



JAXSTRONG®

IN THIS ISSUE

- PORTUGUÉS DAM NEARS COMPLETION
- HARBOR PROJECTS REACH MILESTONES
- UAV PROGRAM IS FUTURE FOCUSED

...AND MORE



JAXSTRONG, *jacksonville*

OUR WORK • OUR PEOPLE • OUR DISTRICT

AUGUST 2013 | Volume 5 Issue 8



COMMANDER'S CORNER

MESSAGE FROM COL. ALAN DODD

WE SHARE AN IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY

On Aug. 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution affirmed the right of women to vote in all public elections. According to the National Women's History Project website, it had taken American women and their male supporters 72 years of ceaseless campaigning to win this basic democratic right. By Presidential Proclamation, August 26 is celebrated annually as Women's Equality Day in recognition of both the anniversary of suffrage and of women's continued efforts toward equal rights in the United States.

Though many gains have been made in the ensuing 93 years, the number of women (and men) in the military who endure sexual harassment or sexual assault is deplorably high. According to a USA Today article from July, last year the Pentagon estimated that about 500 men and women were assaulted each week. From 2010 to 2012, Pentagon records show there was a 35 percent increase in sexual assault and harassment cases in the military.

The demographics of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are very different than that of a traditional military unit or environment, but we are not immune from sexual harassment. To our credit, in the last five years, there has only been one reported case of sexual harassment within the South Atlantic Division. To our discredit, that is one too many.

"We have to do everything we can in leadership and within our ranks to talk about and face up to this problem," said Secretary of the Army John McHugh last month during a meeting with Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention, or SHARP, representatives. "This is the main challenge we face today beyond being at war."

"It is time we take on the fight against sexual assault and sexual harassment as our primary mission," said Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno at a SHARP summit. "It is up to every one of us, civilian and Soldier, general officer to private, to solve this problem within our ranks."

I will not tolerate sexual harassment in the Jacksonville District. It is a climate contrary to Army core values and if any district employee sees something, I expect them to say something. Sexually suggestive, inappropriate comments and other forms of sexual harassment must be reported. Studies show that sexual harassment is often a precursor to sexual assault.

That's why we are all undergoing SHARP training right now – as is the rest of the military. We recently completed SHARP small group engagements between district leaders and all employees. That was a step in the right direction. Now we must complete the online training available to Corps employees on the Intranet. This training consists of a PowerPoint briefing and an online course. All employees must complete the training no later than Sept. 13.

What we do as a district is of paramount importance to this nation and we need the full attention of every employee to be successful. Annual training helps remind us of signs to look for and the reporting procedures if we should witness anything inappropriate. It is your duty to make our work environment as safe and productive as possible. Again, if you see something, say something!

Army Strong. BUILDING STRONG®. JaxStrong.

Alan M. Dodd
Colonel, U.S. Army
District Commander

DISTRICT COMMANDER
COL. ALAN DODD

**CHIEF, CORPORATE
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE**
TERRY S. HINES, APR

MANAGING EDITOR
NANCY J. STICHT

DESIGN AND LAYOUT ARTIST
JENNIFER G. KNUDSEN, MFA

JaxStrong is a monthly electronic publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District providing information about the people, activities and projects of the district. JaxStrong is distributed in accordance with Army Regulation 360-1. Questions about, or submissions to, JaxStrong should be directed to the Corporate Communications Office. The editor can be contacted by telephone at 904-232-1667 or by email to JaxStrongEditor@usace.army.mil. Content in this publication does not necessarily reflect the official view of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of the Army or the Department of Defense.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Commander's Corner	2
President Obama Visits	3
Port Milestones	5
Portugués Dam.....	6
STEM Initiative	7
Panther Kitten	9
Boat Training	10
Invasive Species Lizards	12
Real Estate	14
Postcard from Afghanistan	15
Independence Day.....	16
Women's Equality Day.....	17
JAX Facts	18
Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)	19

ON THE COVER

President Barack Obama chose JAXPORT as a backdrop July 25 to deliver his vision for future economic growth. (Photo courtesy of JAXPORT)



Obama stresses importance of ports during visit to Jacksonville

BY AMANDA ELLISON



President Obama greets a young admirer in Jacksonville, Fla. July 25. (Photo by Amanda Ellison)

Addressing a standing-room-only audience at JAXPORT July 25, President Barack Obama stressed the importance of maintaining the nation's ports and aging infrastructure.

Hundreds gathered to hear Obama's plan for moving the economy forward, starting with passing legislation to authorize two local port projects that would put people back to work in Jacksonville.

"In a couple of years, new supertankers are going to start coming through the Panama Canal," said Obama. "We want those supertankers to come here, to Jacksonville."

Last year, Obama launched the "We Can't Wait" initiative, which expedited seven nationally significant infrastructure projects to modernize and expand five major ports in the United States, including JAXPORT.

For the Port of Jacksonville, the initiative includes completing a feasibility study by April 2014, years ahead of previous projections. The study examines the benefits and costs of deepening the federal navigation channel from its existing authorized project depth of 40 feet to 47 feet.

"...Last year, I acted without Congress, and I took executive action to speed up the permitting process that gets workers breaking ground on projects like this one," said Obama.



JAXPORT was the setting July 25 for President Barack Obama's speech about the importance of ports to the nation's economy. Two Jacksonville District port projects – Jacksonville and Miami – are included in the president's "We Can't Wait" initiative, which expedites nationally significant infrastructure projects. (Photo by Amanda Ellison)

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 4)

PRESIDENT OBAMA VISITS (continued from PAGE 3)



"We've got to create more jobs today, doing what you're doing right here at JAXPORT, and that's building this country's future," said President Barack Obama in his July 25 address to a capacity crowd at JAXPORT. (Photo by Amanda Ellison)



President Obama greets members of a standing-room-only audience at JAXPORT July 25. (Photo by Amanda Ellison)

The Chief of Engineers' report for the Mile Point Navigational Study was signed last year, and is currently awaiting congressional authorization and appropriation. It is a critical project that, when complete, will allow ships to more safely navigate Jacksonville Harbor.

"If we want our workers and businesses to compete," said Obama, "then our ports have to be ready."

