



JAXSTRONG®

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- INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT BRANCH RAMPES UP OUTREACH
- SAFETY ON THE OKEECHOBEE WATERWAY
- A RETIREE'S LEGACY
- ...AND MORE



# JAXSTRONG

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# COMMANDER'S CORNER

## MESSAGE FROM COL. ALAN DODD

**CORPS MAKES UNBIASED DECISIONS BASED ON THE BEST INTEREST OF THE NATION**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been responsible for maintaining the nation's waterways for more than 235 years. We take this role seriously. This proud tradition ensures the nation's infrastructure stays strong, which in turn boosts the United States economy, bolsters global competitiveness, creates jobs, reduces risk and restores and protects the environment. That is exactly what we're doing with Jacksonville Port.

The Corps evaluates projects like the proposed Jacksonville Harbor deepening in terms of their value to the nation and their current performance in meeting authorized purposes, and takes into consideration how the system has evolved over time. We are impartial in our work – we present the facts, analyze the effects and make a recommendation that is in the best interest of our nation's economic development and protective of the environment. These analyses are conducted independently of local port authorities; only national economic benefits rather than benefits to the local economy are included in our final report to Congress for project authorization and funding.

For more than 100 years, the Corps has maintained navigation on the St. Johns River. We have deepened the channel three times in the past 40 years to meet the emerging needs of the country. The evolving global shipping trend has been to larger ships, which reduces transportation costs. Expansion of the Panama Canal by 2015 is significant, as it will allow larger ships to pass through.

Today, many cargo ships can't use Jacksonville's port because they require more than 40 feet of depth to operate. Other ships enter the harbor with only partial loads of cargo to make them light enough to navigate the channel. A deeper and wider navigation channel will resolve these problems and allow vessels to move more cargo, more efficiently.

Our study has determined that the people of northeast Florida, as well as the nation as a whole, will benefit significantly, directly or indirectly, from a deeper harbor. Deeper ports equate to more efficient use by cargo ships and a corresponding higher distribution of goods.

Multiple scientific studies and extensive modeling efforts indicate there will be very minimal impacts to the environment as a result of this project. To ensure the river ecosystem is provided significant deference, we're recommending \$2.9 million for initial mitigation of known issues and \$30 million in contingency for monitoring and mitigation after construction is completed. We're absolutely taking the correct steps; the study is being fully vetted by environmental experts from multiple federal and state agencies, academia and others.

Throughout the study process, Jacksonville District has made every effort to be transparent, keep the public informed, and provide a complete and accurate report.

We conducted public meetings and teleconferences, posted meeting notes and project updates on our website and sent notifications about new information. We were inclusive in our process, inviting participation from diverse groups, including St. Johns Riverkeeper, Sierra Club, Audubon Florida, Florida's Sportsmen's Conservation Association, fishermen, river pilots and more. We hosted multiple public meetings. We also coordinated with eight state and federal agencies and Corps vertical teams throughout the study. We went far beyond what was required by law. In every respect, we shared our process and our findings and addressed questions and concerns.

I take personal pride in what Jacksonville District, in coordination with our partners and the public, has accomplished on this accelerated study. Project challenges have been immense and no one agency can address them alone. We look forward to continued dialogue and collaboration as the report and recommendations are finalized for consideration by Congress.

Army Strong. BUILDING STRONG®. JaxStrong.

Alan M. Dodd  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
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## ON THE COVER

Don, a five-year-old German Shepherd, shows off the toy he earned by accurately locating his target during a demonstration at the Mullet Key Formerly Used Defense Site at Fort DeSoto Park near St. Petersburg, Fla. Don and his handler, Roger Tappan, are members of Corps contractor AMK9, assisting with the ongoing investigation to determine what, if anything, remains from World War II military activities at the site. (Photo by Deborah Chayet, Pinellas County)





# These noses know no limits

BY NANCY J. STICHT



Matos, a two-year-old Belgian Malinois that works as an explosive detection dog, picks up a scent and focuses on leading his handler, Stevie Valencia of AMK9, to a buried training target during a demonstration on the Mullet Key Formerly Used Defense Site at Fort DeSoto Park near St. Petersburg, Fla. The specialty dogs are being used as a demonstration technology, to evaluate the potential for using them on other similar sites. (Photo by Nancy J. Sticht)

Quickly walking across a field dotted with red flags, Don is focused on only one goal—finding explosives that may be buried underground, so they can be removed before they cause harm. He performed similar duties during his tour in Afghanistan, and although his work in Florida is being conducted in a very different environment, it is equally important in contributing to public safety.

As the breeze shifts, rustling the trees and ruffling the little red flags, Don's supervisor, Pete, announces, "He's got it." Within seconds, Don leads his partner, Roger, to one of the flags, where he sits and awaits confirmation that he has indeed found his target.

Don is a five-year-old German Shepherd, one of several explosive detection dogs that are working alongside their handlers at the Mullet Key Formerly Used Defense Site (FUDS) at Fort DeSoto Park in Pinellas County near St. Petersburg, Fla. They

are members of American K-9 Detection Services, LLC (AMK9) of Lake Mary, Fla., a sub-contractor to PIKA-Pimie, JV.

