

PARTNERS ON THE ROAD • YOUTH FISHING • ANNUAL CONFERENCE • 18 LAKES

KANSAS CITY DISTRICT'S NEWS MAGAZINE

HEARTLAND ENGINEER

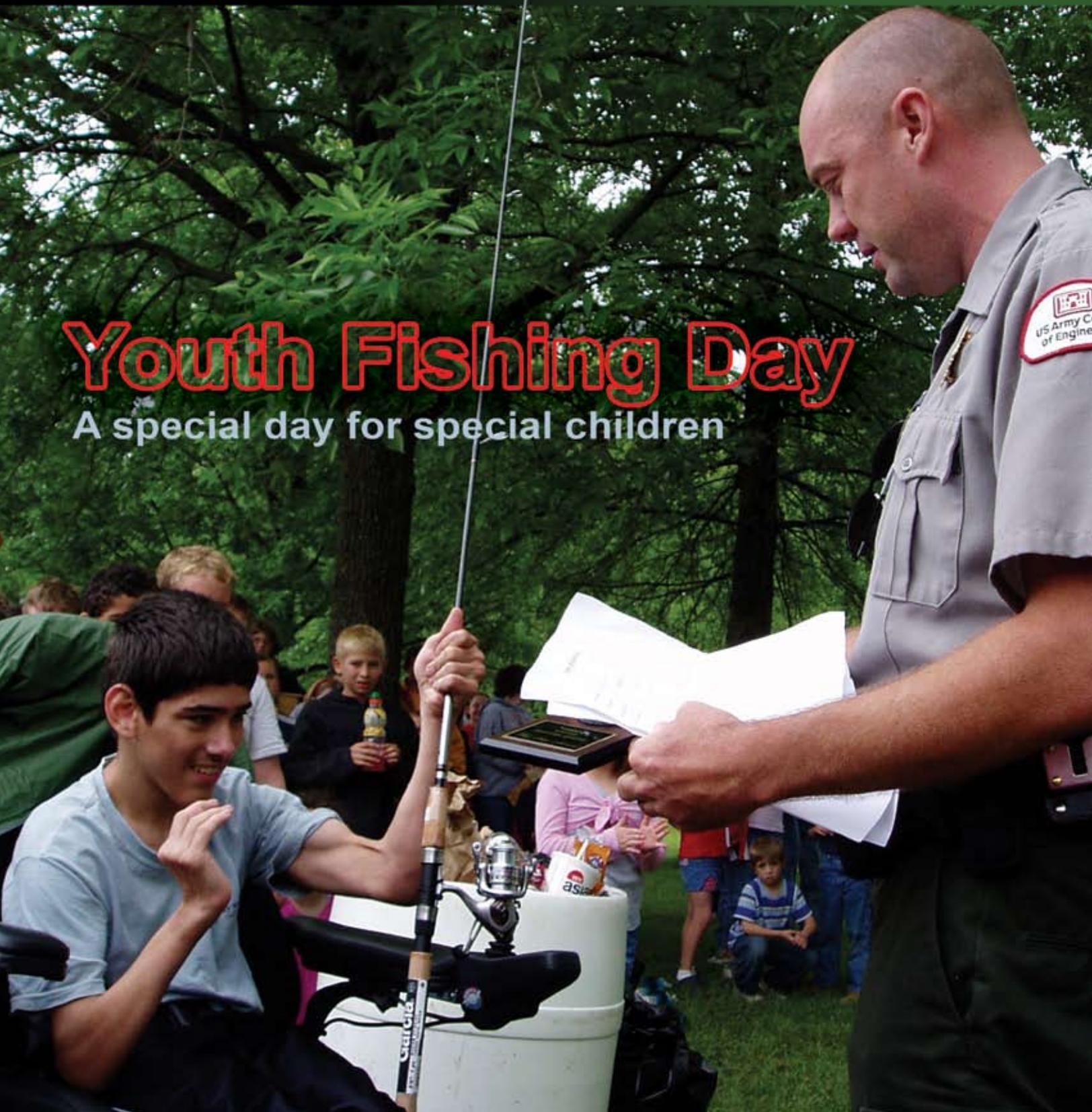


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JUNE 2006

Youth Fishing Day

A special day for special children



FEATURES

PARTNERS ON THE ROAD TO CLEANUP _____ 6

The Kansas City District and the New York District team up at the Maywood Superfund Site in New Jersey to complete the Corps' cleanup mission while minimizing impacts to the surrounding community.

YOUTH FISHING DAY A PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS _____ 8

Special needs children benefit from one man's idea of bringing together several different entities to make a youth fishing day possible.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE HAS NEW NAME AND NEW ROLE _____ 10

The Kansas City District hosted the 2006 Construction Phase PDT Conference for the Northwestern Division. The conference provides valuable lessons for PDT members.

18 LAKES _____ 12

This ongoing series outlines the district's 18 lake projects. This month's columns feature Melvern Lake and Clinton Lake.



Mary Robards finishes the Kansas City Corporate Challenge 5K held May 13 at Shawnee Mission Park in Shawnee, Kan. Robards was one of 19 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees who participated, and her efforts helped put the Corps in 5th place for its division. *Photo by Diana McCoy*

INSIDE THE HEARTLAND

NEWSWATCH

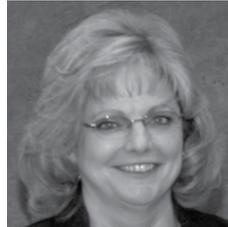
Newsbriefs from around the district and around the Corps.



4

PEOPLEPOWER

Theresa Matthys won this year's Gladys Davies Award for Administrative Excellence.



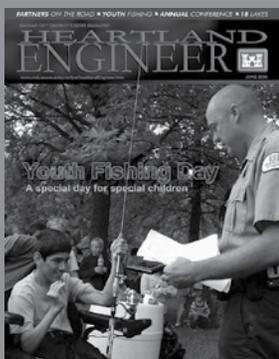
5

LASTWORD

Communicating Corps mistakes is equally important as communicating its successes... telling the Corps story, warts and all.



