

# Crosscurrents

Serving the St. Paul District since 1977

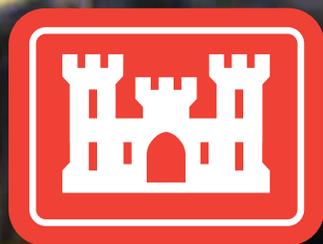
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## **Gulan honored for leadership**

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## **Rapid response saves canoeist, dog**

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

Nathan Van Loon, operations, and Duane Skjeie, operations, worked as a team recently to save a canoeist and a dog that were in trouble near Lock and Dam 5, near Minnesota City, Minn.

*Photo by Patrick Moes*



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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 emailed.

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	Col. Daniel C. Koprowski
Public Affairs Chief	Shannon Bauer
Crosscurrents Editor	Patrick Moes
Contributors	George Stringham
	Allison Fairbanks
	Ben Watson

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## Comments from the top

Team,

We are nearing the end of another great year, and we have lots in which to be thankful.

We've achieved numerous milestones, including some great work by many of you during the June flooding that impacted areas in Minnesota from International Falls to Newport, Minn., and the tireless efforts of many more of you during the emergency dredging that followed through the summer. The most important external event that impacted the district was the signing of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act by President Barack Obama on June 10. As I've mentioned before, the law authorizes the Fargo-Moorhead Flood Risk Reduction Project; the Marsh Lake environmental restoration project, near Ortonville, Minn.; and the completion of the Roseau, Minn., Flood Risk Reduction Project.

Despite the many positives contained

within the law, I'd be remiss if I didn't recognize that the law also requires us to stop using Upper Saint Anthony Falls Lock and Dam in Minneapolis for navigation no later than June 10, 2015. This will significantly impact our team members currently working at the three Minneapolis locks: USAF; Lower Saint Anthony Falls Lock and Dam; and Lock and Dam 1. I'm committed to doing everything within my ability to help them get through this. We've made some progress on the personnel decisions that have to be made, but there's a bit of ground left to cover.

In addition to the passage of WRRDA 2014, we also celebrated some other milestones, with a few of our employees receiving national awards for their work. Terry Zien, project management, was one of two recipients of the Silver Jackets Coordinator of the Year Award, and DeLisa Kviz was the recipient of the Outstanding Department of Defense Employee/Service Member with a

Disability Award. Great honors for both of them!

We also retired two of our construction offices this year – Grand Forks, N.D., and Devils Lake, N.D. Both offices were used to support construction efforts to reduce floods risks in their respective communities. The offices are no longer needed since there are no major construction efforts remaining.

While we certainly have had an exciting year, I hope everyone has the opportunity to take some time during the upcoming holiday season to relax with family and friends. Each and every one of you is an important part of the St. Paul District family and, together, we have much to be grateful for this year and in the years to come.

That said, I want to urge you to use caution while driving, since the roads will become more dangerous due to the weather. I also hope that if you decide to consume alcohol, please do so in



**Col. Daniel C. Koprowski**

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

moderation and remember to have a plan to get home if needed. A phone call to a friend, family member, or co-worker is easier than putting your life and the lives of others in jeopardy if you elect to drive under the influence.

Finally, while we can enjoy the pleasures that come with living in the United States, some members of our team remain deployed to Afghanistan supporting the war fighters as they continue overseas contingency operations. Please keep those deployed in your thoughts this season. My family and I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



Duane Skjeie, operations, drives a cart at Lock and Dam 5, near Minnesota City, Minn., Nov. 5.  
*Photo by Patrick Moes*



Nathan Van Loon, operations, and Duane Skjeie, operations, change a filter at Lock and Dam 5, near Minnesota City, Minn., Nov. 5.

*Photo by Patrick Moes*

[Click on the photo to view the video on our YouTube webpage](#)

## Lock staff's quick response save canoeist, dog

Story by Patrick Moes

A typical day at Lock and Dam 5, near Minnesota City, Minn., turned into a quick reaction rescue for two of the district's lock operators recently.

Nathan Van Loon, Lock and Dam 5 head operator, said it was a fairly windy day with 3 to 5 foot waves on the north side of the dam. He said he noticed a canoeist and his dog come down the river and try to hold on to the wall, but the canoe began taking on water and capsized.

Van Loon said he sees a lot of canoeist attempting to canoe the the Mississippi River from Lake Itasca, near Bemidji, Minn., to the mouth of the river south of New Orleans. He said canoeists have been on the water for a little more than two weeks by the time they arrive at the lock and it is an area where a lot of them call it quits because of the challenges. "Changing weathers, different currents, it's just not a good place to be by yourself in a canoe," he said.

