

Open Channels

Corps needs 100+million cu. yds. of borrow *Special clay material needed for levees in five parishes*

By Susan Spaht

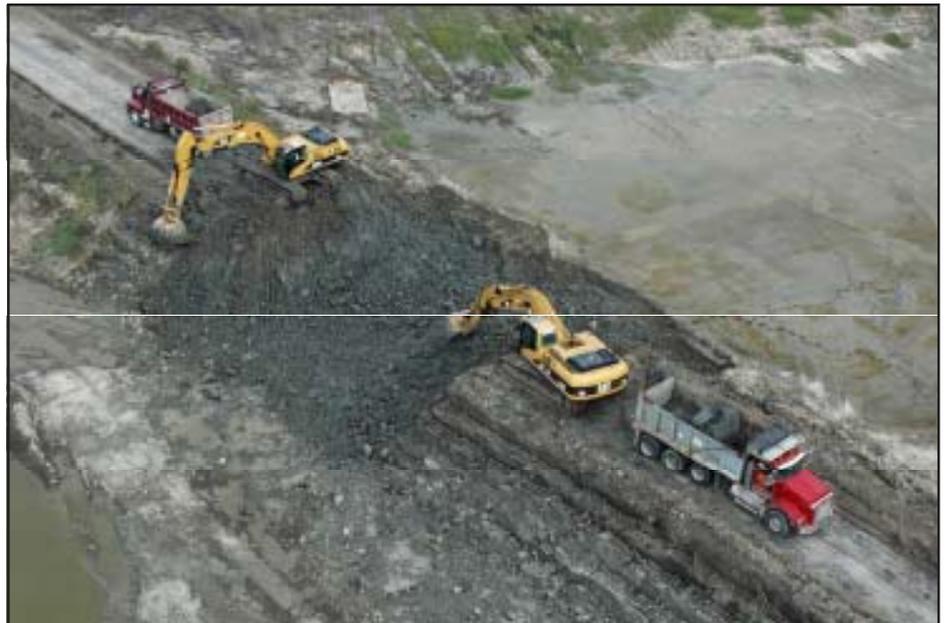
“Borrow” generally refers to earthen materials that are moved from one location to another to use as fill. The Corps of Engineers uses the term borrow to refer to the earthen clay material needed for the hurricane protection system levees.

The Corps of Engineers is looking for sources of borrow to improve Louisiana’s levee system. It is estimated that more than 100 million cubic yards of borrow will be needed to complete the 100-year level of protection over a five-parish area.

Earthen levee construction requires a specific type of clay material which compacts well and prevents seepage. Before borrow material will be used for levee construction, soil borings, testing and environmental clearance need to be completed.

A Sources Sought Announcement has been issued by the Corps to determine how much borrow is locally available. Any supplier who can feasibly deliver large quantities of the right type of earthen clay material is invited to respond to this announcement.

Information on the Sources Sought Announcement is available online at www.fbo.gov.



The Corps of Engineers is seeking suppliers of large amounts of borrow to build levees in the hurricane protection system to the 100-year level. This earthen material must pass specific tests to qualify for use.

To locate the Announcement to make acquisition decisions regarding the possible procurement of earthen clay material.

The Corps seeks a Capability Statement from all parties interested in providing earthen clay. The government will use responses to this request to make decisions regarding the possible procurement of borrow material. This notice is for sources sought only. This is not a request for proposal or invitation to bid. A description of details to be included in the Capability Statement is available online at www.fbo.gov.

Sources Sought Notice, enter W912P808SS0002 in the search box, then click the headline, “Earthen clay material needed for south Louisiana parishes.”

“A Sources Sought Announcement is an opportunity for private citizens throughout the region to let the Corps know they have material that may be suitable for use in building levees,” said Soheila Holley, senior project manager of the Corps’ borrow team.

(see Clay, page 2)



Over 100 million cubic yards of earthen material would fill approximately 20 Superdomes.



The government will use responses to this Sources Sought Announcement to make acquisition decisions regarding the possible procurement of earthen clay material.

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



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Generally Speaking

by Brig. Gen. Robert Crear
Commander
Mississippi Valley Division



First, Happy 2008! It is often said of fallen soldiers that they have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country, and indeed they have.

Those of us who are fortunate enough to have served without making that sacrifice can look forward to a wonderful second age or retirement. I give thanks that I am lucky enough to be in that position.

With that said, I want you all to know that Reatha and I have made the decision to transition out of the Army, and begin our “second age.”

