INTERCOM

US Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District
Vol. 37 No. 3 June - July 2010

From Where I Sit

Team,

I'd like to start off by thanking everyone in the District for such a warm and gracious welcome. As I've stated in the various town hall meetings, this is exactly where I want to be and everywhere I go, from operating projects to staff offices, confirms that the District's reputation is second to none.

There are some very interesting articles in this issue that highlight the great work many of you do. I encourage all of you to read the articles and reflect for a moment on these and the other things not mentioned.

You are making a difference every day! Examples of that are the record fish returns this year, improving our reliability in power generation and our operations at Lucky Peak (all highlighted in this issue).

Another great success is that we continue to be one of the leaders in USACE in supporting Overseas Contingency Operations. Those deployed are doing great work and making a difference for our Nation and the Afghan people. I encourage everyone to support those deployed and to consider serving in this way; it's demanding, but rewarding.

The pace is extremely high and promises to continue and take us in the direction we want to go—improving our infrastructure, capitalizing on good ideas and innovative solutions, and bringing jobs to the region. The same pace also brings challenges with safety, training, communication, and our ability to execute our budget effectively. As I look at these challenges, the first that comes to mind is our ability to execute our jobs and mission safely.

Safety is extremely important, whether having the right equipment or how we implement our design and construction. This is only one aspect of our work conditions, but paramount to our ability to keep our team members healthy and our workforce complete with experts we require.

Every one is a critical asset to the District. We continue to see new employees at all levels, bringing the expertise that allows us to posture ourselves for the future. And, we continue to invest in our future by providing opportunities such as our Hydropower Apprenticeship Program that many of you have participated in and which recently graduated five people. Another example is growing future leaders through our Leadership Development Program.

Communication is and will continue to be critical to the District's success, especially as the pace of projects continues.

Communication is vital to our ability to execute our budget this year and future years. The District needs you to continue to participate by elevating requirements so they can be captured and prioritized for future funding and work.

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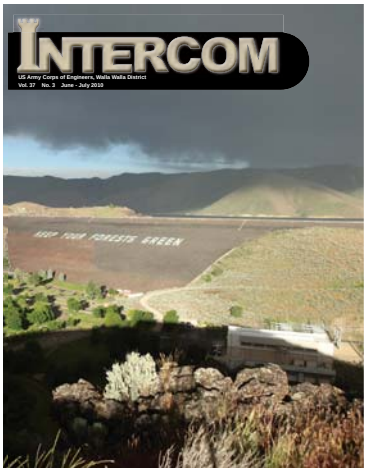
On the cover



A brewing storm creates a gray sky above Lucky Dam and Lake in June. See page 10 to understand how Lucky Peak benefits the Boise, Idaho region.
photo by Keith Hyde

Caldwell takes NWW command

by Terri A. Rorke

Lt. Col. David A. Caldwell assumed command of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District July 9.

Brig. Gen. John R. McMahon, commanding general of the Corps' Northwestern Division, officiated as Lt. Col. Michael J. Farrell transferred command to Caldwell. Farrell moved to an assignment at the Senior Leader Development Office in the Office of the Chief of Staff in Washington D.C. after serving as District commander for two years.

As the commander of the Walla Walla District, Lt. Col. Caldwell oversees approximately 800 employees who manage environmental, hydroelectric, navigation, engineering, construction, emergency management and recreation services within a region covering 107,000 square miles in parts of six states. His responsibilities also include the operation and maintenance of six hydroelectric power facilities and $2.5 billion worth of infrastructure.

The new commander said he is excited to be a part of the Walla Walla District because of its employees' reputation of professionalism and ability to accomplish a great mission.

"As I come on board, we are going to continue to work with all the partners and stakeholders. Open communication is going to be the key," Caldwell said. "The District will continue to work together as partners, and that's when we are really going to find those good, sustainable solutions for the region."

photo by Gina Baltrusch

Northwestern Division Commander Brig. Gen. John R. McMahon, left, hands the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flag to the District's new Commander Lt. Col. David A. Caldwell on July 9.

~ continued from page 2

Finally, I'd like to close by encouraging everyone to take the opportunity in visiting our recreation sites for the last part of the year. We've made some great improvements at many of them that are worth seeing and experiencing.

I look forward to meeting those I haven't yet. It's an honor and privilege for me to join this team and continue on the path the greatness! As we keep this momentum going, I'll ask a simple question of all of you: "What's your part in our continued trek to becoming Great?"

Building Strong!
Lt. Col. Dave Caldwell, Commander

Commander's philosophy

Priorities: People, Projects, Processes

Solution-oriented delivery

Take pride and enjoy our work

Service-oriented leadership

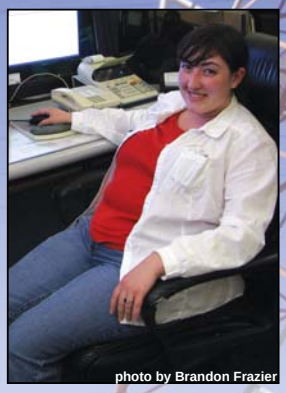
Teamwork

Five hydropower apprentices graduate

by Gina Baltrusch

Power Plant Mechanic Gerald P. Giedeman, McNary Lock and Dam

Power Plant Mechanic Richard S. Maldonado, McNary Lock and Dam



Power Plant Operator Telzey A. Jones, McNary Lock and Dam

Power Plant Mechanic Brett J. Moon, Ice Harbor Lock and Dam

Power Plant Electrician Curtis R. Haynes, Lower Granite Lock and Dam

The recent graduation ceremony of five Hydropower Apprenticeship Program trainees signaled the Corps' continued commitment to pass on institutional knowledge carried by its retirement-eligible employees.

