

# SOUNDINGS



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# Soundings

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**COVER:** The downbound, 634-foot *Great Republic* ties up at a pier below the MacArthur Lock one October morning. The vessel could not proceed after fog prompted the Coast Guard to temporarily close the lower St. Marys River to navigation. (Photo by Michelle Hill)

## Commander's Column



Lt. Col. Michael C. Derosier

I am writing this as I return from the Regional Senior Leaders Conference, SLC, in Dayton, Ohio. The gathering offered an opportunity to improve our regional governance and decision-making processes, and to hear from the new commander of the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, LRD, Col. Margaret Burcham, as well as other senior LRD leaders on their thoughts regarding the division's future. We also worked on developing implementation plans for critical I-Plan actions and initiatives.

This followed on the heels of the Construction Roundtable in Cleveland where the Detroit District was well represented during the Community of Practice meeting. Our employees took the opportunity to share ideas and glean lessons learned from across the region, while also identifying areas of improvement for execution of our construction and Great Lakes navigation missions in fiscal year 2012.

We are nested well with the division in many strategically important areas like stakeholder engagement, continual improvements to our quality management system, leader development, and Department of Defense mandated energy savings and sustainability. In many cases, we are leading the way and setting the example for the divi-

sion. Col. Burcham has now visited several of the districts, met numerous key stakeholders, and gained an in-depth understanding of the Great Lakes and Ohio River systems. She informed us at the SLC that she is now familiar enough with our missions and challenges to publish her priorities and focus areas in the near future. She greatly appreciated her October visit to Detroit, and was impressed with our team and its district overview. In Dayton, Col. Burcham asked us all to give priority focus to doing our assigned duties to the standard of excellence; this ultimately provides the foundation for us to generate positive results and deliver value to the Army and the nation.

Next up for me is the National Small Business Conference and Chief of Engineers District Commanders Conference, a week before Army's football team BEATS Navy on Dec. 10. At the Commanders Conference, I'll get an opportunity to speak with the other district commanders about my thoughts on what the Corps is calling "strategic crossroads." What is this? It is many matters related to the budgetary, customer and workforce environment in which we operate. These include low or uneven funding streams, earlier and more effective partnerships, scheduling and district/divisional/headquarters vertical integration, energy and sustainability, maximizing benefits to the nation, having four distinct generations of employees in the workforce, ISO and the Quality Management System, overseas contingency operations, preparedness for emergency response, a proactive workplace culture, and so much more.

*Continued, page 3*

# New division commander visits Detroit District

By Tom Black  
Public Affairs Office

Just a few weeks after being named commander of the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, Col. Margaret W. Burcham visited the Detroit District in mid-October to learn more about its operations and get acquainted with employees.

At the District headquarters office, Burcham met with senior leaders to learn about congressional issues and district challenges. As she walked around the office and stopped in the various departments, staff members briefed Burcham on their specific areas of expertise and projects. The division commander also visited the Detroit Area Office, toured the floating plant, and checked out the Pointe Mouillee Dredged Material Disposal Facility in southeast Michigan.

“The main purpose of this visit was to get to know the district: its organization, mission, projects, challenges, and most of all, its people,” Burcham said. “I need to know the districts so that when I represent the division in

Washington, or with our stakeholders, for instance, I have a good base of knowledge.

“When I’m sitting in my office in Cincinnati, establishing policies or making personnel or budget decisions, I need a sense of the ground truth as it exists out there at the project level.”



Mark Allen, chief, Engineering and Construction Office, explains current initiatives to Col. Margaret Burcham, commander of the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, and colleagues during her Oct. 14 visit at the Detroit District headquarters office. (Photo by Tom Black)

Burcham said she was impressed by the Detroit employees and the scope of their work.

“I got a good feel for the types of work they are doing and the significant amount of creativity and innovation that is coming from our employees. It’s fun to see what pride the Detroit team takes in their work and how much the employees I met really enjoy their jobs. They motivated me.”

During her time in Detroit, Burcham also participated in Great Lakes Week, a gathering

of environmental and ecological organizations promoting policies beneficial to preserving and protecting the Great Lakes.

She attended several stakeholder meetings and conferences, meeting with agencies including EPA, International Joint Commission, Council of Great Lakes Governors and Great Lakes Commission.

