

Detroit District SOUNDINGS

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



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150 years of Soo Locks Service

Commander's Corner

Let's talk about improving communications

I find it interesting that, in the face of the communications developments over the past decade (Blackberries, cell phones, wireless everything to include computers), we often seem further from the goal of effective communication than ever before.

Perhaps we have not reconciled human communications processes (including basic courtesies) with technology. Or is it that there is so much information available to us, that we can no longer recognize and prioritize what must be communicated and when (i.e. reaction to information overload)?

Whatever the reasons, it's time to think about and improve communication in the District. To that end, I have put together some communication reminders.

1. Tools: Use them – we invest heavily in information technology to maximize our communication capabilities. The investment is only as good as how we use it to make ourselves effective and efficient. A critical tool is Email. Develop the habit of scanning all Emails, and deleting information you don't need. Prioritize the

remaining emails as you go, by putting them into electronic folders to deal with now or later. Flag suspenses in your calendar before they are due to assure you have time to be in compliance.

2. Interpersonal communications: One of the finest ways to be sure people will tell me what I need to know is to develop a strong relationship of trust and open communication. You can do this by creating an atmosphere that welcomes information and updates.

If you need to know something, ask open-ended questions without interrogating.

Invite feedback - let others know that you welcome input as long as it is given respectfully. Let your team know that all subjects are open to discussion, even though leaders (who ultimately bear the responsibility for leading), retain the right to make final decisions.



Lt. Col. Donald P. Lauzon

Listen to what is not being said as much as what is. If there is a sudden shift in morale or attitude in your office, section or area, get to the bottom of it now rather than later.

Problems that are presented to management without proposed

solutions are simply whining. Encourage those who bring problems to offer solutions, too. This engages everyone to find workable solutions and keeps everyone involved in problem solving from the beginning.

Remember that how you say it is often as important as what you say. Try to be mindful of how your message will be received *before* you deliver it.

Say what you mean and mean what you say — never make promises you cannot keep. If you do make a promise that falls through, communicate quickly and honestly, taking responsibility.

See 'Commo,' page 3

SOUNDINGS

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postcards from afghanistan

Detroit project manager documents deployed experience

By Rich Dickson
Project Manager

Greetings from “the top of the world!” That’s a term used for many years by travelers and conquerors to this part of the world (starting with Alexander the Great), as this place is quite something. Here’s a quick travelogue:

I’m at Bagram Air Field (“BAF”, as it’s known), the main U.S. and Coalition Forces base in Afghanistan, and where all Corps folks fly into and out. We’re about an hour drive northeast of Kabul, the capital and where the Afghanistan Engineer District (AED) headquarters sits. BAF is in a huge bowl, mostly surrounded by currently snow-capped mountains, which makes the weather rather mild and the views spectacular.

Deploying here is quite the experience. Once the preliminary paperwork is completed, you then head to the Corps’ CONUS Replace-

ment Center (CRC) in Winchester VA, which was nice for me because I used to live and work there, so got to catch up with some former co-workers.

The Friday of “CRC Week” you head to Dulles airport and fly east. We flew from Dulles thru London and Azerbaijan to Manas, Kyrgyzstan, which has a small Air Force station adjacent to the civilian airport.

So, when you arrive in BAF, usually with little or no sleep and lots of jet lag, all you have to do is grab a phone and call the Corps Resident Office at BAF, where they arrive within minutes to help you grab all your gear. Assuming you’re not quite done traveling (only about a dozen Corps folks are here), the Resident Office staff will settle you into a place to rest or, if again lucky, there’s a convoy to Kabul that you can get on. Convoys are quite a production. There has to be two “shoot-

ers” (soldiers with loaded weapons) per vehicle, two vehicles minimum, and you must wear the “flak vest” and helmet. Rather a shock your first day in the new job.

Living here is not as bad as expected, to be honest. Again, BAF is the main base for this theater of operations, so there’s a lot of US and Coalition Forces here, so the life-support facilities are rather robust. The current big deal on BAF is the imminent opening of Popeye’s, right next to the Burger King. It’s interesting that with free and good food at the dining facilities, a lot of folks choose to pay for fast food, but I can understand the need for some “Americana.”