Who could have guessed that I would be able to end my military career in the same place it all began for Reatha and me ... our hometown of Vicksburg.

We have spent 32 wonderful years in the Army and the truth is that it has been the furthest thing from a sacrifice that you could imagine. It has been, above all, a privilege.

For me that privilege is not just about serving my country or standing under my flag. It is not just about devotion to a duty. It has been about reaching my potential and about becoming the best that I could be in any situation.

It has been about leading and working with both Soldiers and Civilians and helping them to reach their potential on the battlefield, working disaster response, as well as the day-to-day opportunities that arise.

It has been about learning from Soldiers and Civilians of all grades and ranks. That is what the Army teaches and what the Army expects.

I look back on my career with total satisfaction. Like many others, I suspect, I learned some harsh realities of life on the job. Yet I always did my best and believed in my heart in the justness and the truth of what we were trying to do and the people we were trying to help.

I am honored to have given this time of my life to the Army and in particular to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Given the opportunity, I wouldn't change a thing. It has been an incredible adventure and career.

It has been a distinct honor and a privilege to serve as Commanding General of the Mississippi Valley Division and President of the Mississippi River Commission these past three and a half years as my last assignment in the military.

Reatha and I look forward to our “second age” and what it holds for us. On that note, we have selected 20 February for the change of command. Additionally, today the Army announced my replacement and friend – Brig. Gen. Michael J. Walsh. He most recently served as Commander of the Gulf Region Division in Iraq. I know you will grant him your full support and respect.

I look forward to the next six weeks, and although my schedule hasn't eased up much, to crossing paths with as many of you as I can.

You are my credentials!

Hooah!



Volunteering for GWOT Tours: Rewarding, Challenging, Enriching

By Ron Eschmann

Throughout U.S. history, Corps of Engineers civilians have had a proud tradition of stepping up to volunteer for worldwide deployment in support of military operations.

Continuing that tradition, many more have deployed overseas in support of the Global War on Terrorism. This critical mission is not over, and both the Afghanistan Engineer District and the Gulf Region Division are still seeking Corps civilians to fill a multitude of positions.

“At the present time, there are over 300 vacancy announcements that are listed on both the Army Civilian Personnel Online and USAJobs websites,” said Helen Lenahan, chief, Headquarters deployment team. “Many of these announcements are listed as ‘open continuous’ because of the need to recruit talented, experienced people on an ongoing basis.

“Why volunteer?” said Lenahan. “Serving in Afghanistan, or Iraq, presents a unique opportunity for professional growth and personal enrichment. Many volunteer because they believe in the Corps’ rebuilding mission in these countries, or they may volunteer out of sense of patriotic duty, or wanting to help people build a better life and future.”

Additional volunteer benefits and incentives for federal employees may include temporary promotion opportunities; post differential, danger and overtime pay; and separate maintenance allowance among others.

Lt. Col. Kari Otto, AED deputy commander said, “No matter why you volunteer, it’s very rewarding

to be part of such a worthy cause. The projects are fast-paced in Afghanistan, and it’s not uncommon to see a major construction project completed during a six or 13-month deployment.”

AED maintains its headquarters in Kabul, but there are area and resident offices located throughout the country to support the mission. Deployments in Afghanistan offer a wide range of experiences for volunteers to choose from, “and there’s something for everyone,” according to Bruce Huffman, AED Public Affairs officer. Corps employees based in Afghanistan might work out of Kandahar, Bagram, Gardez, Qalat.

GRD headquarters is located in Baghdad and has three district offices located in Tikrit, Tallil, and at Baghdad International Airport. Each district office has multiple locations that are co-located with coalition forces across Iraq.

While deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq, Corps employees will work with coalition partners, the State Department, and the host country to build health care clinics, schools, roads, power distribution facilities, and other infrastructure projects.

Col. Gary Pease, chief of staff, GRD, stated, “GRD is great personal and career experience. People assigned here have a level of responsibility and authority well beyond any job they have ever had before.”



Larry Reever, lockmaster, Lock and Dam 20, puts a new pair of shoes on a child during a deployment in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Reever serves America as a civil servant in the Corps and as a Soldier in the Army Reserve. He served in theater from Febuary 2003 through April 2004 with the reserves.

GRD employees work complex projects and interface with a wide variety of stakeholders, to include Iraqi contractors, Iraqi government officials, coalition partners, U.S. Department of State and US Agency for International Development employees.

