

Big Water Bulletin

October-November 2009



US Army Corps of Engineers®
Jacksonville District

The **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District** specializes in the planning, engineering, construction and management of large infrastructure projects in Florida and the Caribbean. The Corps' mission includes flood control and water management; navigation; shore protection and restoration; environmental restoration; hazardous, toxic and radioactive remediation; military support and emergency support. The Army Corps of Engineers built the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project 50 years ago at the state of Florida's request and with the authorization of the United States Congress.

Pahokee mayor sets sights on jobs

Wayne Whitaker is a man on a mission.

The mayor of Pahokee has one goal in mind as leader of the city: bring more jobs to revitalize the city and reduce its 27 percent unemployment rate.

Whitaker is no stranger to Pahokee or changes in the lakeside community. He moved to Pahokee from North Carolina at age 9. His father was both a minister with the Church of God and a painter. The mayor's wife (the former Alice Guerry) is a native of Pahokee; her father was in the area during the hurricane of 1928 and the catastrophic flooding it caused.

Whitaker followed in his father's footsteps by not only continuing as a man of faith, but also as a man with a trade. He built a number of houses in the area during his career, and has since retired.

Whitaker's first contact with the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** was at age 17. He worked on a project north of Lake Okeechobee related to the channelization of the Kissimmee River; and many years later, he worked on a new pump station in Clewiston. As a resident and a

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Corps of Engineers fills rock quarry

The **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District** is filling an abandoned rock quarry in western Palm Beach County to benefit the **Herbert Hoover Dike** and, in the process, the local economy is getting a much-needed boost.

Many years ago, a mining company excavated rock in the Pahokee area near the dike and adjacent to the **Paul Rardin Park** on Bacom Point Road. The mining has long since stopped, and many small rectangular lakes are left in its place. Because the quarry is so close to the Herbert Hoover Dike and makes it difficult for the Corps to detect dike seepage, the Corps identified filling the quarry as an important early component of the dike rehabilitation effort.



These quarries will be filled by this spring to benefit the dike, which is pictured in the foreground.

Filling the quarried areas will help stabilize the area and the base of the dike, and will allow the Corps to observe any potential seepage issues at the dike's base. Seepage is normal for all earthen dikes, but excessive seepage that carries sediment is an indication of erosion. The Corps is filling 40 acres of the lakes on property owned by the state of Florida. (Some lakes farther from the dike will remain on privately-owned property.) The lakes will be filled with soil and rock and will be covered with grass.

This work has an added benefit for the Glades communities – not only will it increase the dike's stability, but it will also provide economic benefits to the local economy.

The Corps awarded the \$6,150,220 contract to **H&R of Belle Glade, Inc.**, a general contracting firm. The company is using its own locally-based employees and is subcontracting other work. "All the money will stay in Palm Beach County," reported company President **Enrique F. Rionda**. In addition, Rionda is hiring 10 residents of the adjacent **Lake Breeze Trailer Park** for associated work. The project involves clearing land, surveying, removing debris, filling the lakes, and adding topsoil and sod.

Work began on Sept. 8 and is expected to conclude in the spring of 2010. During this time, nearby residents can expect to hear noise from construction and trucks, see more trucks on the road, and may notice dust, although project managers are hoping to control this by sprinkling water on the ground. No work will be done at night.

For more information, contact **Ted Roberts**, the Corps community outreach liaison in Pahokee, at 904-576-3010 or 561-924-5534, ext. 19.



Land must be cleared of debris before filling the rock mining quarry, which will improve dike stability.

Pahokee mayor sets sights on jobs

continues from front page

contractor, he appreciates the role Corps fills in the vicinity of Lake Okeechobee. "They are a first-class operation in my opinion," he said recently from his city hall office.

Whitaker supports the **Herbert Hoover Dike** rehabilitation because it will help protect lake communities and may attract new businesses and residents to the area. "It's part of the long-term plan and we are very proud of the Corps stepping up to the plate and moving forward with it," he said.

Meanwhile, Whitaker is focusing on his priority of attracting future employers with good-paying, stable jobs. He is hopeful a small aircraft manufacturing plant will move to Pahokee, bringing 120 jobs. He also has had discussions with a pharmaceutical manufacturer that may bring up to 80 jobs.

The mayor is optimistic these potential employers, and others, will see Pahokee as he does: a vital city located directly on Lake Okeechobee and with a good future.



Mayor Wayne Whitaker wants to make a difference in Pahokee.

Moore Haven Lock re-opens

To keep operations running safely for the public, the **Moore Haven Lock** underwent a \$3.5 million repair, which is conducted about once every 10 years. It reopened to navigation Sept. 23, again making the **Lake Okeechobee Waterway** passable from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico.



81st Remembrance of the 1928 Storm held

Indiantown's **Ethel Williams** is one of two 1928 hurricane survivors to attend a remembrance of the nation's second most deadliest natural disaster. Survivor **Purnell Green** of East Stuart also attended. The **East Stuart Historical Society** hosted the memorial service Sept. 16 at the Port Mayaca Memorial Garden to pay homage to 1,600 African Americans who lost their lives. At the time of the disaster, the only obstacle preventing Lake Okeechobee from flooding was a small, locally-built muck dike, which was overtopped and eroded by storm surge. Many local residents perished as a result.



Dam safety experts tour Herbert Hoover Dike



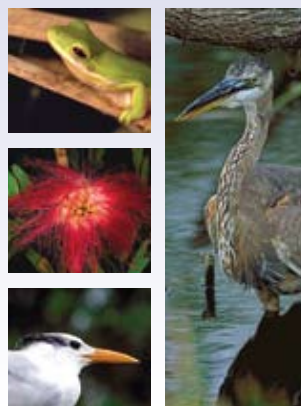
About 100 dam safety professionals from the United States and Canada toured the Herbert Hoover Dike Oct. 1. The tour was offered in conjunction with the **Association of Dam Safety Officials 2009 National Conference** in Hollywood, Fla. Some tour attendees were awed at the challenge of reducing flood risks for a 730-square-mile lake.

To Learn More:

Both the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and the dike strengthening project will take years to complete. There are many ways to keep informed and get involved. Both have Web sites, newsletters, and public meetings.

The Corps of Engineers has an active community outreach program around the lake, too. To learn more, visit www.saj.usace.army.mil or call 1-800-291-9405.

For more information about Everglades restoration and how it affects you, visit www.evergladesplan.org or call 1-877-CERP-USA.



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