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COMMANDER'SCORNER
MESSAGE FROM COL. ALAN DODD

Happy New Year!

The transition between fiscal years doesn't draw the same attention and fanfare as the transition between calendar years, but it's still worthwhile to pause and reflect on our accomplishments over the past 12 months and re-energize ourselves to tackle new challenges that await us.

First and foremost, I can't say enough about the resiliency displayed by the hard-working professionals at the Jacksonville District. We began the last fiscal year with a government shutdown. In the middle of the year, we had some conversations about what the workforce would look like over the next couple of years. Through these challenges, we continued to perform at a truly remarkable level, working with our stakeholders to advance projects and deliver services in a manner I believe is transforming the Army Corps of Engineers.

Congress and the president trusted Jacksonville District with the responsibility to obligate more than $350 million this year in projects and services that improve public safety, sustain the environment, and provide for economic security. With that investment, we took significant steps forward in several areas.

We finished Portugués Dam, and it is now providing additional flood protection for residents living in Ponce, Puerto Rico. We finished work under the first contract at the C-44 Reservoir, a key component of the Indian River Lagoon-South project. We also finished work on the Margarita Channel in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Later this month, we plan to celebrate the completion of the Merritt Canal Pump Station, a key feature of the Picayune Strand restoration project. Additionally, we received clarification of policy issues that will allow Kissimmee River Restoration and C-111 South Dade projects to move forward.

We continue to deepen ports to accommodate larger ships that will provide affordable access to markets across the world for businesses of all sizes. We continue to make substantial investments in beaches that help reduce the impact of hurricanes and tropical storms that may strike our state. Work continues on the Herbert Hoover Dike surrounding Lake Okeechobee; in addition to the construction we are undertaking, we continue to press forward with a Dam Safety Modification Study that will give us the best picture of risks remaining at the dike and alternatives for reducing those risks.

We continue to provide assistance with remediation activities at Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS). We are assisting with recovery projects in Haiti. We continue to operate structures to manage water in south Florida, while simultaneously providing sites where people can swim, boat, or fish. We also provide guidance to people and organizations who are undertaking their own projects near navigable waterways and wetlands, to ensure those valuable resources are protected.

I anticipate the new fiscal year will bring additional opportunities and challenges. We have additional projects to start, some are being studied, and others are ready to be turned over to the operators. There will still be uncertainty as we move ahead, and we'll learn some lessons along the way, but I have every confidence the hard-working people of Jacksonville District will rise to meet the challenges.

I extend my personal thanks to everyone in Jacksonville District who made Fiscal Year 2014 a success. Despite all the challenges we faced this year, we all answered the call to duty as expected by our customers, the taxpayers of America.

Army Strong. BUILDING STRONG®. JaxStrong.

Alan Dodd
Colonel, U.S. Army
District Commander

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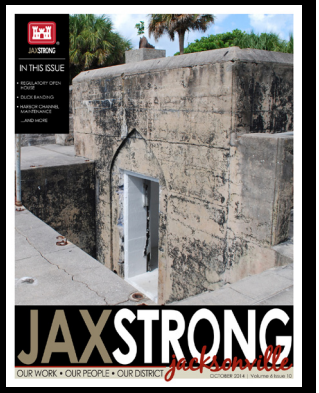

Wetlands aren't always wet!

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NANCY J. STICHT

A young Black mangrove takes in oxygen through specialized aerial, or aerating, roots called pneumatophores, which allows the tree to breathe air in habitats that have waterlogged soil. The roots may grow down from the stem, or up from typical roots. While this Florida Keys site may not look like a wetland, the presence of mangroves, pneumatophores and Sea Oxeye Daisy is a clear indicator of a wetland, and a project that would impact this area may require a Department of the Army permit.

Contrary to popular belief, wetlands are not always wet. And there may be a difference between what the Army Corps of Engineers and state and other regulatory agencies consider a wetland. This may lead to confusion by property owners, developers, consultants and permit applicants who receive conflicting information on whether or not their project requires a Department of the Army permit.

The Army Corps of Engineers defines wetlands as those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a predominance of hydrophytic vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. All three characteristics must be present during some portion of the growing season for an area to be considered a wetland.

Wetlands such as swamps and marshes are obvious, but some wetlands are not easily recognized, often because they are dry during part of the year or don't look visibly wet. Some of these wetland types include, but are not limited to, bottomland forests, pine savannahs, bogs and wet meadows.

Nearly 5,000 plant types that occur in the United States may commonly occur in wetlands. These include cattails, bulrushes, cordgrass, sawgrass, sphagnum moss, bald cypress, willows, bay trees, mangroves, sedges and rushes. Other indicators of plants growing in wet conditions include trees having shallow root systems, swollen trunks (for example, bald cypress and tupelo gum) or roots found growing from the plant stem or trunk above the soil surface.