Your schedule here is rather uncomplicated...work, eat, sleep. There is an amazing amount of design and construction either on-going or programmed, and our 12-14 hour days are filled with work. Of

See ‘Postcards,’ page 6

‘Commo,’ from page 2

3. Written communication:

Need to know – the watchwords for who are granted access to classified information — it is also a perfect question for written communications. There are obvious recipients (the team).

However, before you hit “send,” ask yourself, “Who else should know this?” Writing the information down is only a first step, putting it in the hands of all those who need to know (and in a timely manner) is critical to mission success.

Clarify before delivering your message (in any form). Put the bottom line up front and avoid overly lengthy messages. To help you get to (and stay on) point, develop a fact sheet (often called a “White Paper”) outlining salient points.

One of my goals in the coming year is to improve

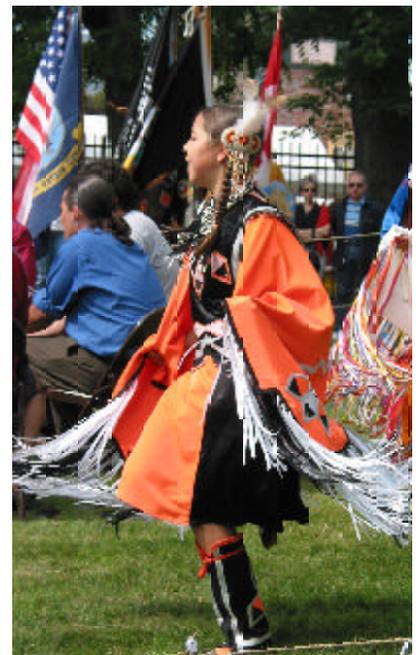
our communications in the Detroit District. We can mitigate many of the negative impacts of the challenges we are faced with by doing a better job of communicating, both up and down the chain of command. Please join me in making better communications a reality in the Detroit District.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to communicate to each of you how much I value your contributions to our nation.

I appreciate the dedication and professionalism that is evident in every hand that I shake as I go around our District. We have a successful District because we have great employees doing great work. Thank you!

Soo Locks Celebrates 150 years

Photos & Story By Casondra Brewster





Thousands pour through Soo Locks to glimpse 'historical engineering marvel,' mark 150th anniversary

On a day marked by record-breaking heat in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., nearly 6300 people came to the Soo Locks to help the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers celebrate 150 years of service to the Soo area and the nation.

The day began with an official rededication ceremony hosted by the District Engineer Lt. Col. Don Lauzon. The keynote speaker was the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division Commander, Brig. Gen. Bruce Berwick, who's audience was dotted with Sault Ste. Marie residents dressed in 1850's fashions.

Following the reading of several official declarations and proclamations by elected officials and representatives, a ribbon cutting 'unlocked' the gates for the public to pass through and cross the Soo Locks.

Once across the locks, visitors were treated to historical photo exhibits of the locks then and now. The public were also able to tour the Corps survey, tug and barge vessels assigned to the Soo Area office, as well as watch the Great Lakes freighters and International ships pass through the locks.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency had a special presentation for visitors also.

The Army was in full force at the special Engineers Day. The Great Lakes Recruiting Battalion hosted a rock-climbing wall for folks to try their hands – and feet – at for free. The Michigan Army National Guard also had special static displays of heavy-duty Army equipment like that assisting the Corps in it's missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For the first time ever on Engineers Day, Amateur Radio Operators hosted a passport station where more than 200 messages from around the world were received.

To mark the commemoration and pause to remember those around the world serving in the Global War on Terrorism, the Michigan Army Air National Guard sent a team of A10 Warthogs to fly over the Soo Locks at 10:55 a.m. that morning.

Inside the Soo Locks Visitor's Center, the anniversary was marked with new exhibits, including an invitation engraved on a deerskin rawhide sent to President Dwight D. Eisenhower to celebrate the 100th anniversary.

As a special 150th anniversary tribute, the Corps will open the lock gates to the public in an unprecedented second time in a year on Sept. 2 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, visit <http://www.lre.usace.army.mil>.



Photos clockwise from top: A big draw for many of the Soo Locks visitors is to watch the large 1,000-foot freighters that pass through the locks moving from Lake Superior to the lower Great Lakes. Visitors for 2005 Engineers Day were not disappointed, nearly one ship per hour went through the locks that day.

