INTERCOM

US Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District
Vol. 37 No. 1 January - February 2010

MAINTENANCE MATTERS

From Where I Sit

Going from Good to Great

District Team,

What an exciting time to be a member of this great organization! With winter maintenance and our annual navigation outage winding up, there isn't a better time to focus on our talented maintenance staff at the operating projects for this issue.

As I have traveled across our 107,000 square mile area, I continue to see clear evidence that we are moving in the right direction as an organization. Where is that? We, along with the rest of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, are engaged in a deliberate effort to go from Good to Great. A key to that effort is your individual drive and motivation to raise the bar, and that is exactly what the folks highlighted on pages 12 and 13 are doing – setting the standard for their profession!

Each year, the second quarter of the fiscal year brings an intense challenge to our team – executing the bulk of our annual maintenance at the projects, an intense push to get remaining efforts and requirements for the fiscal year awarded to contractors, development of our program requirements for two years from now, and the initial planning for next year's work represented in the President's budget. This is the time we must all bear down and peform, because any slippage or delays quickly result in new pressure on other actions that are occurring. It is also a time to keep our calm and ensure we meet our commitments to ourselves and each other professionally – day in and day out. I have also seen tremendous progress in those areas, which I would generally describe as improved teamwork across this organization. We still have challenges, but I am proud of our current effort and success in meeting the many requirements of second quarter – keep up the great work!

My last comment is simply a welcome to all of our new teammates here in the Walla Walla District. I am extremely pleased with the new talent joining us, and remind everyone to help bring our new folks onboard as quickly as possible. With over 300 selections in the last two years, we are indeed a team with a lot of new faces. I hope you will all enjoy this issue and gain a greater understanding of the challenges and amazing maintenance work we do as a team each year.

Building Strong!

LTC Mike Farrell

Contents

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On the cover

Power Plant Mechanic Sean Meyer welds a high pressure flange that connects a pump to an electrical control box at Lower Granite Lock and Dam Feb. 25.

photo by Terri A. Rorke

Bennington Lake: a work in progress

by Terri A. Rorke

It's been more than a decade since Bennington Lake was drained at the Mill Creek Project in Walla Walla, Wash.

Since it was drained in the fall, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Walla Walla District staff have been busy performing a variety of work on the lake.

Employees ranging from biologists to geotechnical engineers and members of the operations and maintenance crew put their specialties together to conduct overdue routine maintenance and perform inspections of the lake bottom and intake tower.

Before maintenance could be performed, however, Mill Creek personnel had numerous concerns about the water leaving and entering Bennington Lake. The recent Dam Safety Action Classification (DSAC) ratings of Mill Creek, National Environmental Policy Act requirements and the Mill Creek Biological Opinion required the Corps to consider and address any potential impacts to fish species when draining the lake into the Russell Creek Outlet Canal.

One solution was to install fish screens in 2002, which resolved concerns with diverting unscreened low-flows to fill Bennington Lake at spring recreation pool.

"This enabled us to screen any potential [Endangered Species Act] listed fish species into Bennington Lake," Mill Creek DSAC project manager Steve Thompson said.

Once Bennington Lake was emptied, geotechnical engineers inspected the lake bottom to determine if seepage and piping was actively occuring.

Currently, the intake tower is fully serviced and personnel are reevaluating the maintenance schedule of the intake tower.

While the lake was drained from fall to March, Corps personnel were able to analyze the lake bed and search for depressions and any evidence of seepage or piping. Although members of the geotechnical design crew only found depressions consistent with what they knew to exist, Thompson said the Corps is still concerned about the uncertainties.

"When things are unknown, we gather data to help make more informed decisions. In the short term, we are performing non-structural and operational changes to reduce risk while longer-term studies and potential structural modifications are being determined," he said.

The Corps is reducing risk on the off-stream storage dam through increased monitoring, inspections, upgrading instrumentation, emergency preparedness, modifying operating and diversion procedures, improving reliability of mechanical and electrical systems and collecting data in support of studies.

With a growing number of retirement-eligible employees leaving the Corps, there is an increasing need for capturing historical engineering data for the next generation of District employees.

Members of the Geotechnical Design team were able to collect some of this data while the lake was drained.

The team is mapping a 3-D modeling tool that will allow personnel to analyze the subsurface of the lake, according to Corps Civil Engineer Michael Schafer. This data will serve as a historical database for future Corps employees to use. Previously, employees were challenged to understand exact locations of issues on the lake bed.

Currently, Corps personnel are refilling the lake to its recreation pool level at 1,205 feet. Once filled, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife plans to stock the lake with rainbow trout.

(Main Photo) Bennington Lake was dewatered from fall through March to perform maintenance, and collect and analyze data on the subsurface of the lake. (Left) Mill Creek Maintenance Worker Dave Parker and Natural Resources Specialist Chris Alford install a new trash rack at Mill Creek, Wash. (Center) The intake gate controls and fish screen compartment keep endangered species out of Bennington Lake. (Right) Bennington Lake's intake tower received scheduled maintenance while the lake was drained.

photos by Jeremy Nguyen

Lucky Peak assists to save lives

by Terri A. Rorke

At any moment, lives may be at stake.

Whether trapped in a burning vehicle from an accident or buried in rubble after an earthquake or terrorist incident, when the cry for help sounds, a victim's last lifeline may arrive in the form of a technical rescue team member.

"Boise's technical rescue team specializes in confined-space rescues, rope rescue, structural collapse, trench excavations, and vehicle and machinery extrications," said Geoff Chally, member of Boise Fire Department's Technical Rescue Team.

Rescue team members, like Chally, understand that every second counts, which is why they must continually train for a real crisis, so they can save lives.

Team members train a minimum of eight hours a month in their specialty, in addition to keeping up with regular monthly firefighter and emergency medical technician training.

