



JAXSTRONG®

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JULY 2012 | Volume 4 Issue 4



COMMANDER'S CORNER

MESSAGE FROM COL. ALAN DODD

JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT'S REPUTATION FOR ENGINEERING EXPERTISE NATIONALLY KNOWN

It is truly an honor to join the Jacksonville District team. My wife Christine and I are excited about the opportunity to spend the next three years with you in such a great district and beautiful region of the country. I look forward to meeting each of you and learning about the tremendous work you perform every day on behalf of our nation.

While my previous assignments included tours in Japan District and USACE headquarters, I'm especially looking forward to the challenges of the civil works mission here. You have a tremendous reputation within the Corps and the country because of your professionalism, dedication and engineering expertise. The mission is difficult, yet you routinely produce solutions to complex environmental, flood protection and navigation problems that challenge the country. Your successes have had a real impact on Florida and the Caribbean, demonstrating a legacy of excellence where you always do what is right rather than what is easy.

While you have accomplished much and have much to be proud of, our challenges in the future are equally as great. Changing environmental conditions, security threats, increasing demands for shipping and navigation and diminishing federal resources all contribute to a future that makes our mission more difficult. As we look forward, we must always remember our purpose is to serve the nation with engineering solutions that strengthen the economy, improve security of the homeland and protect both the environment and our communities. Whether it is ecosystem restoration, flood risk management, or waterway and harbor navigation, America trusts you to always do what is right as you solve some of the most difficult engineering problems facing this nation. We must preserve that trust through a commitment to excellence in everything we do.

Many of our projects are of strategic importance to the nation, with impacts that extend well beyond the region. Our navigation, flood control and disaster response missions are critical to the economic prosperity and protection of the nation, while the environmental remediation and regulatory missions are critical to preserving national treasures for generations to come.

While the country's economic challenges are no secret and the federal government searches for opportunities to reduce spending, Congress recognizes the importance of our mission and continues to fund many of our projects. In these times, it is important that we always remember our ethical responsibility to be good stewards of America's tax dollars and use every dollar wisely to maximize benefits on our projects.

Our reputation depends on the ability to impartially make decisions and execute our regulatory responsibilities based on applicable rules and laws. And while we will always comply with legal restrictions and limitations, we must also remember that state, local and tribal partnerships are key to our success. While our perspectives may not always be the same, we all share a vested interest in seeing every project succeed. By maintaining and fostering relationships with the public and our partners, we will develop better solutions that will help to accomplish our mission. Your efforts in environmental restoration, flood protection and regulatory compliance set the example for others in the Corps and the nation.

In the upcoming weeks, I plan to visit many of the offices and projects in the district to learn more about what you do and how we operate. I'm thrilled to be part of one of the best districts in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and look forward to our time together serving the nation.

Army Strong. BUILDING STRONG®. JaxStrong.

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

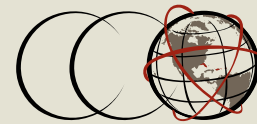
DISTRICT COMMANDER
COL. ALAN DODD

CHIEF, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS
TERRY HINES SMITH, APR

MANAGING EDITOR
NANCY J. STICHT

DESIGN AND LAYOUT ARTIST
LINDA TORRES

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District

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ON THE COVER

COL. ERIC R. P. CONRAD,
SOUTH ATLANTIC
DIVISION COMMANDER
CONGRATULATES
COL. ALAN M. DODD,
JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT
COMMANDER.
PHOTO BY DAVID KIMERY



Dodd assumes command of Corps' Jacksonville District BY JOHN H. CAMPBELL



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Park Rangers, Operations Division, W.P. Franklin/St. Lucie Recreation Area, present the colors to the official party. (PHOTO BY DAVID KIMERY)

Col. Alan M. Dodd became the 57th commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Jacksonville District, during a Change of Command ceremony held today at the Jacksonville Main Library.

As Jacksonville District Commander, Dodd assumes responsibility for the federal development of water resources in Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Jacksonville District's annual program exceeds \$400 million and includes the Corps' largest ecosystem restoration project - America's Everglades - as well as the Herbert Hoover Dike Rehabilitation, the nation's largest regulatory program and the largest federal coastal program in the United States.

"I am incredibly humbled to join the phenomenal federal, state and local team here in Florida, the Antilles and elsewhere in the nation," Dodd said. "Your vision provides for prosperity today while securing a better tomorrow for our country. Whether ecosystem restoration, flood risk management, or waterway and harbor navigation, the Jacksonville District and its partners routinely provide solutions to many complex problems and challenges, strengthening the economy, improving

security of the homeland, and protecting both the environment and our communities."

Dodd most recently served as commander of the 27th Engineer Battalion at Ft. Bragg, N.C. He led the battalion during combat operations while deployed to Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom. Dodd is a native of Worcester, Mass., and a graduate of the United States Military Academy, from which he has a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering and was commissioned as an engineer officer in the U.S. Army. He also has a Master of Science Degree in civil engineering from Pennsylvania State University.

