

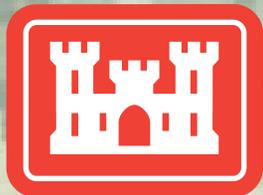
# Crosscurrents

April 2011 Vol. 37, No. 4

*Serving the St. Paul District since*

**Flood preparations  
underway for Fargo  
Page 4**

**New firewood policy  
aims to protect  
environment  
Page 13**



**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**  
St. Paul District

**BUILDING STRONG®**



Paul Johnson, engineering, surveys heights in Valley City, N.D., April 13, 2011. The district is assisting the community of Valley City, N.D., in fighting against flooding from the Sheyenne River.

Photo by Shannon Bauer

*Crosscurrents* is an unofficial publication authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1. It is published monthly for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District.

Views and opinions expressed in *Crosscurrents* are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Articles and photography submissions are welcome and must arrive by the 15th day of the publishing month for consideration. Submissions can be mailed or e-mailed.

Submissions should be in Microsoft Word format for all written copy and photos should be no smaller than a 5 x 7 at 300 dpi. All photographs appearing herein are by the St. Paul District Public Affairs Office unless otherwise accredited.

The mission of *Crosscurrents* is to support the commander's internal information program for the St. Paul District and its stakeholders.

*Crosscurrents* also serves as the commander's primary communication tool for accurately transmitting policies and command philosophy to the St. Paul District community and its customers.

Address all inquiries to:  
Editor, *Crosscurrents*  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
180 Fifth Street East, Suite 700  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1678

651-290-5202  
cemvp-pa@usace.army.mil

District Commander  
Public Affairs Chief  
Media Specialist  
Crosscurrents Editor

Col. Michael J. Price  
Mark Davidson  
Shannon Bauer  
Patrick Moes

# Crosscurrents Contents

## What's inside...

- 3 Comments from the top
- 6 Lock and Dam 2 staff prepare for the worst
- 8 The 2011 navigation season arrives amid flooding
- 9 Technology gives levee safety team new tool
- 10 District employee selected to represent Corps
- 12 Army program allows for rapid issued decisions
- 13 New firewood policy aims to protect forest resources
- 15 The district recognized with award
- 16 News & Notes

## Next month's *Crosscurrents* issue includes:

- District fights major flooding in North Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa



Facebook



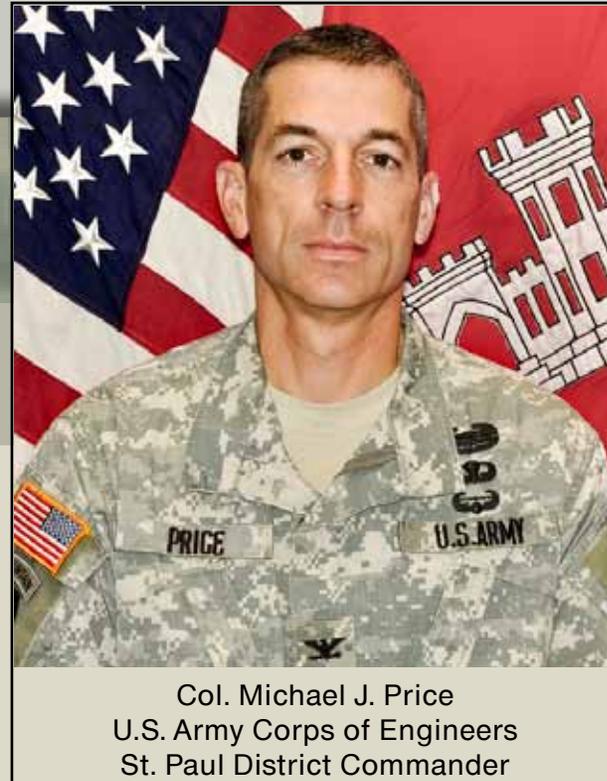
YouTube



Flickr

Click on a logo to go to the St. Paul District's page, where you can like us, watch videos about us or see more photos.

## Comments from the top



Col. Michael J. Price  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
St. Paul District Commander

Team,

So far the region has been very fortunate and has experienced minimal damage from flooding as of April 19. That could be changing as I write this. The recent forecasts for the Red River of the North have energized the cities and the district to provide additional emergency measures in time for a major flood.

