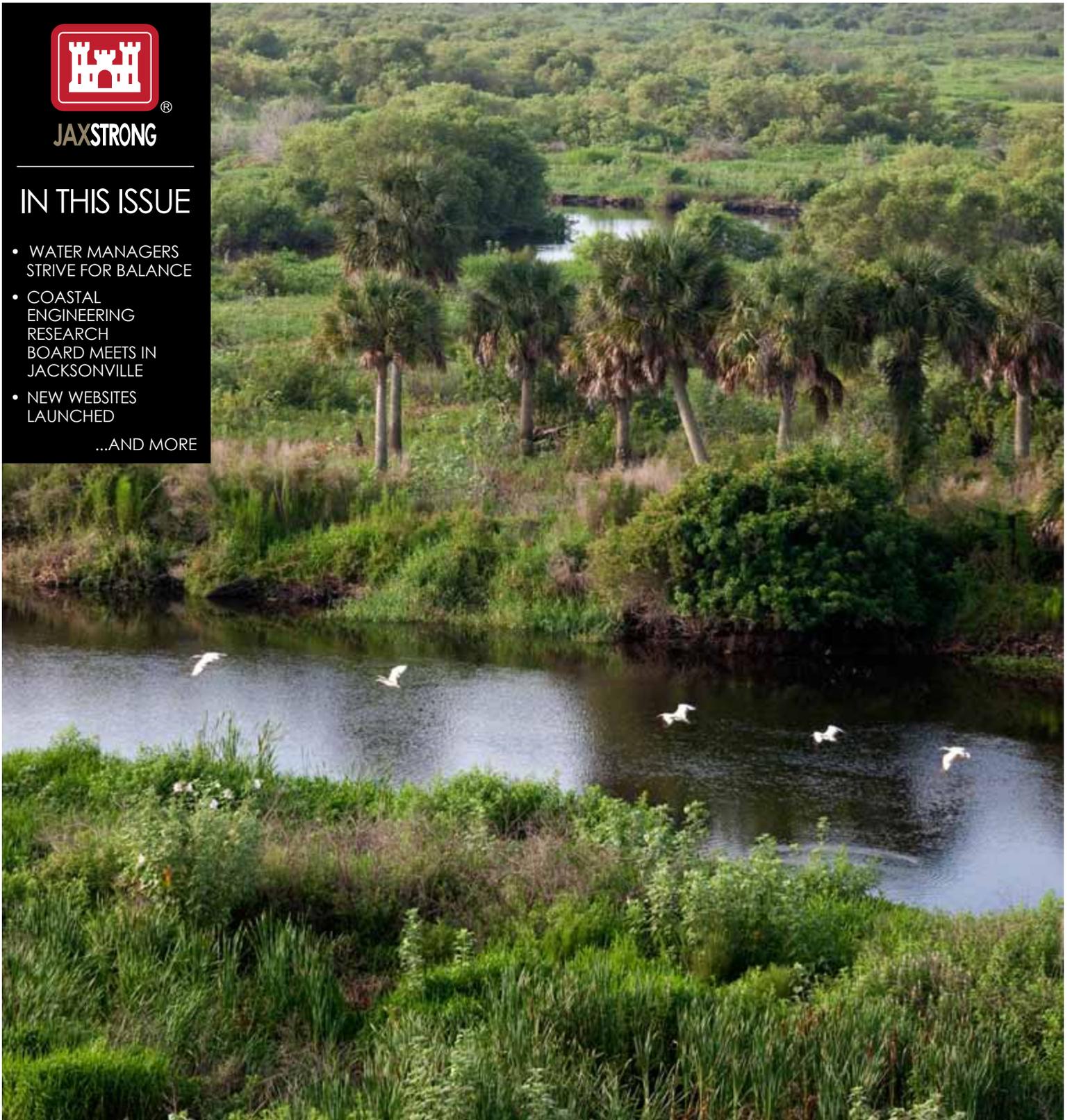




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- WATER MANAGERS STRIVE FOR BALANCE
- COASTAL ENGINEERING RESEARCH BOARD MEETS IN JACKSONVILLE
- NEW WEBSITES LAUNCHED

...AND MORE



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OCTOBER 2012 | Volume 4 Issue 7



COMMANDER'S CORNER

MESSAGE FROM COL. ALAN DODD

TRANSFORMING INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEMS TO ADDRESS 21ST CENTURY WATER RESOURCE CHALLENGES/DEMANDS

Reliable. Resilient. Adaptable. Life cycle funded and managed. Those are a few key adjectives that describe a rather simple, but not necessarily easy-to-achieve goal.

The bottom line is our country's infrastructure is aging rapidly and shrinking state and federal budgets will necessitate innovative financing and management for the 21st century. Civil works transformation is about more than just improving our processes to complete investigations. Through it, the Corps is setting a strategy to also sustain, rehabilitate, divest or repurpose USACE's portfolio of water resources infrastructure.

Jacksonville District is doing that in several areas: Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD), our locks, flood reduction structures, recreation areas, visitor centers and other water resources infrastructures to name a few. After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, we began a reach-by-reach approach to rehabilitating the 143-mile dike by separating the perimeter into eight sub reaches. We set out to fix the problems in Reach 1 and meet current Corps dam standards. The district changed this approach in 2011 by focusing on completing only the primary risk reduction feature in Reach 1, freeing up resources to begin addressing the highest points of risk through the entire HHD system. We will soon complete 21.4 miles of cutoff wall, which greatly reduces the risk of the aging dike in the southeastern section. We are also replacing, removing or abandoning the 32 water control structures, or culverts, around the lake by 2018. Each replaced culvert further reduces flood risk associated with high water levels in Lake Okeechobee.

As we move forward on replacing the culverts, we are simultaneously conducting a dam safety modification study that will be completed by 2014. This report will identify additional risk reduction features which may need to be implemented on HHD to reach the goal of lowering the dike's Dam Safety Action Classification (DSAC) Level 1 rating, which is the highest risk level rating and requires action be taken.