There are approximately 2,000 named soils in the United States that may occur in wetlands. These soils, referred to as hydric soils, have characteristics that indicate limited oxygen in the soil due to periods of saturation during the growing season. Hydric soil indicators include a predominance of decomposed plant material (peats or mucks), a bluish gray or gray color below the surface, red streaks in the soil around plant roots, an odor similar to rotten eggs, or sandy soil with dark stains or streaks of organic material that, when rubbed between the fingers, leaves a dark stain on the fingers.

Wetland hydrology refers to the presence of water at or above the soil surface for a sufficient period of the year to significantly influence the plant types and soils that occur in the area. Besides standing or flowing water, evidence of the periodic presence of flooding or soil saturation may include waterlogged soil during the growing season, water marks on trees and drift lines, or small piles of debris oriented in the direction of water movement through an area.

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act requires anyone interested in depositing dredged or fill material into "waters of the United States, including wetlands," must receive authorization for such activities. The Army Corps of Engineers administers the Section 404 permitting process. Activities in wetlands for which permits may be required include, but are not limited to placement of fill material; ditching activities when the excavated material is sidecast; dam, levee and dike construction; mechanized land clearing; land leveling and most road construction. Not all wetlands fall under Army Corps of Engineers jurisdiction, and the Corps recommends early consultation to avoid unauthorized or non-compliant activity in wetlands. ♦

According to the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension Services, Sea Oxeye Daisy is native to salt water wetlands in south Florida, the Bahamas and the Caribbean, and is commonly associated with mangroves. It fills swales and ditches on barrier islands and will endure brackish conditions and diverse soils.

Harbor channel maintenance benefits navigation and island treasures

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SUSAN JACKSON

Storm surge and wave erosion destroyed portions of Fort Dade's artillery battery on the northern point of Egmont Key. Inset: Project Manager Milan Mora isn't telling a fish tale, he's signaling to a group of Corps and NOAA Fisheries team members that he's ready to move out on a tour of Egmont Key.

Historic Egmont Key will soon receive critical sand thanks to maintenance on the Tampa Harbor channel. The small island has experienced large-scale erosion and structural damage on its western shoreline, threatening historic and cultural resources there.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District awarded a $13.4 million contract to Great Lakes Dredge & Dock Company of Oak Brook, Ill., to perform maintenance dredging of the Tampa Harbor Egmont and Mullet Key channel cuts. The project will beneficially place dredged sand and install geotextile tubes on Egmont Key to help stabilize the beach and protect historic structures.

The maintenance will remove up to 875,000 cubic yards of shoaled sand along 17 miles of channel to improve navigation safety. The Corps anticipates operations will begin later this month or early November, and continue for approximately four months.

Sand placement will begin at the north end of Egmont Key which is the most severely eroded portion of the island, said Andy Cummings, project engineer. From there, he said, sand placement and tilling will progress southward along the western shoreline of the island.

Throughout operations, channel maintenance work will include turbidity monitoring to help ensure water quality standards are met, and endangered species observers to help protect marine wildlife. If sea turtles are numerous in the navigation channel, they may be relocated through the use of open-net trawling.

The island is home to gopher tortoises, nesting sea turtles, nesting shorebirds and wintering migratory birds. Florida Park Service manager Tom Watson is a 13-year veteran of Egmont Key and also lives on the island. He and staff members monitor wildlife activities there and help ensure the safety of boaters and other visitors who enjoy a variety of recreation activities at Egmont.

"We're grateful for the continued support of the Army Corps of Engineers who have been such a vital part of protecting the eroding shoreline," Watson said.

Erosion on the western shoreline has created a two- to three-foot escarpment to form and has caused numerous palm trees to fall into the Gulf of Mexico. As a result of the erosion, currently, the beach is almost nonexistent on the west side of the island for sea turtles to nest. Placing sand there during the early part of the winter season provides time for wave action on the beach to naturally sort the sand and silt, said Aubree Hershorin, Ph.D., project biologist. "This is important, because it ensures the beach is as suitable as possible for nesting sea turtles that will begin using the area in April."

Although the dredged sand is not an exact match to that found

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HARBOR CHANNEL (continued from PAGE 4)

Off of Egmont Key, several recreationists enjoy the clear water as a large ship transits through the channel. Inset: Likely in search of food, a lone shorebird walks along an eroding beach on Egmont Key. Note the escarpment along the beach.

on Egmont Key, the beneficial placement is supported by the Corps, NOAA Fisheries, Florida Department of Environmental Protection and local agencies.

"Reusing dredge sand from the local area will benefit the ecosystem surrounding Egmont Key in many ways," said Mark Sramek, habitat conservation biologist for NOAA Fisheries. "It will protect some of Tampa Bay's most important living marine resources, as well as provide shoreline stabilization to protect the island's historic and cultural resources."