Duane Skjeie, Lock and Dam 5 lock

operator, said the rescue happen really quickly. After receiving a radio call from Van Loon about the situation, Skjeie said he ran to the scene and threw the canoeist a life ring while Van Loon used the life boat to reach him. Worried about his dog, Skjeie said he worked with the canoeist to retrieve the dog and reassure them while waiting for the life boat. "I tried to calm him down and reassure him and just said 'hang on dude, we're coming with a boat to save you.'"

Skjeie said this was the first time that he was involved with this type of rescue. "You just want to do what you can to keep this guy safe," he said about the event. With a few weeks since the rescue, he said he hopes he doesn't have to do another rescue mission, but if needed, he said he feels up to the task. "No life jacket, bad conditions on the river, we even got most of his stuff back," he said. "I feel good about it because you rescued a dog and his man."



Lt. Col. Christian Thompson, left, deputy district commander, presents DeLisa Kviz, resource management, with a Department of the Army Superior Civilian Service medal at the district office in St. Paul, Minn., Oct. 1. Kviz earned the medal for her selection as the 2014 Department of Defense Employee / Service Member with a Disability Award.

*Photo by Wendy Medlin*

## Kviz earns national recognition for work

Story by Allison Fairbanks

The Office of the Secretary of Defense recently announced its selection of district employee and Potomac Falls, Va., native, DeLisa Kviz as the recipient of the Outstanding Department of Defense Employee / Service Member with a Disability Award.

The Outstanding DoD Employee/Service Member with a Disability Award honors DoD civilian employees and Service members with disabilities who have supported the DoD mission, overseas contingency operations or whose attributes best epitomized the qualities and core values of their respective military service or other DoD Component.

Kviz has served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers financial and accounting area for more than 25 years and is currently chief of the St. Paul District's Finance and Accounting Branch. In this position, she develops detailed action plans, provides financial oversight and ensures more than a hundred audit samples are completed on time.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said an 'unqualified opinion with no material weakness' is considered a 'clean audit' and the Holy Grail for financial and accounting professionals in the DoD. Kviz received this award for her part in having an unqualified opinion in fiscal year 2013, as well as for the previous six years.

**"[DeLisa] Kviz is the consummate professional and her performance during her Army Corps of Engineers career has been and continues to be exemplary."**

**-Pete Lillie, St. Paul District resource management chief**

"The St. Paul District is fortunate to have such a professional and dedicated finance and accounting officer to keep our accounts in compliance with federal law," said Pete Lillie, St. Paul District resource management chief, and Kviz's supervisor. "Kviz is the consummate professional and her performance during her Army Corps of Engineers career has been and continues to be exemplary."

Kviz received this award Oct. 30 at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

Kviz has been deaf since birth and is very well-versed in American Sign Language. She does not view her disability as a barrier in anything she does.

## Scientists seek solutions to improve Minnesota River challenges

Story by Patrick Moes

**W**hat does making people happy, environmental restoration, and ensuring people can earn a living from the land all have in common?

These are just a few reasons for a study currently underway about the Minnesota River basin. Nearly 18 federal, state, tribal and local agencies, to include the Corps of Engineers, have been working together to look at ways to improve watershed management. The agencies are exploring better watershed assessment and management tools that will support the best ways to address land uses, habitat and water quality.

Rebecca Seal-Soileau, engineering and construction, said the issues impacting the basin can be seen at the local, regional and national levels. Whether you are talking about the loss of habitat in the Gulf of Mexico or the increased sediment filling up Lake Pepin, near Red Wing, Minn., the issues impacting the Minnesota River basin impact everyone, she said.

Seal-Soileau said within the state of Minnesota, the river is the leading source of increased sediment deposits at Lake Pepin, Sadly, she added, the river is also the largest source within the state for the Gulf of Mexico hypoxia issues. The gulf water at the mouth

of the Mississippi River has limited amounts of oxygen. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the hypoxia is caused by excess nutrients from sources such as fertilizers, soil erosion and sewage treatment discharges.

Many of these hypoxia ingredients can be found within the Minnesota River basin, which runs the length of the river's 335 miles from Big Stone Lake to the confluence with the Mississippi River at Fort Snelling, near St. Paul, Minn. Covering some of the best agricultural land within the state Seal-Soileau said the basin is divided into 12 unique watersheds. With such a wide variety of watersheds throughout the basin, she said the professionals conducting the study have created working groups to move the process forward.

Seal-Soileau said the groups have focused on a cause/effect analysis to determine what can be done to improve the basin. She cited a fact that the flows within the river have increased by more than 50 percent during the past 30 years. The increased flows have caused river bank erosion, which in turn, has created additional sediment to flow within the river.