But HHD is not our only aging infrastructure. We are also conducting a comprehensive assessment of our navigation structures, establishing the size of our current backlog of deferred maintenance and determining how that threatens structural viability. Fiscal year 2014 will be the first budget cycle where we will be able to apply resources where they are most needed to accomplish a goal for the whole system as opposed to just a piece of the system. We have a new accounting tool that will help track labor and field dollars so we can see what we spend on each individual asset. Thus, we will be able to look at a specific lock and know exactly where and how much we spent in maintaining that lock.

Jacksonville District is also reducing our electrical footprint in the field. We are re-lamping facilities with energy efficient bulbs and installing photovoltaic arrays at all lock locations, which will provide off-grid electricity for lighting loads. By generating our own power, it gets us off of the grid, thereby reducing the Army's usage of fossil fuels. This is taking place in fiscal year 2013 and we estimate that it will be less than five years before we see the return on our investment.

We've recently awarded contracts for Structures 12D and C, which will enable us to remotely operate the gates from our Clewiston office. We no longer have to have someone drive four hours to the structure to physically open and close the gates. The same is true for Structures 10 A, B and D. This simple modernization step saves both time and money as well as providing faster response when water levels rise.

In short, we are evaluating the current and required portfolio of water resources projects through a smart infrastructure strategy. We are defining and evaluating the value of "critical" infrastructure and taking steps to preserve and improve that value for the future. Your involvement is key as we continue to look for innovative ways to serve the nation even more.

Next month, I'll conclude this series of columns on civil works transformation by talking about how USACE and Jacksonville District are enhancing product and service delivery methods.

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

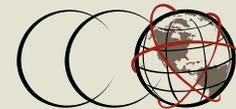
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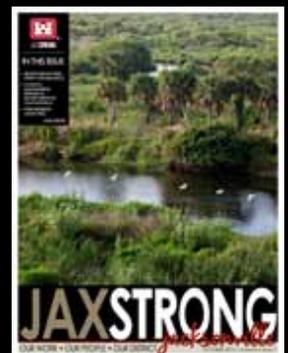
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ON THE COVER

AQUATIC WADING BIRD AND DUCK POPULATIONS IN THE RESTORED RIVER AND FLOODPLAIN REGION HAVE SOARED AND SHOREBIRD SPECIES HAVE RETURNED AS A RESULT OF THE KISSIMMEE RIVER RESTORATION PROJECT. STORY ON PAGE 3. (USACE PHOTO)



Kissimmee River Restoration project recognized in 2012 Chief of Engineers Awards of Excellence Program

BY JENN MILLER



The Kissimmee River Restoration Project filled approximately 22 miles of canal and restored more than 40 square miles of the river channel and floodplain ecosystem, including approximately 27,000 acres of wetlands. (USACE PHOTO)

Restoration work being performed as part of the Kissimmee River Restoration project in Highlands County, Fla., received an Environmental Merit Award in the 2012 Chief of Engineers Awards of Excellence Program.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, along with local sponsor the South Florida Water Management District and construction contractor WRS Infrastructure and Environment, Inc., received the award for their work on the Kissimmee River Restoration Reach 4 Backfilling project.

"This year, more than seventy nominations were submitted – more than double that over each of the last six years," said Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in his message to this year's award recipients. "The number and level of awards given by the juries indicate the high standard of work produced by every team who entered. These world-class designs are indicative of the contributions that the Corps of Engineers makes to our nation and the quality of support we provide to the Armed Forces."

Jacksonville District project manager Tiphonie Jinks, in coordination with David Colangelo, project manager for the South Florida Water Management District, submitted the nomination package for the Reach 4 Backfilling Project, which is part of the Kissimmee River Restoration project -- a project that encompasses the removal of two water control structures, filling approximately 22 miles of canal and restoring more than 40 square miles of the river channel and floodplain ecosystem, including approximately 27,000 acres of wetlands.

The Reach 4 Backfilling project team utilized innovative construction techniques that increased project efficiency while also reducing environmental impacts downstream of the Kissimmee River Restoration project. Not only was the team able to complete the project almost a year ahead of schedule, but it also allowed us to see the resulting ecosystem improvements sooner as well.

"The success of this project was made possible through the hard work and dedication of the project team," said Jinks. "Through collaboration and partnership we were able to not only complete a portion of this restoration project, but also rejuvenate the natural habitat in the area."

Comprehensive monitoring has documented that the river and its floodplain have improved in remarkable ways. Aquatic wading bird and duck populations in the restored river and floodplain region have soared, shorebird species have returned, organic deposits on the river bottom have decreased by 71 percent, and re-established sand bars are providing new habitat for native species.

The Chief of Engineers Awards of Excellence Program was created in 1965 to recognize and promote excellence in design achievements by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and its professional partners. Over its 47 year history, the program has presented a total of 546 awards in the 32 times it has been judged. Two types of awards are given in each of the two primary categories of Design/Military Design and Environmental/Civil Design.

Additional information on this year's award recipients is available at: <https://ceawards.ercd.dren.mil/archives/AwardsProgram/pdf/2012.pdf#view=Fit>. ♦



Reach 4 Backfilling project team members (from left) Hansler Bealyer, Chris Ralph, Diana Martuscelli, Tiphonie Jinks, Sue Wilfong and Tim Gysan, along with (not pictured) Erin Duffy, Tony Smith, Javier Cortes, Cem Goral, Frances Jones, Sam Hutsell, Jose Toro, Brian Roberts, Carlos Rivera and Susan Copeland, received an Environmental Merit Award in the 2012 Chief of Engineers Awards of Excellence Program. (PHOTO BY JENN MILLER)

Water managers find balance between competing needs

BY JOHN H. CAMPBELL



It's hard to see, but water from Tropical Storm Isaac and other heavy rain storms is passing through the W.P. Franklin Lock east of Fort Myers in early September. The Franklin Lock, Ortona Lock, and the Moore Haven Lock are used to regulate the flow of water into the Caloosahatchee River, while the Port Mayaca Lock and St. Lucie Lock regulate the flow to the St. Lucie Canal. (PHOTO BY JOHN CAMPBELL)

"It's very complex and it's a real juggling act."

John Kilpatrick, Multi-Project Branch chief from Jacksonville District's Operation Division, rubs his head after another long day of dealing with questions about rising water levels on Lake Okeechobee, and whether the water management section under his supervision intends to start conducting releases from the lake into the Caloosahatchee River and/or the St. Lucie Canal.

