KANSAS CITY DISTRICT'S NEWS MAGAZINE

HEARTLAND ENGINEER

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JULY - SEPTEMBER 2013

Kansas City Welcomes New Leader

Mark Frazier, Chief, Regulatory Branch.
Photo by Amy Phillips

INSIDE THE HEARTLAND

Commander's Notebook — 3
A Quarter Century of Bald Eagles Nesting In the Kansas City District — 4
Truman's unique resource — 6
Historic replica adds to visitor center complex appeal — 7
District welcomes 44th commander — 8
Kansas City District turns over Missouri River Levee System 385 to the Riverside-Quindaro Bend Levee District — 10
Pomme trails receive national designation — 11
District employee participates in Missouri River 340 — 12
Major Program Planned at McConnell Air Force Base — 13
One of the Unhuggables — 14
Around the District — 16

Where I fit in the **OPLAN 2013**

My Part of the Plan:

Action 3.a Implement a Communications and Strategy Plan for Kansas River Dredging Permit Review.

The regulatory program is one of the oldest federal programs dating back to the 1899 Rivers and Harbors Act. The program is responsible for reviewing permit applications for all construction activities that occur in our nation's waters to include wetlands.

During the fiscal year 13 Operations Plan, the regulatory office was tasked with developing a communication plan in regards to the Kansas River dredging permit review.

"The regulatory program serves the nation through our commitment to protect the nation's aquatic resources while allowing reasonable development through fair, flexible and balanced permit decisions," said Mark Frazier, chief of the Regulatory Branch.

The tasks developed for the FY13 OPLAN primarily hit on the aspect of the collaboration and transparency goal within the larger national goal, Frazier said.

"The Action 3.a task was to implement a communications and strategy plan to make sure that the public has the information they need to understand what we are doing, why we are doing it and how we are going to go about making that decision when it comes to dredging on the Kansas River," said Frazier.

The task was completed and implemented in January 2013.

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ON THE COVER: Brig. Gen. Anthony Funkhouser passes the colors to Col. Andrew D. Sexton during the Kansas City District's Change of Command Ceremony on July 19, 2013. Photo by Scott Robben.

COL Andrew Sexton

As this is the first opportunity to share my thoughts in the Commander's Notebook, I'd like to start with a big thank you. Thank you to all of those in the district who have made the transition onto this team an inviting and fulfilling experience thus far for both myself and for my family. It is an honor to serve alongside such a fantastic collection of people who have gone out of their way to bring us on-board and welcome us to the Kansas City area. We look forward to meeting and getting to know more of the team in the near future.

During the first 60 days after becoming part of the team, competing requirements for my time from Army and USACE HQ levels have kept me away from the district. I'm happy that the alternate uses of my time have drawn to a close and I plan to spend much more time getting to better know our district. The Kansas City District is well-known with a great reputation. Our current vision and mission statement are in tune with maintaining the excellence of the district. They are also in-line with my overarching priorities for the district, People, Projects, and Partners. We exist to serve, create, foster and maintain these priorities. People are the heart of our business and thus should be our top priority. Our business is producing quality projects, on time that serve the nation and the people. Our partners are paramount for our mission success as we foster relationships, cost share and protect the people of the nation.

The September issue of the Heartland Engineer coincides with the end of the fiscal year. I couldn't have been more pleased with the phenomenal efforts of the district. The pressures of the increased workload and deadlines didn't get in the way of continued superb performance. This year may have been more challenging than years in the recent past due to the additional federal fiscal constraints, sequestration, and furloughs. The district's dedication and resolve allowed us to conquer every challenge as we pushed through the end of the year's activities. We should be proud of what we were able to accomplish in a short period of time.

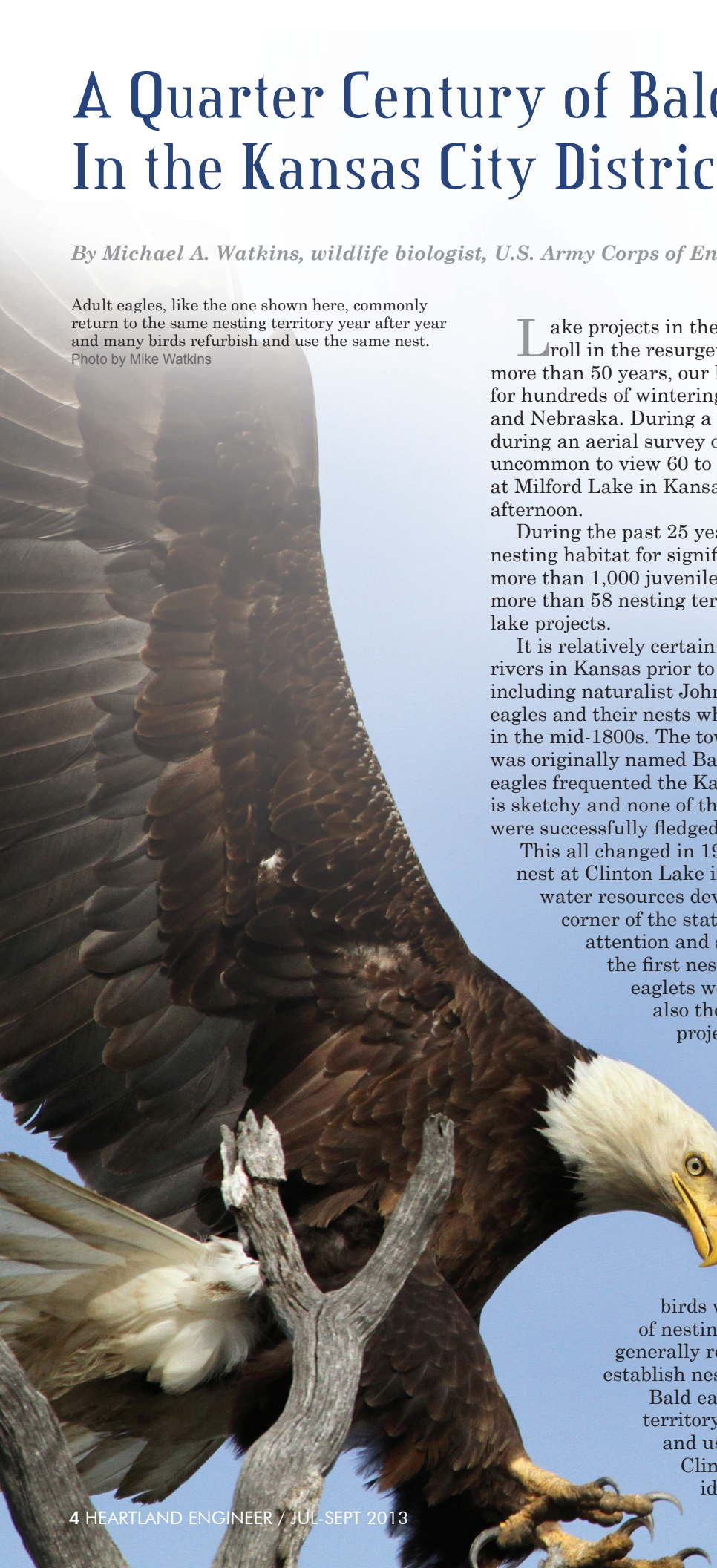
I have been given a fantastic opportunity to work with USACE, but even more so to work with the Kansas City District. The people of this district have achieved a superb reputation that is known across the country, and I am honored to be a part of the team. The district has been a part of making history, never content with watching history being written around them. Together we will serve the nation, the region, and the Corps to write another tremendous chapter as we continue to build the heartland of America.

