

# Crosscurrents

2011 Vol. 37, No. 3

g the St. Paul District since 1977

**Snow levels offer  
insight on flood  
predictions  
Page 4**



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

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## On the Cover



Farley Haase, left, engineering, and Shahin Khazrajafari, project management, fill bags with snow to measure the water content during a snow survey in Cannon Falls, Minn., Feb. 28. The measurements will be sent to the National Weather Service to help the agency in its flood predictions.

*Photo by Shannon Bauer*

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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.

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

- The district supports communities in flood fighting



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## Comments from the top

Team,

As I write this editorial, we are on the verge of major flood fighting efforts within many of our river basins. I'm sure that you are all getting ready to do your part either here in the district headquarters or in the field.

The Corps and the Army are always reminding people about safety concerns – because we care about people, and unsafe acts are a risk to mission accomplishment – but a flood fight brings unusual conditions that we don't face every day. Plus, there are many new people in the district that have never been in a flood fight, including myself.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency offers the following items for our thought:

Do we have all of our professional and personal equipment and have we worn and tested it lately? What about that cold weather gear? What about medications and prescriptions that we might need while we are deployed? Do we have our taxes done and all of our financial affairs in order? Is our Common Access Card or driver's license about to expire?

Please use common sense in making decisions and don't needlessly put yourself

in danger. We need to avoid driving through flooded areas. If you see a flooded road ahead, turn around and find another route to your destination. We all know that moving water is a powerful force.

If there is no other route, get to higher ground and wait for the waters to subside.

Even if the water appears shallow enough to cross, we need to avoid it. Water hides dips in the road. Worse yet, there may be no road at all under the water. Flooding can scour away the entire road surface and a significant amount of the ground beneath.

If your car stalls in or near water, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground.

When six inches of water reaches the bottom of most passenger cars, it can cause loss of control or possible stalling. One foot of water will float almost any vehicle and two feet of rushing water can sweep away most vehicles – including sport utility vehicles and pick-ups.

Drowning is the number one cause of



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

flood-related deaths. Rushing water can easily knock us off of our feet. We should try to use a pole or stick to make sure that the ground is still there while walking through a flooded area – even where the water is not flowing.

We need to avoid power lines and electrical wires near water. Electrocutation is also a major killer in floods and electrical current can travel through water.

Be prepared for a rough time. We will be working long hours for many days. Be ready for anxiety, stress and fatigue. If possible, have a fellow Corps 'buddy' working with you. Make sure someone knows where you are going, particularly out in the field.

I want each of us to be around to enjoy the upcoming great summer. We all deserve it following this near record-setting winter. I continue to appreciate everything you do. Keep up the great work and thank you for your selfless service.

# Digging up snow helps flood predictions

Story by Patrick Moes

The temperature in Cannon Falls, Minn., was a mild 20 degrees Feb. 28, as a district survey crew collected snow samples near the Cannon River.

Led by Farley Haase, engineering, and assisted by Shahin Khazrajatari, project management, the two-man team began their second week of snow measurements. The team will drive thousands of miles while conducting their measurements to gain important data on the amount of snow blanketing the region.

The numbers that Haase collects are channeled through the district's hydrology section and then forwarded to the National Weather Service, or NWS, said Ferris Chamberlin, hydrology chief.

The NWS then uses this data to verify their aerial gamma forecasts from their Airborne Gamma Radiation Snow Survey Program. This program, according to the NWS website, measures the water content within the snow and soil with "a network of 1,900 flight lines covering portion of 25 states and seven Canadian provinces."

With the information obtained via the gamma and snow surveys, the NWS, using highly technical computer models, can begin making predictions about any potential floods a region might see in the near future.

The snow sample measurements are less technical in nature. In fact, they are very simple. An aluminum pole is pushed in

the ground deep enough to reach the underlying dirt. The pole is then removed to measure the depth of the snow pack through open holes in the pole. The snow

is then placed in a bag and weighed. Every ounce of snow weighed is equivalent to one inch of rain. These steps are repeated three or four times at each site to determine



Photo by Shannon Bauer

**Farley Haase, engineering, reviews the snow water equivalent data during a snow survey in Cannon Falls, Minn., Feb. 28. Haase is in the process of completing the surveys for the district. The data will be submitted to the National Weather Service to verify their gamma surveys. This is Haase's 11th year doing the surveys.**



Photo by Shannon Bauer

**Shahin Khazrajafari, left, project management, and Farley Haase, engineering, gather snow surveys to support the district's ability to help prepare and fight the spring floods. This was Khazrajafari's first time conducting snow surveys.**

an average water level. The survey team conducts the surveys at more than 150 locations across the district.

