



US Army Corps of Engineers
Mobile District

BUILDING STRONG®

August 2011

Vol. 3, Issue 2

THE MOBILE

Mobile District leads USACE in Alabama recovery efforts



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Commander	Col. Steven J. Roemhildt
Public Affairs Officer	E. Patrick Robbins
Deputy PAO	Lisa A. Coghlan
Editor / Layout & Design	Lance D. Davis
Web Content Publisher	Lorraine Sutton Evans

THE MOBILE is an unofficial, monthly publication authorized under AR 360-1. It is designed via desktop publishing and distributed electronically by Mobile District's Public Affairs Office to a circulation of 1,800. Editorial views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or the Department of the Army. News stories, tips and letters to the editor are welcomed and encouraged. Contact the editor at the following:

PHONE: 251-690-2506

FAX: 251-690-2185

EMAIL: Lance.d.davis@us.army.mil

Address mail to:
 Editor, *THE MOBILE*
 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District
 P.O. Box 2288
 Mobile, AL 36628-0001

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From the Commander...

Greetings Team,

When an unprecedented series of tornadoes struck Alabama on April 27, 2011 and left numerous communities in devastation, FEMA tasked Mobile District with setting up a Recovery Field Office in Birmingham, Ala. to complete three major missions assigned to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: critical public facilities, temporary housing and debris removal (right of way, personal property and wet).

The first assignment for USACE from FEMA began with debris separation/removal missions in the city of Tuscaloosa.

Nearly three months after receiving the assignment, we have provided assistance to 33 cities, towns and/or counties impacted by the tornadoes. Our critical public facilities and temporary housing missions are completed, and we recently surpassed 4 million cubic yards in debris removal, an amazing accomplishment.

We continue to require quality assurance personnel in support of the debris removal mission; however, I am looking forward to having our whole team back with an overall mission complete before Thanksgiving. This is a super job by everyone deployed and our great team providing support back here in the District.

In general, great accolades for everyone with ongoing success in mission execution with our Military Construction, Civil Works and International Interagency Support programs. I have received superb feedback on our MILCON and design program as evidenced by recent ribbon cuttings at Von Brun MDA HQ, AMC HQ and preparation for an upcoming ribbon cutting at 7th Special Forces Group Complex. Additionally, we are currently at 81 percent in award execution for our FY11 MILCON program. Compared to the USACE average of 38 percent, this indicates what a phenomenal job we are doing.

On the Civil Works side with the Mississippi Coastal Improvement Program, all interim projects are under construction and five have been completed and accepted by the local sponsor. The Bay St Louis Seawall is ahead of schedule with the local sponsor very happy with the project. We are making great strides in standing up Deep Draft Navigation Center and hope to become a national center after the USACE Senior Leader Conference at end of August.

Our IIS program continues to excel with super performance from the LATAM team and our CONUS program is increasing with recent work from the Veterans Administration, the FBI and NASA. We just picked up a new project in the Philippines from the Millennium Challenge Cooperation, truly, the sun never sets on the Mobile District.



*Col. Steven J. Roemhildt
Mobile District Commander*

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From the Commander...continued

As wonderful as our programmatic accomplishments seem to be, our true strength lies within our great people and the teams that we make.

Dennis Newell was recently selected as the recipient of the USACE Construction Management Excellence Award and Toni Ortiz as the recipient of the USACE Innovation of the Year Award. Moreover, for the first time in history, a civilian USACE employee - Julie Walton - received induction into the Army Medical Department Order of Military Medical Merit as an honorary member in San Antonio, TX. And not to be outdone, Mary Haynes was recently awarded the Humanitarian Service Medal for her lifesaving efforts at the Joplin RFO. This is just a sample of the recent awardees just within the last several weeks. I am so proud to be your Commander; this is a great District and a wonderful family.

Please continue to be safe as we are entering the height of our summer season with warm, humid temperatures and all the wonderful summer sports and recreational opportunities. I am looking forward to seeing you soon out on the water, on the projects, downrange or in the halls.

You are making a difference to our customers, our Army and Air Force, and our Nation. Thank you.

