



THE  
**Water's**  
WINTER 2018  
**Edge**



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
Vicksburg District

**Commanding General Visits  
Vicksburg District Headquarters**



# US Army Corps of Engineers®

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

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**On the Cover**  
**Warren Fields with the MSU, demonstrates to Gen. Kaiser the process of tying together the concrete mats.**  
**Photo by Jared Eastman**

# The Water's Edge

## Winter 2018

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<https://www.youtube.com/user/mvkaoguy>

USACE Vicksburg app available on Apple App Store, Android Google Play, and Amazon Apps



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David Dyer, Steven Finch,  
Demetric Erwin, Amber Huell, Javier  
Cruz-Rosario

### PROCESS

Compensatory Mitigation and  
the Regulatory Program

### PROJECTS

Armor 1

# Commander's Corner

with Colonel Michael C. Derosier



## Vicksburg District Team -

As I sit down to write this Water's Edge column, the District remains engaged far and wide in executing our mission and delivering value to the region and to the Nation! Dan Carney, supervisory electrician at Colfax, remains deployed, and we recently welcomed back from Afghanistan Dr. Frederick Austin, chief of the Equal Employment Opportunity Office. We currently have over 40 teammates deployed to Texas, Puerto Rico, California, and the U.S. Virgin Islands in support of hurricane and wildfire response and recovery efforts. I know that many others have already deployed or are planning to volunteer for these missions.

River Operations recently completed the mat sinking season, sinking more than 270,000 squares over the course of 192 days and ending with some very challenging weather and flu conditions.

Across the board, there is much to be appreciative of - beginning with everyone's patience and professionalism during the government shut down in January. Fortunately the shutdown was short, and hopefully it will be the last one that will face us. I appreciate everyone's teamwork, dedication to our mission, commitment to safety (both public safety and workplace safety), and commitment to keeping the Vicksburg District the flagship District in the Corps!

I also appreciate our many outreach efforts including our Adopt-a-School efforts at Sherman Avenue Elementary; our traditional support of the Salvation Army's Angel Tree project; hosting the Vicksburg math competition; the summer S.A.M.E. STEM camp; and the many special events that we host at our flood control lakes and recreational areas. It is impossible to cover everything here, and this only begins to scratch the surface, but I want to encourage you all to keep up the great work!

As we anticipate the release of the FY19 President's Budget along with FY18 funding pot decisions, and as we get ready to send out an annual Civil Works survey to our partners and stakeholders, now is the time to ensure that our goals for the year - both personal and collective - are clearly identified with a plan for accomplishing them. To that point, I will briefly touch on some of my 2018 goals and priorities for the District.

- First and foremost, I want to ensure that we are investing in each of you as the foundation of our District's success. Are we identifying opportunities to sustain or improve job satisfaction, organizational satisfaction, and whether or not you would recommend the Vicksburg District to others as a great place to work? Are we doing everything possible to reduce and avoid accidents and injuries? How well are we developing the bench? Are we nominating deserving individuals and teams for award

recognition at the regional and national level? In short - are we doing all that we can to support LTG Semonite's priorities for ACHIEVING THE VISION?

- Second, I want to leverage our business processes (especially PRB, the E&C Schedule Review, the monthly Operations call, and the district staff meeting) to ensure that we are delivering our projects and programs timely, safely, and with a level of quality that makes us all proud. In addition to meeting all of our scheduled milestones, we will work hard on advancing Armor One, real estate disposal of the West Pearl project, water supply at DeGray Lake, reduction of sedimentation at Lake Providence Harbor, and environmental/water supply projects (Quiver River, SE Arkansas, ARS Pilot Program) - just to name a few. In short - we must DELIVER THE PROGRAM.
- Third, the District will accomplish Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) and Corps of Engineers Safety and Occupational Health Management System (CESOHMS) certification in 2018. We will successfully manage our compliance Key Performance Indicators (cKPIs). Individuals, where possible, should pursue professional accreditation and/or licensure. By focusing here, we will STRENGTHEN THE FOUNDATION.

It is no accident that most, if not all, of these initiatives are reflected in the District OPLAN. The OPLAN, by design, is intended for use in managing the District's highest priority actions and initiatives. Further, the OPLAN is developed by incorporating feedback throughout the year (and especially during the Strategic Planning Offsite in August) and is organized so that it is nested with and supports the MVD IPLAN, the USACE Campaign Plan, and the vision and guidance of both Maj. Gen. Kaiser and Lt. Gen. Semonite. What is vitally important is that your input in setting goals and objectives for the District is heard - in town halls, during performance counseling with your supervisor, by submitting comments to the Commander's Anonymous Suggestion Box, through informal discussions at lunch, in the hallways, or around the water cooler. Wherever and whenever those discussions occur, I want to ensure that we have a culture in the Vicksburg District that encourages and supports teammate involvement in setting personal and organizational goals that improve our workplace, mission delivery, and partner satisfaction each and every day. I firmly believe this will help sustain us as a GREAT District, and will keep the District ready and relevant for years to come. Keep up the great work MVK!

# The World of Compensatory Mitigation and the Regulatory Program

Story and photos by Kristi Hall

The word mitigation is heard in Corps hallways and meetings for both Civil Works projects and permits. But, few understand what mitigation really means, this article will attempt to explain what mitigation means to members of the regulatory branch.

So, what does THAT Mean?

The Corps has regulatory authority over the nation's waters under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Sections 9 and 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act. Impacts to wet-

## *The mitigation temporal process*



*A site is proposed for mitigation.*



*The site is in early stages of a mitigation site, recently replanted in a "desirable community".*

Mitigation generally relates to the efforts made to avoid and minimize impacts to resources. The regulatory office has authority over aquatic resources such as wetlands and streams. For impacts which cannot be avoided or minimized, compensation in the form of mitigation is required to offset impacts. In terms of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Sections 9 and 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act, compensatory mitigation means:

*"The restoration (re-establishment or rehabilitation), establishment (creation), enhancement, and/or in certain circumstances preservation of aquatic resources for the purposes of offsetting unavoidable adverse impacts which remain after all appropriate and practicable avoidance and minimization has been achieved"* (33 CFR 332.2).

lands, streams, rivers, etc. (aquatic resources) are allowed under these authorities. IF every effort was first made to avoid and minimize those impacts, AND it is determined there would be a functional loss as a result from the permitted activity, THEN compensatory mitigation is required as part of a permit authorization.

Sound complicated?

For example, you, the reader, are a commercial developer and you have what you think is the **best** commercial development ever. However, you learn that there are wetlands on your property. Through preliminary coordination with the regulatory branch, you also learn that you need a permit.

You are permitted to impact this aquatic resource IF you compensate (or replace) the wetland lost functions elsewhere in the watershed. Wetland functions are habitat, flood attenuation, contaminant filtration, groundwater recharge, nutrient cycling, etc. Environmental functional losses and gains are quantified as “credits.” Credits are the currency of mitigation. In mitigation, an environmental loss is exchanged for an environmental gain.

Regulatory determines how many credits are needed using a functional assessment. The functional assessment is a formula, which considers the quality of wetlands, the type of impact, the duration of impact, and cumulative impacts of the complete project. This formula determines the number of credits required for the proposed work. The applicant must then determine where they will obtain credits to offset impacts.

ditches running throughout. You propose to remove the ditches to restore wetland hydrology and plant a bottomland hardwood forested community at your mitigation site. You would be required to document functional improvements, develop a restoration plan, provide financial assurances, provide long term management funds, protect the site with a real estate instrument, monitor the site until success is documented and remain responsible for the success of the mitigation effort in perpetuity. There is an amount of risk and possible project delays with permittee-responsible mitigation.

2) **Commercial mitigation bank** - A situation where credits are purchased on the open market from a mitigation banker. In this situation, the responsibility for restoration success is transferred to a com-



*The planted vegetation regrows.*



*After many years, the site is re-established as a mature wetland.*

Where do you get mitigation credits?