Another Jacksonville District project, deepening the Miami Harbor federal navigation channel from 42 to 50 feet, was also included in the "We Can't Wait" initiative, along with port projects in Savannah, Ga., Charleston, S.C., and New York and New Jersey. ♦



Port studies reach critical milestones

BY AMANDA ELLISON



A view of operations at Port Everglades, where Jacksonville District is conducting a study to address the potential widening of the entrance channel and deepening of the navigation channel from its current 42 feet to a depth of 48 feet. (USACE file photo)

Two major milestones have been met, with the release of the draft tentatively selected plan for the Jacksonville Harbor Deepening Study and the Port Everglades Feasibility Study.

The project delivery teams for both projects overcame insurmountable odds to meet deadlines for the release of both of these critical reports to the public.

The district is conducting the Jacksonville Harbor Deepening Study to consider increasing the depth of the existing federal channel along the St. Johns River from its current project depth of 40 feet to a maximum depth of 47 feet. In June, the district released a tentatively selected plan to the public and held a community meeting to present and discuss the plan. The meeting was attended by more than 100 stakeholders who expressed both their support and concerns about the study.

In early July, the district released its draft report for the Port Everglades Harbor Feasibility Report and Environmental

Impact Statement for public review. The study addresses the potential widening of the entrance channel and deepening the navigation channel from its current 42 feet to a depth of 48 feet. The primary objectives of the project are to decrease costs associated with vessel delays resulting from congestion and channel passing restrictions, decrease transportation costs and increase channel safety and maneuverability for existing and larger vessel use. Two public meetings were held in Fort Lauderdale, to provide the public with an overview of the draft selected plan. A total of nearly 400 people attended the two meetings, with a majority expressing overwhelming support for the project.

Both projects are on track to go before the Civil Works Review Board later this year, with a goal of achieving a signed Chief of Engineers' Report early next year. ♦

Portugués Dam nears completion

BY JOHN H. CAMPBELL



Portugués Dam (looking upstream) now fills the river valley as it nears completion near Ponce, Puerto Rico. Construction is expected to wrap up by the end of the year, with operational testing taking place for most of 2014. (USACE photo)

Despite the threat from Tropical Storm Chantal, more than 30 residents from Ponce, Puerto Rico and surrounding areas attended a meeting July 9 to learn more about Jacksonville District's Portugués Dam, which is nearing completion after several years of design and construction. Portugués Dam is the last component of the Portugués and Bucaná Rivers Flood Control Project, which includes the construction of two dams (Cerrillos and Portugués) and their associated channels.

The meeting was billed as a briefing on the Operational Guidance and Water Control Plan for the dam. The plan provides the operational guidance and tools necessary to operate the new dam responsibly and consistently with the project purposes, for the benefit of Ponce and the citizens of Puerto Rico. However, for many people it was an opportunity to ask questions of those who've been overseeing the construction of the 220-foot, roller-compacted concrete (RCC) structure spanning the Portugués River northwest of Ponce.

"The meeting was very successful," said Capt. Juan Cordon, deputy commander for the Antilles. "Citizens were very impressed by the benefits this project will bring to the city of Ponce. They had the opportunity to hear the plan and ask questions."

Community members asked what water level would be maintained upstream, and were told that the goal is to maintain an optimum elevation of 439.8 feet Mean Sea Level (MSL) year-round. In preparation for an impending storm or rainfall event, it is expected it would take less than one week to lower the level, if needed, based on conditions. An Emergency Action Plan is currently under development and will be made available to emergency responders once finalized.

A dam along the Portugués River has been in the works since the 1970s, when the Portugués and Bucaná Rivers Flood Control Project was initially authorized by Congress. In 1992, Jacksonville District completed construction on Cerrillos Dam, northeast of Ponce on the Bucaná River. That structure provides flood control, recreation and water supply benefits.

Cerrillos Dam and other improvements to river channels are credited with reducing damages from Hurricane Georges, which struck the island in 1998, by \$100 million. Portugués Dam represents the final piece of the project.

"Construction is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year," said Luis Alejandro, hydraulic engineer, water management section. "The operational testing and monitoring

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 7)

**PORTEGUÉS DAM** (continued from PAGE 6)

phase will last approximately one year before we transfer the project to Puerto Rico's Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, the local sponsor for the project."

"The meeting was well received by the participants," said Alberto Gonzalez, project manager. "Citizens expressed a lot of interest in visiting the site. We will keep the public informed on the completion of the dam, and future transfer of operations to the commonwealth."

"To me it was pleasing to see the interest of the public in attendance, especially the community in close vicinity of the job. They immediately set aside a date to visit the jobsite," said Pablo Vázquez Ruiz, resident engineer.

The project has been challenging, due to unique geological issues at the site. The Corps attempted to begin construction in the early 2000s, but higher than anticipated costs on a thin-arch design for the dam sent engineers back to the drawing board. After a number of years, a thick-arch, RCC design emerged and construction began in 2008.



Capt. Juan Cordon, deputy commander for the Antilles, welcomes the more than 30 residents from Ponce and nearby communities who attended a public meeting July 9 to learn more about construction progress and intended operations for the flood control structure. (Photo by John Campbell)

The Corps has used the project as an educational tool for its "Dam Safety University" program. That program is intended to improve the knowledge of dam safety practices of new engineers as experienced engineers that have worked on other Corps dams retire or near retirement.

However, on this night, despite the predictions for bad weather, the storm remained at bay, and people were very pleased with the information they received.

"Elected representatives praised the work of the Corps," said Cordon. "We were able to inform the public on our proposed operations, and they were pleased with what they heard." ♦

District supports local STEM initiative

BY NAKEIR NOBLES



Volunteers (left to right) Alex Schur, Pam Winant, Stephanie Raulerson, Viktoria Bogina and Susan Copeland prepare materials for student challenges at the Second Annual STEM Camp held at the University of North Florida. (Photo by Nakeir Nobles)

In an effort to pique the interest of middle school students toward science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) disciplines, Jacksonville District partnered with Mentoring Families and Kids, Inc., (MFK) at the Second Annual STEM Camp, held at the University of North Florida, June 28.

Tim Brown, senior project manager in the Military/International and Interagency Services Branch, had an instrumental role in organizing participating district team members, who used personal leave to volunteer at the event. More than 250 students attended the one-day camp, which featured a water tower design challenge and the construction of a rubber band car.

With a noticeable decrease of students graduating with STEM degrees, Brown thought working with the local organization on its event would serve a two-fold purpose: increase STEM awareness of middle school students and promoting Corps brand recognition in the minds of young people.