We offer a special thank you to the members of our team who are deployed in harm's way, supporting our warfighters and our nation. We look forward to your safe return and reintegration.

Thank you for all that you do for the district and the nation. I am proud to be a part of the Heartland Engineer team.

A Quarter Century of Bald Eagles Nesting In the Kansas City District

By Michael A. Watkins, wildlife biologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



Adult eagles, like the one shown here, commonly return to the same nesting territory year after year and many birds refurbish and use the same nest. Photo by Mike Watkins

Lake projects in the Kansas City District have played a critical roll in the resurgence of the bald eagle in the Midwest. For more than 50 years, our lake projects have provided critical habitat for hundreds of wintering birds in portions of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska. During a recent winter, 138 bald eagles were counted during an aerial survey of Smithville Lake in Missouri and it isn't uncommon to view 60 to 70 eagles from the Wakefield Causeway at Milford Lake in Kansas during a typical December or January afternoon.

During the past 25 years, the district's lakes have provided critical nesting habitat for significant numbers of bald eagles. Since 1989, more than 1,000 juvenile eagles have been hatched and fledged from more than 58 nesting territories located at or adjacent to 15 district lake projects.

It is relatively certain that the bald eagle nested along the major rivers in Kansas prior to the state's settlement. Several explorers including naturalist John J. Audubon documented the existence of eagles and their nests while traveling along the Kansas River Valley in the mid-1800s. The town of Lecompton, located in northeast Kansas was originally named Bald Eagle reinforcing the notion that bald eagles frequented the Kaw Valley in the 1850s. But documentation is sketchy and none of the records indicate whether any young eagles were successfully fledged from those early nest sites.

This all changed in 1989 when a pair of bald eagles constructed a nest at Clinton Lake in Kansas. Clinton Lake is a 7,000-acre Corps water resources development project located in the northeast corner of the state. The nesting attempt drew national attention and surprised state and federal biologists. It was the first nest site from which it could be documented that eaglets were successfully fledged in Kansas. This was also the first successful bald eagle nest at the lake projects in the district.

In 1989, two juveniles were fledged from the nest sight at Clinton Lake. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers trapped the young eagles and fitted them with purple visual identification bands inscribed with silver letters "A" and "B" respectively. By taking beak, talon and weight measurements, the USFWS determined that both juveniles were male. The sex of the birds was critical to establishing a new population of nesting eagles in the Midwest because males generally return within 100 miles of where they fledge to establish nesting territories.

Bald eagles commonly return to the same nesting territory year after year and many birds refurbish and use the same nests. In 1991 the adult male at Clinton Lake was trapped and banded with visual identification band "E." Two adults including

eagle E have returned to the Clinton Lake nesting territory each year and have fledged 56 juveniles over the past quarter century. The eagles have been one of the most productive pair in the nation producing 2.24 young annually where as the national average is only 1.6 young per nest.

In 1993 eagle B, a male, returned to the district and established a nesting territory at Hillsdale Lake in Kansas approximately 28 miles southeast of Clinton Lake. In addition to the standard U.S. Geological Survey aluminum leg band, his mate also wore a white band etched in black with the insignia E-27. The band color was traced through the USFWS's Bird Banding Laboratory in Laurel, MD. The trail led to Alan Jenkins, assistant director of the Sutton Avian Research Center in Bartlesville, Okla. Jenkins said E-27 was part of their bald eagle reintroduction program and had hatched from an egg that was collected from a nest in Osceola County, Fla., in 1990. The pair continues to nest at Hillsdale Lake and have produced 42 eaglets over the years.

Another significant year in the nesting history of bald eagles in the district was 1994. In the early spring of that year, eagle A returned to the district and established a nest at Perry Lake in Kansas approximately 15 miles northwest of where it was hatched and raised at Clinton. His mate did not display any identifying markers. Over the years, they have constructed six different nests in the same nesting territory at Perry Lake and have fledged 22 young.

Mike Watkins, a wildlife biologist with the Kansas City District, holds a young eaglet while the talons are measured. By taking beak, talon and weight measurements, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can determine the sex of the birds. Photo by Marty Birrell.

Considering the mortality rate among first-year eagles is 70 to 80 percent, it was remarkable that both eagle A and eagle B had survived, and had returned to nest in the district.

In 2013, Clinton Lake had four productive bald eagle nest sites, but the champion of successful bald eagle nesting territories in the district is the Harry S. Truman Reservoir in Missouri. The reservoir has over 50,000 surface acres of water and more than 100,000 acres of wildlife land surrounding the impoundment. During the 2013 nesting season, Truman had at least 19 productive bald eagle nesting territories that hatched and fledged approximately 38 eaglets. Since 1991, nest sites at Truman Reservoir have fledged more than 500 juvenile eagles.

Each bald eagle nesting territory can present a unique set of management challenges. When a new nest site is discovered, representatives from the Corps, USFWS and the appropriate state wildlife management agency met to develop a management plan to protect the nest site. Management strategies can vary greatly depending on the location of the nest and the density of the recreating public.

At most lake projects, many of the nests are located in relatively remote areas and nothing other than routine monitoring is required. At Harlan County, Longview and Tuttle Creek lakes however, some nests are located in high traffic areas and are protected by restricted zones which are established around the nest trees to keep the recreating public from disturbing the nesting birds.