Credits are generated when an aquatic resource’s functions are restored, the functional lift is quantified as credits, and credits are exchanged to offset impacts. This work is done at a mitigation site. At the District, offsets are obtained in one of two ways.

1) **Permittee-responsible mitigation (PRM)** - A situation where the permittee, (the person who actually obtains the permit and impacts the resource), performs the environmental restoration work to restore aquatic functions. In this situation, the permittee retains responsibility for the success of the mitigation project. In our example, you seek out a tract of low agriculture land with several

mercial mitigation banker. In our example, you consider purchasing credits from an approved commercial mitigation bank. This mitigation bank has restored more than 1,000 acres of wetlands, and the functional lift or credits generated at this site can be applied to any projects needing wetland mitigation credits within the bank’s service area. The banker has already performed restoration work and demonstrated successful restoration. The banker is responsible for the success of the restoration effort in perpetuity, and he has a pile of credits he is looking to sell. The downside of bank credits is that they are typically expensive, as the banker has assumed all risk of restoration success, and assumption of risk is costly.

*(continued on page 7)*

# River City Early College High School Students Visit Mat Sinking Unit

Story and photos by Catherine Jennison

A group of tenth grade students from River City Early College High School, part of the Vicksburg Warren School District, had the opportunity to see the Mat Sinking Unit (MSU).

The group of 36 students, described by the principal Tammy Burris as “motivated with a passion to complete their education early,” are currently working towards a dual credit high school diploma and an associate degree through Hinds Community College.

While students were on the Corps’ inspection barge, they had the opportunity to view the MSU from the roof top. They also had a tour of the inspection barge, viewing the engine room, tool room, and pilot house. At the end of the tour, the students thanked the crew members and other Corps employees. They stated, “Thank you for allowing us to come onto this barge and see the MSU, it has been a great experience.”

Members of the hydraulics and accounting branches of the District were also in attendance to discuss their careers within the Corps.

*On the right, Randy Stockton, master of the Motor Vessel JADWIN, demonstrates to the students the techniques of steering the Motor Vessel BENYAURD.*

*Below, the high school students pose outside the Motor Vessel BENYAURD for a photo session on a beautiful fall day.*

The MSU is the only one of its kind in the world and performs one of the most important jobs in the Corps’ river stabilization program. The fleet of the MSU consists of the Motor Vessels BENYAURD, WILLIAM JAMES, and HARRISON, all working together to assist with the distribution of articulated concrete mat squares on the riverbanks. The MSU employs approximately 60 full time employees and 240 seasonal and temporary employees who reside in several states. For more information on the Mat Sinking Unit visit <http://www.mvk.usace.army.mil/Missions/Operations-Division/River-Operations/Mat-Sinking-unit/> or visit YouTube to view *Managing the Mighty Mississippi*. ◀



## Vicksburg District a *Best Place to Work* Within the Corps

By Shirley J. Smith

Photo courtesy of HQUSACE

For the second consecutive year, the FY 17 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), has recognized the Vicksburg District as a Best Place to Work within the Army Corps (USACE).

Col. Michael C. Derosier, Commander of the Vicksburg District, and Patricia Hemphill, chief of Programs and Project Management Division, were recently recognized and presented the Certificate for

this honor at a meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Upon receiving this recognition, Col. Derosier stated, “Not only was the District identified as a Best Place to Work...we are the highest scoring District in the large District category. Pat Hemphill, the District’s chief of Programs and Project Management Division, and I had the honor of receiving the certificate for this from Lt. Gen. Semonite and CSM Houston during the recent 1st Quarter Executive Governance Meeting (EGM) in Pittsburgh.”

In reference to his team members at the District he stated, “We were both very proud to represent each and every one of you in being recognized as the highest scoring Best Place to Work Large District in USACE. Thank you for all that you do to make the District a flagship District within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.”

Greg Raimondo, chief of the District’s Public Affairs Office, stated, “The survey is e-mailed randomly to federal employees. This year, according to the survey’s website, 485,000 federal employees participated in the survey. We don’t know who receives it. Employees take the survey and all the agencies are rated. It is about the climate of working here, and the team members who work here think this is a great place to work—the environment. This includes the entire district—the Mississippi lakes, the Arkansas lakes, the field offices, the guys who work on the river—everyone.” ◀



*Col. Derosier, second from right, and Patricia Hemphill, second from left, are presented a Certificate for the District’s award of being selected a Best Place to Work within the Corps by Lt. Gen. Todd T. Semonite, Commander, Headquarters, Corps of Engineers, far left, and Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley James Houston, Corps Headquarters, far right.*

*(Compensatory Mitigation, continued from page 5)*

It is up to you to determine which option meets your needs. The 2008 Mitigation Rule states a clear preference for mitigation banks over other mitigation alternatives. It acknowledges the benefits of large scale mitigation projects, consolidating resources, providing financial planning and scientific expertise (which often is not practical for PRM projects), reducing time lag of lost functions, and reducing uncertainty over project success. (2015 Institute

for Water Resources. *The Mitigation Rule Retrospective: A Review of the 2008 Regulations Governing Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources*. 2015-R-03).

Back to our example, you purchase credits from a commercial mitigation bank, the regulatory branch completes their permit process, and - congratulations, you receive your permit. Aquatic resources lost are replaced with functional gains, there is a no net loss of wetland func-

*(continued on page 8)*

# District Wins HUBZone Award

By Catherine Jennison  
Photograph courtesy of HQUSACE

The Vicksburg District was recently named the 2017 “Top District” by the Society of American Military Engineers for their Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone). The District was the top district with 37.23% in total obligations to HUBZone Small Business firms.

The HUBZone program was created under the HUBZone Act of 1997. The goal of the HUBZone Program is to provide federal contracting assistance for qualified small business concerns located in economically distressed communities and historically underutilized business zones. This assistance is an effort to increase employment opportunities, investment, and economic development.

Demetric Erwin, Deputy for Small Business Programs within the District serves as a special assistant to the District Engineer on all Small Business Program matters to develop and administer the Small Business Program to meet and exceed the goals submitted by Corps Headquarters.

Erwin and Col. Michael C. Derosier, Commander of the District, accepted the award at the 2017 Society of American Military Engineers Small Business Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The U. S. Government is the world’s largest buyer of goods and services, with a statutory goal of 23 percent of government contracting dollars going to small businesses. The Vicksburg District assists small businesses and other



*Demetric Erwin, center, and Col. Derosier, second from left, receive HUBZone Award from left to right, Maj. Gen. Michael C. Wehr, Deputy Commander General for HQUSACE, Tommy Marks, SES, Army Small Business Director, and Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley James Houston, Corps Headquarters.*

contractors in doing business with the federal government, providing maximum practicable opportunities in its acquisitions to small businesses, small disadvantaged businesses, HUBZone small businesses, service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses and women-owned small businesses. ◀

*(Compensatory Mitigation, concluded from page 7)*

tions in the watershed. You are permitted to construct your project in wetlands, and the commercial mitigation banker is responsible for success of restored wetlands. You, the applicant, don’t have to worry about wetland mitigation for this project again.

At the District, there are 70 approved mitigation banks across three states conserving approximately 41,000 acres. While mitigation banking can be a complicated business proposal, this public/private partnership is a creative approach applied nationally through the 2008 Mitigation Rule (33 CFR 332) where the mitigation banker accepts

responsibility for environmental work authorized under Corps permits. It is a very unique approach; a commercial industry helps a federal agency meet requirements outlined in regulations. This program is overseen by members of the Regulatory Team, and it is a valuable part of the work our District performs.