## Commander’s column (continued from page 2)

Whatever you decide to call it, the strategic crossroads is important to me because it is the environment that shapes our analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats; it also influences the future direction and actions of the district. Strategically, it is essential that we continue to execute our mission to the delight of our stakeholders

and customers, and especially our hedgehog areas of Great Lakes navigation, environmental restoration, regulatory, water management, construction and International/Interagency Support. We must successfully hit our Regional Command Operating Budget rates and chargeability targets; monitor our workload-to-workforce to keep it in balance; seize

work sharing opportunities with other districts to help smooth out funding unpredictability; leverage strategic messaging to protect and enhance the Corps of Engineers brand; and reach out to new and existing customers so that we are the agency of choice to deliver projects and programs for our customers, the Army, and the nation. As a result, my near-term

focus and priorities will center around spending time with each office across the district, O-Plan execution and tracking, focused delivery of our “Top 10” projects and customer outreach.

ESSAYONS!!!

BEAT NAVY!!!

# Detroit employees run in Free Press marathon

By Tom Black  
Public Affairs Office

Four Detroit District employees participated in the Detroit Free Press / Talmer Bank Marathon Oct. 16. The event, now in its 34th year, also includes competitions such as a half marathon, 5-kilometer race and relay race.

The four bring different running experiences to the table, but all agree they enjoy it and plan to keep running.

**Josh Hachey** completed the full marathon; **Nick Springer** finished the half-marathon; while **Leigh Ann Ryckeghem** and **Renee Thomas** each completed the 5-K race.

Hachey, a mechanical engineer with the Contract Administration Branch of the Engineering Design and Construction Office, is an accomplished runner. Although he began running just four years ago at age 28, he said he's already run in two dozen races, including five half-marathons and three full marathons. His training routine varies, but typically he runs three or four days per week, averaging between 15-30 miles per week.

His proudest achievement, Hachey said, was participating in a marathon that helped "Team in Training," an organization founded in 1988 to raise money for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

"We raised money for cancer research and treatment while we trained for the Walt Disney World Marathon in January 2009," Hachey said, adding he made many new friends during the event.

Springer, a mechanical engineer and assistant chief of the Soo Area Office's Shops, Yards and Mechanical Section, is also becoming a veteran runner. He has run four half-marathons and two 5K races. During the Free Press event, he finished 26th out of nearly 8,500 finishers in the half-marathon. He said he trains up to one-and-a-half hours, six days a week – 40 to 60 miles per week.



Josh Hachey



Nick Springer



Leigh Ann Ryckeghem



Renee Thomas

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"I didn't run competitively in high school or college, although in college I was on the Notre Dame men's rowing team, which gave me the interest in training and competing," Springer said.

One of his former college coaches encouraged Springer to train and race competitively. Springer is glad he took the coach's advice because he enjoys running, and said he definitely plans to run a full marathon in the future.

Ryckeghem, a civil engineer with the Contract Administration Branch of Engineering, Design & Construction, participated in the 5K race (her second) with her husband. She runs two or three times a week on a treadmill, typically between two and three miles per session.

"I am just proud I finished," she said. "I started running over the past two years to stay active and de-stress. It is very rewarding to participate in any running event and to finish." She added she enjoys challenging herself and plans to run a 10K race soon.

Thomas, a civil engineer with Engineering and Technical Services, played soccer in high school. Recently she took up running again and said she found it to be a great way to build endurance and stay in shape. The Free Press 5K event was the second competitive run in which she has participated.

"I would definitely consider myself a recreational runner," Thomas said, adding she runs for fun and fulfillment. "The sense of accomplishment you feel after finishing a race is awesome."

# Brewer, Keyser lend a hand to help rebuild Afghanistan

By Tom Black  
Public Affairs Office

**A**fghanistan is a vast country with rugged terrain that is often devoid of the landmarks we are accustomed to using for navigation. Roads, subdivisions and fences help determine property boundaries, but these things do not exist in many areas of Afghanistan where U.S. military and civilian personnel operate.



**Mark Brewer**, a realty specialist in the Detroit District Office, serves as a GIS / Cartographer at Afghanistan Engineering District – North, where he creates maps that help military and civilian personnel perform their jobs. The maps delineate

grid points for construction projects, thus facilitating the use of two key technologies: Global Positioning System, GPS, and Geographic Information System, GIS.

Like many who are deployed, Brewer works long days, yet he said the weeks fly by and he has been pleased with the new friendships he has developed while serving in Afghanistan. He said his Afghan experience has given him a greater appreciation for his blessings.

“Being removed from what I once considered ‘my life’ has allowed me to gain a true appreciation of everyone and everything that made it up,” he said, adding he is inspired to capitalize on life’s opportunities. “Make the most of every day; life is fleeting. People are capable of doing much more than they believe they can.”

Brewer has also been deployed in Iraq, and had a one-week deployment in Tajikistan, which is located just north of Afghanistan and borders on western China.

“I have seen and been to places of great historical significance,” Brewer said. He visited the ruins of Babylon in Iraq and the 1,600-year-old Sleeping Buddha sculpture in Tajikistan, and swam in the Band-e Amir Lakes in the mountains of central Afghanistan, six lakes known for their deep-blue hue.

