Open Channels
http://www.mvd.usace.army.mil
Volume 11, Issue 6 December 2013

MRC makes impression at Brazil's 20th Water Resources Symposium

By Bob Anderson
MVD Public Affairs

MRC Director Stephen Gambrell made the arduous journey to South Brazil in November to participate in the Brazilian Association of Water Resources Symposium. Mr. Gambrell represented the Mississippi River Commission and USACE at the symposium, an international gathering held every two years that brings together scientists, operational hydrologists, practitioners and stakeholders interested in managing complex water resources.

This year's symposium was attended by more than 2,000 students, scientists and professionals working in the water sector. It consisted of about 1,000 presentations of scientific and technical studies and dialogue that included the international community. The symposium is one of the most important water-related events in Brazil, offering hydrologists and water managers an occasion to discuss the priorities and strategies for the development and management of critical water resources.

This year's conference featured Mr. Gambrell who presented the MRC's approach to the maturation of water resources investment through long-term, systematic engagement. He highlighted the investment with a description of the successful Mississippi River and Tributaries Project and the evolving 200-year working vision for the management of the Mississippi River watershed.

Mr. Gambrell indicated the MRC's contacts and relationships with international partners, along with the commission's continuing work with Harvard's John Briscoe, was instrumental in Brazil's decision to engage with the MRC and USACE through continuing education and stronger future dialogue and learning partnerships.

"One of the key questions we were asked by conference attendees was, "Will the United States use its vast wealth to re-invest in its aging high-value, high-return infrastructure?" Gambrell said. "I described the MRC's recently signed 'Call to Action,' and that as a country we face critical decisions that will ultimately help people at home and around the globe with the food-water-energy nexus."

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MRC's Call to Action

Water infrastructure is deteriorating at an accelerated rate, just as the nation's fiscal crisis is becoming more acute. Until the nation changes its spending priorities, the Mississippi River Commission does not foresee an improvement in the nation's ability to effectively address critical water infrastructure challenges. To express its concern and to help focus national leaders' attention, the commission published a "Call to Action." This information and declaration is an outgrowth of years of diverse cross-sector dialogue, work and effort to address the infrastructure crisis our nation faces. The commission started discussing this specific statement as an idea more than a year ago. It leveraged discussions with partners and stakeholders over the past few years to shape, inform and refine the document. The Call to Action identifies key challenges the nation faces and offers specific areas on which to focus our energy in developing solutions. The United States faces critical challenges now and in the near future:

- By 2050, global population and wealth explosion (especially in the developing world) will be placing much greater demands on food, water, energy and trade;
- Transportation infrastructure demands are increasing and global competitors (China, Bra-

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Around the Bend

Brig. Gen. Duke DeLuca
Commander
Mississippi Valley Division
President-Designee
Mississippi River Commission

MVD Team,

One of the best things about working for the Corps of Engineers is that we all have excellent opportunities to make positive changes and improvements to our home region and our nation. For old Soldiers like me, this is very unusual and most welcome because so much of our life's effort has been applied overseas for decades.

Our work is more important than ever and I believe the greatest challenges and greatest accomplishments of the Corps are in our future and not in a remembered 'golden age' in the past. Over the next several decades, global population and standards of living will grow rapidly and significantly and this growth will place extreme demands on food, water, energy and trade. The Corps can make a difference by maintaining and improving our nation's transportation infrastructure so that we can remain competitive in the world marketplace and meet the world's increased demands by protecting the American sources of agricultural and industrial wealth.

Another area that is so important most people cannot begin to grasp and grapple with it is that we can make an impact to adapt safely and successfully to our planet's changing climate, rising sea levels and the extreme weather events that are part of the future for us and the planet. Much of the protective infrastructure, scientific knowledge and engineering techniques in place are inadequate to withstand these destructive natural forces without greater application of our brainpower and financial muscle. The Corps can make all the difference, as we have clearly proven with the construction of the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System in New Orleans, among other projects, by improving existing infrastructure to prepare for the inevitable events to come. Both of these areas of concern are covered in the recently published Mississippi River Commission's "Call To Action" (please see related article in this month's Open

New Orleans District Commander Col. Rick Hansen (facing back) provides MVD Commanding General DeLuca (center) with the status of the Interim Closure Structure at the 17th Street Outfall Canal as well as an update on the ongoing construction efforts to replace temporary structures with the Permanent Canal Closures and Pumps commonly known as the permanent pumps. The interim structures currently provide the area with 100-year hurricane and storm damage risk reduction. In attendance are (from left) Chris Accardo, MVN chief of Operations; Eddie Belk, MVD regional programs director, Dan Bradley, Sr. PM for the PCCP project; and Ray Newman, 17th Street Interim Closure Structure Captain. *(Photo by Scott Riecke)*

(Continued on page 3)

Around the Bend (continued from page 2)

Larry Jankowski (right) demonstrates the operation of the Metals Unit CNC plasma cutting table to USACE Mississippi Valley Division Commander Brig. Gen. Duke DeLuca (center) during his visit to Memphis District's Ensley Engineer Yard and Marine Maintenance Center Dec. 10. *(Photo by Brenda Beasley)*

Channels), which brings home the considerable infrastructure investment that is needed now and in the future.