"We all recognized that if nothing is done, storms and wave action will continue eroding the shoreline and eventually destroy the historic structures," said project manager Milan Mora.

"It's only a band aid, but we'd like to continue to beneficially use the dredged sand to help preserve Egmont's cultural and natural environment as long as possible for future generations."

Historic structures in peril include portions of Fort Dade, an 1899 coastal defense system completed in 1906. The island is also home to a lighthouse built in 1858 and still in use today. A number of state, federal and private entities actually own and manage Egmont Key, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Florida Park Service, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Tampa Bay Pilots.

In partnership with the Florida Park Service, the Egmont Key

Many turtles like this one live on Egmont Key, which doesn't have many predators.

Alliance (a non-profit organization) is hosting a "Discover the Island" event Nov. 8-9, that includes re-enactments, nature and history tours, presentations, artists, games, food, and more. Located in the mouth of Tampa Bay, Egmont Key is accessible only by ferry or private boat. Day passes to the state park include ferry service to and from the island.

For more park information, visit http://www.floridastateparks.org/egmontkey/ and go to http://egmontkey.info/page-1251146 for Discover the Island event information. ♦

Egmont Key and Fort Dade Timeline

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SUSAN JACKSON

Overlooking the bay, Soldiers and guns once stood guard of the Tampa Bay area. Nature's tide and storm surge threaten the century-old coastal defense fortification.

Pre-1500: Tocobaga Indians inhabit the Tampa Bay area.

Early 1500s: Spanish explorers arrive in the area.

1819: The U.S. acquires Florida from Spain via the Florida Purchase Treaty.

1821: The U.S. Government recognized its importance as a navigation landmark and named the key for John Perceval, the second Earl of Egmont.

1830s: Congress approved funding for a lighthouse on the island to improve navigation.

1848: The lighthouse was severely damaged in the Great Hurricane of 1848, when ocean surge swept over Egmont Key.

1849: U.S. Army engineers surveyed the coastline for possible use as a defense area. Among the engineers was Col. Robert E. Lee, a top graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, West Point. The engineers recommended Egmont Key and nearby Mullet Key for military defense utilization.

1858: A replacement lighthouse was completed.

1861: Confederates removed the lighthouse beacon to prevent its use by the Union Navy, who responded by taking possession of Egmont Key. Union troops set up a blockade using the two islands. Confederates attempting to run the blockade could be seen by lookouts atop the Egmont Key lighthouse.

1885: President Grover Cleveland appointed a joint army, navy and civilian board, known as the Board of Fortifications, to analyze a coastal defense. The board recommended massive $127 million construction program of breech-loading cannons, mortars, floating batteries, and submarine mines for some 29 locations on the U.S. coastline.

A close-up of where munitions were likely stored under lock and key.

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EGMONT (continued from PAGE 6)

1898: Spain declared war on the U.S. The nation moved to strengthen its coastal defenses and Egmont Key was selected for fortification. Construction of coastal projects typically included a system of well-dispersed emplacements with large guns in each location. Many of these structures featured disappearing guns, which sat protected behind walls, but could be raised to fire. Mine fields were also a critical component of the defense, and smaller guns were employed to protect the mine fields from mine sweeping vessels.

1899: Heavy concrete artillery batteries were built on Egmont, with its batteries designed to fire in cooperation with those of Fort De Soto on Mullet Key, an official sub-post of Fort Dade. The U.S. Navy destroyed the Spanish fleet on the southern coast of Cuba.

1900: In General Order 43, dated Apr. 4, 1900, the fort was officially named for Maj. Francis L. Dade, 4th U.S. Infantry, who was killed along with his entire command by Seminole Indians on Dec. 28, 1835.

1901 - 1916: Construction of mining facilities began with the construction of a cable tank. By 1906, all of the gun batteries were completed and in 1908 a system of mine control stations was established on the key. As the U.S. prepared for World War I in 1916, Fort Dade's mining capability was expanded to include a new loading room, a service dynamite room, a new wharf and a tramway on the north end of the key.

1921: A hurricane on Oct. 25 damaged many of the fort's permanent buildings and destroyed the boathouse and wharf. The cost of repairs weighed heavily in the decision to close the post.

1923: The Army closes Fort Dade. Fires in 1925 and 1927 destroyed major permanent buildings including the 109-man artillery barracks and mess hall facilities.

1935: The government was unable to sell the surplus property and it remained on the U.S Army quartermaster's books through June 1935.

Late 30s: The U.S. Coast Guard took over the key and used it for small arms training.

1940s: The military used the island as a look-out post during World War II.

1974: Egmont Key was designated a National Wildlife Refuge.

1989: Egmont Key State Park opened.