“Most importantly,” said Pease, “is that they leave Iraq feeling they have made a vital contribution in the birth of a free and democratic nation, which is essential to the future security of the United States. Additionally, they will grow personally and professionally, and return with a real feeling of satisfaction that comes from participating in such an important mission,” he added.

(see GWOT, next page)



-GWOT-

“Our work here in Afghanistan is touching people’s lives in a positive way, and you can see that everywhere you look,” Otto said. “We are doing far more than building structures; we are creating a better future and quality of life for a country that has been at war for over 30 years.”

The Corps is providing Afghans with things most people take for granted, such as roads, clean water and adequate health care, noted Otto.

“You really gain an appreciation for the possessions and opportunities you have as an American when you see someone drink clean water or get health care for the first time in their life,” she said.

One question that is frequently asked is: What will my home away from home be like?

“Living conditions in GRD are excellent,” said Pease. “All employees get their own room, which usually has a television, DVD player, and a bathroom. Also, food and transportation are free.

Most GRD locations have gyms, libraries, movies, and other opportunities to rest and relax. Also, civilian employees are now authorized three home leaves during a one-year tour. Leave transportation is paid by the government.

Additionally, communications with family and friends is “very easy and convenient,” added Pease.

Similarly, Huffman with AED, responded, “Accommodations in Afghanistan are quite nice, with modern dining facilities, and nicely equipped gyms, and living quarters, although some forward operating locations can be a bit more rustic.”

There are many opportunities for “rest and relaxation” leave and recreation while deployed, and most Corps employees in Afghanistan have phone and internet access in their individual rooms.

“This has been the most rewarding personal and professional experience I have ever had,” said Curt Heckelman, Deputy for Programs and Project Management, Gulf Region North District.

“You quickly realize that you are a part of something that is much, much larger than any individual effort you have done before now and for me, it has been a great honor,” said Heckelman.

Heckelman said that every person works at a higher intensity and learns very quickly how to execute at a different level. “The pace is unrelenting, but it is also energizing. My most memorable experience is having the ability to teach, coach, and mentor individuals.”

Currently, both AED and GRD are in need of area, resident, and project engineers. However, other mission support positions are also available for administrative support, budget analysts, contract specialists, program managers, public affairs specialists and many others.

Applicants can self nominate through the Army Vacancy Announcement Board: <http://cpol.army.mil> or at USAJOBS.opm.gov.

What’s ahead?
AED
(www.aed.usace.army.mil)
and GRD
(www.grd.usace.army.mil)
will be producing videos that will be available online that highlight civilian employees living and work environments.

For first hand accounts of Corps member’s t ours, please visit:
www.grd.usace.army.mil/news/postcards/index.asp.

Another great starting place for those who are c onsidering Corps duty in support of GWOT can be found at the Corps’ site seen here and located at
<http://cpolwapp.belvoir.army.mil/coe-gwot/>.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers marks four years with Gulf Region Division anniversary.



Schwanz honored

by Shannon Bauer



Neil Schwanz

The National Society of Professional Engineers selected St. Paul District employee Neil Schwanz, design branch, as one of its top ten finalists, representing the Department of the Army, in its federal engineer of the year program.

This annual award is sponsored by the NSPE Professional Engineers in Government.

Candidates are nominated by their agency based on engineering achievements, education, continuing education, professional/technical society activities, NSPE membership, awards, honors and civic and humanitarian activities. A total of 34 agencies nominated candidates.

Schwanz will be recognized for his award at the National Press Club, Feb. 21, in Washington, D.C. There, NSPE will announce the 2008 Federal Engineer of the Year.

Schwanz is a regional technical specialist for the Mississippi Valley Division. He has been a federal engineer for more than 29 years, all of them working for the St. Paul District. He is also a member of the Minnesota Geotechnical Society, the Association of State Dam Safety Officials and the Order of the Engineer.

He received this award predominately for his work on rebuilding the hurricane protection system in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. His role included completing numerical modeling of the New Orleans I-walls, leading the development of seepage and stability design criteria, participating in a field load test conducted on the London Avenue canal wall and more. He spent more than 1,100 hours above and beyond his normal schedule in this work.

Additionally, Schwanz recently authored two chapters for the Unified Facilities Criteria on *Engineering use of Geotextiles* and portions of the Engineer Circular on *Evaluation or Design of I-walls*, performed numerous independent technical reviews and value engineering studies for other Corps' districts and is chairman of the planning committee for the University of Minnesota's annual Geotechnical Engineering Conference.

