

# Open Channels

## **Hurricane Katrina Recovery**

## **Memphis Corps deactivates the Louisiana Recovery Field Office**

by Tom Clarkson

Among an array of mind-boggling accomplishments - such as the effective removal of twenty-eight million cubic yards of hurricane created debris – the Louisiana Recovery Field Office (LA-RFO) of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been retired from service, deactivated.

In the official commemoration, Sept. 25th, presided over by Col. Thomas Smith, Memphis District and LA-RFO commander, and Mike Smith, LA-RFO director, the termination of work was officially noted, its nearly 3,500 volunteers acknowledged and thanked, and – in military tradition – the organization’s colors “cased”, indicating the deactivation of the organization.

“Once, there had been not even a single square foot of an eventual nine miles of temporary roofing installed. And once, there had been not one drop of an eventual forty million liters of water distributed to storm victims,” noted Col. Smith. “Once, there was only chaos.”

Smith noted that an important role of the Louisiana Recovery Field Office, raised in the midst of the worst disaster scene in American history, was to create a foothold and provide an opening for the rest of the recovery effort. “Somebody had to start!” he said.



LA-RFO Photo by Michael Logue

**Mike Smith, right, Louisiana Recovery Field Office Director, passes the RFO colors back to Memphis District Commander Col. Tom Smith as the Corps deactivates its 25-month Louisiana recovery mission and returns residual mission elements to Memphis or the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The Louisiana RFO established a team at peak of 1,700 and a program of \$5 billion in response the FEMA’s ESF3 mission following Hurricanes Rita and Katrina and set numerous records for performance, safety and small business utilization.**

The Louisiana Recovery Field Office opened its doors in Baton Rouge, Louisiana days after landfall, preparing to open roads in 40 parishes, saving lives, sustaining lives and setting the stage for communities to manage their own recovery operations with power, temporary critical public facilities and schools, ice, water, Blue Roof repairs, and debris and demolition services.

From the outset, the Louisiana Recovery Field Office was temporal, created for only one purpose – to productively help the citizens of Louisiana recover from the devastation and destruction of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the ensuing flood depredation. Normal Corps hurricane responses last about four months.

*(see LA-RFO, next page)*



**-LA-RFO-**

The Katrina-Rita response lasted 25 months.

The Corps national response system poured about 3,500 of its worldwide workforce into South Louisiana to manage a \$5 billion recovery program. In a matter of days, the Louisiana Recovery Field Office set up the equivalent of a “provisional district office” in Baton Rouge and later advanced the entire operation forward to New Orleans.

By comparison, the Memphis District, which managed the LA-RFO, normally reports an annual work program of \$90 million.

Pursuant to the Federal Emergency Management Agency directive, Sept. 29 was the last day in the life of an entity that had a positive impact on thousands upon thousands. The organization, the team, the volunteers from around the world – for the most part - will leave Louisiana. Many are natives as well as victims and will continue their personal recovery.

“Thank you not only for your service,” said FEMA Public Assistance Deputy Eddie Williams, “but also for the lessons you have shared with these communities. They are now better prepared to handle future responses because of those things you have taught them following Katrina and Rita.”

With a backward glance, one may marvel at the enormity of work accomplished by this team, such as the installation of more than 81,000 temporary roofs – enough to cover nine square miles.

Or, the fact that during those first frantic days, they hauled in 2,178 truckloads of water at 18,000 liters each, as well as 1,533 truckloads of ice – the equivalent of 62,000 of those commercial ice machines seen at convenience stores.

With an eye to the children, they expeditiously constructed 216 school classrooms and 94 other critical public facilities such as fire and police stations.

And with sensitivity for the storm’s casualties and their families, team members built an 18,720-square-foot Victim Identification Center and mortuary which now remains ready for future national emergencies.

Concern for the survivors led to the assessment of 1,217 sites and the effective monitoring of 65,000 FEMA trailers housing homeless Louisianans.

Literally in the citizenry’s very back yard, they removed over 58,000 salt-water-killed trees and demolished over 7,000 storm-destroyed homes.

This work force of volunteers – comprised of full-time Corps employees, rehired annuitants, active duty and Reserve soldiers and contractors – peaked at a total of 1,700.

Here simply to work to help their fellow travelers of life, the LA-

RFO departs with minimal fanfare. But they do so with the knowledge that, while much remains to be done, they did their part – and more.

“We have completed all the work that FEMA has asked of us. That was our mission,” said LA-RFO director Mike Smith. “We have brought these communities to a level of independence that allows them to finish their long-term recovery using local resources and funding from FEMA under the Project Work Sheet Program.”

Col. Smith said the mission reinforced his faith in the nation to respond to similar challenges.

“I am optimistic about any challenge in this country at any time in the future. We have an enormous capacity of human spirit, and the Corps and FEMA will be there regardless of the scope or challenge.”

For more information about the recovery operations of the Corps’ Louisiana Recovery Field Office as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency response, visit [www.faceofthecorps.com](http://www.faceofthecorps.com).

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



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# Generally Speaking

by Brig. Gen. Robert Crear  
Commander  
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LTG Van Antwerp is focused on the Corps T.E.A.M. —

- ▶ Are you a teammate?
- ▶ Are you working within your role to accomplish great things with the team for the success of the team?
- ▶ Do you take ownership and responsibility for the team's mission?
- ▶ If you are a "coach", do you make every teammate feel special?
- ▶ Do you understand you get more from praising than from threatening?

## T.... Trust

- ▶ What does micromanagement do to trust?
- ▶ Are you transparent in your communications (letting people know the truth and their exposure to risk)?
- ▶ Are you frank, open, and have the best interests of others in mind?
- ▶ What does Trust look like between District, Division, and HQ?

## E.... Excellence

- ▶ Do you base judgments and solutions on sound science and business practices?

- ▶ Is quality an essential and distinguishing attribute of your service?
- ▶ Do you and your team plan thoroughly yet remain flexible?

## A....All about People

- ▶ Are you looking for the 4 Cs: Character, Competency, Commitment, and Chemistry?
- ▶ Do you create opportunities for those you lead? Are you "building the bench"?
- ▶ Do you have a mentor, and are you a mentor for others?

## M.... Motivating

- ▶ Do you strive to win because winning motivates?
- ▶ Are you building momentum that will sustain motivation?
- ▶ Are you motivating toward a legacy, a contribution to the next generation and beyond?

## USACE priorities within MVD

### 1. Support GWOT and expeditionary missions

- ▶ 44 employees currently activated or deployed

We have deployed more than 550 employees to GRD and AED in the past five years. Within this number we have had 54 reservists activated and deployed. Currently we have 37 civilian deployed and COL Pfenning (former St. Paul Commander) is Commander of GRN. We also have 10 people awaiting deployment. COL Christensen, newly assigned St. Paul District Commander, recently returned.