PIKA-Pimie, JV is the prime contractor currently conducting a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) on behalf of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District to determine the nature and extent of anything remaining at the FUDS from the military's use of the site as a bombing and gunnery range during World War II.

During a RI/FS, crews traditionally use digital metal detectors on paths (called transects) and blocks (called grids) to map buried metallic objects. After carefully analyzing the collected data, potential targets are identified and objects that appear to be munitions-related are recovered. If munitions or munitions debris is found, soil and water samples may also be collected. This fieldwork forms the basis for a plan to address what, if anything, remains from military activities.



## NOSES (continued from PAGE 3)



Digital geophysical metal detectors are used during the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study of the Mullet Key Formerly Used Defense Site (FUDS) at Fort DeSoto Park near St. Petersburg, Fla. The technology identifies buried metallic objects; crews then dig a select number of targets to further identify whether the objects are munitions-related or scrap metal. The Corps is complementing this effort for the first time on a FUDS by testing the use of explosive detection dogs that can locate buried explosive materials. (Photo by Nancy J. Sticht)

The Mullet Key FUDS project marks the first time that the Corps has employed the services of explosive detection dogs at a FUDS. The innovative technology is being used for demonstration purposes, to evaluate its potential for further use in the program.

"The purpose of this demonstration technology is to evaluate the dogs' ability to detect surface and sub-surface munitions and explosives of concern (MEC), including unexploded ordnance (UXO)," said Frank Araico, project manager. "We are also determining their ability to differentiate between anomalies associated with 'energetics,' such as MEC and UXO, and those with non-energetics, such as munitions debris and scrap metal."

The dogs investigate flagged locations along transect lanes that have been previously identified with traditional digital metal detection methods, and along transects that have not yet been flagged. Additionally, should a dog alert to an area outside an identified transect, handlers allow the dog to further investigate and then notify UXO personnel, who investigate further.

Pete Owen, director of operations for AMK9, said the explosive detection dogs used at the Mullet Key FUDS project trained for approximately four months and are effective in their ability to locate explosives in numerous forms and quantities.

"Typically, the dogs train for six to eight weeks, but in this case, we were training them to a higher threshold," explained Owen. "They are normally trained to find explosives like nitrates on vehicles and along roadsides or buried to shallow depths. For this job, we needed them to be able to detect explosives buried more deeply, and which may have been buried for 60 or more years."

At a recent demonstration of their capabilities, the detection dogs took turns locating a buried training aid. One by one, they stressed the lead held by their handler as they searched the area for the telltale scent that would pinpoint their target. The presence of a strong wind makes their difficult job a bit easier, as it creates a scent cone that is more easily picked up by the

dog. A marked change in a dog's behavior – what might be described as a sense of greater urgency – signals its handler that it is zeroing in. The dog identifies the target by sitting; the handler showers his canine partner with words of praise and a special toy reserved for such a rewarding occasion. And the dog channels his inner puppy as he happily jumps and plays with the coveted toy.

To date, with the exception of the training aid, neither the traditional metal detectors nor the explosive detection dogs have located buried explosive material at the site associated with the military's training here during World War II. To provide a level of quality control, AMK9 has two different dogs cover each of the grids on the site, confirming their results.

It takes a special kind of dog to do this type of work. Explosive detection dogs are primarily born and raised in Europe, where



Matos signals to his handler, Stevie Valencia of AMK9, that he has found his target by sitting and waiting for confirmation. Once confirmed that he was successful, he'll receive a special toy as a reward. (Photo by Nancy J. Sticht)



AMK9 dog handler Stevie Valencia waits for Rex, a three-year-old Dutch Shepherd, to pick up the scent of a buried training target on the Mullet Key Formerly Used Defense Site at Fort DeSoto Park near St. Petersburg, Fla. (Photo by Nancy J. Sticht)



NOSES (continued from PAGE 4)



Jack, a four-year-old Belgian Malinois, leads handler Roger Tappan of AMK9 as he works to locate his target. Jack is one of two dogs working at the Mullet Key Formerly Used Defense Site at Fort DeSoto Park that have also completed tours in Afghanistan. (Photo by Nancy J. Sticht)

they start their basic obedience training at about a year old. Those with the highest level of “play and prey” drive make the best explosive detection dogs, because of their endurance, enthusiasm and motivation for performance activities such as agility drills, flyball and obedience training.

“In the United States, we breed pets,” explained Owen. “Europe breeds sport dogs, and has done so for generations.” Because the dogs learn the earliest basic commands in Europe, handlers here continue the practice of issuing commands in Dutch or German, to maintain consistency. The German word “bleiben” (Blijf) instructs them to sit or stay; “loslassen” (Los or Loslaten) means release or let go. At about two years old, the dogs start detection training.

Consistency is critical for the more than 750 K-9 teams AMK9 deploys worldwide to conduct approximately two million searches annually. AMK9 worked with the Department of Defense to develop a national certification standard to ensure teams in the canine industry could perform consistently in any environment. AMK9 handlers must have had prior canine handling experience earned in the military and/or law enforcement. With stringent selection, training and certification protocols, AMK9 dogs have a 96 percent or better first-time pass rate.