I continue to be proud of everyone that is providing assistance to the many communities that have asked for our help. To date, we have met with more than 60 communities and provided them technical assistance. We have provided advanced measures in two cities and emergency measures in nearly 20 cities. The EOC has done extraordinary work coordinating all of these efforts, and they are prepared to continue that throughout the upcoming events. We have also relied on the region for resources and additional capacity. I cannot understate the importance of getting the

rest of the region involved. It is not a function of giving our work away to others, but a function of how busy the district is with other priorities and a function of spreading experience down the river.

This month, I want to discuss honor. The U.S. Army has historically been rated as one of the most honorable organizations in the country. The Corps is a big part of that. Each year, we send out customer satisfaction surveys and inevitably we get comments about not doing what we said we would do. That directly relates to honor. Honor is a matter of carrying out, acting and living our values. Honor is how we interact with the public and what that means to our organization. Our nation's highest military award is the Medal of Honor. Think of those that earned that award. Think of what they

did to earn it. Many gave their lives to save others. They clearly carried out and acted upon their values and the values of the Army — honorably. We may never be asked to sacrifice our lives

in performing our missions, but certainly the possibility exists. We walk levees during peak flood events; we operate on the rivers at our locks and dams; dangers exist, yet we carry out and act upon our values ... that is honor.

Thank you to all for fighting the floods. The many communities you served greatly appreciate what you have done for them. You all serve the country proudly, and I see it and I hear about it when I am speaking with local and state officials. Keep up the great work!

**BUILDING STRONG!**

# The Red River of the North is risin'

Story by Shannon Bauer

Once again, the district is preparing for potential record flooding along the Red River of the North.

For the third consecutive year, the National Weather Service is forecasting major flooding along this river, which serves as the border between Minnesota and North Dakota.

The Red River Valley covers 45,000 square miles and occupies substantial portions of North Dakota, western Minnesota and a small portion of northeastern South Dakota. The area is prone to flooding mainly because of geography – the land is exceptionally flat. Additionally, the water flows north. As temperatures in southern portions of the basin warm in the spring, and the snow begins to melt, more and more water accumulates. When the snow melts in the north, even more water is added as the river flow journeys north.

The Corps of Engineers has a long history of supporting flood fighting efforts in the Red River Valley. Since 1997, the St. Paul District has been requested to assist with flood fighting there seven times. The Corps can provide assistance to communities to help save lives, prevent suffering or mitigate damage to public property. During a flood fight, this usually includes providing technical engineering assistance, building temporary emergency levees and providing local governments with sandbags and polyurethane.

“We know the Corps of Engineers can quickly get materials and labor on the ground,” said Mark Voxland, mayor of Moorhead, Minn. “They bring peace of mind.”

The St. Paul District set up an emergency field office in Moorhead, Minn., late March and is deploying emergency responders to the Red River basin as the situation develops. The district is working with many Red River communities, to include the cities of Fargo, N.D., and Moorhead, Minn. Corps contractors are building temporary emergency levees in a number of communities to include



Photo by Patrick Moes

The Red River of the North covers North River Road in Fargo, N.D. April 7. The spring 2011 flood is expected to crest some time during the middle of April. [Click here to see the video.](#)

North Dakota's Fargo, Lisbon, Oxbow, and Valley City and Minnesota's Moorhead and Oakport.

The district also operates four reservoirs in the Red River basin that are used to avert flooding. The district's water control staff drew down these lakes last winter to make more storage available during the spring melt. Since the flood fight began, the staff has been aggressively managing operations at these facilities.

"The cities of Moorhead and Fargo and the surrounding townships, [like] Oxbow, have done extraordinary measures already, because they fight floods every year, and they've done [a number of] permanent measures," said Col. Michael Price, St. Paul District commander. "We're bringing in that last minute stopgap to help them prepare and prevent catastrophic losses."

The Red is expected to crest in Fargo mid April.



*Photos by Patrick Moes*

**(Right)** Kurt Heckendorf, engineering, monitors the construction of emergency levees in Fargo, N.D. April 7. **(Above)** a bulldozer operator waits for a dumptruck to continue building the levee as the Red River of the North continues rising behind him.



# Lock and Dam 2 staff prepare for the worst

Story by Patrick Moes

A crew from the upper locks and dams rapidly filled pallets of sandbags at the district's Lock and Dam 2 in Hastings, Minn recently.