Seal-Soileau said the groups are exploring a "whole suite of strategies" to



Rebecca Seal-Soileau, engineering and construction, reviews a Minnesota River basin poster at the district office Oct. 23. Seal-Soileau is working with more than 18 government agencies to help improve the health of the environmental, social and economic systems within the basin.

*Photo by Patrick Moes*



determine what can be done to improve the river and reduce the sediment. The groups are currently in the process of updating the models to determine what works within localized watersheds. Once they determine what works at a local level, Seal-Soileau said the groups hope to expand the process to improve the river and the environment on a watershed or basin approach.

Currently, the groups are focusing their

attention on two pilot sub-watersheds, Seven Mile Creek, near Mankato, Minn., and Shakopee Creek and Norway Chain of Lakes, near Shakopee, Minn. Seal-Soileau said engineers are using the Gridded Surface Subsurface Hydrologic Assessment Model, or GSSHA, to determine what models can be used within these sub-watersheds and expanded to the larger watersheds within the basin.

The collaborative, interagency approach has been a staple of the study since its inception in 2008, said Seal-Soileau. "We're working together to reduce overlap and save money," she said. "This study is an example of agencies doing the right thing."

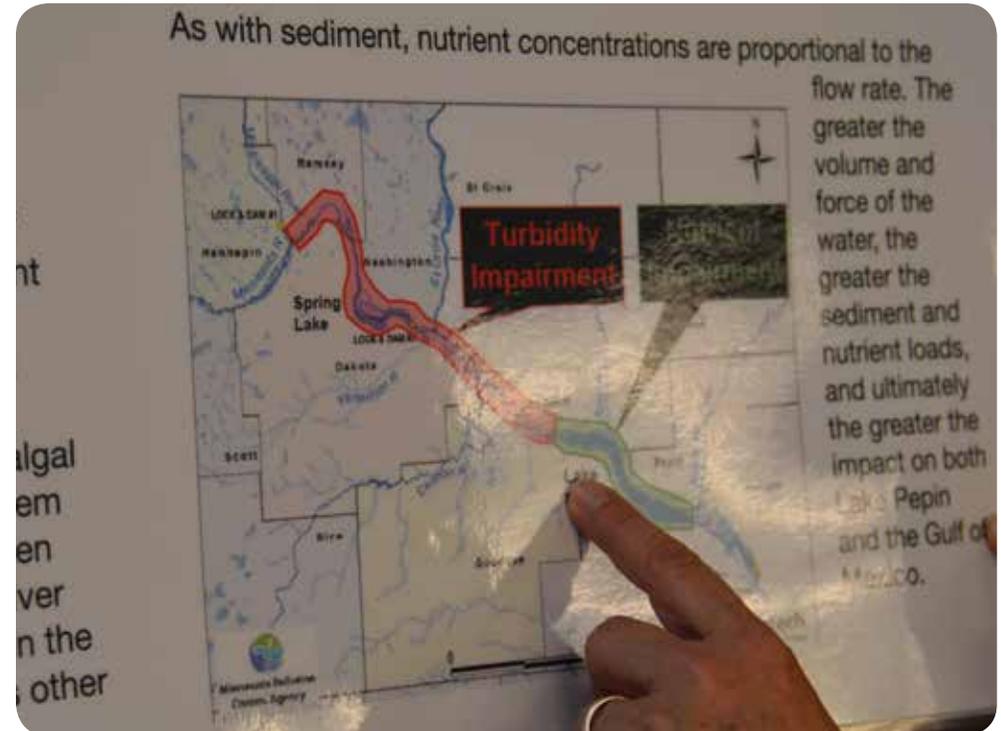
Over the next two years the collaborative team will continue to collect information throughout the basin, complete detailed modeling efforts, and

develop the tools to be used by local watershed planning groups, said Joe Mose, project manager. These tools will be used to simulate alternatives based on ecological, economic and socially desirable outcomes, which will allow plans to be developed for cleaner water and healthier habitats, to improve recreational areas and to support sustainable industry and agriculture now and for the future.



Rebecca Seal-Soileau, engineering and construction, reviews a Minnesota River basin poster at the district office Oct. 23. Seal-Soileau is working with more than 18 government agencies to help improve the health of the environmental, social and economic systems within the basin.

*Photo by Patrick Moes*



Rebecca Seal-Soileau, engineering and construction, points to a map depicting an area with sediment issues that the Corps, along with its partners, are trying to reduce.

*Photo by Patrick Moes*

**“Currently, much more effort is going into risk assessments of existing dam and levee infrastructure, and geotechnical and geology expertise plays critical roles in those processes.”**

**-Michael Bart, engineering and construction chief**



Neil Schwanz, geo-tech chief

## Geo-tech section is a branch, again

Story by Shannon Bauer

The geotechnical and geology section is, once again, its own branch within the St. Paul District Engineering and Construction Division.