Explosive detection dogs serve for an average of eight years, after which they retire and may be adopted by qualified individuals or families. Though they don't typically live with their handlers, they do share a very close, mutual partnership formed out of natural protectiveness, loyalty, and affection each develops for the other.

“It's really hard to let them go at the end of a project,” said handler Stevie Valencia, who on this job works with Matos, a two-year-old Belgian Malinois and Rex, a three-year-old Dutch Shepherd.



Don, a five-year-old German Shepherd, proudly sits to indicate to his handler, Roger Tappan of AMK9 that he has located his target. (Photo by Nancy J. Sticht)

Roger Tappan works with Don, a five-year-old German Shepherd, and Jack, a four-year-old Belgian Malinois, both of whom completed a tour in Afghanistan.

“These dogs love to work and they are highly motivated to earn playtime with their toy,” explained Tappan.

“Dogs don't need to prove themselves,” said Owen. “We know what they can do. Because the traditional technology looks for metal, and the detection dogs look for explosives, it's a great match and totally consistent with other technologies being used by the Corps.” ♦



## Presentation on poisonous species benefits field staff safety

BY ERICA SKOLTE



Florida bark scorpions have been found under rocks and in monitoring well sleeves during inspections of the 143-mile long Herbert Hoover Dike levee around Lake Okeechobee. (Photo by: Dan Culbert, UF/IFAS)

Halloween is the perfect time to talk about all things creepy and crawly, so safety technician Brian Meade arranged for a special presentation during his monthly safety meeting at the South Florida Operations Office (SFOO) in Clewiston.

Meade serves as a resource for team members who work in the Clewiston office and at the locks and dams along the Okeechobee Waterway and Canaveral Lock, ensuring compliance with all safety regulations.

"I asked everyone what they'd like to learn about, and one of the employees suggested the topic of poisonous plants and animals," said Meade.



The brown recluse or "violin spider" can be identified by its sandy brown color, uniformly colored legs and the upside-down violin-shaped marking on the cephalothorax, or front section of its body. (Photo from [www.commonswikimedia.org](http://www.commonswikimedia.org))

Following briefings on respirators and Halloween safety, biologist Nicole Liette provided an overview of the many poisonous plants and animals in south Florida. Since many of the SFOO and lock employees spend a lot of time outdoors or in the field, it's important for them to be aware of the poisonous species they might encounter during their normal duties in south Florida.

Liette covered all of the bases, starting with fire ants, bees and wasps, before moving on to scorpions, black widow and brown recluse spiders.

Liette also included poisonous caterpillars in her presentation, since some people experience severe reactions to the poisons released by the spines and may require medical attention. One treatment protocol is to place scotch tape over the affected area, stripping it off repeatedly to remove the spines. Ice packs help to reduce the stinging sensation followed by a paste of baking soda and water to neutralize the poison.



The adult female black widow has a distinct red hourglass on the bottom of its abdomen. (Photo from [www.commonswikimedia.org](http://www.commonswikimedia.org))

Of the 45 snake species that occur throughout Florida, 23 may be found in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) south of Lake Okeechobee. Of the 23, only four are venomous: the coral snake, the aggressive Florida cottonmouth or water moccasin, dusky pigmy rattlesnake and the eastern diamondback rattlesnake. The southern copperhead is found in a small area of the Florida panhandle, just west of Tallahassee, and the timber or canebrake rattlesnake is found in northeast Florida.

The venomous pit vipers, like rattlesnakes, the cottonmouth and the southern copperhead have large triangular heads, but the venomous eastern coral snake does not. The color pattern is the best way to identify this species. To easily remember the difference between the eastern coral snake and the scarlet kingsnake (a non-venomous snake), Liette advises to think about the two colors most commonly seen on a safety vest (bright red or orange and yellow) to remember which one is poisonous. Or, remember by using the "stoplight" phrase: "yellow, red, STOP!"



**SAFETY TALK** (continued from PAGE 6)



Is it poisonous? Think about the warning colors most commonly seen on safety vests to help identify the poisonous eastern coral snake, which has a black snout, and a repeating pattern where red touches yellow. (Photo from www.common.wikimedia.org)

The treatment protocol for an eastern coral snake bite is to head to the emergency room immediately for anti-venom, since the poison acts very quickly. Liette refuted some popular myths about venomous snake bites. She explained that application of tourniquets or ice worsens the damage, and that cutting an "X" and sucking out the venom is not recommended. Instead, call 911 immediately, keep the limb below heart level and head to the emergency room.

She also recommended keeping a distance from the diamondback rattlesnake, since the snake can strike at a distance of two thirds its body length.

Poisonous creatures also inhabit the water, including stingrays, catfish, urchins, stonefish, scorpionfish and lionfish, which have venom-coated spines, portions of which may be left embedded in a wound. The recommended treatment is to soak in hot soapy water for 30 to 90 minutes to deactivate the venom (no ice or cold water), and head to the hospital to remove foreign matter or treat severe symptoms.

Poisonous aquatic invertebrates include jellyfish, coral, man-of-war and anemones, which have stinging cells that eject a poison whip-like hair when touched. It is important never to rub, because it causes more of the nematocysts to sting. Rinse the area with sea water, vinegar or alcohol (not fresh water), then fix the remaining tentacles with shaving cream, flour or talc, scraping the matter off with a dull knife.