Providing encouragement and educational support that engages students, Mentoring Families and Kids, Inc. was founded in 2005 and focuses on educational support for underrepresented students in kindergarten through grade 12. Brown said he chose to work with the small agency because it's young and does a lot of good in the Jacksonville community.

"Most importantly, they could really use the help," said Brown.

Murika Davis, civil engineer in the Planning and Policy Division, believes that it's important to have a Corps presence at these type events and is glad to have assisted.

"Corps participation is very important," Davis said. "It provides a venue to share what [the Corps] is capable of and provides an opportunity to further educate children on [our] role in public health and safety."

It was an engineer who influenced Brown to pursue a STEM career. "My decision to pursue a career in civil engineering was greatly influenced by an engineer who gave a talk to

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 8)

STEM (continued from **PAGE 7**)

my high school class," he explained. "I'm living proof that engineers' interaction with students makes a difference in career choices."

In recent years, it has been noted that the United States is falling behind in the number of its students who graduate with STEM degrees. A U.S. News and World Report article noted that although billions are spent each year on STEM education, America ranks 25th in math and 17th in science among industrialized nations.

With these statistics, Brown is disappointed but not deterred. He said even though the statistics are disheartening, this news provides the district an opportunity to promote STEM in the local community.



Jessamyn Fluit, a geotechnical engineer, assists students with the water tower construction at the one-day STEM event at the University of North Florida. (Photo by Nakeir Nobles)

"As engineering professionals, I feel it's very important that we give back to the community. Our profession will only remain as strong as those entering the field behind us. It's important that we help our youth develop an interest in STEM," said Brown.

Volunteer Pam Winant, civil engineer in Programs and Project Management Division, realizes the importance of STEM awareness and education.

"The numbers indicate STEM disciplines are definitely declining. Volunteering with agencies big or small who highlight science and math is important because it seems as if school systems are focusing on standardized test results rather than STEM results," Winant said.

The U.S. Department of Education says the Obama administration has articulated a clear priority for STEM education: within a decade, American students must "move from the middle to the top of the pack in science and math." Further, he has called on the nation to develop, recruit and retain 100,000 excellent STEM teachers over the next 10 years.



Under the watchful eye of Joe Tavares, Construction Division, students apply the finishing touches to their water tower design. (Photo by Nakeir Nobles)

Brown thinks Jacksonville District is doing its part to ensure students are aware of the need for STEM, as evidenced in its display of support during the STEM camp as well as the agency's highly attended annual Engineering Career Day.

"As the world's premier public engineering and construction management agency, [the Corps] understands the importance of STEM development on a national scale. Our participation in this event was a way to make a small contribution to the national effort," Brown said.

There are numerous opportunities for people to volunteer with agencies that promote STEM. A lot of those opportunities are within small organizations that may not get a lot of exposure, which may limit the number of volunteers available to assist when the need arises.

Davis looks forward to the next opportunity to assist as she recalls her early career.

"As a professional, I have to stay mindful that someone took a chance in providing me an opportunity and I want to be in the position to always share and give back to others. This is one of the ways I stay reminded of my beginnings, present abilities and future outlook. There are younger, brighter, more creative engineers coming and this allows me to help nurture that next generation," Davis said.

Brown and other event volunteers said the public is aware of the seriousness of the shortage of STEM graduates and how this shortage may affect the nation's future.

"It was mentioned in some of the speeches given during our last presidential election. The better question," Brown said, "is what are we, as engineers, going to do about it? As for me, I will always remain willing to serve." ♦



It's a girl! Kitten born to rescued and released Florida panther

BY ERICA SKOLTE



Panther biologists discovered this one-month old kitten, born to a rescued female that had been released into the Picayune Strand Restoration Project area January 31. (Photo courtesy of MyFWCmedia)

It is said that "Success breeds success." In one case, several successes led to the happy news of the birth of a Florida panther kitten near the Picayune Strand Restoration Project in southwest Florida.

The story began on a sad note. In September 2011, a pair of orphaned five-month-old Florida panther kittens was rescued by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) biologists, after their mother was found dead. Too young to survive on their own, they were raised in captivity at White Oak Plantation in Yulee, Fla., with the goal of one day releasing them back into the wild.



Once a kitten is discovered, it takes panther biologists like Mark Lotz and a veterinarian about 20 minutes to process a kitten while mom is away hunting. The workup includes determining the kitten's sex, weight and measurements; de-worming; administering feline vaccinations; inserting a microchip transponder; performing a biopsy and taking hair and other samples. (Photo courtesy of MyFWCmedia)

Once they were able to make it on their own, the young adults were outfitted with radio collars, so biologists could track their movements. They were reintroduced back into the wild in separate locations that were deliberately chosen to avoid overlap with the known home ranges of other collared panthers.

Only 23 days after she was returned to the wild in the Picayune Strand Restoration Project area January 31, 2013, Florida panther 219 (FP 219) mated with a local male panther. There are only an estimated 100 to 160 adult and juvenile Florida panthers in the last remaining breeding population south of the Caloosahatchee River.

Rather than staying in one place, which normally cues biologists that a female may have denned, FP 219 apparently moved her kitten frequently. When her kitten was finally discovered in the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park east of the Picayune Strand Restoration Project area, the one-month-old, blue-eyed, spotted bundle of fur weighed 3.5 pounds and appeared to be healthy.



Florida panther 219 was fitted with a radio collar before she was released into the Picayune Strand Restoration Project area in January 2013. The radiotelemetry data gathered during aerial flights allowed biologists to track her movements and led to the discovery of her kitten. (Photo courtesy of MyFWCmedia)

"We were very excited to find this panther's kitten," said Dave Onorato, FWC biologist. "The fact that she has given birth is positive news for the recovery of this endangered species and a testament to the hard work of all involved in its rescue and rehabilitation. While we are encouraged the female became a contributor to the population so quickly, it was not completely unexpected, given that her home range is within prime panther habitat. The new kitten has a chance of one day contributing to the population as well."

"The Picayune Strand Restoration Project connects surrounding state and federal lands, including nature preserves and wildlife areas. It provides contiguous land area with opportunities for habitat for many animal species, including the Florida panther," said Lacy Shaw, project manager.