Among Dodd's previous assignments are: command engineer, Joint Special Operations Command, Ft. Bragg; plans branch chief, Office of the Chief of Engineers, Headquarters, Department of the Army; special assistant to the Commanding General for the USACE; battalion executive officer and operations officer for the 27th Engineer Battalion. ♦



LEFT: Maj. Gen. Todd T. Semonite, Deputy Chief of Engineers/ Deputy Commanding General, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers speaks about the Jacksonville district's incoming and outgoing commanders. RIGHT: Col. Eric R.P. Conrad, South Atlantic Division Commander, passes the flag to the incoming Jacksonville District commander, Col. Alan M. Dodd. (PHOTOS BY DAVID KIMERY)

Public involvement is crucial for Jacksonville Harbor deepening study

BY AMANDA ELLISON



Jacksonville Harbor is one of several east coast harbors considering deepening to accommodate post-Panamax ships. (USACE PHOTO)

Bringing post-Panamax ships to our shores is a hot topic along the country's east coast, with several cities vying for their ports to be deepened to accommodate the larger container ships. The associated economic boost and added jobs are vitally important to those regions.

Jacksonville is in the middle of the hunt, and a study is under way to increase 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 50 feet. Deepening the existing channel would allow for more efficient use of the harbor by larger vessels; thereby reducing transportation costs while avoiding or minimizing impacts to environmental resources.

Recently, Jacksonville District hosted a meeting to provide the public with an early opportunity to discuss the ecological and water

quality models that are in development for the study. Taking a lesson from public involvement efforts conducted for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), the project delivery team is starting early in the process to engage stakeholders and members of the public.

"It is not common practice to involve the public so early in the process," said Jason Harrah, project manager. "However, we feel it is crucial to talk with them early and often about what we are doing and how it could potentially impact the port and the citizens of Jacksonville."

Beginning this summer, members of the public will be able to participate in monthly conference calls to hear about progress updates, provide input and ask questions. Future meetings will take place in conjunction with each major milestone of the study phase. ♦

Cultural resources returned to Puerto Rico

BY NANCY J. STICHT

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, recently transferred numerous archeological artifacts to the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources and the University of Puerto Rico. The artifacts had been collected by licensed archeologist contractors under the direction of the Corps, during excavations and studies associated with federally funded Corps projects throughout Puerto Rico. The archeological investigations were performed following strict guidelines of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Collections include artifacts gathered from the former Voice of America site in Boquerón, Rio Tanama in Arecibo, Rio Anton Ruiz in Humacao, Rio Guanajibo in Mayaguez and Rios Portugues and Bucana in Ponce. The most important and largest collection is from the Jacana Site, known as PO 29, in the vicinity of Rio Portugues, Ponce. This site was investigated in 2008. The artifacts gathered at Jacana Site were sent to various universities and laboratories where they were studied and analyzed by archeological specialists. The transfer of the artifacts to the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources fulfills the Corps' commitment to preserve the cultural resources for the benefit of the citizens of Puerto Rico. ♦



(PHOTOS BY JOHN CAMPBELL)

(PHOTO BY MIKE ORNELLA)

Multi-agency partnership preserves critical piece of land for Florida panthers

BY JENN DOMASHEVICH



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District prepared all the necessary documents to facilitate the May 16 easement exchange that will allow for the creation of the proposed "panther corridor." (USACE PHOTO)

After the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that Florida panthers wearing radio collars had crossed the Caloosahatchee River near a disposal easement owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, they requested that the Corps relocate their easements, allowing the property to be purchased and preserved as a panther crossing habitat.

Through the collaborative efforts of numerous federal, state and private organizations, the 1,278-acre American Prime property in Glades County, a property described as a "keystone tract" in the single most important area in the state for ensuring the natural recovery of Florida panthers, was purchased by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) May 16.

"By relocating the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' easements, we will preserve this critical panther habitat crossing and allow the current population to expand up into the Kissimmee River watershed," said Col. Alfred Pantano, former Jacksonville District commander.

"I applaud The Nature Conservancy, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), National Wildlife Refuge Association, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, notably Paul Souza, and the Corps' Karl Nixon, for making this dream a reality. We look forward to continuing this collaborative effort to conserve property that is critical for providing Florida panther crossing habitat."

The Corps had two 50-acre disposal easements along the waterfront of the American Prime property. USFWS asked the Corps to relocate its easements to the western boundary of the property so that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) could encumber the property with a Wetlands Restoration Program (WRP) easement, purchasing the development rights to the property and saving the land from future urban development.

The Corps prepared all the necessary documents to facilitate the easement exchange that would allow for the creation of the proposed "panther corridor," which will enable panthers to disperse from habitats restricted to south Florida.

Without the combined, coordinated efforts of all the agencies, the land was scheduled to be sold on the steps of the court house the following day, May 17.

"The successful completion of this land acquisition effort makes me very proud to be part of the multi-agency team, our organization and our mission," said Karl Nixon, deputy chief of the Real Estate Division. "It reaffirms to me that, when people unite for a common goal of protecting valuable habitat, we can make a difference."

This acquisition will encourage the natural recovery of the Florida panther population by providing habitat where animals can den and stalk prey and migrate from southern Florida to areas north of the river.

"To prevent extinction, the panther population must grow, yet the current habitat south of the Caloosahatchee River is at maximum capacity," said Shelly Lakly, TNC executive director in Florida, in a press release issued May 22. "That's why buying this land -- the land known to be the route out of south Florida -- was so critical. It opens up a future. The most at-risk property in a dwindling panther corridor was purchased right before foreclosure. It would have been extremely difficult to protect this critical panther corridor if this property was lost."

