

Open Channels

Mississippi River Commission celebrates 125 years of service

story and photos by Brenda L. Beasley
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“On a warm summer day in August 1879, seven men, each appointed by President Rutherford B. Hayes and confirmed by the U.S. Senate, gathered in Washington, D.C., to pore over surveys, examinations, and reports representing the best available hydraulic data on the Mississippi River. Six of the men were prominent civil engineers, the seventh a lawyer, constitutional scholar, and future American President. ... These seven men represented the original members of the Mississippi River Commission. ... Upon their shoulders rested the task of remaking the Mississippi River into a safe and reliable commercial artery while protecting adjacent lands from overflow. The job at hand was enormous — so enormous that no less an authority on the Mississippi River than Mark Twain believed the task was “transcended in size only by the original job of creating” the river, according to Charles A. Camillo and Matthew T. Percy, authors of “Upon Their Shoulders.”

Then on a warm spring day in April 2005, seven different but equally impressive men, each appointed by the President of the United States, gathered in Vicksburg, Miss., to celebrate the final event of the 125th Anniversary of the Mississippi River Commission with simultaneous “Open Houses” at the



Motor Vessel MISSISSIPPI docked at the Vicksburg City Front. This five-level, 63,000 horsepower vessel is the flagship for the Commission and is operated by a 35-member crew. Today's *Mississippi* is the fifth Corps vessel to bear that name. In foreground is the Vicksburg floodwall with murals depicting significant events in the city.

MRC Building and onboard the Motor Vessel Mississippi.

An estimated 1,800 people toured the building and vessel during the April 20th open house events, according to Mississippi Valley Division Public Affairs Officer John Rickey.

The hallways of the three-story MRC Building, located at 1400 Walnut Street in downtown Vicksburg, were adorned with museum-quality displays that showcased the Commission's work in

the Mississippi Valley. The building itself is regarded as the finest example of Romanesque architecture in the state of Mississippi and serves as headquarters for the Mississippi River Commission and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi Valley Division.

The anniversary events culminated onboard the M/V Mississippi, docked at the Vicksburg City Front, with a special cake-cutting ceremony honoring the Commission.

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Participants included Vicksburg Mayor Laurence Leyens, Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. Carl A. Strock, and Mississippi Valley Division Commander and MRC President-designee Brig. Gen. Robert Crear.

The M/V Mississippi also served as a public meeting venue for the commission’s annual high-water inspection trip prior to the open house event. The commission conducts inspection trips on the Mississippi River during the high-water season each spring and during the low-water season each summer or fall. The M/V Mississippi serves as an inspection boat and workboat for the commission. Based in Memphis, Tenn., more than 90 percent of the vessel’s time is spent as a working towboat for the Corps’ Memphis District.

The purpose of the Mississippi River Commission is to develop plans to improve the condition of the river, foster navigation, promote commerce and prevent destructive floods, said Crear in an interview Jini Ryan of Soldiers Radio and Television.

On April 18, while the M/V Mississippi was docked at New Madrid, Mo., for a public meeting, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) John Paul Woodley Jr. joined the 125th anniversary celebration voyage.

“It’s a very exciting thing for me to be a part of the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the Mississippi River Commission,” said Woodley in an SRTV interview with Ryan. “The idea that we can have a commission of this kind working with the Corps of Engineers to do this important work for a region of the



The Ransdell-Humphreys Act display in the first-floor hallway captures the attention of one of the many tour groups that visited during the open house April 20.

country that is the true heartland of America is a very exciting experience for me, because it’s a real expression of American democracy at work.”

The commission was established June 28, 1879, and is composed of seven members, each nominated by the President of the United States and confirmed by the Senate. Three of the organization’s members are officers of the Corps of Engineers; one member is from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and three members are Civilians, two of whom are civil engineers.

General duties of the commission include providing recommendations to the Chief of Engineers and reports to Congress on matters concerning river improvements, navigation, flood control, flood damage reduction, ecosystem management, recreation and other major watershed projects and issues, and making semi-annual inspection trips.

The 1879 congressional legislation that created the commission granted the body extensive authority and jurisdiction on the Mississippi River from its headwaters at Lake Itasca, Minn., to the Head of Passes near the Gulf of Mexico.

The MRC Commissioners ensure that public views are reported to Washington so the policy makers can set priorities and provide the resources. “We’re the eyes and ears for Congress and the administration,” said Crear. “We’re able to review the conditions of the Mississippi River and see, firsthand, projects under construction or completed on or near the river.”

The work of the commission is directed by its president and carried out by the six Army Engineer Districts at St. Paul, Rock Island, St. Louis, Memphis, Vicksburg and New Orleans. Over the years, as the MRC’s mission evolved, so did its work.

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“The fundamental work of flood control has been the most constant,” said Woodley, “but it certainly accelerated after the great flood of 1927.”

As steamboats gave way to barges and towboats, the navigation work changed, said Woodley. The Corps of Engineers developed and built the great system of locks and dams on the upper Mississippi River to support navigation all the way from St. Paul to St. Louis.

But, the most recent aspect that has changed is the emphasis on environmental and ecosystem restoration up and down the basin. “Man’s activities have affected this ecosystem,” said Woodley. “We’re learning more and more every day about those affects and what we can do to ameliorate them and to compensate for those affects so that we continue to have a vital environmental ecosystem for wildlife and fish within the Mississippi River basin.”



Following tradition, MRC President-designee and Mississippi Valley Division Commander Brig. Gen. Robert Crear adjourns a public meeting.

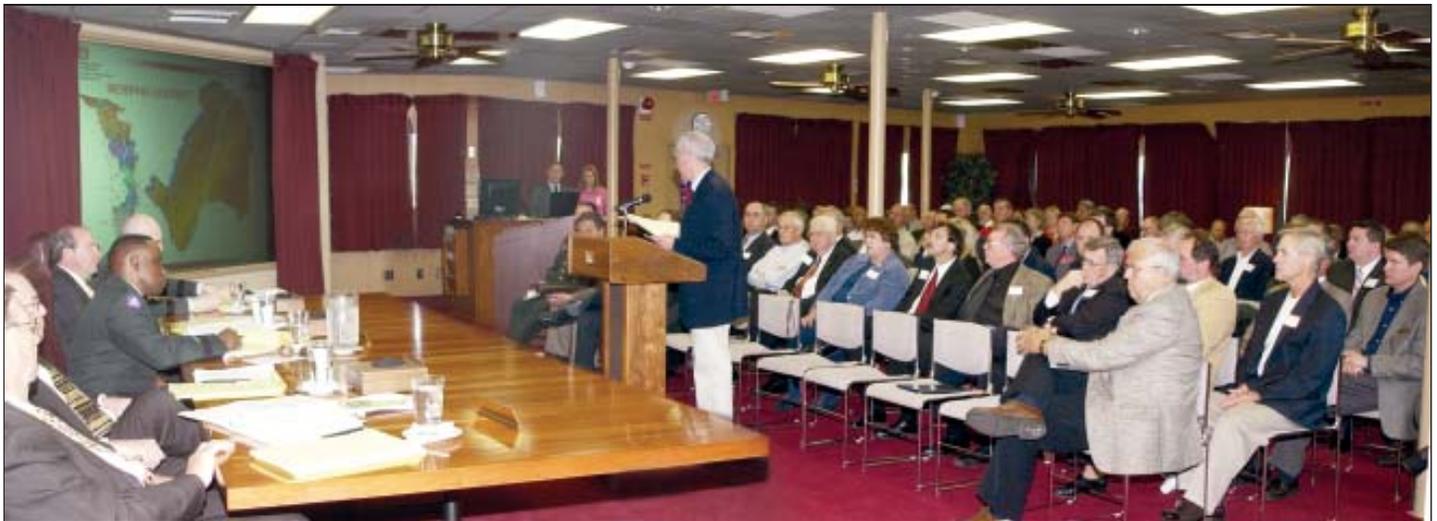
Woodley sees the commission remaining as a relevant service to the nation for another 125 years because it’s based on an opportunity for public input at the grass roots level. “The commission visits countless communities up and down the river and brings this body of government to the people in a very real and personal way,” said Woodley. “And being able to address people in that way and to hear their concerns makes it a unique body in American government. I

believe it has a great history behind it, and even greater history before it.”