Finding the right facilities for training can be challenging, and when the opportunity to assist that training arose at Lucky Peak Dam and Lake in Boise, Corps officials did not hesitate to offer its intake tower to the Technical Rescue Team.

"The intake tower was appealing because it offered a unique location for both confined space and rope rescue training," said Chally.

Keith Hyde, acting operations manager at Lucky Peak said he was glad to offer the tower for training for the first time.

"It was something that had come up at the project during previous outage and inspection debriefings and this year we were able to get it done," Hyde said.

Lucky Peak staff hosted the joint partnership rescue training session at its Boise intake tower for the first time in November. Boise Fire Department's Technical Rescue Team and Gowen Field's Idaho Army National Guard 101st Civil Support Team geared up for the training. The Technical Fire Rescue team has provided rope and confined space rescue training to the Guard members since 2008. During the training session, the team trained five new members of the Technical Rescue Team and five members of the 101st Civil Support Team. Technical Rescue Team Captain Randy Barnack conducted the training along with Senior Fire Fighter Brent Matthews.

Barnack said the training "was great. We had the chance to work inside a building we may actually have to do a rescue in." He said training with Guard members is always beneficial because there may be a time when the two teams will have to work together on a rescue mission.

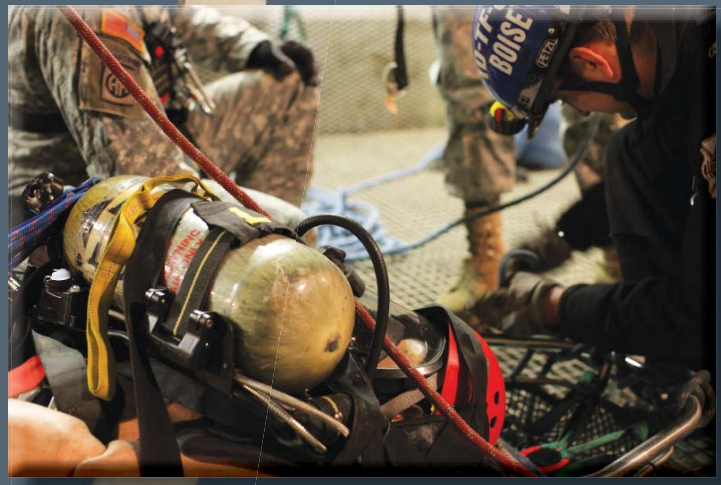
Since the training space is not available for rope and confined space rescue training during summer months when higher lake elevations inundate the tower's interior, the rescue team is hoping to conduct summer dive exercises there.

Hyde said there was only one condition for the rescue team to use the space. "The door is always open to the department's training needs and we are happy to host them. All we ask for in return is their help in identifying the little tweaks we can make to help them affect a rescue," he said.

photos by Keith Hyde

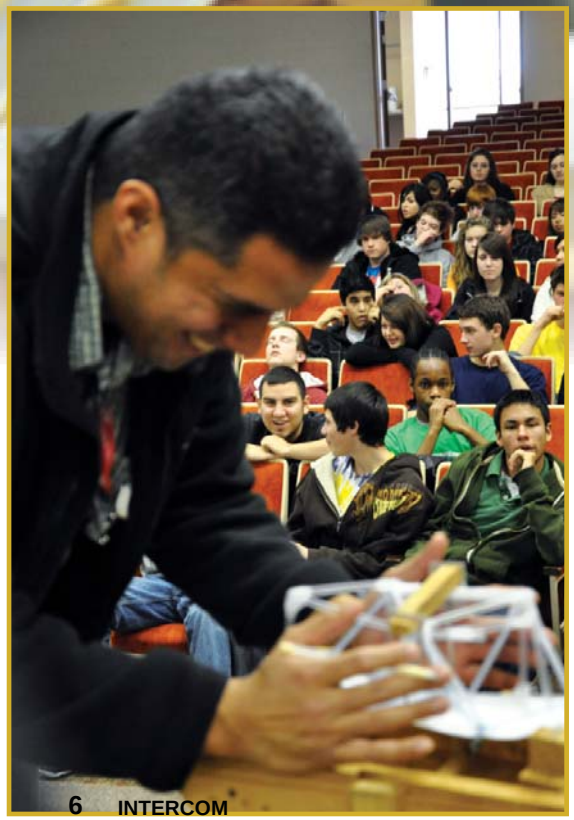
Technical Fire Rescue Team student Geoff Chally rappells with a mannequin in a litter from Lucky Peak's intake tower during the rescue team's training.

Idaho Army National Guard Sgt. Lucas Revaul, 101st Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team, Survey Section, Boise, Idaho, prepares a mannequin for rescue during the high-angle and confined-space rescue training session in November. The 101st Civil Support Team must be certified in this type of training every year.



(Left) Technical Fire Rescue Instructor Brent Matthews, center, teaches Idaho Army National Guard members, left, Sgt. Douglas Huffman and Sgt. Lucas Revaul how to prepare a gurney for a rescue. (Above) Geoff Chally practices confined space rescue training by lifting a mannequin to safety out of Lucky Peak's intake tower. (Right) Technical Fire Rescue student Shane Nelson (Right) prepares the mannequin for the next trainee with members of Army National Guard 101st Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team.

Corps



(Top, left) Corps Electrical Engineer Sydney Foster tests the strength coefficient of a Walla Walla Valley Academy student's bridge in College Place, Wash. (Bottom, far left) WWVA students watch as Corps Civil Engineer Charles Fano prepares a bridge for testing. (Bottom, left) WWVA Junior Daniel Ruiz prepares his bridge for testing. (Top, right) Corps Mechanical Engineer Sue Walton checks to see how many pounds a bridge holds. (Bottom, right) WWVA Juniors Joel Willard, Michael Riley and Sophomore Danae Grigsby, right, look on as Foster tests Grigsby's bridge. Grigsby and teammate Katie Keller, both sophomores, won their school's contest with a total strength coefficient of 206. (Bottom, far right) The overall winning strength coefficient was 513 at Pioneer Middle School in Walla Walla.