For more information on Mitigation and Regulatory permits please visit our website at <http://www.mvk.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory/>. ◀

# What Customer Service Means to Me

By Mitch Strode  
Photograph by David May



*Mitch standing in water to assist with getting the wheels of a visitor's boat trailer back onto the ramp.*

Customer service, when most people think of this it brings to mind services such as a waiter making sure your glass of beverage is full at a restaurant, or having a desk clerk check you into a hotel.

It has a personal meaning for me, it is the services that I render to our visitors at our parks and ramps. It means going the extra mile not because I have to but because I want the visitor to have the best experience possible. This may be as simple as telling someone where the comfort station is or getting a map showing a visitor directions to the nature trail. All of this play major roles towards making the visit to our sites a pleasant one, and the best that it can be.

The following is a scenario of what happened to me on a normal day working at one of our sites. I had been mowing grass within eyesight of the boat ramp when I noticed that a visitor was having problems with his trailer. He had just finished launching his 24-foot pontoon boat with his wife, his daughter and a group of her friends. I knew something was not right; while the trailer was still in the water he kept backing up and going forward only a short distance.

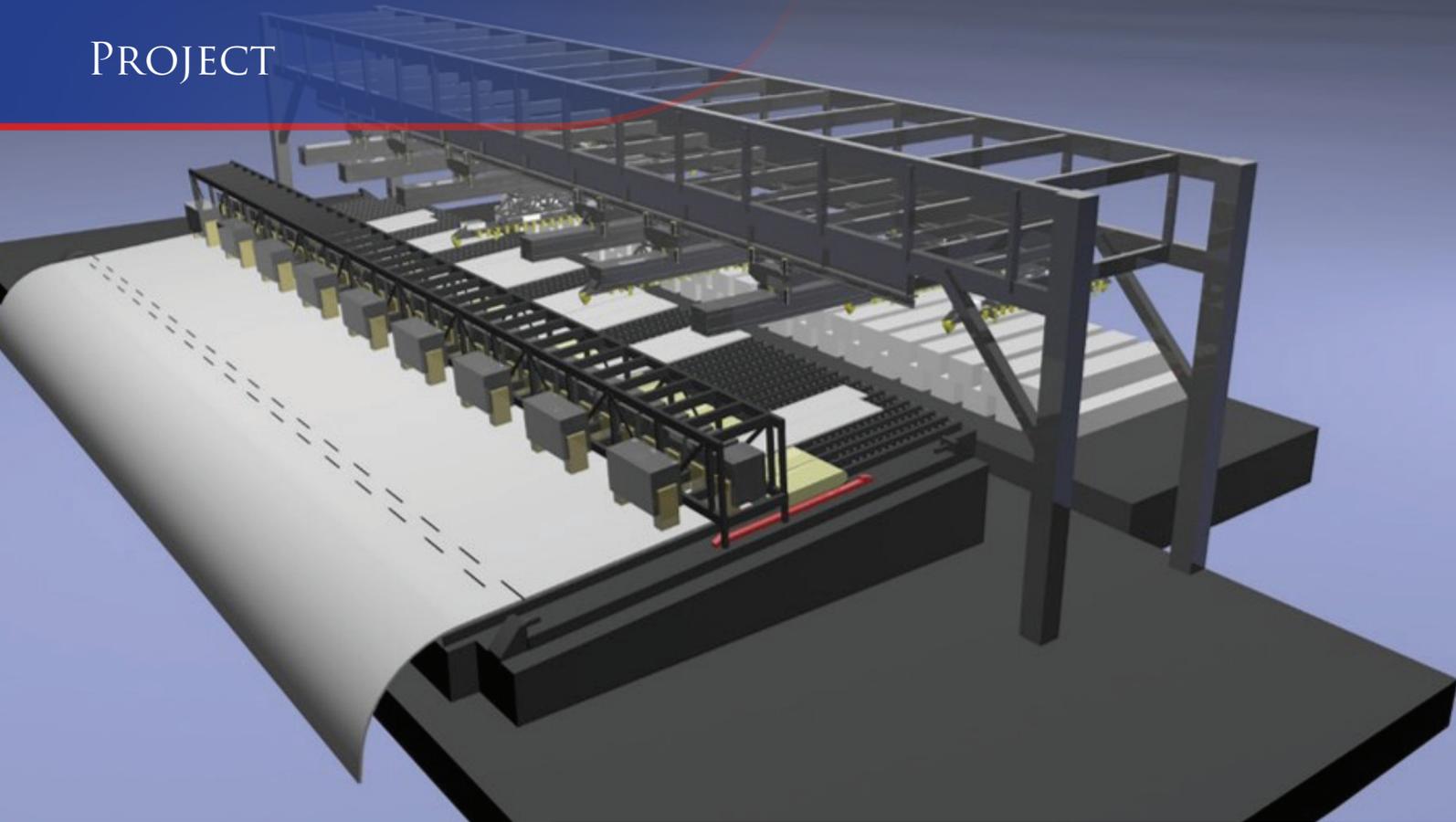
Knowing that there evidently was a problem, I shut down the tractor and walked over to see what I could do to help. I approached the boater and asked what had happened. He told me that his boat trailer wheels had dropped off the end of the boat launch. He had tried to pull it back out but it just would not move and he was afraid that if he pulled too hard the axle would tear loose from the trailer. So, here was a man with his family, wanting to have a day

on the water and they could not leave the ramp. I knew that I could not just walk away and leave him stranded. First, I thought we could use his boat and some rope to lift his trailer up by tying it to the front of the boat. This did not work because he could not lift and tie at the same time with the short piece of rope he had. Next, he tried to lift one side of it up while his wife drove forward. This did not work either. Both sides had to come up at the same time. The only way that was going to happen was if I helped. So everything in my pockets came out - and into the water with him I went.

We both had to pick up the trailer at the same time, making sure that neither one of us got caught between the trailer and the end of the boat ramp. While safety was uppermost on my mind, the wife slowly eased the truck forward as we were lifting up on the trailer. That did the trick! The trailer tires were on the ramp again with no damage to the trailer or ourselves.

Was I required to get into the water and help this visitor? No, I could have stayed on the tractor and kept mowing and let him take care of the problem. But, it is my firm belief that we as rangers should help those needing help as long as it does not put ourselves in harm's way.

This is just one example of going the extra mile. Good customer service will be paid back with increase in visitation rates; goodwill among rangers and visitors; and a lasting favorable image of the Corps. ◀