15



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ON THE COVER:

Rich Chiles, a park ranger at the Harry S. Truman Dam and Reservoir, presents a plaque to Topher, the winner of the fishing tournament which was held as one of the activities of the Youth Fishing Day. The event aims to boost the awareness of the importance of fishing, outdoor recreation and conservation to children with special needs. Topher's fish was a 22-inch long, four-pound catfish. (Photo by Erin Cordrey)

Riding the WAVE of change



COL Michael A. Rossi

Just a quick note about change—You can't stop it. Change is the only true constant in nature, particularly man's nature, yet we spend so much of our energy resisting the current rather than riding the wave of change. We naturally like to operate in our comfort zone and go with what we know. Change involves risk, and it can be both threatening and liberating. You just can't know. My perspective may be a bit skewed, growing up as an Army brat and then being in the Army for the past 24 years—I've moved about every two years of my life. With that life-template, you either get super comfortable with change or you check into an institution with mattress wallpaper. I can assure you, I am very comfortable with change.

For the district, the past few years, institutional change has meant USACE 2012, PMBP, A76, P2, HPOs, performance based budgeting, and "regionalization." These are just the top-driven initiatives. Some of these will "get it right," and some will be missteps. We'll survive and thrive through them all. I promise to do my best to keep you informed, to shield you from stupidity and to exercise tough love (read, make us do some things we'd rather not) when necessary. I only ask for your faith and the unshakable optimism you've shown me the past two years. It just takes a bit of humor and perspective.

Maj. Gen. David Fastabend, our former division commander, gave a retirement speech (not his) a few months back, where he lent some perspective to change and the Army. I'll paraphrase some nuggets for you:

"I've been Totally Quality Managed, micro-managed, one-minute managed, synergized, and Lean Six Sigma'd. I've had my paradigms shifted, had my paradigms broken, and learned about highly effective habits. I've been down-sized, built-down, drawn-down, right-sized, restructured, reorganized, centralized, decentralized, deployed, extended, flagged, stop-lossed, modularized, put on double secret probation (he didn't mention RAB'd, ISO'd, MILCON transformation'd, twice pulsed in the spring and flowed low in the summer). I've been Myers-Brigged, psych-eval'd, equal-opportunitied, made considerate of others, and Warrior-Ethos'd (as well as POSH'd, Galloped and Army Valued). I've gone from Underwood manual typewriters, carbon paper and mimeograph machines, to IBM Selectrics and 3M thermal transfer to dot-matrix, to letter quality laser to "paperless." I've been LANned, WANned, WEBbed, E-mailed, Home-paged, Portaled, Wirelessly, and Blackberried (also IM'd, Blogged, Face-booked, and Googled). I've gone from long-hair to no-hair. I've gone from the Cold War, to post-Cold War, to Other than War, to GWOT."

I think you've got the picture. Enjoy your summer and look forward to all the change the fall will bring. Thanks again for all you do for this District and our great Nation.

Hooah!

PENTAGON ISSUES PAY TABLES FOR NEW PERSONNEL SYSTEM

The Defense Department released the official pay tables May 5 for its new personnel system, which is in place for 11,000 employees and is slated to eventually cover 700,000 civilian workers.

The pay tables for the National Security Personnel System represent a monumental shift from the decades-old General Schedule compensation system for federal employees. In place of the 15-grade pay ladder, the new tables have broad paybands with large salary ranges divided by occupation.

Separated by four career groups - standard, medical, investigative and protective services, and scientific and engineering -- the bands are based on the General Schedule, although the upper pay limits exceed those in the current system.

The standard career group, which will include the majority of Defense employees, has three pay bands for its professional/analytical workers. Payband 1 ranges from \$25,195 to \$60,049, not including a substantial local market supplement. That is equivalent to a GS-5, Step 1, up to a GS-11, Step 10.

But Payband 3, the highest band in that group, ranges from \$74,608 to \$124,904, which exceeds the \$118,957 top of General Schedule for GS-15, Step 10.

The biggest shift from the General Schedule model, according to NSPS spokeswoman Joyce Frank, is in the supervisory paybands.

Supervisors' pay ranges begin at a higher level than their professional/analytical counterparts under NSPS. Payband 1, for example, for supervisors in the standard career group ranges from \$31,209 to \$60,049.

The pay tables, with their broad pay ranges, are too vague, said J. Ward Morrow, assistant general counsel for the American Federation of Government Employees. Workers have no idea where in those ranges they will fall upon conversion to the system, he said.

"Certainly, if everyone who goes in there gets the top of the band, that might be good," Morrow said. "If everybody goes in there and gets the bottom, that would be bad. There's utter confusion in the worksite over what this means."

The 11,000 employees now being paid under these pay tables do not belong to bargaining units. Many of the thousands of Defense workers scheduled to enter in later rounds belong to unions such as AFGE, and Morrow said before those employees enter, the department will have to collaborate with

unions over implementing the pay system.

The tables were released in addition to hundreds of pages of finalized documents, called implementing issuances, that provide details of the working of NSPS.

Those documents remain largely unchanged even after required collaboration with unions, according to Matt Biggs, spokesman for the coalition of Defense Department unions that sued the department over the provisions of NSPS cutting back on collective bargaining rights.

"Not that much has changed," Biggs said. "It's pretty much the same old operation from the DoD. We did give them plenty of suggestions but they didn't seem to incorporate many, if any."

But Frank, the NSPS spokeswoman, said the department did incorporate some union suggestions, although many of them were "editorial or clarifying in nature," she said.

As an example of a significant change prompted by union concerns, Frank offered up the authority for special pay increases. Unions, she said, were concerned that managers could use special pay increase authorities to raid the general pool of money for pay raises for the benefit of a favored few. So the Pentagon changed the rules so the special pay increases can only be given from funding sources outside the general pay pool.