The purchase was covered by approximately \$2 million from TNC in private philanthropy, and \$1.5 million each from the USFWS and the private entity that purchased the property encumbered by conservation easements. Additionally, NRCS provided \$1.5 million to purchase a conservation easement on 718 acres of the property, and \$200,000 was provided through Acres for America, a partnership between the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Walmart. ♦



Chief of Engineers Report signed for Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project

BY JENN DOMASHEVICH



The Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project is essential to achieving restoration of tidal wetlands and nearshore habitats within Biscayne Bay, including Biscayne National Park. It also has an integral role in meeting the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan system-wide ecosystem restoration goals and objectives. (USACE PHOTO)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District received a signed Chief of Engineers Report (Chief's Report) for the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project in Miami-Dade County, Fla., May 2. The Chief's Report, signed by then-Acting Chief of Engineers Maj. Gen. Meredith W.B. Temple, was submitted to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works for review. Following review by the Office of Management and Budget, it will then be submitted to Congress for authorization.

"Achieving a signed Chief's Report for Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands was no easy task. Through every obstacle, the team found creative ways to continue toward the goal," said Tim Brown, project manager. "Reaching this milestone is another indicator that the Corps is committed to Everglades restoration and has what it takes to execute the program successfully. I'm looking forward to implementing the next phase of this project and eventually turning dirt."

The Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project is essential to achieving restoration of tidal wetlands and nearshore habitats within Biscayne Bay, including Biscayne National Park. It also has an integral role in meeting the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan system-wide ecosystem restoration goals and objectives.

The project will divert runoff that currently discharges through regional canals and redistribute the freshwater through a spreader canal system into the coastal wetlands adjoining Biscayne Bay, providing a more natural and historic overland flow. The slower, more natural delivery of fresh water over a broad area is expected to reduce hypersaline conditions and reestablish appropriate estuarine salinities that are important to provide nursery habitat for fish and shellfish in tidal wetlands and nearshore bay habitats. This project is expected to create conditions that would be conducive to the reestablishment of oysters and other components typical of a healthy estuarine ecosystem.

The Corps, in cooperation with its co-sponsor, the South Florida Water Management District, completed a Final Project Implementation Report (PIR) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project in January 2012. This final report describes the project purpose and need, location, evaluation of the alternatives and the recommended plan.

Additional information on the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project, including the signed Chief's Report and Final PIR and EIS is available at: www.evergladesplan.org/pm/projects/proj_28_biscayne_bay.aspx. ♦

Document evaluates impacts of Levy County limestone mining

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NANCY J. STICHT



Ed Sarfert, project manager, greets community member Betty Berger at a public meeting to receive comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Titan/Tarmac America LLC King Road limestone mine permit application.

A May 31 public meeting introduced approximately 80 community members in Inglis, Fla., to a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), prepared in evaluation of the Titan/Tarmac America LLC application for a Department of the Army permit to mine limestone in southern Levy County.

Aggregate is used in the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, buildings, homes and other infrastructure vital to the nation's economy. Limestone is the predominant source of aggregate in Florida, with the state ranked second nationally in production and fourth in consumption of crushed rock (limestone and dolomite).

The proposed King Road mine is located along the western Gulf Coast of Florida, about 80 miles north of Tampa. About 2,700 acres, or four square miles of a 9,400 acre (15 square mile) site is proposed to be mined over an approximate 100-year period. Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulates dredge and fill activities in waters of the United States, including wetlands.

Ed Sarfert, project manager, provided the overview and received comments from those in attendance. "The draft EIS identifies and evaluates a range of reasonable alternatives that could meet the purpose and need for the project," he explained. "Onsite alternatives vary according to timing, mining breadth and location and alternate sources of aggregate. Offsite alternatives include new mines in west-central Florida, transporting aggregate via harbors or rail and using other materials to satisfy construction needs." (PHOTOS BY JOHN CAMPBELL)

The permit application includes a plan to mitigate for unavoidable impacts to 2,069 acres of wetlands and 1,818 acres of uplands by restoring and/or preserving wetlands and uplands on and off site. The western portion of the mitigation area abuts the Waccasassa Bay Preserve State Park.

Fred R. Ward, mayor of the city of Dunnellon, said that he was "impressed with the study and impressed by the very thoughtful comments" received at the meeting. Citing water as the common denominator, he explained that without it, there can be no people, no animals and no commerce.

"I'm here to get educated; I want to learn more so I can go back and inform our city council," said Ward.

"Mr. Sarfert didn't just sit behind a desk; he walked this site," said local resident Betty Berger. "It's great that you have presented these alternatives; you haven't made up your mind yet. You've been very open-minded and took the time to come and meet with us. I appreciate it."

The draft EIS was published in May and comments are being received through July 11. The document and further information may be found at www.kingroadeis.com. ♦

Final earthen plug removed at Kissimmee River Restoration Project

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ANNIE CHAMBERS



A large excavator removed the last earthen plug, connecting the historic channel to the channelized Kissimmee River.

The final earthen plug located along Reach 3 of the Kissimmee River Restoration (KRR) project was removed June 5, connecting the excavated oxbow to the C-38 Canal, located on the Kissimmee River.

"I am excited for this once in a lifetime experience to work on a project that's restoring an ecosystem and giving back to the local area," said Richard Hearne, construction control technician for the KRR project, who provided an overview of the plug removal and day-to-day operations on site for a Canadian documentary being produced on the watersheds of America.