Federal, state and local leaders perform a ribbon cutting ceremony opening the locks and officially kicking-off the summer long event.

Soldiers from the Michigan National Guard demonstrate engineering equipment being deployed in missions all over the world to visitors.

First Nation participation of the Soo Locks Celebrates 150 ceremonies included an honor drum song and words of welcome from the Chairperson of the Ojibway Tribe. Celebrations continued after Engineers Day Friday with more Native American Celebrations like the butterfly dance shown here.

Getting the mail to and from the ships passing through the locks is another operation conducted while the freighters traverse the locks.



'Postcards,' from page 3

course, there's very little else to do, and working long hours keeps the day filled, so it's quite acceptable.

I serve as AED's Program Manager for all the work we're doing for the U.S. Forces in the theater of operations, which is euphemistically called "the Stans" -- Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and my favorite, Kyrgyzstan. We currently have about 25 active projects worth about \$ 350 million, with lots more in the FY05 Supplemental and FY06 request.

The work is focused on supporting the war fighters — new runways or repairing existing ones, personnel or cargo facilities, housing facilities, and logistical facilities (ammunition supply points, fuel farms, etc.). These facilities help the U.S. and the Coalition Forces perform their very important mission of safeguarding the forces, stabilizing Afghanistan and the region, and promoting peace.

AED is also performing a tremendous amount of work for the Government of Afghanistan. We are constructing Afghan National Army facilities throughout the country, Afghan Police facilities, a major highway bridge to Tajikistan, and we're involved in a tremendous amount of various smaller nation-building projects throughout the country.

I would recommend a tour here for anyone. The work is very different than what we see in Detroit, it's very challenging, the pace is amazing, and it's just plain fun!

Sometimes the projects are awarded in another District (TAC, EUD), many times utilizing Corps Centers of Expertise (like NWO -



Rich Dickson

Soldiers walk along a path in Bagram Air Field, showing a typical scene for deploying Corps' civilian Employees. Every career field in the civilian ranks is needed in forward-deployed areas like Afghanistan and Iraq.

Omaha), then the project is forwarded to AED for execution. All Corps folks here are from somewhere else. Many districts are represented, as well as some folks from organizations other than the Corps. Virtually all projects are awarded design-build, which makes for a very fast execution period. This challenges each and every AED employee on a daily basis, which is stressful, however, very rewarding. Even if you're on a month tour, many times PDT members get to see projects you helped get to construction actually start to get built.

As with any deployment overseas to a war zone, there are things that must be dealt with. Yes, leaving your family, friends, loved ones, even pets — the life you have crafted for yourself — is very difficult and even heart-wrenching. Yes,

it can be dangerous. We recently had our third missile attack at BAF since I've been here (thank God no one was hurt in any of these). The living and working conditions are challenging and stressful. But the stress and challenges are mitigated by the tremendous thrill of doing something good for yourself, your country, and the people of Afghanistan.

There are many opportunities to serve here, but don't get frustrated if you do volunteer and don't get selected right away. There are waiting lists for some positions, like Project Managers and Construction Reps, but with many folks choosing 3-6 month rotations, there is opportunity as well. I encourage each of you to consider volunteering for a position here. I can guarantee you that you'll always never forget your service here.

District People On Point

Meet the selected district employees of the 1st quarter:



April Champion
Regulatory, Permit Branch

April Champion serves the District in the Regulatory Branch and processes permits. She was the project manager for a complicated permit application for the expansion of the Blue Chip Casino in Indiana.

The processing of this major activity required several months of careful attention to detail, extensive coordination with the applicant and public and preparation of an Environmental Assessment.

Finally, she prepared a recommendation to the District, which rendered a favorable permit decision in June 2004.

In Oct. 2004 there was a legal challenge to this decision. The District had to respond on an emergency basis to extensive legal proceedings, which demanded weeks of her total attention and commitment while under fire to explain and justify her work.

Champion rose to the occasion, never lost her composure, remained a pleasure to work with while achieving an unequivocal litigation success. Her efforts were a credit to our agency and reflected the highest level of service to the public.



Steve Rose
Soo Area Office

Steve Rose did outstanding work on the District's claim against the M/V Helena Oldendorff.