When the commission was first set up in 1879, the river was un-navigable, said civil engineer and MRC Commissioner R.D. James in an SRTV interview with Ryan. The river was over run with log jams, sand bars and eddies. “An unbelievable amount of commercial vessels were sinking each year,” said James.

The commission’s first task was to clear the river of debris and make it navigable. In 1928, Congress passed the Flood Control Act of 1928 on the heels of the 1927 flood and gave the MRC the additional task of protecting the citizens of the Lower Mississippi Valley from flooding, he added.

In his 24 years as a commissioner, James said he’s seen a few dramatic changes, but he feels there’ll be even more dramatic changes to come if any of the aging locks and dams on the upper Mississippi River fail.



Citizens in the community surrounding New Madrid, Mo., testify before the Commission April 18, during the second of four public meetings held along the Mississippi River.

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“If we ever have one of those fail,” said James, “it’s going to be a disaster.”

Although he doesn’t want to think of a disaster like this happening, he fears it may be the only thing that will bring national attention to the valley’s aging infrastructure. “It’s not just in the Mississippi River Valley,” said James, “It’s happening all over the United States. Our infrastructure is deteriorating. Time takes its toll on infrastructure.”

There are so many differing attitudes in Congress, and in the administration, right now because of homeland security, the war in Iraq, anti-terrorism and other world issues, that civil works projects don’t get much attention. “There is so much those people have to worry about that when you mention the words “civil works” they think of faucets and plumbing and that type of thing and it doesn’t get on the big scope,” said James, “But, it’s a lot bigger than that, and we’re trying as civilian members of this commission to get that message to Washington as best we can.”



This castle-style building has been home to the MRC since 1944.

It’s the very diversity of their makeup that brings a more comprehensive outlook to the commission’s decision-making process.

One important element of the commission is that it’s a mix of military and civilian membership. The civilian members, both businessmen and engineers, add a great deal of continuity that offsets the more rapid turnaround of the military members, said Lt. Gen. Strock in an SRTV interview with Ryan.

The military members bring representation of the three Corps divisions that encompass the Ohio, Missouri and Mississippi river valleys. Together these valleys form the greater part of the basin that drains 41% of the United States and parts of two Canadian provinces. Then NOAA adds their expertise in weather patterns and tidal and coastal issues to the mix.

The Corps of Engineers has the responsibility of carrying out the work on the Mississippi River and Tributaries project, which is the flagship project that the commission has put most of their efforts into. “The commission plays a vital role in the Corps’ work on the Mississippi River,” said Strock. “It’s a very important forum for us to make decisions about how to operate and maintain the Mississippi River.”

The diverse makeup of the commission combines the expertise of the private sector, the military and the federal government. “There’s no other commission like it anywhere in the United States,” said Crear.

When viewing the commission in terms of a return on your investment, especially if you’re a taxpayer, for every one dollar spent there has been at least 24 dollars in return, said Crear.



Replicas of the types of clothing worn by Brig. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys (left) and Civilian Engineer James B. Eads (right) are housed in a case in the MRC Building. Humphreys and Eads sparked one of the first major disputes about the controlling Mississippi River.

To date, 24 billion dollars has been invested with over 400 billion dollars worth of benefits received.

In the last 125 years, “the task of remaking the Mississippi River into a safe and reliable commercial artery while protecting adjacent lands from overflow” has rested upon the shoulders of 112 Army Soldiers and 35 civilians who have served on the Mississippi River Commission.

Even though today’s MRC President-designee feels it’s important that we remember and learn from the past, he believes it’s more important that we look to the future. “What America relies on us to do, regardless of how priorities change,” said Crear, “is to provide the best science and the best engineering that’s relevant for this time.”



Generally Speaking

by Brig. Gen. Robert Crear
Commander
Mississippi Valley Division



The week of June 13-17 was a memorable one in the Mississippi Valley Division as we celebrated the Army's and the Corps of Engineers' 230th birthday's, reviewed the successes of the division over the past year, recognized outstanding performers and spent time getting to know each other a little better at our annual Engineer Day picnic.

The recognition of those responsible for the success of the division are portrayed in this issue of Open Channels, and I want to thank our great award winners and those staff members who made the 125th Anniversary of the Mississippi River Commission a success throughout the year.

It couldn't have been a better week, HOOAH! Well, that was until the Chief of Engineers' new vision and strategic direction was released throughout the Corps.

All it takes is a casual perusal of the Chief's messages to see that the Mississippi Valley Division is truly meeting his intent of being Relevant, Ready, Responsive and Reliable. The efforts undertaken by our Regional Business Center teams, building interdependency between the districts and division, is truly relevant, ready, responsive and reliable, but I will add a fifth "R," and that is Remarkable. The remarkable efforts of all MVD employees to shape and mold this new business acumen are paying dividends for our partners and stakeholders.

Key to that success is recognition of the requirement to be better communicators, which includes the critical element of listening. As I carry my message about this great division and staff, I always take time to listen to what our partners and interests are saying. In case you are unaware, the dialogue between us, particularly the discussions about our practice of the Chief's tenants, reflects great credit on your service as providers of quality engineering services and guardians of critical national resources.

Lt. Gen. Strock has laid out his intent for the next several years, supported by robust core competencies and operating principles. Those competencies and principles are steeped in enduring values that, regardless of our transformation, will remain grounded in The Army Values. Those values compel us to be One Team – Relevant, Ready, Responsive and Reliable, proudly serving the Armed

Forces and the nation now and in the future.

With many of our friends and colleagues serving in very dangerous places, performing Herculean tasks for nations striving to find themselves and their place in the community of free nations, each and everyone of you are playing a key role in accomplishing those transformations and supporting our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters serving this nation in peace and war.

The core competencies of the Corps of Engineers are great enablers for those missions we have freely and willingly undertaken. I am proud of our role in those efforts, particularly the efforts of Corps employees who have gone one, two, and in some cases, three times into harms way.

It is important for all of us to remember those heroes of the Corps, particularly in this season when we remember our past heroes on Memorial Day who gave all for this nation, and our founding fathers on Independence Day who gave birth to this great nation of ours. As you take time over the summer to celebrate those lazy hazy days, take a few moments to reflect on the family, friends and colleagues who continue to perform to standard in areas of the world much hotter, and with no time for laziness. We owe them a debt of gratitude that will pay huge dividends to this nation.

Thank you for all you do.

HOOAH!



EMP partnership works regionally to accomplish program and project goals

by Peter Verstegen
Public Affairs
St. Paul District

This is the first of three articles illustrating regional projects, programs and communities of practice.

