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St. Paul District

Crosscurrents

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Leech Lake recreation area holds fishing derby

St. Paul District photo by Leech Lake staff

Park ranger Timm Rennecke (center) coaches one of the participants during the 11th annual fishing derby held at the Leech Lake Recreation Area. The staff at Sandy Lake also hosted a kids' fishing contest. (See page 5.)

By Zeb Hemsworth
Co-op student

The Leech Lake Recreation Area held its 11th annual fishing derby on July 21. Nearly 250 people were present for the event and all of the nearly 100 children who participated in the event took home a prize, thanks to donations from 33 area merchants.

Twelve children in three age groups – under five, six to 11, and 12-16 – received first, second or third-place prizes. A separate prize was awarded for catching the most fish. "The event is a learning experience for the young anglers, teaching the values of catching and releasing fish," said Timm Rennecke, park ranger.

Col. Ball and Judy DesHarnais were in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 11 when terrorists struck the Pentagon. In their question-and-answer exchange with Public Affairs Chief Mark Davidson, Col. Ball countered hatred with love and DesHarnais (page 7) described the long wait to get word home.

'Strengthen love' to counter hatred of Sept. 11

PAO: Briefly describe what you were doing in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 11 when terrorists hit the Pentagon.

Ball: Judy DesHarnais and I were conducting our semi-annual visits with members of Congress who represent areas within the St. Paul District.

Where were you at the time of the attack and what were you doing?

We were briefing Congressman Ron Kind of Wisconsin in his office in the Longworth Building on Capitol Hill.

When and how did you get back to Minnesota?

We returned late Friday night, Sep. 14. We flew to Rock Island, Ill., on the Corps' G-1 aircraft and borrowed a Rock Island District GSA vehicle to drive to St. Paul.

How do you foresee the district being affected by this attack in the next year?

There will be a requirement for increased security at most of our sites. How to pay for that and what form it will take is being worked out.

I would hope that we would draw together closer as an organization and take a special interest in each other's well being. The best way to counter hatred of the type that we saw displayed Sep. 11 is to strengthen the love we have for our fellow human beings.

That starts in the family, spreads to the workplace, and spills over into the community. If you have ever been on a winning team or tightly knit group, you know what I mean. Organizations like that have a genuine concern for each other and are aware of individual's triumphs and tragedies – and share in them.

I'm not suggesting that we make this into a chance to close ranks in order to keep others out, but rather a drawing together to lift each other up.

Anything else you want to add?

Judy DesHarnais was a rock throughout the ordeal. (See "Long wait," page 7)

CFC drive goes to Oct. 26

Col. Robert L. Ball
St. Paul District Commander

The events of Sep. 11 have changed many things about our lives. In some cases they have denied things to us and in other cases they cause us to look at things we have taken for granted.

One of the things I have grown to take for granted is the sense of community that has existed wherever my wife, Sally, and I have been stationed. That sense of community has been marked by concern for our neighbors, willingness to lend a hand when needed, and the assurance that others were there should we need help. I realize now that communities don't just happen – they need nurturing.

As I was wrestling with my response to the tragedy, I was pleased to see that our Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) is about to begin. Contributing to local or national charities is certainly a way to nurture our community and the CFC is a safe, proven and effective way to do that. Whether you give to the American Red Cross or a local homeless shelter, the CFC allows you to be sure that your money goes where you want it, goes to a reputable organization, and will make a positive difference in people's lives.

Contributing funds to help others in need, here in the Twin Cities and across the nation, is just one way to respond to Sep. 11. I encourage you to examine the CFC brochure and respond as you feel when a solicitor from your floor, division or office contacts you between Oct. 10-26.

The decision is your and yours alone. You can also help in the campaign by participating in the bake sale, either bringing in baked goods or buying them, on the morning of Oct. 10 in the second floor lobby of the Engineer Centre.