On this day in late September, the lake has risen more than two feet in two weeks and now sits at its highest level since May 2010. It's the result of Tropical Storm Isaac, which dumped 15-20 inches in many parts of Palm Beach County.

Even though it's been two weeks since the storm, daily, pop-up showers, some with heavy rain, have dumped more water in the area. More rain is in the forecast as Kilpatrick reviews additional data.

"If we start releasing water now, and we don't get the rain, it's a problem," he says, "if we don't release water and we do get the rain, then we may be at capacity. It's a very difficult lake to manage."

Lake Okeechobee is the nation's second largest freshwater lake, and the largest lake in Florida. It is the heart of the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades system. Congress has authorized Jacksonville District to operate the lake to meet multiple, sometimes conflicting purposes, to include flood and storm risk management, navigation, municipality and industry water supply, salinity control in the estuaries, recreation and fish and wildlife enhancement.

"This is a totally different project from other Corps lakes," said Jorge Tous, water management section chief. "It's so different, so large, and we have so few options."

The master plan for water management at the lake is contained in a document known as the 2008 Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS). LORS is the result of a multi-year study on water management that included significant input from the public. It was developed to balance the performance of multiple project purposes while preserving public health and safety.

One of the primary goals of LORS is to manage the lake level between 12.5 and 15.5 feet.

"I think it has helped us make consistent decisions," said Kilpatrick. "I think it provides a good framework."

Given the multiple authorizations and the topography, both natural and man-made, surrounding the lake, many unique water management challenges have to be overcome.

One of the biggest considerations is that the lake can rise six times faster than it can be drained. Even though the lake has risen two feet in two weeks, it'll take much longer than that for the water to recede.

"It takes a month to lower the lake by a foot," said Kilpatrick.

There is no emergency spillway in place at the lake. The most effective way to lower lake levels is to release water to the estuaries.

However, the delicate ecosystems in the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Estuaries can quickly be impacted by the deluge of freshwater from the lake.

So how does Jacksonville District make the decision on water releases?

The process incorporates input from the South Florida Water Management District and other stakeholders.

"The water management sections at the Corps and the South Florida Water Management District are constantly looking at this system," said Kilpatrick. "They are taking a look at what water is coming into the lake, what water is going out of the lake, what water is leaving the lake by evapotranspiration, what the forecast is...not just the immediate forecast, but the forecast a month or two out."

"The [South Florida Water Management District] challenges us every day with ideas about water management," said Tous. "We review data daily, sometimes twice a day. We need to review everything to ensure we're complying with the regulation schedule."

The process includes input from environmental experts.

"On a weekly basis, we talk to a group of agency, state, federal and civilian scientists, to get all their feedback on what's going on in the system," said Kilpatrick.

Everything is considered...from historical lake levels to current weather conditions and forecasts, hydrologic outlooks, estuary conditions and needs, lake ecology conditions and needs, levels in water conservation areas and more.

"We go through the entire system," said Kilpatrick. "It involves the Kissimmee basin, Lake Okeechobee, the Caloosahatchee, the St. Lucie

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 8)

El Yunque National Forest: A rare ecosystem treasure

World Rainforest Week 2012 is October 15-19 STORY AND PHOTOS BY NANCY J. STICHT



At the Iguaca Captive Parrot Aviary in El Yunque National Forest, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, fledgling Puerto Rican Parrot chicks spend time in a large flight cage, where they learn how to survive before they are released into the wild.

Only two places under the U.S. flag – Puerto Rico and Hawaii – are home to the rich, rare and diverse ecosystems known as tropical rainforests. And just one, Puerto Rico's El Yunque National Forest, resides within the boundaries of Jacksonville District. But like another ecological treasure familiar to Jacksonville District, the Everglades, the world's rainforests are in peril.

There are two major types of rainforest – temperate rainforests (typically found along coasts in temperate zones) and tropical rainforests (located near the equator). Tropical rainforests receive from 160 to 400 inches of rain annually and are characterized by constant humidity and high average temperatures. With as many as 1,500 flowering plants, 750 species of trees, 400 species of birds and 150 species of butterflies in one four-square-mile patch of tropical rainforest, they are the richest places for biodiversity on Earth.

Rainforests benefit people too. It is said that they act as the world's thermostat, regulating temperatures and weather patterns, and that they are critical in maintaining the Earth's limited supply of drinking and fresh water. Rainforests provide many of our food products such as coffee, tea, cocoa, bananas, coconut, corn and sweet potatoes and spices such as cinnamon, ginger and vanilla beans. More than 2,000 tropical forest plants have been identified as having anti-cancer properties and 70 percent of the plants identified by the U.S. National Cancer Institute as useful in the treatment of cancer are found only in rainforests.

Threats to the rainforest come from unsustainable agriculture, ranching, mining and logging practices. Although about six million square miles of tropical rainforest originally existed worldwide, today only 2.6 million square miles remain. At the current rate of loss, five to 10 percent of tropical rainforest species will be lost each decade.

El Yunque, in northeastern Puerto Rico, is home to thousands of native plants, including 150 fern species, 240 tree species (23 of which are found there exclusively) and several animal species found nowhere else on Earth, including the Puerto Rican Parrot, the subject of a cooperative recovery plan implemented by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Forest Service, the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources and the World Wildlife Fund.

According to the USFWS, the Puerto Rican Parrot is one of the ten most endangered bird species in the world, and the only native parrot under U.S. jurisdiction. Its population had dwindled to the brink of complete extinction, as a direct result of the rise in human population on the island. In 1975, only 13 parrots remained in the wild. A captive flock had been established in 1973 to assure the survival of the species,

and was split into two flocks in 1993, with the second flock established at Rio Abajo Commonwealth Forest in western Puerto Rico. This strategy helped protect against the potential loss of the complete flock from a catastrophe such as disease or a major hurricane. According to an article by USFWS, PRDNER and El Yunque National Forest scientists, published in the July-August 2012 issue of the USFWS Endangered Species Bulletin, plans for a third population are now under way.