"Neil [Schwanz] exemplifies the best the engineering profession can offer and sets an outstanding example for all engineers," said Marsha Mose, design branch chief.

Survey crew weaves around ice fishermen on Lake Pepin this winter

By Lisa Lund

A survey crew from the channels and harbors unit in Fountain City, Wis., starts their ice surveys on Lake Pepin on the Mississippi River every February. The survey data on the ice thickness is used by the towing industry so shippers can gauge the opening of navigation through the lake.

This year, the surveys started Feb. 22, when the crew launched an airboat for the trip from the lower part of the lake near Camp Lucupolis, Minn., to the upper part of the lake near Frontenac, Minn.

This year seemed to be a little unusual on the lake – there was a small village of fishermen on the ice. Because of the extreme cold weather this past winter, the ice has been thick enough for vehicles to drive on the ice into March. Some of these fishermen enter from Maiden Rock, Wis., and travel across the lake. Others drive on at Frontenac.

Now, the crew exercises caution to avoid the fishermen and their ice shacks. When they stop to measure the ice thickness near the



Steve Tapp, operations manager, Fountain City, Wis., took his first trip in the airboat on the Lake Pepin ice, March 19. (Photo by Mark Scholl)

(see Lake, next page)



-Lake-

fisherman, they hear more than just the airboat engine winding down and the crinkly noise of their frozen-stiff float suits. The whine of ice augers drilling holes and voices of fishermen telling their fish tales break the silence on a still day.

As the survey crew ran the airboat upstream, they stopped to sample the ice at 22 locations, measuring every mile for 18 miles,

from river mile 765 to 783, and select points in-between. The ice at mile 771 measured 32 inches thick on March 12.

As the weather warms up, the vehicles, ice shacks and fishermen will start to disappear from the lake. Eventually the ice will be thin enough for the tow boats to pass through the lake and head farther north to inaugurate the navigation season on the Upper Mississippi River.



A little fishing village sprung up on the thick ice on the Mississippi River at Lake Pepin near one of the sampling points this winter. Al Van Guilder, mechanical dredge inspector (left), is on the ice with an auger. Kevin Ressie, a licensed airboat operator, is in the boat. (Photo by Lisa Lund)

St. Paul District and Industrial Builders, Inc., receive partnering award for East Grand Forks, Minn., project

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division and the Mississippi Valley Associated General Contractors, or MVAGC, selected the East Grand Forks, Minn., Existing Floodwall Modifications project as the recipient of its 2007 Dan W. Renfro Partnering Award.

The Dan W. Renfro Partnering Award is given out annually to a Corps' partnership that best exemplifies the principles and successes of project partnering within the Mississippi Valley Division. The Corps' St. Paul District and the prime contractor, Industrial Builders, Inc., of Fargo, N.D., will accept the award at the Associated General Contractor's eightieth annual meeting in Destin, Fla., Feb. 8.

Criteria used to select the recipient of this award include whether or not the overall project quality attained was beyond that of contract specifications, whether or not good relations were maintained with all the partners, whether or not team building activities occurred, whether or not innovate ideas were used to improve productivity, quality, safety and more.

Winter 2007



The East Grand Forks project team received this award specifically for their work on modifying an existing 900 foot floodwall. The project included installing a sheetpile seepage cutoff; building a concrete footing extension, foundation piers and entrance wall and plaza; modifying steel supports; weld testing and repairing existing steel supports; installing reinforcing grass pavers and raised brick plants; and more.

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The project not only occurred in a busy downtown area but was also under construction during the sixth highest flood of record in the Red River Valley.

Throughout the project, the partners adopted a team approach that resulted in outstanding performance. They completed a quality project and were successful at communicating and working together to solve problems.



Hercules Supports Work in St. Louis

By George Stringham

The Illinois Waterway’s heavy-lift crane, Hercules, arrives in a towing status, “boom down,” with the mast lowered and boom secured for towing, to the St. Louis District.

The crane arrived on Jan. 10, to begin support to the district. The crane will be used to perform maintenance to bulkhead sections in the district’s service yard until approximately Jan. 31.

After that, the Hercules’ crew will take the crane to Lock and Dam 27 for continued maintenance and support to the St. Louis District.



Corps, WIU Sign Environmental Memorandum

Story and photo by Mark Kane

The Rock Island District and Western Illinois University signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Dec. 10 to build on the joint needs, capabilities, responsibilities, and interests of both agencies with the overall goal of understanding and protecting natural resources and enhancing environmental sustainability.