The employees filled and placed sandbags along critical areas to protect the infrastructure from potential flooding this spring.

The team used new techniques they found on the Internet to fill the sandbags faster, said Mike DeRusha, Lock and Dam 2 lockmaster.



Photo by Patrick Moes

**Tim Hermann, operations, places sandbags in preparation for potential flooding at Lock and Dam 2 in Hastings, Minn., as Mike DeRusha, right, the new lockmaster, ensures the team is working safely March 21.**

Employees at each of the district's 13 locks and dams are preparing for flooding, which the National Weather Service forecasts to be possibly near record levels.

**6** April 2011  
*Crosscurrents*

The new method allows the staff to fill 12 sandbags at one time and it has made the process a lot faster and safer.

DeRusha said the benefits of the modified plywood apparatus include less individual handling of each bag, and it also allows for more uniformity within the bags because each one receives the same amount of sand.

He added that the team was able to produce more than 1,800 bags in one day with a full crew.

The staff is also incorporating jersey barriers, which were originally designed for anti-terrorism, to protect certain areas. DeRusha said the use of the barriers means that the work is less labor intensive and it drastically saves time. "Where a normal area would have



Photo by Patrick Moes

**Tim Herman, left, operations, and Cheryl LaRose, operations, fill sandbags at Lock and Dam 2, March 21. The team consists of employees from Upper Saint Anthony Falls, Lower Saint Anthony Falls and Lock and Dam 2.**



Photo by Patrick Moes

(Above) The sign for Lock and Dam 2 welcomes visitors to the facility. The 2001 floods caused the sign to fall over from erosion. (Right) Cheryl LaRose, an Upper Saint Anthony Falls employee, places sandbags near the district's Electronic Service Center. LaRose is one of several employees from other locks that are helping the staff at Lock and Dam 2.

taken more than 2,500 sandbags to protect against floods, four or five barriers can now accelerate the process.”

While the flood preparations continue at Lock and Dam 2, as well as many other locations along the Mississippi River, the team has received a lot of help from the city of Hastings. DeRusha said the city had volunteered to assist him and his crew with monitoring the adjacent levee, too.

### Dams as flood control

The district is federally mandated to maintain the river for navigation. The Anti-Drawdown Law of 1934 limits what the Corps can do with respect to drawing down the river levels. The law was created to protect the environment from any unnecessary drawdowns that could create fish kills and endanger the wildlife and habitat. It also prohibits the Corps from using the locks and dams for flood control purposes.

In addition to the federal law, the pools of water between each lock and dam are too small to use them for flood control even if they were drained, said Scott Bratten, engineering. “The pools would fill in a matter of hours.”



Photo by Patrick Moes



# The 2011 navigation season arrives amid flooding

Story by Patrick Moes

The Motor Vessel John M. Rivers opened up the navigation season on the Upper Mississippi River when it locked through Lock and Dam 2, located in Hastings, Minn., March 31.

Passing under the train bridge downriver of the lock and dam, the vessel's crew was welcomed by the lock and dam team as they made contact for the first time since the season closed Nov. 25, 2010. As the speakers above the lock house echoed the radio calls, the top of the tow could be seen pushing six barges up the river. They entered the chamber shortly after 1 p.m. and left soon after en route to St. Paul, Minn., the vessels final destination.