Liette also addressed poisonous plants, like poison sumac, which have toxins in the plant sap. Poison ivy and poison oak both have leaves in sets of three, and the poison oak has lobed leaves similar to an oak tree. Another good rule of thumb from Liette: Never eat a plant you don't know.

After the presentation, several employees shared their experiences with poisonous species, which underscored the need to know about hazards in the environment.

Calvin Grinslade, a civil engineering technician in the SFOO, spends much of his time outdoors. This summer during the wet season, Lake Okeechobee levels rose above 15.5 feet, and two-person teams inspected the dike on a weekly basis. Grinslade told the audience that that he has seen several Florida bark scorpions under rocks and in some of the monitoring well sleeves in the levee of the Herbert Hoover Dike. He also comes across aggressive cottonmouths along the interior of the dike and frequently sees black widow spiders (which he stays away from when he sees their unique spiky white egg cases). He has also seen the damage that a brown recluse bite can do.

Liette's presentation underscored the important message to be educated, be alert and aware, and be safe.

For additional information on venomous snakes, visit: [http://ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu/venomous\\_snake\\_identification.shtml#venomous](http://ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu/venomous_snake_identification.shtml#venomous) ♦



Believe it or not, this puss caterpillar larvae can leave a burning blistered trail on the skin. (Photo courtesy of University of Florida, EDIS)



Scorpions are fluorescent under ultraviolet light. Researchers have frozen scorpions overnight, only to put them in the sun the next day and watch them thaw out and walk away! (Photo by Kenton Elliot, courtesy of Desert USA/Digital West Media Inc.)



# Corps retiree inspired others, left a lasting legacy

BY ERICA SKOLTE



Enge's estate preserved this classic salt marsh wetland habitat along the Nassau River, viewed from the Nassau River Bridge, dominated by black needle rush and smooth cordgrass. (Photo by Beth Strawbridge)

At some point, most people will ask themselves the "big" questions, including: How well did I live my life? Did I make a difference? How will I be remembered?

Listening to his family and friends, it becomes apparent that for Noble Enge, Jr., those big questions would have had satisfying answers.

In September 2013, Enge's sisters deeded land to North Florida Land Trust in his name, to ensure its permanent protection and preservation. The Noble Enge Trust encompasses 500 acres, much of it classic salt marsh habitat near and adjacent to the Nassau River on North Main Street in Jacksonville, Fla. within the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve.

Perhaps Enge's generous nature stemmed from his humble beginnings. He was born in Jacksonville in 1929, during the difficult years of the depression. Diagnosed with polio at age three, he endured many surgeries during his growing years and wore a heavy leg brace for his entire life. When he was nine, his father died, leaving his mother to support herself and four young children.

He grew up in Arlington and spent his life playing outdoors, exploring the woods or climbing the banks of the St. Johns River. He received his degree in civil engineering from the University



Noble Enge retired from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District in the 1990s and passed away in 2010, but his spirit and love of the rivers and the outdoors will live on in the creeks, marshes and riverfront land preserved and protected in his name. (USACE file photo)



**NOBLE ENGE** (continued from **PAGE 8**)

of Florida, where he was an award-winning gymnast. He was also an award-winning lifelong canoeist, kayaker and windmill class sailor, and belonged to the Seminole Canoe Club. On two occasions, he won the world's longest river race, the 38-mile Mug Race on the St. Johns River, starting at Palatka and ending at the Buckman Bridge in Jacksonville. As a canoe sailor, he won his Open Portsmouth "B" Class - a nine-hour race won over 15 other competitors, and won more than a dozen national titles in the American Canoe Association's five-meter class on the St. Lawrence River. He canoed most of America's premier whitewater rivers, including Georgia's Chattooga, the Colorado, Idaho's Salmon River, the Green River, the Rio Grande and the upper Delaware.

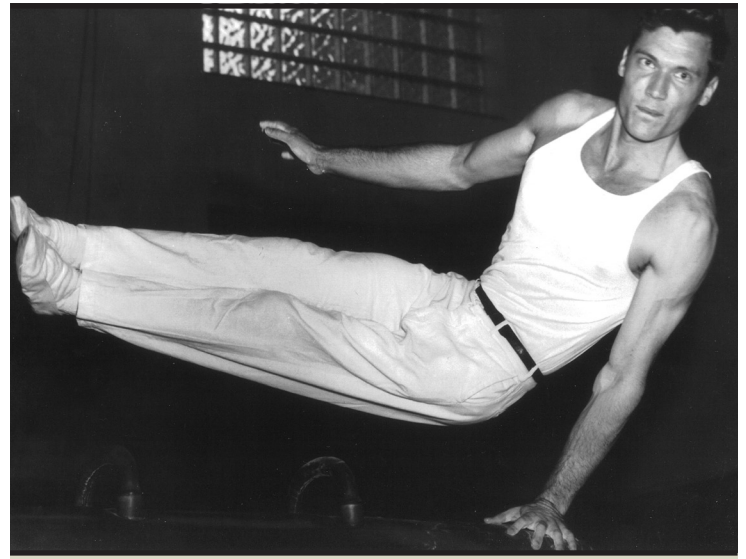
"Noble could do anything; he would not be held back," said his sister, Katherine Barket. "In 1951, he and a friend completed a 500-mile, 15-day journey starting at White Springs, following the Suwannee River to the Gulf to Cedar Springs. They went on to Withlacoochee River, then crossed land to the Ocklawaha River and to Silver Springs. They spent three days on the St. Johns to return to Jacksonville. My brother said that paddling the St. Johns was the most difficult part of the trip."