- ▶ Standup of FEST-M (412th ENCOM)

### 2. Enhance quality of support to soldiers, civilians, families, and the public

### 3. Complete transformation of theater engineer commands

- ▶ 412th ENCOM
- ▶ Standup of FEST-M

No Military Program but all of our other programs enhance quality of life. COL Bleakley- Stand-up of FEST

### 4. Effectively prepare for & respond to disasters

- ▶ Louisiana / Mississippi Gulf Coast hurricanes
- ▶ Flood control and response throughout MVD
- ▶ New Madrid earthquake

### 5. Enable Gulf Coast recovery

- ▶ Task Force Hope
- ▶ Protection Restoration Office Hurricane Protection Office
- ▶ Louisiana Recovery Field Office (complete)
- ▶ Mississippi Recovery Field Office (complete)

### 6. Deliver military, civil works, and R&D programs and projects

- ▶ Every project is important to our customer
- ▶ Some with national significance
- ▶ Hurricane Protection System
- ▶ Mississippi River & Tributaries
- ▶ Navigation Ecosystem Sustainability Program
- ▶ Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive plan

Emphasis here in on DELIVER!

## Regional Strategic Objectives:

- ▶ Implement USACE 2012 and Civil Works Strategic Plan
- ▶ Size and develop regional workforce to efficiently accomplish current and future workload volume
- ▶ Balance customer and stakeholders interests to achieve mutual benefits while improving the overall state of the MVD watersheds
- ▶ Rehabilitate, maintain and improve infrastructure to ensure navigation in the Mississippi River Valley
- ▶ Re-establishment of authorized levels of flood protection (systemic)
- ▶ Repair past environmental degradation and prevent future environmental losses (habitat or species)
- ▶ Develop engineering and water resource solutions that quantify risk
- ▶ Reduction of backlog of maintenance and repair

## Regional Program Priorities:

- ▶ Effectively prepare for and respond to disasters
- ▶ Mississippi River and Tributaries project
- ▶ Levee inventory and status
- ▶ Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration
- ▶ Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program

HOOAH!



# Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale vs. SLOSH

## You need to know more than the wind speed

by Susan Spaht  
Task Force Hope

The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale rates a hurricane's present intensity using wind speed as the determining factor. It rates hurricanes by category using a 1 to 5 scale.

A Category 1 hurricane has the least wind speed while a Category 5 has the highest wind speed. (See insert for category speeds).

Those of us living on the Gulf Coast are all too familiar with a weather report that gives us the "category" of an approaching storm. However, Hurricane Katrina taught us that the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale doesn't give the whole picture on the danger and magnitude of a particular storm.

Strong winds can certainly be dangerous and damaging, but there are other elements of a storm to consider when judging your level of danger: the diameter or width of the storm, the speed, and the surge potential.

Consider this: Hurricane Camille hit the Gulf Coast in 1969, a terrible storm that killed 259 people and caused billions in damages. Hurricane Camille was a Category 5 storm with 190 mph winds at landfall. But Camille was no match for the devastation of Hurricane Katrina which killed more than 1,400 people in 2005. Katrina was one of the worst storms ever to hit the United States. It was rated a Category 3 when it made landfall.

"Wind speed is an important element of a hurricane's damage potential," said Lt. Col. David Berczek, the Corps' Project Manager

for Risk and Reliability, "but it's just one element of the information we need to determine the severity of a hurricane. We must also consider a hurricane's surge potential."

Lt. Col. Berczek, while assigned to Task Force Hope in New Orleans, was charged with leading public sessions to explain the highly technical information released by the Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force (IPET) in Vol. 8 (of their 10 volume report)

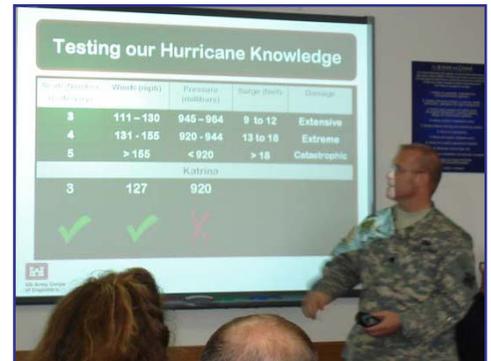
which covers risk potential in the Hurricane Protection System (HPS) in the greater New Orleans area.

Lt. Col. Berczek developed graphs, charts, photos and figures meant to simplify the technical IPET information so we can all grasp its meaning and importance. He examines and explains why the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale measures only one part of a hurricane's damage potential.

**The greatest potential for loss of life related to a hurricane is from storm surge.**  
- National Hurricane Center

So, what is "storm surge" and how can we judge a hurricane's surge threat?

According to the National Hurricane Center (HNC): "Storm surge is simply water that is pushed toward the shore by the force of the winds swirling around the storm.



**Lt. Col. David Berczek, above right, explaining technical hurricane information found in the IPET report.**

This advancing surge combines with the normal tides to create the hurricane storm tide, which can increase the mean water level 15 feet or more. In addition, wind driven waves are superimposed on the storm tide.

"This rise in water level can cause severe flooding in coastal areas, particularly when the storm tide coincides with the normal high tides.

"The level of surge in a particular area is also determined by the slope of the continental shelf. A shallow slope off the coast will allow a greater surge to inundate coastal communities."

In the late 70s, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) developed the first rendition of the computer-run storm-surge model, called SLOSH: Sea, Lake and Overland Surges from Hurricanes.

(see SLOSH, next page)



## Storm Surge from Hurricane Katrina



**This dramatic photo shows Hurricane Katrina's surge overtopping levees under the Paris Road Bridge adjacent to the Entergy power plant in New Orleans East.**

According to longtime New Orleans TV weatherman Dave Barnes, a member of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East: "Weather reports have been giving a storm's surge potential since the late 1800s.

"Since NOAA recognized that the New Orleans region was the most vulnerable in the country to storm surge, SLOSH was designed for this region first.

"The SLOSH model takes into account the hurricane's atmospheric pressure, size, forward speed, track and wind. It predicts the change of water levels in a region with time, including the highest water level expected.

"The latest version of SLOSH is routinely run by the National Hurricane Center when hurricanes

threaten coastal areas. In addition, many organizations use SLOSH to evaluate historical and hypothetical hurricanes for storm surge potential. Emergency managers use the output from the latest version of SLOSH for advance planning, and use it during hurricane emergencies to determine which areas must be evacuated ahead of a storm's expected storm surge."

**The Saffir-Simpson  
Hurricane Scale**

<b>Category 1:</b>	<b>winds 74-95 mph</b>
<b>Category 2:</b>	<b>winds 96-110 mph</b>
<b>Category 3:</b>	<b>winds 111-130 mph</b>
<b>Category 4:</b>	<b>winds 131-155 mph</b>
<b>Category 5:</b>	<b>greater than 155 mph</b>

In general, the more intense the storm, and the closer a community is to the right-front quadrant, the larger the area that must be evacuated.

The problem is always the uncertainty about how intense the storm will be when it finally makes landfall.

"It's important to know that slow-moving tropical storms usually produce greater flooding from rain than fast-moving storms," Barnes added, "regardless of their intensity."