The number of bald eagles has increased significantly since they were placed on the original federal endangered species list on March 11, 1967. In the early 1970's, experts believed there were less than 2,000 eagles and less than 413 nesting pairs in the lower 48 states. Today, eagle numbers have grown to more than 50,000 with more than 10,000 active nesting territories. In response to this increase, the bald eagle was removed from the endangered species list on August 8, 2007. However, the bald eagle is still one of the most protected birds in the world. It is protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Lacey Act. Anyone who disturbs or harms a bald eagle may be assessed a maximum penalty of a $250,000 fine and/or given a two-year jail sentence.

"We expect the bald eagle population in Kansas and throughout the Midwest to continue to expand," said Dan Mulhern a biologist with the USFWS in Manhattan, Kan. "The increase in bald eagle numbers nationwide has resulted in the birds returning to regions of the country they apparently abandoned more than 100 years ago. They seem to be taking advantage of new habitat provided by the construction of large water impoundments. As a result, the new nesting populations are likely to concentrate around lakes and reservoirs rather than the traditional river and stream corridors."

This has certainly been the case in the district. For the past 25 years, the pioneering bald eagle population has been a tremendous success story for the district and the nation. It is proof that integrating flood control, municipal water supply and high quality recreation for large numbers of people, while at the same time providing critical habitat for our national symbol is an achievable goal.

Truman's unique resource

By Amy Phillips

Harry S. Truman Lake has a valuable, unique resource available to the district for everyday business or emergency situations.

The Truman Sign Shop is a distinctive sign making shop that is used by the Kansas City District and other districts within the Corps of Engineers.

This is because it is one of two sign shops in the Corps and the largest in the nation. They are able to build signs and deliver them quickly.

The signs are built to the sign manual standards that require all Corps lakes to have the same size, style, and text.

"The sign shop is used mostly by the lake projects throughout the Corps," said Scott Rice, natural resource management specialist.

However, they have been utilized during emergency situations which can be a valuable asset.

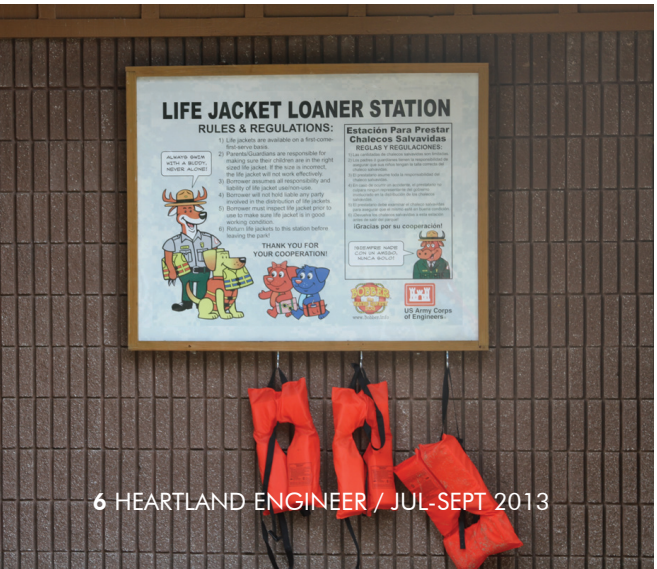
"During the Joplin Tornado, the Emergency Management section called upon the sign shop for support," Rice said.

They were able to quickly build the signs needed in Joplin.

"We wanted Joplin to have the sense that the Corps was there to help them and that we were working hard to get things back to normal," said Lt. Col. Jason Evers, deputy district commander.

Being able to have the signs posted within the first week or two helped show the people of Joplin that we were easily located and we were part of the solution, said Evers.

"The sign shop normally manufactures large orders but can complete a quick turnaround in emergency situations or when information that needs to be pushed out quickly like the blue green algae warning signs," said Rice.



The sign shop has the ability to make all the necessary signs for the lake projects that reinforce water safety messages and life jacket loaner boards like the one pictured here. Photo by Amy Phillips

Top: The Truman Lake sign shop creates signage for use around the lake or for emergency situations like the Joplin Tornado. They produced provisional signs for buildings such as the temporary fire department. Photo by David S. Kolarik

They provide the normal signage around the lake but can also create water safety messages, loaner board signs and visitor center signs that are extremely cost effective.

"The sign shop has to operate on a net zero basis meaning they cannot make or lose money," said Rice.

They work with the Army Corps of Engineers Information Technology team on the graphics for the signs and then quote the material and labor of the workers into the price of the job. The work is either cross charged by a purchase request and commitment or via a military interagency procurement requisition.

The sign shop averages about $160,000 per year with the most productive year being 2012 with more than $300,000 in business.

The staff is very innovative as they designed a new fastening system to help make changing signs easier and more visually attractive.

"The signs are professionally done. I was quite impressed by their work," said Evers.

Historic replica adds to visitor center complex appeal

By Diana McCoy

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Harry S. Truman Lake celebrated a large milestone with the Kaysinger Bluff Pioneer Heritage Association and the Warsaw Chamber of Commerce on June 7.

Visitors and volunteers dressed in traditional clothing worn in the mid-to-late 1800s celebrated the Kaysinger General Store Grand Opening with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

The Kaysinger Bluff Pioneer Heritage Association's goal is to preserve and present Benton County's pioneer life as living history. The organization has been educating the public since 1980 at the Harry S. Truman Dam Visitor Center in Warsaw, Mo.

"Today marks the completion of their beautiful, mid-to-late 1800s general store," said Erin Cordrey, park ranger and Corps liaison for the association. "These guys are a pleasure to work with. They work hard—very, very hard. They spend hours up here, and I think this store is a wonderful addition to the grounds."

The association has a lease with the Corps just off the parking lot of the Harry S. Truman Visitor Center for approximately 11 acres. That land is home to several structures, original and replicated, from the 1800s.

"The Hooper House really started all of the historic buildings here on the grounds," said Cordrey. "The Corps relocated the Hooper House here back when Truman Lake was being built, and it comes from down around Osceola, Mo., which is on the south end of the lake. It's on the national register of historic places."

Cordrey said the house is unique because of its historic style—a turn of the century farm home. A barn is also associated with the house.

The Concord Schoolhouse, a one-room schoolhouse, is another building on the grounds which was relocated there from Quincy, Mo. Other structures include the Elmore Log Cabin complex.

"The association is really good about utilizing lumber from around here," said Cordrey. "The cedar trees for the General Store came from a timber stand improvement project by the Missouri Department of Conservation. They were going in and thinning out some cedar areas here, and so the association was able to use that cedar for this project, which worked out really well."

Demonstrators set up inside the store for the grand opening celebration. One woman sewed quilts on an old fashioned treadle sewing machine. Another woman made bobbin lace. A local author who writes books about the area displayed his latest book and signed copies for customers.