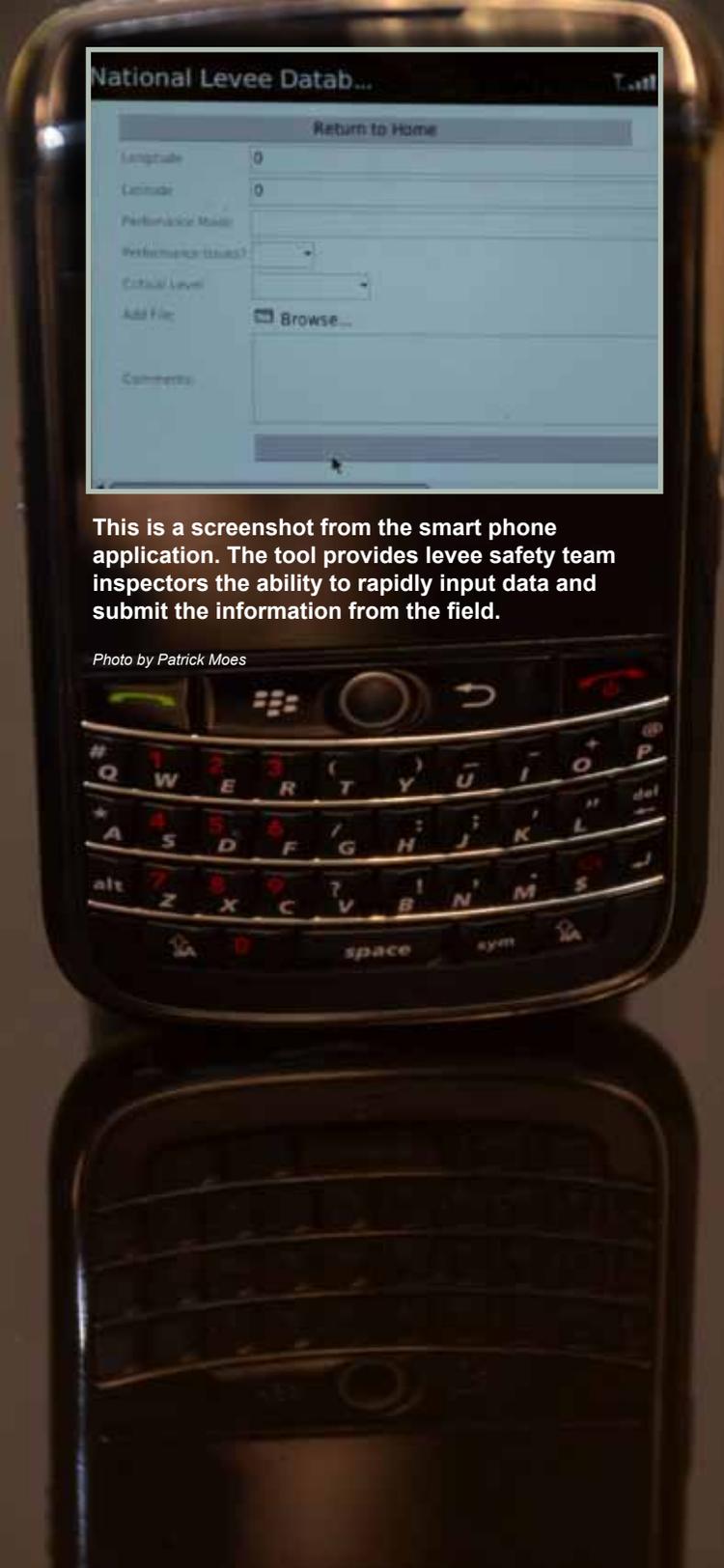
Before reaching Lock and Dam 2, the vessel broke through

12 inches of ice in Lake Pepin, which is near Red Wing, Minn. The vessel's crew said the ice proved to be no problem as it cut through the ice.

The M/V Rivers is part of the Ingram Marine Group and is based out of St. Louis, Mo.

The district considers the day the first commercial tow locks upstream through Lock and Dam 2 as the official start to the navigation season. The average start date for the season opening during the past 10 years has been March 22.

The earliest date that the season has opened was March 4. This happened in 1984, 2000 and 2001. The latest the season has opened was April 7, 1978.



**This is a screenshot from the smart phone application. The tool provides levee safety team inspectors the ability to rapidly input data and submit the information from the field.**

*Photo by Patrick Moes*

# Technology gives levee safety team new tool

*Story by Patrick Moes*

The district's levee safety team is preparing for the 2011 spring flood fight with some new technology. The team of levee inspectors is using newly created smartphone applications, or apps, from the Corps of Engineers' Cold Regions Research Laboratory, or CRREL, in Hanover, N.H., to help monitor levees within the district.

This app, created by Bryan Baker, allows the team to assess levees in the field and input the data directly into a smart phone. The team can then use the phone's wireless Internet to transmit the data to a website that can be accessed by the district, Mississippi Valley Division and Corps headquarters.

This process will not only speed up the reporting times for engineers monitoring the levees; it will also ensure greater accuracy, because the teams can input the data electronically and send it, said Rick Hauck, levee safety team manager.

The new technology allows a levee inspector to take pictures and video; input performance issues with the levee, dimensions and special characteristics associated with the levee; comment on the river stages; and record the time and date of the inspection. The app also allows the team to use a global positioning system to locate the exact location of the levee.