BUSTS bridges at area schools

story and photos by Terri A. Rorke

The bell signals it's time for the assembly. Students gather at the auditorium stage and lead the event singing "London Bridge is falling down… falling down…"

With this rhyme, National Engineer's Week is officially kicked off at Walla Walla Valley Academy in College Place, Wash. On Feb. 16, 20 anxious students waited in line to test the stability of their bridges.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Walla Walla District employees tested the crafted bridges for the highest strength coefficient, which is calculated by dividing the maximum weight the bridge supports by the weight of the bridge.

Eight Walla Walla River Valley schools helped the Corps celebrate Engineers Week, Feb. 14-20, by participating in bridge construction contests.

Students were allowed to use the following materials to build their bridges: 30 drinking straws, one sheet of 8.5-by-10 inches of card stock, 10 feet of yarn, standard white glue, paper staples and scotch tape.

Corps employees tested more than 452 bridges this year, said E-Week coordinator, Jeffrey Lyon, electrical engineer.

"Engineers accomplish great things, from the atomic level to the heavens, but only as a team," Lyon said.

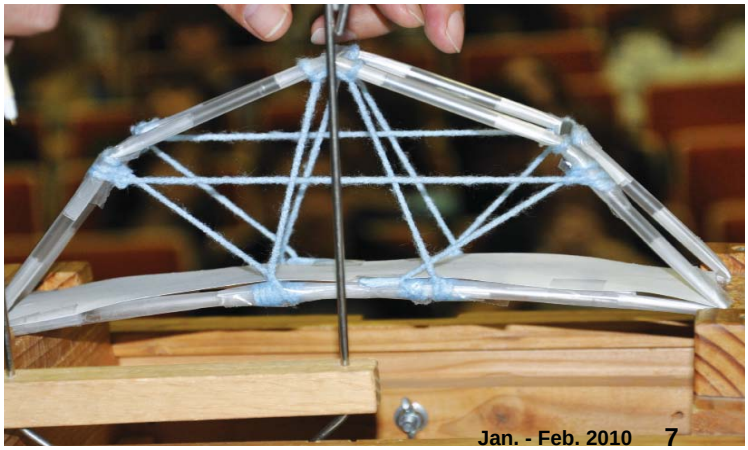
"Engineer's Week is a time to celebrate and remember what engineers do and how they do it. My hope is that the kids learn what it takes to do good engineering; teamwork, science and creativity. But ultimately that we, as engineers and any vocation, are limited by creativity, and that creativity has the power to provide new solutions to life's problems," he said.

President Barack Obama also commented on the importance of engineering in an official message on the National Engineers Week Foundation Web site, www.eweek.org.

"Never has it been more important for America's youth to consider careers in science, technology, engineering and math. The lessons they learn through initiatives like National Engineers Week will help them drive our economy as tomorrow's entrepreneurs, researchers and innovators, and guide our nation as educators, policymakers and parents," said President Obama.

Participating schools

Walla Walla Valley Academy, College Place
Centre Middle School, Milton-Freewater
Garrison Middle School, Walla Walla
Pioneer Middle School, Walla Walla
Walla Walla High School, Walla Walla
Lincoln Alternate High School, Walla Walla
Desales High School, Walla Walla



NWW improves lamprey passage at dams

by Terri A. Rorke

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is modifying fish ladders at McNary and Ice Harbor dams to improve lamprey passage through the facilities on the Columbia River Basin.

Walla Walla District dams on the Snake and Columbia rivers are equipped with fish ladders that accommodate most fish species. However, the lampreys' unique biological makeup necessitates modifications to fish ladders to accommodate these snake-like fish.

Although not listed under the Endangered Species Act as "threatened or endangered," the Corps treats lamprey like they are "threatened" and is working on a ten-year plan to help lamprey, said Tim Dykstra, Corps fishery biologist.

He also said the Corps is working with Native American tribes, to whom lamprey are culturally significant, to brainstorm solutions.

"We recognize and share Tribal concerns for the diminishment in Pacific Lamprey range and numbers," said Northwestern Division Fishery Biologist David Clugston. "The Corps is committed to fulfilling our obligations to assist with their recovery as stated in the Columbia River Fish Accords of 2009."

"The Corps is deeply committed to helping lamprey," Dykstra said. "We are not just sitting around talking about ways to improve lamprey improvement, but we are doing it as we speak."

Many fishery biologists, like Dykstra, understand they can make improvements by acting on what they already understand about lamprey.

"We are still learning a lot about lamprey, but what we do know is that lamprey swim at slower velocities than other fish. Also, they need rounded edges to cup their mouths on the edges to climb the ladder," Dykstra said.

Through continued efforts to understand lamprey and make changes to accommodate these fish, the Corps is already seeing changes.

"By analyzing data collected from Corps studies and working with groups to which lamprey are a concern, the Corps is already making a positive impact," he said.

photo by Gina Baltrusch

Fishery Biologist Brad Eby displays one of several lamprey passage ports installed at McNary Dam's fish ladder. The installed rounded ports allow lamprey to more easily navigate through the fish ladder.

photo courtesy of Robert Mueller, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory

Lamprey improvements

• Eight lamprey diffuser plates were installed over ladder gratings at McNary and Ice Harbor in January and February. Diffuser plates allow lamprey a smooth surface while passing through the ladder.

photo courtesy of by U.S. Geological Survey

• Lamprey passage ports are now installed at McNary and Ice Harbor. Passage ports, installed on the bottom of fish ladder weirs allow lamprey to easily navigate up the ladder.