When an advisory to evacuate is issued, people should be aware that strong winds can be expected ahead of the storm's eye and they should plan their evacuation accordingly.

Coastal inhabitants should realize that, after the eye of the storm passes, they will experience wind from the opposite direction.

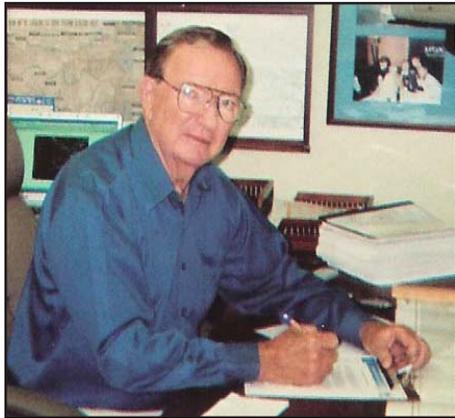
"This is especially important information whether a community is located on the Gulf Coast itself or on an adjacent lake or river," Barnes noted, "because a shift in the wind to a more southerly direction may produce additional flooding after the initial surge moves on shore.

"Many residents of the Slidell area experienced this effect when Hurricane Katrina moved over the area."

(see SLOSH, next page)



**-SLOSH-**



**Dave Barnes, meteorologist, longtime New Orleans TV weatherman and member of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East.**

People living along the Gulf Coast are keenly aware that we are in the height of the hurricane season right now. If a tropical storm or hurricane should threaten us this season, we should all pay close attention to its size, wind (Saffir-Simpson Scale), forward speed, track and its surge potential.

To learn more about storm surge safety actions as well as evacuation information, please visit the National Hurricane Center's Web site at: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov>.

To learn more about the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale, visit: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutsshs.shtml>.

For specific information on the Corps' 100-Year Risk Maps, go to: <http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/100maps.htm>.

To contact David P. Barnes, Jr. go to: [dpbarnesjr@hotmail.com](mailto:dpbarnesjr@hotmail.com).

## St. Louis archaeologist is named top U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civilian employee

by Alan Dooley  
photos by F. T. Eyre

Dr. Michael "Sonny" Trimble has been honored by receiving the Lt. Gen. John W. Morris Civilian of the Year Award, recognizing him as the top performing civilian employee among 34,000 counterparts in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The award was presented to Trimble in Providence, RI, by Corps commander Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp on Aug. 6.

Trimble was recognized for his leadership and work with the Iraq Mass Graves Investigation Team, a small cadre of forensic specialists and employees with other specific applicable talents who investigated the deaths of victims in several mass graves from the deposed dictator Saddam Hussein's reign. Trimble's team performed its mission under extremely dangerous conditions for the Department of Justice and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, working carefully with Iraqi counterparts to help them develop skills for future legal work on the former regime's crimes of the past two decades.

Trimble, who has been to Iraq six times in connection with his work, spent several hours testifying in front of Saddam Hussein and the so-called Chemical Ali in an Iraqi courtroom in Baghdad before both of those men were executed for their crimes against the Iraqi people.

The slender, intense archaeologist, who heads up the St. Louis District Curation and Archives Branch, which is also a center of expertise for such work throughout the Corps of Engineers, says that in the end, the Iraq Mass Graves Team's mission became one of giving voices to those who had been so brutally murdered,



often for no crime at all other than their birth origin. The team's work is being continued by local and regional experts they trained to carry on efforts to bring justice to the perpetrators and final peace to their victims and families.



## St. Paul District responds to I-35W tragedy

by Shannon Bauer

U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam employees in Minneapolis found themselves at ground zero for a large-scale disaster-response effort that began Wednesday, Aug. 1, after parts of the I-35W Bridge over the Mississippi River fell on their work site around 6 p.m.

Debris from the eight-lane, 500-foot span bridge fell on the lock's lower guidewall and adjacent property. From the night of the collapse and throughout most of the following month, the Corps lock and dam became a nerve center for emergency operations.

Lock operators Jim Crosby and David Nerva were working on the Lower St. Anthony Falls lock wall, about 60 feet from the bridge, when it collapsed. Crosby said he hadn't been looking at it, but he saw a poof of smoke out of the corner of his eye. He looked up just in time to see the bridge fall down. "I just couldn't believe what I was seeing," he said.

Nerva heard a noise and also looked up just in time to witness the collapse. He ran to get the Corps' emergency lifeboat into the water via crane (normal procedure to operate the lifeboat), while Crosby ran inside the lock house to open the site's security gates and allow rescue workers access. Then, both he and Nerva assisted with the immediate incident response.

After a few hours, when it became apparent that all the survivors had been rescued, efforts turned to search and recovery. The staff at both the Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and its headquarters,



Photo courtesy White House Photographer  
**President George Bush recognized Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam employees Jim Crosby and David Nerva, as well as other first responders to the I-35W Bridge collapse, in Minneapolis, Aug. 4.**

the St. Paul District, pledged to assist the incident commander, the Hennepin County Sheriff, in any way they could. This help has included providing a site for recovery crews to work at, as well as equipment and people.

The sheriff's department located its command post, which included two mobile command vehicles and a storage trailer, on the site. Additionally, a U.S. Navy dive team called in to assist with finding the victims moved into the basement of the main lock house.

The St. Paul District's maintenance and repair unit, which is based out of Fountain City, Wis., just happened to be at the lock and dam that week completing routine maintenance work with a crane barge and handiflat. This crew and heavy

equipment remained in Minneapolis to support the efforts of the Hennepin County Sheriff's office and then the Navy dive teams.

Greg Frankosky, St. Paul District's Physical Support chief, said the crew loaded and unloaded the Navy team's five semi loads of equipment, set up barge dive platforms and lifted vehicles out of the water that contained victims. They also removed other vehicles, concrete and truss steel that were blocking in the occupied vehicles.

Throughout the search and recovery efforts, the district's water control and lock personnel adjusted water levels on the Upper Mississippi River to aid the divers.

*(see Bridge, next page)*



**-Bridge-**

Since the region had been suffering from a drought at the time of the incident, this was relatively easy up until the weekend of Aug. 18, when the area was pummeled with severe storms, said Scott Bratten, the individual who controls the Mississippi River water levels in this area.

“To compensate for the rains, we drew the pool down for storage purposes and passed larger volumes of flow later at night,” he said. “When the divers were ready to work in the early morning hours, we were able to keep flows to a minimum and allow the recovery effort to continue.

“The divers could handle the depth,” he explained, “but not the fast currents.”

It took until Aug. 20 to locate the eight known victims.<sup>1</sup> By Aug. 22,



Photo by Aaron Snyder

**Brig. Gen. Robert Crear, Mississippi Valley Division commander, receives a briefing on Corps activities at the bridge collapse site from Bryan Peterson, St. Paul District’s maintenance and repair unit chief.**

the Navy and Hennepin County personnel pulled out most of their assets from the area, although the sheriff will continue to provide security around the site until most of the debris is removed.

The Minneapolis Department of Transportation is now responsible for removing the debris and building a new bridge. Members of the district’s engineering staff and a Corps’ debris removal expert are providing the agency with technical assistance at their request.