Formerly of design branch, the section hasn't been on its own since 1978, said Neil Schwanz, chief of this new branch. In addition to the geotechnical and geology section staff, the branch will also include the district's dam safety, levee safety and inspection of completed works program managers.

“The district recreated a [the branch] to reflect the importance and evolution of these engineering functions,” said Michael Bart, Engineering and Construction Division chief. “Currently, much more effort is going into risk assessments of existing dam and levee infrastructure, and geotechnical and geology expertise plays critical roles in those processes.”

“Having a branch in this area aligns us well within the Mississippi Valley Division and elevates these critical engineering functions parallel with design, hydraulics and hydrology, and construction,” he continued. “This was the appropriate management action to prepare for our future engineering workload.”

Schwanz said most people will not notice a change in how the staff does business. “We were pretty much acting as a branch with our division

counterparts, and we worked well under design chief Marsha Mose,” he said. “The change is really how we interact with management.”

Schwanz replaced long-term section chief David Rydeen. “Dave leaves behind a great group of engineers and geologists in the branch, and I'm fortunate to be coming in at this point in time,” he said.

Schwanz brings with him around 36 years of experience. He began his career at the district in the levee and channels section, which was later combined with the dams and studies section to create the geotechnical and geology section. In May 2005, he became a regional technical specialist, and he has been working as a regional and national geo-tech expert ever since. In 2008, he was selected as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's Engineer of the Year, as well as one of the top 10 federal engineers of the year that year.

Schwanz said his goal is to bring in additional work from around the Corps. He said his team is in a good position to serve as a support center for finite element/soil structure interaction. “Around the country, [the Mississippi Valley Division] does more of this work probably than any other division, and St. Paul District does more of this than any of the other MVD districts,” he said.



Grant Riddick, center, engineering and construction, observes contractors as they drill soil samples for the Fargo, N.D. / Moorhead, Minn., Flood Risk Reduction Project.

Courtesy photo

## Gulan honored as hall of fame recipient

Story by Patrick Moes

Nearly 75 friends, family, past and current employees gathered at the Lost Spur Event Center in Eagan, Minn., Sept. 11, to honor and thank the newest member of the district's hall of fame.

Melissa Gulan, this year's recipient, retired as the district's eastern area engineer in 2010 after 33 years of federal service. Prior to her retirement, she was one of the first female engineers in the entire Corps to serve in this capacity.

As one of the district's first female engineers in construction, Gulan was a pioneer role model in her field, mentoring

and encouraging other women engineers that followed in her footsteps.

She led the Eastern Area Office, located in Winona, Minn., with distinction and supervised the construction of civil works projects totaling hundreds of millions of dollars through her retirement.

She was also the first St. Paul District employee to be selected twice as the district's Civil Servant of the Year – 1992 and 2008.

Following her retirement, Gulan volunteered her leadership as a rehired annuitant on the Devils Lake flood risk reduction project.



Melissa Gulan speaks after receiving her award as the district's 2014 hall of fame recipient.

Photo by Wendy Medlin



Melissa Gulan, left, and her husband, Jeff, listen to Col. Dan Koprowski, district commander, during a district briefing at the 39th Annual St. Paul District Retirees' Reunion.

Photo by Wendy Medlin



Melissa Gulan, 2014 district hall of fame honoree, center, celebrates with past recipients David Haumerson, left, 1999 inductee; Don Powell, 2011 inductee; Jim Kursu, 1995 inductee; and Louis Kowalski, 1996 inductee.

Photo by Wendy Medlin

## From Puerto Rico to Minnesota, Torrens reflects on his journey

Story by Allison Fairbanks

**E**duardo Torrens, engineering and construction, said he discovered that engineering was something he might be interested in when he was just a young boy. Watching his grandfather do renovations on his own home, Torrens said he found it interesting this served as an inspiration for him to pursue a degree in civil engineering and land surveying at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez.

After graduation in 2009, Torrens said he decided to apply for the Department of the Army intern program and work with the Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District. While still in Puerto Rico, he interviewed with Marsha Mose, design branch chief, and was accepted into the program.

In August 2009, after spending 23 years in Puerto Rico, Torrens moved his wife and son to Minnesota. Moving was quite a shock, he said, and not just because of the climate change. The language barrier was a challenge, too.

Torrens said in Puerto Rico, Spanish is the main language but English is supposed to be an official language, too, since Puerto Rico is a commonwealth. "I took English classes in school but never practiced because everybody around me spoke 100

percent Spanish. I started practicing my English when I was in my senior year of high school and started working as a kayak-trip guide on a Bio-Bay tours.