Today: Once a two-company U.S. Army coastal defense fort, only the ruins of Fort Dade's brick streets and three gun batteries still remain. Two six-inch Armstrong rapid-fire rifled guns, the last of their kind in the U.S., were moved to the Fort de Soto Park. Egmont Key is jointly owned and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Florida Park Service, U.S. Coast Guard, and the Tampa Bay Pilots Association. ♦

In the forefront, a turtle meanders along tram tracks that speeded the delivery of munitions and supplies across the island. In the background is a guard house, Fort Dade's only reconstructed facility.

A coastal defense fortification at Fort Dade is built into the landscape. U.S. Army, Navy and Marine Corps members served on Egmont Key during the past 114 years.

The Egmont Key Lighthouse Cemetery stands as a reminder of the hardships faced on the small island.

Regulatory takes its show on the road

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NANCY J. STICHT

Regulatory team members welcomed guests at each of eight venues for the Regulatory 2014 Open House events. Here, from left to right, Nicole Liette, Rosalinda Rodriguez, Gletys Guardia-Montoya and Maria Bezanilla of the Miami Regulatory Section, distribute materials to attendees during morning registration at Duck Key, Fla. July 9.

For the first time in four years, Regulatory Division traveled Jacksonville District's territory, from the Florida Panhandle to the Antilles, to offer a full day of information to stakeholders, partners, consultants and the public.

Billed as "Strategies for Success," each of the open house events featured presentations about endangered species, mitigation, alternatives analysis and indirect effects as well as a programmatic overview. Each venue also included a presentation focused on issues relevant to that specific region.

"We have always found this type of outreach to have significant and long-lasting benefits, both for the public and for us," said Donnie Kinard, chief of the Regulatory Division. "As a result of these events, we find we receive more complete permit applications and fewer inquiries that take our time and attention away from processing actions. This outreach also helps us to build productive relationships."

Tori White, deputy chief of the Regulatory Division, agreed. "It had been about four years since the last time we did a series like this on the road, so we had a lot of new information to share, such as the proposed new Clean Water Act rule, and our new Indirect Effects Tool, both of which were open for public comment.

"We called this Open House series 'Strategies for Success' because the information we provided will help ensure more successful applications," explained White. "And applications are successful when they demonstrate attention to identifying and analyzing potential alternatives that have less impact on aquatic resources; when they show that impacts to endangered species have been fully considered and minimized or eliminated; when direct and indirect or secondary and cumulative effects have been analyzed; and when they include a comprehensive mitigation plan to address unavoidable impacts to wetlands."

Between June and September, Regulatory team members traveled to Bradenton, Duck Key, Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Panama City and Orlando, Fla. as well as to San Juan, Puerto

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REGULATORY (continued from **PAGE 8)**

Rico and St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. Audiences in each venue were interested, engaged and appreciative.

In a note to Col. Alan Dodd, district commander, an attendee to the Bradenton and Orlando events wrote, "The Open Houses were very well done and informative. It was also a nice opportunity to chat informally with Army Corps representatives. Thank you for the effort and commitment to support these events. As a member of the regulated community, we were very pleased to attend and found the information provided valuable."

Donnie Kinard (second from left), chief of the Regulatory Division and Tori White (third from left), deputy chief, chat with attendees during a break at the Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Open House July 11.

From left, Don Hambrick, senior project manager, Panama City Regulatory Section; Irene Sadowski, chief, Cocoa Regulatory Section; and Jeff Collins, senior project manager, Cocoa Regulatory Section answer questions from an audience member. Hambrick gave presentations on indirect effects and alternatives analysis and Collins gave presentations on mitigation and endangered species at the Orlando, Fla. Open House August 1.

In response to audience requests, presentations have been added to Jacksonville District's website at: http://1.usa.gov/1nlxPnh. A series of video recaps is being prepared and will be posted at a later date. ♦

Debbie Cedeno-Maldonado, right, project manager, Antilles Regulatory Section, discussed mitigation at the San Juan, Puerto Rico Open House Aug. 7. She presented the 12 components of a comprehensive mitigation plan. Permit applicants must demonstrate that they have used the sequential mitigation process of first avoiding wetland impacts, then minimizing impacts to the greatest extent, and finally, compensating for unavoidable impacts through mitigation.

Alisa Zarbo, senior project manager, Palm Beach Gardens Regulatory Section gave a presentation on alternatives analysis at the Bradenton, Fla. Open House June 25. She illustrated how permit applicants must demonstrate that they have considered enough alternatives for their project to show that the selected alternative is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative. The series of presentations was followed at each venue by an informal poster session, during which attendees could meet one-on-one with Regulatory team members.

Impassioned community packs Regulatory public meeting

BY NANCY J. STICHT

Sindulfo Castillo (right), chief of the Antilles Regulatory Section, watches as members of a standing-room-only crowd wait their turn to speak at Regulatory Division's Sept. 25 public meeting to discuss the Coral World Ocean Park permit application. (Photo by Greg Terry)

One by one, community members from St. Thomas and St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands, along with visitors from as far away as New Jersey, stood to make a plea on one side or the other of an issue that has sparked controversy and polarized viewpoints. Jacksonville District's Regulatory Division hosted the public meeting Thursday, Sept. 25 to receive public comments related to the application by Coral World Ocean Park to construct a nearshore dolphin enclosure.