The Upper Mississippi River, flowing from the headwaters in Minnesota to the open river at Cairo, Ill., has challenged the Corps of Engineers to work regionally, both within its own organization and with the other river stakeholders. The Corps' Environmental Management Program, designed to protect and restore the river ecosystem, offers lessons in how a wide-ranging community of practice works across agency, geographic and political boundaries for the goal of environmental stewardship.

For many years, Mississippi River navigation pools created by the locks and dams in the 1930s to provide a nine-foot navigation channel, supported a wealth of fish, wildlife and aquatic habitat.

But by the 1980s, the system was showing signs of decline. The ecological health of the Upper Mississippi River system was being stressed by erosion, sedimentation, diminished aquatic plant beds and declining habitat diversity.

Congress, acting in response to the public and stakeholders, passed legislation authorizing the EMP in 1986. The legislation recognized the Upper Mississippi River as both a nationally significant ecosystem and a nationally significant commercial navigation system.



The above photo shows a bulldozer shaping Spring Lake Island from the discharge of the Dredge Iowa on the Mississippi River in November.

The EMP initiated a system-wide regional management program for the river. Rock Island District, centrally located on the upper river, became the central dispatcher for overall program management. They also coordinate system-wide meetings, hold regular conference calls and develop beneficial relationships with states and other federal stakeholders.

“We come to the table and talk hard issues for betterment of the river,” said Roger Perk, EMP program manager, Rock Island District.

“Nowhere else in the country does a waterway serve as both a system of major national wildlife refuges and a commercial navigation system,” said Perk.

The program is designed to protect and balance the resources of the Upper Mississippi River basin and guide future river management.

“The priorities of the program focus on both the rehabilitation and enhancement of existing habitats as well as long-term monitoring of the river,” he said. “EMP was the first watershed ecosystem program within the Corps and has broken ground for all the others that have come since.”

Regional work processes

Perk's interaction with district EMP managers reflects regional processes. With input from each of the Upper Mississippi River Corps' districts, he develops consolidated budget and funding requests;

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reports program financial execution to Mississippi Valley Division, Vicksburg, Miss.; monitors and manages the long-term monitoring resource program; facilitates meetings of the EMP coordinating committee; and consolidates work plans, funding priorities and contract award recommendations to division.

The EMP team has learned to work regionally. “There is not much territorial turf protection,” said Mike Thompson, St. Louis District EMP project manager. “We work together to make the program a success. The team focuses on the whole system. Collectively, we determine the higher priorities and move money from one district to another for a project.”

Engineer districts in St. Paul, Minn.; Rock Island, Ill.; and St. Louis, Mo., with oversight by the division, coordinate with a variety of federal and state agencies, associations, the public and non-profit natural resource agencies, such as the Nature Conservancy and Audubon Society.

Restore and protect the river

EMP has two major components: long-term resource monitoring and habitat rehabilitation and enhancement projects. Both work to restore and protect the river. Habitat projects restore islands, control flow, manage water levels, stabilize shorelines and deepen backwaters.

The U.S. Geological Survey, a regional partner in La Crosse, Wis., oversees the collection of data on water quality, vegetation, fish, sediment, aquatic insects and land use for long-term resource monitoring.



Photo by Jon Hendrickson

An EMP project team inspects flood damage at the Island 42 habitat project in 2001. From left to right are Bob Drieslein, Winona district manager for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (now retired); Don Powell, EMP project manager for the St. Paul District; and Jeff Janvrin, EMP coordinator for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The island is on the Minnesota side of the river.

The USGS Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center analyzes the data to assess the health of the river and forecast future trends as part of its long-term resource monitoring. The USGS receives about one-third of the EMP budget.

“As a research agency, the role of USGS is to act as an unbiased science advisor for the partnership,” said Barry Johnson, chief of the aquatic sciences branch, USGS Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center, La Crosse, Wis. “We work with the partners to design effective monitoring plans and to conduct analyses that will increase our collective knowledge about how management actions affect the ecology of the river. The LTRMP is the largest and most comprehensive river monitoring program in the country and probably the world.

It takes considerable regional and system-wide cooperation among state and federal partners to pull it off.

“A large part of the funding that comes to USGS is passed on to state-operated field stations in the five Upper Mississippi River border states to conduct the annual field sampling and participate in data analyses. Just managing the data collected is a big job. The fisheries database alone has more than 3 million lines of data.”

Challenges

Said Johnson, “One of the challenges for the partnership is to integrate habitat rehabilitation projects with long-term monitoring. We know that habitat projects can provide a variety of local benefits almost immediately, but their effects at larger scales, like pool-wide or regionally, take longer to develop and are much more difficult to detect. Only a program like the LTRMP that operates at large spatial scales and over a long time can provide the data needed.”

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Successful program execution is an outcome of regional coordination.

“The success of the program so far is a testament to the dedication and cooperation of all the various agencies involved,” said Johnson.

Wildlife refuges

Regional coordination and project management extends to wildlife refuges operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge was established by Act of Congress in 1924 to provide a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds, fish, other wildlife and plants.

The refuge encompasses approximately 240,000 acres in four states in a more-or-less continuous stretch of 261 miles of Mississippi River floodplain from near Wabasha, Minn., to near Rock Island, Ill. Other refuges in the Upper Mississippi complex include Trempealeau, Wis., and the Driftless Area, a collection of small, scattered tracts near McGregor, Iowa.

Fingers entwined

Dick Steinbach, manager of the Mark Twain wildlife refuge complex headquartered in Quincy, Ill., said, “Our fingers are pretty well entwined with the Corps out on the river in meeting overall federal responsibilities for this multi-use resource.” The Mark Twain complex includes four wildlife refuges: Middle Mississippi River, Marion, Ill; Port Louisa, Wapello, Iowa; Great River, Annada, Mo.; and Two Rivers, Brussels, Ill.

Said Don Hultman, refuge manager, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Winona, Minn., “EMP has proven to



Photo by Tony Batya

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

From left are Randy Urich, forester; Kurt Brownell, natural resource specialist (both St. Paul District); Sharonne Baylor, Environmental Management Program coordinator with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and Bob Drieslein, Fish and Wildlife Service Winona district manager (now retired), at Spring Lake Island in Pool 5 near Buffalo City, Wis., in November. The group was inspecting progress and discussing construction of the island.

be a critical tool in restoring fish and wildlife habitat on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge and our other river refuges. Before EMP, we could do little but stand by and watch the habitat decline. As much as anything, EMP has restored both hope and optimism.

“EMP has also been a catalyst for improving working relationships with the Corps and the states and finding the common ground among agencies with often different missions and purposes on the Mississippi,” Hultman said. “There is nothing quite as powerful as bringing people together to work side-by-side on projects, which make a difference for fish and wildlife, and the public who enjoys them.

Warts and imperfections

“Obviously, any program of this size and duration has its little warts and imperfections, such as maintenance costs we bear as a sponsor for most projects, the monitoring of projects, differences of opinion on design and operation with the states,” Hultman continued. “On the Upper Miss Refuge alone, 26 projects have been completed affecting more than 40,000 acres of habitat. Eleven projects are in various stages of planning, design and construction. The creation of the refuge and the authorization of the nine-foot navigation channel forever linked the service and the Corps. EMP has helped turn that linkage from one of conflict to one of mutual benefit.”

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Photo by Bill Thrune,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Aerial view of the island during construction.