We can better manage navigation along America's inland waterways by allowing our stakeholders to perform dredging work in small harbors. We can accomplish this by making the dredging mission less complicated and more affordable. Along these lines, the Vicksburg District Regulatory Branch has developed a new regional general permit for maintenance dredging of access channels, port basins and the terminal areas of commercial and municipal ports along the Mississippi River.

One additional area where MVD is making a positive difference, and a true success story this year, is our support for our nation's warriors. Our MVD Overseas Contingency Operations team deployed 52 team members to achieve 102 percent of our annual goal in FY13. That support to OCO is very important to me because when you help our warriors, you are helping my friends to accomplish some very tough missions so they can return home to this country, the very best place in the world to live. I appreciate your help as do their families. So thank you for all that you are doing, and for all that you will do. You are making a positive difference here and now, exactly where and when it matters!

The ancient Talmudic scholar Hillel, when contemplating a virtuous life posed three questions to help guide human action on the right and effective path:

- If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
- If I am only for myself, what am I?
- If not now, when?

I think our MVD team and our agency chart a path that answers these three questions in a righteous, powerful and correct way! Can't wait to push for results with you in the New Year!!

Essayons, Building Strong, and ... Army Strong!

MRC's Call to Action (continued from page 1)

Pictured are attendees of the Brazil Water Resources Symposium in November: Jerson Kelman, Michael Reuter, Gabriel Azevedo and Stephen Gambrell, Executive Director of the Mississippi River Commission.

zil, Panama, etc.) are investing enormous capital in infrastructure, in contrast to the United States' underinvestment;

- The United States has unsustainable and cumbersome federal processes that are the outgrowth of decades of disconnected laws, policies and regulations; and
- Recent extreme natural events, such as record floods in 2011 and 2013 contrast with the near-record drought and low water in 2012 – indicating the infrastructure we have is inadequate to manage the ebb and flow of natural events that might reasonably be expected. In response to these challenges, the Mississippi River Commission calls for:
- A strong national (vice federal) vision based on systemic science-based watershed approaches, and a determined and persistent commitment to invest in high-value transportation infrastructure;
- Exploring alternative funding mechanisms and efficient management techniques to optimize current infrastructure, and prioritize resources on the aspects of our infrastructure systems that deliver the most value; and
- Streamline water resource development processes, which would require changes in law, policies and regulations.

A full report of the Call to Action is also available at http://www.mvd.usace.army.mil/Portals/52/docs/MRC/MRC%20Statement%20-%20Call%20to%20Action%20FINAL%20for%20web.pdf.

Tornado hits 'close to home'

By Pamela Harrion
MVD Public Affairs

No one ever envisions being part of a catastrophe. Some of us never want to know or experience it, even though we have been trained to handle emergency situations.

However, one of our own, Jack McDaniel, MVD construction manager, value engineer officer and cost engineer, knows firsthand what it is like to have a devastating tornado hit his home town of Washington, Ill.

On November 17, 2013, at approximately 11:05 a.m., an EF-4 tornado struck the city of Washington, Ill., affecting many of the people McDaniel knows. "The latest report from the city of Washington revealed that more than 1,150 homes were destroyed," said McDaniel. "Washington's population is just over 15,000, which means about 1/4 of the homes were destroyed."

A vehicle is shown along with several houses that were destroyed by the tornado that hit Washington, Ill. (*Photo by Tom Sanders.)*

And although the tornado destroyed many of his neighbors' homes, McDaniel says that he was surprised that his house was not directly affected. "The tornado passed six blocks from our house," said McDaniel.

McDaniel was even more astonished that there was a minimal loss of life. "I am amazed that only two people died from our town," says McDaniel. "Many attribute this fact to many people being in church and because everyone has a basement."

The path of the tornado that struck the city of Washington, Ill. *(Photo by the Chicago Tribune)*

2012 Emergency Manager of the Year!

Kevin Woods, Acting Chief of Readiness for the Memphis District, is the 2012 Emergency Manager of the Year. Woods applied his technical knowledge and experience managing emergency response and recovery operations that proved critical during Memphis District's recovery effort following the largest Mississippi flood event in recorded history. His leadership and crisis management skills also contributed greatly to a successful mission by providing timely critical information and analysis during the lowest recorded water levels on the Mississippi River in 50 years. Congratulations and keep up the good work!

2013 CNN Hero of the Year!

Chad Pregracke is 2013 CNN Hero of the Year. Through his nonprofit organization, Living Lands & Waters, Pregracke voluntarily cleans tons of debris from the Mississippi River each year and is a partner with our Mississippi Education and Outreach. Read Pregracke's story at http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/19/world/hero-of-the-year/index.html?hpt=hp_c2 Good job, Chad!