After completing an eight-phase program focusing on mechanical, electrical and operator crafts, the apprentices graduated June 17 at McNary Lock and Dam near Umatilla, Ore. The highly competitive program only accepts five to six apprentices a year, allowing those individuals to understand the Corps' operation and maintenance duties, while guaranteeing a journeyman position at the District's six hydropower facilities upon completion.

According to the program's Training Officer Pete McGuckin, it is becoming increasingly important to pass on institutional knowledge to upcoming generations at the Corps.

"Across the Corps, we've recognized the need to plan for a sustainable workforce as a large percentage of our current workforce nears retirement eligibility," McGuckin said.

"This program enables the District to better meet its future craftsman needs. Apprentices learn from the masters, rather than trying to glean that knowledge out of a book at a later time when the experts may not be here to help them. This graduation ceremony serves to recognize the students' efforts and welcome them to the ranks of journeymen, and to thank the craftsmen who coached them."

The apprentice program, based at McNary Lock and Dam, develops trades and crafts journeymen to serve in Walla Walla District hydropower facilities. Depending on prior education, or simultaneous enrollment in a related college education program, students can pursue a three or four-year program to become electrical, mechanical or operations journeymen.

The first year focuses on gaining general hydropower knowledge, after which each student pursues a selected craft that signifies the start of a new career. The next two to three years are spent under the guidance of journeymen and a rigid academic curriculum. Academic work includes textbook studies, computer-based training and hands-on experience.

During their apprenticeship, students gain work experience at all six hydroelectric facilities in the district before they join the workforce as craftspersons.

For more information about the Walla Walla District's Apprentice Program, check out our Web site at www.nww.usace.army.mil/Apprenticeship_Program/default.htm.

Piecing it together

LoMo gate production progressing

story and photos by Stephen Doherty

Fabrication of the $13 million Lower Monumental Navigation Lock downstream gate is progressing well and remains on schedule.

The nearly 700-ton structure will stand 84 feet high, 88 feet wide, and 15 feet deep when finished. It is being fabricated in three separate sections by Thompson Metal Fabrication. TMF is the subcontractor in charge of fabrication under the prime contractor, Dix Corporation of Spokane, Wash. Work on the lower and middle sections of the gate is nearly finished, and the top section is beginning to take form.

The Lower Monumental gate fabrication is slated for completion in November 2010. Once finished, each gate section will be barged from Vancouver, Wash., to Lower Monumental Lock and Dam near Starbuck, Wash. That mobilization precedes the extended lower Snake River and lower Columbia River system navigation lock outage, which begins December 10, 2010.

The Corps' Portland and Walla Walla districts worked with navigation industry interests and their customers for many years to plan and coordinate the upcoming 14-week outage. This outage will enable the Corps to make urgently needed repairs to many of their navigation locks on the lower Snake and Columbia Rivers, particularly gate replacements at Lower Monumental, John Day and The Dalles.

The gate replacement for Lower Monumental Dam is part of an approved major rehabilitation project (2006). During lift gate inspections in the 1990s, structural fatigue and fracture problems were revealed. Since 2005, the District has contracted annual welding repairs to continue reliable lock operations. The scope of the repairs grew at a substantial rate over the years, making the gate replacement inevitable and raising the priority to urgent need. The lift gate replacement was funded through ARRA funds in August 2009, and has moved steadily forward since that time.

"The reality is that if we don't take these few months to make these repairs, the facilities will eventually become unsafe to use," said District Project Manager Margie McGill about the Lower Monumental gate status. "A gate replacement is a major undertaking and requires more time to install than allotted during the annual two week routine outages. The choice was either pursue funding and plan ahead for a few month outage, or potentially experience an unplanned outage that might shut the lock down for a year or more."

According to District Project Engineer Andy Rajala, TMF is executing a very robust design plan for the gate fabrication. This project has been a priority by both TMF's technical and administrative staff.

"Working with TMF on this fabrication effort has provided insight on why they have had numerous successful projects," said Rajala. "Their organizational structure and approach to completing jobs is one of the best I have seen for large steel fabrication."

The extended outage's impact is still the main concern. It will begin December 10, 2010, and end no later than March 18, 2011. Industry and District leaders, as well as project contractors, continue to stress early and continued communication.

Award Winners

40 years government service

Connie Gilbreath, program analyst

Patrick Marsh, power plant mechanic

Engineering Excellence

Stephen Hall

Stephen Hall was awarded the 2010 Engineering Excellence Award for his outstanding technical support and leadership in implementing the Columbia Basin Regional Water Management Reorganization. This included assumption of the water management regulator duties for the Dworshak Project and providing sound direction in development of the new Regional Water Control Data System.