President George Bush recognized Crosby and Nerva, the two Corps’ employees on duty the night the bridge fell, and other immediate responders for their efforts at the Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam in Minneapolis Saturday, Aug. 4.

Note: The U.S. Coast Guard closed the navigation channel between Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and Lock and Dam 1 in Minneapolis Aug. 1. (Upper St. Anthony Falls is located around half a mile upstream of Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and the debris pile, and Lock and Dam 1 is located about five miles downstream.) It was reopened to limited local commercial barge traffic on Sept. 6. No recreation boats are allowed.

**(Footnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> A total of 13 died. The others were recovered on top of the bridge.

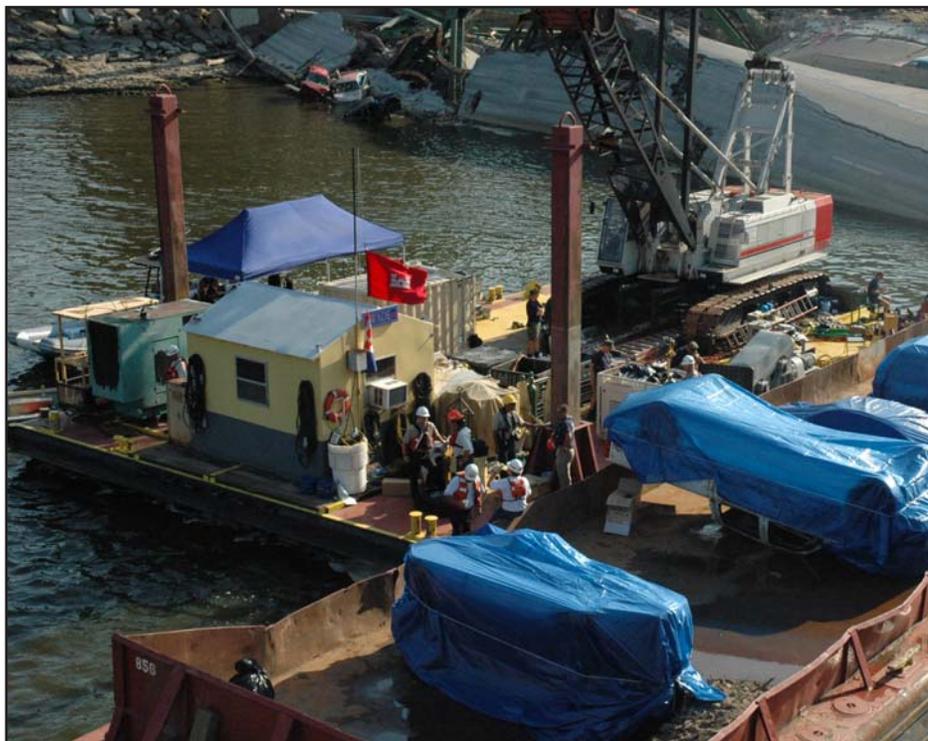


Photo by Jon Lyman

**The St. Paul District’s maintenance and repair crew, based out of Fountain City, Wis., assisted both Hennepin County and Navy dive teams during the search and recovery efforts.**



# Bob Anderson named USACE PAO of the Year

by Dave Harris



photo by Andy Simmerman

**Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp, Chief of Engineers (left), presents the Michael C. Robinson Award for Public Affairs Practitioner of the Year to Bob Anderson (right) at the USACE Summer Leaders Conference held Aug. 6, in Providence, R.I.**

With a supporting cast from throughout America, the Louisiana Recovery Field Office's public affairs team, under the direction of Memphis District's PAO chief, Robert T. Anderson, has the Michael C. Robinson Award under the USACE Worldwide Locke L. Mouton public affairs competition for exemplary media relations and public affairs strategies in 2006. The award is given to the USACE Public Affairs Practitioner of the Year.

The late Locke Mouton was the legendary headquarters public affairs specialist who had coached the Chief of Engineers for an appearance on "60 Minutes" and gained a professional reputation from service in Albuquerque and Tulsa Districts.

Anderson was named as prime contributor. Secondary contributors are James Pogue and Brenda Beasley, Memphis District; Tim Meers and Russell Williams, St. Paul District; Fred Miller, St. Louis District; Dave Killam, Sacramento District; Dave Lipsky, North Atlantic Division; Maria Or, San Francisco District; Lt. Cheryl Perkins and Spec. Larry Gleason, U.S. Army Reserve; Lois Jackson and Alice Welch, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Dave Harris, rehired annuitant and former Seattle District public affairs officer; and Frank Martin, contractor.

"At the LA-RFO, a temporary headquarters set up to run the Corps' disaster recovery missions in Louisiana after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the area, Anderson and his team faced nonstop, often hostile media queries almost every day in 2006 from international, national, regional and local news outlets, as well as thousands of public queries," the nomination said.

"He and his team expertly reacted to this onslaught and, at the same time, were able to proactively plan communication strategies to alert the public to what it needed to know to facilitate recovery."

The team faced a "perfect storm" of multiple rapid-fire dilemmas often requiring simultaneous public affairs responses in the form of strategies and execution. The team fully engaged in recovery from two hurricanes in Louisiana.

Deadly tornadoes ravaging several communities in the boot heel of Missouri shouted and competed for the team's attention. National recruitment efforts became essential as prompted by public affairs short-staffing.

An urgent need emerged to orient and train volunteer staff who, on occasion, reported to help, but sometimes with little or no public affairs skills.

Often antagonistic media and public speculation and misinformation demanded immediate and penetrating truth counteroffensives. The recovery mission stood to falter unless the team promptly and clearly informed the public of means to access needed help available to homeowners from the Corps, conditioned on proper authorization in the form of rights-of-entry.

And public affairs professionals needed to hammer out a framework for quick multi-agency approval of news releases in bureaucracies that traditionally bottlenecked the process until what is breaking news cools and ultimately transforms and morphs into, at best, slowly oozing input into historical archives.

As an example, the nomination said, "In January of 2006, the media and the public were upset with the Corps because the agency had not yet started demolition of condemned properties, although the Corps could not begin this process until given the approval to proceed by the city of New Orleans. The city needed to first compile a list of eligible properties for the Corps, as well as acquire rights-of-entry from the property owners.

"Working in cooperation with the city and FEMA, Anderson [and the team] educated the public and the media on the difficulties the city faced when homeowners were spread out across the nation. [PAO] sent out news releases, hosted community meetings, met with individual members of the media and more."

*(see Anderson, next page)*



**-Anderson-**

“These efforts sped up the process of collecting needed legal documents so demolition could begin sooner.”

Although it was more than five months after Katrina, Anderson and his team were still busy working more than 12 hours a day, seven days a week, responding to big name media queries from FOX, CNN, MSNBC, all four major networks, the New York Times, The Washington Post, the Associated Press and more. They still found time, however, to respond to inaccurate information about the Corps in the press and to be proactive in educating the public on its role and the Corps’ role in the recovery process.