"They have homemade soap and all kinds of handmade items like lace doilies and little quilts for sale—all kinds of really nice items that would be found in a general store back in the late 1800s," said Cordrey. "The proceeds go back to their organization and are used for the upkeep and maintenance of the buildings."

The Kaysinger Bluff Pioneer Heritage Association organizes three events at the visitor center every year. Heritage Days is held on the third weekend in October and brings many crafters and demonstrators of pioneer life to the site. It draws thousands of guests from around the United States and has been held for the last 30 years.

The Kaysinger Christmas event is held in December. Guests experience the sights, sounds and smells of days gone by, while enjoying old fashioned décor, wood stoves and fire places, singing of carols, and festive pioneer table fare.

Living History Days is held in the spring for area elementary students. It provides an opportunity for the children to interact with the history of their forefathers.

Dennis Wallace, operations project manager at Harry S. Truman Lake, remarked at the ribbon cutting he was excited about the general store.

"It's an example of the Corps of Engineers being able to work together with a local group on a partnership to accomplish something that either one of us couldn't do on our own."

Cordrey said the association is now working on an authentic rebuilding of an 1850s log cabin near the Elmore Cabin.

Top: Young boys dressed in the period of the late 1800s play as they wait for the ribbon cutting ceremony to begin. Photos by Amy L. Phillips

A demonstrator sews quilt squares on a treadle sewing machine at the grand opening celebration.

Members of the Kaysinger Bluff Pioneer Heritage Association celebrate the completion of the General Store with a ribbon cutting ceremony on June 7.

District welcomes 44th commander

By Diana McCoy

Col. Andrew D. Sexton took command of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Kansas City District during a Change of Command Ceremony July 19 at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Mo.

Sexton, now the district's 44th commander, joins the district from the U.S. Marine Corps University where he attended the Marine Corps War College and earned a master's degree in Strategic Studies.

The ceremony was attended by former Northwestern Division commander Brig. Gen. Anthony C. Funkhouser; several members of the senior executive service; current Northwestern Division commander Col. (P) John S. Kem; and fellow district commanders within the Northwestern Division.

After an invocation was delivered by Reverend Tim Howey of Grace Church in Overland Park, Kan., a color guard comprised of Kansas City District park rangers posted the colors, and the 312th Army Band from Lawrence, Kan., played the National Anthem. Sgt. First Class Cardell Edwards, a previous employee of the district, conducted the band.

Kansas City, Mo., Mayor Pro Tem Cindy Circo gave remarks on behalf of Mayor Sly James.

"I want to thank Col. Anthony Hofmann and his family for his three years of service to the area and welcome Col. Sexton and your family," said Circo, looking at Mrs. Sexton. "I hope you enjoy living here. It's a great community."

After the passing of the colors, Funkhouser addressed the audience and spoke about Hofmann's achievements and introduced Sexton to the district, saying that he never had the honor to serve with Sexton, but knew who he was by reputation.

"He is definitely a man of character and integrity, and I think he will carry that same intensity, that same competitiveness and desire to take this district to the next level," said Funkhouser.

He challenged Sexton with continuing to take the district forward and doing great things. "You're on the shoulders of some real great giants. There will be plenty of challenges, but you're going to do great."

Hofmann addressed the crowd as well and shared some history of the Kansas City District and what it does for the area. Before turning the podium over to Sexton, he shared his pleasure in serving the American public and his confidence in the district being able to take on any challenge.

"What a great day to be an Army Engineer in the heartland of our nation," Sexton told guests.

He recognized and thanked Army and Department of Defense families for what they sacrifice and endure so members of the military can support the nation.

Sexton said he's had the opportunity to travel around the country the previous year, and when he would talk to folks and tell them his next assignment was to serve with the Kansas City District, he always heard positive comments.

> "Some of those recurring themes or statements that I heard were that Kansas City is a great district. Kansas City is one of the busiest districts, and they do professional work. Kansas City has some of the best and most professional people working. Over the last two weeks, I've been able to witness this first hand as you've welcomed me on to the team and done a phenomenal job at presenting the organization, missions, and challenges we may face in the future. Thank you to Col. Hofmann and the team for continuing to uphold your reputation that is far reaching across the nation and the Corps," said Sexton. "I am honored to be here today, now officially part of what I consider to be the team of teams."

With approximately 900 employees, Sexton's responsibilities include executing civil works, military construction, cleanup of hazardous, toxic and radioactive waste and emergency response programs.

He has served in a variety of command and staff positions to include platoon leader, task force engineer and brigade engineer with the 307th Engineer Battalion, 82d Airborne Division.

He is a native of South Bend, Ind., where he married his wife of 25 years, Jennifer. Together, they have two daughters.

Change of Command

Col. Andrew D. Sexton, 44th commander of the Kansas City District, makes remarks, "I am honored to be here today, now officially part of what I consider to be the team of teams."
Photos by Scott Robben

Col. Andrew D. Sexton is officially the 44th commander of the Kansas City District.

Kansas City District
turns over Missouri River Levee System 385 to the Riverside-Quindaro Bend Levee District

By David S. Kolarik

Riverside, Mo.—The Kansas City District handed over L-385 to the Riverside-Quindaro Bend Levee District after more than 11 years of construction at a ceremony hosted by the City of Riverside on July 1st at the E.H. Young Riverfront Park in Riverside, Mo.

"Today we celebrate the closing piece of this project, the final turnover, a testament to promises made and promises kept," said Kathy Rose, mayor of Riverside. "This achievement, L-385 is an example of a city involved with its citizens, this is our something great."

Since the inception of the Missouri River Valley project in 1939, a multitude of people, organizations and professionals have worked tirelessly to bring the project to fruition.

"Today is an exciting day for the levee district," said Don Coleman, President of the Riverside-Quindaro Bend Levee District.

Coleman stated that the Corps of Engineers had different personnel working the project over the years, but they kept the project alive and constantly evolved it into the levee we are celebrating today.

Coleman added that bipartisan support was vital. Senator Kit Bond, Representatives Pat Danner and Sam Graves all played important roles at pivotal times to keep the project moving.

The hard work is paying off – let's look at the results!

"First of all, we have safety, flood protection and security for the residents and businesses of Riverside," said Coleman.

The levee allows the promise of industrial development in one of the most desirable locations in the Kansas City area.