The recovery program includes the breeding, rearing and release of parrots into the wild, parrot population counts, restoration of nest cavities and protection of wild nests from predators and competitors. USFWS also monitors, through radio transmitters attached to released parrots, the activities of fledglings.

There is good news - as of April 2007, the USFWS had reported that close to 200 Puerto Rican Parrots existed; of those, 159 were in captivity and approximately 30 to 35 live in the wild. ♦

Did you know...

- Rainforests cover less than two percent of Earth's surface but are home to more than half of its plants and animals.
- Rainforests are found on every continent except Antarctica
- One third of the world's oxygen is made by rainforest trees and plants
- About 1.5 acres of rainforest are lost every second



Jafet Valez-Valentin, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, monitors activities in several breeding nests via closed circuit television. He is a member of a team of scientists that is working to save the Puerto Rican Parrot from extinction.

UAV team conducts successful demonstration STORY & PHOTOS BY JOHN H. CAMPBELL



Tom Spencer (left) and Damon Wolfe (holding UAV) conduct pre-flight checks as a crowd of interested observers looks on. Jacksonville District hosted a demonstration of the UAV for internal and external customers Sept. 5 near St. Augustine.

Nearly 40 people from Jacksonville District and other federal agencies witnessed the award-winning Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) system during a demonstration Sept. 5 near St. Augustine, Fla.

Larry Taylor, UAV program manager, said the demonstration had two main goals: offer an opportunity for potential customers to see the aircraft in action, and help allay any concerns officials with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) may have in reviewing documentation requesting "airworthiness" certification for various areas of the state.

"Sometime, you can talk all you want," said Taylor, "but people have that 'ah-ha' experience when they see something perform."

Taylor has seen the UAV program really start to take off (pun intended) over the past year. The program now has three people assigned to it full time. It continues to receive support from all levels of leadership, including Jacksonville District Commander Col. Alan Dodd, who attended the demonstration.

"I was really impressed with this capability and with the professionalism of the team," said Dodd. "I also like that Jacksonville District is leading the charge nationwide on this project."

The UAV captures and records accurate, high-resolution data for a variety of uses, to include monitoring changes in ecosystems, monitoring of construction projects and monitoring of water systems. It can be launched from land or water.

"It's the first aircraft I've seen that's all-weather," said Lance Filler, airfield damage repair/modernization program manager from Tyndall Air Force Base, who is looking at using a UAV if the runways at his facility are ever damaged from war or natural events. "Right now, we put guys on a vehicle and it takes them hours to look at all of the airfield pavement. With remote sensing [that is offered by the UAV], we're hoping to do it in under 30 minutes."

Additionally, Taylor says the demonstration really helped enlighten officials with the FAA, which issues certificates of airworthiness (COAs), authorizing the team to fly the UAV over projects around major metro areas like Miami.

Within 24 hours of the demonstration, Taylor was discussing a pending COA application with the FAA in Miami.

"It was the input from the FAA person who was at the demo who explained to the guy from Miami that what we were trying to do was not going to jeopardize safety in Miami airspace at all," said Taylor.

It's been a busy year for the team, as Taylor says they are flying more missions and getting more funding.

"Right now we are continuing to march," said Taylor. "We are getting new customers; we are expanding existing customers. We're also trying to deal with how we're going to meet our increasing demand."

The work of the UAV Team has caught attention within highest levels of the Corps. In August, the UAV program was presented with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Team Innovation Award.

"It was very comforting to me to know that the hard work the team has done received some recognition because it's a unique operation we have," said Taylor. "It's an operation the team created out of nothing. We had a vision to be able to develop and make many Corps operations better. To see that going from concept to idea to actual implementation is pretty rewarding." ♦



Shortly after landing the UAV, team member Damon Wolfe shows off the photos captured by the UAV during the flight. The high-resolution photography is an important feature of the UAV.

Hispanic American Heritage Month program teaches skills for a successful interview

BY ERICA ROBBINS

Luis Alejandro, one of about 130 Hispanic Americans in Jacksonville District, wears two hats - one as a hydraulic engineer in the water management section of the Operations Division and another as the Hispanic Employment Program Manager. He was inspired to develop a program for Hispanic American Heritage Month in response to several requests from young Hispanic American teammates who want to develop their leadership skills and aspire to higher levels of service within the Corps.

The topic meshed perfectly with this year's National Hispanic American Heritage Month (HHM) theme, Diversity United: Building America's Future Today. The Jacksonville District Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEO) will host a coffee round table Prepare for Success: Resumes and Interviews Oct. 19 from 10 to 11 a.m. in the Executive Conference Room, 4105, 4E.

The activity will provide insight from panel members who have served on selection panels, to enhance understanding of how resumes and interviews are discussed and weighted. Panel members are expected to share their views, experiences and the decision-making process. The goal is to help Jacksonville District team members understand how this process works, describe what panel members look for when reviewing resumes, and to provide advice on what to do and what not to do during the application and interview process. Everyone may benefit from this program, especially those interested in pursuing higher-level positions within the organization.

