

# Open Channels

## MVD Watershed Management - Teamwork in Action

“The Mississippi River watershed is without question America’s greatest watershed,” said Larry Banks, Chief, Watershed Division. “The Mississippi is also one of the world’s most massive and potentially destructive rivers, draining 800 million acres over 41 percent of America from Montana to New York.”

Coursing through the heartland of one of the world’s most fertile regions, the river has been a predominant instrument in the economic development of America and is probably the “MVP” of all the world’s rivers relative to their respective nation’s development.

“The Mississippi and its related navigational infrastructure provide an efficient, environmentally sustainable transportation artery of grave importance to the world’s economy, having transported 215 billion-ton-miles of cargo in recent years,” said Banks. The river supplies water, essential for the viable existence of cities and industry over 2300 miles from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

The river’s system of channel improvements, levees and floodways have safely conveyed flood flows from the world’s third largest watershed since 1927, providing a cumulative total of \$303 billion in damages prevented through 2002 and a return on the invested dollars of over 24 to 1.



**Members of the Mississippi Valley Division Watershed Management Team (seated l-r) include John Brooks, Donnie Cool and Larry Banks, team leader. Standing is Bill Frederick, a National Weather Service contract employee.**

The nation’s greatest bottomland hardwood forests, more than four million acres lying within or adjacent to the Mississippi’s flood control system, serve as one of the world’s most diverse environmental corridors along an expansive 950 mile-reach of the lower river.

The Corps of Engineers’ Mississippi River Commission and its support staff at the Mississippi Valley Division (MVD) have been effective overseers and stewards of the water resources development of the lower Mississippi since passage of the 1928 Flood Control Act. Oversight and coordination of the river’s flow and its watershed from Canada to the Gulf on a day-by-day basis is the responsibility of the MVD Watershed Division in the Programs Directorate.

The Watershed Management Team at MVD is comprised of Watershed Division leader Larry Banks, administrative assistant Mary Lynn McArthur, team members Donnie Cool, John Brooks, Chuck Shadie, Eddie Brooks, Bob Occhipinti, National Weather Service contract employee Bill Frederick and MVD dam safety specialist Duane Stagg.

The team works closely with the Watershed Division’s Mississippi River & Tributaries team, MVD District Support Teams, and the six district Hydrology and Hydraulics/ Water Control teams.

***(see Watershed, next page)***



**-Watershed-**

Although these individuals comprise the main body of the Corps team, the list of essential members does not stop there. Through networking on a regional basis, the Watershed Management Team has developed a close-knit team of partners that play a vital role in water management efforts in the Mississippi valley.

The external team is comprised of the Corps Lakes and Rivers, Southwest and Northwest divisions' Water Management Teams, several other federal agencies including the National Weather Service, U.S. Geological Survey and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), as well as local levee boards, drainage districts and other flood control and navigation interests. Daily communication, either verbally or electronic, between these partners ensures decisions required for efficient water management of the Mississippi watershed are coordinated and in the best interests of the valley's residents, and environmental and business interests.

A prime example of this coordination-in-action occurred during the flooding situation of mid-January 2005 over the Ohio and middle Mississippi watersheds. Heavy rains during the first two weeks of 2005 caused rivers to swell to near record stages for this time of year across portions of the middle Mississippi/Illinois/Ohio river valleys.

"Cairo, Ill., a key site located at the confluence of the upper Mississippi and Ohio rivers, was forecasted to rise to over 14 feet above flood stage," said Banks. With Cairo reaching this level, areas downstream along over 950 miles of the Mississippi River



**Members of the Watershed Management Team also include (front row) Mary Lynn McArthur and Bob Occhipinti; (back row) Eddie Brooks, Duane Stagg, and Chuck Shadie**

would also reach levels that would cause significant damage to numerous developments along the river.

Periodic conference calls occurred between the Lakes and Rivers Division (LRD), the National Weather Service and the Watershed Management Team at MVD. MVD watershed representatives conveyed the needs of the flood control constituents of the lower valley such that LRD could coordinate and strategically regulate the TVA's Kentucky Lake on the Tennessee River and the Corps' Barkley Lake on the Cumberland River to achieve a flood crest reduction at Cairo at the appropriate time that would ultimately benefit the entire valley.

The coordinated operation has subsequently achieved benefits downstream and turned out to be instrumental in also reducing peak discharges downstream to rates just below the threshold values which could have required operation of the Bonnet Carre' Floodway to divert Mississippi River flows above New Orleans into Lake Ponchartrain.

Communication within the MVD Watershed Management Team often includes recurring conversations with the Mississippi River Commissioners, state and local governments, levee boards and drainage districts, the navigation industry, marina operators, local farmers, news media and other interest groups located along the river. This network, developed through years of public meetings, boat trips and one-to-one consultations during critical times, ensures that all interests within the Mississippi River Watershed remain situationally aware.

The MVD Watershed Management Team thrives on continual communications with its partners and fellow residents of the Mississippi River valley to both receive and convey information crucial to flood protection in the valley. As a result of this communication network, the team successfully continues its efforts as great stewards of the Mississippi River watershed for MVD, the Mississippi River Commission and the people of the valley.



## Generally Speaking

by Brig. Gen. Robert Crear  
Commander  
Mississippi Valley Division



My topic of discussion for this issue is diversity and what it means to me and to our organization.

To my mind, diversity is not merely the absence of discrimination; more fundamentally, it is the powerful presence of a sense of teamwork and community — one that brings all kinds of people from different backgrounds together, with the end result of creating a whole that is much greater than the sum of the individual parts.

With the Mississippi Valley Division as my audience, I don't have to point out the importance of another kind of diversity, which is, balancing the challenging and diverse requirements of economic, environmental and social needs throughout the entire watershed.

The Mississippi Valley is extraordinary in terms of its diversity. It has everything from swamplands and hardwood forests to floodwalls and dams. You in the MVD are true stewards - and champions - of the water resources in this amazingly diverse valley.

So my message to you is really very simple. It is to bring the same kind of thinking — and the same kind of dedication — to diversity, in the purely human and organizational context, that you already do to diversity in the water resources context.

I believe that at MVD we value diversity. We should not assume that diversity is something that comes with the territory in being a federal agency. To the contrary, we are spending a great deal of time, money and effort to become more diverse at all levels of our organization.

So, how do you encourage diversity? Above all, how do you encourage it in an organizational setting, such as the MVD? Perhaps we should examine the key word a little more closely.

According to the dictionary, “diversity” simply means difference, unlikeness or variety. Like the proverbial snowflake, each of us is different - in some way, unique. However, like the snowflake, we are also incredibly alike. For all of the differences between people, far less than 1% of our DNA separates any one human being from any other.

Diversity has also been described as inclusion — inclusion of all groups at all levels in the organization. Diversity also requires a special corporate culture — a corporate culture in which every employee is able to pursue his or her career aspirations without being inhibited by gender, race, nationality, religion or other factors -- factors, which are irrelevant to performance. Diversity means maximizing the potential of our workforce by creating an environment of respect, acceptance, understanding and communication. A place where new ideas and new perspectives are

encouraged along with a commitment to serve diverse communities.