Building Strong! - **Col. Steven J. Roemhildt**



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USACE wet debris mission complete

Story by Sara Corbett, Charleston District, and Nakeir Nobles, Jacksonville District

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently completed its mission to remove debris from Neely Henry Lake and Lake Martin that was the result of the devastating April 27th storms.

Lakes Neely Henry and Martin are where Alabama families gather to celebrate holidays and children learn to water ski. The spring tornadoes tore through the lakes, leaving much debris throughout both. Neely Henry Lake is located in northeast Alabama on the Coosa River near the towns of Gadsen and Ohatchee. Lake Martin is located in the counties of Tallapoosa, Elmore and Coosa.

FEMA tasked USACE with the wet debris mission as part of the ongoing federal effort to assist the state of Alabama and its citizens in the recovery from the spring storms. A total of more than 5,000 cubic yards of debris was removed from Neely Henry and 15,000 plus cubic yards of debris was removed from Lake Martin.

“As an Alabamian, I was proud to partake in this mission. I learned to water ski on Lake Martin and I wanted to see these lakes cleaned up just as much as anyone,” said Wes Trammell from Mobile District who served as manager for the wet debris removal mission.

Local subcontractors for Phillips & Jordan, Inc. (USACE’s primary contractor for the mission) collected the debris onto barges and relocated it to staging areas where it was separated by category of vegetation, construction and demolition debris. It was then loaded onto trucks and taken to the appropriate disposal areas.

“Risk to public health and safety is significantly reduced with the removal of the debris from Neely Henry Lake,” said Wes Trammell, waterway debris removal mission manager for USACE. “However, while the risk of boater traffic running over submerged debris has been reduced, we encourage the public to think about safety and exercise caution while on the lake as there is always a chance that some smaller storm debris might be present.”

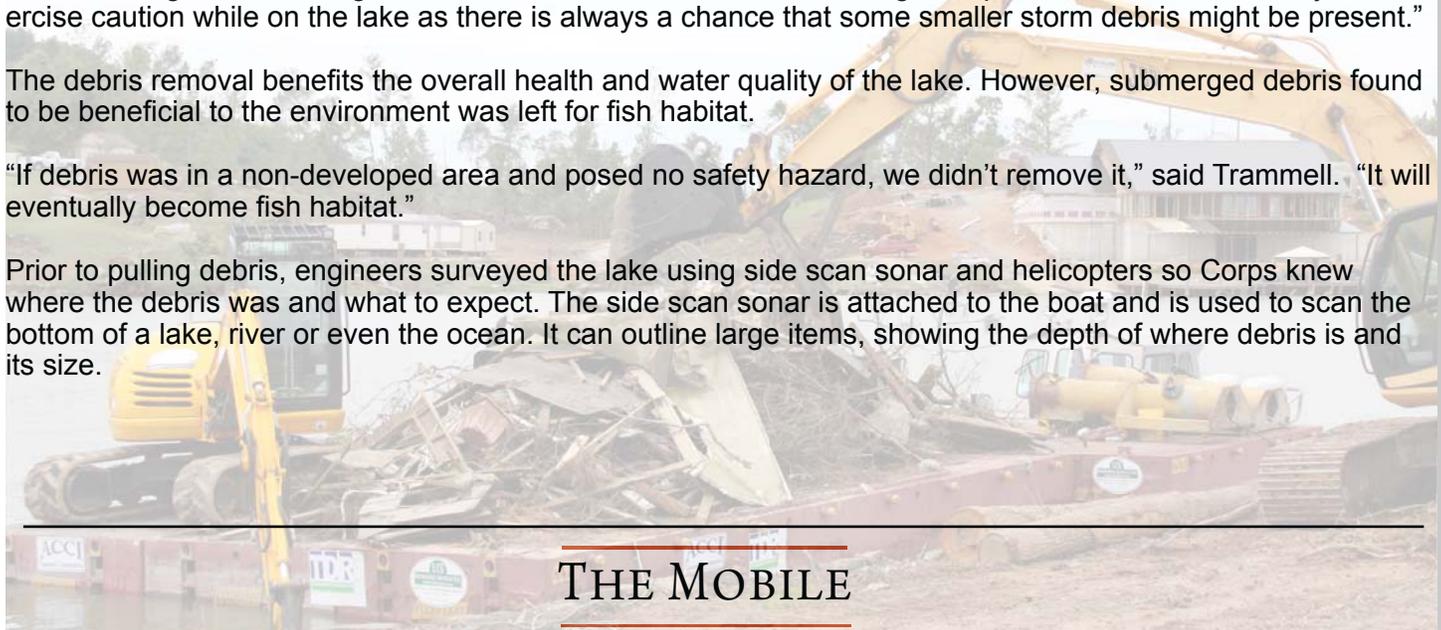
The debris removal benefits the overall health and water quality of the lake. However, submerged debris found to be beneficial to the environment was left for fish habitat.