The locations are determined by a map marked with specific places the district hydrologists want surveyed. Haase said he finds the specific sites near the location while he's driving through the country.

"We have to keep track of the countryside and ensure there is not a lot of drifting going on," said the retired Wisconsin Army National Guard soldier and district employee since 1988. "The site that we choose is pretty representative of the local area."

Haase said this year's measurements have been higher than normal. He's been doing these surveys for the past 11 years and added that there have been some years where there was not enough snow on the ground to measure.

This year has been different and Haase has adapted to the current environment. He said they needed to use snow shoes near International Falls, Minn., because the snow was at least 27 inches deep. Regardless of the conditions, the survey team completes all of their surveys within a two-week period.

If you would like to know what the river levels are in your area, you can do so by [clicking here](#) to see the Corps of Engineers' RiverGages website or [click here](#) to view the St. Paul District's Water Control Center website.

# District embraces Corps levee safety program

Story by Mark Davidson

The district levee safety program has come a long way in the last few years due to changes in the way the federal government and the Corps evaluate levees and communicate the risks associated with living behind or near a levee.

Hurricane Katrina and its results triggered an initiative to start the

Corps of Engineers Levee Safety Program. As a result, the emphasis has changed from primarily annual inspections to the development of a comprehensive nationwide program.

With the formation of the levee program in 2007, the Corps is integrating the inspection and risk assessment requirements for levees within a process that emphasizes public safety, said Rick Hauck, the district levee safety manager.

“[It’s evolving into] a risk-informed program. Various technical tools, policies and procedures are being developed and implemented to evaluate the 2,000-plus levee systems nationwide. Levee systems are not risk-free, and the Corps Levee Safety Program is changing to assess, manage and communicate the risks,” said Michael Bart, district levee safety officer and chief, engineering and construction division.

The basic tool of the program is the annual routine inspection, which focuses on the operation and maintenance of the project. The annual inspection verifies that the sponsor, or local community, is operating and maintaining the levee to achieve the maximum benefits the levee was designed to provide. The first routine inspection in the St. Paul District started in 1948 with the completion of the dry run diversion at Decorah, Iowa.

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the Corps used ‘best engineering judgment’ and the criteria outlined in Title 33, Part 208.10, Flood Control Regulations for inspections, said Dana Werner, a member of the district’s levee safety team.

The new program changed the way the Corps conducts inspections, focusing more on consistency, levee safety and public education regarding the risks associated with a levee system that has multiple deficiencies.

While the focus of the routine inspection is still operation, maintenance and emergency access, Werner said, “We must now educate the local sponsor and the public explaining why trees planted within the 15-foot vegetation free zone must be removed;