Noble Enge "at home" in his beloved kayak during a 10-mile freshwater trip from the Shands Bridge to his house in Switzerland on the St. Johns River in 2003. (Photo by Dan Peck)

In 1982, Enge moved from Arlington to a riverfront home in Switzerland, Fla., happy to finally live on the river that he loved. He believed in the preservation of land and water and participated in many environmental groups, such as the Stewards of the St. Johns River, Bartram Trail Historic Highway Preservation and others. He continued boating throughout the U.S., Canada and Hawaii, winning many trophies and awards.

"Noble was a renaissance man of the outdoors," said Russell Weeks, who worked with Enge before his retirement in the early 1990s. "He loved everything about nature and particularly about water. Those loves probably led him to choose a career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, since the Corps is first and foremost a water resources agency. He began working for the Corps in the 1950s, but before he did, he and some of his buddies embarked on a week-long canoe trip through the Florida Everglades - how ironic, since that area is now the number one environmental restoration project for the Corps. He was involved in water resources planning and wrote about the original flow patterns of the Everglades. Many of today's senior Corps employees remember him as a great teacher



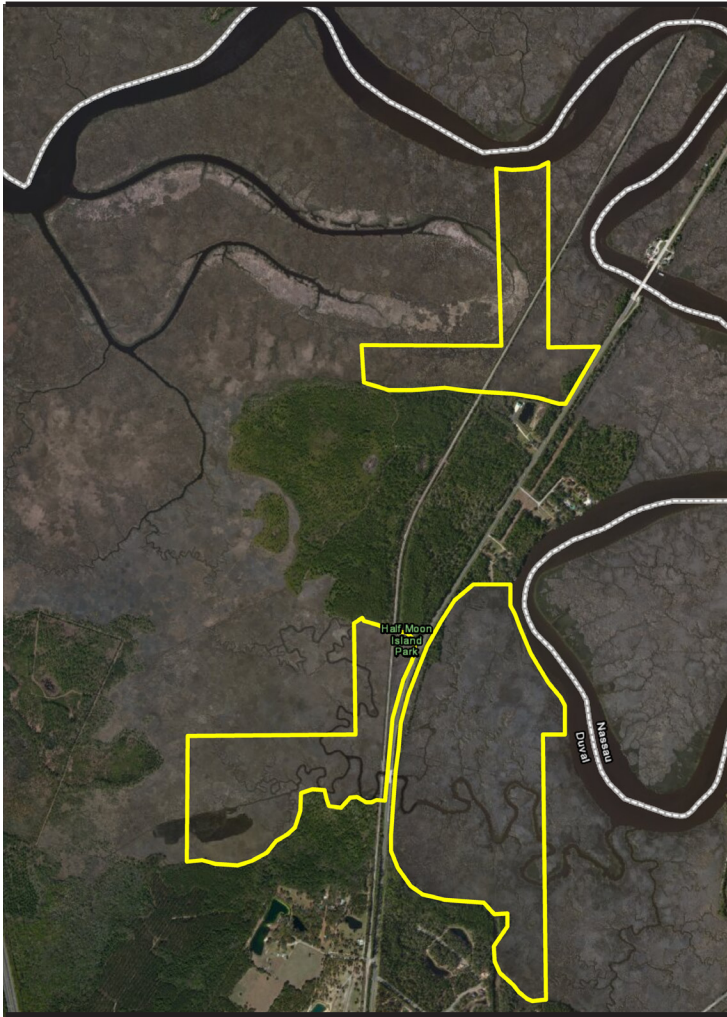
Though Enge contracted polio at age three and wore a heavy brace for the rest of his life, he never let it hold him back. He won many trophies and medals as a member of the University of Florida gymnastics team. (Enge family photos courtesy of Katherine Barket)



Enge enjoyed canoe sailing near his home on the St. Johns River. (Enge family photos courtesy of Kathy Barket)



## NOBLE ENGE (continued from PAGE 9)



The estate of Noble Enge, Jr. donated 500 acres on the Nassau River within the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve to the North Florida Land Trust (Photo courtesy of the North Florida Land Trust)

and mentor, a reservoir of institutional knowledge."

"Noble was a knowledgeable and trusted hydrologist. He loved working with our nation's rivers and lakes," said Carol White, former chief of Jacksonville District's water management section for many years. "Noble was a close friend while we both worked at Jacksonville District, and after we both retired, he became like a brother to me – a "go to" type of person who was always there when you needed a helping hand. We shrimped together almost annually on the end of his dock. We beheaded thousands of shrimp together into the wee hours of night and shared the catch."