“The talented public affairs professionals who answered the call to duty from the Louisiana RFO showed true grit in a very difficult media environment,” Anderson said after winning the distinction with his team. “They would get attacked daily by reporters hungry for a screw-up, the same reporters who completely ignored the good the Corps accomplished every day.

“All the PAOs said they could weather the attacks as long as they thought we were making a positive difference for the people of Louisiana.”

The nomination concluded, “The work of Anderson and the LA-RFO public affairs staff allowed for

open and honest communication between the Corps and the media and the Corps and the public. The public was able to understand the complicated legal rules involving the Corps’ involvement in the disaster recovery mission. And, due in part to the tremendous professionalism of the staff as well as Anderson’s extraordinary public affairs abilities, the Corps of Engineers was able to maintain credibility during the recovery mission and build back respect for the agency after it reached an all-time low in the days following the breaches of the levees in New Orleans. The public became the Corps’ partner in the recovery mission, and the Corps was able to complete its missions there at a faster pace.”

## The Other Story of New Orleans

Dr. Ed Link  
Director, Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force  
Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering  
University of Maryland

*Editor’s note: Dr. Ed Link, director of the IPET, has submitted this OpEd piece to the Washington Post. It was unknown at press time whether the Post would publish his submission.*

A recent epidemic of negative New Orleans editorials and stories resonate the frustration with the status of recovery and criticism of past and ongoing efforts on the hurricane protection system. Although many have substance, the issues have not been reported from a balanced perspective. Many, to paraphrase George Will, often are “innocent of the facts.” The levels of protection afforded by current and planned structures are poorly characterized, the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet channel continues to be dubbed a hurricane highway, the severity of Katrina is downplayed and storm category is misused.



**Hurricane Katrina had the highest surge ever to hit the U.S. and tied the highest recorded wave.**

The significant progress already made in New Orleans seldom creeps into the stories or opinions. The magnitude of what remains to be done is allowed to overshadow the progress.

Hurricane Katrina has exposed our inadequacy to deal with a really large natural disaster, the nearly irreversible crippling of a major

metropolitan area. This capability gap has evolved from policies and a national complacency that led over many decades to short-term investments and partial solutions that sufficed until Katrina provided a painful calibration. Unfortunately, our policies are in as dire need of changing as the natural hazard defenses in New Orleans and elsewhere. Most of the articles have failed to distinguish between role of the policy framework and the work ongoing within it.

Katrina was a monster storm, a 400-year meteorological event, created record storm surges and waves. In fact, Katrina had the highest surge ever to hit the U.S. and tied the highest recorded wave.

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



**-Link-**

Its rare combination of size and intensity gave it a significantly greater surge generation capability than Category 5 storms Camille, Dean or Felix. Storm Category is only a part of the story and alone is misleading.

Accusations that work in New Orleans has been piecemeal and disorganized are the result of looking at the situation superficially. Looking deeper shows a sensible strategy at work.

First, restore some level of protection by repairing Katrina's major damage. This is complete.

Second, strengthen the existing system to improve performance over the short term. This is under way.

Third, build a significantly better capability as a platform for the future – 100-year protection scheduled for 2011.

And fourth, develop alternative approaches for higher levels of protection - also under way.

Over 200 miles of the 350 miles of hurricane protection system have been repaired and many additional areas strengthened. Yes, another Katrina event on a similar path today could cause flooding within the city. But it likely would be significantly less severe and the planned 100-year system will make more dramatic improvements.

The inundation maps available on <http://NOLArisk.usace.army.mil> demonstrate the differences between the pre-Katrina and current conditions. In some areas there is a significant reduction in probability of flooding.



**St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana, after Hurricane Katrina struck in August 2005.**

The assessment for the 100-year-protection system shows a dramatic reduction in likelihood and levels of flooding for most of the region. At the 100-year level or 1 percent chance per year, the primary threat for flooding in the metropolitan area will be rainfall, not hurricanes.

Yes, overtopping is possible from larger events. The 100-year system is baseline protection from which higher levels can evolve. But the protection level incorporates subsidence, sea-level rise, and new information on cycles of more intense storms. This will be by far the most reliable protection that New Orleans has ever had. Is it enough? No, protection beyond this baseline is needed and will require integrated natural defenses. But building natural defenses takes time, and the people of New Orleans need base line protection that will enable economic and social recovery.

Much action has been taken, but not enough to perform the miracle

of bringing New Orleans back to its old self. In fact, one of the barriers has been the natural desire to bring it back the way it was. Will New Orleans look different from the past? It must, concepts that promise or propose going back to the old New Orleans are not realistic. Can all of the region be readily protected against "Category 5" storms? Likely not, one size fits all is an industrial age concept. If we return to the past thinking, New Orleans and the Nation are going to suffer the same fate again and again.

The situation in New Orleans did not originate with Katrina. We are paying for our long-term national complacency in regard to natural hazards.

We have to change the strategy and policies that enable this destructive thinking so it will not continue to plague us and our grandchildren. The consequences of our addiction to short-term fixes and solutions are far greater than the cost of doing it right.



## **A major step forward**

# **ASA (CW) makes positive Bayou Meto determination**

by Jim Pogue

John Paul Woodley Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), on Sept. 24, determined that the addition of agricultural water supply and waterfowl management components to the previously authorized flood damage reduction component of the Bayou Meto Basin Project in eastern Arkansas made the project “technically sound, environmentally acceptable and economically feasible.” This determination allows the project to move into construction pending Congressional funding.

One of the main benefits to be provided by the Bayou Meto Project will be a reduction in the depletion of the alluvial aquifer, a resource used to benefit rice farming.

The determination, however, contained a few significant changes.

Secretary Woodley retained two of the three features of the project’s waterfowl management

component but increased the local sponsor’s cost-share portion of the bill. Additionally, he removed the bottomland hardwood feature from the cost-sharing portion of the project. These actions significantly increased the local sponsor’s cost-shared portion of this component.

Col. Thomas Smith, commander of the Memphis District, said the news was good in that it allowed the project to move forward, but that the changes present the sponsor with some new challenges.

“It’s as if we now have a 16-game football season ahead of us,” he said of the path ahead for the project sponsor and the Corps. “We know who we’ll be playing and what we have to do.”

The Bayou Meto Basin Project is located in Lonoke, Pulaski, Prairie, Jefferson and Arkansas counties. It is designed to help reduce agricultural flooding, the loss of



**One of the main benefits to be provided by the Bayou Meto Project will be a reduction in the depletion of the alluvial aquifer, a resource used to benefit rice farming.**

environmental resources and the depletion of the alluvial aquifer. The aquifer provides most of the water used for agricultural irrigation and baitfish farming and supports area wetlands.

This final step allows the report developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to move forward with the agricultural water supply, flood damage reduction and waterfowl management components.

## **The Business of Communicating Flood Risk Management**

Story and Photos by Alan Dooley

Dave Busse is the Chief of the Hydrologic and Hydraulics Branch of the St. Louis District Engineering Division. He took over that assignment when Claude Strauser retired.