As a result of Mr. Hall's dedication and commitment, Walla Walla District has become an example of success in the water management reorganization effort.

2010 NWD Innovator of the Year
Cost and Schedule Risk Analysis PDT

Jim Neubauer, civil engineer
Jay Skarbek, civil engineer
Michael Jacobs, mechanical engineer
LaRhonda McCauley, technical editor
Glen Matlock, civil engineer

2010 NWD Innovator of the Year

William Harrison, geologist
Stephen Tatro, civil engineer

Distinguished Retiree Civilian

Ronald Porter

Outstanding Achievement

Debbie Mallard, human resource specialist

The District hired about 300 people in the past two years. Debbie Mallard was awarded the 2010 Outstanding Achievement Award for her superb performance as a human resources specialist whose expertise and knowledge of the mission and requirement for each job within the Corps streamlined the hiring process.

Samantha Handcox, program analyst

Fully utilizing the P2 process has been a challenge for the District. Samantha Handcox was awarded the 2010 Outstanding Achievement Award based on leadership in working with the P2 process. She maintained excellent relationships as she worked to resolve issues and ensured a balanced workload that maximized organizational effectiveness.

Shane Douthitt, chief power plant operator

Shane Douthitt was awarded the 2010 Outstanding Achievement Award for Trades and Crafts based on his extensive knowledge of McNary Lock and Dam, excellent leadership skills and his dedicated effort towards the improvement and safety of this multipurpose facility.

Chief of Engineers Design & Environmental

USACE Merit Award

Little Goose Spillway Weir PDT

The Little Goose Lock and Dam spillway weir project delivery team was awarded the 2010 Chief of Engineers Design and Environmental Award for merit for designing a modular surface spillway weir that was less expensive than a traditional spillway weir while still retaining the ability to vary its rate of discharge.

Hydraulic Engineer Jack Sands lead the team, which was formed in 2006 as a result of the Columbia River Fish Mitigation Program initiated by the Corps to focus efforts on improving adult fishways and juvenile bypass systems at its lower Columbia and Snake rivers dams.

Preliminary test results show survival rates of fish passing over the weir near 100 percent.

The purpose behind a spillway weir is to allow juvenile salmon and steelhead to pass through the dam, under lower accelerations and lower pressures without having to dive to depths of 50 to 60 feet to pass through conventional spillway gate openings.

Jack Sands, project manager

Breaking records 2010 fish returns


photo courtesy of Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Chinook salmon

Throughout the Columbia River Basin, droves of fish are migrating upstream and surpassing records along the way. Thanks to a team effort of active improvements along the river and satisfactory ocean conditions, sockeye, chinook and steelhead are making record 2010 returns.

Sockeye

As of Aug. 22, 2010, 386,509 sockeye fish passed through Bonneville Lock and Dam surpassing a 1955 year record of a 237,748 run.

The Record: For 2010, there is already a record return of 386,509 sockeye run through Bonneville Lock and Dam and a record 2,151 sockeye run through Lower Granite Lock and Dam.

Second Highest Record: In 2009, the total season had a 1,219 run at Lower Granite Lock and Dam.

Chinook

As of Aug. 22, 2010, the ten-year average run of 106,280 chinook at Lower Granite Lock and Dam was already surpassed with a 135,045 run early into the season.

The Record: The 2001 season returned a record of a 210,381 run at Lower Granite Lock and Dam.

Second Highest Record: The 2009 season returned a record of 168,032 at Lower Granite Lock and Dam.

Steelhead

As of Aug. 22, 2010, a record of a 32,344 run is already surpassing last year's pace of 20,818 in August 2009 at Lower Granite Lock and Dam.

The Record: The 2009 season returned a record return of 323,697 steelhead at Lower Granite Lock and Dam.

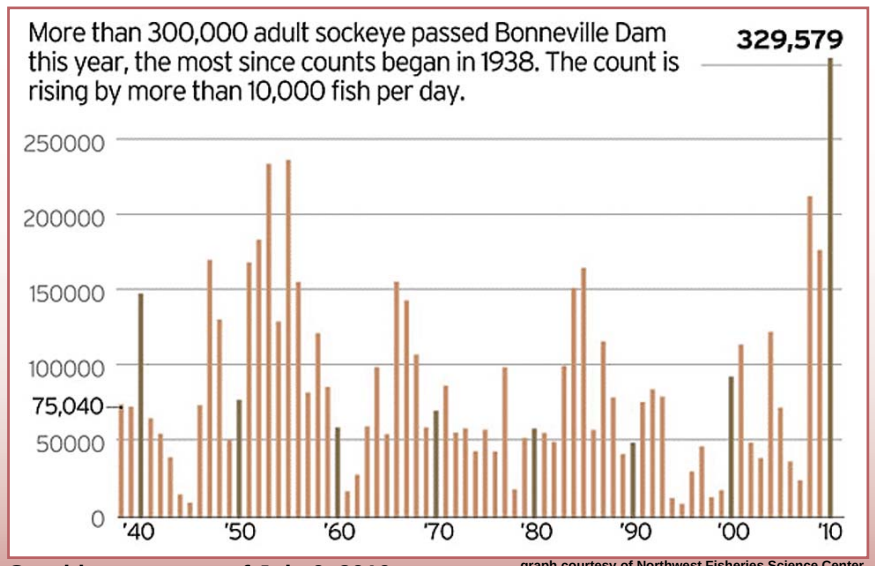
Second Highest Record: The 2001 returned a record of 262,568 steelhead at Lower Granite Lock and Dam.