The KRR project is a congressionally authorized undertaking, sponsored by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District, the non-federal sponsor. The project encompasses the removal of two water control structures, filling approximately 22 miles of canal, and restoring over 40 square miles of the river channel and floodplain ecosystem, including approximately 27,000 acres of wetlands. ♦



Richard Hearne, construction control technician for the Kissimmee River Restoration project, provides an overview of the plug removal and day-to-day operations for a Canadian documentary film crew.

Do you know....

- ...The average time it takes for an adult to drown?
- ...The average time it takes for a strong swimmer to put on a life jacket after entering the water?
- ...The amount of water in the lungs that causes an adult to drown?
- ...What percentage of water fatalities on Corps-managed waters can be attributed to falling?
- ...The average distance in feet that many drowning victims were from safety?
- ...The percentage of drownings that are witnessed?
- ...The average length of time it takes for a child to drown?
- ...The federal agency that is the single largest provider of outdoor recreation?

(ANSWERS ON PAGE 8)



Corps park ranger Art Ruebenson keeps his head above water with the help of an inflatable life jacket. (PHOTO BY ADAM TARPLEE)

Surprising water safety statistics

BY ERICA ROBBINS

Most of us are drowning in information and quickly filter out anything that doesn't seem to be new, intriguing or critically important. That's one of the challenges of the Corps "Are you next?" national water safety campaign. Many would agree in principle with the tag line "Expect the Unexpected – Wear Your Life Jacket," but may not really understand why it is so important to do so.

On average, it takes an adult **60 seconds to drown**, while it takes **10 minutes for a strong swimmer to put on a life jacket** after entering the water. Wearing a life jacket can help you survive unexpected slips and falls, and buys you time to be rescued.

It takes **less than a half cup or 4 oz. of water in your lungs to drown**. A sudden, unexpected fall into cold water could trigger an involuntary gasp reflex. If you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, this reflex may be delayed, resulting in a last breath of water instead of air. **Falls contribute to 19% of all water-related fatalities** on Corps-managed waters. Wear a life jacket to keep your head above water in the event of an unexpected fall, especially when around cold water.

Many people **die within 10 feet of safety**, having unintentionally entered the water. Believe it or not, unless you are specifically trained, you should never go near anybody struggling to stay afloat because you could drown too! Even the strongest swimmer could drown trying to help others. To help rescue someone, extend a pole, stick, line or clothing to reach them or throw something floatable to them. For more information, go to www.army.mil/article/51402/reach-throw-row-dont-go.

An estimated **60% of all drownings are witnessed** – drowning is a silent killer and many people don't even realize that someone is in trouble. Know the signs of a drowning victim: head is back and bobbing up and down, mouth is open, there is **no sound**, and the arms are outstretched moving simultaneously in an above-the-water, up and down stroke that appears as if they are slapping or playing in the water.

It takes an average of **20 seconds for a child to drown**, so always make them wear a life jacket and never take your eyes off of them when around water.

What agency is the largest federal provider of outdoor recreation? If you guessed the National Park Service, you would be wrong! **The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is the nation's largest federal provider of outdoor recreation**, managing more than 400 lake and river projects in 43 states and hosting more than 370 million visits per year. Water safety is an important mission for the Corps nationwide.

How did you do on the quiz? Were you surprised by how quickly things can go bad near the water and how close to help things can go wrong?



Corps park ranger Art Ruebenson demonstrates proficiency with an inflatable life jacket during a boat operator course. (PHOTO BY ADAM TARPLEE)

Follow these tips for summer water safety:

- Learn to swim well and practice floating
- Wear a life jacket
- Watch your children
- Don't depend on air-filled toys such as water wings that can deflate in seconds
- Use the buddy system and don't swim or boat alone
- Inspect your equipment regularly
- Take a safe boating course
- Check weather conditions and prepare for sudden weather changes
- Don't drink and swim or drink and boat
- Obey all signs and buoys

Additional summer fun safety tips are available from the Corps' National Water Safety Program website at <http://watersafety.usace.army.mil>.

If you recreate around water, expect the unexpected and wear a life jacket. Even excellent swimmers should wear life jackets while boating. If you are over age 16 and know how to swim, inflatable life jackets are a good option. They are cool and comfortable and available in collar and belt pack styles. For information on how to choose the right life jacket, go to: www.uscgboating.org/assets/1/Publications/howtochoosetherightlifejacket_brochure.pdf. ♦ (PHOTOS BY JOHN CAMPBELL)

Out and about

Using a watershed table, an interactive, hands-on educational tool, Angela Ryan of Regulatory Division's Tampa office explains watersheds, the hydrologic cycle and effects of pollution to students at Virgil Mills Elementary school in Palmetto, Fla. The students learned about the life of a biologist working for the Corps, with an emphasis on wetlands and stream protection. ♦

(PHOTO COURTESY ANGELA RYAN)