An EMP coordinating committee meets four times a year to keep check on projects and the program. Although the Corps is the primary manager, the coordinating committee provides oversight. Participants include the Corps; Fish and Wildlife Service; USGS; the Environmental Protection Agency; the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association; and representatives from the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri and Illinois.

“Typically, the committee meets four times a year, once each in St. Paul, Rock Island, St. Louis, Mo., and rotates the fourth, usually in La Crosse, Wis., or Peoria, Ill.,” said Don Powell, EMP project manager in St. Paul.

Regional management extends beyond the coordinating committee to technical teams. Project delivery teams of technical specialists, such as biologists and engineers, from the three upper river Corps’ districts, gather at workshops every other year to exchange lessons learned and discuss other project and program information. “It started in 1998,” said Thompson.

Said Perk, “Mississippi Valley Division provides the overall program coordination with the districts, states and other federal agencies and interest groups, as well as co-chairing the coordinating committee. The division oversees overall program execution and review, approval of all budget documents, funds allocation, approvals of schedules, costs and approval of definite project reports. MVD [the division] coordinates all program issues, guidance, Congressional items and funding with Corps’ headquarters.”

“Rock Island District has been given the overall management responsibility for the program,” said Powell. “St. Louis, Rock Island and St. Paul districts develop the habitat project programs within their respective boundaries and coordinate with each other to execute the overall program. The districts share project design information through workshops, periodic meetings and collaboration on a design handbook.

“Future project selection will use a process that looks at projects from a reach and system-wide perspective, rather than just individually with the districts,” continued Powell. “This could also have impacts on the allocation of funding for each district.”

Program constraints

Budget and geographic constraints have challenged the team. “A large number of projects, which are in different phases of development, would be capable of expending the full EMP authorization each year,” said Perk. “However, due to numerous budget priorities, the funding allocations have not come near to the full authorization amount for the program.”

“The overall EMP has a continual authorization of \$33.52 million per year,” said Perk. “In fiscal year 2005 the allocation was \$17.5 million, with nearly full funding in the recently released president’s fiscal year 2006 budget of \$33.5 million.”

“Individual districts do things differently, depending on the location of the district on the river,” said Thompson. “There is not a lot of standardization, and we are trying to standardize reports.”

Said Powell, “It is also important to maintain program flexibility and the individuality of each district in order to be responsive to all the stakeholders.”



Wheeler cook retires after 60 years

By Eric Lincoln
Public Affairs
New Orleans District

Earnest Paynes, chief cook on the Dredge Wheeler, retired from the Corps at the end April with a record-setting 60 years of service.

Paynes had been in the same position on the Wheeler for the past 23 years. He previously worked on the Dredge Langfitt for 30 years, the Omega for four years and the Pullen – the first dredge at the district – for three years.

He started as a mess attendant on the Pullen in October 1945 at 17 years old, and later became chief cook on the Langfitt.

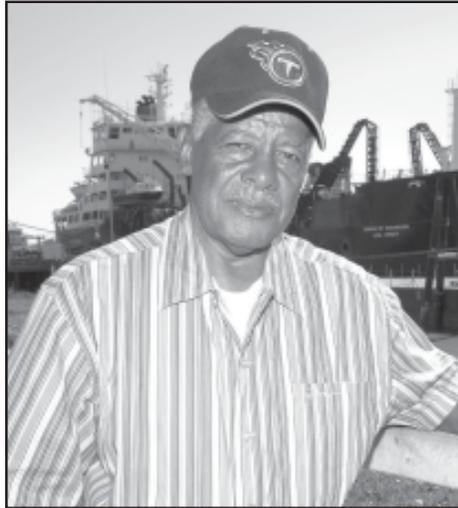
Under the old Civil Service Retirement System, Paynes actually had enough sick leave to be credited with 62 years of service.

He received a de Fleury medal for lifetime achievement from Col. Rowan.

“My brother helped me get the job,” says Paynes. “He was a cook here, too. I came on right after I got out of school. It was all right after I got used to it, and I made up my mind to stay as long as I could.”

“I loved what I did. I got to see all the ships and visit different parts of the country ... I’ve been to Virginia, North Carolina and even Puerto Rico.”

Paynes seems to have taken all his years of Corps service in stride.



“There were some good days, some bad,” he says. “Some good weather, some bad. Lots of ships, you know?”

“I’ll miss it. I’ve been doing it my whole life.”

The Wheeler is “overhired” right now, Paynes says, and that is the main reason he’s retiring. “I want to give some other folks a chance to move up.”

“I’m going to take it easy,” Paynes says. “My wife and I, we’ll go see my sister in California.” Paynes has four brothers and three sisters, one of whom lives in Alaska. He and his wife, Lillie, have been married 48 years.

As much as Paynes enjoyed working on the Wheeler, though, he didn’t spend more time on the water than necessary.

“I don’t have a boat at home. The only boat I own is the Wheeler. I’ve been on there since it came out of Avondale Shipyard.”

He has a little advice for the person stepping into his shoes: “It’s all business in the kitchen. You know those men want to eat ... and they know where the food is.”

Wheeler Capt. Edward Morehouse said, “Ernie has certainly been known for his excellent cooking abilities, plus his ‘can-do’ attitude and unfailingly sincere dedication to the mission of whatever vessel he served on. He’s often catered special events, organized gatherings and prepared vessels for important visitors, and routinely covered special duty aboard the Alexander during river inspections.

“It was always a pleasure to strike up a conversation with him over just about anything ... he has been a confidant to ship captains too numerous to mention. And, interestingly, he’s been working for the government longer than any of his chain of command in the New Orleans District have been alive.”

Paynes likes to fish and plans to do more of it now that he has some free time.

“And I thought about opening a restaurant,” he added. “I’d make chicken, fish, greens ... real soul food, you know?”



A Better Mousetrap

by Mark Kane
Public Affairs
Rock Island District

Tensioning stress bars on a miter gate ... a time-consuming and arduous task that has probably been done by workers on the Mississippi and Illinois river structures maintenance crews more times than they care to remember, has recently become much easier.

“The guys on the crew came up with a new method for doing this and teamed up with the folks in Engineering Division to actually get it designed and built,” said Bill Gretten, Mississippi River Operations Manager. “The old method required using enormous wrenches and a lot of manpower to move turnbuckles on the stress bars. It was a slow and laborious process. The new method uses a hydraulic tensioner and the guys say the time required to do the job went from around 10 hours to around two hours.”

John Wayne, general supervisor, Maintenance Section, Mississippi River Project Office, said the idea to make it happen came after talking about how to do the job better.

“It was considered after assembling the spare gates for Lock 19, which use a similar system, by the foremen who all thought it could work on all miter gates,” said Wayne. “It was looked at for two years and rehashed many times to consider every good and bad point, and how we could make them work in every aspect without compromising any known integrity of the structures.”



Members of the Mississippi River Structures Maintenance Crew (Johnny Bennett, left, and Rod Stover, right) complete tensioning of the stress bars on the miter gates at Lock and Dam 22. Photo by Jim Wilson, Operations Division.

Even after the idea came into focus, there were some hurdles before it came to fruition.

“Once the Mississippi River Project Office contacted the Structural Section (Engineering Division) several meetings were accomplished with each session growing more productive on collective ideas,” said Wayne. “It ended up taking several months of joint effort and another month of field application to secure a great product.”

The collaboration between the two departments has not been downplayed; in fact, it is being heralded.