“If debris was in a non-developed area and posed no safety hazard, we didn’t remove it,” said Trammell. “It will eventually become fish habitat.”

Prior to pulling debris, engineers surveyed the lake using side scan sonar and helicopters so Corps knew where the debris was and what to expect. The side scan sonar is attached to the boat and is used to scan the bottom of a lake, river or even the ocean. It can outline large items, showing the depth of where debris is and its size.



A press conference is held at Neely Henry Lake announcing the start of waterway debris removal at the lake. Photo by Adrian Bostick, USACE, ACE-IT



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Debris removal mission helps small town recover

Story by Gregory A. Fuderer, Los Angeles District

Before April 27, 2011, Hackleburg was a small town of about 1,500 in northwest Alabama best known as the former home of country musician Sonny James, who sang the 1957 hit song “Young Love.”

That all changed shortly after 3 p.m. when an EF-5 tornado, packing winds in excess of 200 miles per hour, roared through the rural town, destroying its elementary school, high school, police station, 89 of its 90 businesses, most homes and causing 18 deaths. The Red Cross estimated the tornado destroyed 75 percent of the town.

A drive into and through the town reveals the total destruction of a Wrangler distribution center and concrete slabs in place of what used to be people’s houses.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manages the debris removal mission from a temporary command post at Hackleburg High School. Operating beneath a tarp in temperatures in the high 90s, Scott Forbes, Baltimore District, serves as quality assurance manager for the debris removal mission. From there, his team maps out the areas from which debris has been removed and the areas still remaining.

“We’ve removed about 160,000 cubic yards of debris so far. We transport it either to a vegetative burn site or to a C&D site,” Forbes said, referring to a debris site that is permitted to receive construction and demolition materials, such as treated lumber, metal and cinder blocks. “It’s extremely rewarding to be able to be here helping,” Forbes said. “The town had already done a lot of work before we arrived. US Steel had cleared a lot of the right-of-way, and people had already begun clearing their property and moving debris toward the roads. They’re very resilient. They even stop by to bring us meals while we’re out here working.”