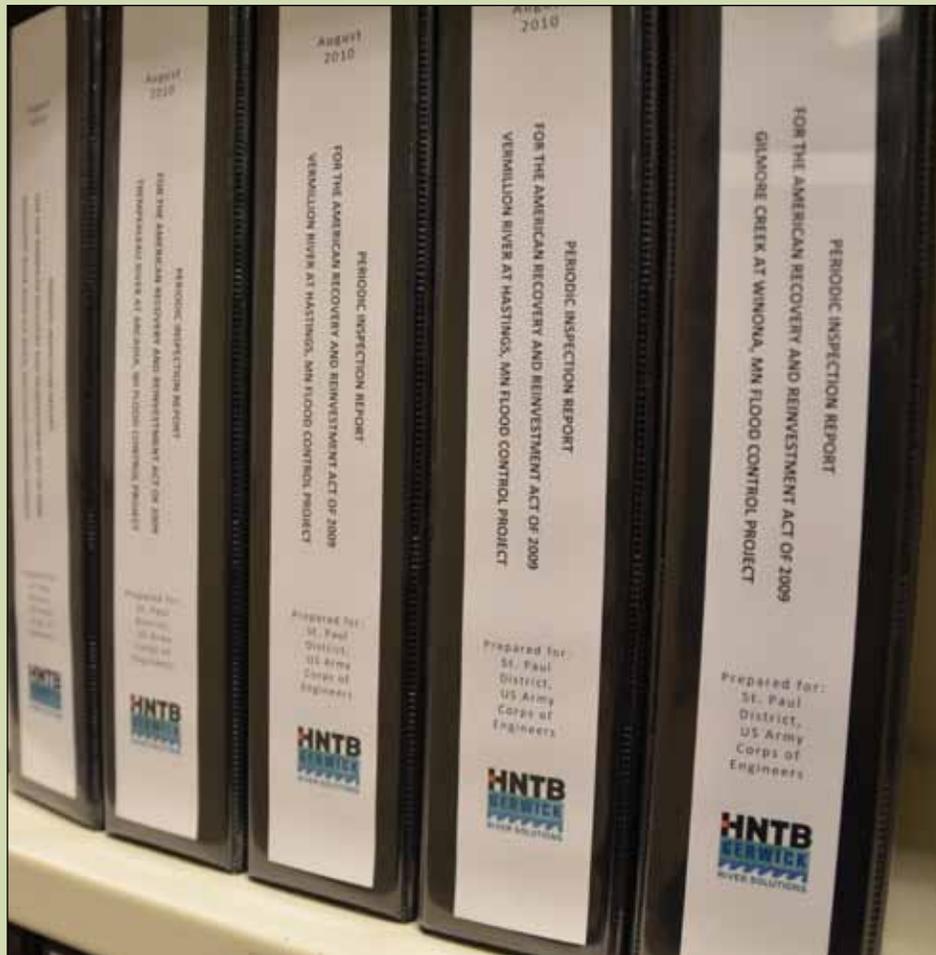


Photo by Patrick Moes

why above ground utilities, fences and buildings within the levee easement that restrict emergency access must be relocated; and how culverts and pipes that have not been visually or video inspected can increase the risk of a levee failure.” He added that these items can make the difference between an acceptable project and one that is rated as unacceptable.

Items checked during a routine inspection include but are not limited to: vegetation, encroachment, closure structures, erosion, animal burrows, pump stations, culverts and relief wells.

Routine inspections result in an acceptable, minimally acceptable or unacceptable rating and affect the project’s eligibility for federal rehabilitation assistance under Public Law 84-99 if damaged in a flood or storm event.

Starting in 2010, the district began conducting periodic inspections on more than 50 federally constructed levees within its boundaries. These inspections are the next level in the levee safety program and are conducted by a multidisciplinary team led by a professional engineer. They are more detailed in nature than the periodic inspections and are completed every five years.

Activities under the periodic inspection include inspecting routine items, verifying proper operation and maintenance and evaluating