• The Corps is testing how to lower velocities at fish ladder entrances during nighttime. The Corps understands that lamprey primarily navigate the fish ladders at night while salmon and steelhead pass through during the day; so the Corps is trying to take advantage of this by changing the velocities at ideal times for both fish. The Corps had mixed success at reducing velocities in the past, so it is testing to understand accommodating velocities.

• As part of an agreement with the Native American Tribes and the Columbia River Fish Accords of 2009, the Corps is delaying installation of ESBSs (extended submersible bar screens) at McNary Lock and Dam by two weeks. ESBSs are understood to be difficult for lamprey passage. Normally, ESBSs would be installed April 1, but the beginning of April marks a historical "pulse" of juvenile lamprey passage through the dams. Therefore, the Corps will install the ESBSs on April 15 this year. The Columbia River Fish Accords of 2009 includes a 10-year lamprey improvement plan.

Chipping off the Lomo Block

by Terri A. Rorke

Contract workers started off the new year by cutting out unsafe concrete from the Lower Monumental navigation lock wall in a 300 hour project from Jan. 2 to Jan. 29.

The workers' goal was simple: to remove spalling concrete. Spalling is the deterioration of the concrete causing "chunks" of the concrete to separate from the concrete structure. The crew removed approximately 700 tons of concrete from the lock wall.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District Structural Engineer Robert Hollenbeck, a crack was first identified on the Lower Monumental navigational wall in September 1998. Consequently, concrete spalling occurred in 1999. Until the Corps could obtain funding to repair the wall, workers removed small portions of the unsafe concrete multiple times since 1999 as an interim risk reduction measure.

The $800,000 project's first phase included cutting 4-by-8 foot deep, 60-by-100-food tall portion of the wall. The project came to fruition as soon as funding became available. The second phase of the project will be completed during the scheduled annual navigational lock outage in March during the Corps' maintenance season, when workers will replace a waterstop, instrumentation and guard rails.

The third phase of the project will have to wait until March 2011 during the next navigation lock outage and when funding becomes available to complete the project by replacing the missing concrete, said project manager Karen Robison.

Jensen Drilling Company out of Eugene, Ore. performed the work along with sub-contractor, Accurate Concrete Cutting, Inc. out of Vancouver, Wash.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photos

Progression of construction on Lower Monumental's lock wall. Workers removed 700 tons of concrete from the lock wall.

In the spotlight: Operations and

by Terri A. Rorke

Behind the scenes are workers who ensure that Walla Walla District's eight hydropower dams are operating smoothly and the conditions are safe. These workers are a part of the operations and maintenance crew who include electricians, mechanics, operators, engineers and administrative personnel. They are the people who inspect, test, clean, grease and fix the facilities' equipment.

Every year the operations and maintenance crews at the District's dams must carry out winter maintenance.

The District conducts three major maintenance projects during winter: hydroelectric generator maintenance, fish passage facilities and equipment maintenance, and navigation lock outage maintenance during March every year.

photo by Keith Hyde

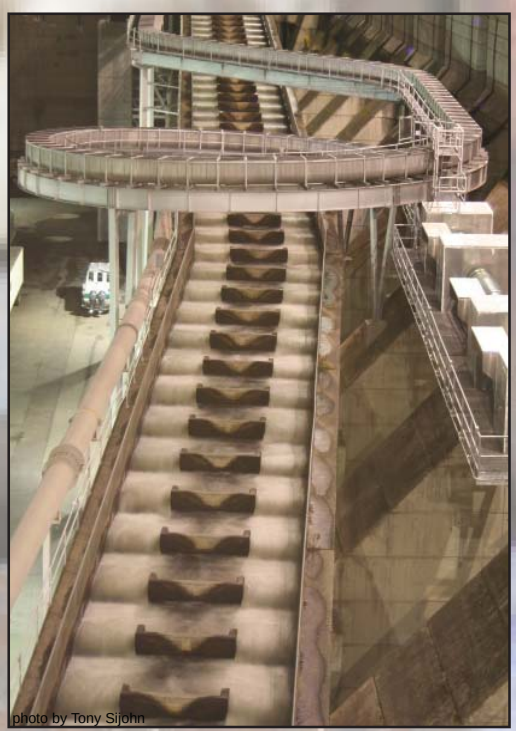


photo by Tony Sijohn

Fish passage facilities and equipment

The Walla Walla District has an expansive fish program that demands proper operation and maintenance. Examples of the District's fish program includes juvenile fish facilities at four of eight dams, barges and fish ladders.

The Corps has a major responsibility of improving fish passage at its dams to aid the recovery of endangered anadromous fish species. One of the District's contributions in aiding fish is the juvenile fish transportation program which began in 1968. Commonly called "fish-barging," this program uses specially equipped barges and tank trucks to carry migrating salmon and steelhead fingerlings around dams on their way down the Snake and Columbia rivers. In recent years, the District has modified dam spillways to increase fish survivability and added specially designed screens to guide most migrating fish around turbine intakes.

maintenance crews

Hydroelectric generator maintenance

photo by Terri A. Rorke


photo by Gina Baltrusch

Lower Granite Lock and Dam crew members clean thrust bearings as part of turbine "unstack."

As the second largest hydropower producer in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, providing a total generating capacity of 4,413 megawatts to the Federal Columbia River Power Systems, the District has a lot to maintain. An example of hydroelectric maintenance includes a complete "unstack" of one of the turbines each year, which can take about three months to take apart, clean and put back together.

Navigation lock outages

The District operates and maintains the federal navigation channel from McNary Dam on the Columbia River, through the four lower Snake River projects, providing a navigable waterway more than 400 miles inland to Lewiston, Idaho.

Every March, navigation lock outages take place at the Distrtict's five lock locations. The District coordinates with Portland District to schedule a four week outage on the Columbia and Snake Rivers. During the lock closure, maintenance, inspection and repair is performed at each lock. At Ice Harbor Lock, the upstream tainter gate anchor bolt is to be replaced this year. At Lower Monumental Lock, cavitation work and lock wall repairs are to be performed.