"When I moved to Minnesota, it was hard to communicate only in English since not a lot of people here speak Spanish," he said. "However, that actually helped me improve my English because I was forced to learn and think in English rather than thinking in Spanish and then translating it."

After Torrens' two-year rotation as an intern, he was offered a job as a civil engineer working for Jim Mosner, the former civil-site section chief. Torrens' first project involved stream bank stabilization repairs at the Ft. Abercrombie State Historic Site, near Wahpeton, N.D. "I learned a lot on the Ft. Abercrombie Bank Stabilization Project because it was a complex project, and it was my first design done as a civil engineer," Eduardo said.

After Torrens worked as a civil engineer for more than two years, he shifted into the survey team lead position and has served in that position for the past nine months. "He really cares about his work and it shows in the excellent products he produces," said Gary Wolf, Torrens supervisor.



Eduardo Torrens, engineering and construction, grew up in Puerto Rico before moving to Minnesota in 2009 to work for the district as a part of the Department of Army intern program.

Photo by Allison Fairbanks



**Theis drops more than 86 pounds and 18 inches off of his waist.**

*Courtesy photo*

## **Theis says he's proud to be one of the district's biggest losers.**

Story by Shannon Bauer

**M**ark Theis is a little lighter these days on the scale. Since making up his mind on May 13, 2013, to lose weight, this information technology site supervisor has lost more than 86 pounds and 18 inches off his waist.

"I have never been happier in my whole life," he said. "I feel great! I have an incredible amount of energy. I feel like I'm 30 again. Actually, I feel better than when I was 30, maybe even better than when I was 20."

At 142 pounds when he served with the U.S. Marines back in his early 20s, he found himself at 51 and 280 pounds when he decided he was fed up with his size. "I was sick of being fat, sick of not being able to breathe, sick of not being able to move or not fit in chairs," he said. "I was just sick of the whole thing."

Before beginning his weight loss program he said he did a lot of research. "There is no magic pill. You have to work for it," he said. "Society sells you a lot of miracle drugs – miracle this, miracle that – they don't work. A balanced diet and exercise make you lose weight.

"I had to figure out what my problem was first, and then I had to fix it," he continued. "My problem was I ate too

much. I am what they call a food addict. When I start eating, I can't stop. I was probably eating around 5,000 calories a day. You can't sit behind a desk and eat that many calories and not expect to get fat."

During his first week on his weight loss journey, Theis used meal replacement shakes in order to restart his metabolism. He explained that when people become obese, their bodies shut down and hang onto fat. He said, "This is why fad diets don't work. People lose 15 or 20 pounds, they plateau, and then they quit."

Today, he said he works at eating a balanced diet and maintaining portion control. He still eats a meal replacement shake for one or two meals a day. "I don't deprive myself of food. I still eat what I want, I just eat less," he said. "I still eat pizza, cheeseburgers, Coney islands – all that stuff. I just don't eat a lot of it, and I don't eat it every day."

Around three weeks into his weight loss journey, Theis said he started exercising regularly. "It was real slow going at first," he said. "I had a hard time walking half a mile." Today, he runs four miles a day, every day. He has clocked more than 1,000 miles this year

and is still counting.

“If you want to lose weight, you have to move,” he said. “Walking is the best exercise. Even if you can only go around 200 feet, if you start walking, you will soon be able to do 300 feet, then 400 feet and so on.”

Exercising has become a family event. Theis’ oldest daughter participated in two organized races in 2013, and Theis said he wanted to be able to participate in a race with her. He made it one of his goals to be able to do the Warrior Dash in Hastings, Minn., in July. “I never

planned on doing it, but that was my goal,” he said. Then, for Christmas, his oldest daughter purchased Warrior Dash tickets for he and his youngest daughter, and Theis decided to accept the challenge.

To prepare, he signed himself up, as well as both of his daughters, for his first official 5-kilometer race, the Run or Dye in St. Paul, Minn., last March. “I wasn’t ready to run a 5K, but my goal was to finish,” he said. “Run, walk, crawl – it didn’t matter. I just wanted to make it.” The race was the first time in 30 years

that Theis ran 3 miles at one time.

Theis described his weight loss accomplishment as a complete lifestyle change. “I eat different. I look different. I feel different,” he said. “I am able to do things with my family that I was never able to do before.” This transformation didn’t go unnoticed. In July, he was chosen as one of two winners in a Ship Shape Challenge sponsored by his meal replacement shake company. His prize included a free vacation at a spa in Utah.