Draft document is latest milestone reached by mining team

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NANCY J. STICHT

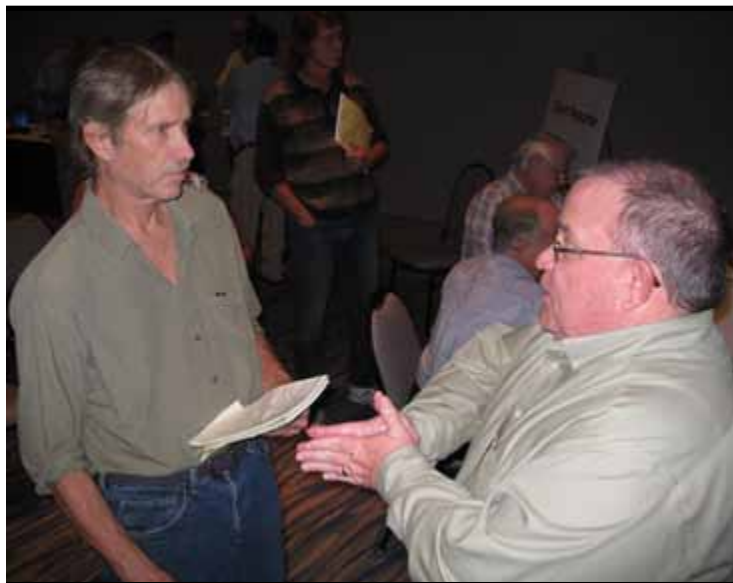


LEFT - Community members review copies of the Draft Areawide Environmental Impact Statement addressing continued mining in the Central Florida Phosphate District and prepare to submit comments on the document at a public meeting June 19 in Lakeland, Fla. RIGHT - At left, from front to back, Regulatory Division's Krista Sabin, Angela Ryan and Mark Peterson, project managers for the individual mine projects currently under consideration, speak with community members who attended the June 19 public meeting on the Draft Areawide Environmental Impact Statement in Lakeland, Fla.

A Draft Areawide Environmental Impact Statement (AEIS) that addresses phosphate mining in the Central Florida Phosphate District has been published for public review and comments are being received through July 30.

Public meetings were held June 19 in Lakeland, Fla., and June 21 in Punta Gorda, Fla., each attended by more than 500 interested citizens. John Fellows, project manager, described the decision to pursue an areawide EIS and the issues considered during the development of the comprehensive document.

Guidelines issued by the White House Council for Environmental Quality for implementing the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) require that federal agencies consider the environmental consequences of proposed agency actions, such as Department of the Army permits for dredge and fill activities in waters of the United States.



John Fellows (right), project manager answers a question about the Draft Areawide Environmental Impact Statement for a Charlotte Sun newspaper reporter at the June 21 public meeting in Punta Gorda.

In doing so, the agency must look at similar actions holistically.

"With four applications for the construction or expansion of phosphate mines – Ona, Desoto, Wingate East and South Pasture Extension – currently under consideration in the Central Florida Phosphate District (CFPD), the Corps began the process of preparing an areawide EIS," explained Fellows. "The areawide EIS takes a watershed approach rather than limits evaluation to each of the four individual mines or even within the boundaries of the CFPD," said Fellows.

The Draft AEIS evaluates 24 alternatives to meet the purpose and need of the proposed projects, including the four proposed mines, three potential future mines and 17 offsite polygons. Further, it takes into consideration potential cumulative effects over the lifespan of the four proposed phosphate mining operations and compensatory mitigation for unavoidable impacts to aquatic resources.

The publication of the Draft AEIS is the latest in a series of milestones that have been met by the mining team, led by Tunis McElwain, acting chief of Regulatory Division's South Permits Branch.

"In May 2010, we hosted a mining summit that was attended by about 50 representatives of federal and state agencies, including the U.S. Environment Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Southwest Florida Water Management District and the South Florida Water Management District, as well as representatives of U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson and U.S. Rep. Bill Posey (FL-15)," said McElwain. "That was the first step in collaboration, with the goal of managing mining efforts with a watershed approach."

An October 2010 public workshop followed, as a precursor to the development of the AEIS and associated scoping meetings. Stakeholders were given the opportunity to offer statements and participate in a series of interactive sessions designed to elicit early issues and concerns for further consideration.

"Our official public scoping meetings, held in March 2011, helped us to identify the primary areas of environmental concern to be addressed in this AEIS," said Fellows. "Those issues include the potential loss of

DRAFT DOCUMENTS (continued from PAGE 9)

wetland functions and services, the effect of proposed mining on groundwater and surface water quality and quantity and potential cumulative effects.

The AEIS is based on credible and defensible data and associated evaluations that use the best information possible during the defined timeframe," Fellows added. "Public comments on the draft document will all be reviewed and incorporated into a final AEIS, which will help ensure a framework for effective, consistent and well-informed decisions on current and future phosphate mining permits."

For more information, including the Draft AEIS, visit: www.phosphateaeis.org ♦



An early design rendering of the new Antilles Elementary School. Credit: Reynolds, Smith & Hill, Norfolk, Va.

Contract awarded for state-of-the-art DoD school in Puerto Rico

BY NANCY J. STICHT

Jacksonville District recently awarded a \$51 million contract to design and construct an elementary school at Fort Buchanan in Puerto Rico to Gilbane Building Company of Lakewood Ranch, Fla. The school is a component of the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA)/Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools and will replace the current Antilles Elementary School.

The state-of-the-art school is one of the first DoDEA schools that will incorporate 21st century school design elements and is expected to achieve a Leadership in Engineering and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver rating as an energy efficient and environmentally sustainable school. The plan configuration, which is fully accessible, was developed with input from school users and the educational program specific to the school.