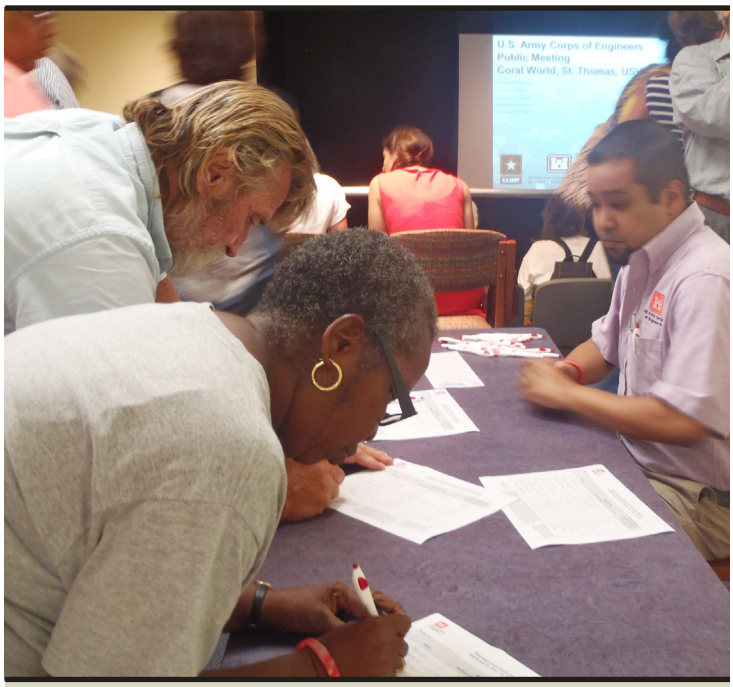
More than 250 people – some carrying signs and posters; some wearing shirts expressing their opinions; all of them fervently in favor of or opposed to the project – packed the Charles Turnbull Regional Library well beyond its capacity. Nearly 50 attendees lined up to ask a question or submit a comment about the project.

"I have rarely seen an audience as passionate, or as divided, as this one," said Osvaldo Collazo, chief of Regulatory's North Permits Branch.

The proposed project at Coral World Ocean Park at Coki Point in St. Thomas includes constructing dolphin pens approximately 300 feet by 200 feet in Water Bay, a two-story "education center" structure adjacent to the shore, and a system of buoys, floats and lines to restrict vessel access. The project would impact 0.32 acres of coral habitat, 0.01 acre of seagrass in Porites rubble, 0.01 acre of hard bottom and 0.02 acres of scattered seagrass and coral.

The applicant has taken measures to avoid and minimize impacts to aquatic resources by reducing the size of the project footprint, avoiding the densest seagrass beds, reducing the number of pilings, adding dock grating and increasing the span of dock sections to reduce the number of pilings in hard bottom. Further, the applicant proposed compensatory mitigation for unavoidable impacts by relocating corals, boulders and seagrass and implementing an environmental and water quality monitoring plan.

"The Army Corps of Engineers is neither a proponent nor an opponent of any project," Edgar Garcia, project manager, explained to the audience. "Public input is an important part of our process, and that is what brings us here tonight – we scheduled this meeting in response to your request, and we want to hear from you."



Victor Negron (right) of the Antilles Office, greets attendees at a Sept. 25 public meeting on St. Thomas. Jacksonville District scheduled the meeting in response to hundreds of requests from community members. More than 250 people attended and nearly 50 offered comments on the proposed Coral World Ocean Park dolphin enclosure. (Photo by Nancy J. Sticht)

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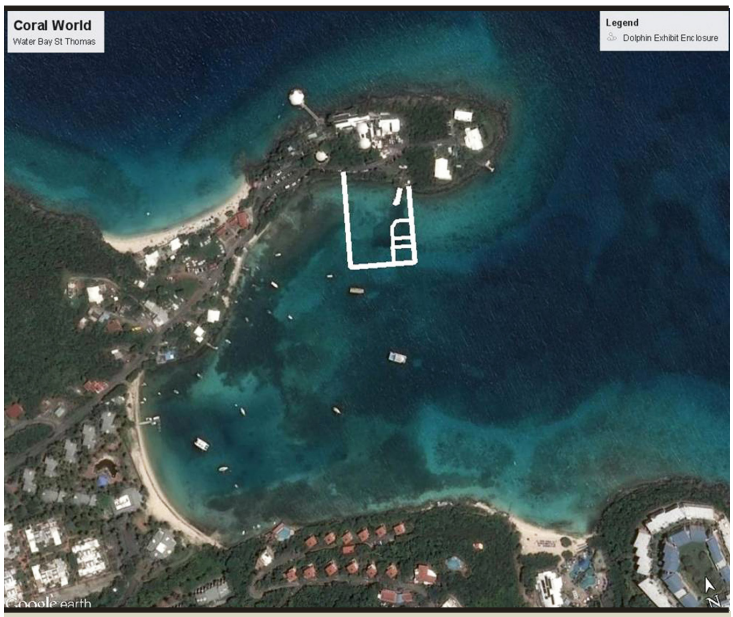
CORAL WORLD (continued from **PAGE 10)**