*New process for laying mats of the MSU.*

## **Mat Sinking Unit Overdue for Overhaul Armor 1 Design Continues**

**By Shirley J. Smith**

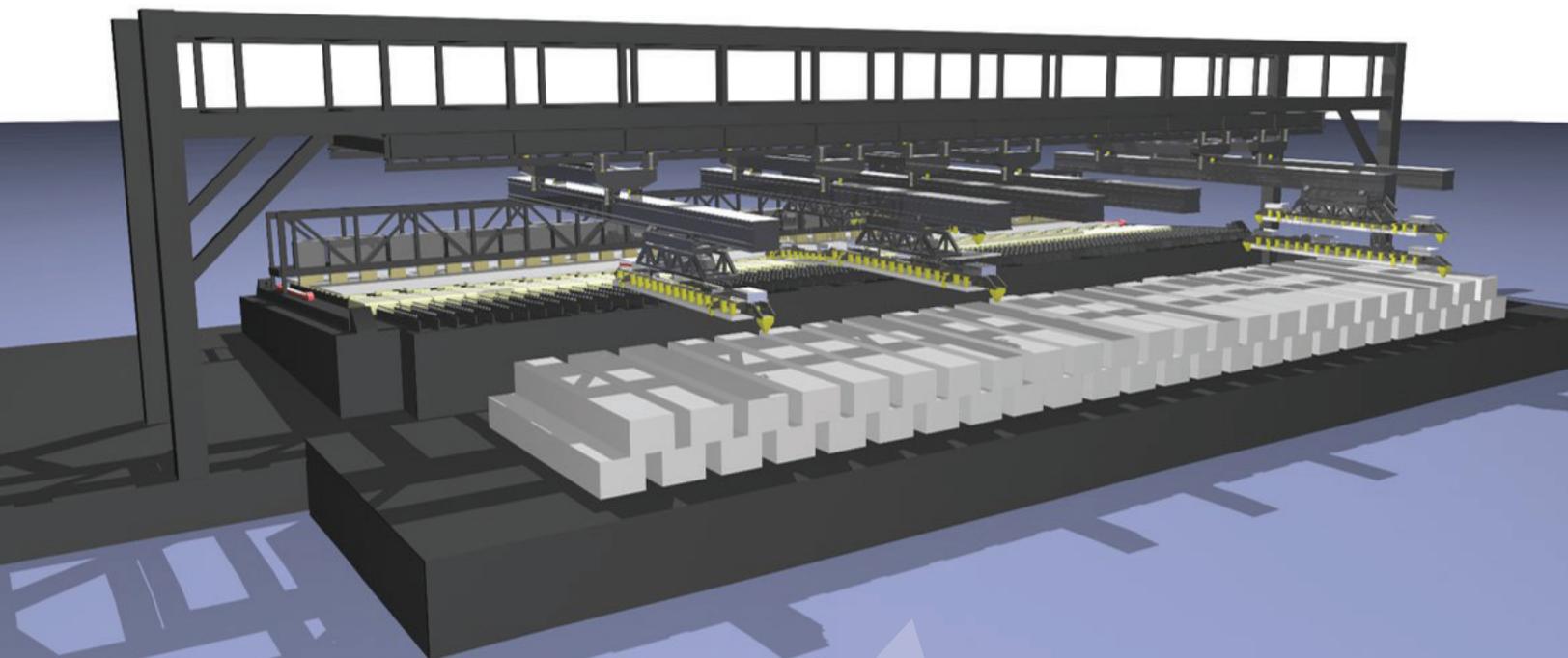
**Sketches courtesy of National Robotics Engineering Center**

In January of 2014, the Commanding General of the Mississippi Valley Division gave then Vicksburg District Engineer, Col. John Cross, the thumbs-up to begin the re-design and modernization of the mat barge, the critical piece of the Mat Sinking Unit (MSU). Col. Cross appointed David Jenkins, deputy chief of Operations Division, to lead the effort. Jenkins stated, “It was really hard to get any traction to begin. Most people thought that the government didn’t have the appetite for such an expensive investment.” An investment is exactly what the mat barge would be.

Since the initiation of the Mississippi River & Tributaries project, the nation has contributed \$14 billion toward project planning, construction, operation and maintenance. One element of the MR&T project is revetment, which is the armoring of river banks with articulated concrete mattress (ACM) to maintain a desired channel alignment by preventing channel migration through bank erosion.

Revetment is critical to maintain the navigation channel alignment and to protect levees from constant forces of the river. The current method of armoring the Mississippi River channel from erosion is the MSU.

The MSU’s current mat barge was built in 1948 and was considered, at that time, state-of-the-art. During the past seven decades, the MSU has placed over 1000 miles of articulated mattress from Cairo, Illinois to Head of Passes, located south of New Orleans along the lower river. However, the mat barge is fast approaching an unreliable status. The cost of making necessary maintenance, repairs, and meeting safety requirements is approximately \$5 million annually. Most of the equipment has outlived its life and some of the devices are so antiquated that supplies are sole sourced and very expensive. A failure of the mat barge would mean significant risk, including levee failures near populous areas, loss of channel alignment at multiple locations and adverse impacts to navigation.



*Phototypical design of MSU robot.*

Jenkins started the effort to re-design the mat barge with the Marine Design Center (MDC), the marine vessel subject matter experts of the Corps, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He said, “One of the smartest things I did first was build a trusting relationship with the experts at MDC. They have been vital in finding us the expertise that can automate and modernize a new mat barge, Armor 1.” Armor 1, the replacement for the current mat barge, will integrate robotics with a modern design of a new barge utilizing current safety designs and sensors. The National Robotics Engineering Center (NREC) located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, associated with Carnegie Mellon University, has designed robots that have the technology to drive tractors and heavy equipment and robotic lasers that can remove paint off jet airplanes.

While early concepts were being developed, Col. Cross and Jenkins developed a successful communication strategy aimed at educating leadership on the need for a replacement and gaining support for a new mat barge. During the spring and summer of 2015, Col. Cross and Vicksburg District leadership successfully briefed members in the U. S. Senate and the House of Representatives including Senators Cochran, Cassidy, and Bozeman and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Ms. Jo Ellen Darcy.

“As more funds were designated to Armor 1, more requirements were needed. The project management was done as “other duties as assigned” by Jenkins and Gloria

Piazza, operation project manager in river operations branch of Operations Division. It was clear now that we needed someone 100% focused on meeting all the requirements for Armor 1,” Jenkins stated.

In December 2017, Vicksburg District Commander, Col. Michael C. Derosier, approved the decision to hire a full time project manager that will manage Armor 1 to include workforce planning, fleet management and strategic communications. Now retired Col. John Cross was selected to lead this effort. “I can’t think of anyone that has more passion than Col. Cross to push this across the finish line,” Jenkins said.

Col. Cross began work on January 16, 2018, and said “I am extremely excited to be selected to manage Armor 1 as it begins to make an upcoming critical transition from the design phase to construction. Working on such a worthy project is a once in a lifetime opportunity to me. I look forward to working with the high quality Armor 1 team and the excellent men and women of the MSU and the Vicksburg District.”

Currently the NREC is in Phase III of the prototype design which includes designing all of the subsystems associated with the new mat barge, lifting arms, tying heads and global positioning. Phase IV will be awarded in September of 2018 and that phase combines all the subsystems into one overall system. The first major construction contract will be the barge contract awarded in September of 2019. The completion of Armor 1 is scheduled for the year 2024. ◀

# DISTRICT TEAM MEMBER DEPLOYS TWICE TO NATIVE PUERTO RICO IN SUPPORT OF POWER MISSION

By Catherine Jennison

Photos by Eric Arndt and Javier Cruz-Rosario

*Power poles installed by Corps team members.*

Every year, the Vicksburg District deploys volunteer employees to disasters within the District's area of operation and around the nation. This is a part of the federal government's unified national response to natural disasters plan. 2017 proved to be a whirlwind of a year with several hurricanes causing widespread devastation around the nation.