In addition to the smartphone tool, the website allows levee inspectors to add more details on the levee after they have completed the levee inspection. This is the first time the district has used this type of technology and the team said they are looking forward to seeing how it can help.

"I think this technology will help the levee safety team," said Hauck. "We will now be able to improve our monitoring of the stresses being placed on the levees during the floods."

Jason Foss, engineering, said, "It will be nice to have real-time data that can be viewed from the district headquarters."

# District employee selected to represent Corps at Army conference



*Story by Patrick Moes*

She began working for the district shortly after graduating from high school as a summer hire to earn some extra money while attending college at St. Cloud State University in St. Cloud, Minn.

Twenty three years later, Kristen Fairbanks now works as an emergency management specialist in the district's operations division. In addition to her emergency management work, she's also been responsible for managing the district's deployment program for the past seven years.

Fairbanks said she started working with the Corps deployment program as part of her leadership development program's developmental assignment in 2004. "After going back to my regular job in [the] engineering division, I took the deployment program with me," said the North Branch, Minn., resident.

At that point, she said the job focused more on preparing district personnel for a deployment. Since then, Fairbanks said, there's been an increased emphasis on taking care of our deployees, as well as their families, throughout the entire deployment cycle.

As a result of the increased awareness on the deployment program, the Corps, along with various other units within the Army, began attending the Army Family Action Plan, or AFAP, conference to systematically discuss and prioritize issues being faced by the military and their families. The Corps of Engineers selected two representatives to attend the conference this year. Fairbanks and another

**Kristen Fairbanks is an emergency management specialist with the district. She also works as the deployment and family readiness manager.**

*Photo by Patrick Moes*

representative from the Mississippi Valley Division represented the Corps at this year's conference.

"She is a national asset when it comes to family readiness," said Teri Alberico, emergency operations center chief. "A lot of the programs she has created within the district have been incorporated at a national level."

The 27th annual AFAP conference afforded Fairbanks the opportunity to see what more could be done to take care of the district personnel that volunteer to deploy. "Being a part of the AFAP conference was an honor," said Fairbanks. "I learned what a great process the Army has developed to take issues from the very lowest level and be able to escalate it to the point of making a change. The process allows the smallest voices to be heard loud and clear."

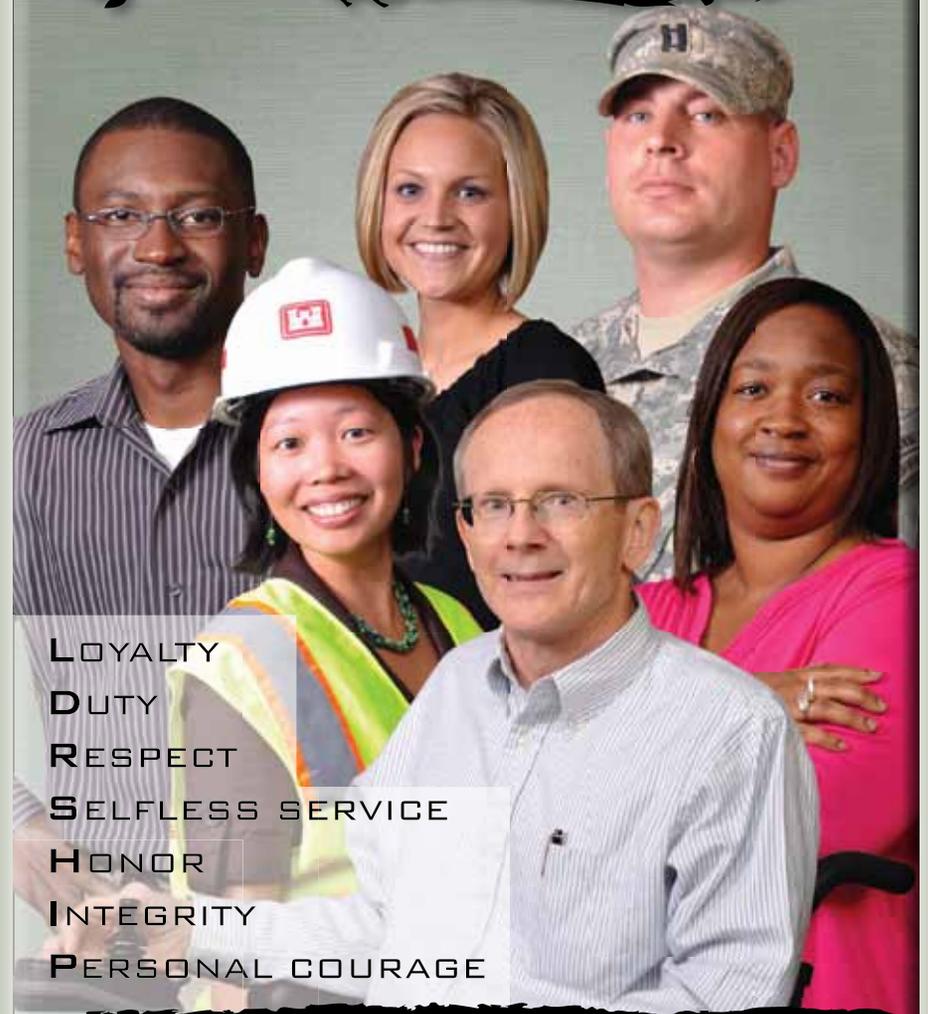
Attending the conference proved to be very rewarding for Fairbanks. She said that along with her time spent in Baton Rouge, La., for Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, "representing USACE at the AFAP conference may have been one of the most rewarding experiences in my career."