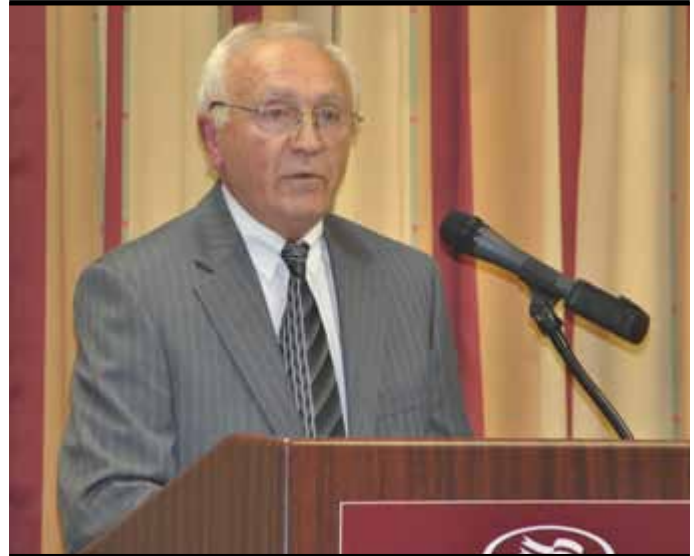
Design components for the school include a special education suite, art and music rooms, a gymnasium and playgrounds, outdoor classrooms, an information center and occupational and physical therapy areas. The two-story building will have an open floor plan that will accommodate future flexibility of the interior spaces and encourage collaboration. Multi-purpose "Learning Streets" will provide common areas for both student and community use, and will include space for exhibits, displays and interactive kiosks.

The contract award followed a two-step submittal, review and ranking process implemented in accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulations. "The goal was to select the best proposal representing a fair and reasonable value for the government and for the taxpayers," said Frank Grant, project manager.

Gilbane Building Company has operated in Puerto Rico since 2000, and opened an area office in San Juan in 2004. ♦

NEVER AGAIN: Holocaust survivor encourages remembrance

BY ANNIE CHAMBERS



Morris Bendit tells the Jacksonville District his story of Holocaust survival. (PHOTO BY STACY CAGLE)

Although the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is not a typical audience for Morris Bendit, Jacksonville District provided a standing room only crowd for his talk at the April 20 Holocaust Remembrance Event, sponsored by the Equal Employment Opportunity Office. Bendit frequently shares his story of Holocaust survival at synagogues and schools, and is pleased that other organizations, such as the Corps, are willing to hear it too.

"Very soon there will not be any witnesses to the atrocities that took place in Europe from 1939 to 1945; there will only be stories that will be passed down to future generations," Bendit said.

During World War II Hitler and his collaborators across Europe systematically segregated, transported and murdered millions of Jews.

Though he was too young to remember the horrific details himself, Bendit recalled the Holocaust as a systematic, industrialized annihilation of six million Jews – about 1.5 million of which were children – by the Nazi regime during World War II.

(PHOTOS BY JOHN CAMPBELL)

Bendit was born January 22, 1941 in Czernowitz, Romania. His father was forced to serve with the Russian army to fight the Nazis when Bendit was just two months old. During transport, his train was attacked by German bombers; Bendit's father didn't survive.

Before World War II there were nine million Jews in Europe; by 1945 two out of every three Jews had been murdered at the hands of the Nazis as well as the Romanians and Ukrainians. Anti-Semitism crept into and took over Eastern Europe. The Romanians were especially barbaric, killing citizens on city streets. At times even the Nazis intervened to end the brutality.

On July 5, 1941 Romanian troops invaded the Czernowitz Jewish quarters for 24 hours. The army ransacked courtyards, cellars, attics and shelters, indiscriminately shooting anyone they found. The Romanian police rounded up another 3,000 Jews and brought them to the dungeons of the police station for nonstop beatings.

In October 1941, thousands of Jews were herded out of their homes into the ghetto, allowed to take with them only what

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Vice President Biden visits Everglades

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JENN DOMASHEVICH



LEFT - Pictured from left, Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works; Stu Appelbaum, former chief of the Planning and Policy Division; Vice President Joe Biden and Maj. Gen. Todd Semonite, former South Atlantic Division commander, at the S-356 pump station, a component of the Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park project in Miami-Dade County, Fla. RIGHT - Vice President Joe Biden, right, and Howie Gonzales, chief of the Ecosystem Restoration Branch at an April 23 event celebrating Everglades restoration accomplishments.

Vice President Joe Biden discussed the administration's efforts to restore the Everglades at the S-356 pump station, a component of the Modified Water Deliveries (MWD) to Everglades National Park project in Miami-Dade County, Fla., April 23.

"About a mile from here, we're building a bridge to raise up the Tamiami Trail so there can be a natural flow of water," Biden said.

Construction of the \$81 million Tamiami Trail project, a key component of the MWD to Everglades National Park, began in 2010. The project includes constructing a one-mile bridge and raising and reinforcing an additional 9.7 miles of road, allowing increased water flows that are essential to the health and viability of the Everglades.

"Last year, the Corps of Engineers' construction project generated 6,600 good paying jobs for Floridians and their families – and thousands

of indirect jobs," Biden said. Restoration projects currently under way will garner "\$46.5 billion net additional revenue to the state of Florida – just as a consequence of this restoration."

Biden was accompanied by his 18-year-old granddaughter, Naomi, who he pulled out of school to see the Everglades for herself.

"The truth of the matter is, people around the country, you know, they know the Everglades," Biden said. "But they just, they have no comprehension, no comprehension of what a federal and national treasure it is. It supports some of the greatest biodiversity on the planet – including 68 threatened and endangered species, 350 species of birds and it's the only place on earth where the Florida panther lives." ♦

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they could carry. A 10-month-old Bendit was carried by his mother to Transnistria, a 16,000-square-mile province created by the Germans for the annihilation of Jews.