Biggs said his group is shifting its focus to negotiations over pay in the coming months as more employees are scheduled to move into NSPS.—*Karen Rutzick, Government Executive.*

TELEWORK PROMOTED AS WAY TO OFFSET GAS COSTS

By leaving the car parked in the garage and working from home two days a week, federal employees could soften the blow from the recent increase in commuting expenses caused by rising gasoline prices, a study published May 9 found.

With national fuel prices leveling off at just under \$3 per gallon -- up from \$2 per gallon in February 2005 -- federal employees are spending an average of \$46.27 more each month on their commute, the study from the Alexandria, Va.-based Telework Exchange stated.

An average federal employee currently spends about \$138 a month in gasoline, but teleworking two days a week would save workers an average of \$55.52 per month, according to figures in the study.

John Townsend, spokesman for AAA Mid-Atlantic, said market conditions are going to push fuel prices down, but it might take time as prices tend to "go up like a rocket and go

down like a feather."

The online-based telework promoting organization figured that current fuel prices cost typical GS-7, Step 5 federal employees \$138.80 a month, nearly 7 percent of their after-tax income. The organization's study, titled "Gas Fuels Telework," is based on a survey of 3,500 federal employees registered with the Telework Exchange Web site.

According to the Telework Exchange, rising fuel prices are putting pressure on agencies to comply with a federal law that requires certain agencies to let all employees eligible to work outside the office do so.

William Mularie, a longtime advocate for telework and chief executive officer of the federally sponsored Telework Consortium, said the study did not present the best argument for why federal agencies should encourage their employees to telework. Fuel expenses are only the fourth-largest expense of owning a car behind depreciation, licenses and fees, and maintenance, he said.

Continuity of operations planning for emergency situations, the strain on the public transportation infrastructure and employee retention are more significant factors, Mularie said.

"It doesn't matter if you are driving a car that gets 10 miles per gallon or 30 miles per gallon," Mularie said. "We need to step back and rethink this whole thing of distributing the workforce."

But Chuck Wilsker, president and chief executive officer of the nonprofit Telework Coalition, said he believes the study minimized the true cost of the high fuel prices. He said rising gasoline prices could force people to quit jobs in order to work closer to home, but teleworking is an option that could keep employees from making that decision.

"If you want to save 20 percent [of your gasoline expenses] leave your car parked once a week. If you want to save 40 percent leave your car parked twice a week," Wilsker said. "I think more people are going to do it because of high gas prices."

Wilsker also predicted that as more people telework due to high fuel prices, they won't want to go back to working in an office five days a week once prices subside.—*Daniel Pulliam, GovExec.com.*

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children's
website for
summertime
FUN!



Bobber.info

THERESA MATTHYS



Theresa Matthys is the 2006 Gladys Davies Award Winner. Photo by Scott Robben

FACE of the district FACE of administrative excellence

She has worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for six years and served three different deputy district commanders, and she was recently awarded the Gladys Davies Award for Administrative Excellence.

Theresa Matthys began her federal career six years ago when she came to work for Lt. Col. Gary Heer as a secretary. Since then she has also worked for Lt. Col. James Steinke and now Lt. Col. Kelly Butler, who nominated her for the award.

The award was first given out in 1996 to boost the morale of all personnel working in a GS-7 or below administrative position. It is named after Gladys Davies, a secretary who worked for the Kansas City District from 1936 to 1973 and served 17 different district commanders.

“This is an impressive award, and it’s a huge honor for me to receive it,” Matthys said, “considering every secretary is eligible for it.”

She also appreciated and thanked Lt. Col. Butler for nominating her, saying she believes it really is a morale booster and that it was important that every supervisor consider nominating their secretary for this prestigious award.

“Theresa’s duty to the Kansas City District has been exceptional in many ways,” Butler said. “Her expertise in multiple administrative areas has been indispensable to maintaining continuity in the front office area and supporting the entire district.”

Butler went on to explain everything Matthys does.

“Besides coordinating schedules, events and ensuring travel is well planned, she has assumed the role as the master calendar coordinator and has also acted as the face or voice of the district, answering numerous calls on the general line and greeting hundreds of visitors,” Butler said. “She does all of these things and much more, always in keeping with the highest standards of professionalism.”

Matthys’ job hasn’t always come easy to her, though.

“This was the first government job I’d ever had,” she laughed. “When I first came here, I had a hard time understanding what things meant because of all the acronyms.”

Now since learning the “language” of the military, Matthys sees other challenges ahead of her.

“Being awarded this honor makes me want to strive to be even better and set an example for others to look up to,” Matthys said. “The pressure is definitely on.”

PEOPLEPOWER

People Power is a monthly column designed to highlight the outstanding accomplishments of a district employee. Supervisors and peers are encouraged to nominate team members to be featured in an upcoming issue of *Heartland Engineer*.

Nominations should include a brief summary of the nominee’s accomplishment and contact information for the person submitting the nomination. Nominations should be submitted by the 15th of the month for consideration for the next issue.

Nominations should be sent to:

PEOPLEPOWER
c/o Public Affairs Office
700 Federal Building
601 East 12th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64106
or e-mailed to:
thomas.a.ohara@usace.army.mil

FUSRAP

Maywood Team and the NJ Motor Vehicle Commission: Partners on the road to cleanup

Heavy equipment operators conduct remedial excavations at the Maywood Superfund Site in northeastern New Jersey. The Kansas City District is assisting the New York District at the site as part of the Formerly Used Sites Remedial Action Program. *Photo by William Kollar*