His goals for next year include

dropping an additional 20 to 30 pounds and firming up, strengthening his muscles, as well as running a few more 5Ks with his kids. He said another important goal he has is to assist others with their weight loss challenges. He is trying to record his journey by writing a book that will help others. He said if his story helps at least one person lose weight, it will be worth it.

His advice to anyone wanting to lose weight is to have dedication and commitment. He said, “Don’t give up. It can be done. It’s worth it!”



Mark Theis, information technology, has lost nearly 100 pounds since his decision to focus on his health last year.

*Courtesy photo*



Mark Theis, information technology, left, completed the 5-kilometer Warrior Dash with his daughters Ashley; Kristina, and her fiancée, Jeff.

*Courtesy photo*



Mark Theis, information technology, right, and his daughter, Ashley, completed the 5-kilometer Run or Dye race in St. Paul, Minn., this spring.

*Courtesy photo*



Eagles are perched in the trees over the restoration site prior to the fall planting.

*Courtesy photo*



Ray Marinan, natural resources, performs a quality assurance inspection during the planting phase. The contractor planted 2,500 trees and shrubs.

*Courtesy photo*

## Mitigation efforts restore trees along Mississippi River

Story by Dan Redburn

A genuine team effort is on display in the forests along the Mississippi River in Pool 5, near Minnesota City, Minn.

The district's environmental section, maintenance and repair crew, channels and harbors section, as well as staff with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and volunteers from the Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Headwaters, recently partnered to restore nearly 10 acres of land along the river.

The project started in 2010 and includes 5.2 acres of backwater dredging and 3.5 acres of reforestation. What started as a recommendation from the River Resources Forum's Fish and Wildlife Work Group to show how small habitat improvements could be made along the Upper Mississippi River, is already impacting the wildlife. During a pre-planting site visit this spring, it was determined that a nest in the middle

of the 3-acre site had a pair of adult eagles that were lying on eggs. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service postponed the planting until this fall as a result. A contractor planted 2,500 seedlings Nov. 5-6. The Friends of the Upper Mississippi River provided the \$16,000 financial contribution for the seeding.

The Corps' maintenance and repair crew dredged material from Weaver Bottoms and hydraulically placed it onto a retired dredged material placement site nearby. The dredging improved the over-wintering fish habitat. In 2011, after a season of drying, the crew spread the topsoil onto the site.

Following two years of planning, the restoration project includes species such as bur oak, swamp white oak, hackberry, river birch, black cherry and black walnut. Shrub species include gray dogwood, red-osier dogwood, choke cherry and cranberry bush.



Aerial photo of the 3.5-acre site.

## Corps, partners offer new mitigation opportunity for Wisconsin applicants

Story by Patrick Moes

**W**etland regulatory agencies signed an agreement Nov. 19, in Duluth, Minn., that allows Wisconsin permit applicants an additional option to mitigate unavoidable damages to wetlands within the state.

Leaders from the district's regulatory branch, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources signed the agreement.

The agreement expands mitigation options statewide by providing applicants the option to mitigate wetland losses via an in-lieu fee program, which will be administered by the Wisconsin DNR. Despite the new option, Eric Hanson, regulatory, said applicants are still required to first avoid, then minimize adverse impacts to wetlands and

meet all other permit conditions before qualifying to participate in the new program.

The in-lieu fee program simply provides another option for applicants to mitigate unavoidable wetland impacts authorized by Department of the Army permits, he added.

Susan Hedman, EPA Region V administrator, said the program addresses the need to improve the effectiveness of mitigation efforts to maintain the health of an entire watershed. The costs per credit as established by the partners will range between \$58,000 and \$61,000. The values are based on a variety of factors including land values, projected construction costs and the costs of administering the program.



Tamara Cameron, regulatory; Susan Hedman, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region V administrator; and Cathy Stepp, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources secretary, sign the in-lieu fee agreement at a meeting in Duluth, Minn., Nov. 19.

*Courtesy photo*



*Photo by Steve Eggers*



## Corps, partners build relationships while building new boat ramp

Story by Allison Fairbanks

A much needed renovation was completed at the Sibley Boat Ramp located on the north end of Baldhill Dam / Lake Ashtabula, near Valley City, N.D., in late August.

When the ramp was constructed 30 plus years ago it met the needs of launching the smaller fishing boats of that time period, but it no longer accommodates the larger boats of today, said Jeff Kapaun, park ranger.

At a time when budgets are already strained, representatives from The Barnes County (North Dakota) Wildlife Federation, a local club in Valley City, and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department met at the ramp to discuss the project and a potential cost share effort. The Game and Fish provided a grant to fund 75 percent of the project and Barnes County Wildlife and the district split the remaining 25 percent.