The ceremony, held at the WIU-Quad Cities campus on John Deere Road, Moline, Ill., included a welcome and explanation of the MOU by Roger Viadero, director of Western’s Institute for Environmental Studies, and remarks from Col. Robert Sinkler, District Commander, and Western Illinois’ President Al Goldfarb. Sinkler and Goldfarb then signed the MOU.

“Today we can produce things of much greater value for the American taxpayer by forming strong interagency teams and partnerships that include federal, state and local government organizations,” said Sinkler. “Both the Corps and Western share a common vision for the Upper Mississippi River Valley.”

“The Memorandum of Understanding between Western Illinois and the Corps is a significant step for our University’s presence and commitment in the Quad Cities,” said WIU President Al Goldfarb.



Col. Robert Sinkler, Rock Island District Commander, signs the Corps/WIU Memorandum of Understanding at the WIU-Quad Cities campus with co-signer and Western Illinois’ President Al Goldfarb.

“This partnership enhances our strategic plan’s value of social responsibility and our environmental planning and sustainability efforts, which are key features of the Quad Cities and Macomb-campus master plans.”

(see WIU, next page)



-WIU-

“The MOU builds on significant prior work between Western and the Corps and seals the long-term commitment of both organizations to support regional missions of mutual interest,” said Viadero. “Work conducted under this MOU will build on joint needs, capabilities, responsibilities and interests of both parties with the goals of understanding and protecting natural resources in support of environmental sustainability.

“The main objectives of the partnership are to promote environmental and socio-economic research, to increase knowledge related to the sustainable use and management of environmental resources and to promote the application of Geographic Information Systems for sustainable resource management,” he said.

“We are currently focusing our efforts on two things,” said Sinkler.

“The first is to achieve a greater balance between traditional water-resource demands and ecosystem objectives; and, the second is to restore the vitality of the environment from degradation caused by past development. In these efforts, we will rely heavily on Western Illinois University as a key member of our interagency team.”

The Rock Island Argus/ Moline Dispatch contributed to this article.

Groundbreaking Ceremony Completed for Mississippi River Project Office’s New Building

Story and photo by Mark Kane

Amid cold temperatures and snow flurries, the groundbreaking ceremony for the Quad-Cities Mississippi River Project Office’s new building took place in Pleasant Valley, Iowa, near Locks and Dam 14 on Jan. 14.

The ceremony included Rep. Bruce Braley; Col. Robert Sinkler, the Commander of the Rock Island District Corps of Engineers, Nancy Mulcahey from the Quad-City Development Group, and Steve Swanson from Swanson Construction Co., the contractor for the project.

“This office will serve as a major planning and operations center for integrating federal, state and local government; and non-governmental efforts to maintain and improve 314 miles of the Upper Mississippi River,” said Sinkler. “It will also give the Corps the technologies, facilities and capabilities to supervise 300 employees including lock and dam operators and rangers who operate and maintain 12 locks and dams and their pools, and manage 26 recreation sites on the Mississippi.”

The Rock Island District Corps of Engineers is in charge of operations and maintenance of the river from Dubuque, Iowa, to Hannibal, Mo. These operations are run out of the Mississippi River Project Office.

From this office, the Corps supervises the lock and dam employees and rangers on the Mississippi River within our area of responsibility; operates and maintains the locks and dams and recreation sites within our area of responsibility; operates the Regional Structural Repair Center for maintaining river structures on the Upper Mississippi River; and, manages our forested resource program. Even though based in the Quad Cities, the Regional Structural Repair Crews work on projects from St. Paul, Minn., to New Orleans, La.

“The office will also be responsible for managing 55,000 acres of federal forests and wetlands along the river,” said Sinkler.

The facilities currently being used are becoming old and antiquated.



From left to right, Col. Robert Sinkler, Nancy Mulcahey, Rep. Bruce Braley, and Steve Swanson participate in the groundbreaking ceremony .

The office space is primitive, decades old, and spread out amongst a large area.

This new facility will combine the separate functions of the project office and all of the employees into one building. The new facility will also be better able to meet the technology demands of employees, provide them with areas to have meetings, and provide them with a better area to meet with citizens to discuss Corps projects and programs.

The facility is scheduled to be completed in December 2008 and will cost approximately \$2 million.