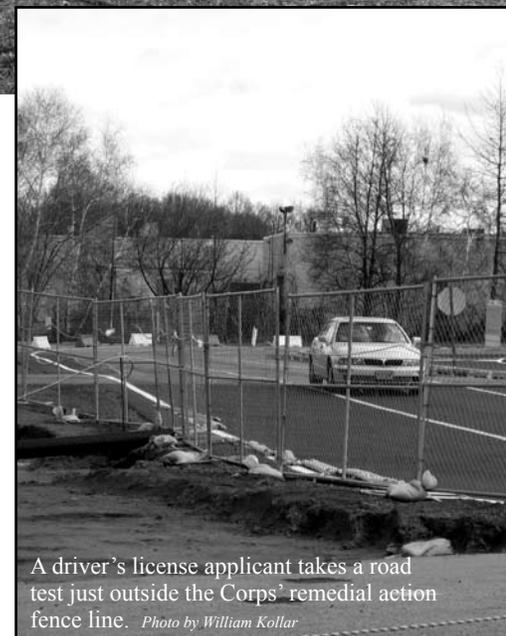
As every site manager knows, impacts to affected properties during site remediation are unavoidable. At the Formerly Used Sites Remedial Action Program Maywood Superfund Site, the challenge for Project Manager Allen Roos and Contracting Officer Representative Danny Lee of the New York District is to safely and efficiently complete the Corps' cleanup mission while minimizing impacts to those properties.

The Maywood Site is in the middle of highly urbanized, northeastern New Jersey. A total of 88 properties, known in FUSRAP as "vicinity properties," make up the site. They include a mix of residential, commercial and a few government-owned properties. All of the residential properties have been remediated. The Corps is currently addressing the remaining commercial and government vicinity properties, most of which house active operations.

One of the more challenging properties at the Maywood Site is a 14-acre tract in Lodi owned by the state of New Jersey. The property houses a New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission business office, vehicle inspection station, and driver testing facility. Remedial activities are underway on a four-acre chunk of this site, meaning nearly one-third of the total site area is temporarily out of service to MVC. The loss of any space was understandably a big concern to MVC officials. The Lodi agency processes more drivers licenses and permits than any other MVC office in the state. Vehicle inspections at the facility total nearly 100,000 annually, and about 7,000 drivers license applicants take road tests there each year. Clearly, the challenge of conducting a long-term cleanup in the midst of such a busy and important operation was immense.

As long-time New Jersey residents, Roos and Lee were well aware of the importance of the Lodi facility to area motorists, so they reached out to MVC early on to kick off coordination on the cleanup.

Among the first issues identified was the need for direct and frequent communication with MVC employees. A briefing by Roos to several dozen facility employees soon followed, covering topics such as Maywood Site history,



A driver's license applicant takes a road test just outside the Corps' remedial action fence line. *Photo by William Kollar*

Article written by William Kollar, community relations for Shaw Environmental and Infrastructure. It contains information provided by Josephine Newton-Lund, Kansas City District.



contaminants of concern, radiation safety, and cleanup plans and schedule. A second brief for another 40 employees was provided in February 2006, immediately preceding the start of full scale remediation. That brief included the results of an indoor air survey at the agency office, conducted by the Corps at the request of MVC employees. In addition to Roos, project specialists in health physics, construction and community involvement participated in the briefing. Both briefings included lively question and answer segments between project representatives and MVC employees.

As remedial construction got closer, coordination of the Corps' cleanup with MVC operations became the priority. Several onsite meetings between the Corps and various MVC and contractor representatives were held over the course of 2005 in the run-up to remediation.

These scoping meetings and site walkovers identified several areas of concern, such as: temporary rerouting of inspection station waiting lanes and driver testing roads; impacts to employee and customer parking; and health and safety during construction. To address these concerns, the project developed detailed site plans and drawings of proposed layouts for temporary MVC operations.

For example, the plan for the temporary road test showed traffic patterns, locations for the various test elements (backing, turning, parallel parking, etc.), locations

of perimeter air monitoring stations, and safety buffers between the testing operation and the remedial work. MVC provided comments on the plan, and follow-up meetings were held to iron out any differences. The plan was revised based on comments received, and a final plan acceptable to the Corps and MVC was developed in late 2005.

The New York District also received help on the project from the Kansas City District's technical specialists.

"Our technical support to the New York District includes a dedicated staff specialized in several environmental disciplines including chemistry, health physics, environmental and cost engineering, risk assessment, hydrogeology and industrial hygiene. This 'virtual' team of specialists has provided New York District with quality technical assistance since 1998 when the USACE was delegated authority from Congress for the cleanup of FUSRAP waste," said Josephine Newton-Lund, FUSRAP project manager for the Kansas City District.

In addition to the virtual team, the Kansas City District also provided on-site support.

"Oversight of the onsite analytical laboratory including quality assurance of analytical data is an important role for the Kansas City District lead project chemist," Lund said. "Contractual support to the New York District includes a dedicated staff of contract specialists who have performed numerous contract awards for engineering, construction and radiological disposal services over the duration of the project in addition to the experienced environmental specialists who manage these contracts."

This successful coordination resulted in on-schedule mobilization to the MVC site in January 2006 by Shaw Environmental, the Corps' remedial contractor. Early site activities included test pitting, temporary



The vehicle inspection station (background) is in full operation as Corps remedial excavations proceed. Photo by William Kollar

continued on page 14



Youth Fishing Day

a partnership success

Story by Diana McCoy

More than 150 youth from five schools south of Kansas City participated in an event which aimed to improve awareness of the importance of fishing, outdoor recreation and conservation—all due to partnership efforts between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other organizations.

For Rich Chiles, park ranger at Harry S. Truman Lake and Reservoir, the Youth Fishing Day transformed from a dream to reality six years ago.

“My idea was to incorporate local school districts to reach physically and mentally challenged youth who might not have the opportunity to fish or learn about various other outdoor recreational activities,” Chiles said. “And this event would never be what it is today without the partnering efforts from people around this community.”

Lakeland High School’s Jim Young is just one of the players who make this event possible. He is an agricultural education teacher and Future Farmers of America advisor and has been involved with the event since the beginning.

“My role in this is to basically get the students from the high school to come and help,” Young said. “We usually take anywhere from 25 to 40 juniors and seniors, and I match each special needs kid with one of my students for the fishing tournament.”

Young said the first year they were involved, his students were a little “iffy” about participating, and now the event is the most popular activity of the school year.