This Google Earth image shows the general area (not to scale) on St. Thomas where Coral World Ocean Park has proposed to build a nearshore dolphin enclosure and two-story educational support center. (Google Earth image)

Garcia outlined the Army Corps of Engineers' regulatory mission, authorities and process before opening the floor. Under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, the Corps regulates structures or work in, over or under navigable waters of the United States. Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1977 regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material in waters of the United States, including wetlands. Finally, Section 103 of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act regulates the transportation of dredged material for the purpose of ocean dumping.

"The Army Corps of Engineers does not regulate dolphins in captivity or water quality," said Garcia. "We review every application in accordance with the same criteria, as outlined in the Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines and the 21 public interest factors covered by the National Environmental Policy Act. Additionally, we must comply with requirements of the Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act and Essential Fish Habitat as well as state and territorial certifications such as coastal zone management and water quality certification."

Dolphin encounters, such as those at the Florida Keys resort pictured here, are offered at destinations in Florida, the Caribbean and elsewhere. Advocates of the proposed Coral World project say the educational benefits are second to none. Opponents say the practice is cruel to the animals and detrimental to the environment. (Photo by Nancy J. Sticht)

Proponents for the project advocated economic benefits through increased and enhanced tourism as well as educational benefits through hands-on wildlife encounters. "We can learn so much more through parks like Coral World and activities like dolphin encounters than we can ever learn from a book or video," said one speaker.

One view of Coral World Ocean Park, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. Park owners have requested a Department of the Army permit to construct a nearshore dolphin enclosure in Water Bay, to provide hands-on dolphin encounters for park visitors. Under the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, the Corps regulates structures or work in, over or under navigable waters of the United States. (Photo by Nancy J. Sticht)

Project opponents stated that environmental impacts to coral, seagrass, marine life and water quality resulting from housing dolphins in the proposed enclosure will degrade Water Bay. "I have seen threatened Acropora coral in the area proposed for the dolphin enclosure," said one attendee as his wife displayed photographs.

The meeting, which was originally scheduled for 6-8 p.m., adjourned at almost 10 p.m., with many attendees on both sides of the issue expressing gratitude for the Corps' responsiveness in having the meeting.

"We wanted to stay as long as we needed to stay, and hear from as many people as possible," said Sindulfo Castillo, chief of the Antilles Regulatory Section. "We all agreed that it was time well spent, and we were touched by how deeply everyone felt and how eloquently they presented their statements." ♦

Wildlife research
For a little island, there's a lot happening at Tampa Harbor's 3-D

BY SUSAN JACKSON

Three newly banded ducklings are spotted at another 3-D pond. (Photo by Lorraine Margeson)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and contractors on Dredge Material Placement Facility 3-D in Tampa Bay recently earned warm fuzzies as they assisted the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) in effort to collect data.

The Corps and its contractors, Carter's Contracting Services, Inc. and LG2 Environmental Solutions (LG2ES), hosted and volunteered as assistants during a two-day FWC operation that involved building a corral and herding wild ducks for banding.

Yep. Ducks. Not branding; banding. They were banding special ducklings born on 3-D.

A bird aficionado and LG2ES monitor on the construction worksite, Lorraine Margeson, was informed the FWC was interested in banding black-bellied whistling ducks (BBWD) for research, and she knew the large congregation on 3-D was easy pickings.

"I thought they could easily capture the ducklings, since they couldn't fly yet and were essentially in a pond with no place to go," Margeson said. She quickly coordinated with her

Ducklings are herded toward the corral where they are captured, banded and released. (Photo by Lorraine Margeson)

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DUCK BANDING (continued from **PAGE 12**)

A duckling wearing his new bling. (Photo by Lorraine Margeson)

supervisors and the Corps, and then contacted FWC waterfowl and small game program leader Jamie Feddersen who immediately coordinated with the Corps to gain access to the site.

Time was critical, according to Feddersen, because Margeson indicated that many of the ducklings weren't capable of flight. "This makes capture much easier and increases our ability to conduct an effective and successful trapping event," he explained to Corps officials.

To Aubree Hershorin, Ph.D., project biologist, this sounded like a great opportunity for the FWC and she was glad that the Corps and the contractor were able to accommodate the request while constructing the 3-D dike raising. The raising will bring the dike from 23 to 40 feet creating about 15 million cubic yards of capacity and will help sustain another 20 years of dredging for the Tampa Harbor Federal Navigation project.