"Noble was a truly nice guy and an authentic preservationist. He helped me navigate through Planning Division when I first came to Jacksonville, and he took a sincere interest in my cultural resources work," said archaeologist David McCullough. "He was a friend and a mentor. He had a strong passion for the river and its preservation and protection. I was delighted to find out what his family had done to honor his legacy."

"The circumstances of his early life inspired my brother to evaluate his priorities. He was intelligent, generous, humble, kind and creative. He could achieve excellence in anything he

pursued. He achieved what some spend a lifetime searching for and some never find," said Barket. "Noble knew himself and chose a life that would give him the most pleasure. He found solitude, peace and contentment in the water and the environment. He lived life to the fullest in the manner that he chose."

The Enge family began acquiring riverfront and marsh land in the 1940s, but it was Noble who made sure that it would continue to be held by the family until it could be preserved. Enge researched different ways to conserve and protect the land before he passed away in 2010. His dream was finally realized with the donation of the lands for permanent preservation in September 2013.

"Noble will be remembered for his generosity of spirit, his concern for Florida rivers and lakes, and the flora and fauna of the region. My two sisters and I believe it would be his wish to preserve this beautiful marsh land in his name," said Barket. "When you spend your life on a river, you can't help but want to see it preserved." ♦



Even ice couldn't keep Enge out of his kayak when parts of the St. Johns River froze. (Enge family photos courtesy of Katherine Barket)



# Rangers educate boaters on Okeechobee Waterway anchoring policy

BY JOHN H. CAMPBELL



A boater approaches LaBelle on the Caloosahatchee River, part of the Okeechobee Waterway in south Florida. Jacksonville District is educating boaters on its anchoring policy to improve safety and reduce the risk of an accident on the 152-mile long waterway connecting Stuart and Fort Myers. (Photo by John Campbell)

The task can seem never-ending at times, but Jacksonville District park rangers along the Okeechobee Waterway are educating boaters on navigation and anchoring policies adopted to promote safety.

The anchoring policy was formalized earlier this year. It prohibits long-term anchoring in the 152-mile waterway, which connects the Atlantic Ocean at Stuart with the Gulf of Mexico at Fort Myers. Exceptions are allowed for boaters who are making progress to cross the waterway; they will be allowed to drop anchor for a period of up to 24 hours in the same location.

"The basis of the policy is to provide a safe and open waterway," said Steve Dunham, chief of the South Florida Operations Office in Clewiston. "It's about navigational safety on a waterway where vessels are traveling at all hours of the day and night."

The policy has strict prohibitions against using boats on the waterway for habitation. Dunham says this is to ensure boat traffic can continue to flow smoothly.

"Many recreational boaters were clogging the waterway, and navigation through some areas was becoming a serpentine event due to the zig-zagging that some boaters were doing

to avoid these anchored vessels," Dunham said. "Without this policy, it was only a matter of time before we had an accident." Implementation of the policy has been challenging, in part, because the state of Florida has adopted navigation laws that many see as much friendlier than the anchoring policy in place on the waterway.

"Boaters have to remember that state regulations don't govern a federal waterway," said Dunham. "Once we tell them that we're doing this for safety reasons, they are very understanding."

A new component to the education effort has recently included citations, penalties and fines for boaters found in violation of the anchoring policy. One boater was fined \$500 over the summer for his failure to comply with the policy, something Dunham says is only done as a last resort.

"Over the years, it's been difficult for park rangers to keep boats from anchoring due to the conflicting policies," said Dunham. "Our rangers will continue to work to educate boaters using the waterway."



## ANCHORING POLICY (continued from PAGE 11)



Boaters drop anchor for a moment at LaBelle in Hendry County along the Okeechobee Waterway. Jacksonville District has stepped up efforts to educate boaters on its anchoring policy, which prohibits long-term habitation at the same location. (Photo by John Campbell)

Hundreds of boats continue to make use of the waterway in south Florida, which has remained open for more than a year after installation of a manatee protection system at the Moore Haven Lock and unexpected repairs at the St. Lucie Lock forced those structures to close for about a month during 2012.

Changes in operations at Moore Haven Lock were recently announced. On Wednesdays and Thursdays, the lock will operate on a limited schedule, with lockages at 8 a.m., 10 a.m., noon, 2 p.m., 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. On all other days, Moore Haven will be open from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. The other four locks on the waterway continue with their normal hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week.

"This adjustment is being made to accommodate a change in the staffing pattern at Moore Haven Lock," said Tim Murphy, assistant chief of the Operations Division. "Our intent is to implement this change in a manner that causes the least inconvenience to those who navigate through the Moore Haven Lock." ♦





# Invasive Species Management Branch ramps up outreach

BY ERICA SKOLTE



The program to control invasive aquatic plants like water hyacinth is important to the health of Lake Okeechobee and Corps operations. Left unchecked, the plants multiply quickly, resulting in problems with navigation, flood control and the natural ecosystem. (USACE file photo)

This past year, Lake Okeechobee has been in the news and the subject of much attention. Through it all, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District provided frequent updates for the media and the public regarding water releases, lake levels and the Herbert Hoover Dike, which surrounds the lake. The recent focus on the lake provides an opportunity for the Corps to continue to educate and engage the public about all operations around the lake, including invasive species management.