Carp Catch at Carlyle

By Alan Dooley

They've been coming to the spillway below the Carlyle Lake Dam for at least two summers now. Last summer they were so thick that deputy lake manager Dick Conner thought he might be able to walk across their backs when he and Rob Maher, of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, looked down on them from the top of the dam into the spillway and Kaskaskia River.

“They” are Asian Carp – primarily the Big Head species, but also other varieties including silver and grass carp.

The history of the United States is replete with examples of foreign species being introduced and going wrong – badly wrong.

In 1876 an exhibit from Japan at the Philadelphia World's Fair showed a plant, the aroma and rich foliage of which captured America's imagination. Cattle readily ate it. Its foliage could be used in salads. Its blossoms and fruit could be transformed into a sweet jelly or jam. During the drought of the 1930s it was seen as a plant to secure soil from erosion.

Today we know it as kudzu – the green vine that grows up to 60 feet a year, which covers shrubs, trees, telephone poles, buildings and just about everything else in America's southeast.

In the 1890s another group of do-gooders introduced 100 English or European starlings into New York City's Central Park as part of an effort to establish this “poor man's mynah” in the new world.



Here, large tubs of Asian carp harvested from the Kaskaskia River are prepared for transfer, where they were sold for 10 cents a pound. The invasive fish were originally brought into the United States to clean plankton and other materials from commercial catfish ponds in the south. (USACE photo by Jason Selle)

And establish itself it has, in 49 of 50 states and most of Canada, displacing the majority of the continent's hole-nesting birds.

Conner asked if the same commercial fishermen who fish the lake for carp and buffalo might be permitted to go after the carp below the lake and the IDNR granted a permit to try.

During the closing days of December, once the water was cold enough to bring the invasive carp back to the foot of the dam,

commercial fishermen took to the waters, essentially driving the fish into nets and then loading them into their boats. Game fish were released back into the water.

Before the effort ended several days later, more than 60,000 pounds of fish were harvested and sold for 10 cents a pound.

Asian carp were brought into the United States for their appetites.

(see Carp. next page)



-Carp-

Their planned task was cleaning the plankton and water-clouding materials from commercial catfish ponds in the south. But with floods in the 1970s they escaped into the environment and have exploded northward in less than three decades.

Today they are within 50 miles of the Great Lakes.

The Big Head variety can grow to four feet and 100 pounds. All of this growth takes food from less aggressive suction feeders such as other carp, sturgeon and paddlefish.

The silver variety is smaller but is a prodigious leaper, flying up to 10 feet out of the water, leaping into boats and injuring water skiers and jet ski operators in recent years.

More than \$9 million is currently being spent to build an electric barrier that it is hoped will thwart their steady progress north and cut them off from the rich sport

fisheries on the Great Lakes.

These fish are following the longest river wholly within Illinois, the Kaskaskia and are currently stymied by the high water dam that forms Carlyle Lake. They've been unable to get through the spillway and hopefully they won't find a way either. Otherwise they would likely destroy the sport and commercial fishing in Carlyle Lake and work their way north to the Lake Shelbyville dam.

Joe Smothers at Carlyle reports that they hope commercial fishing for the carp can be continued below the dam. "We're working that proposal with the IDNR," he reports.

So what happened to the 30 tons of fish caught in December?

Carp don't enjoy the best reputation among sport fishermen and one might expect them to have been ground up for feed stock or fertilizer.

But according to Joe Smothers, "They're being eaten, by people!"

Smothers reports that he has learned that a portion of the fish was frozen, boxed and ship to southern California, apparently for the sizeable Asian population there.

"Some were sent to St. Louis, again, apparently for human consumption," he said, and "some were sent east to be processed into gefilte fish. So these fish are meeting cultural and dietary needs," he concluded happily.

As one considers the fight being waged by the federal, state and local governments to halt the spread of these large, voracious fish, it is instructive to realize that somewhere out in nature is a predator that would be delighted to eat these carp – all of them. But it's sobering to consider what form that creature might assume. "Some items like utilities and fuels have doubled and tripled through this period," she noted.

Four District lakes reducing services for FY08

Four lake projects operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District, are announcing reduced recreation service levels this summer. Flat-to-declining budgets are dictating reductions at Mark Twain Lake in Missouri, and Shelbyville, Carlyle and Rend Lakes in Illinois.

Even after reducing services, Corps managers point out that they will start the 2008 recreation season with 92 percent of campgrounds open until after the July 4th weekend, 85 percent until after Labor Day weekend and 75 percent will remain open until the season's end. Similar figures are cited for beaches, picnic

shelters and boat ramp lanes. In addition, the four lakes offer state park facilities that are not affected by the Corps budget reductions.