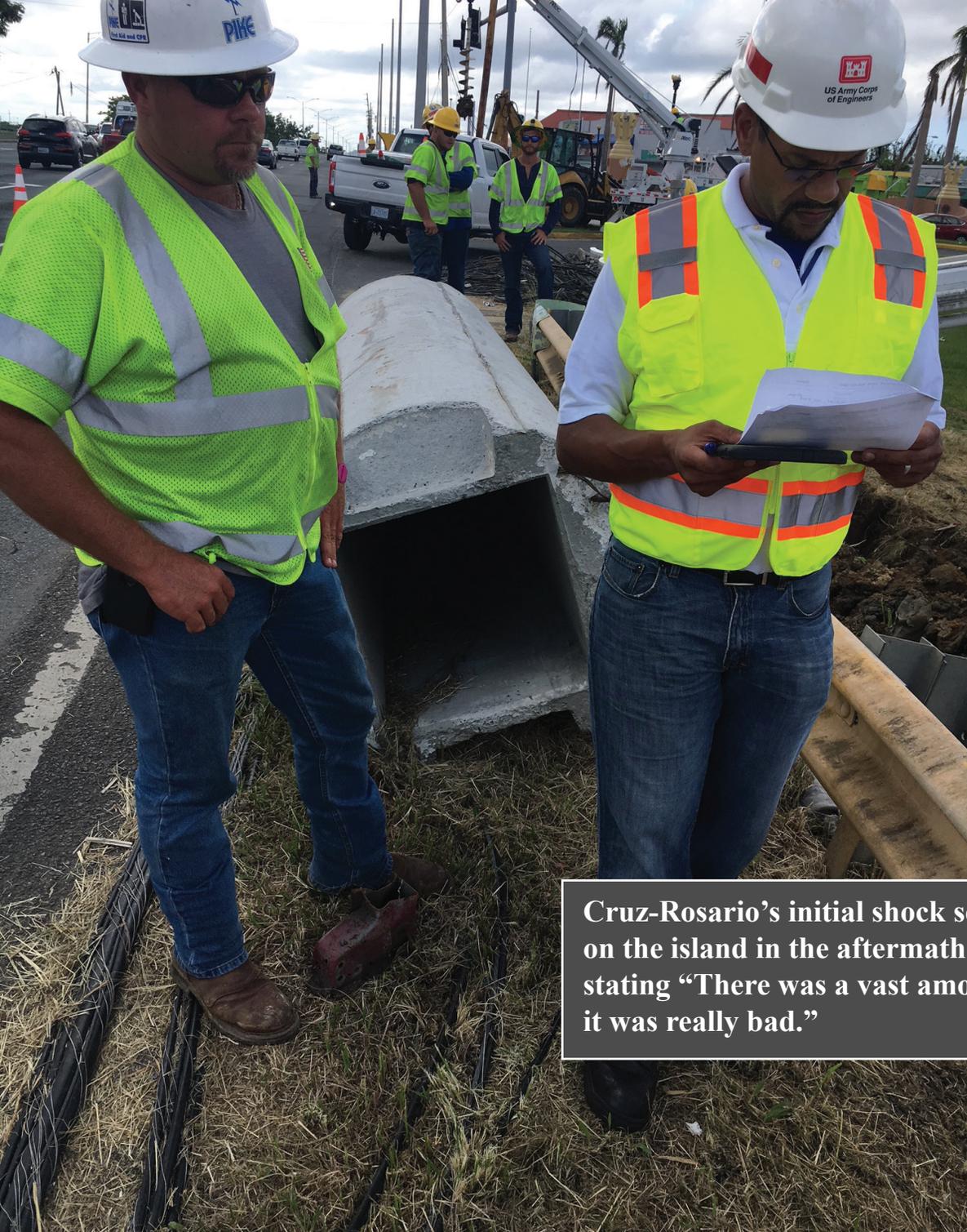
The District's Emergency Operation Center is always prepared for potential disasters. Team members who wish to help with disaster relief are placed on a volunteer deployment list and may be asked to deploy with little notice. As of today, 163 team members have deployed to Puerto Rico for response operations in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Javier Cruz-Rosario, a mechanical engineer in the Engineering and Construction Division, design branch, is one of the skilled team members who stepped up for a volunteer deployment two separate times, both to Puerto Rico.

Cruz-Rosario, a native of Puerto Rico, was able to offer a unique skill set of being bilingual and having past experience working for Entergy. Javier was recruited to work his first mission with the Corps' Critical Public Facilities Team.

Cruz-Rosario's initial shock set in when he landed on the island in the aftermath of the hurricanes, stating "There was a vast amount of devastation, it was really bad." During his first tasker, he worked to assess about 100 critical public facilities for damage. Those facilities included hospitals, police and fire stations and government buildings. Upon assessing the damage, Cruz-Rosario and his team made recommendations for repairs that would ultimately be passed on to local contractors. With a specialty in utility work, he took it upon himself to also inspect and search for different electrical and mechanical problems around the facilities stating, "I used my skills to go the extra mile."

His first tasker ended in early November and after returning for only four days, Javier re-deployed to Puerto



*Cruz-Rosario reviews the on-site safety hazard sheet with the contract safety foreman during the Corps' power restoration mission.*

**Cruz-Rosario's initial shock set in when he landed on the island in the aftermath of the hurricanes, stating "There was a vast amount of devastation, it was really bad."**

Rico where he worked another 45-day tasker. During his second mission, he was the deputy director for the Power Grid Unit working with the South Atlantic Division (SAD) FWD group. There, he worked both in the field and in the Recovery Field Office. Throughout his second tasker, he worked to make power grid improvements, restock supplies and replenish the local depleted supply of materials. He also worked to improve the communication between local power organizations, contractors and FEMA.

Cruz-Rosario, who was able to see some of his family

members who still live in Puerto Rico, said he will continue to volunteer on a case by case basis for future missions. He stated, "I learned a vast amount of new and valuable information and was happy to volunteer."

The Corps' workforce provides unique expertise to fighting the forces, including reach-back capabilities that tap into the valuable resources of the Corps as a whole. The Corps will continue to play a key role in defense operations as well as respond to natural disasters, both at home and abroad. ◀

# Commanding General Visits Vicksburg District Headquarters

By Shirley J. Smith  
Photos by Jared Eastman

The Commanding General of the Mississippi Valley Division (MVD), Maj. Gen. Richard G. Kaiser, recently visited district headquarters during a Town Hall Meeting with District Commander, Col. Michael C. Derosier.

The Commanding General's visit began with staff introductions and a staff photo with him.

The Vicksburg Leadership Development Program members hosted the Town Hall Meeting, beginning with invocation and the Pledge. Remarks by Col. Derosier immediately followed. "It is great to see the teammates of the Corps of Engineers' flagship District assembled here in the multi-purpose conference room; I appreciate your attendance here this morning. It is my honor and privilege to introduce Gen. Kaiser, our Commanding General of MVD and also Presi-

dent of the Mississippi River Commission. He came to us from an assignment as Commanding General of Combined Security Transition Command in Afghanistan. Welcome back Sir from that hard overseas contingency mission effort in Afghanistan," stated Col. Derosier.

Col. Derosier showed a map that shows what the Mississippi River has done over the past hundred years. He stated that it has tried to push itself westward but due to the efforts of the Corps of Engineers, channel improvement coordinators and stakeholders, the river has kept its current alignment since the 1928 Flood Control Act. He continued by stating, "This is part of the great work we do here, in the region, and certainly here in Vicksburg."

As a side note, Col. Derosier informed the audience that Gen. Kaiser has a twin brother, Bob, who he served with as a young platoon leader when Gen. Kaiser's brother was his Commander. After Col. Derosier's completed his remarks he welcomed Gen. Kaiser to the podium and thanked him for being in attendance.

Gen. Kaiser began his remarks with comments and a Thanks for the work that the District does. The world's open to all of our goods and services. He asked what ties the north to the south and the east to the west. The answer was the Mississippi River. Gen. Kaiser stated, "The Mississippi River ties this country together. Ninety-five percent of our imports and exports rely on the waterways, adding 4.1 trillion dollars to the economy. That matters, you're the ones who really help to keep it flowing whether it's through

*"It's the work that you do that allows us  
as a country to flourish.  
Thanks for what you do."*

Maj. Gen. Kaiser

Col. Derosier, left, welcomes Maj. Gen. Kaiser, right, to the Town Hall meeting.



dredging or eco system restoration. Everything that you do to help sustain this waterway is critical. You wouldn't be able to live where you live, work where you work, or farm the most fertile farmland in the world, if we didn't harness the power of that river. It's the work that you do that allows us as a country to flourish. Vicksburg is an interesting place. This is why I say this, more people know about Vicksburg than you have any idea.

"When I was in Afghanistan, I once was chatting with the ambassador there and he stated that when he leaves Afghanistan he was going to tour all these battlefields and the one that he really wanted to see was the one at Vicksburg. I informed him that I was moving here. So, when he arrived I took him to the battlefield and explained why Vicksburg is so important. It's because of the geography here and its command of the river is why the battle happened here. If you control the river, you control the economy. This river is as vital to our country as it was a hundred years ago and will be in the future. You have a great team here and give yourself a hand for being nominated two consecutive years as a Best Place to work within the Corps. Thanks for what you do."