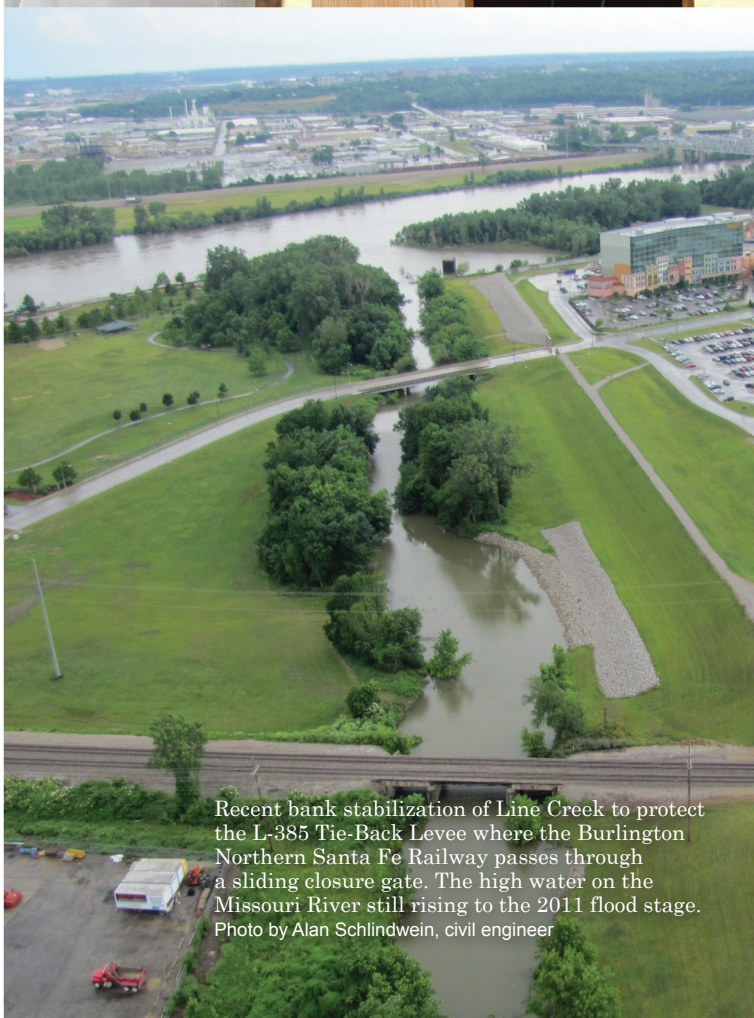
Coleman added that over 2,300 new, high paying jobs are already committed in Riverside and potentially, when fully developed, may account for 8,000-10,000 jobs that could not exist in southern Platte County without the levees.

John Benson, Kansas City District project manager for L-385 stated, "Full turnover of the system makes it eligible for requested assistance authorized under the Public Law 84-99 program, yet it is imperative to understand that operation and maintenance of this system is ongoing and requires continuous effort."

According to Coleman, the total investment in buildings and infrastructure protected by the levees ranges between $400 and $600 million. He added that the level of commerce as a result of the levee will be huge, resulting in sales and property taxes that will improve the quality of life for all Platte Countians.

Coleman concluded stating that with the levee built, our responsibilities continue. The levee requires constant maintenance like any other multi-million dollar investment. Trees must be controlled, boring groundhogs trapped, erosion corrected and flood gates lubricated and pumps tested regularly.

Don Coleman, President of the Riverside-Quindaro Bend Levee District addresses those attending the L-385 Ceremony. Photo by Jennie Wilson



Recent bank stabilization of Line Creek to protect the L-385 Tie-Back Levee where the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway passes through a sliding closure gate. The high water on the Missouri River still rising to the 2011 flood stage. Photo by Alan Schlindwein, civil engineer

Pomme trails receive national designation

Horseback riders enjoy the scenery along the Pomme de Terre Multipurpose Trail. The trail is one of two recognized as a National Recreation Trail during the annual Running River 5K race on Jun. 1. Photo provided by Pomme de Terre Lake

By Amy Phillips

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently announced that five of its recreation trails at Corps lakes have been designated National Recreation Trails by the Department of Interior. There are 28 trails nationwide that received the designation this year and they will join the national network of more than 1,200 previously designated trails.

Out of the five that were announced on Jun. 1 during National Trails Day, two of the trails are located at Pomme de Terre Lake.

"We did not know that our two trails were being designated National Recreation Trails until I received an email notification from the National Park Service on May 31, 2013, the day before National Trails Day on Jun. 1, 2013," said Brad Myers, operations project manager.

It just so happened that the lake had their annual Running River 5K run scheduled to take place on National Trails Day and used that event to dedicate the new trail designations.

"During the event I announced that the Running River Trail and the Pomme de Terre Multipurpose Trail had been officially designated as National Recreation Trails in the National Trail System," said Myers.

The lake staff submitted an online application package to the National Park Service in November of 2012 to be considered during the annual cycle of reviewing the nations trails to see if they met the standards to receive the National Recreation Trail designation.

For a trail to be considered for this prestigious designation, the trail must be open for public use and be designed, constructed and maintained according to best management practices in keeping with the use anticipated.

> "Trails that demonstrate state-of-the-art design and management are especially encouraged to apply for NRT designation," said Myers.

With Pomme de Terre Lake located in a rural area without large population areas near the lake, the staff did not expect either trail to receive the heavy use it has.