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 10)

PANTHER KITTEN (continued from PAGE 9)

This panther kitten was discovered in the Fakahatchee State Park Preserve, just east of the Picayune Strand Restoration Project area. (Photo courtesy of MyFWCmedia)

"The work done on the Prairie Canal area several years ago by our partners at the South Florida Water Management District has already provided benefits, not only to Picayune Strand but also the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park to the east of the project site," said Shaw. "Corps construction projects are moving forward, with Merritt Pump Station construction scheduled to be complete in fall 2013, followed by the Faka Union Pump Station in fall 2014. We are currently performing operational testing and monitoring of all systems in the Merritt Pump Station and expect to award the Miller Pump Station contract by the end of the year. We expect all phases of the Picayune Strand Restoration Project to be complete in 2018." ♦

View a brief video of the Florida panther kitten recently discovered by FWC biologists: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/myfwcmmedia/9144084538/>

Read the original article "Rescued Florida panther released into Picayune Strand" in the April 2013 issue of JaxStrong: <http://1.usa.gov/YY0PKj> ♦

Motorboat Operator training provides certification and skills needed to perform a wide range of duties

BY ERICA SKOLTE



Qualification for the motorboat licensing course was rigorous - students had to have 10 hours of boat experience with a licensed operator, take an online class and pass a test before they even entered the classroom. After the training, they had to pass another exam and demonstrate proficiency in all areas of instruction before they could be licensed. (Photo courtesy of Art Ruebenson)

In May and June, the South Florida Operations Office hosted a 32-hour motorboat licensing course and two 8-hour refresher courses at the W.P. Franklin Lock Recreation Area on the Okeechobee Waterway. Thirteen Jacksonville District employees participated in the program, designed to ensure that operators are adequately trained, properly tested and licensed prior to the official operation of any Corps boat or vessel less than 26 feet in length.

"This is no easy course," said instructor Tim Loftis. "It is challenging, and the people who receive the certification are knowledgeable and able to handle a boat competently. They are well-prepared to safely perform their duties in a broad variety of water-related missions."

All motorboat instructors must be graduates of the 40-hour U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Motorboat License Examiner Training Course. To maintain their certification, they must participate as



Course participants learned the proper procedures for launching and retrieving a boat. (Photo courtesy of Art Ruebenson)

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 11)



BOAT TRAINING (continued from PAGE 10)



One of the hands-on activities during the motorboat licensing course was a demonstration of how to deploy and use a rescue net. (Photo courtesy of Art Ruebenson)

an instructor in at least one 24-hour motorboat training course or 8-hour refresher course every three years. Instructors this year included Loftis and Robert Schnell from the South Florida Operations Office and park rangers John Chassey from the Orlona Lock Recreation Area and Art Ruebenson from the St. Lucie Lock Recreation Area, who usually coordinates the annual training.

"I like being an instructor because I do a lot of boating at work and on my own. I own my own boat and do a lot of fishing," said Loftis. "I love teaching others to operate a boat properly. It makes it safer for everyone else out there."

Operators of Corps boats and vessels less than 26 feet in length are required to successfully complete a 24-hour training course and be licensed prior to official operation of a Corps vessel. The course offered at W.P. Franklin provided more intensive instruction than the minimum required by regulation, allowing enough time for participants to be successful and feel comfortable with handling any situation that may arise on the water.

The course is generally offered in the spring and summer and requires some advance planning. Students have to do a lot of work prior to taking the course – they must have 10 hours of boat experience with a licensed operator, take an online class and pass a test before they even enter the classroom. After the training, they must pass another written exam and demonstrate proficiency in all areas of instruction before they can be licensed.

Operations Division students in the recent 32-hour course included biologists Angie Huebner, Nicole Liette, Jessica Spencer and David Lattuca from the Invasive Species Management Branch; as well as geodesists Andrew "Kevin" Smith and Matt Staley, and Victor Wilhelm from the Surveying and Mapping Branch.

Graham Thompson, South Florida Operations Office, obtained

his Corps certification and also holds a U.S. Coast Guard master tender license for vessels of 100 tons or less. He operates the tug boats Leitner and Chobee. Whenever dewatering is required for lock repairs or maintenance, tugs may be required to push barge-mounted cranes into place. They are also used in performing various emergency operations.

Licensed motorboat operators must also complete an 8-hour refresher course every five years to retain their license. Students taking the refresher course included Water Management Branch engineer Jonathan Jenkins and engineering technician Mark Whitson, as well as engineering equipment operators James Hart and Mike Hinz and structural engineering technician Chester "Wayne" Sullivan, South Florida Operations Office.

The training came at just the right time for Liette, a new biologist in the South Florida Operations Office. As one of her duties, Liette will use an airboat to conduct pre- and post-treatment surveys for invasive aquatic plant species on Lake Okeechobee. Obtaining a motorboat license was just the first step on the way to achieving her airboat operator license. Now she must accumulate 20 hours of operating time, or "stick time," with a licensed airboat operator before she can take the class and exams.

"We use boats to do surveys for aquatic invasive plants on the St. Johns River and Lake Okeechobee. I also use boats to access some of the dredge spoil islands where we treat terrestrial invasive plants," said Spencer. "The Motorboat Operator course is the most valuable training that I have had while working for the government. It provides you with valuable knowledge and real life skills that you can use on the job and in your personal life. We were taught many practical skills, such as docking, launching and retrieving, trailering and close-quarter maneuvering. It was a challenging course, but very rewarding."



To pass the swim test, training participants had to demonstrate that they are capable of swimming 100 yards while wearing a personal flotation device. (Photo courtesy of Art Ruebenson)

"I find it reassuring to know that I am fully capable of handling a boat in ways that are not of a routine nature," said Sullivan. "I do random and regularly scheduled inspections of the structures surrounding Lake Okeechobee, along with the contributory culverts on the adjoining flow ways. Most of the inspections are done from land, but at least once a year I feel that it is imperative to inspect the areas by water, which allows me to see any obstructions that may affect the waterways."

"I primarily work with Unmanned Aerial Vehicle-acquired data to create geographic information system products such as imagery mosaics and maps, some of which are used in Google Earth for species identification, levee inspections, construction activities and other environmental restoration projects," said

BOAT TRAINING (continued from PAGE 11)



Students learned how to tow and be towed. (Photo courtesy of Art Ruebenson)

Wilhelm. "This training is important for me to have so I can operate boats and access our sites. I thought the most valuable part of the course was getting experience on the water maneuvering a variety of different types and sizes of boats."