In 2011, the District plans to schedule an extended outage of 12 weeks to perform major maintenance.


U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo

Check out pages 12-13 to meet a few members of Walla Walla District's operations and maintenance crews who keep the District running smooth and safe.

McNary Lock & Dam: Shane Douthitt

Shane Douthitt is the designated dayshift chief power plant operator at McNary Dam for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Kentucky native grew up on a tobacco farm until he left the fields for the ocean and served in the Navy for six years as a nuclear plant electrician and operator. After the Navy, he found himself working for a private utility and state agency. But once the Corps offered him a job, his nuclear days were over. Today, he is responsible for the overall day-to-day operations of the powerhouse, spillways, navigation locks, fishways and their auxiliary equipment.

"When you walk into McNary Dam, you are walking into 'Shane's world,'" according to supervisor Robert Stoaks. Douthitt has expert knowledge of the major systems of the plant and how they interact, Stoaks said.

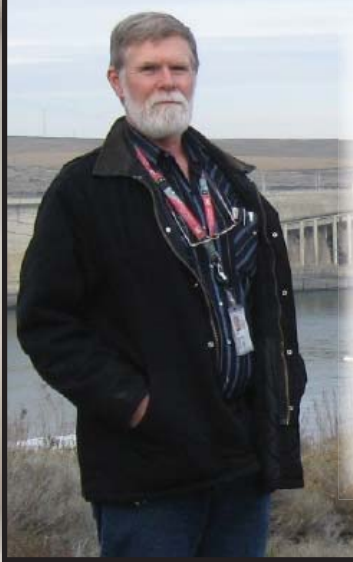
As a member of the Corps for more than ten years now, Douthitt holds a variety of responsibilities. He coordinates all corrective and preventative maintenance. He is also a leader in safety by ensuring equipment is safe for personnel to work on and oversees the hazardous energy control procedure.

During major equipment problems that could impact the mission, he makes first hand determination and diagnosis of events and coordinates all emergency and corrective actions by the operations and maintenance crew.

The chief operator also conducts special products to ensure smooth operations at the dam, such as setting up a database and hard copy record for nearly 300 electrical panels. This project allows personnel to properly identify all breakers and valves.

"I love my job, and McNary has provided an environment that is certainly enjoyable to work in. The people are good to work with and everyone tries to leave McNary a better place than when they began, because everyone knows what we do here is a service to the people of the Northwest and the environment," Douthitt said.

Ice Harbor Lock & Dam: Rick Weiss



Rick Weiss, who serves as Ice Harbor's power plant electrician crew foreman, has worked for the Corps for more than 25 years.

Weiss takes a proactive, well-planned approach to the performance of electrical/electronics maintenance at Ice Harbor.

Roger Golladay, operations and maintenance manager, said, "Mr. Weiss is an excellent employee with well defined leadership skills, setting high standards for himself that he instills in those that work for him, always striving to make things better."

Because of Weiss' stellar performance through the decades, he was nominated for the Northwestern Division's 2009 Power Operations and Maintenance Electrician of the year award, Golladay said.

Weiss goes above and beyond his work title duties. He has a full understanding of the contracting process and has prepared his own purchase request and commitments for purchasing services, supplies, materials and equipment. He also routinely serves on hiring panels and gives tours to a wide variety of audiences at Ice Harbor. Furthermore, Weiss' safety and environmental record speaks for itself. He has personally not had a lost time accident or reportable related incident in his career that spans over 35 years.

Mill Creek Dam and Bennington Lake: David Parker

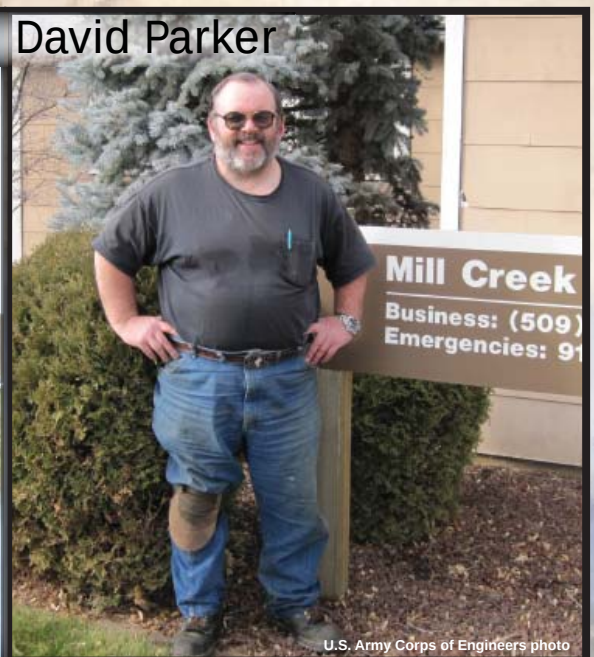
David Parker started as a laborer at Lower Monumental Dam in 1986 when he joined the Corps. He worked himself up the ladder to become the lead maintenance worker at Mill Creek in 1991.

When he started at Mill Creek, his manager told him, "There it is. Maintain it." And since then, he learned how to maintain all of the flood control gates and valves, recreation facilities, buildings, ground and utilities (BGU) and permanent operating equipment (POE) all on his own.

"I consider myself self-motivated and always wonder how and why something works," he said.

As a Vietnam veteran, when Parker is not working, he helps other veterans with adjusting to life after the military through a motorcycle group called, "Combat Veterans International."