“My students really enjoy helping out, and I think it’s a really good learning experience for them,” Young said. “They always want to come back the next year.”

Chiles couldn’t give Young and his students enough accolades.

“They really help out by volunteering their time to help the kids bait hooks and catch and release fish during the fishing tournament—the highlight of the day,” Chiles said. “Without their involvement, this Youth Fishing Day wouldn’t be possible.”

Before the tournament, the pond had been freshly stocked by the Missouri Department of Conservation—yet another partner. This allowed the children to catch and release 125 fish.

Rick Lisek, Jr. and Gregg Pennington (left to right in second row) present children with hats and fishing line for their efforts during the Youth Fishing Day. The hats were donated by G3 Boats. Photo by Erin Cordrey



A student from Lakeland High School (right) is teamed up with a special needs student for the fishing tournament. Even though the participants had some rain throughout the course of the day, they didn’t mind donning the “highly fashionable, government-issue rain attire.” Photo by Erin Cordrey



Rich Chiles (left front) and Andy Bullock, a conservation agent with the Missouri Department of Conservation, help children build bluebird houses to take home and enjoy. The MDC provided bluebird houses to more than 150 kids, and the whole project was led by Betty Ream, an MDC education specialist. *Photo by Erin Cordrey*

Other partners who make the day possible are Gregg Pennington, a retiree, and Rick Lisek, Jr., a professional fisherman. They sponsor the fishing clinic and give the children pointers on beginning fishing.

“I’ve been involved with the Youth Fishing Day since Rich started it,” Pennington said. “As a retired educator and being involved with the school system for 40 years, this allows me to get back to the kids, get them away from the TV and into nature.”

When he’s not volunteering his time, Pennington visits different schools and represents different fish tackle companies who provide him with clothing and different fish merchandise.

“For the fishing clinic, we give the kids ideas for what they’ll need in a beginner’s tackle box and where to go to get it without overdoing it and breaking the pocketbook,” Pennington said. “They kids are very excited about it, too. This is an opportunity they don’t get very often, and they realize they *can* get out and participate in outdoor activities—even the kids in wheelchairs.”

Pennington and Lisek were able to put together little goodie bags from several of Pennington’s sponsors such as Lucky Strike, Strike King, Shakespeare Fishing Tackle, G3 Boats and Suffix Line. The sponsors donate materials such as tackle, bobbers and hats.

“I’ve had nothing but good experiences with the Corps and the Missouri Department of Conservation,” Pennington said. “The whole program Rich has put together has everyone bending over backwards to support each other, and it’s definitely a team effort.”

Other scheduled activities are a casting contest, run by Larry Smith and Melissa Herhiem, both Corps park rangers, and a water safety program presented by Dan Sandersfeld, another Corps park ranger, and his assistant, Brian Carlton, a summer ranger.

“We talked to the kids about the three basic rules of water safety: swim with a buddy, know how to swim and wear your lifejacket,” Sandersfeld said. “We also talked to them about hypothermia and did a little exercise with them which involved a bucket of ice water and several pennies.”

The rangers gave each child 15 seconds to stick their hand in the water to collect as many pennies as they could. The activity aimed to teach kids about how quickly one could get hypothermia.

“We also taught them how to throw a life ring using a pylon with Bobby, our cartoon character, painted on it,” Sandersfeld said. “The goal was to ‘save Bobby’ by throwing the life ring out to the pylon without hitting it.”

At the end of the program, Sandersfeld and Carlton handed out water safety posters for the kids to bring back to their classrooms.

Another activity for the day was bluebird house building, sponsored by the Missouri Department of Conservation.

“They provided the materials to the kids and helped them build the houses to take home and put in their yards,” Chiles said. “We thought it would be nice to include this activity to help them learn about different outdoor interests.”

At the end of the day, every child went home with donated materials from local businesses and water safety information.

“This is a remarkable opportunity for the surrounding communities of Harry S. Truman Lake,” Chiles said, after explaining this was his last year of involvement with the annual event. “But it won’t end here. Erin Cordrey will be taking over next year. I just think this event is a true example of how partnerships can make a positive difference in the lives of people in our communities and is a great way for the Corps to tell our story and promote outdoor recreational opportunities at our projects. This is a true success story.”

“The whole program Rich has put together has everyone bending over backwards to support each other, and it’s definitely a team effort.”

- Gregg Pennington



has new name
&
new role

Story by Eric Cramer

Col. Michael Rossi welcomes guests of the 2006 Construction Phase PDT Conference. Several PDT members from across the Northwestern Division attended this event which focused on engineering, construction management and contracting.
Photo by Diana McCoy

Col. Michael Rossi, Kansas City District commander, welcomed about 25 project delivery team members to the Northwestern Division Construction Phase PDT conference May 16-18 at the Great Wolf Lodge, Kansas City, Kan.

Eric Arndt, Northwestern Division Construction Manager, said the annual conference began several years ago as the “Area Engineer Conference,” and its role has evolved over time.

“We’re trying to change the focus from being purely on construction, looking at engineering, construction management and contracting—all the issues that affect us,” said Arndt, who organized the event.

Arndt said the conference had four stated objectives: To provide an open forum for the discussion of USACE 2012 issues; to discuss the latest trend for design reviews and comment certification and reach an agreement on how it should work in the future; discuss contract durations; and to serve as the venue for the presentation of a number of awards.

“We spend a lot of time celebrating the things we do wrong when we have after action reviews,” Arndt said. “We want this to be the place where we celebrate the things we do right.”

Award winners at this year’s conference were:

- Hard Hat of the Year (presented to the most outstanding field office employee) – Peter Sturdivant, Omaha, Omaha District.
- Construction Management Excellence award – Gene Scott, Seattle District.
- Construction Representative – Marshall Fisher, Seattle District.

- Project Manager of the Year – Darlene Young, Kansas City District.
- Contractor of the year—Military, MW Builders of Texas, Inc; civil, Barnard Construction Co.