"I needed the training since I work in the hydrographic survey section. I spend the majority of my time on a number of different boats," said Smith. "Now, when needed, I can also operate our smaller survey vessels. I thought the training was great. The small class size allowed for one-on-one time with the instructors and I received hands-on training on a number of different vessels."

Classroom instruction included boat orientation, required safety equipment, aids to navigation, "rules of the road" and marlinspike, the art of tying bowline, cleat-wrap and clove-hitch knots.



Trailering a boat, especially backing up, is a skill that requires a good deal of practice. (Photo courtesy of Art Ruebenson)

Practical course work involved a 100-yard swim test while wearing a personal flotation device, emergency rescue procedures, trailering, launching, and retrieving of vessels, docking, towing and anchoring procedures, boat and trailer maintenance, fire suppression and operating vessels on four different maneuvering courses to demonstrate the student's abilities to handle vessels with different hull configurations.

Students were required to pass a written exam and demonstrate competence of the practical exercises before being issued a motorboat operators license. The intensive course of instruction proved successful and everyone who participated received a license. ♦

South American lizards slither into south Florida

BY ANNIE CHAMBERS



Tegu hatchlings have a green coloration on their head, which usually fades within a few months. On average, a mature female tegu will lay around 35 eggs a year. In Florida, tegus hatch in the early summer. (Photo by Dustin Smith, Miami-Dade Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces)

Hailing from South America, the tegu, an exotic lizard, has made its way into the Sunshine State and is now considered to be established in the south Florida region.

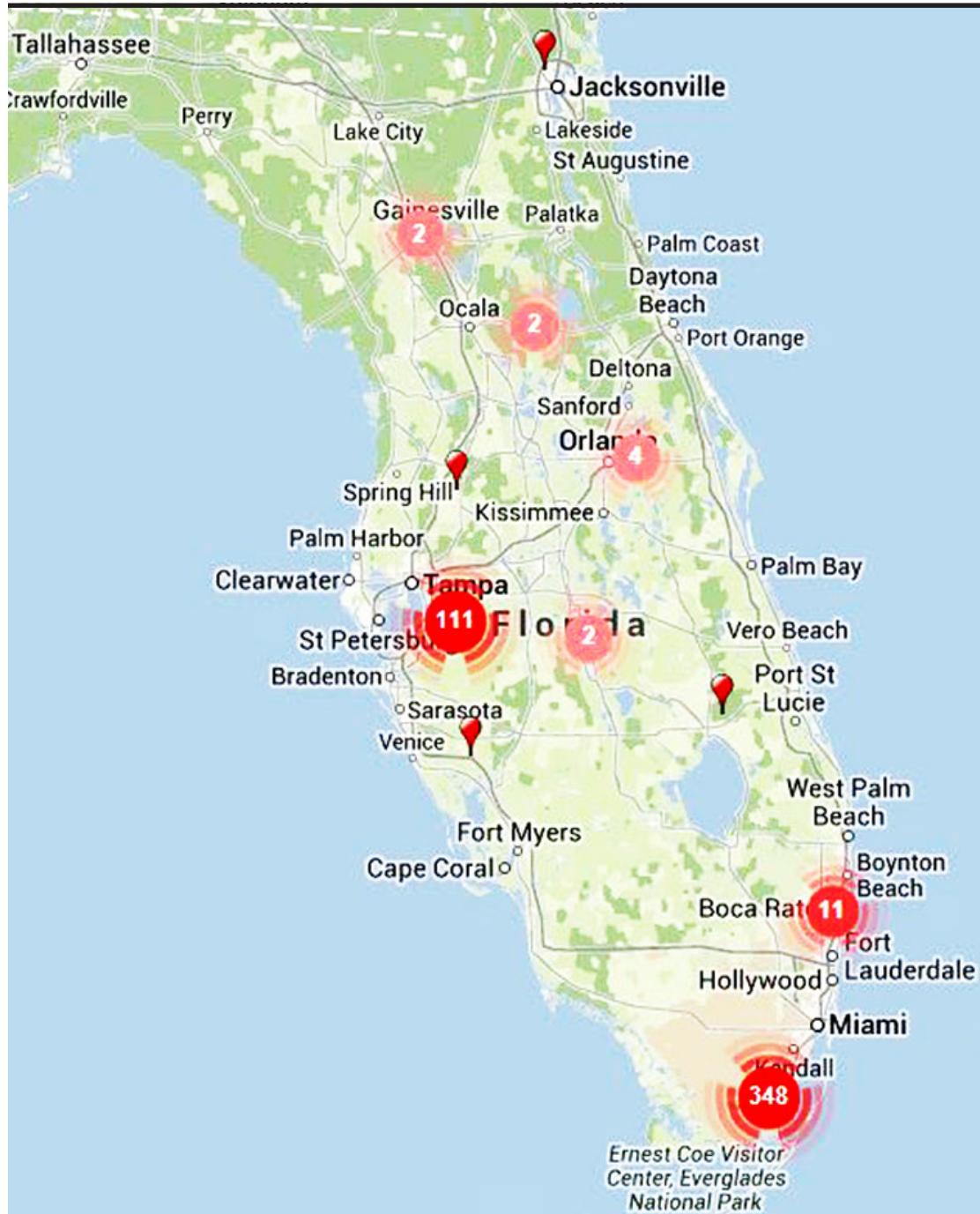
These invasive black and white lizards can reach up to four feet in length. While they spend most of their time on land, they are capable of swimming. Native to South America, specifically Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina, tegus now have breeding populations in Miami-Dade, Polk and Hillsborough Counties. Like many other invasive species, it is likely the populations were founded by escaped or released pets, according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).



Tegus are most active during the daytime and eat fruits, vegetables, eggs, insects, cat or dog food, and small animals such as rodents or lizards. (Photo by Dustin Smith, Miami-Dade Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces)



LIZARDS (continued from PAGE 12)



While black and white tegu populations are densest in south Florida, there's evidence they've moved north.
(Courtesy of Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System (EDD Maps) website)

"Tegus love eggs and are a direct threat to the endangered crocodile, as they are expanding into the nesting area and are known to eat reptile eggs," said Jon Lane, chief of the Invasive Species Management Branch. "Tegus have been seen and captured inside Everglades National Park. In the park they will compete with other native reptiles as well as impacting alligators and eating their eggs."