The true test of diversity within an organization — or across a whole society — is whether people build upon their differences or whether they are divided or even destroyed by them. Part of the greatness of our country is contained in the motto that is stamped on our coins — “E Pluribus Unum,” or “Out of Many One.”

Skin color, gender, age and national origin are some of the obvious and important differences between people. But there are many other differences in background, history and habit that are also very important — and that must be addressed in any organization seeking to reap the benefits of diversity.

This brings me to a favorite book — and I recommend it to all of you. It's called “Building a House for Diversity.” The author is R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr.

Thomas' book begins with a wonderful fable about a giraffe who wants to befriend an elephant and who therefore invites the elephant into his house. After some quick carpentry to enlarge the basement door in order to admit the elephant, the giraffe goes off to answer a phone call, telling the elephant, “Please make yourself at home.” But every time the elephant moves, there is a large scunch or crashing sound. When the giraffe returns, he is amazed at the damage that the elephant has done and is quick to offer advice. Sign up for Weight-Watchers, he urges the elephant. And it wouldn't hurt, he adds helpfully, “if you'd go to ballet class at night”, in order to become “lighter on your feet.” There are three clear morals to be drawn from this story and the interaction between the giraffe, as the insider,

*(see Crear, next page)*



**-Creat-**

and the elephant, as the outsider. The first is the silliness of expecting an elephant to assume the same dimensions as a giraffe.

If you are serious about diversity, you should build your house with that in mind. But that is not an easy task. As a second moral to the story, you should expect a certain amount of tension and complexity. And finally, each of us must be prepared to move outside our original comfort zone if we want to embrace and promote diversity. That's the third and biggest moral from the story. There is no such thing as a diverse organization created by executive dictate. It is something that will come into being only through the willing and active behavior of supervisors, managers and people at all levels.

I'm sure that most of you have already learned those same lessons in managing the great water resources of this valley. It wouldn't occur to you to think that every stream was the same or that every tree was the same. You accept the need for positive actions dictated by unusual soil conditions or other localized differences. Say there has been substantial erosion of topsoil in a place of rich farmland. That could be an action that would elicit some kind of counter-action on your part. And I trust that we can all agree that the maintenance of a clean environment requires the concerted efforts of all concerned citizens.

When I — as an African-American, male, general officer — write on the topic of diversity, I know that there is always going to be an unspoken question on the minds of many readers. They will wonder: What does he really think? If I could read his inner thoughts, what would they be? I will try to answer that question with particular reference to race.

Frankly, I'm worried. What makes me apprehensive is the growing gap in the perceptions of white Americans on one side and black Americans on the other. It is as though the giraffe and the elephant have each been blinded to what the other sees as reality. White Americans, for the most part, believe that race is no longer much of an issue in our society. They see the nighttime television dramas in which individuals from all races get along as buddies and excel equally. That's how it is in real life, right?

Wrong. While I cannot pretend to speak for black Americans as a whole, I can tell you that a recent Gallup poll indicated that 50% of black Americans believe they have been discriminated against within the past 30 days -- when shopping, dining out, working, using public transportation or interacting with the police. What's more, I can cite studies showing that, with similar educational backgrounds, black males earn less than 75 percent of what their white peers take home.

Our journey toward greater harmony and justice is not yet over. If you look around MVD, you'll see that we're not as diverse as the population outside our offices. Representation of African Americans in positions of management doesn't come close to representing the population in our communities.

MVD is comprised of approximately 5,171 employees. Of this total, only 18 percent are minorities. Our minority employees include 521 black males and 262 black females; 50 Hispanic males and 29 Hispanic females; 29 Asian American/Pacific Islander males and 14 Asian American/Pacific Islander females; 24 American Indian/Alaskan Native males and 14 American Indian/Alaskan Native females.

These figures indicate a grave need for us to strive to be more diverse. Becoming more diverse does not mean that we sacrifice quality in selecting individuals for positions. It means that we should put forth more effort to reach our qualified minorities.

We can no longer use the excuse that there aren't any minorities in the labor force. For example, if we look at civil engineers just in Mississippi, there are 30 Hispanic males and 4 Hispanic females; 130 black males and 30 black females; and 15 Asian males and 15 Asian females. Yet, we are not bringing these people to the table for local jobs. When we look at our national labor pool for minorities in our occupational series, they are out there. We just need to cast a net as extensively as possible to attract them. That means better recruiting, not decreasing quality or qualifications.

What a challenge. We can make the region more diverse with more effort. We should visit our minority-serving institutions, encourage students to apply for our vacancies, bring back resumes and act upon them rather than adding them to some database that we never use.

Having already given you the dictionary version, I would like to close with my own definition of diversity. To my mind, diversity is not merely the absence of discrimination; more fundamentally, it is the powerful presence of a sense of teamwork and community -- one that brings all kinds of people from different backgrounds together -- with the end result of creating a whole that is much greater than the sum of the individual parts.

My challenge to you is be equally bold and energetic in bringing that kind of teamwork and community into play... in making the Mississippi Valley Division a true house for diversity.



# Crear Keynotes Watershed Summit at Carlyle, Ill.

by Alan Dooley  
Public Affairs  
St. Louis District

Mississippi Valley Division Commander and Mississippi River Commission President Brig. Gen. Robert Crear delivered the keynote address to the annual summit of the Kaskaskia Watershed Association at Carlyle, Monday, Feb. 28, 2005. More than 130 people representing interests throughout the watershed region attended the day-long session.

In his remarks, the general noted the example of watershed organization and effectiveness that the KWA has become, noting that it is praised and held out as an example in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Five Year Strategic Plan. He told how literally within days of assuming command of the St. Louis District, Col. Kevin Williams had as one of his first official duties, spent an evening on the Kaskaskia River with the Association – and hadn't stopped raving about the group during the next two and one-half years. He described the KWA as an organization representing numerous interests with a single voice – and one that is heard and to which attention is paid.

Brig. Gen. Crear took advantage of the opportunity to tell his attentive audience about future trends and developments throughout the Corps and the Mississippi Valley, noting that we cannot continue to do business the same way if we are to best serve our customers.

He noted that we have had a relatively flat civil works budget for several years – before effects of



**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division Commander and Mississippi River Commission President Robert Crear introduces his keynote remarks to the Kaskaskia Watershed Association, gathered in their annual summit meeting in Carlyle, Ill., Monday, February 28, 2005.**

inflation – which means we have really had diminishing resources. He told how the Corps is focusing its efforts on those projects that will have the greatest impacts and provide the highest returns on the nation's investment.

Taking the audience step-by-step through his message, he described his efforts as being driven by a desire to transparently bring the very best people and technology to bear on projects, regardless of where they actually work.

The general also reminded everyone of the involvement and importance of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Global War on Terrorism, noting that a force of

uniformed military people and civilian volunteers had or was serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, with still more Corps employees serving in more than 90 nations worldwide.

He concluded his remarks with a moving multimedia presentation showing some of the many Corps employees at work in Iraq and Afghanistan, drawing a standing, thundering ovation from the appreciative audience when he ended his remarks.