Crist named to St. Paul District Hall of Fame

Photos by Ben Jensen

Chuck Crist, former district deputy engineer for Programs and Project Management, holds his recognition plaque that will join others in the St. Paul District Hall of Fame. Col. Robert Ball, the district commander, at left, inducted Crist into the Hall of Fame during the Retirees' Reunion on Sept. 6 in St. Paul. Other members of the Hall of Fame and the year they were inducted are, from left: Robert Fletcher (1989); Jim Kursu (1995), Dave Haumersen (1999), Crist (2001), Bill Spychalla (2000); Catherine Smith (1989): and Bob Post (1999).

In the photo above, left to right are: Marianne Price, EEO officer; Mark Davidson, chief of Public Affairs; and Bruce Boldon, chief of Construction Branch. Top right are Delores Sudeith and Jean Thurmer. In photo at right are Dean Peterson and Craig Hinton. Hinton worked as the plant engineer in Maintenance Section at Fountain City, Wis., from around 1980 until 1995. Peterson is the operations manager for locks and dams.

High water levels lingered in Headwaters lakes while levels downstream of Aitkin receded

By Mark Davidson
Chief of Public Affairs

Residents and cabin owners at the Headwaters lakes in Minnesota donned hip waders or rode in boats to their homes in April, May and early June.

While water levels had receded in southern Minnesota by late May, the Headwaters lakes north of Aitkin, Minn., burst their banks into the summer.

Aitkin was the dividing line.

Hydrologists and others in the St. Paul District worked carefully with residents, agency officials, property owners and the private sector to minimize damage from high water both upstream and downstream of Aitkin.

The challenge was that above normal precipitation had inundated six St. Paul District projects in the Headwaters of the Mississippi River north of Aitkin during the fall and winter of 2000 into spring 2001.

The impact had dissipated quickly at Gull Lake and Cross Lake, but four others – Sandy, Pokegama, Leech and Winnibigoshish – stayed wet until the outflow, dry conditions and natural evaporation established a steady downward trend at the lakes in late June and July.

It took all summer and into early fall to achieve normal water levels at Winnibigoshish and Leech lakes.

The upper Headwaters reservoir system is affected by river conditions as far south as Aitkin in addition to the local runoff that must be managed.

The district operates Lake Winnibigoshish, Leech Lake, Pokegama Lake and Sandy Lake for year-round flood control. Flowage easements were originally purchased upstream and downstream of these reservoirs for navigation purposes, but today are used for flood control storage.

"... above normal precipitation had inundated six St. Paul District projects in the Headwaters ..."

When water levels reach flood stage at Aitkin, both Pokegama Lake and Sandy Lake must hold back water according to an economic guide curve, which is designed to equalize damages throughout the system. When this occurs, Leech and Winnibigoshish lakes must also cut their flows to keep Pokegama Lake from going too high on the guide curve.

The discharge from Winnibigoshish, Leech, Pokegama and Sandy has, at various times, been reduced this year to assist in flood control downstream. Flows from Cross Lake and Gull Lake, while increased during the runoff, did not significantly affect other areas. The operation of Cross Lake and Gull Lake do not affect the areas upstream.

Specialists from the district worked closely with the U.S. Forest Service, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Ottertail Power Company to coordinate the regulation of water levels and discharges in the Headwaters sub-basin.

"The Corps of Engineers worked with these agencies on a daily basis since early April to coordinate the release of water from Corps reservoirs, and to monitor and mitigate the effects on the landowners and communities upstream and downstream," said Roland Hamborg, operations manager for the Headwaters Lakes project.

"The agencies worked together to implement the various water-control plans for the reservoirs in the face of almost unheard of volumes of water and rainfall.

"The water-control plans balance many variables to achieve multi-purpose objectives including flood control, recreation, fish and wildlife, and are not targeted to benefit a special interest group or a single stakeholder at the expense of another," he said.

Portions of the Headwaters region received more than six inches of precipitation in the month of April. Precipitation totals exceeded the historical average by more than four inches in many areas. May precipitation totals averaged two inches above normal for most of the Headwaters basin.

Precipitation totals for the Headwaters area in the first half of June were three to five inches, with many sites receiving two inches in one rainstorm on June 13.