Gen. Kaiser recognized the team members who had deployed in support of the recovery efforts from the hurricanes. He encouraged all to be the best at what you do. He said that he thinks the Corps is the best and the answer to get the job done.

Next, he stated that he has three principles that he relies upon. First was **Competence**—"Be the best at whatever it is you do. The government turned to the Corps and said we want you to do something not within your current scope. But, we know that you have the men and women to take care of this. Gen. Kaiser further stated, 'It is because you are capable and competent. And, we are doing it in Puerto Rico.' If we are not good at we do, they will find another answer. I think the Corps is the best, it's the right answer for our government to get critical work done. Second, **Care**-caring for your people, that is so important to me. I trust you to know your co-workers. Take care of your people. Third, **Balance**-have balance in your life-it is critical. Everybody has priorities. Think about what's important in your life. You might have elderly parents not doing so well, children in school. Everybody has someone important in their lives. If you're not taking time to touch those priorities you're going to be out of balance. Stop and think about what your priorities are. Be good at what you do, take care of your people, and have balance in your own life."

Gen. Kaiser concluded his session with a question and answer period.

At the conclusion of the Town Hall Meeting, Col. Derosier awarded some team members with District coins for exceptional Corps service.

While at the District headquarters, Gen. Kaiser visited with each Division and Separate Office. ◀



*Col. Derosier explains a map of the Mississippi River and its meandering.*



*Maj. Gen. Kaiser speaks to the District team.*



*Maj. Gen. Kaiser talks with chief of Engineering and Construction Division, Henry Dulaney.*

## District Selects District Counsel

By Catherine Jennison  
Photo by Jared Eastman

The Vicksburg District recently selected David Dyer as its District Counsel. Dyer will serve as the senior attorney advisor to the Commander and provide timely and accurate legal advice to all division chiefs, supervisors and leaders on areas of regulatory guidance, environmental law, real estate law, contract law, claims, Freedom of Information Act requests, ethics and litigation processing. He also serves as the primary liaison between Mississippi Valley Division senior counsel and the District Commander.

Col. Michael C. Derosier, District Commander, stated, "We are very excited to have David join the District. With his wealth of experience in the Army and the Corps' Mississippi Valley Division, he is a perfect fit to lead the District's Office of Counsel and support the District's mission across the entire Civil Works spectrum."

Dyer joined the Corps in 2007 working for the New Orleans District as Assistant District Counsel. He has also served with the Army Geospatial Center and the Afghanistan Engineer District South. He previously worked in Vicksburg for a developmental assignment in 2012, as Deputy District Counsel.

Dyer has received numerous awards including the E. Manning Seltzer Award, Commanders' Awards for Civilian Service, Achievement Medals for Civilian Service, the Civilian Combat Service Pin, the Secretary of Defense Global War on Terrorism Medal, and a Non-Article 5 NATO medal. ◀



## District Names Chief for Finance and Accounting Branch

By Shirley J. Smith Photo by Jared Eastman

The District recently selected Amber Huell as chief of its finance and accounting branch of the Resource Management Office.

In this position, Huell will serve as staff advisor to the resource management officer, the Deputy Commander, and operating officials on fiscal matters pertaining to the District. She will lead and advise a staff of eight accountants who provide finance and accounting services to the District's tri-state area of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

She is responsible for ensuring accurate, ethical, and proper financial operations for the District through various metrics and financial elements.

Prior to this selection, she served as a staff accountant for the Corps' Engineer Research and Development Center's Directorate of Resource Management (DRM), Accounting Operations Team. She assisted the DRM with providing advice and guidance to eight laboratories stationed across four states on matters of finance and accounting. She is an alumna of the Engineer Research and Development Center's Leadership Development Program, Levels 1 and 2.

Huell began her career with the District as a co-op student in 2009, Resource Management Office. Her du-

ties included assisting senior level accountants with chief financial officer audits. She became a staff accountant in 2012 where her duties included providing professional accounting services to the District and Mississippi Valley Division.

She serves as president of the West Central Mississippi Chapter of the Association of Government Accountants, and is an active member of the American Society of Military Comptrollers. She is also an active member of Mu Xi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

A Vicksburg native, she is a graduate of Vicksburg High School. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in accounting from Mississippi State University, and a Master of business administration from Mississippi College. She is a Certified Defense Financial Manager and has a Level II DoD Financial Management certification.

She is the daughter of Perry and Judy Huell of Vicksburg. ◀



# Office of Counsel's Finch Earns Juris Doctorate

By Catherine Jennison

Photo by Angela White

# Congratulations

Steven Finch, a paralegal specialist at the District graduated from Mississippi College School of Law with a Juris Doctorate Degree December 2017. Finch, who grew up in Hurley and currently resides in Clinton, has an associate degree in Arts and History, a Bachelor of Science degree in paralegal studies with a minor in history.

Finch completed his Juris Doctorate degree after four and a half years of night school while working his full time job at the District. He was enlisted in the Army for 12 years where he was both an active and reserves military member. While serving in the Army, he served for 13 months in Iraq and served a three-month deployment with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

For the last seven years, he has worked within the Corps and has been deployed to Minot, North Dakota for flood recovery control and to Afghanistan for six months. While in Afghanistan, he considered furthering his education, but didn't know if it was possible. His colleagues convinced him to take the LSAT, which he did, and without any prep he passed the LSAT with high scores earning him a spot at Mississippi College School of Law.

"This journey has been challenging and has taught me a level of resilience and time management," Finch stated. He learned the fast way how to prioritize his studying along with his demanding work schedule. John Breland, Deputy District Council knows firsthand the life-absorbing demands that come with earning this degree and said, "Between a full time job, where we were half-staffed, and law school, the energy that Steven committed to his work was amazing."

Finch is now applying for the Corp's Honors Program where he hopes to become a senior paralegal within the Corps. With the support from John Breland and others in his office, he is striving to embark on this new adventure in his career. He gives a special thanks for the endless support and direction given to him by Rymn Parsons, South Pacific Division, Division Counsel, and former Counsel for the District. ◀