Ocean Conditions

"It's important to recognize that ocean conditions are really important and often times drive the number of adults that return to their spawning grounds," said Corps Fishery Biologist Tim Dykstra. "When nutrients upwell in the ocean, it provides lots of food for young fish to grow, develop and put on biomass that they need to sustain a long term migration back to their spawning grounds. Their ability to put on that size is often dependent on ocean conditions. There are a lot of factors that are out of the Corps' control and ocean conditions are certainly one of those primary factors that influence adult returns," he added.

Corps Effort

The Corps is actively improving downstream migration conditions for juvenile fish. "We are making significant improvements over the years including how we operate our transporting program," Dykstra said. "We're collecting data and research to understand how to provide the best chance for those fish to return as adults. Our goal is to make our dams as invisible to fish as possible," he said. The Corps is also making efforts in improving surface passage structures such as installing spillway weirs.



graph courtesy of Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Graphic current as of July 6, 2010

A second chance for

photo by Amber Larsen

photo by Amber Larsen

Dr. Christine Moffitt displays a kelt specimen at the University of Idaho in Moscow.

Three University of Idaho students are looking for a second chance. For the past year and a half at Lower Granite Lock and Dam's fish facility, the group has researched the potential for adult steelhead, or kelt, to re-spawn. Even though kelt have the ability to spawn twice in a lifetime, many do not re-spawn in the Snake River Basin, unlike coastal fish populations.

"We are seeing if we can improve survival and identify reasons why we have low repeat spawning," said Dr. Christine Moffitt, UI professor of fish biology who leads the research team made up of graduate students Jessica Buelow, Bryan Jones and Zachary Penney.

The team is trying to understand reasons for the current low repeat spawning counts by collecting and analyzing data from each kelt that passes through the dam's bypass system. The students hope to discover answers from patterns and physiological data they find.

"We have found in a number of females that the gonads have potential to mature again. The capacity is there; we're just deciding if the energy is there to be successful," Moffitt said.

The study is funded by the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers partnered with the UI during 2009-2010 winter maintenance season and constructed an improved facility for kelt research activities. The facility includes a direct access fish bypass flume leading to a holding tank which can hold up to approximately 300 fish.

"This new facility has made it much easier to handle the number of kelts required for the study in the next few years," said Mike Halter, fishery biologist at Lower Granite.

About 10 organizations conduct research at Lower Granite Lock and Dam each year to include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration-Fisheries, Idaho Fish and Game, and the University of Washington.

The facility is ideal for researchers for many reasons, according to Halter: Lower Granite is the first place where juvenile fish encounter a dam on the Snake River. It also is the first dam steelhead kelts encounter after they have spawned and are migrating back to the ocean. The fish-barging program originates at Lower Granite, making it ideal to collect and mark fish for transport research at the start of the process. The dam has the last adult fish ladder on the river system, and the success of adult fish returns is often based on how many fish successfully migrate back to Lower Granite Lock and Dam.

It may take years before the study provides sound conclusions on how to facilitate repeat spawning in kelt, but for now the public can be assured there is a chance for success.

steelhead?

story by Terri A. Rorke

Jessica Buelow prepares a kelt for release back into the Snake River.

photo by Amber Larsen

photo by Terri A. Rorke

photo by Amber Larsen

photo by Terri A. Rorke

(Far, left) Zachary Penney takes a blood sample from kelt on June 28. (Left) Jessica Kohls records fish data. (Above) Kelt are provided aerated water throughout the data collection process.

Peeking into Lucky

photo by Keith Hyde

When it all began

Construction of Lucky Peak Dam was authorized by Congress in 1946 for flood control, irrigation and recreation. In 1950, construction on the nearly $20 million rolled-earth dam began. Five years later, in 1955, the lake was filled.

Construction of Lucky Peak stemmed from the need to reduce flooding along the lower 65 miles of the Boise River Valley and also the need to irrigate a region where the average annual precipitation is a mere 12 inches.

In 1988, a hydropower facility was built at the base of the dam. Seattle City Light, under an agreement with the Boise Project Board of Control, operates and maintains the power facility.

Lucky Peak Lake stores more than 307,000-acre feet of water and together with the Bureau of Reclamation's Arrowrock and Andersen Ranch dams, can hold nearly a million acre-feet of water for irrigation and flood risk management. The 12-mile-long lake offers 45 miles of shoreline and provides one of the best locations for recreation in the region.