According to St. Louis Operations Chief Peggy O'Bryan, "We have worked with flat, to slightly declining budget numbers for several years. We identified economies and deferred maintenance to continue to support the recreation program," she said.

But while funding has remained flat, each year there have been small, but accumulating increases in salaries as well as costs of contracted services and supplies.



North Marcum Day Use Area looking to the southeast. In the background is South Marcum Campground. Both areas at Rend Lake will be closed for the 2008 season.
(photo by Alan Dooley)

(see Lakes, next page)



-Lakes-

District Commander Col. Lewis F. Setliff III directed that public health and safety must continue to have top priority and no changes would jeopardize that. He also directed that the District continue to minimize impacts on the people who use these lakes. He stated that managers must balance historic usage figures and the geographical distribution of Corps facilities, with the similar facilities and assistance the Corps gets from partners that share these lakes such as the states of Missouri and Illinois.

The heaviest impacts are being felt at two Corps Lakes. At Carlyle Lake, some campgrounds and facilities will open on schedule but close early. At Rend Lake, South Marcum Campground and the North Sandusky and North Marcum Day Use Areas will be closed all season. Lake Shelbyville and Mark Twain Lake will operate all of their campgrounds on a normal seasonal schedule but, as at all four of the lakes, services will be reduced for visitors.

Reductions will include less frequent mowing, refuse pickup and facility cleaning. In addition, Visitor Centers will operate on weekends only, when demand is at its highest. Corps officials also acknowledge that support to some activities and events will have to be curtailed this year.

The Corps is realizing other savings by accepting gaps in vacated full time positions and not hiring as many of the temporary summer employees as in the past.

“This will result in fewer education and water safety programs and less frequent visibility of patrolling park rangers,” O’Bryan acknowledged.



Although Carlyle Lake (above) will not have any complete closures throughout the season, there will be partial closures and reduction in services. Like Mark Twain Lake, Lake Shelbyville (right) is not scheduling any closures at campgrounds or recreational areas; however, their visitor center will only be open on weekends (Carlyle and Rend lake visitor centers will only be open on weekends, Mark Twain Lake doesn’t have a visitor center). (photo by Alan Dooley)

Roving visits by area law enforcement patrols that the Corps funds will also be reduced, although law and safety organizations and personnel will still respond to emergencies as before.

Corps managers also acknowledge that they have no contingency funding for unexpected breakdowns. They explained that if something major breaks they will either have to identify additional cuts for repairs or do without the service until they can find other funds.

Corps managers also explained the different levels of service cuts as a function of the Federal budget process. Funds are allocated to each lake project for the broad spectrum of missions each lake has such as flood risk management, environmental stewardship and water supply. While minor adjustments can be made between those requirements at a given lake, regulations restrict moving – or reallocating – money between different projects.

The St. Louis District also notes that one of its lakes, Wapappello in southeastern, Mo., was built under the Mississippi River and

Tributaries (MR&T) Program to reduce flooding after the disastrous Lower Mississippi River Flood of 1927. Since that lake is funded under the MR&T appropriation and did not experience the same budget reduction as our other lakes under the Operation and Maintenance appropriation, there will not be similar reductions there.

The St. Louis District lakes hosted some 11 million visits last year, providing regional recreational economic benefits of some \$322 million. While it’s anticipated that those numbers will fall this year, with income impacts for businesses near the lakes, especially those serving seasonal or recreation needs, Corps officials say they have sought ways to minimize those losses. The various projects plan to hold public meetings in their areas to answer questions and to seek public input. They are continuing to explore greater involvement by volunteers as well as regional partners and stakeholders.

Individual lake project offices will be available to talk to visitors to help them find alternatives if their first choices are unavailable and help them be prepared for reduced service levels.



Protecting the investment

Last of Grand Prairie pumps arrive

Story and photos by Jim Pogue

The Memphis District took delivery Jan. 22 of the third and final shipment of the pumps for the Grand Prairie pumping station. The pumps went into storage at the Navy Cavitation Facility on President’s Island until the court determines the ultimate status of the Grand Prairie Project.

If the court ultimately decides in favor of the Corps, the pumps will be installed in the project. Otherwise, the Corps will sell the pumps.

“We appreciate the court allowing us to complete the pump fabrication and delivery, and protect this costly investment,” said Project Manager Paul Hamm. “We also appreciate the U.S. Navy providing space in their facility to store the pumps.”