Parker is currently compiling a "Mill Creek Control" binder. "I have a lot of institutional knowledge locked up in my rafters, and it's really hard to explain some of these items. I've put this binder together to list some of the daily/weekly/monthly/yearly items that are expected from this position, in the hopes that lessons learned can be forwarded on to the next generation," Parker said. Parker hopes that by creating the binder, his successor will have a smooth transition into the job.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo

Lower Granite Lock & Dam: Eugene McDonald


photo by Terri A. Rorke

Eugene McDonald has loved working at Lower Granite Lock and Dam since he started there in Oct. 2007. While working as a mechanic with an extensive machinist background, McDonald has diverse duties at the dam.

Recently, McDonald managed to help Lower Granite save time and money when it was faced with broken slip rings. Through utilizing his machinist skills, McDonald manufactured two devices that machine slip rings in place for the dam's generators.

"McDonald's device got us back a week ahead of schedule. Otherwise, we would have had to take the generator to another facility to get fixed." This new device will also set Lower Granite and other dams up in the future if McDonald's device is needed again.

Nevertheless, McDonald said he does not want to receive sole credit for his device. He said other members of his crew helped develop the fixture. The crew is a diverse team of members who are all cross-trained in trades that are not part of their job title. It's a team made up of four mechanics, a utility man and an electrician who are capable of picking up the workload in each others' trades.

"It's uncommon to see a team like this that is able to unstack an entire unit. Normally contractors are sent in to do the work," McDonald said.

Dworshak Dam & Reservoir: Tom Cummings


U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo

Tom Cummings has been a member of the Dworshak maintenance crew since the early 1990s. He brings a depth of diverse skills to the job. Cummings' official title is engineering equipment operator, but he can often be found performing routine maintenance tasks.

"There is very little Tom cannot do or does not have some experience doing," said Cummings' supervisor Greg Parker. "His knowledge of operating equipment such as the barges, backhoes, dozers and graders on steep mountainous terrain in all kinds of weather is unmatched."

Cummings can be found doing a variety of jobs independently from plowing snow or rebuilding roads at remote locations to installing new 48,000 pound anchors at the Big Eddy marina or retrieving sunken boats from the shore or docks around Dworshak.

"He also is very highly skilled in fabrication," Parker said. Cummings performs everything from small jobs on pieces of heavy equipment to large jobs such as fabricating an all-aluminum flying bridge cab on the red barge.

"Tom can get cranky at times, mostly because he wants to see things done right the first time. He has such a deep tool bag of experience to draw from to get it all done. Without Tom, many of the challenging, unique problems the Dworshak maintenance crew gets asked to solve, would be more expensive or more dangerous," Parker said.

Lucky Peak Dam & Lake: Rex Harding

"We don't call him 'Rexamatic' for nothing," said Lucky Peak's Acting Operations Manager Keith Hyde about Rex Harding, maintenance worker.

Harding offers a wealth of skills and expertise to the Lucky Peak team to include construction standards, welding, concrete work, metal fabrication, and mechanical design and repair.

Harding began his time with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a park ranger before he graduated from Boise State University with a bachelor's degree in biology and ecology. Upon graduation, he was hired as a maintenance worker for the Corps. He performed temporary duties at Mill Creek Dam assisting the maintenance team. As a result of assignment changes, Lucky Peak extended his position through the winter as a park ranger and he just returned to his maintenance worker position.

"Whatever projects Rex gets involved with, he takes from adequate to nothing short of exceptional. His unique blend of natural resources education, trade skills, attention to detail and uniformed park ranger experiences, are powerful strengths he applies on our team," Hyde said.

Because Harding can approach projects from his experience working with safety and durability of constructed items, park aesthetics and recreation needs, he "effectively devises balanced solutions," Hyde said.

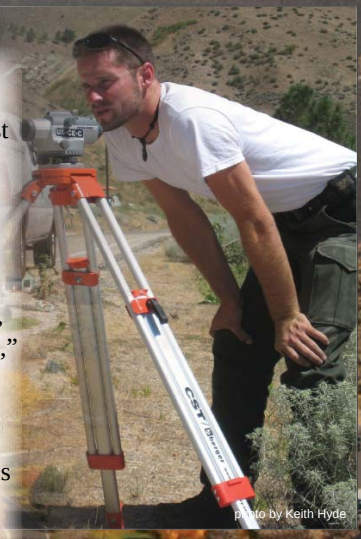


photo by Keith Hyde

A helping *command* hand:

District leaders help rescue fish during annual Ice Harbor main

story and photos by Terri A. Rorke

The Walla Walla District commander took the opportunity to change hats while Ice Harbor Lock and Dam dewatered its fish ladder to perform scheduled maintenance Jan. 18.

District Commander Lt. Col. Michael Farrell dressed up in a wet suit along with Maintenance Worker James Ezelle to slide through the weirs of Ice Harbor's fish ladder and gather any remaining fish.

Every three years, Ice Harbor completely dewaters its fish ladder to perform maintenance. Workers net up the remaining fish while it de-waters. The rescued fish are released back into the Snake River.

During the release in January, the commander and Ezelle rescued a total of ten steelhead fish. Deputy District Engineer Alan Feistner also assisted with the rescue.

Once the fish ladder was dewatered and the fish were released, workers were able to make modifications for lamprey passage throughout the fish ladder. For more information about how the Corps is improving lamprey passage, see page eight of the *Intercom*.

Deputy District Engineer Alan Feistner prepares to be lowered by a crane to the base of Ice Harbor's fish ladder in a man bucket.

(Main) Walla Walla District Commander Lt. Col. Farrell and Maintenance Worker James Ezelle search for remaining fish in Ice Harbor's fish ladder Jan. 18. (Top right) Ice Harbor Utility Worker Jeffrey Ethredge points out a remaining fish to Lt. Col. Farrell. (Right center, bottom) Ten steelhead fish were rescued from the fish ladder Jan. 18.