During the visit, Brig. Gen. Crear also took a helicopter tour to see for himself, damage from January's unseasonable rainfall that brought Lake Shelbyville and Carlyle Lake to near-record elevations within a matter of days.



# Clarence Cannon Power Plant at Mark Twain Lake is Tops in Reliability

By Alan Dooley  
Public Affairs  
St. Louis District

America is a nation aglow in night lighting, especially during the holiday season when homeowners, businesses and entire neighborhoods seem to vie with each other by putting up millions of lights to celebrate the season. Images from orbit at night clearly show the cities and major commerce corridors by their brightly lighted outlines.

And of course we all expect that at the flip of a switch our lights will come on at home, in our yards and anywhere else we are prepared to pay for illumination. Indeed, the ready availability of electricity is so universal in America that many of us take it for granted: pay the bill, flip the switch, see the light.

But five people at the Clarence Cannon Hydropower plant at Mark Twain Lake don't take this "miracle" for granted. They know what it takes to ensure reliable energy anytime it is needed.

About one-fourth of the nation's hydroelectricity - electricity generated by the energy of falling or

passing water - is generated by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers facilities. While the nation derives only a little more than three percent of its electrical power supply from hydropower, for two reasons, it is a critical three percent.

First, it's renewable. The cycles of the seasons move water in an age-old pattern, eventually returning it to its starting place as precipitation and runoff. Although power plants cost money to build and maintain, the energy they use to generate electricity is basically free.

Second, hydropower plants are very responsive. They can be brought online to add power to the distribution grid virtually in minutes of the need arising.

The Clarence Cannon Power Plant excels in both categories, as it pushes power out onto a multi-state power grid at 69,000 volts. (Main Power Transformer steps voltage up from 13,800 to 69,000 nominal — voltage varies from 69,000 to approximately 73,000 volts.)

"We are what is called a peaking plant," Project Manager Dennis Foss said in a recent interview. "We are on call to meet increased needs above and beyond the base generating system. At some times of the year, the Clarence Cannon plant generates additional power as water impounded in Mark Twain lake is regulated downward to pool elevations where it provides a combination of optimal flood damage reduction capability and recreation.



**The power plant's two generators are able to supply the electrical needs of a small town. The blue Kaplan unit is a refined generator-only design. Its companion, in green, is a Francis combination generator and pump. The large numbers are to aid visitors on self-guided tours of the facility.**

"We're doing that right now," he explained on Friday, December 10.

He said that power plants that use oil, coal or nuclear power can take a day or more to power up and bring on line. "We have to answer the bell much more quickly." The only comparable capability is costly gas turbine generation to meet peak requirements.

Foss explained that while most of the time, the power generated at Clarence Cannon is consumed nearby, though not in St. Louis, the power plant is part of a grid known as the Southwest Power Grid, that runs from east-central Missouri to central Texas. "There's a substantial line loss when you send power long distances, but we can do that," he said.

Meeting the emerging needs of the grid, with extraordinary reliability, is a premier characteristic

(see Cannon, next page)



**Travis Arch has entered a four-year training program to ultimately become a journeyman mechanic.**



**-Cannon-**



**Cannon Power Plant is a winner to the environment and to the eye.**

of the St. Louis District's only hydropower plant. According to recent data, the Clarence Cannon plant has been available to meet peak loads 98.85 percent of FY2004. This figure compares very impressively with the MVD overall rate of 81.94%.

According to Foss, "There are a few plants that approach or reach 100%, but they are what we call 'run of river' plants. They run full time and are larger facilities. They might have 24 generators, with perhaps 12 online at any given time. It's relatively easier to bring up a 13th one if needed, than it is for us to answer the call reliably with only two generators."

Visitors to the Clarence Cannon plant are invariably impressed with its cleanliness. Through thousands of square feet from the bottom of the plant to the top of the dam that impounds Mark Twain Lake, floors are clean enough to eat off of and shine like just-waxed tile. The pride the small crew exhibits in their responsibility is on display at all times, even though they normally work only a day shift.

Certainly one of the driving forces behind the impressive appearance and performance of the plant – Senior Power Plant Mechanic John Hickham – has his eye on

retirement in the near future. Hickham, with more than 27 years of service under his belt, has been part of the Clarence Cannon facility since its construction began. Everyone in the crew credits him for his total grasp of the intricacies of the plant and its operation, as well as his eagerness to pass that knowledge on to them. His in-depth almost encyclopedic knowledge of the plant makes him the lead in promoting safe operations and maintenance.

So how can the plant respond at night or on weekends when the crew is absent?

According to Power Plant Senior Electrician John Stone, "Through the SCADA, the fulltime operators at Truman (a Kansas City-District hydropower plant 200 miles to the northwest) can bring our turbines online when needed."



**Senior Power Plant Mechanic John Hickham's skilled hands create spare parts and special tools when needed.**

The SCADA – or Supervisory Control Automatic Data Acquisition – system enables those technicians to remotely control and monitor operation of the turbines when they are needed. They can see remotely what an operator sitting at Clarence Cannon could see firsthand.

Stone is more than ably assisted by Power Plant Electrician Terry Oltman, who is a journeyman electrician known for being available 24/7, either to respond with emergency repairs at the plant or to work with the operators at Truman.

Oltman, who is lauded as a professional who has uncanny ability to see operations through from start to finish, has received several awards for his suggestions to improve processes and operations at Clarence Cannon.

The Clarence Cannon Power Plant's two generators appear to visitors to have names: Francis and Kaplan. When asked who they were, John Stone laughed and explained, "They're types of turbines." He went on to detail how a Francis turbine has fixed blades on its rotor. A Kaplan on the other hand, has variable-pitch blades, which may be fine tuned to make most efficient use of the passing water as they spin the General Electric Generators.

The two turbines can generate nearly 43,000 horsepower each: the Francis at 75 rpm with a 75 foot head of water above it behind the dam and the Kaplan at 128.6 rpm with the same lake condition.

The Francis turbine has another function. To help improve the quality of power on the grid – ironing out peaks and valleys – it can be run in what is called the condensed mode. Kevin Long explained as he walked past a bank of giant compressed air tanks, "We can close the wicket gates that regulate the amount of water passing through the turbines and blow the water out of the turbine housing area. Then we can switch electricity into the turbine, making it a motor that uses electricity versus a generator that makes it. This improves the quality of the power on the grid."

The Francis can also pump water up from below the dam into the lake. But that is not routinely done and would in any case, happen only during extreme drought.

**(see Cannon, next page)**



**-Cannon-**



**Mechanic Kevin Long shows some of the massive sockets and wrenches necessary to maintain and repair the giant machinery of Cannon Power Plant.**

“If we had minimal elevation of water in Mark Twain Lake and simply had to generate power during peak loads – maybe during peak use of air conditioning during extreme heat – we could pump water from the pool below the dam at night to be ready to generate electricity the next day.”

The extreme reliability of the Clarence Cannon Power Plant has been recognized in a meaningful way – with money. According to Dennis Foss, “The Southwestern Power Administration, which runs the grid for its users, has deemed it to their advantage to help fund maintenance and upgrades here. They see us as an extremely reliable supplier of high quality power at low cost. They have sent us \$2.7 million for that work during the last four years,” he said. “That’s a lot of money, but it cost less to keep Clarence Cannon in top shape than it would to get power elsewhere.”