Brewer said he’s grateful to his wife and children for their support.

“I would like to thank my wife for all her hard work dur-

ing this and my other deployments, and my three children for their support and understanding in my absence. Last but not least, my mother, who does not understand why I love these deployments but supports me anyway.”

**B**enjamin Franklin reportedly coined the axiom, “Small strokes fell great oaks.” The same principle applies to those who have deployed to the troubled nation of Afghanistan: Each does his or her small part to help address the country’s large needs.



**Joshua Keyser**, a power plant shift operator at the Soo Area Office, has found his niche, helping out as the facilities manager at an air field in Afghanistan Engineer District – South.

“I have learned that even though I am only one person, the services that I supply help support many more people and in the end this is helping to rebuild Afghanistan,” Keyser said.

As a facilities manager, Keyser takes care of six residential buildings and four office buildings, overseeing power generation and the water and sewer infrastructure.

Keyser’s busy schedule includes serving as a contracting officer representative for agreements pertaining to janitorial services, operations and maintenance, and he is involved in supporting and supplying numerous military bases.

Keyser said he enjoys spending his limited free time with co-workers and contractors.

“I have met a lot of good people from all over the world,” Keyser said. “One of our contractors was from Turkey and invited me to have tea with him.” He and his Turkish friends enjoy teaching each other words from their respective languages.

“Every Friday at 7 p.m. we meet and play cards, dominoes or other games,” Keyser added.

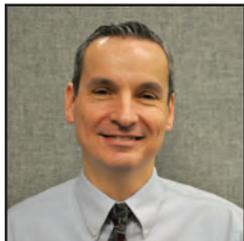
Keyser thanked his wife and children for their support, as well as co-workers at the Soo Area Office. His wife is picking up the slack at home, he said, while colleagues at work have pitched in to keep things running smoothly.

## New district Quality Team oversees improvement efforts

By Scott Thieme

To continue the Detroit District's march toward GREAT, a quality team has been formed. Joining me on the team are Joanne Gray, Contract Administration; Joyce Hess, Resource Management; Crystal Kelley, Operations; Bill Stafford, Internal Review; Keith Kompoltowicz, Hydraulics and Hydrology; John Niemiec, Programs and Project Management; and Rachel Nys, Regulatory.

This team was put together to ensure effective management and growth of the Detroit District's "Culture of Quality," which includes our Quality



Scott Thieme

Management System, QMS; continued ISO-9001 certification; the generation, monitoring and resolution of Opportunities for Improvement and Non-Conformance Reports; full execution of the district level quality improvement initiatives and an overall emphasis on continuous improvement. Quality must be a daily part of everything we do – not something we worry about every few years when audit time comes around.

The team will meet monthly to discuss ongoing initiatives and will also participate in frequent teleconferences with our division office to ensure we are in synch with headquarters'

efforts. The inclusion of the Operations, Regulatory and Emergency Management offices in our QMS is one of our major new initiatives.

The district quality team will also work toward quarterly meetings with all supervisors to update them on ongoing work efforts related to quality. Supervisors will then relay this information to their staff to ensure we are infusing our quality actions throughout the district.

Please feel free to see any of the quality team members for more information and to share your ideas for improving quality in the district. Our "Culture of Quality" is contagious. Catch it!

*Scott Thieme is the Deputy District Engineer for Project Management.*

## Commander lauds district achievements, discusses O-Plan

By Tom Black  
Public Affairs Office

During the first town hall meeting of fiscal year 2012, District Engineer Lt. Col. Mike Derosier highlighted the fiscal year 2011 closeout, employee achievements and future district plans.

"Fiscal year 2011, we had very excellent execution of projects and programs," he said, expressing appreciation for employees' efforts.

Derosier noted that helping the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division achieve ISO certification for its Quality Management System was an important milestone for the district. He also encouraged employees to familiarize themselves with the newly unveiled 2012 O-Plan and learn what their roles are.

He then spent a few minutes focusing on key initiatives important to the district mission. The Corps' Overseas Contingency Operations and IIS programs (International and Interagency

Support) are examples of vital missions district employees have helped carry out, Derosier said. He also cited priorities including a continuation of Regulatory road shows; eliminating the backlog of dam periodic inspection reports; and focusing on safety and quality.

Derosier urged employees to learn from and emulate successful approaches and programs employed by other organizations. "I want to steal ideas shamelessly

from other districts, from others in industry," he said, emphasizing that these ideas could be infused into the district's operations.

Employees should speak up about problems and propose possible solutions, Derosier said, making note of the "Commander's Hotline" on the district Intranet, which enables submission of anonymous comments and suggestions for improvement.