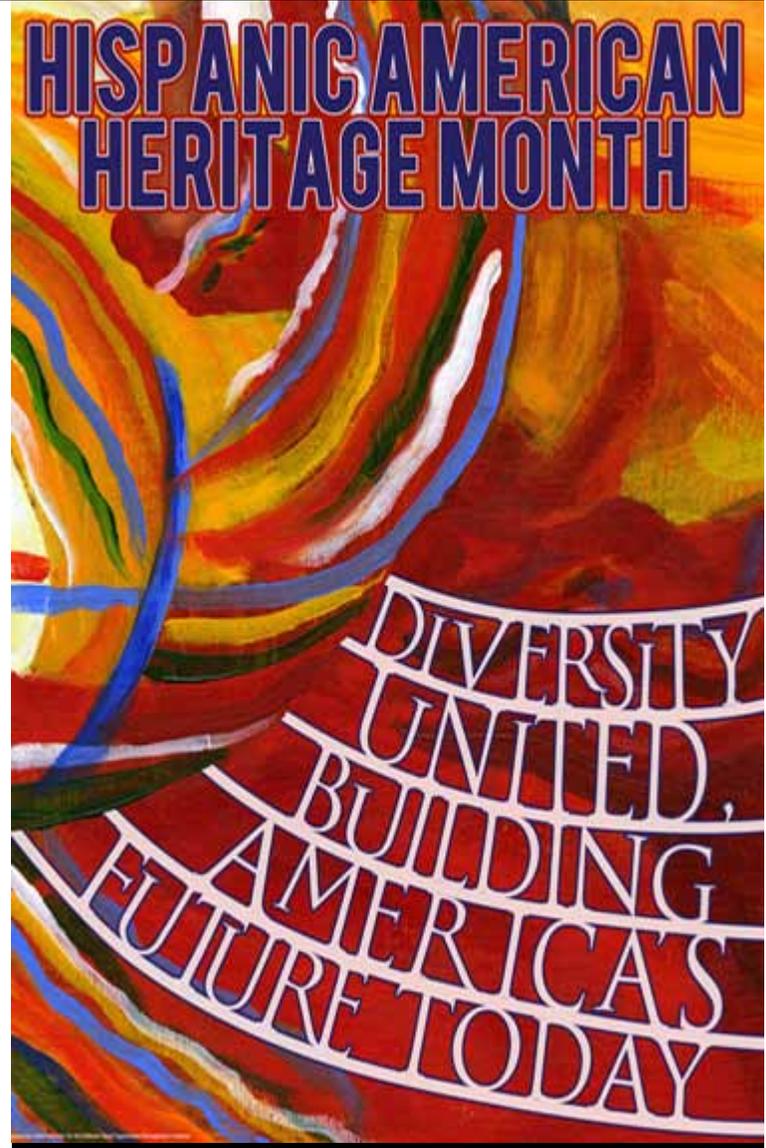
"In the Jacksonville District, we are a team. We have different backgrounds and experiences, but we are a team and we all complement each other," said Alejandro. "It is important to share our institutional knowledge for the benefit of us all. This Hispanic American Heritage Month activity is one of the many ways we can mentor and support our teammates and help them to succeed.

Their success is our success. Their strength is our strength. Working toward the accomplishment of our missions together provides a common goal that unites us."

Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America. As the largest and fastest growing minority group in America, the Hispanic community's ability to thrive is vital to the future of our nation.

President Barack Obama said, "Hispanics have had a profound and positive influence on our country through their strong commitment to family, faith, hard work and service. They have enhanced and shaped our national character with centuries-old traditions that reflect the multiethnic and multicultural customs of their community. They are doctors and lawyers, activists and educators, entrepreneurs and public servants, and brave service members who defend our way of life at home and abroad."

"This month, it is also important to honor and recognize Hispanic Americans that have and continue to serve in defense of our nation and contribute to shaping the culture of the United States, including our teammates who have been or are currently deployed overseas," said Alejandro. ♦



Did you know?

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Hispanic population of the United States as of July 1, 2011 was 52 million, making people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest ethnic or racial minority.
- Between July 1, 2010 and July 1, 2011, 1.3 million Hispanic Americans were added to the nation's population. This represents more than half of the approximately 2.3 million Americans added to the nation's population during this period.
- The U.S. ranked second in the world for largest Hispanic population as of 2010. Only Mexico, with a Hispanic population of 112 million, had a larger Hispanic population than the U.S., with 50.5 million.
- In May 2012, the Census Bureau announced that non-Hispanic Whites now account for a minority of births for the first time in U.S. history, marking a demographic tipping point that is already changing the nation's politics, economy, and workforce. ♦

WATER MANAGERS (continued from PAGE 4)

Canal, the conservation areas, and all the way down to the south Dade conveyance system."

During the entire process, the group constantly refers to graphs and charts in the LORS.

"The decisions, during those discussions, are based on LORS," said Kilpatrick. "Particularly for Lake Okeechobee, the basic question is do we open or close the gates."

Kilpatrick understands the decisions on whether to release water, due to the often competing nature of the stakeholders involved, will generate criticism.

"There are some people that want more water at certain times of the year and they can't get it," said Kilpatrick. "There are others that don't want water at certain times of the year that do get it. But, in terms of trying to manage the lake for flood reduction, for navigation, for environmental stewardship, and for recreation, I think LORS offers a good balance."

In addition, Jon Morton, biologist, says the water levels in place under LORS led to improvements in the lake ecology over the past five years.

"Prolonged high-water levels plagued the lake from 2002 to 2006," said Morton. "LORS has been pretty successful in keeping the lake levels from getting too high for too long. Sustained high water tends to drown out certain aquatic species, especially in the littoral zone, and increase turbidity that prevents adequate sunlight from reaching submersed species."

He adds some types of endangered species are doing much better as well.

"There have been 101 nesting attempts by snail kites through August," said Morton. "Habitat and forage conditions have definitely improved."

For the heavy rains associated with Tropical Storm Isaac, and the resulting runoff from the streams that feed into the lake, Jacksonville District began releases from the lake Sept. 19. To minimize environmental impacts, releases were reduced to 50% of what was authorized under LORS.

"It is our hope that by doing small releases now, we can avoid a situation where we're doing larger releases later," said Kilpatrick. "Tropical Storm Isaac provided a classic example of how quickly the lake can rise. Now we've got to manage it in a manner where we have enough storage for the remaining two months of hurricane season, have enough water for the dry season, and be sensitive to the delicate ecosystems in each of the estuaries. It's analogous to lifting your foot off of the gas pedal."

How long this release lasts and its ultimate effectiveness are questions that will be answered in a few weeks or months. For now, Kilpatrick, Tous and the other water managers will continue to monitor conditions, reach out to stakeholders, and repeat the process as necessary to ensure the authorized uses of Lake Okeechobee are met in the most-balanced fashion possible.

"There are a lot of people watching what we do," said Tous. "It's important to do the very best we can every day." ♦



Anthony Rodino (left) briefs information to scientists on a conference call while Zafar Hyder (right) listens. Jacksonville District conducts periodic calls with scientists to gain a better understanding on conditions in the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Estuaries to use in their decision-making process. (PHOTO BY JOHN CAMPBELL)



September 11 Day of Remembrance and Service

Dr. Helen Jackson, CEO and president of the Women of Color Cultural Foundation presented a plaque to representatives of each of the Armed Services during a September 11 commemoration ceremony at EverBank Stadium. Cpt. Shawn Jones, Programs and Project Management, accepted a plaque on behalf of the U.S. Army.