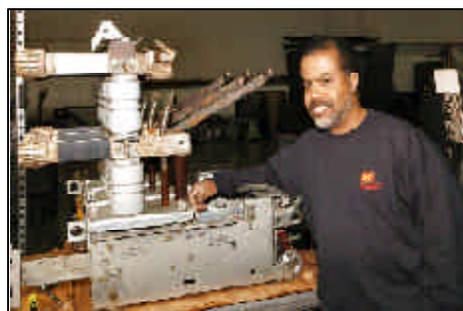
The newest employee at Clarence Cannon, Travis Arch, is being groomed in a four-year training and development program for hydropower power plant personnel to become a journeyman mechanic. Arch, who has been recognized for diligence and excellence by fellow plant operator Terry Oltman’s recommendation for a St. Louis District “Kudo Award,”

was identified for his keen interest and swift learning abilities. “He’s also one of the only people around here who can pick up some of these tools from the floor,” Kevin Long noted, mentioning Arch’s physique and strength.

The training that Arch is undergoing is key to continued safe, efficient operation of the power plant. All personnel undergo this type of preparation, which consists of three to four years of book study, intensive on-the-job training and a series of tests – oral and written – before they are fully qualified to fill more responsible positions.

There’s another reason the Clarence Cannon Power Plant is so highly prized by consumers of its product.

Generating electricity requires more than simply spinning a turbine. It requires reference frequencies and voltages so that the final product is reliable and predictable in all of its qualities. Starting a grid after it has collapsed – such as the U.S. Canada grid failure in the northeast last year – requires some place where the starting ingredients – proper frequency and voltage can be made. Clarence Cannon is one of only a small number of what are called “Black Start” facilities from Missouri to Texas.



**Senior electrician John Stone works rebuilding one of the massive circuit breakers.**

**Electrician Terry Oltman operates the Truman Plant remotely, some 200 miles away.**



Showing off a spotless room full of large batteries, John Stone explained, “These batteries can provide the initial control voltage to get our hydroelectric generators started and producing power, and in turn, we can provide the requirements to bring others onto the grid in succession.” What if the batteries are depleted? “We have an emergency diesel generator for that too,” Stone replied.

Clean power. Cheap power. Reliable power. “Our average annual ‘payback’, at the rate determined by the original authorization for this plant is about \$4 million,” Foss said. “I wish we got that money, but it goes directly into the treasury.”

Clearly the Clarence Cannon Power Plant is part of a well-integrated project. The system generates commercially valuable quantities of increasingly costly electricity; it sustains a valuable water supply and recreation opportunity. Also it’s environmentally friendly. Kevin Long and John Hickham – the latter soon to retire from the senior position at the plant – finishing a bottom to top tour of the plant and dam, gazed from a catwalk high above the plant’s spillway: “Do you see those dark and white spots in the trees down there” they asked? Those are bald eagles.”

The Clarence Cannon Power Plant is a hands down, win-win-win operation. We just thought that you’d like to know about it.



# New Red River Visitor Center rising in Shreveport



**Dirt flies as construction begins for the new visitor center.**

Construction of the J. Bennett Johnston Waterway Regional Visitor Center at Shreveport, La., is underway. The new center will be located at the corner of Clyde E. Fant Memorial Parkway and Crockett Street.

The summer groundbreaking ceremony was co-hosted by the Red River Valley Association, Red River Waterway Commission and the Vicksburg District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Former U. S. Senator J. Bennett Johnston was keynote speaker.

The new visitor center in downtown Shreveport will have approximately 8,300 square feet dedicated to a reception area, exhibition hall, and theater. The reception area and exhibit hall will house audiovisual, static and interactive exhibits.

A multi-purpose theater will provide a continuous film highlighting the rambling Red River. The theater will be available for special public events. A special interior balcony will overlook the Red River.

Varied exhibits will feature the river’s meandering history, physical characteristics,

environment, Native American habitation, early explorations and archeological artifacts. Other exhibits will detail development of the Red River for navigation and recreation.

The \$3.3-million contract was awarded to Quality Design and Construction, Inc., of Gonzales, La, in March 2005, and is scheduled for completion this spring.



**Construction was well underway within a matter of months.**

## “Survivor” event challenges senior leaders

By Eric Lincoln  
New Orleans District

The district pitted 90 MVD Senior Leaders against each other in teams recently during a “Survivor” event at the Bonnet Carre Spillway. It had participants literally standing on each other’s shoulders to complete tasks.

The group was in town for the annual MVD Senior Leaders Conference, hosted by New Orleans District at the Bourbon Orleans, Nov. 16-18.

“There is usually a pre-conference event to help attendees get to know each other,”

said Chris Accardo, Operations, one of the event organizers. “We wanted to do something a little more daring and challenging this time. In that aspect, and judging from comments afterward, we succeeded.”

Several options were submitted for approval by Col. Rowan and Brig. Gen. Crear, who eventually selected the survivor-style exercises at the spillway.

Judi Gutierrez, Real Estate, and Jean Vossen, Engineering, the current active Emerging Leaders, planned the events.



**Senior leaders try their hand at net casting at a “Survivor” event held recently at the Bonnet Carre’ Spillway.**

*(see Survivor, next page)*



***-Survivor-***



**Brenda Weber, Resource Management, gets a lift from Brig. Gen. Crear for the rock climbing event.**

The scope of the project needed more than two sets of hands, though, so they enlisted the help of Phase-2 Leadership Development Program participants: Angela DeSoto Duncan, Chris Dunn, Amena Henville, Sharon Richarme, Ralph Scheid, April Villa and Stuart Waits.

Each of the ten groups had 10 minutes to complete a team-building event: bridge building, net casting, channel surveying, wall climbing and wetland determination.

Spillway personnel provided support, coordinated by Mike Stout,



**Brig. Gen. Crear talks with emerging leaders.**

recreation manager, while Chris Brantley, Project Management, helped out with the net casting and Rob Heffner, Regulatory, helped with the wetland determination.

“It was a tremendous accomplishment for the attendees and the planners,” said Vossen. “The events were challenging, teams had to work together to succeed and the participants raved about it at the end.”

“It sounds easy,” Accardo added, “but it was quite a test, getting 90 people from the CBD to the Bonnet Carre and back, completing all the activities and showing them some of the city in the process. It took a great deal of planning and energy to pull it off.”

Accardo said there was some concern that the event would be too physically taxing for some of the “senior” senior leaders.

“Col. Rowan had the idea for the wall climbing event. I wasn’t sure that would work.



**Emerging leaders completing a wetland determination.**

At the conference, Accardo said, Brig. Gen. Crear focused on the theme of “One Corps, Operating Regionally.”

“He wants us to blur the lines between districts in the coming years, to come together as one region and avoid some of the miscommunication



**Channel surveying was one of the team-building events.**

But the teams really attacked it, as they did all the events. They were real troopers. Brenda Weber (Resource Management) even stood on Brig. Gen. Crear’s shoulders to get over the wall. They were unstoppable.”

that can occur being split into six districts.