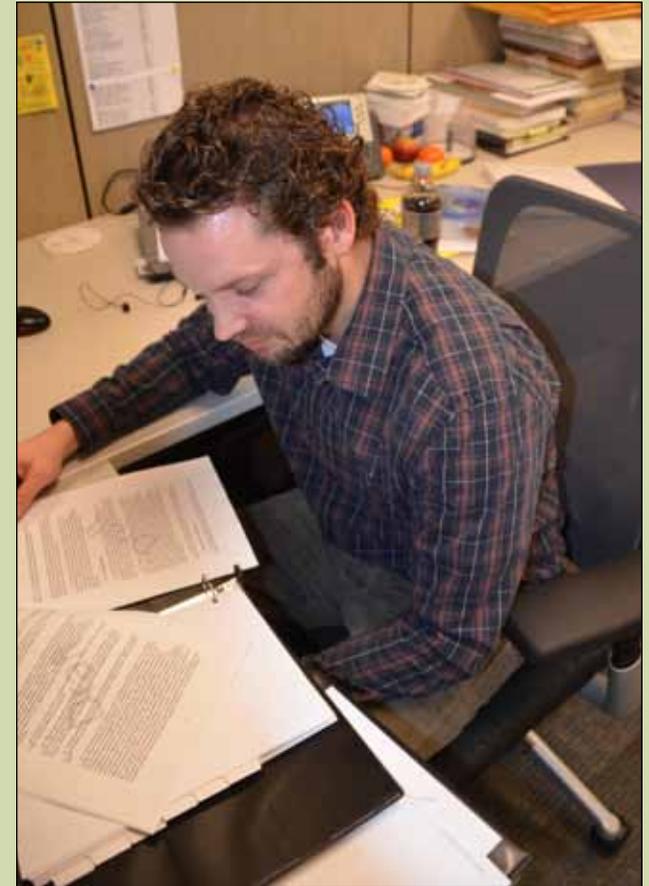
*courtesy photo*

**The Corps has improved how it inspects levees and is incorporating new technical tools, policies and procedures to complete the inspections. The district is currently in the process of completing the new levee safety inspections.**

operational adequacy, structural stability, the safety of the system, and comparing current design and construction criteria with those in place when the levee was built.

“Some major items of risk identified in the periodic inspections include the aging condition of discharge pipes through the levee embankments and foundations,” said Hauck. “The condition of unapproved utilities, discharge pipes and encroachments within the levee embankments and easements are major concerns, and project design in relation to current Corps procedures, practices and criteria, such as I-wall design are critical items, too.”

The district also initiated a new levee screening tool process that incorporates information from the routine and periodic inspections and combines it with a limited engineering assessment to determine simplified performance indices that include potential life, safety and economic consequences. The district has initiated work on three levee screenings and will complete the remaining 75 systems during the next few years.



*Photo by Patrick Moes*

**Charles Boyd, engineering, reviews a draft proposal from the Corps levee safety program recently.**

# Lake Pepin ice determines start of navigation season

Story by Shannon Bauer

The district survey crew, located in Fountain City, Wis., began this year's annual Lake Pepin ice measurements Feb. 16.

The survey team is taking ice measurements on the lake to predict the navigational outlook on the Upper Mississippi River. It is the location of choice for these measurements, because the lake is the last part of the navigation channel where the ice breaks up due to the slower river current in the lake.

Each year, the surveying crew uses an airboat to travel on the ice, a portable global

positioning system to identify the exact location for taking the measurement, and a tape measure to determine the thickness of the ice. In addition to measuring the ice thickness, they also record the general condition of the ice. The information collected by the survey crew is used by the towing industry to predict whether or not it will be difficult for towboats to break through the ice and determine when it's safe to begin the navigation season.

The average opening date of the navigation season in St. Paul for the last 10 years is March 20. For many of those who live in the Midwest, the first tow of the

season is the unofficial start of spring.

This year, the Corps does not anticipate any up bound out-of-town tows in Lake Pepin until after March 15 due to construction at Lock and Dam 10, in Guttenberg, Iowa. With construction at Lock and Dam 3, in Red Wing, Minn., projected to last until March 28, the Corps does not anticipate the first up bound out-of-town tow to reach St. Paul until after March 28.

Normally, ice measurements are completed weekly until the navigation season begins. The information is posted on the district's website. [Click here for figures on past and present Lake Pepin ice measurements.](#)



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*courtesy photos*



(Left) Kevin Ressie, right, and Brandon Olson, both in operations, take a break after taking ice surveys on Lake Pepin, near Red Wing, Minn., March 2. (Above) Olson drills one of the holes on the lake. The ice is checked every mile using a global position system.

# District welcomes new employees with meet and greet

Story by Patrick Moes

**M**ore than 15 new district employees were officially welcomed into the district at its headquarters in St. Paul, Minn., Feb. 14.

The employees joined the Corps within the past six months and span a wide-array of backgrounds from legal to information technology.

“We all love welcoming new employees,” said Col. Michael Price, St. Paul District commander, to the attendees after administering the Army Civilians’ Oath of Office. “Thanks for being a part of the big team.”

The Equal Employment Office Special Emphasis Program Committee’s gender subcommittee sponsored the bi-annual event. Lupe Santos-Jensen, equal opportunity, said these event are great at letting people get to know each other and thanked everyone for attending.