“The important thing is we are trying to look at all aspects, not just construction,” Arndt said. “That’s why we brought in speakers like Hans VanWinkle, he’s a retired major general who works for the Construction Industry Institute, to tell us about benchmarking, and best practices in the industry.”

He said speakers at the seminar also included George





U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees from across the Northwestern Division meet at the Great Wolf Lodge for the 2006 Construction Phase Project Delivery Team Conference May 15-18. The group is standing inside the waterpark of the lodge where some employees also brought their families. *Photo by Diana McCoy*

Rogers, of Rogers/Quinn Construction, Inc. who talked about Building Information Management construction, or “BIM systems.”

“We have our award winners sit with these people so they can establish a dialogue—this lets some of the upper echelon hear from those people who work in the field,” Arndt said.

Other subjects discussed at the conference included a customer perspective on the Corps’ construction of family housing at Whiteman Air Force Base, near Knob Noster, Mo., by base representative Randy White; an update in the Installation Management/ Army Chief of Staff for Installation Management climate; Military Construction Program Metrics; regionalization efforts; ENGLink accident reporting; Design Build Institute of America- Design build for Army Transformation; and several others.

Maj. William Moen, of the Kansas City District’s Fort Riley Area Office, said the conference was a useful learning experience.

“The lessons learned are valuable. It gives us a chance to learn from our mistakes,” Moen said.

The conference is also important from a networking standpoint, said Thomas Poole, a project manager with the Seattle District.

“It’s invaluable to have the cross-organization involvement in these events,” he said. “We talked a lot about relevant and significant issues that are important to what we do every day.”



Randy White, a contractor at Whiteman Air Force Base, provided a customer perspective on the Corps’ construction of family housing. He also answered several questions from the audience about how to improve relations between contractors and the Corps. *Photo by Diana McCoy*

Melvern Lake

A Camper's Paradise

www.nwk.usace.army.mil/melvern/melvern_home.htm

Location of Dam: Near Melvern, Kan.
Stream/River: Marais des Cygnes River
Miles Above Mouth of River: 175.4
Storage Date: August 1, 1972
Total Acreage: 23,366 Acres
Lake Size: 6,930 Acres
Dam Length: 9,650 ft.
Yearly Visitation: 475,000

Story by Diana McCoy

This is the 11th lake to appear in a series which will outline Kansas City District's 18 lake projects. All projects will appear in chronological order from the date they first stored water.

Like many of the lakes built in the Kansas City District, Melvern Lake was authorized after the major flood of 1951 which devastated farm land below the Marais des Cygnes River Valley.

The damage, which equaled to nearly \$7 billion, submerged the city of Ottawa and resulted in the loss of 28 lives.

Located in the geographic region known as the Osage Questas, was authorized in 1954 and completed 18 years later to ensure a flood like the one in 1951 would never happen again. Their missions: flood damage reduction, water quality, recreation and fish and wildlife management.

"About 1990, we were given a fifth mission and became authorized for water supply," said Mack Carlisle, operations manager for the lake. "For a lot of the people in this area, they relate more to the water supply mission than to the flood damage."

Carlisle credits this to the fact that since the dam was put in place, people haven't had to worry about flood damage.

"It's very meaningful to people to have a predictable and safe water supply," Carlisle said. "And now, most of the towns in the lake region are supplied water from two water treatment plants which draw from the lake."



Madeline Volkman eagerly shows off her 15-inch bull head catfish she caught using a spinner lure. Melvern Lake is popular for walleye, crappie, two types of catfish and four types of bass. Photo by Scott Rice

Larry Wigger, a maintenance work leader, pours concrete for the sidewalk at the new Outlet Park Pavilion. Visitors must rent a campsite to be eligible to reserve the pavilion. Photo by Jarah Casten

Carlisle and Jim Franz, park manager, are working together to improve the project's third mission of recreation.

"National Trails Day is June 3, and we're in the process of expanding our trails system," Franz said. "We've recently cleared a 1.5 mile area in our scenic Arrow Rock Park, and as part of the day, we'll have a summer ranger take a group out on mountain bikes."

Other events that attract visitors include National Public Lands Day in September which allows volunteers to work on the trails system and also clean up the park by removing litter and picking up trash.

"We've also participated in National Safe Boating Week in May," Franz said. "We hired Jarah Casten to be our water safety ranger, and she set up displays in different areas around the project. This is mainly for the children, and we put together little bags for them."

When asked what types of things visitors could do at the lake, Carlisle and Franz came up with several different activities.

Besides swimming, hunting, camping and fishing at the lake, wind surfing and sail boating are popular as well. Carlisle said it was because of the fewer number of boats on Melvern in comparison to other lakes.

Clinton Lake

Something for Everyone

www.nwk.usace.army.mil/clinton/clinton_home.htm

Location of Dam: Near Lawrence, Kan.
Stream/River: Wakarusa River
Miles Above Mouth of River: 22.2
Storage Date: November 30, 1977
Total Acreage: 22,554 Acres
Lake Size: 7,000 Acres
Dam Length: 9,250 ft.
Yearly Visitation: 1.6 Million

Story Diana McCoy

This is the 12th lake to appear in a series which will outline Kansas City District's 18 lake projects. All projects will appear in chronological order from the date they first stored water.



Leroy Liberty clears fallen branches from Bloomington Park. Liberty and his wife are one of five volunteer couples at the lake. In return for doing work around the project, volunteers get a free campsite all summer long. *Photo by Willem Helms*

has been at Clinton Lake for 20 years. "The lake is kind of unique in that when architects designed the lake, they threw away the cookie cutter planning of the older lakes and designed our park totally differently."

For example, Clinton Lake is home to the first equestrian campground for the district. Also, Woodridge Park, a primitive area, allows people to backpack and camp overnight along the 4.5-mile trail system.

"The most unique thing about our lake is Bloomington Park," Rhoades said. "It's a mega park where most of the camping takes place, and it accommodates a wide variety of campers."