"The Sandy Lake and Pokegama Lake reservoir and dam have a

direct effect on flood conditions at Aitkin and must be constantly monitored," said Kenton Spading, a hydrologist in Water Control Section. "Sandy Lake in particular is difficult to keep on the economic guide curve. Aside from the snow and rain problems, we have the fact that Sandy Lake is the smallest of the six Headwaters lakes," said Spading. "But it has a very large drainage area relative to the size of the lake, which means that water will drain into it and fill it up more quickly relative to other area lakes. Sandy Lake historically rises very fast. We often have to open the gates wide open in order to keep it on the glide curve. The gates at the Sandy Lake dam were wide open from April 14 to June 27."

High water on the Mississippi River slows the outflow of water from Sandy Lake. "As the Corps releases water from Sandy Lake it flows into the Mississippi River," said Spading. "If the Mississippi River is very high it creates a backwater effect that restricts the outflow of water from Sandy Lake. In a worse-case scenario, Mississippi River water can flow into Sandy Lake or, more commonly, reduce the outflow from Sandy Lake to near zero even though the gates are wide open."

Sandy Lake, northeast of Aitkin, peaked at about five and one-half feet above normal on April 29, 2001.

Spading said that the water levels at the six lakes became high for several reasons. "In November 2000 there was significant rainfall, as much as three inches in some locations, that filled the upper portions of the soil before it froze. Then we had a heavy winter snowfall that left almost five inches of water in the snow at Sandy Lake followed by a fast snowmelt. Heavy rains in April added to the problem."

Fifty homes on Sandy Lake were surrounded by water during the flood and were only accessible by boat or hip waders. Many homes on the lake were in danger of losing their foundations.

The water level at Aitkin peaked nearly six feet above flood stage on April 28, 2001, causing 20 homes to be inaccessible and many receiving water damage. Six families evacuated their homes. Water submerged about 50 state, county, and township roads. Sandbags protected three businesses in the city of Aitkin and pumps kept the sewage treatment plant operational.

Upstream of Lake Winnibigoshish, Knutson Dam, which controls the outflow from Cass Lake, and is operated by the U.S. Forest Service, had its gates wide open. However, the high water levels on Lake Winnibigoshish caused a backwater effect that restricted the amount of outflow from Knutson Dam.

Army honors Johnson

The Department of the Army awarded honors to Pat Johnson, Project Management, as its Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (SADBU) Small Business Specialist of the Year 2000. She received the award and the above medallion in Washington, D.C. on August 16. She had previously been awarded the Corps of Engineers' SADBU Award of the Year. St. Paul District personnel congratulated Johnson in a ceremony on Sept. 6 at the district office.

Sandy Lake site hosts kids' fishing contest

By Travis Nelson
Co-op student

Nearly 60 children registered for the annual kids fishing contest held Labor Day weekend at the Sandy Lake Dam. Accompanying them were nearly 120 adult assistants to chaperone the activities. Rangers weighed and recorded fish for the contestants and campground hosts prepared a complimentary lunch provided by area merchants.

Contestants caught 72 fish, including Northern Pike, Black Crappie, Bluegill, Perch, Rock Bass, and a three and one-half pound Dogfish. The fish were registered and then released into the lake.

The grand prize winner caught a Northern Pike weighing just over five pounds. Everyone who participated received a small tackle prize.

Construction begins on Grand Forks projects

By Virginia Regorrah
East Grand Forks Resident Office

At 8:30 a.m. on July 31, Blake Sander opened the pre-construction conference in the Grand Forks City Hall for the Grand Forks, N.D., Levees Phase 1 Project. Sander is the contracting officer's representative (COR) for the first phase of the project.

The conference represents the beginning of construction on these much-anticipated projects in Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, Minn. It also represents the actualization of years of work by the district to prepare for these jobs.

More than 20 individuals representing the prime contractor, the subcontractors, the city and several different utility firms attended the meeting.

The project, awarded to NODAK Contracting, Inc., for $13 million, initiates the construction of the flood control measures for Grand Forks.

The first phase of a three-phase construction program includes the construction of 7,000 linear feet of levees in three reaches throughout the city, as well as four pump stations, interior drainage, stoplog closures and recreational facilities.

Sander provided an orientation to the project, described the district's organization, then addressed several coordination issues, including scheduling.