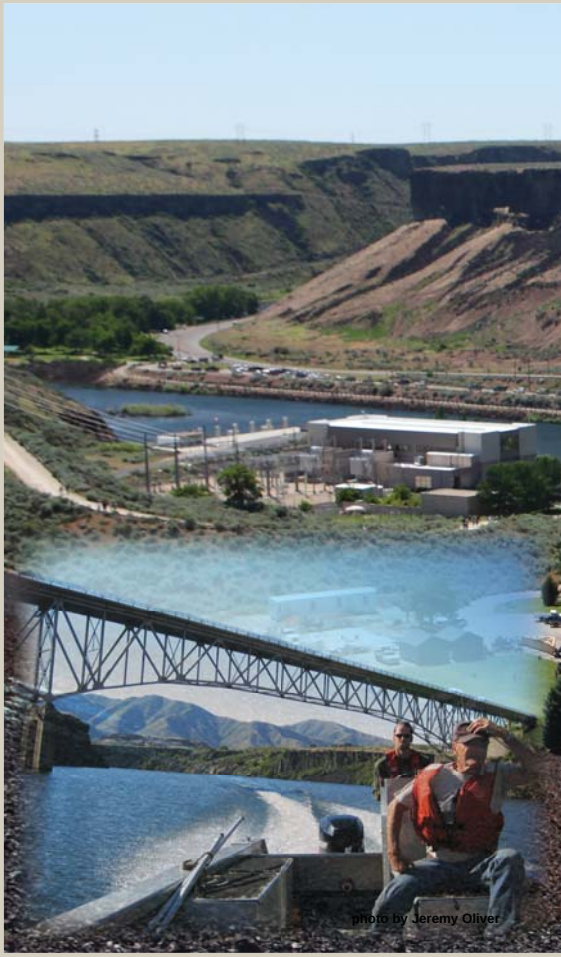


photo by Jeremy Oliver

A golden name

Gold was discovered in the Boise River Basin in the mid 1800s, and mining quickly became the area's most thriving business.

In a few short years, more than $250 million of gold was mined and removed from the area. Many mine claims and mining camps sprung up, among them "Lucky Peak" and "Unlucky Peak."

Oliver Lewis, a former U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employee, felt Lucky Peak was also an appropriate name for this dam and lake.

(Right) Rex Harding prepares to weld. (Far right) The five-year intake tunnel inspection was performed in November 2009. (Bottom, left) Workers install Lucky Peak's intake tunnel liner.

Peak

Whether you are a fanatical fisherman or a triathlete, Lucky Peak Dam and Lake has something in store for you. Located 10 miles east of Boise, in the foothills of southwestern Idaho on the Boise River, Lucky Peak offers a lot to its community.

Recreation opportunities include 20 day-use areas for activities like swimming, fishing and boating.

In addition to recreation services, Lucky Peak also provides flood risk management to the surrounding population of 585,000 people. While preventing $1.2 billion in potential flood damages since 1961, the 12-mile long Lucky Peak Lake serves as a storage reservoir.

Lucky Peak also offers electricity benefits to local homes and businesses as a hydropower producer.

The 15 Corps folks who operate the Lucky Peak Project include natural resources, administration and maintenance staff.

photo by Jeremy Oliver

photo by Jeremy Oliver

(Left) Maintenance Workers Walt Jackson, front, and Rex Harding travel via Lucky Peak Lake to perform maintenance duties. (Middle and right) Jackson and Harding perform maintenance duties at Lucky Peak.

photo by Keith Hyde

photo by Keith Hyde

photo by Keith Hyde

photo by Keith Hyde

"You can imagine the financial contribution that ends back in the local Treasure Valley economy with an annual average of a million visitors.

They buy groceries, swimsuits and sunscreen for lakeside picnics, camping supplies, jet skis and boats for water-based recreation, vehicles to tow them, fishing tackle to catch the big ones and bikes to ride the green belt.

There are also significant economic benefits provided by the Corps through local purchases for materials and supplies and utilizing area contractors for infrastructure requirements."

Joyce Dunning, Lucky Peak operations manager, on the dam's benefits to community

photo by Keith Hyde

photo by Keith Hyde

Another service Lucky Peak provides to the region is serving as a venue for Boise's annual Ironman Triathlon, which most recently took place on June 12 (left page).

Idaho's Boise River is impeded by the Lucky Peak Dam and, every once in a while, the high water allows a special release resulting in a "rooster tails" charge of excess water (Bottom, right page).