The FWC does not recommend capturing a tegu. While they're most likely not aggressive, they will defend themselves with their sharp teeth and claws. If you see a tegu, take a picture

and report the sighting and location by calling 1-888-IveGot1. Reporting a sighting will assist wildlife managers to better understand where the animals are found. A free phone app, IveGot1, provides an easy way to report exotic species findings.

The FWC is currently working with other agencies and organizations to assess the threat of this species and to develop management strategies such as targeted trapping and removal. The goal of these partnerships is to minimize the impact of tegus on native wildlife and natural areas. ♦

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

- Don't leave pet food outside.
- Cover outdoor openings and clear your yard of debris to minimize hiding and burrowing areas.
- Don't release exotic animals into the Florida ecosystem. It's not only illegal, but can be harmful.
- Report all tegu sightings to the exotic species hotline at 1-888-IveGot1 or online at Ivegot1.org.
- Be a responsible pet owner. Take the time to learn about an animal before you take one as a pet.

Tips courtesy of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Real Estate plays important role in civil works and military projects

BY NAKEIR NOBLES



Hansler Bealyer (right), chief of the Real Estate Acquisition Branch, accompanies engineers Tony Smith (center) and Tim Gysan (left) on a River Acres site visit, to ensure real estate interests are appropriately addressed. (USACE file photo)

More than a decade after leaving Jacksonville District as a realty specialist to assume an 18-month tour with the Installation Management Agency, Europe, Audrey Ormerod has come full circle, returning to the district as the Real Estate Division chief.

After working with various Army commands for more than 30 years, Ormerod is excited to return to Jacksonville to oversee its real estate mission.

The Real Estate Division is responsible for ensuring the federal government has sufficient real estate interests necessary to support the construction, operations and maintenance of Corps civil works and military projects. The division plays a huge role in the process that leads to the completion of a civil works and military projects.

During the civil works reconnaissance study stage, a real estate appendix is prepared as part of the study to determine if there is sufficient federal interest to move into the feasibility phase of a civil works project. In the feasibility study phase, a comprehensive and detailed real estate appendix is prepared as part of the feasibility report, which is submitted to Corps headquarters for a determination on project authorization and funding. There are numerous factors that play a role in whether a project will be approved and constructed. The identification of real estate interests and costs are major components in that decision-making process.

Ormerod said that working with real estate is unique. "All the work we do is on or affects someone's real estate or an interest in their real estate. Real estate is all land and structures firmly attached, such as buildings, structures, piers, wharves and linear structures; or integrated into the land such as underground utilities. Real estate is thought of as a group of rights, like a bundle

of sticks, which can be divided. Beneath it all is the land," she explained.

Hansler Bealyer, chief of the Real Estate Acquisition Branch, agrees with Ormerod in that real estate is a valuable function that enables the district to operate successfully. His branch works closely with both Programs and Project Management and Planning and Policy Divisions in the development and implementation of reports and construction efforts.

"It's one of those key elements of a project, for which its many complexities are often overlooked. Each parcel of land can have various components of ownership, which can make acquisition go from a simple process taking a day or two on one hand, to a very complicated legal process taking a few months and in some cases, years," said Bealyer.

Bealyer says the district has numerous missions to provide various services to the nation, both here in the U.S. and abroad. One of the components of mission accomplishment is ensuring that real estate is available to support those missions. Absent the real estate component, successful mission accomplishment is not possible.

Mark Bennett, chief of the Management Disposal Branch, explained that no two real estate actions are alike. In real estate, it's often said the three most important considerations are "location, location, location." In the case of real estate that supports district projects, location makes each action different. In addition to civil works support, his branch executes the Department of Defense Military Recruiting Program and supports military projects in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

With real estate potentially affecting an individual's or organization's real estate or interest in that real estate, Ormerod and her staff said that it's important for project delivery teams to include a real estate representative.

"The real estate mission begins in a project's planning and resourcing stages, and spans acquisition, construction, management and disposal," Ormerod said. "Everything we do is on somebody's land. Whether we're building docks or bridges, real estate is a part of it."

"It is our responsibility to ensure all interests of real estate are appropriately addressed," said Bennett. "One of the biggest problems people get into is trying to appropriate something they have no right to. We make sure our [government] rights aren't encroached upon, so that our engineering plans work as designed. We make sure interests aren't compromised, that the chain of title is intact and that appropriate real estate interests apply to what the district is executing."

Real Estate Division is involved with several key civil works projects, including the Kissimmee River Restoration Project (KRR) and the Herbert Hoover Dike Rehabilitation Project. The KRR is one of the federal government's largest environmental projects and has been recognized for its environmental success.

"Somebody has to get the land. We [real estate] have a role. None of our projects can move forward until we have the land," Ormerod said. ♦



Postcard from Afghanistan



Here I am (center) with the Local National Quality Assurance team, which inspects our job sites. They are fantastic people and are among the many friends I am making.



Waiting on the helicopter to go and view my project sites.



This is Rambo, the base's bomb-sniffing dog. He and his handlers did a demonstration for us, to show that their dogs were not only bomb-sniffing dogs, but also attack dogs. I am smiling, but don't let it fool you; 110-lb. Rambo had one heck of a bite.

Commentary by Alex Saar

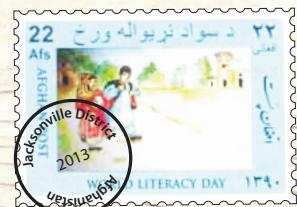


In regards to my first deployment, I didn't know what to expect. I am sure I had the deer in headlights look for the first week or so, but I soon got into a routine.

We work seven days a week, 10+ hours a day, and Friday is our half day. My schedule consists of eat, work, eat, work, gym, eat, sleep, repeat. Currently I am overseeing 10 projects.

I am working with people from Jacksonville and many other districts, including Los Angeles, Kansas City, Little Rock, Baltimore and Seattle. There are representatives of many different countries here on my base, including Armenia, Canada, Germany, Hungary, Belgium, Sweden and Croatia. They are all very nice and a lot of fun to talk with. I recently got to work with the Germans on one of my projects, where we coordinated a mission to visit the project site. It was a very good experience.

I am meeting a lot of great people and making many close friends.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Jacksonville District
701 San Marco Blvd.
Jacksonville, FL 32204

Independence Day on the Okeechobee Waterway

BY ERICA SKOLTE



Swimmers cooled down at the W.P. Franklin swim beach while enjoying a sunny July 4th weekend. (Photo by Phillip Hart)

The W.P. Franklin South Recreation Area in Alva was a popular destination on the July 4th weekend, receiving more than 2,000 visitors. The swim beach provided a welcome place for families to splash, play and stay cool. Families also had fun picnicking, playing volleyball and soccer, throwing Frisbees and pitching horseshoes.