And, he’s the Flood Risk Management Business Line Manager.

*Esprit* caught up with Dave late one afternoon, asked questions and took notes furiously as he explained his work as a business line manager.

“My tasking as the Flood Risk Management Business Line Manager crosses disciplines, divisions, branches and halls. It doesn’t mean that Emergency Operations has been placed under me. It doesn’t mean that we are discarding anything we have done in the past, like training and preparing to fight floods.

“It does mean that as the Business Line Manager for Flood Risk Management, Col. Setliff has charged me with looking across the district to

help him keep tabs on the many interrelated parts that make up the totality of that mission.”

“Huh,” we asked?

“Flood risk management is not just about levees. It’s about seeing the various parts of the district as elements of a flood-risk management system.

**(see Busse, next page)**



**-Busse-**

That includes such parts as levees, dams, reservoirs and our ability to confront flooding. It includes oversight of the operation and maintenance of the parts of this system. It includes training and preparedness of our people, including assigning them in such a manner as to best meet the needs of the system.”

Busse went on to cite concepts such as shifting people between flood-fighting teams to ensure that the teams are all ready to fight floods in specific areas – to play their roles in an overall system.

“Maybe to meet needs arising from retirements, deployments or other losses, we need to consider transferring an experienced person from a region he is very familiar with to another a hundred miles away to restore the level of technical expertise as opposed to being focused on intimate knowledge of a geographic area.”

Busse’s new assignment has taken him into a maelstrom of issues such as those concerning the integrity of levees protecting hundreds of thousands of citizens who live or work behind levees, or more broadly, depend on them and the protected infrastructure.

“An awfully big part of my mission is communication,” Busse said.

And communicating has recently been a large part of Busse’s work as the Flood Risk Management Business Line Manager.

Busse has been a key member of the district team informing government officials, stakeholders and citizens of the status of the levees and



**Dave Busse communicates the level of risk associated with some urban levees within the St. Louis District at the Illinois Levee Summit held August 15. Rep. Jerry Costello (D-Ill.) and Col. Lewis F. Setliff III, looking on from the front row, are both dedicated to fixing the levees and communicating the present risk openly and honestly with those impacted.**

other elements of the region’s flood-risk reduction system.

“I’m not trying to scare people,” he said. “But I want to convey two basic messages. People, property and infrastructure behind levees and floodwalls are at some degree of risk. Whatever man can construct can be overcome by nature. Also I want them to understand the true system nature demanded by effective flood risk reduction,” he said.

“We’re partners in this with FEMA. FEMA has asked us if we know of any reasons parts of the flood risk management system might not withstand a 100-year flood event. That’s not an event that occurs every century, but rather, one that has a one percent statistical chance of occurring every year.

“In the wake of the 1993 floods, we were asked by several drainage and levee districts – our stakeholders – to examine their levees and other parts of their protection. With congressional authorization and funding we did so.

“The end results were studies and reports. We examined examples of under performance by these systems during the 1993 flood, applied our best engineering skills and identified problems, many associated with under seepage, or movement of water and foundation material under levees during prolonged floods,” Busse said.

The reports were provided to the stakeholders operating the levees and forwarded up the Corps command chain for review and concurrence. In some cases these reports have resulted in funding and work to correct deficiencies.

“Many of the levees and other parts of the flood risk management system were built in the 1930s and 40s,” Busse explained. “They were built using the best engineering we had then. They have been maintained well by stakeholders for decades. But simply put, we have better tools today to analyze system needs and the benefit of 50-plus years of observation of these levees. We know what the problems are and how to fix them.

“So when FEMA asked us if we knew of problems, we certainly could not turn a blind eye. That would not have been the right thing to do,” he affirmed.

“We also have the unfortunate experience of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and New Orleans,” he added.

“The same kinds of studies and reports were available down there. They were available to stakeholders and the public. Nobody hid them. Nobody swept bad news under the rug.

*(see Busse, next page)*



Seen here in his office, Dave Busse talks with one of the many stakeholders interested in how policy and requirements related to flood risk management are impacting the region.

But in more than a hundred public meetings, we heard: ‘I never knew... I had no idea... I had heard but never really considered the risk...’ from citizens who had lost their homes, businesses or worse.”

“The previous Chief of Engineers acknowledged the Corps’ role in what happened. Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp has taken that to the next level, and I can tell you from my own personal experience, Col. Setliff is onboard: we are going to do our level best to inform people, to be absolutely transparent, to give them our best analysis of the risks. We are going to explain the technical elements and we are going to keep doing it as long as necessary.

“Is it popular to tell this story, a story that may result in a requirement for people to buy flood insurance or that the levee we built is not adequate to ensure the authorized level of protection? Is it fun to tell people things that may persuade them to move? Is it easy to explain why levees built to provide a 500-year level of protection might not in fact be reliable in the face of a lesser threat? No!

“But it’s wrong not to tell them,” he said.

“We’ve done the studies, written the reports. Now we’re telling citizens, stakeholders, elected officials and partner agencies, like FEMA and state partners, the facts. The answer isn’t in changing the rules or moving the goal line. Mother Nature doesn’t care how we want to view risk. It is what it is.

“Armed with the engineering facts, educated concerning what they mean, the next step is up to our customers,” Busse said. “The answer is in fixing the levees. It is in reducing the risk.”

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, other federal agencies,

### Flood Risk Management Business Line

**Vision: Provide and sustain a comprehensive flood-risk reduction system within the St. Louis District watershed boundaries that reliably minimizes risk to lives and property damage.**

**Goals:**

- Develop a comprehensive risk-based plan for addressing all needs.
- Integrate stakeholder and customer needs and concerns into the plan.
- Operate and maintain existing systems to the authorized levels.
- Communicate risk and reliability to stakeholders and customers.
- Provide the technical expertise needed in an emergency.

state and local governments are onboard. “Congressman Jerry Costello (D-Ill. 12<sup>th</sup> District) called the first Illinois Levee Summit with us and FEMA on Aug. 15. He’s gets it,” Busse told. “I am, we all are, on the road ahead. We are telling people what’s needed to lower flood risks to acceptable levels – levels that they understand and accept. We are in this for the long haul and the Flood Risk Management Business Line is our system to do this.

“When the business line management approach was first discussed, it was about budgeting. But that’s not the whole case any more. For flood risk management it is about levees, reservoirs and water control for sure. But instead of any single element it is now about putting all the pieces together into a working system.”

**For additional information:**

**District’s Flood Risk Management Website**  
<http://www.mvs.usace.army.mil/pa/floodriskmang.html>

**National Flood Risk Management Program**  
<http://www.iwr.usace.army.mil/nfrmp/index.cfm>

**Federal Emergency Management Agency**  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

**National Flood Insurance Program**  
[www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov)



## Rochester project protects community; St. Paul District works to prevent Wisconsin dam failure

by Peter Verstegen

As a result of the district-built Rochester flood-reduction project, the city of Rochester and property owners in the project area were protected from the heavy rains Aug. 18-19 and high waters that flooded several neighboring communities in southeast Minnesota and southwestern Wisconsin.