“I think the Bonnet Carre event was a good first step.”



## Crossroads at Cross Lake for Paul Bunyan Byway

By Mark Davidson  
St. Paul District

The district signed its first cooperative agreement in the state of Minnesota on Nov. 4 with the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway at the district's Cross Lake facility. The agreement allows the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway Association to use a portion of the district's facility there as an office.

"By sharing space and partnering our ideas, the Corps of Engineers and the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway organization will both be able to broaden and enhance visitor's experiences with programs, activities, interpretative products and facilities that clearly tell our shared stories," said Ray Nelson, the Corps' Cross Lake manager.

The Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway is a 54-mile road looping around the Whitefish Chain of Lakes and along the north side of Pelican Lake in the Brainerd, Minn., area. The loop is circular and includes the Corps' Cross Lake site.

"This partnership will be an opportunity for both organizations to tell the stories of the people, places and events along the scenic byway and within the Whitefish Area, said Lynn Scharenbroich, the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway president.

"Drawing from each other's strengths, together we'll set some new shared goals and develop intriguing ways to open the eyes of residents and visitors to the compelling, poignant, quirky and delightful aspects of the area and the central role played by



**Lynn Scharenbroich (left), the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway president, and Col. Mike Pfenning, St. Paul District Commander, signed the cooperative agreement with the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway at the district's Cross Lake facility, Nov. 4, 2004.**

the Corps of Engineers and the route that is now the scenic byway in the unfolding of those historical moments, as well as the birth of new memories," said Scharenbroich.

The Corps of Engineers has been authorizing cooperative agreements since 1991 and now has more than 30 such agreements at projects like Cross Lake nationwide.

"By signing this cooperative agreement, we are providing the public with additional opportunities to become involved in and support the Mississippi River Headwaters and Paul Bunyan Byway areas through wise stewardship of our public land, water, natural environment and historic cultural resources," said Col. Michael Pfenning, district commander.

The Crosslake area and the Corps of Engineers have a mutually beneficial relationship. More than 370,000 visited this camp site last year and spent more than \$6 million in the local area while visiting.



**Deb Griffith, a ranger at Cross Lake, hosted about 25 people who attended the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway signing ceremony. At right is Chuck Pelzl.**



# Dredge Thompson to retire with rich history

By Dan Krumholz

St. Paul District

*Chris Lennon, dredge inspector, contributed to this story.*

For 68-years, the Thompson, a Corps' dredge whose mission is to maintain the navigation channel on inland rivers, has been a stage for the stories of people working and living together on one of the world's greatest rivers. The dredge is part of the fleet based in Fountain City, Wis., and operated by the St. Paul District.

The crew's response on two holidays, 64 years apart, shows how unpredictable life on the Mississippi River can be.

Armistice Day in November, 1940, began with blue sky and temperatures in the 50s.

Like it, Veterans Day 2004 began with clear sky and moderate temperatures, which continued through the following morning as the Thompson cleared the river channel for navigation.

But these two holidays ended much differently.

Sixty-four years earlier, an abrupt change in the weather, later called the Armistice Day Storm, surprised residents in the region.

Response to this storm was a classic example of the Thompson crew and equipment rising to the occasion, working under adverse weather conditions and doing what it takes to get the job done.

The temperatures rapidly dropped to freezing, 70-mph winds raked the region and two feet of snow blanketed the ground by the time the storm ended the following day.

In 1940, the Dredge William A. Thompson had completed its fourth dredging season and was safely back in the Fountain City boatyards when the deadly storm hit.

The sudden high winds, six-foot waves on the river, blizzard conditions and freshly forming ice stranded hundreds of duck hunters, with their small skiffs and outboard motors, on islands up and down the river.

Members of the Thompson crew, including Clarence Thompson, the first captain of the dredge (no relation to William A. Thompson), and Allen Fiedler, the pilot of the dredge, and other Corps' employees stationed at the boatyards, instinctively knew what had to be done as they fired up the dredge tenders the next day and set out to find their friends, neighbors and possibly co-workers. Search planes, circling overhead, guided the dredge's steel support boats and their operators to the hunters. Trip after trip, they brought stranded hunters to shore.

The Thompson is unique - a boat, a dredge, a hotel and restaurant, power plant, repair shop and construction site, all rolled into one.

It is a combination that makes for fascinating human experiences. For the Thompson crew, it is more than a job, it is their home, it becomes their lifestyle.

That may account for the pride of ownership and sense of duty that is obvious as the crew goes about routine business or a rapid response to



**The Dredge Thompson and its flotilla of support barges pass by Winona, Minn., on their way up the Mississippi River to the boatyards in Fountain City, Wis., in October. Latch Island, to the east, is in the background.**

a channel closure.

Like Thanksgiving 1980, when crew members left deer stands and family dinners to fire up the Thompson from winter hibernation and mobilized the dredge in a snowstorm to a channel closure at Grand Encampment on the Mississippi River.

The channel clearing prevented the last tows of the year from spending the winter frozen in the Upper Mississippi River.

Over the years, dredge employees have worked away from family and friends during weekends, holidays, Fathers' Days, Mothers' Days, birthdays, anniversaries, graduations and other special days.

*(see Thompson, next page)*



**-Thompson-**

But family is not always that far away as the work force has included brothers, father and son, grandfather and grandson, uncle and nephew, cousins, mother and son and spouses.

Dredging jobs can be in a crew member's backyard or a thousand plus miles from their land-based home.

The Thompson has worked the major navigable rivers of the upper Midwest, the Mississippi River from St. Paul to Memphis, the St. Croix, Illinois, Missouri, Kaskaskia and Ohio rivers.

Maintaining the channel means the crews have an ongoing relationship with the quirks of the river and a close attachment to the Corps' navigation mission.

The crew moves and shapes sand that only minutes earlier was a potential obstacle for safe movement of commercial barges. They disconnect the pipeline, moving it out of the path of an appreciative towboat that shares information on other locations of concern as it eases past the big dredge boat.

From the still heat and humidity of a July evening to the freezing ice-covered decks on a November day, the Thompson works on.

When not actively dredging, the crew sets up the job, adds floating line, moves anchors, extends shore-pipe, prepares a placement site, cleans the pump or assembles the tow so that 5,000-tons of dredge and floating equipment can safely move to the next job.

The Thompson has survived years past its projected life-span



**The bow of the Dredge Thompson contains the cutterhead used to loosen the river bed and clear the navigation channel. The pilot house sits atop the dredge.**

largely due to the maintenance and care it has received.

The crew has adapted the Thompson to changing times, especially environmental responsiveness.

In the mid-1970s, the pumping distance of the Thompson was extended from 1,700 feet to more than 7,000 feet with additional pipeline and two booster pumps. This allows targeted placement of the dredged material at environmentally approved sites.

Sixty-eight dredging seasons and 125,000,000 cubic yards later, modern technology and supplemental heavy equipment are now a routine part of the operation, as the dredge completes the final job just 25 miles upstream from its very first job site.