Rich Plecity's Excavating LLC, a local Valley City contractor, renovated the

ramp according to Game and Fish boat ramp specifications by increasing the slope of the ramp to a minimum of 12 percent. The "pour and push" method was used for the new 15-foot x 50-foot concrete slab. This method consists of pouring the new slab on the ground above the existing ramp, allowing the slab to cure for a minimum of 7 days, and then pushing the new slab out into the water with heavy equipment. Once in place, rip rap was placed down both sides of the new ramp. The final phase of the project included adding crushed asphalt to blend the top of the new ramp into the existing parking lot.

The "newest addition" to the Baldhill Dam / Lake Ashtabula Project has been well received by its users, said Kapaun. He added that without the partnership of the Game and Fish and the Barnes County Wildlife Federation, the new boat ramp would just be another item on the "wish" list.

## Personal decisions impact safety

Story by Barry Simmonds

Fall has about run its course, the first snow has already fallen, deer hunters are in the woods, and the safety office is expected to wave a magic wand and produce a plan to keep everyone safe.

Well, I can pontificate and wax eloquently all I want, but the fact of the matter is that I cannot make anyone "be" safe. Each individual is responsible for making choices which impact their safety. For example, we can choose to drive fast and take our chances, or we can slow down a bit and know that a 35-mile trip while driving 55 mph only takes 38 minutes. But, if you drive at 65 mph, it only takes you 32 minutes. That saves a whopping 6 minutes ... but puts you, your family, and everyone else on the road in much more danger.

How about changing batteries in smoke detectors? Do you know how heart breaking it is to read about a fire which destroys a house

and maybe kills everyone inside, and then read that it was found that the occupant either had dead batteries in their detector or none at all? That is why people recommend changing them in the spring and fall when the time change takes place ... just in case.

Simple decisions like having an emergency kit in your vehicle; keeping windows free of fog, ice and snow; driving with headlights on; having proper boots and not wearing slick bottom shoes while walking in the snow are all good decisions. And, I've preached them all before. I imagine that some are grateful and appreciate the reminders. And, I suspect some laugh and assume that "it will never happen to me" and keep making poor choices. And therein is the problem. I cannot "make" anyone safe. It is a personal choice.

Just remember that whatever "choices" you make; the results affect those around you (friends and family) and not just yourself. I hope you choose to be safe.



Graphic by Wendy Medlin

## Editor's Note

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

## Taps

- Glenn Duren**, lock and dam lockmaster, operations, Hastings, Minn. Services were held Sept. 11 at the Johnson Funeral Home in Lake Charles, La.
- Carmen Mundale**, mail room specialist. Services were held Sept. 30 at the Bayview/Freeborn Funeral Home in Albert Lea, Minn.
- Donald E. Johnston**, lock and dam operator, operations, Alma, Wis. A private family memorial service was held.
- Sarah Super**, administrative assistant, operations, district office. Services were held Oct. 10 at the Miller Funeral Home in Fridley, Minn.
- Eric Dore**, former equal employment office chief  
Services were held Oct. 10 at the Miller Funeral Home in Fridley, Minn.
- Rosemarie Vezina Braatz**, former operations division employee. Services were held Nov. 18 at the Taylor Falls United Methodist Church, Taylor Falls, Minn.
- Jim Braatz**, former public affairs chief, passed away Nov. 25.

## Emerging Leaders selected



George Stringham



Lisa Lund

George Stringham, public affairs, and Lisa Lund, operations, were each selected for Mississippi Valley Division Emerging Leaders Program based upon their ability to lead, develop and manage within our workforce, as demonstrated by past performance.

## Congratulations

- Congratulations **George Stringham**, public affairs, and **Lisa Lund**, operations, on their selection as the 2014 St. Paul District emerging leaders.
- Congratulations **Bryan Peterson**, operations, on his selection as the Mississippi River navigation operations project manager.
- Congratulations **Kelly Obermiller**, planning, on her selection as the district's workforce development program specialist.
- Congratulations **Pat Foley**, retired, on his selection as the Outstanding Achievement Award of the University of Minnesota recipient. His name will be engraved at the university's Alunmi Wall of Honor next to McNamara Alumni Center in Minneapolis.
- Congratulations **Bryan Peterson**, operations, on his selection as the Mississippi River navigation operations project manager.
- Congratulations **Dr. Kat McCain**, planning, and **Charlie Hanneken**, planning, on their work on the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program. They both received Commander's Awards for Excellence for their work on the program.
- Congratulations **Duane Skleie**, operations, and **Nate VanLoon**, operations, for their role in saving a canoeist and his dog at Lock and Dam 5, near Minnesota City, Minn., Sept. 21.
- Congratulations **Charlie Hanneken**, planning, and **Katie Opsahl**, planning, on their recent graduation from the fiscal year 2014 Planning Associates Program. **Jason Smith**, planning, and **Greg Kohler**, planning, were selected to attend the fiscal year 2015 program. **Kohler** recently graduated from the St. Louis District Leadership Development Program, too.
- Congratulations **Kevin Sommerland**, real estate, on his selection as the district's real estate chief.
- Congratulations **Judy Denzer**, operations, and **John Perry**, operations, on their graduation from the district's lockmaster development course.
- Congratulations **Kevin Bokay**, project management, for earning his Lean Six Sigma Green Belt certification.
- Congratulations **Hlee Moua**, engineering and construction, and her husband, **Toua**, on the birth of their son, **Nolan Lee**.
- Congratulations **Kurt Heckendorf**, engineering and construction, and his wife, **Roshell**, on the birth of their daughter, **Gabriella (Ella)**, Oct. 10.