Feddersen was excited about this venture because of a newly started multi-state color-banding project the FWC is undertaking with several southern states. Collectively, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas have breeding populations.

"Each of these state's wildlife agencies, along with Ducks Unlimited and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, have agreed to begin marking BBWD with colored leg bands with color contrasting alpha-numeric codes in hopes that birdwatchers, biologists, or anyone can see, read, and report the bands," Feddersen said.

The BBWD are a subtropical duck and, until recently, were generally found only in South America and coastal Central America. Within the past 10 years they have expanded their range throughout the southern United States. Feddersen said very little is known about their movement patterns and their natural expansion is extremely interesting, with sightings as far north as Virginia. "Our hope is to gain some basic demographic and movement information on these birds, of which we understand very little," he said.

Feddersen said he was impressed with the number of ducks he saw using the ponds. "It was good to see that many black-bellied whistling ducks and mottled ducks all on the same pond. Plus, after seeing the area, I can understand why there is a lot of duckling production. This area has no real predators – no alligators, no raccoons or opossums; maybe some snakes and they'll eat eggs out of the nests, but probably not too many."

The day before the banding event, a small team built a corral made of fence posts and plastic construction fencing that they intended to herd the ducklings into. By the next day, however, the majority of the ducks had "flown the coop".

"Events did not go as planned," Feddersen explained. "When we showed up, we found that many of the ducklings had moved to another pond. There were a few still left on our initial pond, but when we put our kayaks in the water and started paddling, they all scurried out and we weren't able to get people into position to prevent them from climbing the banks."

Feddersen said he was discouraged when it happened, but the team pulled together to formulate a new plan for another pond that had quite a few ducks on it.

At left, LG2ES Matt Dinkins holds a duckling steady as FWC team leader Jamie Feddersen prepares a band for placement. (Photo by Lorraine Margeson)

"We grabbed a few stakes and a bit of fencing from our corral and moved over to the other pond and chose a natural funnel point to put up a quick corral. We positioned all our workers (three FWC staff and five volunteers) around the pond and started walking and herding the flightless ducks toward the funnel point and corral. The ducks cooperated pretty well," Feddersen said, "and with a little coaxing, walked right up the funnel point and into the corral."

The team captured and banded 51 BBWD with an aluminum Federal band, and placed color leg bands on 26 of them.

(CONTINUES ON **PAGE 13**)

DUCK BANDING (continued from **PAGE 13)**

Lorraine Margeson, LG2ES bird monitor, smiles as she holds a feathered friend. (Photo by Don Margeson, Lorraine's husband and volunteer at the banding event)

"We generally band a handful every year during our summer banding period," Feddersen, "but this is the first time we have made a BBWD-specific capture attempt. This is the largest number of BBWD that we have ever captured at one time and it is the second location in the state where we have placed color leg bands."

Feddersen said the FWC is viewing this first year as more of a test year to see if all the cooperating states can actually catch a large number of BBWD. Florida plans to put out 125 color leg bands throughout the state.

"We're currently working with the owners of the www.bandedbirds.org website to see how we can incorporate the BBWD color leg band sightings into their established reporting system." Feddersen says that for now, anyone seeing a color leg band on a BBWD can send an email message to ducks@MyFWC.com with the following information: Date seen, location (latitude and longitude if possible), band number and color combination (example might be an orange band with black letters), and the observer's name. He says photographs are great and are encouraged!

Margeson, who was excited about the venture from the beginning, already photographed and reported on a few banded ducks found in another pond on 3-D.

To hear what a BBWD sounds like, go to http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-bellied_Whistling-Duck/id. ♦

Lorraine Margeson, LG2ES bird monitor, smiles as she holds a feathered friend. (Photo by Don Margeson, Lorraine's husband and volunteer at the banding event)