Large bulldozers, a backhoe, plastic pipeline and drop structures are all used to contain material on land and prevent the sand from entering valuable backwaters. A drop structure contains dredged material on land while allowing for water to drain back to the river. Lighting allows round-the-clock operations and proper placement of dredged material.

The Thompson now uses equipment, such as satellite positioning and electronic maps, likely never imagined during its first job down-river of Lansing, Iowa, in June 1937.

Clearing the navigation channel on the Mississippi River on Veterans Day 2004 is not the last job of the season. It's the last job for the dredge - ever.

With the arrival of the Dredge Goetz in 2005, the Thompson's role will be reduced to providing a home for the crew until the Quarters barge Taggatz is funded and delivered.

In the unpredictable world of channel maintenance, the work near Brownsville, Minn., Head of Raft Channel to be specific, is already the Thompson's second final job.

The next to last job was completed earlier in the week, 75 miles upstream at Reads Landing, Minn., that is until a towboat grounding prompted yet another "final" job. This is a familiar scenario that the Thompson and its able crew respond to in routine fashion.

Clearing Raft Channel is only the final dredging job for the Thompson, but not its final call.

The 270-foot dredge boat will be transformed into a museum exhibit at Winona, Minn., seven river miles from the Fountain City boatyards. The exhibit will serve to educate the public and future generations about the river and the important role the Thompson has played in river lore.



# David Washington, Rock Island District, Heavy Mobile Equipment Mechanic Supervisor, Illinois Waterway Project Office

By Mark Kane  
Public Affairs  
Rock Island District

In the late 60s, there was a lot going on in government, and in America at large, with the Vietnam conflict, the assassination of Sen. Robert Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the moon landing, and the Civil Rights Movement; and for those just graduating high school, working for the government may have been intimidating, but some never flinched.

David Washington, now a heavy mobile-equipment mechanic supervisor for the Illinois Waterway's Maintenance Support Unit, jumped feet first into government service even before he graduated high school and landed a job with the District in the summer of '66.

"When I graduated from high school, I was looking for a full time job," said Washington. "I had worked as a student aide for the Corps the previous summer. The project engineer sent me a letter at the end of my summer employment stating that he was pleased with my performance and I should reapply after graduation. I did, and the rest is history."

Washington started working for the District full time shortly after he graduated in 1967 from Manual High School in Peoria, Ill.



Although he says the work that he's been involved with has been challenging, he says that's exactly what he likes most about working for the Corps.

"When I started with the Corps right out of high school, I was green," said Washington. "I have acquired a lot of my present skill from on-the-job training. Throughout my career there have been people willing to help me."

Betty Nash, a co-worker of Washington's in the ILWW project office, might be one of the people that Washington was referring to, but in her case, it's Washington that has been a help to her.

"David Washington Jr. was here when I transferred to the Illinois Waterway Project Office," said Nash. "He has always been a gentleman ... not just opening doors for ladies or sharing breakfast sandwiches or cookies — we both have a sweet tooth — but listening when you have a question or explaining why the crew is doing something and not cutting you off for being a dumb girl. How else was I ever going to learn what the crews were doing or why."

"He has always been patient with me, and other fellow employees have said the same."

*(see Washington, next page)*



**-Washington-**



Washington's advise -- "Life is full of choices, always try to do the right thing. Learn from your mistakes. Treat others the way that you want to be treated."

When someone has an idea to improve on fabrication of a part or a better way of doing his job, Dave will always hear them out ... not just blow them off. He has adopted many a suggestion from his fellow employees. He's always thinking of a better way of doing business whether it's streamlining or saving money for the Corps; his last suggestion saved the Chicago District \$4,600 and contributed to the project's overall saving of \$200,000."

Washington has a good working relationship with his co-workers, who impacted heavily on his answer to what he likes most about his job, which to no surprise was, "The great group of people that I have working on my team.

I have their respect and they have mine. We always get the job done."

Getting the job done is no easy task, as Washington's job title brings many responsibilities with it.

"As supervisor over the Maintenance Support Unit my mission is to provide hired-labor maintenance services to all District activities, and other districts when requested," said Washington. "Some of the work that I am responsible for consists of machining and fabrication, electrical and electronic repairs, carpentry and wicket fabrication, heavy equipment repair, sand blasting, painting, and facilities maintenance at the project office.

I also coordinate with outside contractors the machining and fabrication work that cannot be done in house."

Washington also said he plans the weekly and monthly work schedules for his unit, as well as performing a variety of other administrative functions.

He has lived and worked in the Peoria area his entire life, where he continues to live with his wife. They have three grown children.

"I enjoy traveling with my wife, Vanessa," said Washington. "The rest of the time I usually spend helping my children and aging parents."

A lot has taken place for Washington since the summer of '66. Through it all, Washington is thankful for everything he's achieved.

"Some of my co-workers did not make it to where I am today," said Washington. "I thank God for blessing me to see my 55th birthday and 37 years with the Corps. I have a lot to be thankful for and will never take it for granted."

Washington's advice to anyone reading this article is, "Life is full of choices, always try to do the right thing. Learn from your mistakes. Treat others the way that you want to be treated."



# Hydrographic Survey Crews Contribute to District Success

By Mark Kane  
Public Affairs  
Rock Island District

In the District, two hydrographic surveying crews, one on the 314 miles of the Upper Mississippi River and one on the 271 miles of the Illinois River Waterway, survey approximately 24,000 acres of navigation channel and main-channel border every year.

This 365-day-a-year job puts the survey team members right at the District's front line according to Bill Graham, a channel maintenance coordinator and hydrographic surveyor who works in the Channel Maintenance Section of the Technical Support Branch in the Operations Division that maintains both surveying crews.

"We are the one's that identify any problems that the rivers might be experiencing or may experience, through continual monitoring," said Graham. "For the most part, we try to be proactive to changing conditions, but that is not always the case."

The two crews complete an average of more than 320 surveys each year, including non-channel surveys related to environmental or sedimentation issues, periodic navigation-dam surveys, and wing dam surveys. Each crew operates a 34-foot survey vessel and uses the Global Positioning System to obtain a horizontal position with a multi-transducer sweep system to obtain depth soundings.

"There are six hydrographic surveyors who collect and process the data, four dredging coordinators who are past hydro-surveyors and direct the survey work, and two



**The M/V Holling - the District's state of the art survey vessel that made the surveying possible.**

technicians, with one back up, who plot and post the data," said Graham.

Although their mission goes on throughout the year, it does change depending on what time of year it is.

"Our mission varies slightly from season to season," said Graham. "The heaviest work is done between April and October, preparing for and supporting the dredging season and CARS (Committee to Assess Regulatory Structures) work. During the fall and spring we do reconnaissance surveys of the rivers to monitor changes over the winter. In the spring, when we have high water, we try to do surveys outside the normal navigation channel in backwaters, government sponsored marinas and on the three reservoirs, as needed."

Many on the crews work a four-day, 10-hour-a-day schedule, and attend training when needed.

In mid-January members of the Motor Vessel Holling's hydrographic survey crew were scheduled to travel to Hilton Head, S.C., for a Hypack training seminar (Hypack is the software system that the District's survey and mechanical dredging boats use for data collection and positioning), when they received a call from Graham about a sunken barge in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal that was obstructing river traffic.