**"This journey has been challenging and has taught me a level of resilience and time management," Finch stated.**

## Arkabutla Lake Reports Statistics on its Archery Hunt

Story and photo by  
Sawyer Hunt

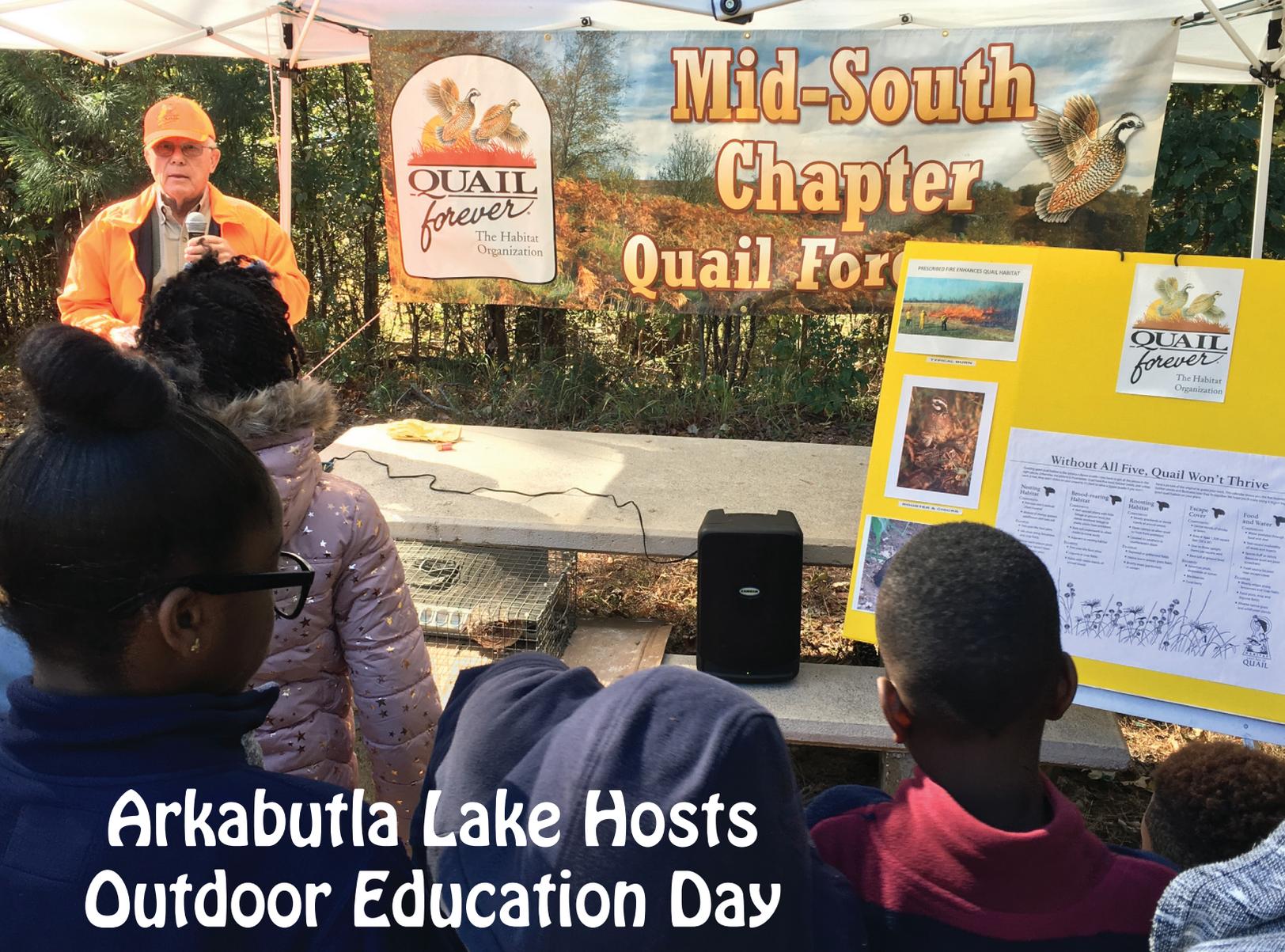
Arkabutla Lake held its 18th Annual Special Management Archery Deer Hunt on October 6-9, 2017, and 20-23, 2017. A total of 112 applicants harvested five deer, four of which were does and one lucky hunter harvested a 10-point buck.

Thanks to True Value in Senatobia, Big Muddy Power Sports in Olive Branch, and Desoto Outdoor and Archery in Nesbit, for donating prizes given to the hunters that harvested the biggest does. These prizes included a two-person pop up blind, 2-30oz. yeti tumblers and a gift card to Desoto Outdoor and Archery.

The prior record for the number of deer harvested is 12. The hunters were anxious to beat that record but the exceptionally warm weather during the first 4 days of the hunt took a toll on the harvest. Michael Carter, lake manager at Arkabutla stated, "Despite that, the hunters still enjoyed the time in the woods and an opportunity to hunt in an area where hunting is normally not allowed." ◀



*Archery hunter Kevin Mitchell harvested a nice 10-point buck at the Arkabutla Lake Management Draw Deer Hunt.*



# Arkabutla Lake Hosts Outdoor Education Day

Story by Jamie Richmond

Photos by Chris Gurner and Jamie Richmond

*Walker Morris with Mid South Quail Forever discusses habitation of quail with the students.*



*Salli Mattox with MS Department of Environmental Quality presents a puppet show to the students on how pollution affects the environment.*

The 19th Annual Outdoor Education Day held at Arkabutla Lake was an exciting event. This event, held within the Dub Patton Recreation Area, demonstrated how critters, conservation, and outdoor safety can be cool! Agencies joined to orchestrate the activities included Desoto and Tate County Soil and Water Conservation districts and the Corps.

Approximately 1,500 students, teachers, and parents from Desoto and Tate counties and Magnolia Heights schools were in attendance. They listened to several presenters including the University of Memphis, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Desoto County GIS, Mid-South Quail Forever, Desoto County Regional Utility Authority, Mississippi Wildlife Rehabilitation, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Keep Desoto Beautiful, Mississippi Wildlife Federation, Farm Bureau, Missis-

*(Continued on page 20)*

# LAKES AND RECREATION

*(Outdoor Education Day, concluded from page 19)*

Mississippi Forestry Commission, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Mississippi Department of Transportation, Mississippi State University Extension Services Master Gardeners, Desoto County Environmental Services, Marathon Pipeline, Desoto and Tate County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Corps.

The students were given the opportunity to learn about water, boating, and outdoor safety. They also discovered the importance of conserving water, reducing pollution, and the significance of recycling. They had the opportunity to see up close live animals, talk to foresters, and have a one-on-one experience with wildlife enthusiasts. The event provided all attendees with a remarkable outdoor education classroom.

Natural resource specialist, Chris Gurner, stated, "Outdoor Education Day is a great outreach opportunity for Arkabutla Lake and its partners. Thousands of students get the chance to learn in an outdoor environment." ◀



*Colby Pullen, left, and Cody Scruggs, right, complete a presentation on water safety to the students.*



*Sue Reeves with Marathon Pipeline uses demonstrations to explain to students what can be done to protect the environment.*

# Enid Lake Hosts Annual Wounded Warrior Hunt

By Thomas Hoff

Photos by Thomas Hoff and Vick Mosely

The Enid Lake Field Office recently hosted its annual Wounded Warrior Deer Hunt. The hunt provided eight veterans, wounded while serving our country, the opportunity to harvest deer on approximately 700 acres of Corps land. These areas have been closed to hunting in past years, resulting in a high deer density and a greater chance of harvest for the participants. These participants were selected by Wounded Warriors of Mississippi of Jackson.

The participants arrived at the Enid Lake Field Office on December 6, 2017 for a welcome dinner and orientation/safety meeting. During the meeting, participants were introduced to blind locations and areas they would be hunting; received a safety briefing; were briefed on state rules and regulations; and drew numbers to determine which blind they would be hunting the following day. Hunters, volunteers, Enid Lake personnel, and friends and family shared stories with one another, enjoyed a great dinner, and had a great evening of fellowship.

Ranger personnel and volunteers assisted the hunters to and from the blind locations throughout the hunt. Hunters were also assisted with game recovery and cleaning of their harvest by volunteers from Nose to the Ground Mississippi, a tracking dog club, and ranger personnel, with a total of four deer harvested.

Throughout the event, participants were provided dinner  
*(Continued on page 22)*



*John Erwin, a volunteer with Nose to the Ground Tracking Dogs, with his dog Sheba.*

*A hunter, Chris Rogers, with a buck he harvested.*



# LAKES AND RECREATION

*(Wounded Warrior Hunt, concluded from page 21)*  
each evening thanks to volunteers from the Enid Lake Volunteers, Adonai Church in Water Valley, and Corinth Baptist Church in Tillatoba. All participants received an event t-shirt and hooded sweatshirt purchased with donations by T.G. Baker and HER trucking companies of Water Valley.

Supervisory ranger, Chris Hannaford, stated, "Not only was the event's success measured by deer harvested by the participants, but also gave Enid Lake staff and volunteers an opportunity to give back to those who have sacrificed a lot to secure our freedoms. This event is one of our most rewarding opportunities of the year."

We would like to thank all of our sponsors and volunteers, this event would not have been possible without your generous contributions.

Our Wounded Warriors of Mississippi are all around us every day. You might not always see a Veteran's injuries,

not all of them are visible, and there are hundreds upon hundreds of them that came back with mental scars as well. They have made an ultimate sacrifice, and came home to their spouses, children, and other family members as extremely different persons. These heroes are now fighting a war within themselves to reconnect with society and they are finding this battle is as difficult as the battlefield itself.