Many death camps were established in Transnistria to isolate the Ukrainian and Romanian Jews. An absence of barracks and gas chambers made it unlike a typical concentration camp, but it was home to the largest (territorially) killing field in the Holocaust.

Suffering from scarlet fever, typhus, malaria and malnourishment until age four, it is a miracle Bendit survived. Most people were barefoot and clothed in rags, dying when temperatures dropped to 40 below zero. Bendit said that of the 150,000 Jews who were deported, 90,000 perished.

Bendit's mother, maternal grandparents, 13 brothers and sisters, and his paternal grandmother arrived at Transnistria, hoping to stay together. In 1944 the Russian Army liberated their camp. Only Bendit, his grandmother, mother and aunt survived.

They returned to Romania, where their neighbors had kept up their house, but were not yet allowed to move to Israel where nearly 100,000 Jews had emigrated to safety. Finally their names rose to the top of the list. One year after moving to Israel, Bendit's mother married a Holocaust survivor who had lived in a neighboring town in Romania.

Bendit volunteered to train with the Israeli Navy at age 17. Bendit achieved the rank of staff sergeant by the time his military service ended. He then moved to Montreal, Canada for three years. He has lived in Jacksonville for 27 years.

Dr. Adam Bronstone, community engagement consultant for the Jewish Federation of Jacksonville, worries that 20 years from now the rest of the world will no longer be able to hear direct testimony of the Holocaust, and fears it will be as though it had never happened.

"Never forget history, because it always repeats itself," said Bendit. "Never again is not just a slogan, it means not letting your guard down and making sure no man-made human disaster occurs again." ♦

International students visit Herbert Hoover Dike

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOHN H. CAMPBELL



A student from UNESCO's Institute for Water Education photographs a "hydromill" attached to a crane at an HHD worksite near Port Mayaca.

Twenty-seven students from 20 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and South America received a first-hand look at the progress being made on repairs at Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD) June 4.

The visit was part of a trip for students enrolled in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) Institute for Water Education. The students are candidates for a Master of Science degree in Hydroinformatics, a program that uses modeling and information technology to help solve hydraulic and other water-based environmental problems.

The group was briefed on the status of repairs on HHD, then visited a worksite near Port Mayaca, where a cutoff wall had recently been installed in the dike by a contractor.

"It's an opportunity for them to see what kind of work is necessary to accomplish some of our projects," said Ingrid Bon, HHD forward project manager. "The repairs on the dike require large, sophisticated equipment, and it's just not possible to see that in the classroom."

"They were amazed by the size and scope of the project," said Stan Bronson, executive director of Florida Earth, the organization that sponsored the group's trip to south Florida. "Most of them deal with much smaller dikes, so they were really impressed to hear about one that's 35-feet high and 143 miles long."

Work continues to progress on the dike. Twenty miles of cutoff wall have been installed between Port Mayaca and Belle Glade, and another 1.4 miles of the wall should be in place in the coming months. The completion of those projects will close the chapter on this phase of repairs at HHD. However, work continues at full steam in removing and replacing various water control structures around the dike.

"Work began in January to replace Culverts 1 and 1A, as well as Culverts 11 and 16," said Bon. "We plan to open bids later this year for replacement of Culverts 3 and 4A along the south side of the dike."

In addition to the above work, Engineering Division team members are reviewing plans and specifications for additional culvert replacement projects that are expected to be awarded in 2013.

"The students were very interested in the risk-based approach we use at the dike," said Bon. "Treating the dike as one continuous system,

as opposed to dividing it up into sections, allows us to improve public safety by placing the highest priorities on those areas that can make the biggest impact in terms of risk reduction."

"The idea of being proactive on repairs, fixing something before it causes a mess, left quite an impression with the students," said Bronson.

UNESCO students have toured the dike each of the past seven years. In addition to their HHD visit, the group also visited Everglades National Park and attended the INTECOL Conference in Orlando. ♦



Ingrid Bon (right), HHD forward project manager, uses a map of Lake Okeechobee to illustrate the repair projects under way at the dike.

Everglades featured at international wetlands conference BY ERICA ROBBINS



Tree islands, sawgrass ridges and open water sloughs are part of the unique Everglades landscape. (PHOTO COURTESY SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT)

The 9th INTECOL International Wetlands Conference was held June 3-8 in Orlando, Fla. The joint conference combined the International Wetlands Conference, the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS) Annual Conference and the Greater Everglades Ecosystem Restoration Conference (GEER), bringing together more than 1200 participants from 45 countries.

When Everglades restoration began, there were few projects available to serve as a models, especially because of the size, scope and long-term commitment envisioned. Throughout the effort, Everglades restoration has been watched and studied both nationally and internationally. At INTECOL, presentations by Corps staff offered the gift of hindsight; they were able to provide a historical perspective as well as lessons learned.

Col. Alfred Pantano, former commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, joined Melissa Meeker, executive director of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), Bob Progulski of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bob Johnson of Everglades National Park for a panel discussion about working together for Everglades restoration.

Pantano stressed that the success of Everglades restoration lies in the relationships between all of the partners and stakeholders, adding that honesty and transparency are the key. He noted that in addition to science and engineering solutions, cultural attitudes and individual choices need to change if restoration is to become a reality. He cited the importance of water conservation and the ability to store freshwater.