photo by Stephen Doherty

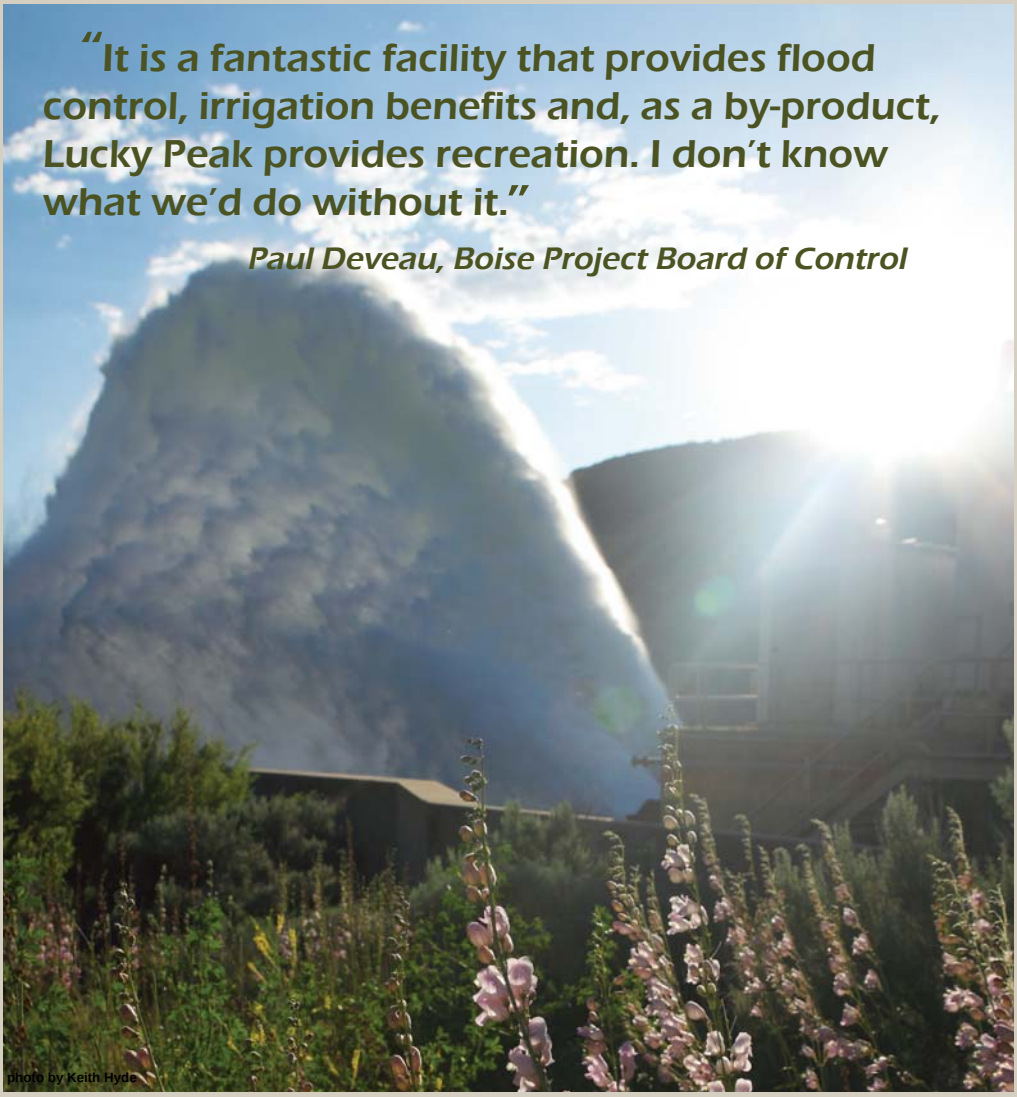



photo by Keith Hyde

(Left page) Scenes from the annual Ironman Triathlon in June. (Top, right) Boise skyline in July. (Bottom, left) Rooster tail. (Above) Lucky Peak park rangers take in the view of a roaring "rooster tail" in June.

Clarity in contracting

The contract division conducted a three-day class to educate operations and maintenance personnel on the contracting process July 20-22. This training provided personnel at the District's eight operating projects the chance to ask questions about how to streamline contract requests. The Contract Division plans to hold the training annually to provide refresher training.

Checking the depths

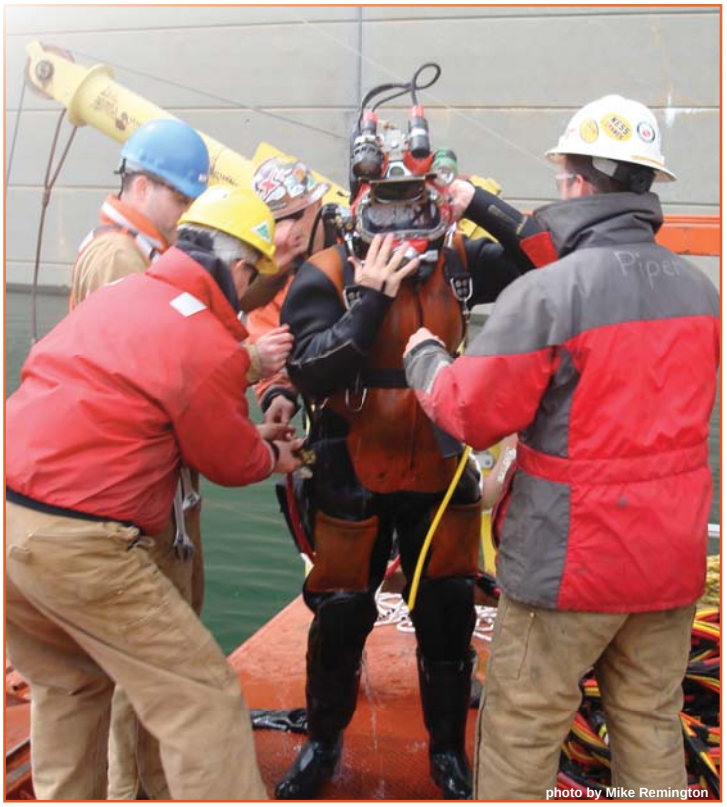
In collaboration between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. and Idaho Fish and Wildlife Services, professional divers conducted deep water intake cleaning and inspections at the Dworshak National Fish and Clearwater hatcheries. The water intakes are used to provide rearing water and water-temperature regulator capabilities.