## District leaders graduate from leadership program



Col. Dan Koprowski, district commander, fourth from the right, congratulates Kevin Baumgard, left, operations; Tamera Cameron, operations, Craig Evans, planning; Terry Birkenstock, planning, Pete Lillie, resource management; Mike Knoff, engineering and construction; Aaron Snyder, project management; Chris Atkins, operations; and Mike Dahlquist, engineering and construction, on their recent completion of the district's executive leadership development program.

## District selects 13 for leadership development program

**Eric Wittne**, engineering and construction  
**Megan McGuire**, engineering and construction  
**Zachary Kimmel**, operations  
**Kristin Moe**, operations  
**Lisa Draves**, contracting  
**Samuel Mathiowetz**, operations  
**Brian Sipos**, operations  
**Joe Schroetter**, project management  
**Jeffrey Hopkins**, operations  
**Patrick Moes**, public affairs  
**Shahin Khazrajafari**, project management  
**Byron Williams**, planning  
**Eric Hanson**, regulatory

## Forester is spooktacular during discussion about bugs



Bobby Jackson, center, operations, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees Kendra Niemeck and Wendy Woyczik pause for a photo during the 'Creepy Critter Night' at the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge, near La Crosse, Wis., Oct. 29. Jackson was on hand talked about the dangers of emerald ash borer to nearly 200 people and also discussed the importance of water safety.

*Photo courtesy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*



## Retirees

**Randy Devendorf**, wildlife biologist supervisor, planning, district office.  
**George Mead**, lock and dam operator, operations, Red Wing, Minn.  
**Dave Rydeen**, civil engineer supervisor, engineering and construction, district office.

## Seasonal/New hires

**Kelly Costello-Warner**, administrative assistant, operations, Fountain City, Wis.  
**Quianna Dolney**, civil engineer, engineering and construction, district office.  
**Emily Kostner**, administrative assistant, operations, Fountain City, Wis.  
**Duane Perkins**, civil engineer, engineering and construction, district office.  
**Lawrence Sharp**, civil engineer, engineering and construction, district office.  
**Colleen Whaley**, environmental protection assistant, operations, district office.  
**Brenda Aleshire**, legal assistant, office of counsel, district office.  
**Evan Ingebrigtsen**, ecologist, regulatory, Brainerd, Minn.  
**Jung Kim**, librarian, public affairs, district office.  
**Erin Krug**, civil engineer, engineering and construction, district office.  
**Nathan Meisgeier**, civil engineer, engineering and construction, district office.  
**Simon Christensen**, student trainee, regulatory, Waukesha, Wis.  
**Danielle Erickson**, student trainee, engineering and construction, district office.  
**Ntsa Lee**, student trainee, regulatory, district office.  
**James Lundequam**, student trainee, regulatory, district office.  
**Meghan McKinney**, student trainee, regulatory, district office.  
**Stephany Nelson**, student trainee, regulatory, district office.  
**Emily Peterson**, student trainee, regulatory, Green Bay, Wis.  
**Nickolaus Phillips**, student trainee, regulatory, district office.  
**Shane Simmons**, student trainee, planning, St. Louis District office.  
**Davi Warden-Michl**, student trainee, planning, Rock Island District office.  
**Brian Yagle**, student trainee, regulatory, Green Bay, Wis.

## District signs agreement with tribal commission



Col. Dan Koprowski, district commander, front row on the right, signs a project partnership agreement with the Corporate Commission of the Mille Lacs Band of Objibwe as members of the commission and Congressman Rick Nolan, second from the left, look on during the ceremony Oct. 10. The district is currently accepting comments on the draft environmental assessment for the proposed project. The comment period is open until Dec. 26. For more information on the project, or to comment, please visit the district's website at: <http://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/Home/PublicNotices.aspx>

*Photo by George Stringham*