“This is a real success story and a great example of teamwork across divisions,” said Gretten. “I think ED-DS, particularly Fred Joers and Carl Johnson, were able to take the concept and turn it into the actual design.

Fred did the actual design on this and worked on it from both his position as chief of structures in ED and also as chief of the Mississippi River Maintenance Section, when he served a detail here about a year ago.”

“OD-M and ED-DS have a vast knowledge base, which is unrivaled anywhere inside or outside of this organization, period,” said Wayne. “I am extremely proud to be a part of this collective team and we are capable of even more, if given the resources.”

The elation that has resulted from the end product and teamwork used to make it happen is there for good reason ... tensioning stress bars on miter gates wasn't easy, and now a better way has come.

[\(see Mousetrap, next page\)](#)



-Mousetrap-



A close-up view of the new equipment used at Lock and Dam 22 to tension the stress bars of the miter gates. Photo by Jim Wilson, Operations Division.

“In the past, it took 10 hours of time and about 15 people to stress two miter-gates prior to installation,” said Wayne. “This had to be accomplished while the gates were sitting on a barge out of the water. Once they were installed, if a slack condition emerged in any of the gates, we could do nothing about it unless we pulled the gates again. This would cost approximately \$80,000 in time and equipment. With the new system, a force of three personnel can re-tension a slack gate within hours on site without removing it.”

To say that Wayne has been there and done that is an understatement. He has stressed and underscored how much hard work goes into maintaining structures that were not manufactured to last as long they have been pushed to last. Wayne’s position with the district is where the rubber meets the road and equipment failure means that barge traffic doesn’t move. He’s acquainted with the frustration of recognizing a better way to do something, only to see time go by without a solution coming to completion.

“As someone who spent decades doing this type of work, I am elated to see such designs go into practice,” said Wayne. “Anything to reduce strenuous work and still get a better mousetrap out is always exciting and rewarding. This project is something that will pay benefits down the road long after the members of the team who made it happen are gone. There have not been that many monumental changes accomplished during my 30-plus years, and this will certainly make the list. This job was tackled with enthusiasm by all involved and should give everyone a long-lasting smile for their participation on a quality mission and user-friendly product.”

The new method of tensioning stress bars has been adopted by the Mississippi River Project Office and it seems like there will be no looking back as the transition to the new system is underway.

“All gates that are removed for major repair or rehabilitation will have these installed permanently,” said Wayne.

The difficult transition is over. The initial set was a learn-as-you-go process for both OD-M and ED-DS. Each subsequent set will become easier as the Structures Maintenance Unit becomes more familiar with the process. ED-DS will be involved with technical aspects until all heights of gates are addressed, as each height of gate requires small changes in angles and dimensions.”

Good news not only for the crews involved with doing the work, but also for Uncle Sam’s wallet.

“There are massive cost savings to the district in that gates that were once trying to tear themselves in two from prolonged operation in a slack condition may now be operated safely for extended periods without damage,” said Wayne. “Being able to re-tension a slack gate in place, without removing it, will reduce operations and maintenance costs, continuously and forever, on each gate fitted with the new design. Safety of operation will also be enhanced because collective damage we now see on gates will be drastically reduced or eliminated almost in its entirety.”

The possibilities are great to say the least said Gretten, who sees no reason why this couldn’t be used outside the district, throughout the Corps, even in private industry ... Wayne shares the sentiment.

“I could not see why others would not openly support this system in at least some ways, if not in all ways,” said Wayne. “Any structure with a similar design could be fitted with this system and monitored for tension applications.”



Sponsors share insight at Partnering Conference

by John Hall
Public Affairs
New Orleans District

A highlight of the district's 2005 Partnering Conference, held March 30-31, was a luncheon talk by U.S. Rep. Bobby Jindal, R-Kenner, who stressed the importance of hurricane protection and Louisiana coastal restoration to the state and nation.

Jindal praised the event's variety of participants as evidence of precisely the close cooperation that Louisiana needs. The 275 attendees, convened at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, represented cities, levee districts, Louisiana government agencies, port authorities, parish governments, federal agencies and non-governmental organizations.

Making the rounds of the room at the Hyatt Regency, Jindal said he was impressed with the range of needs that were represented.

"It shows the kind of partnership we are bringing together to address the most important problems facing our state," he said.

"If we don't do something to protect our very state, our very land, it doesn't make any difference what else we do" concerning areas of great importance such as infrastructure, schools and the economy.

Fiscal common sense demands, Jindal said, investment in levees and flood prevention structures today to avoid paying a

larger bill in lives lost and property destroyed after the fact.

"If you thought those Florida hurricanes were devastating, you just wait. It's not a matter of whether but when."

Saving Louisiana's coast is "critical," Jindal said. "It's the state's top priority."

"Our challenge is to educate the nation" to understand that \$2 gasoline is small potatoes compared with the consequences of losing Louisiana's huge oil and gas contribution to U.S. needs, and its fishing bounty and its port and transportation value.

Southeast Louisiana Urban Flood Control project

He added, "SELA is a great success story, a great state, local and federal partnership."

The rain-flood protection project throws off benefits well beyond the areas getting direct benefits, and people he has talked to understand this is true even if the improvements are not in their backyard, he said.

The previous day, during the conference, the Pontchartrain Levee District and the Corps had signed an agreement to share the costs of a feasibility study for a similar project in St. Charles Parish. SELA is limited to Orleans, Jefferson and St. Tammany parishes.

Coastal consistency

Coastal consistency was the subject of breakout sessions that focused on the fact that restoring and protecting coastal Louisiana will take more than resources, and will also require mutual understanding and hard decisions.

"The sessions addressed how to blend all of the competing needs of navigation, hurricane protection, flood control and restoration," said Robert Bosenberg of the district's Coastal Branch.

"How do we value each need versus the other? And how do we thread them together to create a tapestry?"

The reactions that I got were that "it's about time" we frankly considered the problem of interconnectedness, and that we can do a lot if information, coordination and communication are improved," Bosenberg said.

What about 2006?

A fourth Partnering Conference will be held in 2006, Col. Rowan said afterward.

"Partnering does not just take place at conferences," he added. "The payoff in partnering comes from everyday contacts."

The conference is "just to take stock and make improvements" in a forum not geared to individual project decisions.



P2 conference put users face-to-face

by Eric Lincoln
Public Affairs
New Orleans District

The district accommodated a first-of-its-kind P2 conference this month that brought in over 230 Corps employees from around the world.

For three days, twenty-eight presenters from headquarters, various MSCs and districts, and Primavera, the company that makes scheduling software, spoke to attendees about P2's structure, requirements and future with the Corps.

The conference was developed because conference calls, the PMBP portal and Groove, while useful, were not communicating to users as thoroughly as needed. The P2 Team needed a more direct way to explain their progress and future actions to the employees using P2, called "Power Users." The conference would also allow users to share their practices and issues with the P2 Team and each other.

It was organized within about three months by the Operational Advisory Committee, which was established in 2005 to communicate the needs of the field to the P2 Team and headquarters.

For some participants, it was their first time in New Orleans. But district employees "made them feel right at home," said Rodney Greenup, Program Management and district P2 coordinator.

"Several times, attendees stated how impressed they were by our facilities and the warmth shown by employees," Greenup said.

"Also, they appreciated the use of the computer room, Room 251, in the morning and at breaks for checking e-mail or accessing the PMBP portal."