"By the time I reached the crew, consisting of Don Flinspach and Jim Luellen, they had already secured the boat for the weekend and were headed back to the Clock Tower to turn in the week's surveys and to get ready to travel," said Graham. "I reached them as they were just arriving in Ottawa, Ill. I explained the situation to them and headed them back to Joliet, Ill., and the boat."

*(see Holling, next page)*



## **-Holling-**

The District had been called upon by, and was working closely with, the Coast Guard following a barge explosion in the canal at approximately 4:30 p.m. on Jan. 18, which resulted in the barge sinking and obstructing river traffic.

Now the abilities of the hydrographic survey crew and the M/V Holling had been called upon to conduct surveys to determine the extent and location of the debris in the canal, the width and depth of open channel, and to provide the District's findings for the Coast Guard's use in determining whether there was a clear path around the sunken barge for safe passage.

By 1:30 p.m. on Jan. 19, the crew was back onboard and headed upstream to the site 31 miles away.

"After a very rapid trip they arrived at the site around 3 p.m. and began their survey," said Graham. "At the direction of Coast Guard personnel on-site, the crew sounded around the wreck on the downstream, left bank, and up stream sides."

Upon completing the survey, the crew edited the information, removing from the raw data any "stray" soundings and anomalies that they could discern. The following day, Jan. 20, the information was plotted on a map for the Coast Guard.

"Jennifer McDermott, the other person who plots surveys, was at home in Quincy, Ill, preparing to leave for Hypack as well," said Graham. "Jennifer, however, telecommutes and plotted the survey from her office at home."

After reviewing the plotted survey, it appeared that there might be 35 feet of channel available along the left bank through which single barges could pass.

Unfortunately, right in the middle of this pass was a sounding of less than nine feet.

"We were not able to determine with any certainty if the shoal was an air bubble or a legitimate target that would have to be physically removed in order to pass traffic," said Graham.

So the decision was made that a second survey was needed. The immediate need to enable traffic to pass through was driven by the fact that there are two coal-fired power plants upstream of the site that are only able to receive coal by barge and need to be replenished every two days or so.

"With everyone already heading off to Hypack training, I made a few fast phone calls to round up a hydrographic surveyor to accompany me back to Brandon Road so that we could re-survey the wreck site," said Graham. "I was able to get ahold of Chris Reger and explained to him what was happening and that I needed his help to complete the assignment. This meant that Chris would not be going to the warmer climes of sunny South Carolina, but the near zero temperatures and blowing snow of Chicago instead."

By 6 a.m. on Jan. 21, Graham and Reger were onboard the Holling getting the boat ready to run and making repairs to the number ten transducer.

"We completed this by late morning and preceded to Lockport Lock ... we arrived at the wreck site about 1:30 p.m, said Graham. "We surveyed the entire area between the railroad bridge to the upstream side of the wreck, and down to the Cicero Street Bridge. Upon finishing the wreck survey, we confirmed that there was, indeed at the very most, 35 feet of usable channel at a depth of nine feet or greater."

Graham and Reger arrived at Lockport around 8 p.m. and secured the boat for the evening. The survey was delivered the next day, Jan. 23, to the Clock Tower Building where Jimmy Aidala was waiting to plot the survey and get it posted on the District's webpage where the finished surveys were made available to the Coast Guard. Graham said the Chicago District made their plotting abilities available for the Coast Guard, so that they could get a hard copy as soon as the survey became available.

Soon after, the Coast Guard carefully examined the hydrographic survey data and successfully verified that dry-cargo inland-river barges could transit safely past the sunken barge. As a result, the Coast Guard Captain of the Port made the decision to open the section of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal between the Cicero Avenue Bridge and the Chicago Belt Railway Railroad Bridge to commercial barge traffic.

"I believe that 80 percent of their decision was based upon the surveys," said Graham. "The surveys increased their comfort factor."

Although the District's role in giving the Coast Guard information to make this decision may not have received a lot of attention in the media, the hydrographic surveying crew members' skills were certainly put to the test, as they are throughout the year.

"It's not enough that the people who do this work need an up-to-date knowledge of hydro-surveying," said Graham. "They also have to be a qualified boat operator, computer literate, have mechanical skills, be good at public relations, and most importantly, have a sense of humor."



## Old plans revived for Category 5 hurricane protection

By Eric Lincoln  
Public Affairs  
New Orleans District

Engineering and Project Management are determining costs for a hurricane protection feasibility study that could lead to a project to protect southeast Louisiana from Category 5 hurricane storm surges.

One of four alternatives to be investigated will include blocking tidal surges at the Rigolets and Chef Menteur Pass. The concept was part of the original Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection project.

In 1977, plans for hurricane protection structures at the Rigolets and Chef Menteur Pass were sunk when environmental groups sued the district. They believed that the environmental impact statement did not adequately address several potential problems, including impacts on Lake Pontchartrain's ecosystem and damage to wetlands.

Ultimately, an agreement between the parties resulted in a consent decree to forego the structures at the Rigolets and Chef Menteur Pass. Instead, a "high-level plan" resulted, amounting to construction of a levee system around St. Bernard, Orleans, East Jefferson and St. Charles parishes.

The new initial feasibility study will look at protecting the area between the Pearl River and Mississippi River from a Category 5 storm.

Subsequent studies will look at the area between the Mississippi River and Morgan City, La.

Four alternatives that would be studied in the initial feasibility report are:

(a) Construction of floodgate structures, with environmental modifications, at Rigolets and Chef Pass, along with levees extending from high ground on the north shore to the Mississippi River.

(b) Raising existing levees for greater protection.

(c) Construction of a gated structure and new parallel span to the existing I-10 twin spans to Slidell, La. The additional lanes could be used for evacuations and, during normal days, alternating traffic-flow during the morning and evening to aid Slidell commuters. This structure would include higher levees extending to high ground on the north shore and to the Mississippi River.

(d) Raising all existing levees except those in the Inner Harbor area. A structure at Seabrook and a navigation gate at the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (MRGO) / Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) would close off the Inner Harbor area when storms threaten.

The impacts of coastal restoration projects will also be included as part the studies.

"Simply restoring the coastal wetlands and barrier islands will probably not be sufficient to protect the city from a Category 5 event," said Al Naomi, senior project manager, "but it could reduce the surge elevations and result in cost savings to the Category 5 project.

"I hope that one of these alternatives will prove feasible and will be constructed. We would then have the only Category 5 protection system in the country."

With that system in place, says Naomi, it would make sense to build shelters and other buildings to withstand Category 5 winds. Right now, few if any buildings in the city are capable of surviving a strong storm, and if they did, the water from the storm surge might finish them off.

"The new convention center or (New Orleans) Saints stadium could be constructed to these standards, with electrical generators and other emergency equipment built in at a relatively small initial cost. Including the upgraded levees, we're talking maybe \$2 billion for a system that would protect the city.

*(see Hurricane, next page)*



## -Hurricane-

“Compare that to damages from the storm, which could be as much as \$100 billion, and 100,000 lives lost.