Associated Underwater Services performed the dive because of signs of flow restriction on the screens of the intake pipe.

The Corps rarely conducts deep-water dives like the one at the hatchery, according to the District's Dive Coordinator Mike Remington.

One of the intakes is attached to a 300-foot long pipe that can be raised or lowered to adjust to the desired water temperature and pool elevation. The other deep-water intake is used to provide cool water from the depths of Dworshak Reservoir.

The project was funded by the federal U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services as part of the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan.



(Above) Associated Underwater Services workers help Diver Karl Thomas out of his wetsuit after performing an inspection on intake valves at Dworshak National Fish Hatchery.

New faces of leadership

Leadership Development Program graduates 2009 class and welcomes class of 2010

photo by Keith Hyde

(From left to right) Power Plant Mechanic Robert Meyer, Cost Estimating Specialist Clayton Romain, Natural Resource Specialist Kye Carpenter, Paralegal Specialist Amber Trukositz, Natural Resource Specialist Mike Carilli, Leadership Development Program Administrator Stephanie Russian, Program Analyst Mike Vandiver, Electrical Engineer Sydney Foster, Construction Inspector Doug Weldy, Supervisory Civil Engineer Bill Clarno and Civil Engineer Charles Fano.

story by Terri A. Rorke

The District welcomed ten new leaders as they graduated from the Leadership Development Program in June.

The class participated in multiple activities that build leadership character. The LDP includes field trips, an analysis of one's leadership style, developing an Individual Development Plan, classroom and staff meeting attendance, participation on team projects, briefings by the commander and a mentoring relationship with a senior manager.

"I couldn't have asked for a better group to pilot the new and improved Walla Walla District Leadership Development Program," said Human Resource Specialist Stephanie Russian, who designed the previous and current year's programs. "The 2009-2010 graduating class was energetic, flexible and always willing to learn. Their insights helped me shape the program and make it what it is today. I have no doubt that this group will do great things for the Corps of Engineers."

The newest group of emerging leaders is already fully engaged in the Corps' year-long program.

Walla Walla District has one of the longest running LDP programs in the Corps with a record of 21 years, according to Russian.

2010-2011 Class

Gina Baltrusch, public affairs specialist, District Headquarters

Lyle Calhoon, power plant mechanic, Lower Monumental Lock and Dam

Casey Forest, administrative support assistant, Lucky Peak Dam

Michael Francis, wildlife biologist, District Headquarters

Michael Harrington, cost engineer, Hanford

Jamie Howard, environmental resource specialist, Boise Regulatory Office

Trevor Mclaen, supervisory electrical engineer, Ice Harbor Lock and Dam

Mehdi Roshani, structural engineer, District headquarters

Manuel Salas, power plant mechanic planner, Lower Granite Lock and Dam

David Sears, maintenance worker, Lower Granite Lock and Dam

Peter Stewart, rigger, McNary Lock and Dam

Julie Davin, project manager, District Headquarters

On patrol in Afghanistan:

Corps construction representative shares experience

photos courtesy of Bradley Clarke

Bradley Clarke, front, participates in a foot patrol while in Afghanistan. Clarke, who works as an engineering equipment operator leader at Lower Granite Lock and Dam, served as a construction representative for six months on deployment.

Deployments can be hot, dusty and stressful, but District employees continue to take on the challenge because they believe in the mission. Bradley Clarke is no exception to this rule.

As a construction representative serving in Afghanistan from September 2009 to March 2010, Clarke was in charge of 13 projects valued at more than $34 million, participating in bids, missions and meetings while working 12-hour days.

"My mission was to monitor and evaluate construction projects," he said. "I mentored and monitored local construction companies, quality control programs and insured contract compliance, while paying special attention to construction methods. While embedded with the U.S. Forces Forward Operating Base Shank, I worked daily with Army officers and enlisted personnel and on occasion assisted the Czech Provincial Reconstruction Team who worked out of FOB Shank also."

Clarke's days were filled with site visits, foot patrols, reading up on engineering and construction manuals and going to the gym.

"This type of duty is not for everyone," Clarke said. "People need to realize you may find yourself in a rather remote area with few, if any, creature comforts. One thing that is very important is a basic understanding of military life. It will save you a lot of grief if serving with a Provincial Reconstruction Team."

Clarke said that besides experiencing limited mobility of working in a combat zone, he was also challenged to keep his family confident and motivated during his absence.

VIP status

U.S. Department of Interior Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Anne Castle and Northwestern Division Commander Brig. Gen. John McMahon learn about Lower Granite Lock and Dam's avian predation and friendly fish passage efforts June 8. Castle oversees water and science policy and has responsibility for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Geological Survey.

photo by Mark Wright

NERC: maintaining reliable power

story and photo by Robert Wall

The electric system requires amazing planning and teamwork.