Rhoades said the project staff are currently partnering with the city of Lawrence and the Kansas Trails Council to add a paved trail which will connect some of the Clinton Lake trails systems with trails developed outside of Corps property, using a federal grant from the Department of Transportation.

continued on page 14



Bloomington Park is home to the Clinton Lake Museum. The museum focuses on the 1860s abolitionist movement and underground railroad. *Photo provided*

It was the summer of 1855, and nearly 1,200 New Englanders had made the journey to the new territory of Kansas, armed and ready to fight. They were abolitionists, and their fight was a border war. Their cause? Make Kansas a free state.

Lawrence, Kan., settled by the New England Emigrant Aid Society, fell right in the middle of the conflict and was burned twice for firmly holding to their conviction that Kansas should remain free.

"They claim the Civil War started here because of the border wars," said Lew Ruona, operations manager for Clinton Lake near Lawrence. "There was a lot of guerilla activities here between the Red Legs (Kansas Raiders) and Missouri Bushwackers."

As the war ended in 1865, the freed slaves settled into the basin of the lake in a town called Blommington, which no longer exists, but is now the name for one of Clinton Lake's parks.

More than 100 years after the war and 26 years after the major flood event of 1951, Clinton Lake was established for the purpose of flood control, fish and wildlife management, recreation, water quality and water supply.

"Water supply will be one of our main focuses in the future," Ruona said. "On the average, we have more than 13 million gallons of water per day come out of our lake to serve nine rural water districts and seven municipalities."

Lawrence, doubling in size in the past ten years, is continuing to grow, and Ruona said the demand for water will be even greater in the future as people continue to populate the city.

Also growing is the number of yearly visitors to the lake.

"We've got a wide variety of recreational activities out here," said Dave Rhoades, the park manager who

FUSRAP

continued from page 6

fence installation, and establishment of environmental controls and radiation restriction zones. During this time, MVC suggested additional “tweaks” to the arrangement, such as slight modifications to the inspection station lane routing, that the Corps readily addressed. Full scale remediation began in late March. Meanwhile, MVC’s busy operations have continued without interruption.

Sal Panico, MVC’s Manager of Building Services & Maintenance, is the Corps’ primary point of contact on the Lodi project. He had this to say about working with the FUSRAP Maywood team:

“As the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission’s representative on this project, it has been a pleasure to deal with the Army Corps of Engineers and their contractor Shaw Environmental. Their combined expertise and professionalism has really made a difference in what could otherwise been a very problematic project. As one of New Jersey’s busiest MVC locations, we were a little apprehensive how such a large project could be accomplished without major interruption to our services, but through careful planning and cooperation there have been no interruption of services for the citizens of the State. This has been a wonderful example of the Federal, State and the private sector working together.”

Since assuming responsibility for FUSRAP in 1997, the Corps has completed cleanups on all residential and municipal properties that are part of the Maywood Site, and is currently addressing the remaining commercial and government-owned site properties. Of those, twelve have been completed or are nearing completion, and work at six others is currently underway.

The Corps has excavated and shipped over 175,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil for offsite disposal at Maywood since 1997. 47,000 cubic yards of material were shipped in fiscal year 2005 alone, significantly more than in any previous year. This demonstrates the Corps’ ongoing pursuit of efficiency and productivity improvements. Completion of all Maywood Site property cleanups is expected by 2012.

The primary contaminant of concern at Maywood is thorium, a naturally occurring radioactive element that was commercially extracted from sand at a defunct chemical works from 1916 to 1959. During this period, a watery process waste stream containing residual amounts of thorium was pumped to diked disposal

ponds or disposed of in onsite waste pits. Some of this material was eventually carried offsite through sediment transport in a local surface stream and by flooding events. Lesser amounts were removed from the plant site for use as fill on nearby properties.

MELVERN LAKE

continued from page 12

“We’re working on getting a 15-mile trails system in here,” Carlisle said. “We feel like it could be a trail of regional significance and attract people to the lake just to use our trail system, but that’s far ahead into the future.”

Franz said they were focusing on a four-mile trail in the meantime, which will connect two parks, and he credits the trail to their partnership with the Kansas Trails Council.

“Mike Goodwin, the president of KTC came out with us and flagged the trail, and we’ve gotten \$5,000 through the Handshake Program,” Franz said. “We’re pulling together to put the trails system on the south side of the lake which will connect three of our parks.”

The park areas at Melvern Lake are known as being some of the most highly developed in Kansas. Outlet Park, the most popular park in the Kansas City District, collected \$178,000 in revenue alone in 2005.

“For the project as a whole, we collected \$265,000 last year in revenue, which is the most out of any federal lake in Kansas,” Carlisle said. “We’re in a good location, and [the planners] had the foresight when this lake was developed to put in a really nice park with 150 campsites.”

He said in 2005, their park attracted visitors from 39 different states and two Canadian provinces.

“It’s the amenities here that attract people with the large RV units,” Carlisle said. “It’s truly a national park.”

What also attracts visitors is the water quality, which Carlisle and Franz agreed was superior to other Kansas lakes with exception to Wilson Lake.

“The water is so clear because of the surrounding native prairie grass the water drains from,” Carlisle said.

Carlisle said he’s been at Melvern Lake for 20 years, and he really enjoys the clear water and the native prairie scenery which most other lakes in the district lack.

“We’re also in a good location—we’re not quite as close to the city, so Melvern Lake is popular for that reason,” he said. “We have a lot to offer as well, so I would consider the lake a camper’s paradise.”

CLINTON LAKE

continued from page 13

“We have a total of 60 miles of trails at Clinton Lake,” Rhoades said. “Twenty-one miles of that is our mountain bike trail—which, I believe, is the first mountain bike trail at a Corps lake in the Kansas City District.”

Another exceptional fact about the lake is the volunteer program, which, Ruona boasted, is the “best volunteer program in the district—if not in the nation.”