She added that the conference allowed her to work with people from several areas within the Army community. "In my workgroup alone, we heard perspectives from a wounded warrior, a gold star spouse, a widow of the war, Army Community Service workers, an Army chaplain and folks representing the [Judge Advocate General]. It was incredibly empowering to take part in a process that has the potential of changing the lives of so many."

While the conference gave Fairbanks a deeper insight into the Army and the programs available to Corps of Engineers employees, she came close to not even attending it. She said she questioned whether she would be qualified to represent the Corps on a world-wide level.

Alberico said Fairbanks has been doing a great job and is more than qualified to do the job. "She has great people skills, and she is very well organized and she quickly learns how to make any process better."

# CORPS VALUES



LOYALTY  
DUTY  
RESPECT  
SELFLESS SERVICE  
HONOR  
INTEGRITY  
PERSONAL COURAGE

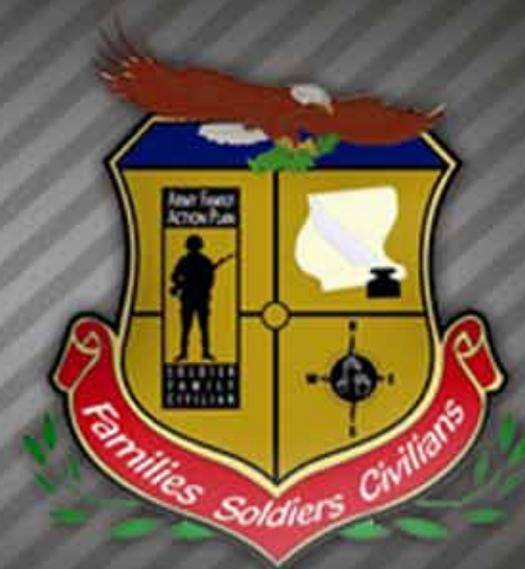


US Army Corps of Engineers  
**BUILDING STRONG®**

April 2011  
Crosscurrents

11

# Army Family Action Plan



## Army program allows for rapid issued decisions

*Story by Patrick Moes*

Officially introduced in the 1980s, the Army Family Action Plan, or AFAP, is an Army-wide program designed to advance the quality of life for Soldiers, Department of the Army civilians, technicians, surviving spouses and their family members.

"AFAP is a grassroots process that directs actions to enhance readiness and increase retention by improving the quality of life for Soldiers and their families, identifies issues of concern to the total Army, and it determines actions necessary to resolve

issues and assigns responsibility for actions to the proper Army staff agency," according to the AFAP website.

The program was created by Army spouses who realized change would require organization. This change has resulted in 589 issues being adopted by the Department of the Army headquarters. Of the nearly 600 issues addressed at the most senior Army levels in the past 20 years, 95 issues have resulted in legislative changes, 137 Army policy changes, 153 improvements to programs and services offered through the Army and more than 50 percent of AFAP

issues raised benefit everyone within the Department of Defense.

Some examples of AFAP issues include benefits, medical, finances and education.