Sander was the COR for several projects in Devils Lake valued at more than $21 million. The Devils Lake projects provided him the experience to lead the construction management team for the Grand Forks project.

Many of those attending expressed relief and satisfaction that the project reached the construction phase. Greg Hughes, a sub-contractor with United Crane, greeted Steve Griffin, NODAK Contracting general manager, by saying "This is where it all starts." Griffin replied that "It's going to be a great voyage."

The contractor's schedule provides contingencies for the inevitable spring flood fight on the Red River of the North.

Craig Johnson, Grand Forks resident engineer, emphasized maintaining the current level of flood protection throughout the city.

Project designs call for the removal of existing levees with the new levees in place before the old levees can be demolished. Al Grasser, Grand Forks city engineer, briefly mentioned his expectations for the flood fight and the impacts for NODAK's construction of Phase 1.

Sander and Don Speulda, construction representative, and Darren Bergsgaard, a mechanical engineer, will provide quality assurance and construction management for this first phase, assisting NODAK in producing a quality, incident-free project.

Those attending included: Al Grasser, the Grand Forks city engineer; Steve Griffin, the general manager of the prime contractor, NODAK; and Mark Lambrecht who is the vice president of CPS, Ltd. "Mark is Grand Forks flood project coordinator for the city of Grand Forks," said Tom Eidson, Western Area Office engineer. "When the flood protection projects developed by the Corps are complete, we will have greatly reduced the burden on the city's flood project coordinator."

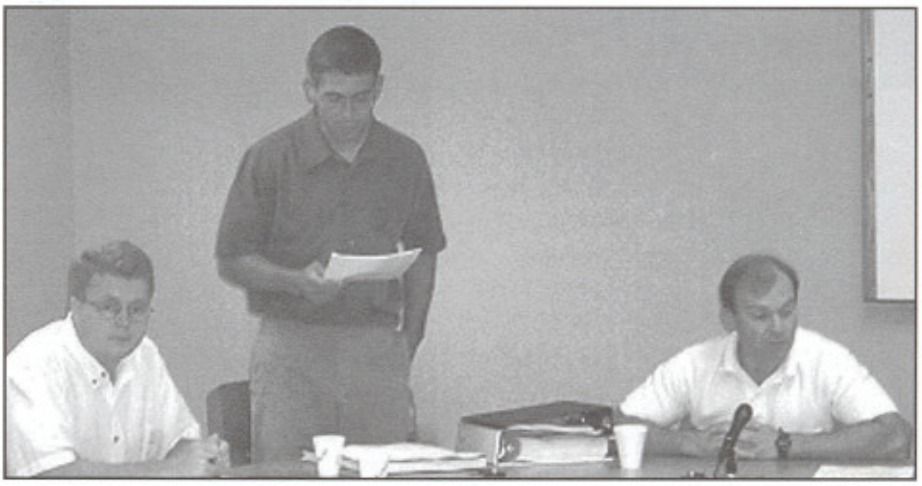

Photo by Virginia Regorrah

From the left are: Craig Johnson, Grand Forks resident engineer; Blake Sander, Grand Forks project engineer for Phase 1 Levees Project; and Tom Eidson, Western Area Office engineer. They are in a conference room in the City Hall at Grand Forks, N.D., for the pre-construction conference.

Contracting Division gathers for satellite broadcast on acquisitions

Photo by Peter Verstegen

Contract specialists gathered at the district office on Sept. 10 for a Department of Defense satellite broadcast for Acquisition and Logistics Excellence Week. Left to right: Charles Horwitz, chief of Contracting Division; Deborah Lawrence, purchasing agent; Dawn Linder, contract specialist; Suellen Buelow, contract specialist; William Hurley, contract specialist; Cathy Frederickson and Fred Mitchell, contracting officers. Buelow, Hurley and Frederickson are new to the district.

'There was a long wait till we could get word back home'

Judy DesHarnais, deputy district engineer for Programs and Project Management, accompanied Col. Ball to brief members of Congress in Washington, D.C., when terrorists struck the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 11. Mark Davidson, chief of the public affairs, asked DesHarnais about her experience.