*Photo by Stefania Padalino*

The district’s newest employees take the Army Civilians Oath of Office during a meet and greet ceremony held at the district’s headquarters in St. Paul, Minn., and included more than 15 employees that have been working for the district for less than six months, Feb. 14.

# Spring cleaning comes early for old documents

Story by Kevin Bokay

**M**ore than 5,000 boxes containing records created by the district, some of which date back to the early 20th century, are in the process of being reviewed to determine their disposition.

The district currently uses the Iron Mountain storage facility to

house these boxes. The company has facilities in every major U.S. city and has had a nationwide contract for storage and maintenance of Corps of Engineers archived materials for several years. The storage contract with the Corps is currently set to expire in 2013.

Stephanie Ehnstrom, district records manager, together with section records coordinators and the district's MVP Oracle Digital Assets, or MODA, team are attempting to get a handle on the large amount of boxes the district has stored in the facility.

With the 2013 expiration date looming, departments are going to need to start the drawdown process as soon as possible. Supervisors and section chiefs are encouraged to initiate the process by requesting a list of their documents in storage through their department records coordinators. The coordinators can then order the boxes through Ehnstrom.

Some of these records will require long-term permanent storage at the National Archives and Records Administration in Chicago. Others documents will be sent to the Federal Records Center in Chicago for later determination of their status. Records going to either location will remain available for retrieval upon request. Other documents will be destroyed. All these actions will be performed in accordance with standard Army procedures and regulations.

District personnel are in the process of scanning many of the documents and will make them available digitally to the district through the MODA interface in the coming months.



Photo by Stefania Padalino

Stephanie Ehnstrom, left, records manager, and Monique Johs, engineering, examine the contents of storage boxes recalled from Iron Mountain. The district is involved in an effort to draw down more than 5,000 boxes currently in storage.

# St. Paul employees recognized with prestigious awards

## Flewellen recognized with national engineering award

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters recently announced its selection of Corps of Engineers St. Paul District employee Jane Flewellen as one of its five recipients for the agency's annual 'New Faces in Engineering Award.'

The award is given by the Corps of Engineers during National Engineers Week, Feb. 20-26, to recognize contributions made to the agency by new engineers.

Flewellen received an engineering degree from the University of Minnesota in 2006 and has been a Corps engineer since 2008. Her first project with the Corps of Engineers included assisting with the design and construction of a floodwall in New Orleans, as part of the hurricane recovery efforts associated with Hurricane Katrina. She is currently serving as a project engineer during the renovation of Lock and Dam 3 on the Upper Mississippi River near Red Wing, Minn. She is also an integral member of the district's Levee Safety Program.

She received this recognition for being able to keep her projects on schedule without sacrificing safety or quality.

"Jane [Flewellen] fit right into our organization and has excelled in both design and construction assignments," said Jim Peak, construction branch chief. "She volunteered to work on two of our most challenging projects, and her work has proved to be invaluable to the team."



**Jane Flewellen**  
civil engineer

## Vickman receives division construction

The Mississippi Valley Division recently announced its selection of St. Paul District employee Pat Vickman as the recipient of its annual Construction Management Excellence Award.

This award recognizes individuals for their superiority in administrating contracts and managing the construction and quality assurance of federal building projects. Vickman will now compete Corps-wide for the national version of this award.

Vickman has served as a district resident engineer in the agency's Winona office since 1999 and has been a Corps employee since 1986. In his current position, he manages a workload of construction projects valued at more than \$80 million.

Vickman received this award specifically for his efforts in managing the Lock and Dam 3 Upper Embankment Project, which includes renovating Lock and Dam 3 on the Upper Mississippi River, and the Corps' Island Unloading Project, which includes transferring approximately 350,000 cubic yards of stockpiled dredge material from the placement site to an upland disposal site approximately four miles away.

"Pat [Vickman] is one of the most talented construction engineers I have worked with in my career with the Corps," said Jim Peak, the St. Paul District's construction branch chief. "He has a wealth of experience in both government and commercial construction which he combines perfectly with great people skills to get the best possible results in his projects."