Participants seemed generally satisfied by the information received and were especially glad to be able to meet the people they had been working with via P2 for so long.

"Now I know I'm not alone!" said Andrew Borden, Charleston District. "This is really all information I'll use when I get back to my district. It's giving us the nuts and bolts view of the system and some low-level background about how it works. Now I understand how P2 thinks."

Veronica Rife, Louisville District, and Kelly Cambell, Huntington District, said they both took away a good education in P2.

"They did a good job of teaching us just what we needed to know," said Rife. "We understand the Business Process better and how headquarters and MSC's use the system. That's useful, since they're the ones who will be looking at us to make sure we understand the concepts."

"The ability to share information between ourselves was fantastic," said Cambell. "We learned so much just by talking to each other, and were able to share our understanding of the new developments discussed at the conference."

Linda Grove, Portland Division, commented on how well the conference was organized.

"The short workshops were well done, and the overall timing of the conference was ideal. I have just enough information to be saturated, but not overwhelmed. You can see the organizers and speakers really put a lot of thought into it."

"Plus, I finally get to see the people I've talked with for so long. It's been a great networking opportunity."

"I think it's been very productive overall," said Michael Walsh, Institute for Water Resources, and one of the speakers at the conference. "Users have been able to share tips and meet each other. The great thing is that this will all be on a portal afterwards, and we can all refer to the lessons learned."

Greenup noted that there were a few moments when the conference team members had to get creative to keep the conference rolling smoothly.

"Thanks to our highly qualified personnel, we were able to overcome several incidents that could have derailed the success of this conference," he said. "On the first day, one of the buses died and didn't make it back for the first afternoon pick-up. The team ... managed to get everyone back to the hotels at the scheduled time.

(see P2, next page)



-P2-

On day two ... the team overcame bad weather by orchestrating a major lunch relocation without negatively impacting the conference schedule.”

Lunch was catered by the cafeteria contractor “A Guy Named Guy,” and held outside under a large canopy in the parking lot on two of the days.

“We received nothing but compliments regarding the caterer’s

professionalism, promptness and food quality,” Greenup said.

District employees who helped organize the conference included: Annette Vanderson, Philip Meric, Rebecca Ben, Anne Marino, Amanda Jones, Scott Riecke, Jim Syrdal, Elaine James, Demetria Butler, Alvin Hunter, Dana Perkins, Geri Robinson, Lois Pierre, Kim Theophile, Frank DeBoer, Carol Joseph, Lisa Crescioni, Janet Kleinschmidt, Mike Zack, Don

Miller, Mary Pizzuto, Bruce Terrell, Marcia Demma, Ernest Pitts, Shelton Kennedy, Mike Maples and Gloria Reeves. Also Magic Movers (Alton, Demetrius, Alcee and Bubba), Ralph (electrician) and Luster (Sandra Purdom, Mike Bowen and Gary Hanneman).

The conference agenda, notes, presentations and recommendations are posted on the web: www.mvn.usace.army.mil/PD/P2Conference2005/.

Upper St. Anthony Falls lock dewatered Upper lock drains dry for major maintenance

by Shannon Bauer
Public Affairs
St. Paul District

The St. Paul District emptied nearly eight million gallons of water out of Upper Saint Anthony Falls lock and dam in December 2004.

This downtown Minneapolis lock and dam, the deepest lock and dam on the entire Mississippi River, was emptied to allow the district to perform major maintenance on it, while the navigation season was on hold for the winter.

On average, around 1,500 tows, 2,500 recreational vessels and 1.5 million tons of cargo pass through this lock each year.

Major maintenance happens every 15 to 20 years on each Mississippi River lock and dam. Upper Saint Anthony Falls has not been dewatered since 1979.



Scheduled maintenance of the lock during the dewatering includes vertical concrete joint and surface repair on the walls, horizontal concrete repair on the floor and corner protection armor replacement near the downstream miter gates of the lock chamber by a contractor, Engineering and Construction Innovations, Inc., from St. Cloud, Minn.

At the same time, the Corps’ maintenance and repair section from Fountain City, Wis., will repair or replace parts of the miter gates, tainter valve guides, bubbler system and staff gages, as well as sandblast and paint the miter gates.

The St. Paul District operates and maintains 13 locks and dams beginning at Upper St. Anthony and ending at Lock and Dam 10, Guttenberg, Iowa.



3rd Annual Engineering and Construction Camp held

by David Jenkins
Mississippi Valley Division

The third annual Southeast Engineering and Construction Camp was held in Vicksburg, Miss., June 12 -18. The one-week program was sponsored by the Society of American Military Engineers and supervised by professional engineers and volunteers from engineering organizations in the lower Mississippi Valley.

The camp originated in 2003 and included 27 students predominantly from central Mississippi, Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Last year 39 students attended from Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee and Alabama. This year the number of high school participants increased to 40 students (22 boys, 18 girls) from six surrounding states, warranting a name change to the "Southeast Engineering and Construction Camp."



The campers were housed at the 412th U. S. Army Reserve Center in Vicksburg.

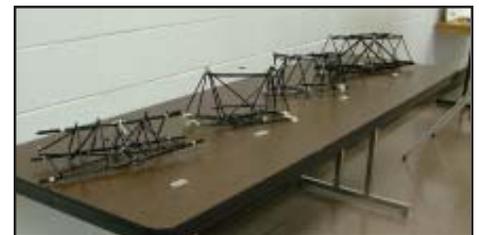
The students were exposed to cutting-edge technology that is intended to provide them with career-choice information in the fields of engineering and construction.



Topics covered were environmental, electrical, mechanical, geotechnical and river engineering, GIS and information technology. From a ride on the Mississippi River to using a super computer, the students had hands-on experience in various science and technology activities.

Leo Phillips, camp director, says he also benefited from the camp, "The Camp Staff got as much inspiration from the week as the students. Just being able to make a small contribution to the development of tomorrow's engineering professionals makes us feel great. The energy of the students during the week and their great capacity to learn gives us excitement and a feeling of confidence that engineering innovation will abound in the future."

The cost of the camp is only \$50 for the students, which includes meals and housing. Leo Phillips adds, "Unlike the other two SAME Camps, the Southeast Engineering and Construction Camp is funded primarily through donations from individuals, SAME Sustaining members and other professional societies. The raising of funds to support such a clearly beneficial activity has never been a problem. The engineering community always steps up to assure that financial support is provided."





Ecosystem Center of Expertise – Updates and Activities

by Stoney Burke
Vicksburg District

The Ecosystem Center of Expertise was originally developed to retain Corps expertise in the fields of science and technology. However, another goal is to provide a technical resource for customers around the nation and internationally. The center continues to reach each objective as it evolves into an efficient and effective information tool.

One of the many ECO-CX tasks is conducting independent technical reviews. In 2004, ECO-CX completed two ITR projects. The first was the San Antonio Channel Improvement Project which included two study areas, the Park Reach and the already constructed Mission Reach. The Mission Reach was being evaluated for ecosystem restoration. Both are located entirely within the city limits of San Antonio in Bexar County, Texas. The second project was the Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park Project which also included ecosystem restoration.

The center is utilizing current technologies, such as Geographic Information Systems related data and software, to develop detailed planning tools for ecosystem restoration related projects. These planning tools will help integrate sensitive natural and cultural resource issues into the project planning process. The action district for the center, located in the Vicksburg District Environmental & Economic Analysis Branch is assisting with the daily tasks of developing these tools.