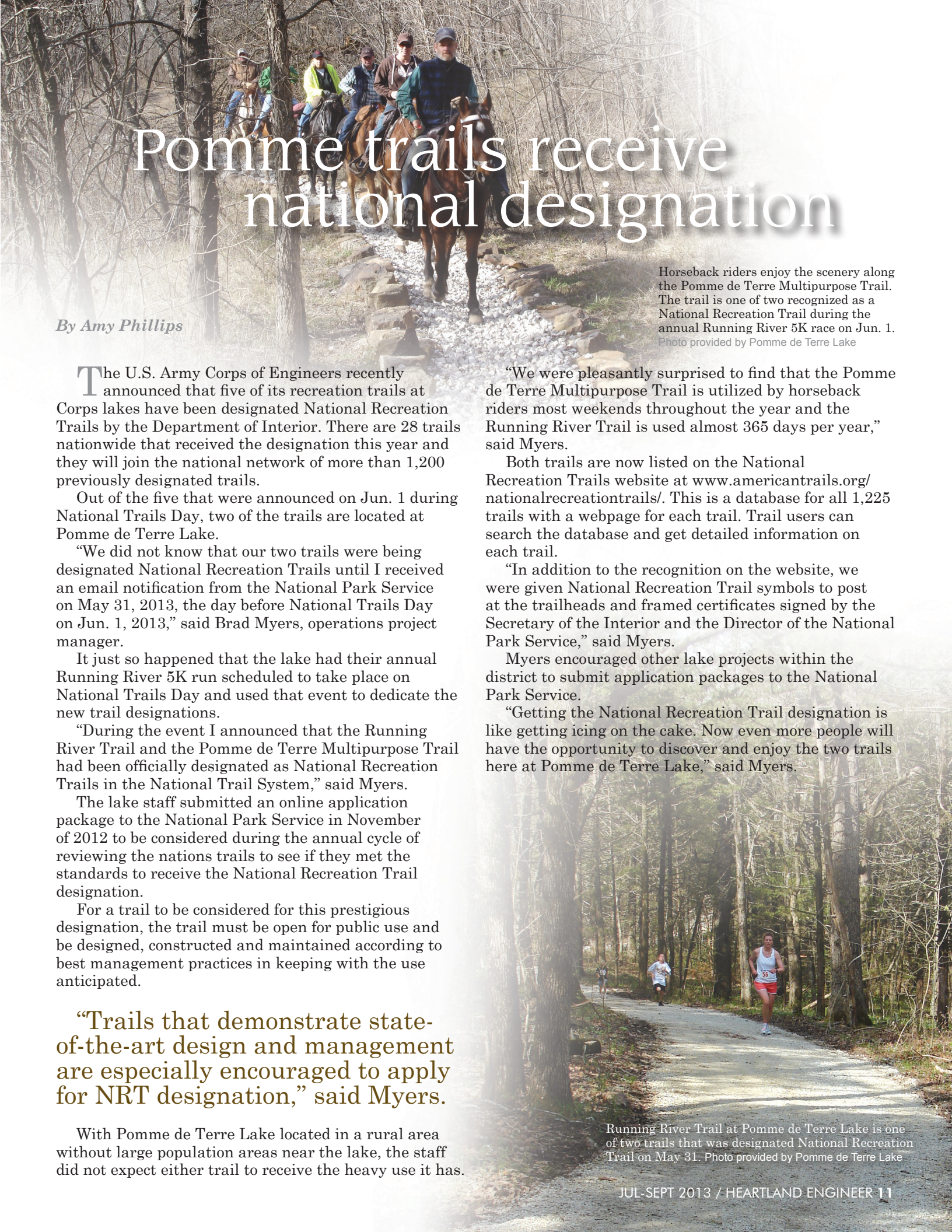
"We were pleasantly surprised to find that the Pomme de Terre Multipurpose Trail is utilized by horseback riders most weekends throughout the year and the Running River Trail is used almost 365 days per year," said Myers.

Both trails are now listed on the National Recreation Trails website at www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails/. This is a database for all 1,225 trails with a webpage for each trail. Trail users can search the database and get detailed information on each trail.

"In addition to the recognition on the website, we were given National Recreation Trail symbols to post at the trailheads and framed certificates signed by the Secretary of the Interior and the Director of the National Park Service," said Myers.

Myers encouraged other lake projects within the district to submit application packages to the National Park Service.

"Getting the National Recreation Trail designation is like getting icing on the cake. Now even more people will have the opportunity to discover and enjoy the two trails here at Pomme de Terre Lake," said Myers.



Running River Trail at Pomme de Terre Lake is one of two trails that was designated National Recreation Trail on May 31. Photo provided by Pomme de Terre Lake

District employee participates in Missouri River 340

By Amy Phillips

With having a goal to float every mile of the Missouri River in the state of Missouri, Frank Bales, lead process engineer in the Environmental Branch of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Kansas City District and his nephew, Jacob Bales completed the 8th annual Missouri River 340 canoe race in July.

The Missouri River 340 is an endurance race across the state of Missouri in which competitors are given 88 hours to travel 340 miles from Kansas City to St. Charles by means of race craft propelled exclusively by paddle power.

The Bales team, TerraMizzou, completed the race in 82 hours, sleeping on sandbars and paddling for hours to make their way down the Missouri River in the time allotted. They paddled for 65.5 hours with the remaining 16.5 hours used for much needed down time.

"We slept on sandbars for 4.5 hours the first two nights, seven hours the third night in Herrman to take a shower and get good rest to finish the race," Bales said.

The race was not without challenges. The team met issues with the slow and wide Missouri River stretch between Waverly and Glasgow.

"The wind pushed us backwards if we went too slow, we only averaged 4.7 mph on this stretch," Bales said.

They barely made the checkpoint in time to stay in the race. It was at this point that Bales said he understood why some people are so tired that they have to drop out of the race.

"Traversing the state with just the self-propelled power behind the blade of your paddle is not an easy task, especially under a time crunch," said Heather Hill, who completed the race in 2012.

There was a sad event that occurred during the race. A man in his 60s had a heart attack in his sleep and died the first night of the race. Bales said that his wife heard the news and was worried about him because he had his phone off to save the battery. He called and checked in with her the next day.

Bales is no stranger to physical endurance events. He participates in a triathlon most years and has completed a half ironman triathlon. He also rides his bike to stay in shape.

When asked if he would do the race again, Bales replied, "Absolutely. I loved paddling in the dark. Very peaceful and beautiful with the stars and a full moon."

The team persevered through the race and finished although tired and bug bitten, they were well satisfied with their accomplishment.

Bales has only 80 more miles to complete his goal of floating every mile of the Missouri River in the state of Missouri. He expects to finish the final two legs of his journey this fall and winter.

Other known district alumni of the MR340 race include Neil Bass and Cody Wheeler.

"It is quite an accomplishment to just finish the race since typically about one-third of the teams don't finish. Ask any of us and we will all agree that it is a memorable experience. After enough time, the memories that remain are mostly joyful," said Wheeler.

Right: Frank Bales and nephew Jacob at St. Charles, Mo., on July 26. They entered in the men's tandem division of the 8th Annual Missouri River 340. They completed the race in just under 82 hours. Photo by Jessica Bales

The Missouri River 340 is an endurance race across the state of Missouri starting in Kansas City, Mo., and ending in St. Charles, Mo. Photo by Mary Singer

Major Program Planned at **McConnell Air Force Base**

By Amy Phillips

The Air Force has a new plane, the KC-46A, arriving at McConnell Air Force Base in 2016 and the Army Corps of Engineers Kansas City District is going to help them prepare for its arrival.

Preparations are in the process to make several changes to McConnell AFB prior to the KC-46A arriving. The military construction program is more than $260 million over the next four years and several major construction projects for the district are under a very tight schedule.