**Pat Vickman**  
resident engineer

# Girls learn about engineering and science during a career day

Story by Shannon Bauer

In celebration of the nation's 11th 'Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day,' the district's Special Emphasis Program Committee's gender subcommittee arranged for 19 girls from four St. Paul, Minn., high schools to visit the district to learn what engineers do, Feb. 16.

Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day is part of the annual National Engineers Week. This week was created in 1951 by the National Society of Professional Engineers, or NSPE, to raise public awareness of engineers' positive contributions to the nation. Each year, Engineers Week reaches thousands of schools, businesses and community groups.

As a way to increase interest in engineering among girls and young women, NSPE created Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day in 2001. By planting the seeds of interest early, NSPE hopes girls will be motivated to do well in math and science and be well prepared to enter engineering programs in

college. This is the seventh continuous year the district participated in the event. Girls from Harding, Highland Park, Humboldt and Johnson high schools participated.

"The district's Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day initiative was designed for female high school students who have developed an interest and aptitude for science and math," said Chanel Kass, civil engineer and primary organizer of the district's event. "It is designed to encourage girls to seriously consider engineering and other science majors as they begin to make decisions about college.

"The program is a one-day event that consists of rotations to job stations of female engineers and scientists and presentations on some of the jobs available in science and engineering and what education is needed to get there," she explained. At the end of the day, the girls are given applications to apply for student

jobs with the Corps.

In addition to Kass, district personnel who participated or assisted in the day's activities included: Chris Afdahl, engineering; Kim Bahls, engineering; Kirby Bauer, information technology; Shannon Bauer, public affairs; Lt. Col. Kendall Bergmann, deputy district engineer; Adèle Braun, engineering; Janet Golubski, engineering; Deb Griffith, natural resources; Rojean Heyer-LaSeure, locks and dams; Monique Johs, engineering; Marie Kopka, regulatory; Dave Kayser, information technology; Angie Phipps, equal opportunity; Lupe Santos-Jensen, equal opportunity; and Byron Williams, environmental.

"The event was a success with participation being at an all time high," said Kass. "Our presenters did a great job conveying how much they enjoy their work and hopefully this will encourage the participants to consider a career in science and engineering."



Photo by Stefania Padalino



Photo by Patrick Moes

## Upper St. Anthony Falls welcomes students with Developmental Cognitive Disability

Story by Jon Sobiech

A group of six high-school-aged students from Centennial Independent School District's Journey Program visited the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and visitor center recently.

The Journey Program provides students with disabilities the opportunity to work on life skills during approximately a three year period. They have a varying range of skill level, which consequently requires a wide-range in curriculum, said Dan DeRuyck, the group's teacher. The program is built around five basic areas: recreation and leisure, community participation, employment, post-secondary education/training and home living.

District employees Corrine Hodapp, operations, and Brad Labadie, operations, presented information on why the lock and dam was constructed and how it operates. The kids were encouraged to participate in

a hands-on activity, where they acted out the steps involved in locking through a boat. Labadie said, "We explained that the lock basically operates like a water elevator that brings boats from one elevation to another."

DeRuyck said, "Our tour was informative on three levels: historical, recreational and economical. My students and I learned the uses of the lock, as well as the process."

The students have been diagnosed with Developmental Cognitive Disability, which is a condition that results in below average intellectual functioning and is associated with concurrent deficits in adaptive behavior which requires special education and related services. DeRuyck's students have a wide-range of different disabilities included but not limited to autism, hydrocephalus and mild to moderate intellectual disabilities.

DeRuyck said he was impressed with how the district staff changed their presentation

to better meet the needs of his class. He said, "My particular group needed some extra assistance to catch the overall meaning of the lock system, and Corrine and Brad appeared to be very comfortable and flexible with students with special needs."

Hodapp and Labadie both expressed great satisfaction in being able to provide a fun and exciting tour to the group.

It encouraged them to step out of their normal routine and adjust how they presented the material to meet the needs of people with different learning skill sets.

"Everyone learns in different ways, and we need to adjust to the diverse groups of visitors that come to Upper St. Anthony Falls," said Labadie. "Overall I feel that we were successful at communicating our information, but we can also improve and be better prepared in the future."

# News & Notes

## Taps

**Dave McFarlin**, logistics, passed away Feb. 25. He worked as a supply technician in Fountain City, Wis. Services were held at Full Gospel Assembly Church in Cochrane, Wis.



