ingredient to saving lives on the water. Clunker Boat Night is an outstanding example of utilizing creative methods of reaching water enthusiasts of all ages. Sports has proven to be a life sustaining catalyst for boating and water safety education. To add to the luster of the evening, the Travelers won the game 6-1, making it a win-win event across the board. This event was a definite home run for the Corps, thanks to Arkansas Travelers Baseball! ◀

*(VLDP Anniversary, concluded from page 21)*

networking, projects, and traveling to experience first-hand work that the Vicksburg District does.

Much of the VLDP content has remained unchanged, but some tweaks made this year have really been embraced by the VLDP members, as well as their supervisors. For example, class sizes have been structured to accommodate eight employees per year to enable more team involvement, as well as more professional leadership course opportunities provided by private educational institutions.

In reference to his experience in the program, Walker Moller, Office of Counsel, stated, “Having a better idea of how the construction process works, and seeing the end product, will help me with my work in future cases.”

Employees’ supervisors can appreciate a more standardized schedule of events allowing for improved operational planning and travel preparation. The employee application located in the VLDP Handbook has been reformatted to more closely mirror the new MVD Emerging Leader Application to streamline the application process for those supervisors whose employ-

ees want to take the next step in their leadership development after completing the VLDP.

Porter Holliday, Engineering and Construction Division, stated, “The training I have received has already helped me, and will serve me well throughout my career. I can’t thank my supervisor enough for allowing me to participate in the VLDP.”

This year’s VLDP class has completed their final professional off-site leadership course. They hosted the 2017 Founder’s Day Ceremony, then traveled to Arkansas and toured the lake projects and met with the Ouachita River Valley Association (ORVA), followed by the MVK OPLAN off-site planning meeting, and graduated in late August.

The next VLDP Class can expect more of the same valuable leadership training, networking, and experiences. The District is already looking-forward to the next applicants wishing to further their personal and professional development.

Michael Warren, Engineering and Construction Division, stated, “The knowledge and experience I am gathering in the VLDP has been invaluable to me.” ◀



*VLDP members participate in rope crossing, and below, they climbed over obstacle wall.*



## Story and photo by Hayden Sullivant, Sardis Lake

Eleven heroic veterans were recently afforded the opportunity to “hand fish” at Sardis Lake. Team members of Sardis Lake Field Office, the Panola County Sheriff’s Office and local volunteers gathered to show appreciation to the veterans for their service and sacrifice.

Grabbling or hand fishing is the art of fishing with your hands to catch catfish, practiced primarily in the southern United States. Many other names are used in different regions for the same activity.



*Participants with the hand fishing event were, kneeling left to right, Billy Dobbs, Johnny Graves, and Billy Kelly. Standing left to right are, Brooks Swink, Jamie Villafane, James Coggins, Cliff Chaisson, Michael Savoie, John Ellis, Justin Turk, and Christopher Glory.*

The species of catfish that are sought after when grabbling are “blues” and “flatheads”. Those are the largest species to be found here. A person will usually use his/her hands to reach into a structure, natural or man-made. Natural structures are usually tree roots or tree stumps that are underwater. Man-made structures were used for this event—wooden boxes that were placed in Sardis Lake specifically to attract catfish.

The female fish looks for a sheltered location to deposit her eggs such as holes in rocks, boat ramps, hollow logs, or other secluded areas providing shelter for spawning activities. After the female deposits her eggs, the male moves in to guard the eggs and will stay in the nest and protect them from predators. The male will strike out at anything that comes too close to the nest, especially a bare hand. When this happens, the fisherman grabs the fish and uses his hands to pull it out.

Fishing began around 8:30 a.m. when veterans were transported on the scenic waters of Sardis Lake by boats provided by local volunteers. The fishing was in the shall-



## Sardis Lake Hosts Third Annual Wounded Veterans Grabbling Event

*Billy Kelly shows one of the fish caught during the grabbling event.*

low waters of Sardis Lake as the veterans waded alongside local guides Nick Hudson, Logan Potts, and Lonnie Chrestman.

Billy Kelly, one of the participants, stated, “The fishing expedition was truly amazing and full of excitement as the veterans wrestled 15 catfish out of the productive waters of Sardis Lake. After a thrilling day on the water, the veterans and volunteers gathered at Pats Bluff Campground and enjoyed a meal of fried catfish, alligator, hushpuppies, and fries.”

Thanks to the volunteers for helping make this year’s Wounded Veterans Grabbling event a huge success for those who have given much. ◀

# ENGINEER'S DAY PICNIC

Photos by Angela White



## District Field Offices & Services

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,  
Vicksburg District  
4155 E. Clay Street  
Vicksburg, MS 39183  
www.mvk.usace.army.mil  
email: cemvk-pa@army.us.mil  
Twitter: @vicksburgusace  
601-631-5000**

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) 226-5911  
Bayou Bodcau (318) 949-1804  
JBJ Waterway (318) 677-2673

Ouachita-Black Rivers, Monroe  
Navigation Project Office, &  
LA Field Office (318) 322-6391  
Corps Wetland Permits (601) 631-7071  
*Apply, ask questions, or report violations*  
Contracting & Bids (601) 631-7684  
*Vendors, status of bids, specs*  
Community Support (601) 631-5223  
*Tours, speakers, volunteers*  
Historical Questions & Research (601) 634-7023  
*Mississippi River History Center*  
Real Estate Issues (601) 631-5979  
*Corps impacts to your property*  
Employment Questions (601) 631-5858  
*Vacancies, status, qualifications*  
River Forecast (601) 631-5900

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## Other Vicksburg Engineer/Federal Organizations

Mississippi Valley Division (601) 634-5760  
Engineer Research and Development Center (601) 634-2504  
412th Engineer Command (601) 636-1686  
168th Engineer Group (601) 313-5290  
Vicksburg National Military Park (601) 636-0583  
Marine Safety Detachment Vicksburg (601) 636-5516  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (601) 629-6607

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