"May 17 is when the Air Force designated that the KC-46A would be beddown at McConnell. With the planes arriving on Feb. 2016, we are operating under a compressed schedule as we work to have the facilities ready," said Ben Davis, program manager.

The program, currently in the design phase, will consist of eight different projects with seven different construction contracts to be awarded during fiscal year 14. These projects include a 2-bay corrosion/fuel cell hangar; a 1-bay maintenance hangar; a 3-bay maintenance hangar; an alter aircraft parking apron; an add/alter flight simulator building; an alter apron fuel distribution system; miscellaneous facilities and a pipeline student dormitory.

According to Boeing, "the KC-46A is a wide body, multi-role tanker that will revolutionize the air mobility mission by ushering in a new generation of capability, efficiency, affordability, trust and partnership."

Boeing is tasked with building the aircraft that will eventually replace the KC-135 while the Corps has been charged with designing and building the facilities that will soon house the aircraft.

Construction is anticipated to begin in June 2014 and some of the projects will continue into FY15 and 16.

According to Davis, "This is the largest program that the Kansas City District has ever had at McConnell." It is a huge deal for the districts declining military construction program and a huge deal for the Air Force.

The district has not had any real MILCON projects at McConnell in years and with the projects coming to an end at larger bases like Fort Leonard Wood and Fort Riley, a welcomed project for the military construction branch.

"We were trying to figure out how to keep the district working during the lean years and the KC-46A came along and really helped out our MILCON program," said Davis.

The McConnell project office will grow from four people to approximately 20. Davis says that there have been volunteers from several of our other project offices to make the move to McConnell which is located near Wichita, Kan.

Other project managers include, Doug Plachy, Eric Brandt, and Steve Rech.

Top: The Kansas City District will design and construct several different projects, like the one shown, at McConnell Air Force Base in Kansas. Graphic provided

Bottom: The KC-46A, shown, is a wide body, multi-role tanker. U.S. Air Force Photo

One of the Unhuggables

By Michael A. Watkins, wildlife biologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Vanessa Avara reached carefully for the lone egg that rested on the cold slab of concrete. Just before her hand cradled the white ovoid object, peeps from a great horned owl chick came emanating from inside the egg. She withdrew her hand and quickly removed a small camera from her pocket. As she recorded the chirping sounds on video, the owl chick piped a hole in the side of the shell.

"The chick is hatching," Avara exclaimed. In an instant the chick's dark colored beak with its white egg tooth were visible through the pea-sized hole in the side of the egg.

Within minutes, Avara carefully collected the egg and placed it in a small soft-sided cooler with an abundance of additional padding and a heating pad for the short trip to the Milford Lake Nature Center.

"We were all extremely excited that the chick was about to hatch as this would significantly improve its chances of survival in an artificial environment," said Avara.

It was a unique set of circumstances that had brought us to the catwalk overlooking the tainter gates at Tuttle Creek Lake at 10:30 a.m. on the morning of March 20, 2012. During a routine dam inspection back in February, Park Ranger Paul Weidhaas had noticed that a pair of great horned owls was incubating an egg that had been laid directly on a flat slab of concrete in a corner section of the catwalk.

This created a significant problem as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had hired a contractor to refurbish the gates as part of a dam safety maintenance project. The contractor was quickly approaching the area where the owls had decided to nest. The work could have been subject to significant delays as the birds are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and could not be disturbed.

To resolve the imminent conflict, the Corps received a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to collect the egg, hatch it and raise the owlet to be released into the wild, if possible. Upon receipt of the permit, the Corps contacted Pat Silovsky, director of the Milford Lake Nature Center which is a state and federally licensed avian rehabilitation facility. Silovsky stated, "We have the equipment and expertise to hatch and raise raptor chicks," and she and her staff were eager to assist.

After the 30-minute drive from Tuttle Creek Lake to the nature center, Avara, assistant director of the center, removed the egg from the portable incubator and placed it on a scale to get its exact weight. Her extensive experience with hatching and rearing birds at the Sedgwick County Zoo had taught her to monitor the egg and chick closely to ensure that nothing would go wrong.

Before placing the egg in an incubator Avara closely inspected another extensive crack in the shell she had noticed on the egg opposite from where the hole had been

Today, Tutt spends his time serving as an excellent ambassador for his species by helping to educate different groups. Vanessa Avara shows a group of Girl Scouts a Great Horned Owl's wings during a presentation in Dover, Kan., on July 19. Photo by Mike Watkins

piped. She was not sure how this crack had formed, but, "I was concerned that this relatively large crack could cause the egg membrane to dry out prematurely making it nearly impossible for the chick to break out of the egg," Avara said.

After work, Avara took the incubator home and constantly monitored the progress of the owl chick that would eventually be named Tutt. At 7 p.m., she became concerned because the chick was not making much progress with breaking free from the shell and seemed lethargic. Avara got her camera and played the video of the egg she had recorded earlier in the day. The peeps and chirps on the recording seemed to stimulate the chick and Tutt began to work feverishly to extricate himself from the egg.

Tutt, a great horned owl, rescued as an egg from Tuttle Creek Lake, weighed just 38 grams after he hatched in March 2012. Photo by Vanessa Avara

Avara said, "Tutt obviously thought the video was his siblings or parents calling to him. That is how some birds stimulate the hatching of their young in the wild."

Within 30-minutes, the wet and extremely tired chick emerged from the egg. Within 1.5 hours his coat of down had dried and he weighed in at a whopping 38 grams. The next 24 to 72 hours would be critical to the young chick's development and survival.

According to Avara, "Tutt could not be fed for 24 hours to ensure that he absorbed the egg yolk that nourished his body. If he didn't consume the entire yolk which contains an antibody called antiglobulin, he could have contracted a bacteria or virus which would have likely led to his death."

The next critical stage was to get Tutt to eat his first solid food, bite-sized portions of mice served with a pair of tweezers. He passed this test easily and proved to be a voracious eater. Two more important milestones in his young life included his first defecation and the forming of his first pellet.

Young birds eat frequently when they are first born and Avara fed Tutt every three-to-four hours for the first few days of his life. The small bits of mice were provided through a hidden access port in his cage so that he would not associate humans with the food. By the time he was three weeks old, he could swallow whole mice and was eating up to 12 mice a day. "Luckily that incredible growth spurt doesn't last long," Avara stated, "or our freezer would have been emptied quickly."

A stuffed great horned owl was placed in Tutt's kennel along with a mirror so that he would associate with and hopefully imprint on these owl images. Several days after he hatched, a three-to-four week old great horned owl was blown out of its nest and brought into the nature center. Their cages were placed side by side so that they could socialize, interact and hopefully imprint on each other.