“A Category 5 hurricane hitting the city may be a once-in-a-500-year event ... A Category 3 like Hurricane Betsy in 1965, or less, is more likely, and the existing levee system should be able to handle a storm like that.

“But there are no guarantees. One failure or overtopping of a levee could be catastrophic.

“The point is to eliminate that storm surge threat with one of these plans. Then we can build stronger buildings and stay in local shelters with the Red Cross, instead of spending eight hours in traffic trying to leave.

“The philosophy of what we do during a hurricane would change. We could spend more time protecting our homes and less time trying to get out of the city in these desperate evacuations.”

The cost estimate for the study will be discussed with the state Department of Transportation

and Development (DOTD), the local sponsor, before being submitted to headquarters for funding. Right now, there is no money for the study in FY05, even though it is one of the most vital for a city threatened more every hurricane season by a potential Category 5 storm.

With federal funding, a cost sharing agreement could be arranged with DOTD, and the feasibility study could proceed, taking about five years to complete, with another 10 to 20 years for construction.

## Federal Women’s Program impacts work force

by Brenda Beasley  
Public Affairs  
Memphis District

Like the constantly flowing, ever changing Mighty Mississippi River with its swift current making an impact on everything it touches, so is the Memphis District’s Federal Women’s Program committee continuing to make major impacts in its efforts to provide equality and quality in the work place.

To keep up this swift pace and to help make their impact gain strength, the committee members reached out to employees in the District to join them during their membership drive held Feb. 7 in the Federal Building. “I’d like to see more support from the employees,” said FWP Manager Cynthia W. Wells.

A cartographic technician in the Engineering Division, Wells was appointed to the collateral position by former Special Emphasis Program Manager Lynn H. Dupriest in August 1998.



**Although she’s been pioneering the future since 1990, when she first joined the FWP as a member, Cindy Wells is looking forward to some of the 100 women who make up 20 percent of the Memphis District joining the FWP and sharing their fresh ideas.**

She spoke on what the FWP was all about and how it has changed the lives of the Memphis District work force.

Not wanting to come across as a women’s lib group, the committee set goals that would help women, as well as men.

*(see Federal Women, next page)*



**-Federal Women-**

“In the beginning, our goal was to help female employees advance in their positions,” said Wells, “but with more women in the work force, we want to reach out to women and men.”

Ever mindful of the advancement of women, the committee worked toward getting good speakers for the annual Women’s History Month Program that would give the attendees something beneficial they could take back and apply to their job, according to Wells.

The committee was also instrumental in creating “District Training Week” that brings the training to the employee. “Women had families and it was hard for them to go out of town for training, so we started bringing instructors here,” said Wells. “Now we have District Training Week, which benefits all of us.”

Flextime is another benefit brought about by the efforts of the Federal Women’s Program. It was created because women couldn’t get their children to day care and still get to work on time. “Men have benefitted from this also,” said Wells.

A lot of the goals that the committee set have been achieved. Today, there are more women in higher graded positions. “My only disappointment,” said Wells, “is that even though we pushed for more upward mobility positions, we haven’t got there yet.”

The fall and winter months are a quiet time for the FWP committee, said Wells, so they began creating projects and seeing them through.

In May 2000, they fulfilled a long overdue need to recognize employees of the Memphis District who were unable to enjoy their well-deserved retirement. They planted a “memory tree” and placed a monument at the foot of it to honor all employees who died while in service to our nation. The monument is engraved with the statement “This tree is dedicated to all employees who have passed away during their career with the Memphis District.”

A dedication ceremony was held at Ensley Engineer Yard (EEY) May 25, 2000. Former District Commander Daniel W. Krueger acknowledged the efforts of the FWP committee and said, “Those who died in service to their nation should never be forgotten. We honor them by keeping them ever alive in our memory.”

In September 2000, it was brought to the committee’s attention that there were no computers for the employees at EEY and Marine Maintenance Center. Computers don’t come into play when you’re a welder, painter, electrician or carpenter; however, with the District’s Personnel Office transferring locations, employees were being forced to apply for job vacancies via the computer. “We felt there was a definite need for computers for these employees in order to review and apply for other positions,” said Wells.

A joint effort between the FWP and former EEY Chief John Flanagan led to a “computer room” finally being created within the EEY Administration Building, said Wells. Flanagan then asked if there was any way for those employees to receive the basic training needed in order to apply for positions.



**L to R: FWP committee member Selena Hurst presents a Woman’s Daily Journal to Acting Chief of Construction-Operations Division Linda G. Boyd. This was just one of four door prizes handed out at the membership drive.**

Several FWP Committee members volunteered their time and efforts to make this happen. When they shouted, “let’s ride the wave,” blue waters, white beaches and gnarly surfboards were nowhere in sight. Instead they were armed with central processing units, monitors and keyboards June 2, 2001, as they showed 12 of Ensley’s employees how to ride the technology wave.

“Being involved in providing computer training for the employees at Ensley is just one of my proudest accomplishments as a member of the FWP,” said Phillip Pinkston, a committee member and a civil engineer technician in the Engineering Division.

**(see Federal Women, next page)**



**-Federal Women-**

A member for five years, he's enjoyed being a part of the advancement of women in the district and being able to help an employee in need. "Being a minority," said Pinkston, "I believe in equality, not just for myself, but for all people."

Other FWP committee projects have included sponsoring a family in need during the holiday season, helping employees who were on extended leave because of illness, and helping collect hats for the cancer patients at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, said Pinkston.

On March 28, the committee will be sponsoring "Powerful Communication Skills for Women" from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. The workshop is free to all employees. "Communicating with power and finesse is a skill that doesn't come naturally to most of us," said Donna Sanders, committee member and a work force development specialist. The FWP is sponsoring the workshop as an opportunity for employees to improve themselves and get ahead professionally.

The Department of the Army requires establishing Special Emphasis Programs like the FWP to ensure equal opportunity in hiring, training, advancement and treatment of women and minority employees, according to Equal Employment Opportunity Officer Diane Brown. The goals for the programs are to eliminate discriminatory practices, to ensure targeted groups are appropriately represented throughout the workforce, and to sponsor special activities designed to enhance diversity awareness.



**A variety of posters representing Women's History events were used as the major decorating theme at the meeting.**

In 1967, Executive Order 11375 added gender to the list of prohibited discrimination such as race, color, religion and national origin. In response to this, the Office of Personnel Management established the Federal Women's Program. In 1969, Executive Order 11478 integrated the FWP into the EEO Program and placed it under the direction of EEO for each agency.

OPM regulations require that Federal agencies designate a FWP manager to advise the EEO officer on matters affecting the employment and advancement of women. This law also requires that Federal agencies allocate sufficient resources for their Federal Women's Programs.

And like the diverse and ever changing Mississippi River making an impact on everything it touches, District Commander Col. Charlie Smithers encouraged employees to share their diverse knowledge and join the FWP to make an impact. "I encourage you to build on the success of what's happened since I've been here," he said. "More people on a team allow you to do better things. You can pick a project and make it happen! You have good input and no one person has to do all of the work. It's a team of teams and that's what makes this thing work."

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