“Rains in the area during the flood ranged from eight-inches to 10-inches,” said Scott Jutila, hydraulic engineer, Engineering and Construction Division.

Said Kevin Bluhm, an economist in Project Management, “The flood-control project worked very well and contained the high water as it flowed through Rochester without incident or need for emergency actions. By using conservative figures, the flood event that was contained saved the community, the state and the federal government an estimated \$80 million and prevented the need for emergency work, sand bagging, interrupting business and flood-related losses such as cleaning up homes and businesses from flooding.”

The project in Rochester included several design reaches. They controlled flooding along Bear Creek, the South Fork Zumbro River and Cascade Creek.

In the Bear Creek and South Fork Zumbro River reaches, the flood was contained several feet below the top of the channel.



The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources requested assistance from the St. Paul District in lowering the level of a reservoir behind Hidden Valley Dam, one of the agency's high-hazard dams in Vernon County. The Wisconsin National Guard airlifted in pumps supplied by the district. The dam is a Natural Resources Conservation Service structure with an emergency grass-lined spillway and low-flow conduit. Due to the high flows and velocities, the spillway has reportedly experienced 8-10 feet of erosion, raising concern by dam safety officials of structural failure. The district's Fountain City Service Base supplied three pumps Aug. 19 for use at the location. Dick Otto, area flood manager, was at the site to provide assistance. All residents downstream of this structure were evacuated.

However, along Cascade Creek the estimated peak discharge equaled the design discharge, and the flood control channel was flowing full.

The flood was estimated to be about a 100-year event on Cascade Creek, and a 15-year event on the South Fork Zumbro River.

Said Jutila, “There is no estimate for Bear Creek. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources gauge on Bear Creek was not recording during the flood peak. Based on high-water marks, the flood on Bear Creek was between a 10-year and 25-year flood event.”



# Corps' personnel rescue residents from rooftops in response to flash floods

by Mark Davidson

Two Corps employees used a canoe, kayak, motor boat and a Corps airboat on Aug. 19 to rescue dozens of people and animals from flooding in southeastern Minnesota.

The Corps' airboat was used by Kevin Ressie, a small craft operator who works for Channels and Harbors Unit in Fountain City, Wis. Ressie lives in Fountain City.

The canoe, kayak and fishing boat were used by Jon Sobiech, a forester who works for Natural Resources in LaCrescent, Minn. Sobiech lives in Rushford, Minn., a city that was flooded.

Aug. 19 started early for Ressie when he got a call from a friend that worked at the Winona, Minn., hospital at 5:30 a.m.

"My friend knew I owned an airboat, and they were looking for people to start rescuing people," said Ressie. "I told him my boat was broken, but I'd get back to him."

Ressie called Dan Krumholz, the district chief of lock and dams, for permission to use the Corps' airboat at Lock and Dam 5A at Fountain City. Krumholz gave him permission to use the airboat due to the potential life-threatening situation.

"I got to the lock and dam around 6:15 a.m. and got the airboat into the water," said Ressie. "I got the airboat across the river and into the water on the Minnesota side."

The [water] on the Minnesota side that Ressie was driving the airboat in was about three

feet over Highway 61, which parallels the Mississippi River on the west side. The water was running very fast down the highway in a southerly direction.

"There was a Winona firefighter with me, and we were rescuing people all along Highway 61 until about 11 a.m.," said Ressie. "We rescued about 40 people, which included some babies and elderly people. We rescued people with their cats and dogs."

Ressie said most of the people were on their house's steps and some were on the roofs. The people and animals were delivered safely to higher ground in another part of Winona County.

"I remember picking up one person from their house, and we pulled away from the property," said Ressie. "I turned around to look back, and I saw the person's basement cave in at that very moment."

While Ressie was busy in Winona, Sobiech was in the middle of the flooded area in Rushford, Minn.

Three levees along Rush Creek were overtopped Aug. 19, flooding Rushford, with very little damage to the levees.

Sobiech and his family and friends were up late Saturday night, Aug. 18, after being involved in a wedding the day before. At about 6:30 a.m. on Aug. 19, Sobiech and his brother, Jeff, decided to get out of the house and see how they could help people.



Photo by Jon Sobiech

From left are Pat Vickman, resident engineer, Winona, Minn., and Jeff Sobiech, and Jeff Gulan, locks and dams, Fountain City, Wis. Gulan and Vickman are walking a levee in Rushford, Minn., to inspect it from an engineering perspective.

"We spent about 14 hours that day, without the cell phones working, going throughout the town, helping and rescuing people using my canoe, kayak and motorboat," said Sobiech. "The air and the water smelled disgusting. My brother and I had a headache the entire day from the smell."

Sobiech and his brother used the vessels in a variety of ways to help and rescue people. They rescued four people who were trapped in their homes by the water.

"We also transported a bunch of people to another part of town where their other family members were," said Sobiech. "We assisted about 45 people that were trapped in town and helped them get out of Rushford."

(see Floods, next page)



**-Floods-**



**Photo by Jeff Sobiech**

**Jon Sobiech, Natural Resources office in LaCrescent, Minn., and Josh Nelson, Red Wing, were in Rushford, Minn., to support disaster response. Nelson is a family friend who attended a wedding with Sobiech the day before. Sobiech and his family live in Rushford.**

Sobiech and his brother, despite having to get out of the boat many times and walk through gas- and sewer-infested water, also assisted seven business owners in Rushford by transporting them to their businesses so the owners could save some of the products in their stores.

“We used my motor boat to transport food and water when the local authorities got the donation from a local grocery store,” said Sobiech. “We probably transported more than 10,000 pounds of food and water that day and city of Rushford officials are still using the food and water salvaged weeks after the flooding.”

The Sobiech brothers family were concerned about them being out in the flood area with no communications but were relieved later that day when their father, who

lives in Little Canada, Minn., saw them on a television news report.

“The mayor and fire chief of Rushford knew where we were most of time,” said Sobiech. “We stopped by the emergency operations center that the city had set up in city hall many times, which was on high ground.”

Near the end of his long day, Sobiech contacted Jeff and Melissa Gulan and Pat Vickman, all with the Corps, to get something done in Rushford.

“I contacted Jeff, locks and dams, Melissa, and Pat, both at the Eastern Area Office, to get them to walk the levee in Rushford and inspect it from an engineering perspective,” said Sobiech. “Town officials were unsure what steps should be taken next and wanted a professional opinion from the Corps.”

After dealing with flooding in his basement, Bryan Peterson, chief of maintenance and repair section, operations division, helped assess levee damage and supported recovery of public utilities. Peterson also lives in Rushford.

Said Sobiech, “We managed to open the gates on the Rush Creek River manually, because there was no power to open them. It took hundreds of cranking turns to get it open.” Opening the gate wells allowed water to drain from the interior.

Sobiech and his wife, Christa, donated the freezers in their house and garage space to the local Red Cross and Catholic Church so these organizations could store food in the freezers and store water, food and clothing in the garage.