PAO: Where were you at the time of the attack and what were you doing?

DesHarnais: We were meeting with Representative Ron Kind in his office in the Longworth House Office Building in Washington, D.C. The first airplane crash into the WTC (World Trade Center) occurred while we were in the basement of the Longworth building prior to our meeting. The second occurred while we were in Rep. Ron Kind's waiting room and watching on television, not sure if it was really happening, since it was so horrendous. When the plane crashed into the Pentagon, Rep. Kind and his staff decided to immediately evacuate. After the DE (district engineer) led the way down to the first floor, we stopped at Representative Earl Pomeroy's office to touch base prior to evacuating as we were supposed to meet with him that morning.

When and how did you get back to Minnesota?

I arrived at my house at about 11:30 p.m. on Friday. On Thursday night we met up with MVD and ERDC personnel as well as the DE from Rock Island and learned that they were trying to finalize planes to return home on the G-1 the next day. We left from Andrews Air Force Base at about noon Friday – and witnessed very tight security. We arrived in Moline and Rock Island District loaned us a government car for the return to St. Paul District. At the end of the long drive back to St. Paul we stopped at the airport to pick up my car, stopped at the district office and dropped off the government car and I dropped Col. Ball off at his house. Living very close to St. Paul, I really felt like I'd made it home when I saw the large red number 1 atop the First Bank building. Strange how the mind works.

How do you foresee the St. Paul District being affected by this attack over the next year?

Security will be tighter. Some of our folks may be called upon to support the Army and I am sure we will have plenty of willing volunteers to do whatever is needed. We have a great and a responsive district.

Anything else you want to add?

Thanks to all the folks who were concerned. I had only a few minutes where I thought I might be in any danger, but due to the difficulty with communications there was a long wait until we could get word back home that we were fine. Thanks to Angie and Mary Kay in the executive office for their efforts to get us a place to stay and their attempts at getting us home.

Bits and Pieces

CFC provides opportunities to give generously

The 2001 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) for the St. Paul District is from Oct. 10 through Oct. 26. Mark Davidson, chief of Public Affairs, is the chairman of the district's 2001 CFC.

"All 360 district employees here in the headquarters building, and at the Con-Ops sites in the Twin Cities metro area, will have a chance to contribute to the worthwhile agencies of CFC, either locally or nationally," said Davidson.

Each division and office will have solicitors passing out CFC brochures and contribution forms during the drive. "All employees are reminded that contributing to CFC is a voluntary gesture on the part of employees," said Davidson.

A CFC bake sale was scheduled for Oct. 10 from 9-9:30 a.m. in the district's second floor lobby.

Save Dec. 14 for Holiday Awards Ceremony

The St Paul District Holiday Awards Ceremony will be held Dec. 14, 2001 at the Prom Center in Oakdale, Minn.

"All employees and their families are invited to attend," said Dave Christenson, chief of Readiness Branch. Christenson and Ralph Augustin from Regulatory Branch are event co-chairmen. "Retirees are encouraged to participate," added Christenson.

The district holds the event in December to celebrate the accomplishments of district employees throughout the year.

Program guides, prices, the menu, meal tickets and other details are being developed.

District joins St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce

The St. Paul District is now a member of the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce. "Chamber membership will help educate many people about the mission of the Corps of Engineers in the Twin Cities area," said Mark Davidson, chief of public affairs.

"Stop in at the Public Affairs Office on the fifth floor to get more information on how you can get involved with St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce events," he said.

LDP candidates selected

The second group of Leadership Development Program (LDP) candidates begins their duties as of Oct. 1, 2001 and continues for one year. Mike Knoff, chief of Hydraulics and Hydrology Branch, will monitor the progress of new candidates. They are:

- Eric Carlson, Construction Operations (CO);
- Terry Jorgenson, Engineering Division (ED);
- Mark Koenig, CO;
- Joe Mose, ED;
- D.J. (De Lene) Moser, CO;
- Dan Oles, CO;
- Jim Sentz, ED;
- Steve Tapp, CO; and
- Greg Yale, CO.

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