Lt. Col. Mike Derosier takes a question from Eric Burr, civil engineering technician with the Engineering and Construction Branch, during the Oct. 20 town hall meeting in downtown Detroit. (Photo by Cassandra Kardeke)

## Pow-wow, crafts in McNamara Building



Participants browse crafts during the North American Indian Association's Native Hands Gallery, Oct. 9 in the McNamara Building cafeteria. In observance of National American Indian Heritage Month, the Equal Employment Opportunity Office sponsored a "Pow-Wow" event to honor the many contributions made by Native Americans, their traditions, and their culture. (Photo by Cassandra Kardeke)

## Asian Carp web site gets upgrade

The Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee has upgraded its web site, which provides up-to-date information on efforts to protect the Great Lakes from bighead and silver carp.

Those who are looking for such information are encouraged to visit [www.asiancarp.us](http://www.asiancarp.us).

The multi-media site includes a news archive, frequently asked questions, fact sheets, information on waterway monitoring plans, maps depicting where Asian Carp have been found and a downloadable copy of the Asian Carp Control Plan.

## Commander visits project in Milwaukee



Lt. Col. Mike Derosier speaks with contractors and Corps employees during an October visit to the Milwaukee Dredged Material Disposal Facility, DMDF. During a trip to Milwaukee for a conference, the Commander arranged to stop by the DMDF to check up on dredging operations and construction of a 4,600-foot perimeter berm around the DMDF. (Photo by Dave Bowman)



**Bridget Rohn**  
*Environmental Analysis Branch*

From April through June, Bridget Rohn served as the lead environmentalist on four of the district's Top Ten projects, and used her accomplishments to complete her involvement in the Leadership Development Program, LDP. She presented her LDP training project as "development of an ecosystem restoration habitat unit evaluation framework."

Rohn wrote environmental assessments for the Frankenmuth Fish Passage, Manistique Sea Lamprey Barrier and Northwestern Michigan College.

Because of the district's execution on the project and the good working relationship Rohn helped establish with Customs and Border Patrol this provided more work to the district. Rohn collaborated with project sponsors and coworkers to meet tight deadlines, and each project had unique aspects that required innovative environmental processes.

Rohn exhibited leadership to the project delivery team members and the district through her determination and commitment to getting her portions of the projects completed on schedule. She is an asset to the Detroit District.



**Brian Romsek**  
*Lake Michigan Area Office*

Brian Romsek has been working on the Fort Custer Army Reserve Center in Augusta, Mich., as the on-site project engineer since the work began in spring 2010. The project has been extremely challenging, and Romsek was instrumental in assuring that the building was ready for the customer to move into by July 2011.

Romsek oversaw an air barrier test, which determines how well sealed a building is and whether any leakage allows for the unintended movement of air into and out of a building enclosure. Due to a lack of detail in the design, the building failed the initial air barrier test.

Romsek stepped in, researched the requirements, and contacted the air barrier subject matter expert to ensure that the project delivery team understood all the requirements. Romsek's efforts resulted in the contractor revising some of the existing construction in an effort to meet the air barrier test requirements.



**Matthew Leazier**  
*Soo Area Office*

Matthew Leazier, a lock/dam equipment mechanic, came up with a better way to lubricate the MacArthur Lock gates at the Soo Locks. He isolated the lubrication system and installed grease dispensing buttons on the gates themselves, thereby ensuring that critical pivot points on the gates get the lubrication they require.

Although the original system simplified the greasing of each piece of equipment, this was done at the cost of adding weak points, and it also increased grease line maintenance. Leazier said having to frequently replace grease lines inspired him to devise a better approach. His idea of adding grease buttons to the gate eliminates these weak points that had caused added maintenance.

### *Innovator of the Quarter*



**Kevin Kwasny**  
*Kewaunee Resident Office*

Kevin Kwasny started in Kewaunee two years ago as an engineering technician and was immediately assigned to work on hydro surveys, a technically challenging and physically demanding job. Conducting hydro surveys means working in all types of weather – sometimes in adverse conditions.

Kwasny has helped the district save money by creating a new solution to an old problem. It used to take a week or more, with three or four employees, to survey a dredged material disposal facility, DMDF. Employees needed to spend time manually clearing brush so their amphibious vehicle could properly navigate for a topographic survey.

Kwasny figured out how to combine several types of technology to render the manual brush clearing unnecessary. He laid out a grid of the DMDF using CAD software, single-beam data collection software and GPS to plot the DMDF and provide accurate navigational guidance for operators of the amphibious vehicle.

This innovative solution exemplifies that tech-savvy employees, even if newcomers, can successfully challenge long-established ways of doing certain jobs if they have a better idea.



# CONGRATULATIONS!