Meeker shared information on components included in the state's plan to meet water quality requirements, including additional treatment areas, known as Flow Equalization Basins (FEBs) and expansion of Stormwater Treatments Areas (STAs). FEBs are shallow reservoirs where peak flows can be stored before the water is released into the STAs, providing optimal flows to maximize water quality treatment. In addition, she said that sub-regional source controls, such as Best Management Practices (BMPs) in the Everglades Agricultural Area are also important to meeting water quality goals. Currently, the SFWMD operates about 60,000 acres of STAs, an additional 65,000 acres for water treatment are planned.

From the perspective of the Department of the Interior, represented by Johnson and Progulski, supporting efforts to restore natural flows

throughout the Everglades ecosystem is paramount to restoring habitat. Johnson stressed the importance of incorporating new science into decision making and ongoing planning, including the Central Everglades Planning Project. He also believes that maintaining a watershed or system-wide focus will support the most efficient use of water and water storage.

Eric Bush, chief of Planning and Policy Division, shared his experience and lessons learned during his presentation, "Managing Implementation of a Multi-Decadal Ecosystem Restoration."

"Any large-scale ecosystem restoration program is extraordinarily complex, involving all life-cycle phases, including planning, design, acquisition, construction, operations and maintenance," Bush said.

According to Bush, to successfully manage a complex program implemented over a several decades, attention must be focused on multiple efforts simultaneously: legal and policy requirements, budgeting and funds management, day-to-day project management (including issue resolution), and developing a solid applied science foundation (updating scientific information, implementing a comprehensive system-wide monitoring and assessment program) that enables adaptive management.

He credits the sustained success in Everglades program management in part to the development of program management tools such as the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) Design Agreement, Master Agreement, Design Coordination Team, CERP Guidance Memoranda, Evergladesplan.org website and others, all of which provide opportunities for agency and stakeholder engagement.

Bush cautioned, "When program management is not fully successful, litigation follows. This often confounds the long-term interests of the implementing agencies, resource management agencies, stakeholders and the public."

Inherent in any long-term effort is the problem of building and maintaining focus, interest, support and funding. Biologist Gretchen Ehlinger presented "Sustainability of Long-term Monitoring for Large Scale Ecosystem Restoration," documenting the need for continued monitoring to measure success as well as the need to adapt and make adjustments along the way. Ehlinger sees monitoring as a valuable and

EVERGLADES (continued from PAGE 12)

integral part of the process, providing the scientific data that is the necessary basis for decision-making and adaptive management.

Ehlinger also shared her suggestions for "Innovative Solutions for Storing and Retrieving Everglades Monitoring Data" on a poster. More than 1100 papers were offered as oral or poster presentations at the conference, often with eight sessions running simultaneously.

Andy LoSchiavo, adaptive management coordinator in the RECOVER Branch, presented a poster, "Everglades Collaborative Adaptive Management Program Progress," and learned a lot from the overwhelming number of presentations available.

"INTECOL was a great conference for anyone working with wetlands in a regulatory, conservation, restoration or research context. The conference provided ample opportunities to discuss restoration efforts around the world and to learn from the experiences of others," said LoSchiavo. "In addition, the conference provided time to discuss Everglades-specific work in person with our partner agencies and university scientists to understand the latest models and performance measures to use in evaluating project plans, support design improvements, and/or monitor actual restoration indicator status to support operations."

Supervisory biologist Barbara Cintron presented, "Ten Years of CERP: Idealism, Confusion, Recession, Reality – A History of the Ups and Downs of Everglades Restoration," highlighting the changing phases and progress made over time.

Grady Caulk's poster, "It Is All In The Questions: Incorporating Archeological Data in Wetland Studies," was a reminder that many different branches of science contribute to the restoration effort.

Environmental engineer James Riley found the sessions to be extremely valuable. "INTECOL provided me with excellent up-to-date technical information from the top leaders in their respective technical field on south Florida environmental projects I am currently involved in and supporting. This conference provided me the most useful job specific training information I have had in several years. There was great



Laura Brandt, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (left) shares her expertise regarding the role of alligators and crocodiles as an indicator of change in the Everglades ecosystem. Gretchen Ehlinger (right) provided poster and oral presentations on the importance of monitoring. (PHOTO BY SUSAN KAYNOR)

content provided, with the majority of it directly applicable to South Florida issues."

Riley noted that in his work on Everglades restoration, water quality is strongly influenced by the performance and size of the Stormwater Treatment Areas, so it was important to him that STA's and uptake mechanisms for phosphorus were a significant part of many of the presentations he attended.

During the INTECOL Conference, Jacksonville District staff shared a wealth of experience and lessons learned from working on Everglades restoration for more than a decade. They also had the opportunity to learn from others at the top of their field from around the world.

Susan Kaynor, supervisory biologist, provided information on Everglades restoration at the Corps booth, and noted that there were many young attendees ready to carry the torch of scientific knowledge into the future. The clear and overarching theme of the conference, echoed by many of the speakers was this: "Science is the backbone of any restoration or conservation effort." ♦

Work continues

Work continues on Portugues Dam near Ponce, Puerto Rico. Another significant milestone was achieved this spring as workers finish laying the roller-compacted concrete at the dam. Work is expected to wrap up in 2013 on the project, which will provide flood-damage reduction to Ponce from the Portugues and Bucana Rivers.

The backside of Portugues Dam near Ponce, Puerto Rico is expected to reduce impacts from flooding when it is completed in 2013. The land pictured here will be under water when the dam is operational. ♦

(PHOTOS BY JOHN CAMPBELL)