If you or someone you know would like to know more about Wounded Warriors of Mississippi, please contact Cheryl Bruce at 601-750-3062, visit our website at [woundedwarriorsofms.com](http://woundedwarriorsofms.com) or our Facebook Wounded Warriors of Mississippi.

For those interested in getting involved or just wanting information on Enid Lake's Wounded Warrior Deer Hunt, please contact the Enid Lake Field Office at 662-563-4571. ◀



*Shown left to right with park ranger Brent Bowman, far left, and natural resource specialist Thomas Hoff, fourth from right, are Wounded Warriors hunters Dwain Brister, John Patterson, Chris Watkins, Chris Rogers, Matt Hicks, Joey Bryan, and William Moody. Shown in front is Cheryl Bruce, director of Wounded Warriors of Mississippi.*



# Grenada Lake Hosts Chase Futurity and National Fox Hunt

*First day of the National Fox Cast-off at dawn.*

**Story and photos by Catherine Jennison**

For the last 23 years, men, women, and children from across the United States and Canada have been coming to Grenada, Mississippi for the Chase Futurity and National Fox Hunt. This year was the 97th Chase Futurity and the 123rd National Fox Hunt with participants from 14 different states and Canada.

The Corps owns several flood control lakes and acres of property that are used for hunting and fishing. Each year, the fox hunt is held on Corps lands at Grenada Lake and the property surrounding it. The participants and judges are appreciative that the Corps allows them to host this event each year. As a team member of the Corps' Vicksburg District, I traveled to Grenada Lake to witness the last two days of the National Fox Hunt.

This 123rd Fox Hunt was the first fox hunting event I have ever witnessed, and it began with my meeting the Master of Hounds, Craig Nobles from Newbern, North Carolina. This was Craig's first time being the Master of Hounds at the National Fox Hunt. Craig, being an avid fox hunter, grew up fox hunting with both his father and

his uncle. I had the opportunity to join Craig and 35 other judges each morning, about two hours prior to daybreak near the dog kennels, to eat breakfast and discuss the previous day's events.

It was fascinating listening to the judge's conversations and the roll call, which was conducted to check which hounds were eligible for the morning cast-off. Listening to the Master of Hounds call off numbers and judges confirming the hound's eligibility sounded similar to an auction, numbers and "Yeahs" were being counted off left and right.

Post roll call, all handlers and their eligible hounds drove to the cast-off. The handlers backed their trucks into the meeting area to allow their hounds direct access to the cast field. Having never attended a fox hunt, it was eerie standing outside in the pitch black surrounded by hundreds of hounds who were howling as they prepped for the days hunt.

At the cast-off, I had the pleasure of meeting Elizabeth Linker, a hound handler from North Carolina, with whom

*(Continued on page 24)*

I spent the remainder of my first day. It was intriguing to hear about her life and experiences fox hunting, having started back in 1960. I learned that she started judging the National Fox Hunt in 1975 and after many years, she decided to become a competitor again. Over the course of the day, Liz told me more than I could ever hope to know about raising hounds and fox hunts and trials.

We talked about everything from training hound puppies to become fox hunters, to what we were seeing and hear-

hours, we drove all over the hunting grounds listening for hounds and stopping to judge them as they crossed our path. Bill, a precision judge, was right on the mark whenever a group of hounds passed him as they were hunting game. He explained that if a judge recorded hound number one and two but missed hound three, he could not score hound four.

Since the hounds were hunting over a vast area, the 36 judges had many opportunities to score a hound or group of

*It was exhilarating to pursue a group of hounds, just to get a glimpse of them for a few seconds as they passed hunting game.*



*Owner gets hound ready for cast-off.*

ing as we followed the hounds around the hunting grounds. From cast-off to when the hunt was “called” or finished, about a five hour time period, we drove around on paved and dirt back roads in search of hounds hunting game. At one point we saw a deer run across the road, and shortly after, a group of hounds followed. At that moment and location, there were no judges present to rate those hounds. However, to my surprise, I learned that the dogs would not be judged in that instance anyway because they were chasing the wrong game; not a fox or coyote.

Throughout the day, while Liz and I followed the hounds around, we could hear them “giving mouth” or barking when they got on the path of some game, and “giving tongue” when they hit a hot track of the game. When the final call was given at noon, we began the process of calling in her hounds. All of Liz’s hounds had a radio frequency tracking system and over the next few hours, across hundreds of acres, we rounded up her hounds, along with other hounds who had not been picked up by their handlers yet.

As my second day began, and the final day of the 123rd National Fox Hunt, I was paired with Bill McGee, a judge from Pilot Mountain, North Carolina. This was his 30th non-consecutive year judging the National Fox Hunt. Immediately after the cast-off at 7 a.m., we hopped in his truck in pursuit of a group of hounds. For the next five

hours. Each judge had a radio that was connected to the other judges. They announced their location and what they heard or saw every couple of seconds. There were not many times that the radio wasn’t buzzing with a judge’s location or information about where a group of hounds was headed. Bill would radio to let someone know what he heard or where he was going, and also inform others if he had just judged a group of hounds. It was exhilarating to pursue a group of hounds, just to get a glimpse of them for a few seconds as they passed hunting game.

As the fox hunting event came to a close, it was clearly visible that there were several hounds who were tired and done for the day. They could be seen hanging around the edges of the road, waiting for their handler to come and get them. Bill gave many hounds the opportunity to get on their way, but if they were “loafing”, or hanging around, not showing any desire to hunt or engage, they were scratched off, meaning they couldn’t be scored for the day.

Soon after the hunt was called, the judges headed to a separate location to begin the scoring process. Craig Nobles addressed the group of judges saying, “We have a great group of dedicated judges here, it has been a good week working with all of you, and I thank you for your hard work.” When the scores were all tallied and the results were final, it was noted by one of the judges that Craig “had done an exemplary job of being the Master of Hounds this year,” and everyone agreed.

As a group, Craig and several judges filed into the Gore Springs Community Center to present the 123rd National Fox Hunt awards. There was a feeling of excitement spreading through the room as we entered; someone was about to go home with the crown jewel of championships. Awards were given to several different categories, including



*Hat Creek Joann hound numer 189 earns coveted title of National Fox Hunting Champion.*

the oldest hunter, Joe Lewis, and the youngest hunter (11 years old), Cameron Moore.

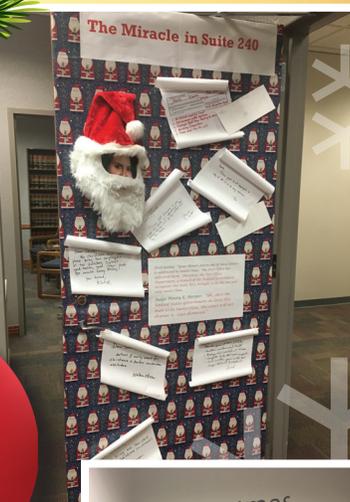
National Fox Hunters Association President, Alfred Hensley, presented the awards for the top ten best hunting hounds, best trailing hounds, best speed and drive hounds and best endurance hounds. Then came time to award the coveted best overall, highest general average hound, the hound that would win it all. That coveted award went to hound number 189, Hat Creek Joann, from Hat Creek Kennels in Grenada, Mississippi. Hat Creek Joann also won

the top spot for speed, drive, and endurance. When the top award was presented, the crowd went wild, yelling and cheering.

As a community, the fox hunters came together for the good of the sport. It was clearly evident throughout the hunt and at the awards ceremony that these hunters truly love raising hunting hounds and participating in fox hunts.

I feel honored to have had the opportunity to attend this event and see the camaraderie between kennels and the competitive nature of the handlers and hounds. ◀

# DISTRICT DOOR DECORATING CONTEST



# DISTRICT'S ANNUAL ANGEL TREE PROJECT



## 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 Brigade (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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