The event, A Day of Remembrance and Service, honored first responders, active duty Military, Veterans, Homeland Security and Emergency Management officials. It was sponsored by The Women of Color Cultural Foundation, The Corporation for National and Community Service, Women Infants and Children, Jaguar Foundation, IHOP, HandsOn Jacksonville and the Duval County Health Department. Jacksonville Mayor Alvin Brown, U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown (FL-3) participated in the event. ♦

PHOTO COURTESY DUVAL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Redesign of Recreation.gov website makes it easier to head to the “Great Outdoors”

BY ERICA ROBBINS



The swimming beach at W.P. Franklin, one of three recreation sites managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District. (USACE PHOTO)

The new design, improved navigation tools and expanded content for Recreation.gov is one part of a long-term strategy to achieve several goals: to promote domestic and international travel and tourism, strengthen the U.S. economy and get people involved in healthy outdoor activities.

The redesign of www.recreation.gov is an initial step in a multi-year strategy to engage visitors with enhanced interactive content and more multimedia, mobile, trip-planning tools. The seven million visitors who use the website every year will be able to make reservations, see ready-made itineraries for destination cities, and search for activities on an interactive map. The interagency website guides visitors to 90,000 sites on federal lands such as national parks, wildlife refuges, waterways, forests and recreation areas.

“Tourism and outdoor recreation are powerful economic engines in communities across the country,” Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar said. “With the redesign of Recreation.gov, we are making it easier for people to plan trips, find outdoor adventures, and explore activities at our public lands across the country.”

“Recreation.gov is a ‘one-stop’ website to find places that close to home for a day’s fishing, boating, swimming, hiking, and much more. There are so many sites within a short drive of urban areas that people don’t know about,” Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy said. “At Recreation.gov people can find parks, swimming beaches, boat ramps and other places to get away to for a few hours, days or weeks.”

“The new features of the Recreation.gov website make it easier for visitors to discover and explore parks, recreation areas and other public lands,” said Adam Tarplee, natural resource program manager, Jacksonville District. “This provides another way for us to connect Americans to the great opportunities for recreation right in their own backyard. You can make online reservations for Corps-managed campgrounds in Florida along the Okeechobee Waterway, including Ortona South, St. Lucie South and W.P. Franklin North. You can also check out recreational opportunities nearby. When Floridians go to the website for the first time, many will probably be surprised to find so many

places to go and things to do for a ‘staycation’. If you would prefer to travel the other side of the country for your outdoor recreational activities, you can plan that trip also.”

Highlights of the updated site include:

- **EXPLORE TRIP IDEAS:** Recreation.gov now features Explore Trip Ideas with interactive maps to help visitors discover points of interest on public lands when planning trips to popular destination cities like Atlanta, Miami, Las Vegas, San Francisco and more.
- **GO LISTS:** Created to encourage more people to get active outdoors, Go Lists provide highlights of places to go, events, and activities at federal sites across the country with topics including “Day Hikes for Weekend Warriors” and “Civil War 150th Anniversary: Places and Events that Shaped Our Nation.”
- **DISCOVER GREAT AMERICAN ADVENTURES:** More in-depth articles and destination spotlights can be found in Discover Great American Adventures which feature a wide variety of experiences and adventures found only in America.

The Recreation.gov website update is a joint initiative between federal agency partners, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, National Archives and Records Administration, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It is a key effort under President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative, which focuses on supporting healthy outdoor spaces and making them more accessible to Americans. Thanks to the power of the Internet, the redesigned website also provides an easy way for visitors from all over the world to explore America’s vast resources and recreational opportunities. ♦



Early detection is key, but action is equally important BY ERICA ROBBINS



National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an opportunity to increase awareness of the disease and to raise funds for research into its cause, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and cure. There are many types of breast cancer and treatment depends on the type and the stage of the cancer. Everyone's treatment is different.

During education efforts, the emphasis is often put on early detection - but taking action is equally important. Cancer is a scary word and a life-changing diagnosis, and fear can overwhelm and result in denial and inaction. Knowledge is power and there are many things that can be done to empower yourself both before and after a diagnosis. There are also many important things that you can do to support friends and loved ones who have been diagnosed with cancer.

BEFORE DIAGNOSIS

Get regular screenings: Early detection is critical. Treatment and prognosis can be drastically different depending on the stage at diagnosis, and action following diagnosis. Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam as part of a regular exam by a health expert at least every three years, and must pay closer attention if they have risk factors such as a family history of breast cancer. Women age 40 and older should have a clinical breast exam and mammogram at least yearly. Women over 50 should be even more vigilant in watching for the warning signs of cancer in between screenings, as the risk increases with age. In some cases, depending on family history and other risk factors, a more frequent screening may be required.

Follow up with additional screenings if necessary: If you are told to get additional screenings such as an ultrasound, MRI or biopsy, make sure you follow up immediately. A mammogram alone cannot show for sure whether or not cancer is present. If your mammogram shows a possible problem, a sample of breast tissue is removed during a biopsy, and looked at under a microscope to see whether cancer cells are present. Cancer may progress quickly, so prompt follow-through is the best course of action.

Check out any changes: If anything changes, looks "funny" or feels different than normal, have it checked out by a health care provider. This pertains not only to breast cancer, but anything else that seems different to you. You can have breast cancer even if you don't feel a lump. Pay close attention to any changes that you observe.

Know the warning signs: The most common symptoms of breast cancer are a change in the look or feel of the breast, a change in the look or feel of the nipple, and nipple discharge. Others include:

- Lump, hard knot or thickening inside the breast or underarm area
- Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening of the breast
- Change in the size or shape of the breast
- Dimpling or puckering of the skin
- Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple
- Pulling in of the nipple or other parts of the breast
- Nipple discharge that starts suddenly
- New pain in one spot that does not go away

If you have any of these symptoms, see your health care provider. In most cases, these changes are not cancer; however, the only way to know for sure is to see your doctor. If breast cancer is diagnosed, it is best to find it at an early stage, when the cancer is most treatable.