The AFAP process is designed to bring issues from every Army level up through the appropriate chains for review and timely resolutions. Issues are reviewed every six months until a final resolution is made by a general officer steering committee.

Click here to view the AFAP website; or contact Kris Fairbanks, the district AFAP program manager.

# New firewood policy aims to protect forest resources

Story by Patrick Moes

Outdoor enthusiasts looking to have a campfire at a Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, recreation site this summer need to ensure the wood they use is certified for the location before burning it.

In an effort to reduce the likelihood of the emerald ash borer and other forest pests from further spreading across the upper Midwest, a new, more restrictive firewood policy was signed by District Engineer Col. Michael Price March 8.

The purpose of this policy is to prevent the spread of forest pests by restricting the movement of the firewood, said Tammy Johnson, natural resources. "We still want people to be able to enjoy campfires when they recreate with us, but we also want to protect our forest resources."

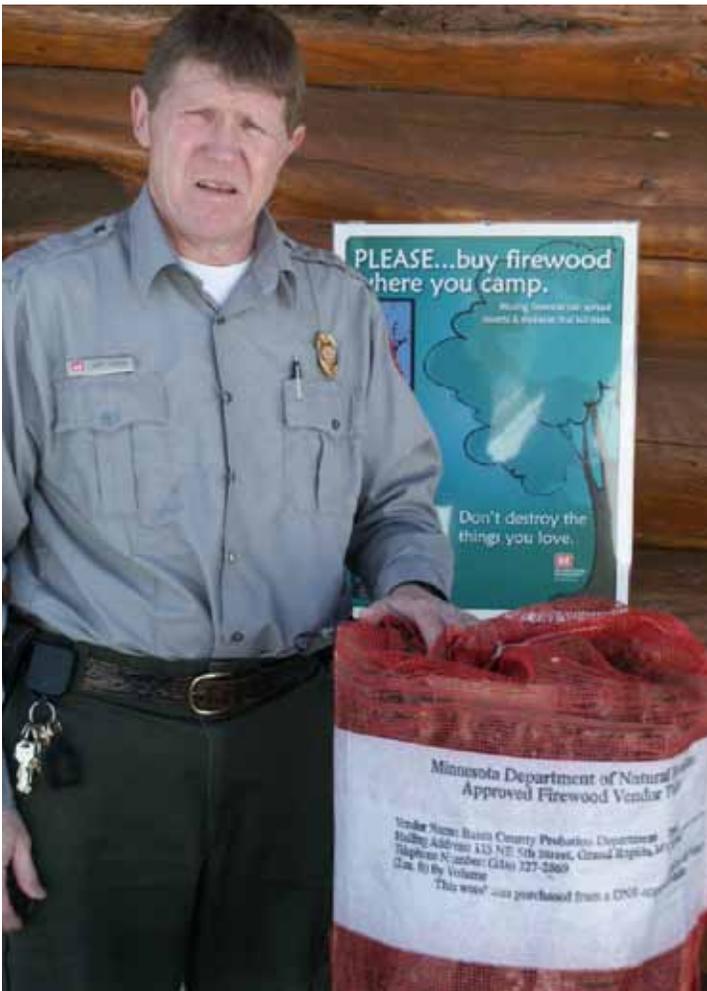
The new, more robust Corps' policy is similar with policies from the states of Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin.

The policy restricts the possession, transportation, use or storage of firewood on Corps' lands within Minnesota and Wisconsin unless the firewood has been approved by an authorized agency. These agencies include the state departments of Natural Resources and Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

The policy also restricts the use of firewood in North Dakota

**Randy Urich, natural resources, checks for the presence of emerald ash borer. The Corps is working with several agencies to prevent the spread of forest pests that can harm forests within the upper Midwest.**





Courtesy photo

Jeff Steere, natural resources, shows what an approved firewood bundle looks like. Certified, approved firewood can be purchased at, or near, many of the district's recreation areas. The purpose of the firewood policy is to protect forest resources.

by restricting the use of wood that originates more than 100 miles from the Corps' land or current state requirements, whichever is stricter. The policy also prohibits firewood from crossing state or national boundaries unless the wood has been officially certified as being pest-free.

The emerald ash borer is a green beetle that is native to Asia. It's been found in the United States since 2002. The beetle lays eggs in ash trees and then the larvae use the tree as a food source and shelter until they reach maturity. In 2009, the Corps confirmed the presence of the emerald ash borer at the Corps' Blackhawk Park, said Johnson. The park is located near De Soto, Wis.