Hello from the Front

Deployed U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Walla Walla District employees Danielle Bolte, structural engineer (far left), Alden Foote, program manager (left), Randy Chong, environmental engineer (right), and Ezra Abraham, program manager (far right) take a moment to pose at Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan in January.

The Walla Walla District currently has 20 employees deployed in support of Overseas Contingency Operations, with 20 serving in the Afghanistan Engineer District.

Structural Engineer Danielle Bolte (far left) works with the Afghan National Police Program as a project manager on projects ranging from $1.5 million to $10.5 million. Bolte said she is working in a diverse program that is ever changing to meet challenges in Afghanistan.

"I've been fortunate enough to work projects in the Jalalabad, Herat, Salerno and Kabul area, and thus traveled quite a bit," Bolt said. Bolte and her husband, Corps Civil Engineer William Bolte, both deployed to Afghanistan in September.

Alden Foote (left) serves as program manager for the Afghan National Security Forces' operations and maintenance program and project manager for a number of military construction projects. He is responsible for an interim wastewater plant at Kandahar Airfield and a number of different military construction wastewater management complexes to be constructed spring 2010. The waste management complexes range from $5 million to $10 million and consist of incinerators, recycling, composting and hazardous material collection points.

"So far, I have been lucky to have visited a former Soviet Air Base at Shindand, had the joy of landing at Qala i Naw, a tiny city with an airstrip through the middle that is also used as one of its main roads, and the opportunity to scout terrain around the unfinished sections of the Ring Road near the Northwest border that may be ultimately finished by the Corps," Foote said.

Abraham (far right) deployed to Afghanistan in January and is a project manager for 62 projects under four major police groups: Uniform Police, Border Police, Afghan National Police and Afghan National Civil Order Police.

by Ian Dovey
ISAF- Forward Media Team

As a mechanical engineer, Carl Knaak says he can build just about anything. But what he really enjoys is building upon the skills of like-minded Afghan people.

Knaak and his U. S. Army Corps of Engineers partner Bill Stratton have teamed up to hold weekly seminars and share their professional knowledge of the trades with the people of Bamyan.

"If we can improve the skill sets of these students we are improving the community's knowledge base and making Bamyan a better place to live," says Knaak.

The first workshop was about diesel generator maintenance. Stratton says it was an obvious subject matter since diesel generators are the life-line of Bamyan Centre, producing all of the community's electricity.

The city of 45 thousand people is located along the historic Silk Road in the central highlands of Afghanistan. It gained international attention in 2001 when the Taliban destroyed Buddha carvings that had overlooked the valley for centuries.

Everywhere one looks they are reminded of Bamyan's rich historical past, but its citizens yearn for it to be a modern city.

Without the expertise of properly trained mechanics, this community would find it very difficult to cope and function; the hospital, university, schools, government and communications links would likely fall dark and

MISSION AFGHANISTAN

Corps employees hone Afghans' building skills

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Matthew Moeller

silent, and security could be jeopardized.

Mohammed Kazem works for the Agriculture Development Association for Afghanistan.

"I am responsible for my organization's generator, and if I did not know how to use it, this would create problems for my job and the people I work for," says Kazem. "This course has a lot of benefit for us."

Knaak and Stratton have 10 workshops scheduled from now until the spring. Topics include water systems supply, writing tenders, agriculture training, plumbing, roofing, Eeectrical safety, flood and retaining walls, concrete and roads.

News travels quickly in Bamyan and within a day of the first workshop there was a line of people outside the Provincial Reconstruction Team wanting to sign up for future seminars.

Not only is there great community interest for the workshops, there is also support. Robert Thelen the regional program manager for the Aga Khan Foundation provided the training facilities. He says the foundation is interested in developing and transferring skills to the local people and recognizes this training as a great opportunity.

Bill Stratton, who is a hydroelectric plant operator back at McNary Lock and Dam, says judging by the outpouring of interest they intend to extend the workshops beyond the initial 10 weeks. And based on the questions asked at the first workshop, they'll have to offer advanced courses.

"These courses were never available to us here in Bamyan," says Jawad who works for the public health office. "This kind of workshop is very good and will be helpful to my future."

(Top) A U.S. Army 10th Mountain Division Soldier looks out over the village of Sarhani in Afghanistan's Kunar Province. (Below) A new bridge under construction. (Bottom, left) Corps Mechanical Engineer Carl Knaak demonstrates the proper method of servicing and changing a diesel generator combustion air filter. (Bottom, right) Diesel generator class, Jan. 26.

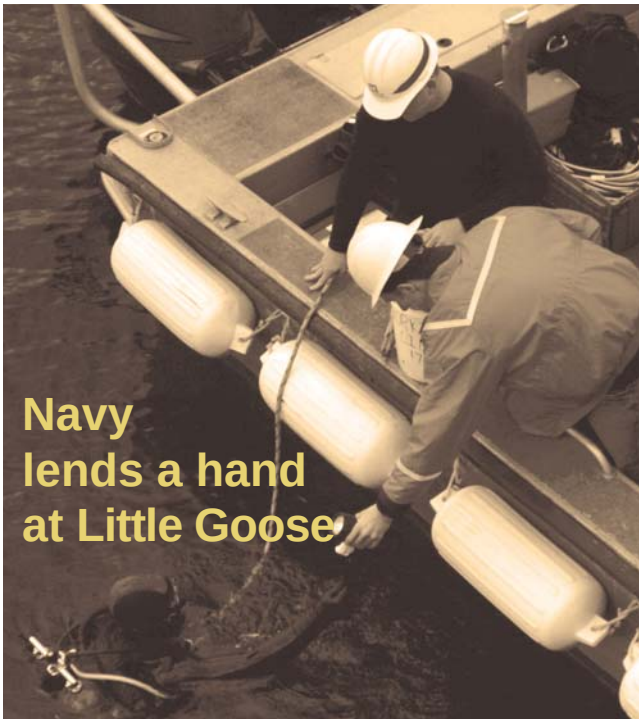
photo by Carl Knaak

photo by Ian Dovey

photo by Ian Dovey

Corps deployees Carl Knaak and Bill Stratton conduct workshops that teach Afghans everything from plumbing to electrical safety.