Practice prevention: Find out more about what you can do to prevent cancer. Research the risk factors and see if there are lifestyle changes that you can make to help you stay healthy. You may find that many of the things you can do to prevent cancer may also improve other health issues, especially those related to inflammation.

AFTER THE DIAGNOSIS

Take action: The most important thing that you can do is to take action. In many cases, breast cancer is very treatable and people are

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Wounded Warrior 8K Run

The Wounded Warrior 8K run took place Sept. 8 in downtown Jacksonville, Fla. Participating Jacksonville District team members were, left to right: Capt. Shawn Jones, CCO's Annie Chambers and Col. Alan Dodd, district commander. ♦

PHOTO BY JEFF KAMPMAN



EARLY DETECTION (continued from PAGE 10)

able to live long, happy, healthy lives. But there are still many people who do not get treatment in a timely manner or fail to take the necessary steps to aggressively treat their illness.

Bring a friend: If possible, bring someone with you when you see the doctor. Life shifts into "The Fast and the Furious" gear. You may be in shock, scared, confused, angry or overwhelmed and support is important at this time. It's a good idea to have someone else along to listen to what the doctors are saying, to help you keep it all straight. This is especially important if you are taking pain medication of any kind.

Get a second opinion: Or a third opinion, or more, if you are not comfortable with the doctor, the treatments or procedures - but don't wait too long. Every person and every situation is different, and there are a lot of decisions to make. However, fear and inaction may lead to denial and more inaction. Left unchecked and unchallenged, cancer will progress. The longer you wait to take action, the more limited, complicated and difficult your treatment options become.

Be your own advocate: Medical personnel see an overwhelming number of patients every day. It is up to you to ask questions and make sure that the procedures and treatment you receive are clearly understood and correct for your specific situation.

HELPING A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE WITH CANCER

Provide support and reassurance: Although each person is unique and everyone's experience is different, the song "I'm Gonna Love You Through It" by Martina McBride accurately captures and portrays what the breast cancer experience is like for many women and their loved ones. It describes how important expressions of love and support can be when dealing with cancer. Family members and friends may also be scared about losing their loved one or worried about how they are going to deal with it, but it makes a huge difference to a person with cancer to have friends and family "love them through it." Breast cancer, especially, can temporarily be profoundly devastating to a woman's sense of self, her body image and her feelings of attractiveness and femininity. A breast cancer diagnosis can be even more difficult for a man to deal with. He may worry that he has been diagnosed with what is often thought of as a "women's" disease.

Watch the video for "I'm Gonna Love You Through It" by Martina McBride on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYNOXRfXKQ

Sign those cards and send those flowers, prayers and well-wishes: If you have asked yourself whether or not those cards you sign or the flowers you contribute towards make a difference, the answer is a wholehearted "YES!" Feeling cared for, supported and uplifted by friends and loved ones can make a huge difference to a person who is going through the emotional, mental, physical and financial challenges that are inevitable when dealing with cancer.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Simplify your life: Do the minimum. Take care of the things you must do, and let the rest go.

Cancer is a life-changing event: A cancer diagnosis is a life-changing event. Even though you may not want to "go there," it likely will bring up questions of your own mortality and all of the issues associated with that. Even after the "main event," you will continue to have periodic screenings, and the idea that cancer might come back is usually in the back of your mind. In fact, it may come back and you may indeed have to deal with it again. It is helpful to maintain a positive attitude and prepare yourself for the fact that you may have to deal with it (but don't focus on it). If you must deal with it again, take the steps necessary and do what you've got to do to reclaim your health and your life.

Remember: Early detection is key, and you must take action! ♦



BREAST CANCER AWARENESS GIVEAWAYS AVAILABLE AT THE CLINIC.

Visit Sandra Ziegler, RN at the clinic at the Safety and Occupational Health Office, room 625 during Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Oct., for more information. ♦

Jacksonville DISTRICT launches NEW WEBSITE!!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR OCTOBER 9 – that's when the new Jacksonville District website makes its debut as the latest site to be migrated to the new, uniform design now being employed Corps-wide. The facelift is intended to help users find information easier, faster and with enhanced consistency, regardless of which district website they access.

Please note that old bookmarks will no longer work once the new site is live. ♦



My story

COMMENTARY BY ERICA ROBBINS

"You saved my life." I've heard that more than once over the years.

I proposed this story on Breast Cancer Awareness Month because this year, it's personal. In April 2012, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I hope that sharing my story will encourage others to get regular screenings and take decisive action to deal with the results. I've learned from experience what a huge difference early detection and quick follow-up can make.

First, I want to say how much I have appreciated the support of my colleagues in both West Palm Beach and Jacksonville, including Lt. Col. Michael Kinard who told me not to worry about work and to just focus on taking care of myself and my supervisor, Terry Hines Smith, who told me that cancer is "not only survivable but thriveable." I admit that at the time I had my doubts, but it turns out, she is right. My thanks to Terry and all of my CCO and other Corps colleagues who supported and covered for me as I went through three surgeries and recovery, followed by a series of 28 radiation treatments - every weekday before work, for six weeks.

I had been asked to coordinate the program for Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day, and during a trip to Jacksonville, Dana Gentry had introduced herself to me and offered her assistance and that of the Leadership Development Program (LDP). At the time, she seemed like an angel sent from heaven and I was grateful to have her enthusiastic help and the help of the LDP team. Little did I know how auspicious this was, because a few months later, she would be exactly that. Somehow, all of the right pieces and people were in place for the wheels to be set in motion for me to play the hand that life had dealt.

In April, I had an annual mammogram, as I always do. I had not felt any lumps and my doctor had not felt any during the exam. I was used to being told that I would have to have a follow-up ultrasound, due to the density of the breast tissue, which makes it tougher to detect cancer. When my doctor's office called and said, "You need to come in to speak with the doctor," I pretty much knew that it was not going to be good news. When my doctor said, "Your mammogram showed a pattern of microcalcifications that we need to check out. You need to have an MRI," I immediately had the gut feeling that this was not a good thing. I had never heard of microcalcifications. Now I knew what all the little clicks were when the silent ultrasound tech marked them off during the ultrasounds in years past. Microcalcifications are tiny specks of mineral deposits (calcium) that can be scattered throughout the mammary gland, or occur in clusters. They can simply indicate the presence of tiny benign cysts, but can signify the presence of early breast cancer.