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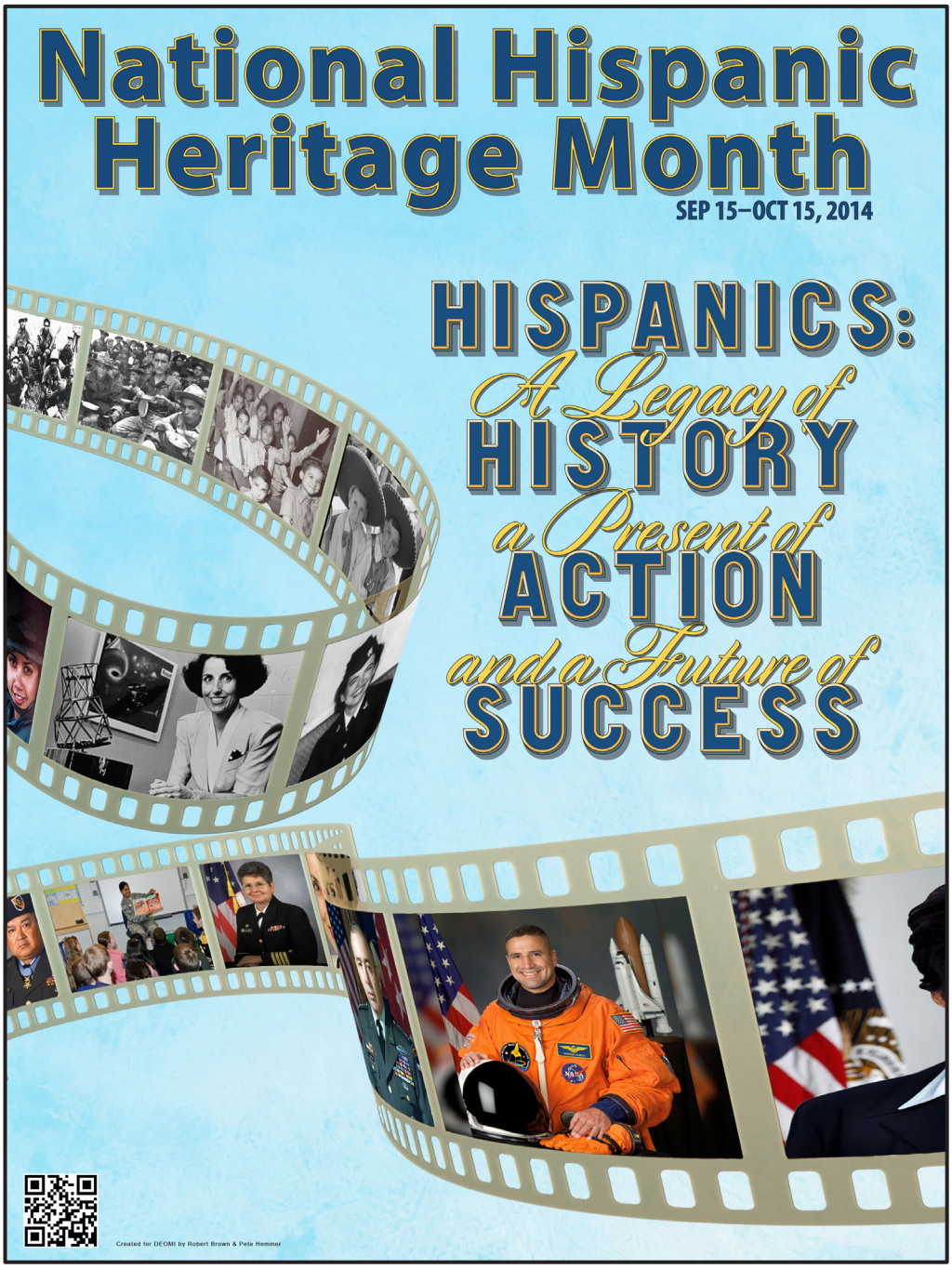

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Jax Facts: How well do you know Jacksonville District?

BY NAKEIR NOBLES

Congratulations to Brenda Deavers, Programs and Project Management Division, the first district team member to submit the correct answers to all ten of the following questions, based on stories that appeared in the September issue of JaxStrong. (Photo by Nikki Nobles)

1. **What missions were included as part of the Corps' response to the hurricanes of 2004?**

   Missions included temporary roofing "Blue Roof" Program, temporary housing, power, ice and water, (page 13)

2. **Port Mayaca is located on the east side of which large body of water in south Florida?**

   Port Mayaca Lock & Dam on the east side of Lake Okeechobee in south Florida, (page 8)

3. **What is another name for the Chief of Engineers' Report?**

   Chief of Engineers' Report, also known as a Chief's Report, (page 9)

4. **What is the goal of the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP)?**

   The goal is to capture water lost to tide and re-direct the water flow south to restore the central and southern Everglades ecosystem and Florida Bay, (page 9)

5. **What will be the role of the multi-billion dollar Indian River Lagoon project?**

   It will serve a vital role in storing and treating local basin run-off, (page 7)

6. **When did record keeping of hurricanes begin?**

   Hurricane records started being kept in the 1850s, (page 11)

7. **What lesson did the Jacksonville District learn after the 2004 hurricane season?**

   District leaders noticed it was taking considerable time to gather signatures on right-of-entry forms necessary to allow contractors to install temporary roofing materials, (page 13)

8. **What is beneficial use of dredge material normally associated with?**

   Beneficial use of dredged materials is normally associated with shoreline protection or as fill for upland areas, (page 3)

9. **Who built the 400-acre island known as "3-D"?**

   Jacksonville District built the 400-acre island known as "3-D", (page 3)

10. **When we (Corps of Engineers) can't reduce risk further, what do we do?**

    We mitigate for known and potential resource losses, (page 2) ♦

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

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