Open Channels

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R5 puts puzzle pieces together, creates a shared future view

Brig. Gen. (P.) Michael J. Walsh signs the Permanent Order to establish MVD Regional Planning organization during the R5 meeting held at the Vicksburg District, Oct. 14 & 15. Photos by Alfred Dulaney

By Bob Anderson
Public Affairs Officer

More than 100 Mississippi Valley Division team members and Corps guests gathered for the initial meeting of five division-wide regional boards (R5) Oct. 14-15 in the Vicksburg District's multi-purpose conference room. *(Please see side bar that describes the five topic areas discussed during the meeting.).*

"When we all have a clear line-of-sight to a shared target, our success rate for achieving regional goals will be exceptional," said Joni Nichols, Business Management Division chief for MVD, who was the meeting coordinator.

"The R5 brought together a broad cross section of regional expertise and leadership to share best practices and create a common set of processes," Nichols added. "This kind of meeting helps build a strong expeditionary work force."

MVD Commander, Brig. Gen. Michael J. Walsh, gave the opening presentation and thanked everyone for a truly exceptional and historic FY09. He also presented everyone a High-5 lapel pin to commemorate the year's successes and R5 event. During his presentation, Brig. Gen. Walsh congratulated the division for hiring 903 new permanent personnel, which represented a net gain (after deducting retirements, transfers, etc.) of 400 employees in FY09. He also gave kudos to everyone for executing the largest MVD program ever, a whopping $4.5 billion.

What is R5?

- Regional Command Council
- Regional Management Board
- Regional Project Review Board
- Regional Program Budget Advisory Committee
- Regional Acquisition Strategy Board

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Welcome Aboard!

Nicolas P. Lopez, Jr.
FEST-M

I'm Nicolas P. Lopez Jr., but most people call me Nick. Having lived in Hawaii since July 1986, I was welcomed by cool weather on my arrival at Jackson International Airport on October 16.

As the new Electrical Engineer for the 579th Engineer Detachment (FEST-M), I'm excited to be a part of USACE.

I am a registered Professional Engineer (Electrical) in the State of Hawaii and a Project Management Professional with Project Management Institute.

I enjoy playing basketball, mountain biking, swimming, running and chess.

I have a beautiful and wonderful daughter named Rachel (an actress and receptionist in Hollywood, Calif.).

I am excited to meet a lot of wonderful people working with the Mississippi Valley Division.

Jerone Bostick
Military Planner

I'm a south Louisiana native, so I've got that culture in my blood. I like all the spicy food, music, festivals and especially the New Orleans Saints football team. I'm a die hard Saints fan win, lose or draw. So, I'm ecstatic that my team is doing so well this season.

I'm probably the most laid back guy there is, due in large part to my living in the "Big Easy", and also because I'm just a country boy with few hang-ups. When I'm not watching football, I enjoy cooking ('cause I like to eat). I'm into music (I dabble a little), photography and fishing.

I live in the New Orleans area now, but I'm originally from Lafayette and attended the University of SW Louisiana (now called Univ. of Louisiana, Lafayette) studying architecture and met my wife of 20 years, Cheryl, there. She is from a little town in Louisiana called Opelousas. We have four children (three sons and one daughter) and believe it or not, I'm also a grandfather. My oldest and youngest sons are local, my middle son lives in Texas and my daughter (who is the youngest of my children) attends ULL.

As mentioned, I majored in architecture. My wife majored in interior design. As you might expect, our house is our drawing board and the place where we bump heads in terms of the décor. I've not won a dispute yet. That's why I'm always saying my house has been "Cherylized". Next house, I'll win one (yeah….right)!

I came to the Corps in 2006 working the hurricane recovery mission in New Orleans as the executive officer of the LA-RFO. I've spent the last 17 months in HQUSACE as the military planner. I have 32 years wearing the Army uniform, so hopefully I can contribute my experience to the MVD team.

The End of NSPS

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 contains a provision to repeal NSPS and requires the transition of NSPS employees, with no loss in pay, to previously existing civilian personnel systems no later than January 1, 2012.

The enacted bill also provides for new authorities regarding a new performance management system; redesigned hiring procedures; mandatory training for supervisors; and the ability for the Department to request Congressional approval for additional personnel authorities and flexibilities.

The Department will take all necessary steps to transition employees out of NSPS and into the appropriate pay system.

During the transition period, NSPS remains in effect for organizations and functional units working under the system. Organizations and employees currently covered by NSPS will continue to follow NSPS regulations, policies and procedures until such time as the law is enacted and the transition takes places for their organization.

For more information, including a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs), visit the NSPS homepage: http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/ and CPMS at: http://www.cpms.osd.mil

Welcome Aboard!

Rodney Stephen
FEST-M

I recently arrived from Stuttgart, Germany where I was the Budget Analyst for the Operations Directorate, U. S. European Command Comptroller Office.

My hometown is Palestine located in the great state of Texas.

I'm a fan of every sports team in Texas and a few other sports teams outside of Texas.

After 20 years of service in the Finance Corps of the United States Army, I retired in October 2006.

Besides loving to read, my hobbies include running, biking, traveling, home gardening, landscaping and listening to music.

Roman Bieniek
FEST-M

I am proud to be a member of the MVD family. I have over twenty years of experience in project engineering and management.

I love working with people, as it is the project stakeholders' experience, expertise and knowledge that make my projects successful. I hope that people working with me will think of me as a good contributor to the success of the Corps and to their success, as well.

I spent the last 10 years at school acquiring my education and, consequently, not having much time for anything else. However, I still find time for my hobbies including fishing, watching nature and reading a good novel.

My wife will be relocating to Vicksburg shortly.

Brandy Alexander
Programs Directorate

I came to MVD from the Vicksburg District. My official title here is a string of acronyms that boil down to mean program manager for St. Paul.

I leave behind (at MVK) my wonderful husband, Mike, and the glorious Value Engineering Officer position.

Mike and I are currently overseeing the construction of two homes - one locally and one in Alabama; both are in the foundation/framing stages, so no visitors yet. A funny fact: We sometimes get teased that we live so far out of town that we have to come into town to hunt. In fact, our closest neighbor is a 4,000-acre hunting camp. It is quiet out there and cell phone coverage is sketchy...but we finally got water service - hurray!

Cynthia Constancio
Emergency Management

I recently joined the MVD Emergency Operations Center team as the new EM Specialist.

Previously I was employed by the Vicksburg District EOC.

I moved to the Vicksburg area in 2007, from Lake Village, Ark.

I have two daughters: Christy, who lives in Chicago and Celeste, who attends Warren Central Jr. High.

My hobbies include walking my daughters three dogs (anyone want one?), fishing and reading a good book.