Outreach to the communities surrounding Lake Okeechobee is nothing new to the members of the district's Invasive Species Management Branch. They have always gone to great lengths and used a broad variety of methods to inform the public. Now, they are harnessing the power of social media to boost their reach. Facebook and Twitter are just some of the newest tools in their outreach toolbox, allowing them to expand the visibility of their existing programs.

One of the long-standing outreach programs around the lake remains intact. Corps biologists continue to visit fish camps, bait shops and marinas around the 143-mile long lake shore at least once a month, to hand-deliver treatment schedules.

"The personal contact helps us to maintain relationships and help the local community. Whenever Corps employees go out around the lake, conversations open up opportunities to field all types of questions," said biologist Jon Morton. "People ask us about all kinds of things, not just invasive species management. They also ask us about lake levels, water releases, fisheries and

really anything related to the lake. The biologists can put them in contact with someone who can answer their questions."

"Face-to-face interaction on a consistent basis is incredibly important," said biologist Jeremy Crossland, who worked at the lake for many years and now focuses on invasive species management district-wide. "When we go out and talk to the same people at the fish camps, bait shops and marinas every few weeks, people get to know us and feel more comfortable. They are more likely to ask questions or communicate things about what is happening around the lake that are important for us to know. You start out talking about work, but after stopping in time after time, eventually you start talking about other things. You gradually build a personal relationship that helps both people learn more about what's going on. It's a two-way street."

Corps biologists are often on the lake in airboats marked with the distinctive Corps castle logo.

"A big part of the job for us is pre- and post-treatment monitoring, to measure the effectiveness of the treatment of target plants and to ensure that damage to non-target native plant species is minimized," said biologist Nicole Liette. When they are out on the water or at public use areas like boat ramps, members of the public frequently ask questions about the lake.

"It is important to educate the public about invasive species, the effects of invasive species on the environment, and the importance of maintaining Lake Okeechobee as a healthy

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 14)



## INVASIVE SPECIES (continued from PAGE 13)

ecosystem," said biologist David Lattuca. "Letting people know about how problematic these invasive plants really are can help them to understand why we're doing what we're doing. If they know that water hyacinth can double in as little as 10 to 14 days, the need to treat and control them makes a lot more sense."



Biologist Nicole Liette (right) visits the bait and tackle store at Roland Martin's Marina as part of the regular face-to-face outreach the Corps does every few weeks around the lake. (Photo by David Lattuca)

Another new outreach strategy debuted in March. The Corps installed permanent metal signs at all boat ramps around the lake, featuring websites that are regularly updated with information on vegetation management. The QR code displayed at the bottom right corner of the sign makes information immediately available to anyone with a cell phone. The signs provide up-to-date information more efficiently and cost-effectively than posting flyers in kiosks.

Regularly scheduled meetings provide another source of information and opportunity for public participation. The Corps chairs the Lake Okeechobee Aquatic Plant Management Interagency Task Force meetings that take place approximately every four to six weeks, with the location alternating between the Corps' South Florida Operations Office in Clewiston and the South Florida Water Management District's Okeechobee Service Center. Members of the Corps, the South Florida Water Management District and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, which share joint responsibility for invasive species management around the lake, meet to discuss vegetation management issues and projects. The meetings are open to the public, and members of the public can also call in and participate. In contrast to many other meetings, members of the public are invited to speak during the first part of the meeting. Information from these meetings is posted on the Lake Okeechobee Aquatic Plant Management Interagency Task Force website ([www.floridainvasives.org/okeechobee](http://www.floridainvasives.org/okeechobee)).

In the past, many fishermen, guides and other stakeholders have attended meetings. The biologists have built relationships and work closely with recreational fisherman, especially around tournament time. If there is a tournament going on, they will do their best to move treatment operations to a different part of the lake, if possible.

If needed, public information meetings are held in Okeechobee and Clewiston. These meetings are held in the evening, when

it is easier for the general public to attend. Information on all upcoming meetings will now be available via Jacksonville District social media sites. Treatment schedules are updated weekly on the Jacksonville District website, and are now posted on both the district's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/JacksonvilleDistrict](http://www.facebook.com/JacksonvilleDistrict)) and its Lake Okeechobee and the Okeechobee Waterway Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/LakeOkeechobeeOWW](http://www.facebook.com/LakeOkeechobeeOWW)). The social media outlets also link visitors back to information on the Jacksonville District website.

These new outlets are quickly becoming known to both the public and the media as excellent sources for all types of information about Lake Okeechobee. News releases, educational information, public meetings, news stories, daily lake levels, water safety information and treatment schedules are all shared on the site. The power of social media was demonstrated when a recent posting of the treatment schedule on the Lake Okeechobee Facebook page was shared by several local newspapers, including the Glades County Democrat, Clewiston News and Okeechobee News. As a result, nearly 1,700 people saw the information in their news feed.

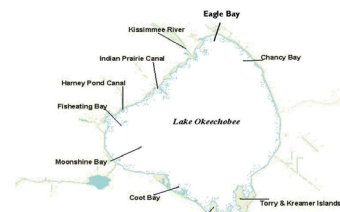
Though social media provides powerful new ways to share information, members of the public may also talk to a Corps biologist in person.