On Aug. 15, 2003 the Motor Vessel Helena Oldendorff struck and damaged the McArthur Lock Stiffleg derrick. Repairs were accomplished before the end of Dec. 2003, which cost the District more than \$150,000.

In June 2004 the matter was referred to the District Office of Counsel for collection of the repair cost from the vessel owner.

Rose prepared a detailed, accurate, and complete documentation of the cost to the District for the repairs, which was the key to full recovery. Negotiations occurred on the basis of Rose's work. His final product consisted of more than 50 pages of meticulously prepared invoices and substantiation of in-house labor costs.

In March 2005, the vessel owner presented a check to the District for the full amount of the repairs.

Return of those funds to the proper District elements is critical to our operations in these lean budget years.



Nancy Peterson
Regulatory, Enforcement Branch

Nancy Peterson was project manager for Riverside Bayview Homes vs. The United States, a Supreme Court case won by the Corps that established the national precedent that allowed the Corps to regulate wetlands adjacent to navigable waters of the United States.

She recently was on the team that is partnering with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality in pursuing a major wetland violation right near to Bayview Homes on Lake St. Clair.

She also recently led the team that took on the difficult task of developing a Detroit District guidance document for applicants for the purpose of implementing Compensatory Mitigation, i.e., creating or restoring wetlands when required as a condition of a Department of the Army permit.

Always amiable with colleagues and the public she serves, she is nonetheless a hard-nosed regulator whose professional dedication has done much to preserve and protect wetlands not only in Michigan but across the country.

Golfing for the Great Lakes

Corps and other Great Lakes stakeholders partner in day of fun

By Joyce Hess
Outreach Coordinator

The sun peeked from the clouds in the brisk afternoon to remind us that it was, in fact, spring. The weather stubbornly stayed below 55 degrees for the first “Partners for the Great Lakes” Golf Outing on Friday, April 29, 2005 — but the “partners” and the District’s own golfers were on a mission.

Nothing, not even snow and rain earlier in the week, deterred the attendees from dusting off their clubs and joining us. Sixty-one golfers played and, (judging by the laughter and smiles), many made the most of the outing by making new friends and contacts while joining familiar faces for this all new event on the golf calendar.

The Outing was held at the Selfridge Air National Guard Base, near Mount Clemens, Michigan. Participants came from as far away as Canada, Ohio and across the entire state of Michigan to make this an “International” event.

The gathering allowed “Partners for the Great Lakes” to enjoy a round of golf, while taking the opportunity to meet and discuss our common interest in the welfare of the Great Lakes Region.

The winning foursome was Lt. Col. Don Lauzon, Commander of the Detroit District, USACE, Colonel William Ryan, Deputy Commander, Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, Mr. George Costaris, Manager/Directeur Canadian Consulate General and Commander Jeff Ogden, Commander USCG Air Wing.

In the category of individual awards, CH2M Hill’s, Tim Watkins’ shot made him the man who was closest to the pin and Tony Schmiedlow’s (of Housing and Urban Development) fine shot made her the woman who was closest to the pin. Craig Moulon (also of CH2M Hill), made the man’s longest drive on the fairway and Debra Venegas, with PA Consulting’s Team, captured the woman’s longest drive. Rusty Owens of DLZ Corporation won the early morning putting contest and generously turned the proceeds into a gift certificate door prize for award later in the event.



photo by Joyce Hess

‘Partners for the Great Lakes’ head to the fairway at Selfridge Air National Guard Base for the start of what is hoped to be the first of an annual golf outing.

Many of the Corps partners have taken the time since the event to let the district know how much they really appreciated the outstanding company of a group of great sports and partners in the region.

Following eighteen holes of golf, the participants gathered at Mulligan’s Clubhouse for a Hamburger buffet and the awards ceremony. Lauzon opened the proceedings by recognizing our valued partnerships and naming each of our corporate partners and the outing volunteer organizers.

He thanked everyone for making a great start to what he hopes will become a valuable annual tradition. Lauzon also thanked all of the golfers and donors who made the event so successful and closed with an invitation to attend the 2006 “Partnership for the Great Lakes” Outing slated for next year (May 2006).

Next year’s Outing is again scheduled to be held at the Selfridge Air National Guard Base, so please make a note on your calendar.

For further information concerning the Outing and participation for next year, please contact Joyce Hess at JHess96305@aol.com.