When Tutt was approximately 10 weeks old, he was placed outdoors in an eight-by-eight-foot cage so that he could adjust to the outside environment. At 14 weeks of age, he was placed in a 20-by-60-foot flight pen with two other owlets. His development progressed quickly with short jumps from branch to branch, and he was soon flying with great skill.

Part of his training in the flight cage included the killing and eating of live prey. Although his cage mates adapted well to this activity, Tutt never was able to make the transition from eating dead mice to catching and killing his prey.

Avara said, "Tutt never really got the hang of killing and tearing apart his food. He pretty much expressed the attitude of 'if you kill it, I will eat it, but if you aren't going to kill it, I am not going to eat it.'"

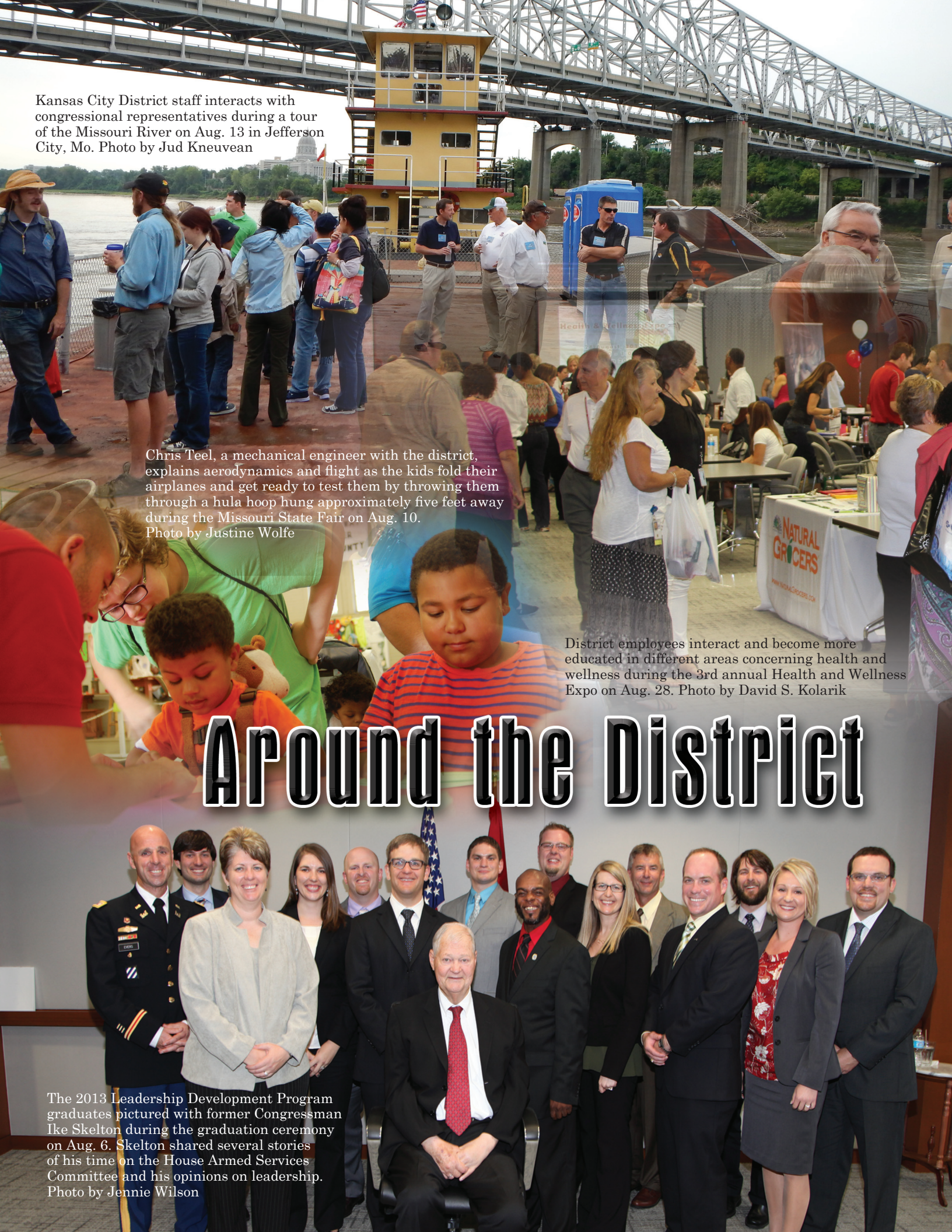
In addition, Tutt displayed one other troubling trait. He didn't seem to be afraid of people.

"Despite all of our efforts, we could never get him to kill live mice or make him uncomfortable around humans," Avara said. "Therefore, he could not be released into the wild."

Tutt was eventually adopted by the Milford Nature Center that now serves as his permanent home. He has developed a unique personality which makes him popular with young and old alike. He has adapted well to the glove and can be easily handled when in front of large audiences. Tutt has quickly become the primary great horned owl used for interpretive programs such as Night Time Diners, Birds of Prey and the Unhuggables.

On a typical day in mid-July, Tutt was the center of attention as he perched on Avara's gloved hand in front of a group of Girl Scouts at Camp Daisy in Dover, Kan. The girls sat transfixed on Tutt and his antics as Avara described the characteristics that made him one of the Unhuggables. The young ladies learned about his sharp talons and beak and that he was still a wild animal, not a pet, and that he should be treated with caution and respect.

Tutt will spend the rest of his days serving as an excellent ambassador for his species. He will help educate thousands of individuals on the unique characteristics of nocturnal raptors and the importance they play in our environment. Considering his inauspicious beginning in life, Tutt is destined to achieve great accomplishments in the field of environmental education.



Kansas City District staff interacts with congressional representatives during a tour of the Missouri River on Aug. 13 in Jefferson City, Mo. Photo by Jud Kneuvean

Chris Teel, a mechanical engineer with the district, explains aerodynamics and flight as the kids fold their airplanes and get ready to test them by throwing them through a hula hoop hung approximately five feet away during the Missouri State Fair on Aug. 10. Photo by Justine Wolfe

District employees interact and become more educated in different areas concerning health and wellness during the 3rd annual Health and Wellness Expo on Aug. 28. Photo by David S. Kolarik

Around the District

The 2013 Leadership Development Program graduates pictured with former Congressman Ike Skelton during the graduation ceremony on Aug. 6. Skelton shared several stories of his time on the House Armed Services Committee and his opinions on leadership. Photo by Jennie Wilson