Many cruised the Caloosahatchee River, enjoying the scenic oxbows upstream or just being out on the water. Some enjoyed water skiing and tubing on the waterway, while others watched the wildlife along the shore. Late in the afternoon, a number of boaters launched and traveled west of the locks to take in the fireworks in downtown Fort Myers or Labelle. The locks were busy the entire weekend, while boaters traveled both upstream and downstream. Lock personnel advised the public on the closure times of the locks to make sure everyone could get home safely. Each of the five locks is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week.

While some people love fireworks, others just like to get away to a quiet place, far away from the noise and the crowds. W.P. Franklin North Campground was fully occupied, with almost 1,200 visitors, while Ortona Campground in Moore Haven reached about 60 percent capacity.

Downstream from the W.P. Franklin Lock, the river is brackish, and upstream, the water is fresh, so campers and local fishermen can catch a variety of fish from the fishing pier, including tarpon, redfish, snook, shark, blue crab, catfish, bass, bluegill, mullet, tilapia, and many others.

The weekend turned out to be a good one, from the W.P. Franklin to St. Lucie, thanks to the rangers, gate attendants, lock personnel, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, county law enforcement, Corps volunteers and the public all cooperating to make sure that everyone was safe. Rangers traveled from campground to campground and to the park, talking with the boating public about boating safety and the dangers of drinking while boating. Visitors were able to borrow life jackets for free at the life jacket loaner stations at the swim beach and boat ramp, helping to keep everyone safe.

Corps volunteers John Sox and Bounty Lautour were on duty all day, from 8 a.m. until sunset. They watched over the W.P. Franklin swimming beach and the park, and spoke with children and their parents about water safety. Volunteer Margie Raulerson answered many questions on the phone and in person at the Visitor Center.

With so many ways to enjoy the outdoors, Jacksonville District's recreation areas help make the Okeechobee Waterway a fun destination for families all year round. ♦



Campers and local fishermen can catch both fresh and saltwater species at the fishing pier at W.P. Franklin Lock and Dam. (Photo by Phillip Hart)

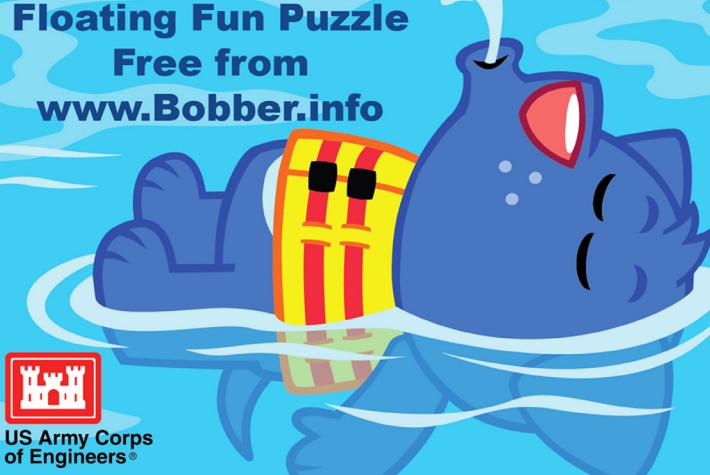


**Learn to Swim
and Float Well!**

Download the
Floating Fun Puzzle
Free from
www.Bobber.info



US Army Corps
of Engineers®







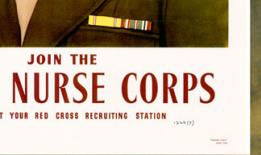
JAXSTRONG

17

Women's Equality Day

August 26th

JOIN



Jax Facts: How well do you know Jacksonville District?

BY NANCY J. STICHT

Last month we started a new initiative, "Jax Facts," to challenge readers to test their knowledge of Jacksonville District's projects and people. Answers to the questions were found in the pages of JaxStrong. Look for future Jax Facts questions on the district's social media pages and a monthly wrap-up in each issue of JaxStrong.



(Photo by Annie Chambers)

Congratulations to **Enid Gerena**, Engineering Division, the first district team member to submit the correct answers to all ten of the following questions, based on stories that appeared in the July issue of JaxStrong:

- The Support for Others program was born on the 50th anniversary of what significant event in history?**
A: D-Day (Col. Dodd's column, p.2)
- Which district organization executes Rights of Entry in support of district projects on property owned by others?**
A: Real Estate Division (Col. Dodd's column, p.2)
- What is the correct five-step approach for helping someone in the water who appears to be in trouble?**
A: Talk/Reach/Throw/Row/Don't Go (Memorial Day story, p. 3)
- How many visitors enjoyed Jacksonville District recreation areas over the Memorial Day weekend?**
A: Nearly 4,000 (Memorial Day story, p. 4)

- What has a shape similar to the hydrofoil on the new survey vessel Florida II?**

A: An airplane wing (Florida II story, p. 6)

- Name four benefits of providing clean water to communities in Honduras.**

A: Improves overall health by reducing waterborne illness; improves crop production capabilities of the community; gives women more time to make/sell crafts to earn living; gives children more time for education (Engineers Without Borders story, p. 9)

- What are the three possible ways the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission recommends people remove lionfish from the ocean?**

A: Spear, hand-held net, hook and line (Invasive Species story, p. 10)

- What does COOP stand for, and what is its purpose?**

A: Continuity of Operations; exercise and remind Crisis Action Team about what is required in potential building closure due to disaster/notice and no-notice events (Emergency preparation story, p. 11)

- What is the average cost range of an IIS project?**

A: Between a few hundred thousand and \$2 million (Support for Others birthday story, p. 12)

- What is one of the most prevalent causes of water quality impairment in the United States?**

A: Excess loading of nitrogen and phosphorous compounds (Caitlin Hoch story, pg. 13) ♦

OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS WELCOME HOME

GRISELLE GONZALES-AQUINO
GLORIA LESANE-AYODEJI
TONY SMITH



Unmanned Aircraft Systems working group examines capabilities, future opportunities

BY ANNIE CHAMBERS



A pad fire between two NASA space shuttle launch pads at Kennedy Space Center in May 2011 was sparked by a lightning strike in the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (MINWR). Prescribed burns occur regularly at the MINWR to reduce hazardous fuel loads, reduce encroachment of woody vegetation and to replenish nutrients to the soil. Potential UAS flights would assist with not only wildlife and environmental data collection, but also prescribed burn support. (Photo by Ryan Sharpe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

A group of leaders from the University of Central Florida, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, University of Florida, Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVS), Space Florida and the Kennedy Space Center (KSC) gathered June 24 to discuss the possibility of using unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) around the Cape Canaveral area.