Looking back, one memory of that day Sobiech said he will always remember is people coming up to their boat to ask him and his brother to get one of their family members out of a house.

“The other memory of that day I have is how proud I was that people didn’t complain or point fingers,” said Sobiech. “It was all about helping the other guy, even if the helping person lost everything in the flood.”

Said Peterson, “I’ve lived in Rushford my whole life. The residents there appreciated Col. [Jon] Christensen’s [district commander] first-hand look. It meant a lot to them.”



# Innovations from Devastation: LaBure named 2007 Real Estate Professional of the Year for the Corps

By Dave Mack

It's become a cliché because it's so true: Katrina changed everything. That realization struck Linda LaBure while she was still in Vicksburg waiting out the storm. The New Orleans District Real Estate Chief did not yet know the extent of the devastation that had been visited upon Corps facilities, but she did know there would be no more business as usual.

Over the next 24 months, LaBure and her team practically rewrote the real estate rulebook for the district. In recognition of her exemplary performance and innovation, LaBure was recently named 2007 Real Estate Professional of the Year for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"I look at the award as acknowledgement of the entire New Orleans District Real Estate team's efforts since Katrina," said LaBure. "I'm amazed that with all the personal and professional challenges my staff was facing, we accomplished some pretty extraordinary things."

To wit, they:

- ☞ Developed creative approaches to several Uniform Relocation assistance issues unique to Hurricane Katrina landowners;
- ☞ Pioneered the multi-services contract approach to help manage the heavy acquisition workload as a result of the storm; and
- ☞ Established effective working relationships with numerous



stakeholders, associations and representatives involved in the hurricane effort.

And that's only a partial list.

The over-arching post-Katrina mission for LaBure and company, a team of 40+, was – and continues to be – to secure the real estate interests needed for the repair, rehabilitation and completion of the hurricane protection system. If you're going to install pumps and floodgates and build levees, you need land to put them on. If you're going to excavate borrow, you need a source.

To accomplish those tasks, LaBure and her team had to innovate. In the area of Uniform Relocation Assistance, owner/occupants are required to reside on the property to be eligible for relocation assistance.

The expanded application of "constructive residential occupancy" in the areas needed for repair and rehabilitation of the hurricane protection system allowed relocation assistance benefits for owners who would have been living on their property had the storm not made it uninhabitable. Availability of land for construction was accelerated working with the state, parishes and the city of New Orleans which "commandeered" necessary use of rights-of-way, a term not heard before Katrina.

As for multi-service contracting, rather than issuing separate contracts for various real estate components, such as appraisals, legal descriptions and plats, and title work, LaBure and her team rolled the needed resources into a single contract, giving Real Estate the flexibility required in an environment where it was impossible to pinpoint exactly what was needed.

"The vision I had for Real Estate changed on August 29<sup>th</sup> (2005)," LaBure said. "Before, I could look six months to a year ahead and have a pretty good understanding of how I would deploy resources. Now it's at most a month ahead."

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



**-LaBure-**



**Linda LaBure, left, with her secretary Elaine Comeaux.**

LaBure estimates that the workload for the Real Estate Division tripled, if not quadrupled

after Katrina. And she sees that level of activity continuing for the next several years. Asked if she misses the pre-Katrina days, she says “sometimes, but we cannot look back, we have to keep moving forward.”

According to LaBure, the post-Katrina demands have re-energized her organization and given it a new sense of purpose.

“We recognize we are playing a part in an historic mission in our region,” she said. “All the work is important including our regular mission, the work on the hurricane protection system and future work such as LaCPR (Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration).”

“We have a motto in Real Estate: Together we succeed. Katrina presented us with a new challenge, caused us to be innovative and brought us together as a team. Those are the positives,” said LaBure. “We provide a service that’s key to getting the job done here in New Orleans. I’m very proud to be the Chief of this organization. My staff members are the real heroes.”

On Aug. 6, LaBure received the Real Estate Community of Practice Professional of the Year Award at the Corps Summer Leaders Conference National Awards Dinner and Ceremony in Providence, RI.

## Emerging Leaders taking us from “Good to Great”

By Judy Ward

Do you think the Corps is good at what we do? The Chief of Engineers does, but he also thinks we can be great! That is his vision for the Corps and that was the focus of the 2007 Summer Leaders’ Conference.

The annual conference was attended by General Officers, Senior Executive Service members, and 35 Emerging Leaders selected from across the Corps. I attended as one of four Emerging Leaders, representing the Mississippi Valley Division. Also selected as 2007 HQUSACE Emerging Leaders from MVD were Amena Henville (New Orleans District), Andy Simmerman (Memphis District), and Wayne Stogsdill (Vicksburg District).

The Chief’s vision is based on the book, “Good to Great”, by Jim Collins. The transformation from “Good to Great” is made in three

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stages: disciplined people, disciplined thought, and disciplined action. Collins describes five levels of leadership under his disciplined people concept and identifies what it takes to be a level 5 leader. Level 5 leaders are seemingly ordinary people quietly producing extraordinary results.

Collins also states that to be successful, you must first define who, then what. To be successful, you must have the right people in the right seats on the bus (the organization).

The first principle of disciplined thought is having the courage to confront the brutal facts. Only when we do this, can we truly create change.

The second principal is the hedgehog concept. The hedgehog concept is simply an understanding of what you are passionate about, what you can be the best at, and what motivates you.



**Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp, Chief of Engineers, at the USACE Summer Leaders Conference, Providence, R.I.**

*(see Emerging, next page)*



**-Emerging-**



**(L-R) Michael (Moose) Welch (Omaha District), Amena Henville (New Orleans District), Judy Ward and Wayne Stogsdill, Vicksburg District on a visit to Harvard.**

None of this is of value, unless we take action that is fanatically consistent with the hedgehog concept.



**Judy Ward at the SLC dinner.**

What does the Corps do next? The Corps' plan is to: 1) define objectives to take us from good to great, 2) implement the hedgehog concept in line with these objectives, and 3) establish accountability/metrics for each objective.

Wayne Stogsdill had the following thoughts, "In order to achieve lasting greatness, we need to find and capitalize on pockets of greatness and then spread this to the entire organization. We need to confront the brutal facts to ensure that mistakes are not re-done. We do not need to place blame, just fix the problems and move on to success. Our organization needs to be the best

at what we do, but always make sure that we do not overextend ourselves and take on more than we can be successful at."

According to Amena Henville, "It was inspiring to see the energy and motivation that came from the Chief in implementing his plan by empowering us all to go out and do great things. I think that it will take a lot of work to get everyone else as excited about what we're doing, but excitement is contagious and it only takes a few people to get it started."

Attending the conference was a tremendous learning experience and gave us, as Emerging Leaders, the opportunity to gain insight into how our leaders formulate solutions to our growing challenges and was truly one of the highlights of my career, thus far. Along with the other Emerging Leaders, I witnessed dedication and service to organization and country that I hope to emulate and that will enable me to play a part in taking the Corps from "Good to Great".



**Emerging Leaders at the 2007 Summer Leader's Conference.**