Mississippi Valley Division congratulates retirees for service

Brig. Gen. Duke DeLuca, MVD commander, presented a retirement certificate, the Bronze Order of the de Fleury Medal as well as other commendations to Susan Smith, MVD senior planning deputy, during her retirement ceremony, Nov. 13. Smith retired with more than 33 years of service. *(Photo by Alfred Dulaney)*

(Right) Lt. Col. John Dvoracek, deputy commander for MVD, presented the Superior Civilian Service Award to Kathy Sills, HQUSACE revolving fund accountant, and the Meritorius Civilian Service Award to David Sills, MVD chief of Emergency Management/Readiness and Contingency Operations, during their retirement ceremony, Nov. 22. Kathy retired from MVD having served 36 years; and David retired from MVD having served 37 years. Both also received Bronze Order of the de Fleury medals as well as other special awards. *(Photo by Alfred Dulaney)*

Corps' Fraud Investigation Unit starts Fiscal Year 2014 with a bang

By Alice Bufkin
Vicksburg District

The Corps of Engineers Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) Fraud Investigation Unit (FIU) has gotten off to a great start in fiscal year 2014 by saving taxpayers more than $3.9 million dollars in workers' compensation costs. The savings, realized the first month of the new fiscal year, were the result of investigative efforts that uncovered several inaccurate or false claims.

Last year, the FECA FIU saved the taxpayers in excess of $3.8 million by returning rehabilitated individuals to the workforce and denying fraudulent claims, and in 2012, the FIU saved more than $5.5 million using the same techniques.

The FIU is a unique group of individuals who investigate fraud, waste and abuse of Workers' Compensation (FECA) funds for the Corps. This unit has been stationed at the Vicksburg District since 1992 and supports the Corps nationwide. The unit's mission is to assist the Corps in management of injury claims submitted by the Corps' 30,000 plus civilian employees. Injury claims result in workers' compensation costs of more than $20 million annually.

Since the beginning of the program, the FECA FIU has saved taxpayers 75^{+} million dollars by preventing and reducing costs related to fraud, waste and abuse of the FECA program. This money would have otherwise been diverted from construction and management of infrastructure and vital waterways.

To report FECA fraud, waste or abuse by Corps employees, call 1-800-831-2018.

STEM tool bridge building software

A virtual bridge building software, built by West Point, is now available for download. This software allows students to design, build and test a bridge virtually. It is a valuable tool for engaging students of all ages. For more information on the software, visit the West Point site at http://bridgecontest.usma.edu/. *(Bridge photo)*

Welcome Aboard!

Joel Brown
MVD Operations/District Support Team (Vicksburg and Memphis districts)
Program Manager,
Programs Directorate

Cody Eckhardt
MVD Operations/District Support Team (Vicksburg and Memphis districts)
Program Manager,
Programs Directorate

If you have a new employee in your office, or if you ARE a new employee to the Mississippi Valley Division, please contact the Public Affairs Office at cemvd-pa@usace.army.mil, so that we can introduce you to everyone in Open Channels.

MVD special recognition...

Dr. Paul J. Dubowy was recently featured as a guest editor in the journal *Ecohydrology & Hydrobiology* for his preparation of two consecutive special issues under the title: "Ecohydrology for harmonization of societal needs with the biosphere potential." The two issues were composed from the research presented at the Eco-Summit 2012 conference, "Ecological Sustainability. Restoring the Planet's Ecosystem Services," that took place in October 2012, in Columbus, Ohio. Congratulations, Dr. Dubowy!

Around the Division

Brig. Gen. Duke DeLuca (standing) stresses the importance of giving back to local communities, as well as nationally, to improve the quality of life for everyone during the kick-off of the 2013 Combined Federal Campaign in October. So far, more than $26,000 has been raised at MVD for the CFC. *(Photo by Alfred Dulaney)*

Twelve bright-eyed and very enthusiastic Jacob's Ladder kids sang Christmas carols to MVD employees during their annual tree trimming event, Dec. 3. The kids also spent time with Santa.

Open Channels

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mississippi Valley Division

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Open Channels is an unofficial publication, authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1.

It is published monthly and distributed electronically, by the Public Affairs Office, U.S. Army Engineer Division, Mississippi Valley.

Views and opinions expressed in the publication are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army.

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MVD's holiday luncheon and door decorating contest winner

Mississippi Valley Division Commander Brig. Gen. Duke DeLuca announces and congratulates Crystal Davidson, administrative assistant for the Watershed Division, as the first place winner of the door decorating contest during MVD's holiday luncheon, Dec. 17. Second place winner was David Merkel, USACE Logistics Activity manager. *(Photo by Pamela Harrion)*

Crystal Davidson was the first place winner of the door decorating contest, announced during MVD's holiday luncheon, Dec. 17. Pictured are four doors Davidson decorated for the Watershed Division. Congratulations, Crystal!