When my doctor got the results of the MRI, the next call came in: "You need to see a surgeon."

When I met with the surgeon and she showed me the MRI, just a year after I had my last mammogram, the results were clear to me. With more than 800 images, the MRI was like a three dimensional picture, and the surgeon was able to scroll through the image, top to bottom and front to back. The right breast showed up mostly dark, which she said was normal. The left breast on the other hand - not so good. Most of the area had a white, irregular, spiky appearance. I was then sent for a biopsy.

The doctor called me immediately upon receiving the results. "But I'm all packed to leave for Jacksonville today and for the rest of the week to do Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day," I whined. "I can't come in. Can't it wait until next week?"

"You need to be in our office at 9 a.m. tomorrow," she insisted. "You shouldn't be going to Jacksonville."

Fortunately, Dana and the LDP team were poised to take the reins for the event, almost as if pre-destined, freeing me to do what I had to do, with their support and blessings. For that I am profoundly grateful, because it may have made a huge difference in the course of my treatment and prognosis.

"The cancer in your left breast is extensive and we need to operate as soon as possible. Would tomorrow work?" Fortunately, my boyfriend had come with me to support me. I liked and trusted the doctor and had confidence in her. "Let's do it," I said.

The next morning, going into surgery, I felt strangely calm, as if the prayers and well-wishes of my Corps colleagues and loved ones had lifted me up. I was at the hospital at 10:30 a.m., being prepped with a variety of high-tech procedures, including a radioactive material that would set off a "Geiger counter" during surgery, to help them find the Sentinel lymph node, the first one outside of the breast. Techniques have advanced to be much less invasive than they were years ago. If they didn't find any cancer in the Sentinel, they didn't have to remove the other lymph nodes. I went into surgery at about 5:30 and was finally sent home at 9:30 that night.

When the pathology came back a few days later, the surgeon said that despite her best efforts, in order to preserve as much tissue as possible (per my request), she had not been able to "get it all." I was back in surgery the next week for a full mastectomy on the left side.

This time, the surgeon said that she had gotten it all. That was good news, but I still cried every time I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror. My boyfriend cared for me 24/7, went to doctor appointments with me, and most important of all, reassured me that I was still very attractive to him, despite the fact that my body looked like a Picasso painting, with all of the parts in the wrong place. I will be very honest here - without his support, things would have been much, much harder for me.

I also cried when I read the well wishes in the cards and texts, and looked at the beautiful flowers sent by my Corps colleagues. These were happy tears - I felt supported by my Corps family, and for that I was deeply grateful.

I returned to work and chose to have another surgery for reconstruction. No, I don't look like I did before, but I'm getting used to it, and my boyfriend still thinks I'm fabulous even with my battle scars.

I was still very fortunate, in relative terms. Because I had gotten my yearly screening, we caught the cancer early enough that I was spared additional treatments. Thank goodness I followed my doctor's orders and did not make my trip to Jacksonville, and instead, followed through aggressively with surgery before the cancer could spread. Though the cancer was extensive, it was

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MY STORY (continued from PAGE 12)

ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS), meaning that it remained inside the ducts and had not moved into the other tissue and had not gone into the lymph nodes. This makes all the difference in the world. Had I waited and the cancer spread into the lymph nodes, I would have had an additional year of chemotherapy in addition to the course of 28 highly-targeted radiation treatments that I received.

My journey continues. I will have a full-body PET scan to see if there is any additional cancer that I will have to deal with. Breast cancer may spread out of the breast and into the lymph nodes, and travel to other parts of the body such as the bones, lungs and brain. Yes, it

is possible to have breast cancer in the brain. I hope and pray that my PET scan comes up clean, and that I live to be a very happy, very healthy, very old lady.

I have learned many lessons through this experience. No matter what, I will continue to get ongoing screenings as necessary. If I must deal with cancer again, I will quickly take the steps required to treat it aggressively and regain my health. In the meantime, I am researching what I can do to prevent cancer and stay healthy.

I hope that my story will be helpful to you! ♦

Jacksonville District hosts Coastal Engineering Research Board meeting

BY AMANDA ELLISON



Members of the CERB (left to right): Col. Kevin Wilson, U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center commander; Col. Kent Savre, North Atlantic Division commander; William Hanson, Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company vice president; Brig. Gen. Michael Wehr, South Pacific Division commander; Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh, deputy commanding general for civil and emergency operations; John Headland, Moffat & Nichols Engineers vice president; Col. Ed Jackson, South Atlantic Division commander; Dr. David Kriebel, Naval Architecture & Ocean Engineering Department chair.

(PHOTO BY JOSE BILBAO)

For its 89th annual meeting, the Coastal Engineering Research Board met in Jacksonville, hosted by Jacksonville District. Established by public law in 1963, the CERB functions as an advisory board to the Chief of Engineers. It was originally the Beach Erosion Board, established in 1930.

The board provides broad policy guidance and review of plans and funding requirements for research and development projects in concert with the needs of the coastal engineering field and the objectives of the Chief of Engineers.

The theme of this year's meeting was "Regional Sediment Management – Uniting Navigation, Beaches and the Ecosystem." The objectives of the meeting were to examine the challenges with port and navigation development and operation, beach and coastal development and managing storm damage risk; and to examine the challenges to coastal ecosystems restoration, resilience and sustainability, all with a focus on coastal engineering requirements.

During the course of the conference, a wide array of industry experts gave presentations to the CERB concerning their challenges.

Jacksonville District led the way with six presentations that focused on various district projects, including Mile Point, dredging operations, the state of Florida beaches and funding concerns.

After two full days of presentations, the CERB took a field trip that highlighted several local projects. The trip included stops at the Jacksonville Port Authority Container Terminal, Mile Point Training Wall Relocation, Naval Station Mayport Deepening Channel project and the Duval County Shore Protection project.

The conference was a great success, and Jacksonville District received many compliments for a job well done.

"I wanted to personally thank Jacksonville District for hosting the CERB this week," said Col. Ed Jackson, South Atlantic Division commander. "It was extremely well planned and executed and I personally learned a great deal." ♦