The workshop examined the opportunities for research, environmental and wildlife data collection using UAS in the restricted airspace over the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (MINWR) and KSC.

The downsizing of NASA's 30-year space shuttle program led to many layoffs. The UAS capability for MINWR and KSC flights would potentially lead to a test flight center for research and applications as well as a way to employ some of the nearly 8,000 highly-trained scientists living in the area.

"Air space is already there, which is the most attractive aspect," said John Lambert, research associate, Unmanned and Robotic Systems, Institute for Simulation and Training, University of Florida. "We wouldn't be flying just to fly; there's

something interesting and that data can be recorded and collected. Flights would fulfill necessary pilot flight hours, while actually collecting valuable data for wildlife researchers and educational programs."

The Jacksonville Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) program has been operational since 2011 and has flown approximately 200 different missions in various places around the state of Florida. Possible missions include monitoring invasive species, beach erosion, the structural condition of levees and canal banks and conducting biological investigations and wildlife census.

Upcoming missions include pollution monitoring and boundary survey marking. The technology also allows 3-D data gathering missions, both with and without ground truthing. These types of missions will be used to fly Florida beaches for renourishment projects, to fly jetties to determine their condition and to fly disposal areas to do quantity estimations. These potential missions are all dependent upon Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approval.

"Our operational experience could be valuable in trying to

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 20)

UAS (continued from **PAGE 19**)

duplicate work that has already been done," said Larry Taylor, UAV project manager. "We feel that, at least for the platform we fly, we have moved past the research phase into operations."

The UAS Working Group is examining the feasibility of establishing a training center that would also serve to gather valuable environmental and educational data in the MINWR and Kennedy Space Center area. One potential idea is to work with private and government agricultural industries. A UAV would be able to fly over a field to determine crop health and yield production and produce a comparison over time. The health of the whole field can be assessed in 15 minutes, a significant time savings over physically walking the area. However, FAA regulations restrict all non-government flights. The Corps is restricted to a five-mile radius outside of small airports and population centers.

"While wildlife refuge burns are an environmentally conscious effort to remove fuels, they also create training opportunities for UAS pilots to learn how to fly during burns," said Lambert.

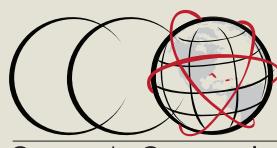
The UAS working group aims to bring people together who would have use for overhead sensor data to help them accomplish their jobs and their research. UAS have the ability to increase human potential. By flying into hurricanes, over wildfires and collecting wildlife data, these machines are saving human lives. The mortality rate of low-flying helicopters used to collect wildlife data is extremely high.



Roseate Spoonbills and the endangered West Indian manatee are among the species that call the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge home. If approved to fly the restricted airspace over the refuge, unmanned aircraft systems may provide potential, unobtrusive opportunities for research, environmental and wildlife data collection. (Photo by John Palmer)

"Moving forward we will closely monitor the progress of UAS operations in the national airspace as this develops with the FAA," said Lambert.

The latest in civil technologies will be on display at the AUVSI Unmanned Systems 2014 event, to be held at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla. May 12-15, 2014. ♦



Corporate Communications Office
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District

GET JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT NEWS AND INFORMATION AT:
www.saj.usace.army.mil

OR VISIT OUR SOCIAL MEDIA SITES:

FACEBOOK
www.facebook.com/JacksonvilleDistrict

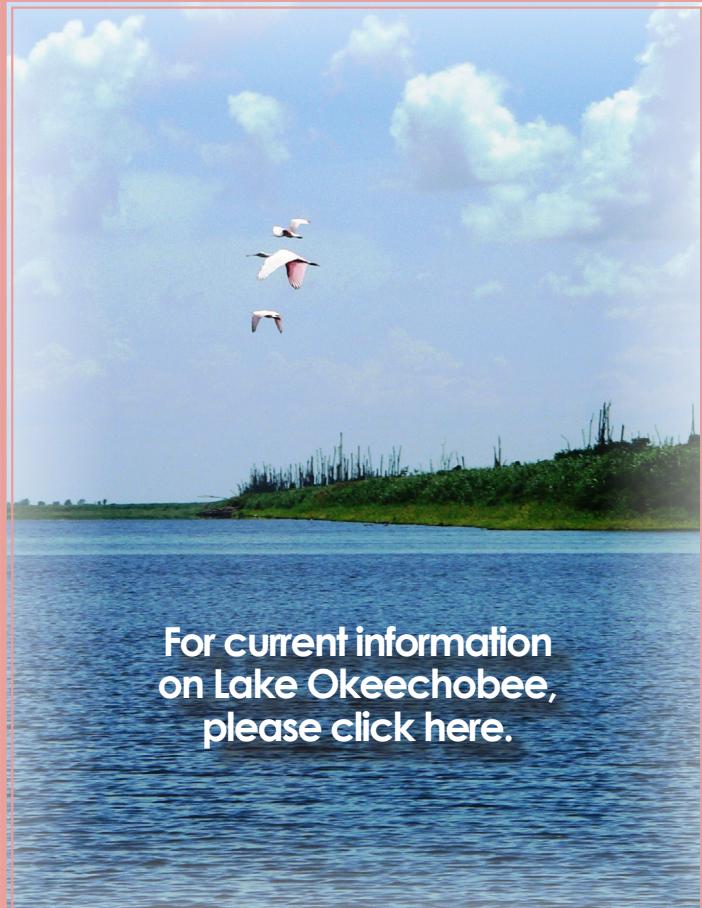
YOUTUBE
www.youtube.com/JaxStrong

TWITTER
www.twitter.com/JaxStrong

Flickr
www.flickr.com/photos/JaxStrong

PINTEREST
www.pinterest.com/USACEJax

LINKEDIN
<http://bit.ly/jaxlinkedin>



For current information on Lake Okeechobee, please click here.