Once the beetle larvae begin feeding on the ash tree, the tree's canopy begins to die, because the beetle destroys the water and nutrient conducting tissue. The dying process for a mature ash tree affected by the beetle can take four years.

The Corps is currently involved with several state and federal agencies to help control the spread of forest pests, said Johnson, a McGregor, Minn., native.

She added that there are not any natural predators here in the U.S. for the beetle, but there are stingless, non-native wasps that are currently being tested. These wasps were released last summer in Minnesota's Houston County. The wasps insert their eggs into the larvae of emerald ash borers and destroy the pest's breeding cycle.



Courtesy photo



Courtesy photo

Emerald ash borer and their larvae, along with other forest pest, are destroying trees within the district. The new firewood policy will help reduce the movement of larvae by limiting the transfer of firewood. The emerald ash borer destroys the ash tree's water and nutrient conducting tissue, which ultimately kills the tree.

## The district recognized with award for efforts done in Minnesota

Story by Patrick Moes

The district was recognized with an award from the State of Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, or HSEM, during the 46th annual Governor's Conference in St. Paul, Minn., March 15.

Deputy District Commander Lt. Col. Kendall Bergmann accepted the Outstanding Federal Agency award on behalf of the entire district.

The citation for the award read "Although many of you are familiar with the Army Corps of Engineers for their flood planning and flood fighting expertise, as an agency they do much more. Throughout the year, they provide guidance and leadership through their participation on the Minnesota Recovers Task Force, Minnesota Silver Jackets and the Regional Flood Risk Management Team to name a few. We are in communication on an ongoing basis. During disaster preparedness and response, they very generously and good naturedly provide their time, expertise and resources anytime, day or night.

"For consistently providing outstanding service and partnership to HSEM and local governments in Minnesota, we recognize the St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers."

Lt. Col. Kendall Bergmann, deputy commander engineer, left, receives the Outstanding Federal Agency award from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Director Kris Eide during the 46th annual Governor's Conference in St. Paul, Minn, March 15.



Courtesy photo



# News & Notes

## Mark your calendars

The district's Summer Awards Ceremony and family picnic is scheduled for June 24. This year's event will be held at the Como Park Pavilion in St. Paul, Minn. Look for additional details in the May issue of *Crosscurrents*.

The 34th Annual Minnesota Federal Civil Servant of the Year Awards Luncheon will be held at the Crown Plaza Hotel in St. Paul, Minn., May 6. The cost to attend the event is \$20. Advanced registration is required and can be done by contacting Pat Berczyk at [patricia.a.berczyk@usace.army.mil](mailto:patricia.a.berczyk@usace.army.mil). District employees being recognized at the luncheon include Bill Csajko, Craig Evans and Roy Lawson. Look in the May issue of *Crosscurrents* for the full story.



Avery Sobiech takes a nap after a bath.

## Congratulations

**Jon Sobiech**, planning, and his wife, Christa, welcomed twins into their family March 22. Avery Raine Sobiech, 4 pounds, 8 ounces, was born at 11:55 a.m., and Oliver Michael Sobiech, 4 pounds, 10 ounces, was born at 11:56 a.m. They were both 19 inches long.



Jon Sobiech and his son, Oliver.

## Editor's Note

Do you have news that you want to share with the district? Send your announcements of births, weddings, graduations, etc. to *Crosscurrents*. [cemvp-pa@usace.army.mil](mailto:cemvp-pa@usace.army.mil).

## Newcomers

**Travis Brantner** lock and dam operator, Lock and Dam 4  
**Steve Heidbrider**, lock and dam operator, Lock and Dam 3  
**Ross Kolsrud**, lock and dam operator, Lock and Dam 6  
**William Odell**, hydrologic technician, district office  
**Jesse Onkka**, procurement technician, district office  
**Keith Schindler**, lock and dam operator; Lock and Dam 7  
**Dan Wilcox**, biologist, district office (rehired annuitant)

## Retirements

**Tim Fell**, 34 years federal service, environmental protection specialist, district office.



Photo by Patrick Moes

A construction crew contracted by the district builds temporary emergency levees in Sawyer, N.D., April 12. Check out the May issue of *Crosscurrents* for additional coverage.