"One of our biologists would be happy to speak with anyone who has questions," said Morton. "They can always give us a call, and we will answer their questions or check out their concerns."

The need to continue educating people about invasive species control is ongoing.

"Outreach in south Florida is always very dynamic," said Crossland. "In addition to the local community, we also have a lot of visitors who come down to fish seasonally. We must continually inform and educate the public, respond to their concerns and help them understand the importance of our work." ♦

### Treatment Notice – Lake Okeechobee



Vegetation Management Activities are routinely conducted in Lake Okeechobee and the associated marshes. Detailed information on the current schedule of vegetation management activities is available at:  
<http://www.floridainvasives.org/Okeechobee/News.html>

Lake Okeechobee Interagency Aquatic Plant Management Task Force meets on a bi-monthly basis to plan and execute these activities. More information about these meetings is available at:  
<http://www.floridainvasives.org/Okeechobee/index.html>



Permanent metal signs were recently installed at all boat ramps around Lake Okeechobee to provide information about vegetation management. (Image courtesy of Jon Morton)





# It's that time of year again



## Resources to help you achieve your New Year's resolutions:

- **Eat healthier** – U.S. Department of Agriculture: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>
- **Get fit** – President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition: <http://fitness.gov/>
- **Lose weight** – Weight Control Information Network [http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/for\\_life.htm](http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/for_life.htm)
- **Drink less alcohol** – National Institute of Health: <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/Hangovers/beyondHangovers.htm>
- **Quit smoking** – Smokefree.gov <http://smokefree.gov/>
- **Manage debt** – Federal Trade Commission <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0150-coping-debt>
- **Manage stress** – Healthfinder.gov <http://healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/health-conditions-and-diseases/heart-health/manage-stress>
- **Volunteer to help others:** Serve.gov <http://www.serve.gov/>
- **Reduce, reuse and recycle:** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency <http://www2.epa.gov/recycle>

## How to achieve your 2014 resolutions

- Develop a time-activated plan under each goal – break goal into manageable pieces so you will see steady progress
- Start following your plan immediately, and track your progress
- Create accountability – find a friend or family member with the same resolution and work on it together
- Remind yourself – write down what you plan to do each day to help you achieve your goal
- Focus on the process rather than the end goal – take one step at a time
- Create a successful environment – set your running shoes by the door; stock up on healthy foods
- If you fall down, get right back up – A minor setback is just that, as long as you put it behind you and set your sights on moving forward
- Reward yourself – Set small, frequent rewards for meeting milestones along the way, and a major reward for completion

## OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS WELCOMEHOME

ALEX SAAR  
 JOHN HUGHES  
 GRESHAUN NAIR  
 SIMONE TATE  
 GUS ROJAS



# Jax Facts: How well do you know Jacksonville District?

BY NANCY J. STICHT



Congratulations to **Bill DeFrance**, Regulatory 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 November issue of JaxStrong. (Photo courtesy of Bill DeFrance)

**1. What is the function of the Invasive Species Leadership Team?**

A: The function of the ISLT is to create invasive species policy for the Corps and to develop and implement program management plans. (A Community of Practice is born, pg. 12)

**2. What Jacksonville District project resulted in the creation of a tribal liaison position?**

A: Tamiami Trail (A day in the life of Jacksonville District's tribal liaison, pg. 4)

**3. What does FCCE stand for?**

A: Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies (Protecting lives and infrastructure from the next storm, pg. 3)

**4. Purple Martins migrate to Florida each spring from where?**

A: Brazil (Corps volunteers prepare for annual return of Purple Martins, pg. 14)

**5. Name three of the keys to invasive species management.**

A: Control, prevention and coordination (The others are early detection, rapid response and public outreach) (A Community of Practice is born, pg. 12)

**6. How do the Miccosukee and Seminole concerns related to water levels in Water Conservation Area 3A differ?**

A: The Miccosukee want water levels to be lower in Water Conservation Area 3A to minimize damage to tree islands, while the Seminoles want more water to rehydrate historic wetlands on their land. (A day in the life of Jacksonville District's tribal liaison, pg. 4)

**7. Name two sources of information to help manage stress during the holidays.**

A: Mayo Clinic and Health Magazine (COL Dodd's column, pg. 2)

**8. In the eastern United States, Purple Martins are almost entirely dependent on what?**

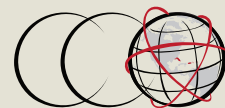
A: Man-made birdhouses (Corps volunteers prepare for annual return of Purple Martins, pg. 14)

**9. What are the four impacts of invasive species?**

A: Invasive species impact wildlife and fisheries habitat, human health and result in high costs to eradicate and manage. (A Community of Practice is born, pg. 12)

**10. What were two major accomplishments of the FCCE program in Fiscal Year 2013?**

A: The district awarded contracts for eight million cubic yards of sand placement on 38.5 miles of Florida's beaches and emergency navigation maintenance at nine ports or channels. (Protecting lives and infrastructure from the next storm, pg. 3)



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

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