In addition, the action team can provide aid in individual GIS project needs, technical assistance in database development and assistance in developing a public ArcGIS Internet Mapping service. Located on the center's webpage, the Internet Mapping service will be used for general project data searches and public interest information. The planning model is awaiting certification and was presented at the Environmental Leaders Conference in Rock Island, Ill., on June 14.

In addition to planning assistance, the center has become active in a variety of sponsored events locally as well as nationally. ECO-CX is partnering with the Audubon Society of Mississippi to provide waterway transportation for an economic and community development workshop to be held in Vicksburg, Miss., October 18-20. The workshop, "Promoting Nature Tourism Along the Mississippi River", will address recreational activities such as hunting, birding, hiking, nature photography, canoeing, power boating and other outdoor activities. A few of the goals for the workshop are: introduce and explain nature tourism accomplishments, demonstrate economic impact and environmental benefits, provide examples of nature tourism successes, explain how nature tourism complements other tourism, and foster improvement in the well-being of the citizens of the region.

Another event scheduled for 2005 is the Third International Symposium on GIS/Spatial Analyses in Fishery and Aquatic Sciences to be held at Shanghai Fisheries University, Shanghai, China, August 22-26. The primary objectives of the symposium are: to highlight developments and applications of GIS/Spatial analyses in fisheries and aquatic sciences; to exchange ideas and information; and to suggest further improvements, techniques and applications of GIS/Spatial analyses in fisheries and aquatic sciences. The center will present a paper on ecosystem restoration and environmental issues. The presentation will also incorporate information on the center, including contact information, capabilities, mission, services and benefits for past, present and future customers.

During the past two months, there have been several inquiries related to model certification and the center's role. Planning models are defined as any models and analytical tools that planners use to define water resources management problems and opportunities, to formulate potential alternatives to address the problems and take advantage of opportunities, to evaluate potential effects of alternatives and to support decision-making. It is important to note that the use of certified models for all planning activities is mandatory and includes planning models currently in use, models under development and new models.

(see ECO, next page)



-ECO-

The draft Engineering Circular on model certification (EC 1105-2-407) was issued February 3, 2005 and the final issued in May 2005.

The purpose of this regulation is to certify that the model itself, including assumptions, does what it is supposed to do and the output is reasonable and accurate. The certification team will be composed of Corps experts as well as non-Corps professionals. Model certification can be thought of as a seal of approval that the model is technically and theoretically sound and functional.

Here are a few points that should be considered concerning models and certification:

◆ Existing models can be used if they have been certified by the center.

◆ Models under development are considered new models and should be coordinated with the center to initiate the certification process.

◆ The center should be contacted to determine the costs of model certification.

◆ Engineer Research & Development Center review would constitute a part of the peer review, but not a complete review that would constitute certification of a model.

◆ Documentation required for model certification includes a copy of the model, detailed background information, assumptions, science involved, intended use and applicability of the model.

◆ The center’s involvement early in model development can save time and money.

Two models are under development and currently involved in the certification process. Baltimore District has begun the certification process for the “Oyster growth and Perkinsus marinus dynamics model.” This model provides a useful tool to those working on oyster restoration projects in the Chesapeake Bay.

In addition, Mobile District has started model development for two urban stream restoration projects located in DeKalb County and Fulton County, Ga. The goal of this model is to incorporate the chemical, physical and biological stream components as a predictor of stream restoration.

For more information on the center, please call Mr. Rayford Wilbanks (MVD Planning CoP POC at 601-634-5847 or Dr. David Vigh MVD Environmental CoP POC at 601-634-5854, and check out our web site <http://el.erdc.usace.army.mil/ecocx>.

MVD Adopts “Regional Interdependence” Business Model

Since 1998 MVD and the other Corps divisions have been moving toward operating as Regional Business Centers or RBCs. Operating as an RBC means that all of the knowledge, skills and other resources of the entire region can be applied and leveraged to accomplish all of our missions within the region’s six districts.

In business terms, it is simply a matter of realizing economies of scale and adopting best practices. If we can do this successfully, we can

improve both our effectiveness and efficiency and provide better, faster and cheaper projects and services for the people of the Mississippi Valley.

In MVD, the notion of using people assigned to one district to do work in another isn’t new. Our history is filled with numerous successful examples. We have carried out complex planning studies using regional teams, we’ve used virtual teams for independent technical review, and it has not been uncommon for dredges based in one district to

work in another. Unfortunately, we just haven’t done enough of it. So, there have been times when we were hiring people in one district and having a reduction in force in another. There have been times when engineers in one district struggled to work out a complex technical problem on their own even though a world class expert was available from the district next door. Now, we have the opportunity to build on our past successes and share work on a larger scale, by operating regionally through the RBC.

(see RBC, next page)



-RBC-

In November of last year, leaders from around the division met in New Orleans for the MVD Senior Leader Conference. Their primary objective was to identify the things we need to do “Actualize the RBC”- to make the benefits of operating regionally a reality. They heard how other organizations, from government and the private sector, are operating multiple offices as a single business.

They also reviewed a case study titled “the Blue River District Case.” The case study was based on actual events at a district in another Corps division. The Blue River district had based its staffing levels on its historical funding and continued funding at the same levels. When the funding didn’t materialize, they found themselves overstaffed, with an income much smaller than expected. Many of the participants felt that the problems of the Blue River District could have been mitigated, or avoided altogether if the districts in the region been better at cooperating with each other - at sharing work and at sharing risks. Many also felt that the same thing that happened to the Blue River District could happen to theirs.

The outcome of the meeting was a series of tasks that included identifying and implementing the “regional business model.” A business model is a description of how an organization is structured, how it

operates, how decisions are made, how it is managed and how missions are accomplished.

A team led by Dan Hitchings, MVD’s Regional Business Director, and comprised of the Deputies for Project Management from each of the region’s six districts developed and evaluated eight different business models.

Four were selected for detailed analysis. In March, the team made its recommendations to the Regional Command Council. The Command Council is chaired by MVD’s Commander, BG Robert Crear. Its members include MVD’s six District Commanders, its two Senior Executive Service Directors and the Deputy Division Commander. The model they approved is called “Regional Interdependence.”

Regional interdependence means that districts will no longer operate as wholly independent entities. However, districts will continue to be the primary operating unit, will continue to have the primary responsibility for executing projects and will retain the capabilities they require to accomplish their district and regional mission.

With this model, there will be no significant change in organization structure. However, should the number of people doing a particular type of work fall below certain levels, use of people in other districts or consolidation

into regional centers will be considered.

There will be little change in where project execution decisions are made or by whom. District Commanders in their role as members of the Regional Command Council will become more involved in the decision making required for actions that involve the region or multiple districts.

The new model applies to all technical functions – planning, engineering, construction, operations and real estate. It does not apply to the five major support functions – information management, contracting, logistics, resource management and public affairs. These functions were regionalized under USACE 2012 and follow different, but similar models.

One major advantage to the regional interdependence model is that it has the least impact on employees and on day-to-day operations. The disadvantage is that some people will see it as no change at all and act like we are doing business as usual. It is essential that we seek every opportunity to improve our delivery of products and services to the nation.

The actions needed to make the new model work for us are already underway. Most will be completed within the next few months. Whether or not MVD continues to use the “Regional Interdependence” business model will depend entirely on whether or not we achieve the improvements we are seeking.