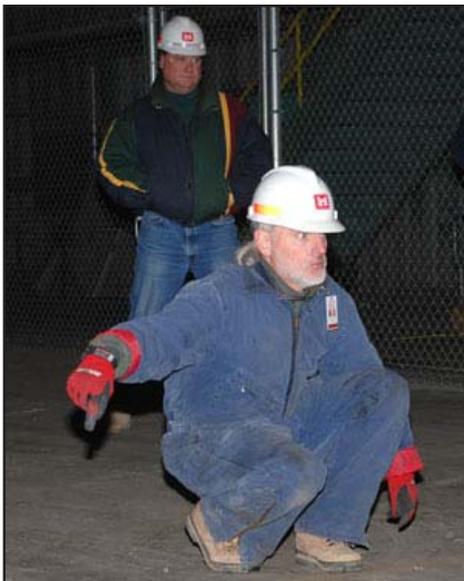


Using a portable crane, workers from Ensley Engineer Yard unload pump part for storage as the Navy Cavitation Facility on President’s Island.

Work on the multi-million dollar water management project, designed to protect and preserve the Alluvial and Sparta aquifers, is currently on hold while the Corps answers court challenges from the National Wildlife Federation and Arkansas Wildlife Federation. They allege the work proposed by the local sponsor and the Corps would adversely impact the Ivory-billed woodpecker.

Assistant Project Manager Greg Grugett was at the Navy facility for the unloading process.

“Don Mayer and his crew did a great job on this challenging job,” Grugett said. “They battled cold weather and accomplished a potentially dangerous set of heavy lifts in a very professional manner. My ‘hardhat’ is off to them.”



Don Mayer (kneeling) directs the unloading of a pump section as Greg Grugett watches from behind.

Studies and surveys by the Corps say this is untrue. Their findings are supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, when Field Supervisor Mark Sattelberg wrote, “... the (Fish and Wildlife) Service concurs with the Corps of Engineers conclusion to its Biological Assessment that the Grand Prairie Demonstration Project, which includes surveys, long term environmental monitoring and adaptive management, is not likely to adversely affect the Ivory-billed woodpecker.”



Roosevelt Tiggs and Dexter Littleton with a large pump section.



Looking to the future

District to do half million dollar river study

by Jim Pogue

The Memphis District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is set to begin work on a major reconnaissance study of the lower Mississippi River. Titled the Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment (LMRRA), up to half a million dollars in Federal funds may be used to work in cooperation with Federal resource agencies and states that border the river.

“This is a great opportunity for us to work together as a very broad-based team to determine the best ways to protect and benefit from this vital natural resource,” said Col. Tom Smith, commander of the Corps’ Memphis District.

“We will be looking toward the future to ensure it is there to be used and enjoyed by the many generations that will follow us.”

Section 402 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 authorized the LMRRA. It includes three assessments.

They are:

1. A list identifying data gaps in information for river-related access.
2. An assessment of natural resource habitat needs, and
3. A needs assessment for river-related recreation access.

The study area includes 954 miles of the lower Mississippi River and portions of seven states which border the river. Additionally, engineers and scientists will look at river reaches and adjacent floodplains within the Lower Mississippi River Alluvial Valley which have commercial



Dr. Ken Jones, professor at Dyersburg State Community College, prepares to board a Memphis District boat during a survey of least tern birds conducted in 2006. The Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment will look at many additional aspects of the river system.

navigation channels on the Mississippi River mainstem and tributaries south of Cairo, Ill., and in the Atchafalaya River basin.

The Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley has lost 80 percent of its original forested wetlands and 90 percent of its floodplain. Yet the 954-mile-long lower river and many of its tributaries are still functioning ecosystems.

“Although the Lower Mississippi River’s 2.7 million-acre mainstem floodplain ecosystem is larger than that of the Everglades, it gets little attention beyond navigation and flood control,” said Leighann Gipson, the Corps’ project manager.

“For example, more than 1,600 lakes and 145 side channels up 110,000 acres along the river.”

Another benefit of the study and subsequent work could help stimulate local economies by restoring natural resources along the river. Officials say this kind of work would not degrade the quality of navigation or flood risk management efforts.

The Corps expects to work collaboratively with the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Commission, two U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regional offices and a variety of resource agencies in seven states along the river. Other key stakeholders and groups are expected to join the effort as the study moves forward.