Walla Walla District is at the "tip of the spear" providing renewable reliable hydroelectric power, instantly responding to the needs of our homes, communities and nation.

Teamwork and maintenance keep the system reliable, and documentation is an essential tool to prove the District is producing reliable power.

The electric system has undergone significant changes recently that affected how the pieces fit together to form a reliable system. Transmission system interconnections, once used for backup, are now the backbone of a network providing competition among electric generating firms.

Electric customers benefited from the competition with lower costs, however reliability concerns grew. As the system grew more complicated, it underscored the need for new standards for maintenance and coordination.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) was given the responsibility to mandate minimum levels of maintenance and cooperation under the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

This act was in direct response to the massive Northeast blackout that took place in August 2003 after poor maintenance caused transmission lines to fail. The Northeastern electric system went unstable and crashed, leaving roughly 45 million people without electricity and highlighted the need for standards and minimum requirements.

NERC developed its minimum standards and requirements using industry representatives and input from stakeholders including the Corps.

NERC shares its mission to regional groups to audit and enforce the regulations through formally delegated enforcement authority.

The Pacific Northwest reports to the Western Electricity Coordinating Council, commonly known as WECC, which employs auditors to periodically inspect the District. The auditors are "hands on" type people who will review documentation, trace wire or conduct interviews to confirm the District is meeting standards.

NERC's latest focus is cyber security. The push is important – to protect the bulk electric system from malicious anonymous attacks through computers. The District is working to minimize impacts while maintaining high security standards. Expect changes as NERC requirements mature to meet the ever expanding cyber threat.

For those planning a project visit, call ahead to ensure expectations are clear and follow the guidance of the project's host.

You don't want to be the source of a NERC violation or worse, a security breach!

Editor's note: Robert Wall works for the Corps as the reliability compliance program manager.

Members of the McNary project development team go over the schedule of plans for the new NERC requirements Aug. 4. Pictured left to right: Electronic Systems Control Craftsman William Gersbach, Power Plant Electrician Crew Supervisor Robert Martin, Supervisory Electrical Engineer Robert Stoaks, Electronic System Control Craft Worker-Charge Ken Wanderscheid, Electronic Systems Control Craftsman Joseph Fisk, and Power Plant Electrical Planner Dee Dee Lingo.

The 31 federally-owned multipurpose dams on the Columbia River and its tributaries that compromise the Federal Columbia River Power System provide about 60 percent of the region's hydroelectric generating capacity of 20,444 megawatts of power. From a national perspective, this is approximately 25 percent of the nation's hydropower output.

FCRPS dams are the Northwest's power supply foundation, and in large measure, they fuel the region's economy. With a transmission grid that reaches customers up and down the West Coast from Canada to California and eastward to the Southwest desert.

A diverse crowd...

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Natural Resource Specialist Jeremy Nguyen hands out water safety frisbees to children with Water Safety Dog Bobber at the 17th Annual Multicultural Arts Festival June 20. The Walla Walla Diversity Coalition hosts the festival to celebrate diversity in the area and it features international dances and music.

photo by Andrew Dankel-Ibanez

Familiar faces informed

A few familiar faces stopped by the District June 4 during the annual Retiree Day. The retirees had the chance to learn the latest news in the District. The crowd was presented with multiple briefings on the status of the District's biggest projects to include the upcoming Columbia and Snake rivers' extended navigation Lock outage during the 2010-2011 winter season, Ice Harbor Lock and Dam's recent awarded contract to install a new runner designed for easier fish passage and the status of Corps employees' efforts in the Overseas Contingency Operations.

The District hosts the event every year to show appreciation to past Corps staff.

Splish splash, smile, laugh
Corps Day 2010

July 16 found Walla Walla District employees scattered across Rooks Park at Mill Creek. The annual Corps Day brought more than 350 employees from around the District together to relax, get to know each other and show off their volleyball skills. Activities included a kid's water balloon toss, a bike ride, a fun run, horseshoe games, a volleyball tournament and a catered barbecue.

The slip and slide was undoubtedly the highlight for most of the smaller individuals that Friday, but the champions of the volleyball tournament also seemed pretty pleased with themselves as well.

"The picnic reminds me of the importance of how what we do here affects families," said Allen Pomraning, 30-year Walla Walla District employee. "It's not just about employees; it's about spouses, children, grandparents. And for that reason, I'm careful never to miss one."

This year's Corps Day proved to be one not to miss.

photo by Terri A. Rorke

photo by Terri A. Rorke

photo by Stephen Doherty

(Above) Lindsey Jetton, 3, glides feet first down a slip and slide during Corps Day July 16. (Left) Paralegal Specialist Amber Trukositz battles with one of several children who participated in a water fight. (Bottom, left) Secretary Rose McNulty's Field Spaniel, Hunter, relaxes at the picnic. (Below, middle) Bikers enjoy the Fun Ride at Mill Creek July 15. (Lower right) Office Automation Clerk Bruce Hallowell leaps for the ball during one of many volleyball games at Rooks Park during the festivities.

photo by Jeremy Nguyen

photo by Amber Larsen