Around the District



Navy Diver Second Class Nicholas Wright grabs a flashlight from Navy Diver 1st Class Joshua Jarvis, both of the Naval Undersea Warfare Center, Keyport, Wash. The Navy dive team performed underwater inspections at Little Goose Lock and Dam on Feb. 16. The team inspected various features of the facility. The inspection provided training and dive time for the Navy dive team while helping Little Goose inspect parts of the dam that the crew is unable to inspect above water.

Award winners

NWD 2009 Hard Hat of the Year Award winner

Construction Control Representative Berton Kinman is the Northwestern Division's 2009 Hard Hat of the Year recipient. Kinman earned this award by supervising $10.25 million worth of contstruction projects at Little Goose Lock and Dam, to include spillway deflectors, temporary spillway weir, juvenile fish facility passive integrated transponder tag detectors and navigation lock repairs.

"I am honored and want to thank those people who have acknowledged my time, effort, and work on these projects and who nominated me for this award," Kinman said.

2009 Herbert A. Kassner Journalism Competition

First place winner of Contribution by a Stringer (photography) category: Mike Deccio, engineering technician, Walla Walla District headquarters

Second place winner of Contribution by a Stringer (photography) category: James Gale, supervisory mechanical engineer, Lower Monumental Lock and Dam, Kahlotus, Wash.

Third place winner of Contribution by a Stringer (photography) category: Mark Graves, wildlife biologist, Lower Granite Lock and Dam, Wash.

First place winner of Photojournalism category: Terri Rorke, public affairs specialist, Walla Walla District headquarters

Corps keeps community warm

District Mission Support Specialist Karen Hovatter takes down knit hats donated to Walla Walla's Helpline charity organization Feb. 3, 2010. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Walla Walla District employees donated about 30 sets of winter hats and gloves to the local charity organization, Helpline. The District has worked with Helpline for several years now donating hats, gloves and non-perishible foods. The Corps donates to Helpline because the organization assists the Walla Walla County community's indigent and working-poor individuals and families on an emergency basis with food, clothing, prescriptions, transportation, utilities, short-term shelter, homeless prevention rental assistance, infant-care needs and referrals for crisis advocacy and counseling.

Hockey captivates Corps players

story and photos by Terri A. Rorke

The game awakes with the usual echoing slap of the puck, the familiar sound of skates, gliding, slicing through 25-degree ice. Adults, armored with full body padding, play a sport that's been popular since the turn of the 20th century. It's a typical game on ice except without the promise of a big cheering crowd, an announcer or a mascot. The appeal lies elsewhere in this hockey game.

For five U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Walla Walla District employees who play hockey on an adult recreational league in Walla Walla and informally in Tri-Cities, Wash., the interest evidently lies in the love for the game.

"Despite press focusing on fist fights and other negative aspects of the game," Corps Biologist Carl Christianson said, "Ice hockey is truly a beautiful and graceful sport. It's a ballet on ice that requires a tremendous level of skill, balance and grace."

For Christianson and his co-worker teammates, this graceful sport is a big part of their life.

"Before I accepted this position, I researched if there was hockey in the area. If not, I would have declined and stayed in Alaska," said Power Plant Mechanic Crew Supervisor Ronald Standring, who has been working at Lower Monumental Lock and Dam near Kahlotus, Wash., for 12 years. Standring, a hockey veteran of 45 years, is preparing for the 29th annual Spokane Oldtimers Hockey Tournament in late March along with fellow Corps employee, Tom Holt, document automation specialist at the Walla Walla District Headquarters in Walla Walla, Wash. Standring and Holt will compete in the over 50 division defending their title.

Holt, who began playing hockey at age 13 in Portland, Ore., said hockey got him through his divorce. "It was my salvation because it's a great stress reliever," he said.

For many, hockey is a lifetime sport.

"As long as you can skate, you can play hockey," Holt said. In fact, adult recreational leagues include divisions for groups as old as 60.

Even though all five of the Corps players began playing hockey as children, Holt said he knows many people who haven't started playing until their 30s. He said athletes often quit playing sports because it wears on knee joints, however hockey has low impact on the knees.

Two other Corps employees are regulars on the ice: Curt Tjomsland, clerk at the District headquarters and Electronic Systems Control Craftsman Shawn Cunningham for McNary Lock and Dam near Umatilla, Ore..

Tjomsland is one of four Corps employees who frequent the ice on the adult hockey league at the Walla Walla Ice Chalet ice rink. He said he plays hockey because he enjoys teaching others the game he grew up playing in Ankorage, Alaska. Christianson said the league has been the perfect way for him to get back into the game and to continue to appreciate the skill exhibited by minor leaguers like the Tri-Cities Americans, National Hockey League players and Olympians.

These Corps employees don't play for recognition or money, nor fame or glory. It's simply about playing the game, according to the players. Not only does the league allow employees to get to know each other from different projects in a recreational setting, but allows them to play a game they love.

No matter what your age or your occupation is, hockey proves to be a sport you can begin at any time and continue playing your entire life. As Holt attests, "I'll play hockey until I die."

(Top, left) Referee Hunter Alden, 11, son of Jodi Alden, faces off the puck during an adult recreational hockey league game Jan. 2009. (Top, right) Players Erin Morris and Wolfgang Raddlefinger clash during an Ice Chalet game in Walla Walla. (Below) Holt, left, leads with the puck while Corps Clerk Curt Tjomsland, right, follows behind.

A group of Corps employees take a close look at Lucky Peak's flood outlet tunnel during its five year inspection during October.

photo by Keith Hyde