MVD Honors its own during awards ceremony

The Mississippi Valley Division/Mississippi River Commission, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, held its annual awards ceremony Monday, June 13. The following awards were presented:

Gallery of Distinguished Civilian Employees



Mr. Dan W. Renfro was posthumously inducted into the Mississippi River Commission Gallery of Distinguished Civilian Employees.

A special ceremony was held following the Engineer Day Awards ceremony, where a plaque with an engraved portrait of Mr. Renfro was placed on a gallery board displaying plaques of previously selected members.

The Gallery of Distinguished Civilian Employees was established in 1970 as a means of recognizing outstanding retired civilian employees of the Mississippi Valley Division/Mississippi River Commission.

Mr. Renfro retired in March 2000, as Chief of Construction-Operations Division, with over 35 years of federal service. He was the 49th inductee to the gallery since its inception.

Mr. Renfro provided 26 years of distinguished service and support to the Mississippi Valley Division/Mississippi River Commission, which included nine years with the Memphis District, 13 years with the Vicksburg District and four years at the MVD/MRC headquarters.

After his retirement, and until his death in August of 2003, Mr. Renfro was a dedicated partner and continued supporter of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers serving as the Executive Vice president of the Mississippi Valley Branch of the Associated General Contractors of America.

Mr. Renfro was a recognized leader and team builder. His many achievements and reputation are the result of his lifelong commitment to serving the nation and the Army through the many Corps offices he worked. He is deeply missed by all who had the distinct privilege of working with him during his many years of dedicated service to MVD and our great nation.

Ernest P. Blankenship Awards

The Blankenship awards are among the highest honorary awards presented to MVD employees by the local commander. The awards cover three categories: engineer/scientist, professional and technical/administrative. Established in 1987, they memorialize the commitment, dedication and knowledge of the long-time Mississippi Valley Division Executive Assistant, who died in 1973.

Engineer/Scientist Award



Mr. Ben G. Ruff, Jr., was the recipient of the Ernest P. Blankenship Engineer/Scientist Award. He is a civil engineer in the Programs Directorate.

Mr. Ruff was recognized for his exceptional service to the Corps of Engineers as project manager for the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System Navigation Feasibility Study.

Mr. Ruff exhibited extraordinary vision, innovation, selfless service and determination in the successful restructuring and completion of this complex feasibility study. The study recommends a dual-purpose navigation efficiency and ecosystem restoration plan that is one of the first of its kind, and will help ensure the long-term economic viability and environmental vitality of this nationally significant river system.

Mr. Ruff's outstanding regional level perspective provided an essential ingredient to the successful completion of the study's feasibility report and environmental impact statement.

(see Awards, next page)



-Awards-

Professional Award

Ms. Pat Daniel received the Ernest P. Blankenship Professional Award. Ms. Daniel, a management analyst in the Business Resource Division, was recognized for the significant contributions she made to enhance the division's operating performance during the past year.

Ms. Daniel accepted the challenge to lead the division's effort for the Command Management Review, the Management Control Program and the Army Suggestion Program. She also facilitated and assisted on many special programs — in particular regional rates implementation for the division.

Technical/Administrative Award



Ms. Cassandra Lee was the recipient of the Ernest P. Blankenship Technical/Administrative Award. Ms. Lee is an office automation assistant in Business Management Division.

During the past year Ms. Lee was moved from an administrative support position to a lead administrative assistant position.

This challenge was very complicated since she was required to

provide administrative support to two separate divisions within the directorate, both with large staffs.

Ms. Lee ensured employee requirements were met and in compliance with all applicable regulations. She initiated many actions to educate the staff on various regulations and developed new ways of doing business to streamline the administrative needs and purposes to benefit all.

Woman of the Year Award



Ms. Ann Bargains was the recipient of the Mississippi Valley Division Woman of the Year Award. She is the division's Equal Employment Opportunity Manager.

Ms. Bargains was recognized for her service over the past year to employees and students within the Mississippi Valley Division, Vicksburg District and the Engineer Research and Development Center regarding educational and professional development.

She often met with non-scientific employees to discuss career paths, helping them work through issues related to higher educational attainment and financial planning to achieve higher education.

Ms. Bargains advised employees regarding developmental

assignments and provided guidance that assisted female employees in reaching the high point of their careers. In addition she coached students, encouraging them to stay in school or to enter academic programs that would better prepare them for employment opportunities and advancement in their chosen career fields.

In addition to volunteering for various events and activities at the division, Ms. Bargains also volunteered in the community, assisting at the Vicksburg Child Abuse Prevention Agency and the Abused Women's Shelter. She also worked with the Vicksburg-Warren County Jackson State University National Alumni Association to raise money for scholarships provided to students in the Vicksburg community.

Commander's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Equal Employment Opportunity



Colonel Richard B. Jenkins, Deputy Commander for the Mississippi Valley Division, was the recipient of the Commander's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO).

(see Awards, next page)



-Awards-

Col. Jenkins was recognized for his support to the EEO Office before, during and after the transition of the division EEO Manager from division staff to Corps headquarters staff.

His insistence that the EEO Office sustain no collateral damage in the transition was manifested in the changes he made to new policy – policy which required that all support to the division EEO office be provided by Corps headquarters.

Col. Jenkins changed the new policy to ensure that the division’s EEO Manager received support from within the division. He worked diligently to ensure there were adequate resources, at all times, for meeting the needs of the EEO Office in responding to the division, its districts, its customers and the community.

Certificate of Achievement

Certificates of Achievement were presented to Ms. Becky Brown and Mrs. Cecilia Robertson.

Ms. Brown is the administrative support assistant to the Deputy Director of the National Center for Ecosystem Restoration.

During the past year, through initiative and personal diligence, Ms. Brown coordinated and managed the development of the center’s logo, web site, portable display and brochure.

In addition, she exhibited high levels of skill and initiative by developing a document suspense tracking system. Her exemplary work habits significantly contributed to the ecosystem center’s high performance and morale.

Mrs. Robertson is the administrative support assistant to the Chief of Business Technical Division.

During the past year, Mrs. Robertson continually demonstrated skill and initiative in developing better budget-tracking programs related to effective management of overhead costs and training/travel budgets for the division. She also volunteered to provide administrative support to the Regional Business Directorate and the Executive Office.

She demonstrated the highest level of personal diligence and mission responsibility, always willing to work late and work on challenging assignments.

Commander’s Award for Civilian Service

Commander’s Awards for Civilian Service were presented to Mrs. Babs Hearn and Mr. Stan McAlpin.

Mrs. Hearn was commended for the performance of her duties during the past year as the budget analyst in the Budget Office. She exhibited outstanding

professional abilities, quality leadership and noteworthy initiative in carrying out her responsibilities.

She demonstrated forward thinking and planning to achieve efficiencies in obtaining and capturing budget data that assisted with multiple tasks. In addition, Mrs. Hearn was a mentor to numerous co-workers and an exceptional team player.

Mr. McAlpin was recognized for his efforts that went above and beyond his normal duties as a project manager on the division’s Memphis-Vicksburg District Support Team.

From July 2004 to June 2005, Mr. McAlpin served as the project manager for both the Memphis and Vicksburg Districts. With minimal assistance, Mr. McAlpin professionally used his skills, talents and expertise to ensure the vital missions of the job were accomplished in a timely manner.

His dedication, professionalism and spirit of working toward the success of the Corps mission were continuously demonstrated.

**Open Channels
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mississippi Valley Division**



Division Engineer
Brig. Gen. Robert Crear

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