“We have five volunteer couples out here, and because of our shoe-string budget, they do a huge amount of work for us that we would otherwise not do,” Ruona said. “Last year, they put in 3,200 hours of volunteer effort in our parks.”

Ruona said the volunteers do a lot of painting, spraying, repairing, pruning and landscape management.

“If our maintenance crew needs an extra set of hands, they’ll help out,” Rhoades added.

Ruona said the project’s robust program is due to the coordination done by Willem Helms, a park ranger, and Dan Brooks, a maintenance work leader.

“The volunteers provide the ‘eye appeal’ to the lake, and they really do a good job,” Ruona said. “In exchange for all the work they do, which includes manning the visitor’s center on weekends, they get a free campsite all summer long.”

The work volunteers accomplish help free up time for the maintenance staff so they can attend to their daily duties.

As for annual events at Clinton Lake, there are many for visitors to attend.

“We’ve been holding an eagle day event since the early ’80s in coordination with Perry Lake,” Rhoades said. “Attendance to that normally depends on the weather, and the location gets rotated between Clinton Lake, Perry Lake and the city of Lawrence.”

Rhoades said the staff also has an annual Clinton Lake Cleanup which they’ve been doing since 1982, where as many as 800 people have come out to pick up tires and trash around the project.

“We also have a special archery hunt in the fall, and this spring we held a special youth turkey hunt where we allowed them to hunt in areas in which hunting isn’t normally allowed,” Rhoades said.

The largest event held at the lake every year is the Wakarusa Festival, which is generally held during early June. Groups will come out and play rock and roll music at this event which draws 15,000 people per day.

“From the recreational activities to the historical significance of the area to the events held here, there are so many different things you can do,” Rhoades said. “Clinton Lake really has something for everyone.”

Face it - no one likes being wrong. However, despite as much as any proud engineer hates to admit it, engineers make mistakes. They're human. Engineers made a mathematical mistake in the design of the mirrors for the Hubble telescope, and it was a multimillion dollar fix. Several engineers had tried and failed and crashed before the Wright brothers soared successfully across Kitty Hawk. You can't build a better mouse trap without getting your fingers stung once or twice.

Whether it is on the global stage in Iraq and Afghanistan, under the national microscope in New Orleans, or on a small project in the Midwest, the engineering successes and failures and tough calls for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are there for all to see.

More often than not we soar...but sometimes we stumble.

It's tough to be wrong. The tendency is to rationalize or find an excuse for when things don't work as planned, but often the explanation is simple: flaw in the model, disagreement in the science, or simply human error. As engineers, we know it comes with the business, but it doesn't mean we like it. We also know from the ashes of failure come lessons learned.

The public usually doesn't like mistakes by their federal protectors. When the perception is it puts their well-being in jeopardy—they like it even less. Worse than that, when that mistake is followed by the perception that something is being covered up, their faith not only in the engineering, but in the engineers themselves, begins to erode.

More often for the Corps, thanks to well-honed review processes, it's not a mistake but a tough decision or outcome on an engineering challenge that appears to some as a "mistake" in judgment that generates interest. Real mistake, or perceived mistake, our actions generate an equal and opposite reaction by our critics.

For the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, no matter the mission, no matter the challenge, the stage is usually big, the mission is usually huge and the chance for failure is usually large. This is the "major league" for engineering. Like the major league umpire behind the plate, no one notices when things are going well. However, make an unpopular call, or a flat out bad call, and fans and critics will notice.

But unlike baseball, the Corps' mission is not a game. Be it military construction, civil work operations or environmental restorations, what we do affects people—our "public."

That is where the role of public affairs, and more accurately, the need for effective communications comes

in. People both inside and outside this organization think the role of public affairs is to pitch a company line, and when necessary, make mistakes "look" better. That perception of public affairs (by the public, the media, even those within the Corps—including some PAs) is wrong.

First, as a matter of function, that's not the role of the office. Government public affairs, unlike private sector public relations, is a "warts and all" business. Explain the mission, explain the process, and get out the facts. Public Affairs tell the Corps story – the good and the bad. The PA role is not an effort to promote good press, but rather to develop a good understanding. Unlike the private sector, the Corps' "shareholders" and its "customers" are one and the same: the American public. Maximum disclosure, minimum delay.

Second, philosophically, the best way to get past a mistake is to admit it, take your medicine, learn from it, and move on.

In public affairs, there is no such thing as "spin." Spinning only makes you dizzy. People, the public, understand mistakes. They will not, and should not, tolerate spin.

Explain what happened. Explain the impact. Most importantly, explain what will be done differently to prevent the same mistake from happening twice and what is being done to correct the impact of the mistake. And then get to work.

Actions speak louder than words.

Just like in the city of New Orleans, the Corps could get caught up in finger pointing and "politically correct" debate, but it doesn't. We have a job to do. Regardless of "why," the buck stops here.

The Corps takes all the criticism on the chin, fair and unfair, and gets back to business: Here's the new levee we're building; Here is why it'll work better than the one before it; Here is why what happened last time won't happen the next time; Here is how we're helping prepare for the next hurricane season; Here is what you can do to help. Those are the messages that need to get out so everyone can move on.

The Corps has its critics; always has, always will. That's a good thing. Sometimes they are wrong, but sometimes they are right. As Benjamin Franklin, a great public servant himself, once said, "Our critics are our friends, they show us our faults."

Look alive ump...another pitch is coming in...time to make another tough call.

(Note: Thomas O'Hara is the chief of public affairs for the Kansas City District. He also holds a bachelors of science in electrical engineering.)

Beverly Stone focuses during her warm up at the Kansas City Corporate Challenge Pool Play event held May 16 at Side Pockets in Kansas City, Mo.

Stone was one of 61 women who participated, and she earned one participation point for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Another Corps employee, Fred Wilkinson, participated for the men's pool.

Kansas City Corporate Challenge, one of the largest corporate games in the United States, kicked off May 12 with a one-mile walk at the Kansas Speedway. The Corps has been participating since 1990. *Photo by Diana McCoy*