Photo by Shannon Bauer

**Dave McFarlin** supporting Hurricane Ike recovery efforts in Lake Charles, La., Oct. 17, 2008.

## 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).

## Congratulations

**Kurt Brownell**, operations, finished the 54-kilometer Birkebeiner Classic race Feb. 26, in 4:56.58; 6.

**Mike DeRusha**, was selected as the lockmaster for Lock and Dam 2 in Hastings, Minn.

**Leon Mucha**, was selected as the locks and dams project operations manager.

**Scott Tichy**, operations, finished the 50-kilometer Birkebeiner skate race Feb. 26, in 3:51.58; 1.

**Tammy Wick**, was selected as a program analyst.

## Newcomers

**Angela Deen**, program analyst, district office

## Retirements

**Ray Nelson**, 34 years federal service, supervisory park ranger, Crosslake, Minn.

## Deployed employees offer thanks

All is going well here in Kabul, Afghanistan. I just want to express my sincere "Thank You" to everyone in the district for the care package that I received yesterday, It really means a lot!

See ya in the spring

**Kurt Reppe**, real estate  
Kabul, Afghanistan



## North Dakota newspaper editorial offers praise to Corps project

**Editorial note:** This editorial was written by Tom Dennis of the *Grand Forks Herald*. It is reprinted with permission. Background photo by Mike DeRusha.

A funny thing is happening in Grand Forks and East Grand Forks these days: Nothing. No “Sandbag Central,” that is. No sandbag updates, no sandbag stockpiling, no debate about the merits of paying sandbaggers vs. calling for volunteers. No sandbagging, period, even at the close of a cold and snowy winter and the dawn of an ominous spring. It’s a rare thing, this calm in the middle of a valleywide flood-preparation storm. Rare and precious: Residents are fully conscious of their good fortune, and they value it tremendously. And to a person, they know they have government to thank. Not their own work ethic, not their own frontier initiative and not their own pioneer spirit. Government, principally in the form of taxes levied on their fellow Americans from Maine to Hawaii, taxes that Washington collected and then funneled back here. That’s why Grand Forks and East Grand Forks residents now sit idle and reasonably secure behind high flood-protection walls. That’s why the talk in town is of the prospects for

the Fighting Sioux nickname and UND’s outstanding hockey teams, not a spring flood. This isn’t to suggest that residents feel smug. Just the opposite: They feel grateful for the local, state and national efforts that built flood protection in town. That was too big a job for the private sector. But it was just the right job for the government — and as far as residents can tell, government did the job right. Government gets a bad rap these days — and rightly so at times, considering the hash it can make of public policy. That’s why President Ronald Reagan drew applause every time he made his famous claim, “The ten most dangerous words in the English language are ‘Hi, I’m from the government, and I’m here to help.’” But now and then, it’s worth remembering that the government can do some things well. The Grand Forks-East Grand Forks flood protection system has to qualify as one. No, it’s not perfect, and it doesn’t eliminate the flood risk. Dikes have been known to fail, after all, and the Red River at times has flooded to a level higher than 1997. But the floodwalls do lower the local flood risk dramatically. And as most Grand Forks and East Grand Forks residents would agree, that’s enough. Now, it’s Fargo

and Moorhead’s turn. The status quo of forming residents into a sandbag line each year no longer is acceptable. The current proposals for permanent flood protection have problems, and some of those problems are severe. But government in the form of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is on the case. And the chances are good that the Corps will solve the problems in time. Put it this way: Suppose Reagan was mayor of Fargo. If that was the case, then Mayor Reagan not only would be driving around the countryside monitoring the changes in the snowpack, as Fargo’s real-life mayor is doing. Mayor Reagan also would be waiting for a very important day. It would be the day on which an Army Corps general, a U.S. senator or maybe even the president himself calls Fargo City Hall with some good news. The problems have been solved, and the flood diversion has been approved, the high official would say. In effect, “I’m from the government, and I’m here to help.” And when that day and that call came, Ronald Reagan as mayor of Fargo would respond in this way: He’d close his eyes and breathe a sigh of relief. Then he’d say, “Thanks.”