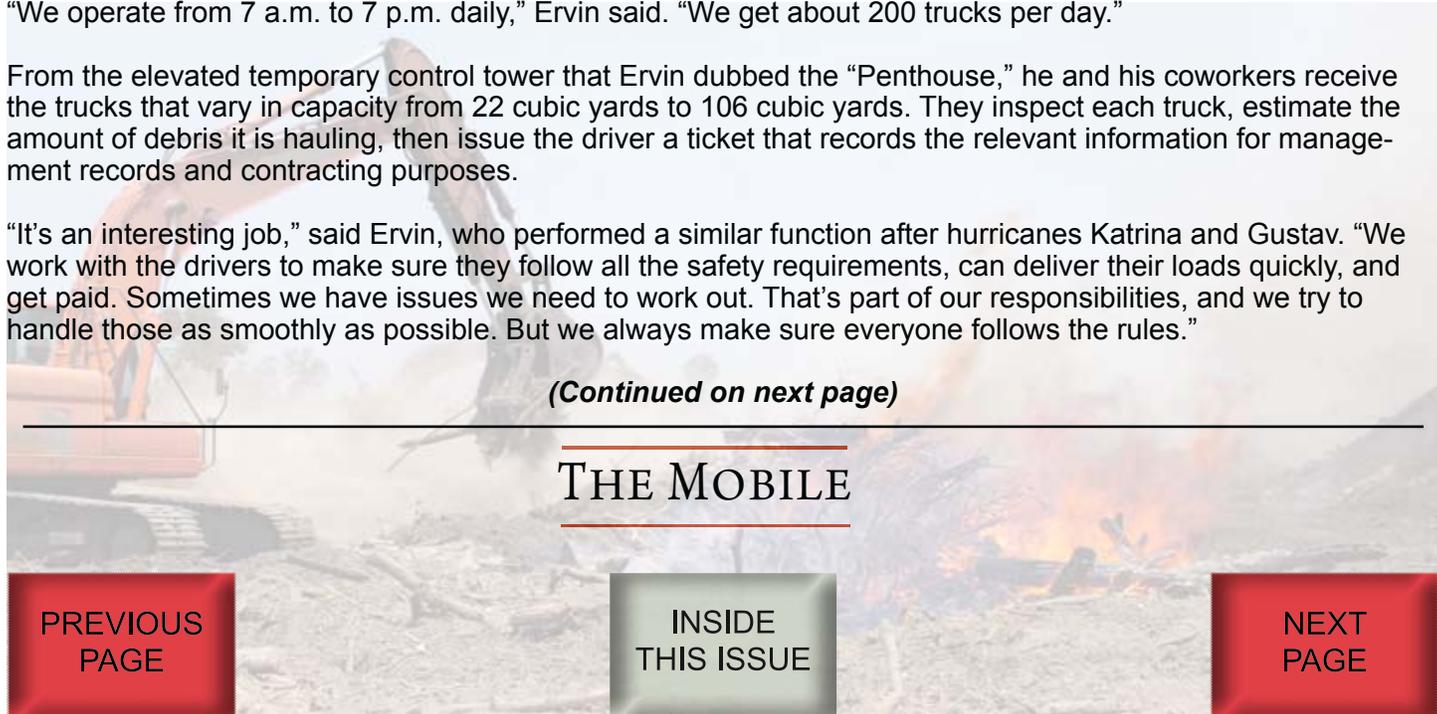
A few miles west of town smoke billows into the still air. The sounds of back-up alarms and heavy equipment motors emanate from a burn site as one approaches a bank of debris piles. Chuck Ervin, a journeyman mechanic for the Nashville District, manages the burn site.

“We operate from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily,” Ervin said. “We get about 200 trucks per day.”

From the elevated temporary control tower that Ervin dubbed the “Penthouse,” he and his coworkers receive the trucks that vary in capacity from 22 cubic yards to 106 cubic yards. They inspect each truck, estimate the amount of debris it is hauling, then issue the driver a ticket that records the relevant information for management records and contracting purposes.

“It’s an interesting job,” said Ervin, who performed a similar function after hurricanes Katrina and Gustav. “We work with the drivers to make sure they follow all the safety requirements, can deliver their loads quickly, and get paid. Sometimes we have issues we need to work out. That’s part of our responsibilities, and we try to handle those as smoothly as possible. But we always make sure everyone follows the rules.”

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Rubble fills the hallway at Hackleburg High School from which students were released only minutes before the tornado arrived April 27. USACE operates its debris removal mission for the area from a command post located at the high school. (Official USACE photo)

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Debris removal mission...continued

Working amid the bulldozers, dump trucks and self-loading debris trucks known as knuckle booms, with a fire truck standing by as a safety precaution, Donald Entrekin climbs out from a bulldozer he's operating this day because of a family emergency the usual operator had to resolve.

Entrekin is a local resident who raises chickens and does logging work.

"This work is very similar to logging," he said.

Entrekin and his son-in-law Matt Moore were hired by prime contractor Phillips and Jordan to manage the burn side of the pit operations.

"They're doing a great job," said Mobile District's George Rush, a resident engineer for debris removal operations in six northwest Alabama counties. "They maintain the site well and make sure everything is safe. They've hired local people. They're very humble and a pleasure to work with."

The work involves taking the piles of vegetative debris and placing them in a burn pit roughly 15 feet by 30 feet and 12 feet deep. For 12 hours a day in the Alabama summer heat, the operators scoop a bucketful of limbs and branches and drop them into the yellow-red flames streaking into the air.

For every pile dropped into the flames, a debris truck brings another. Hour after hour the debris burns. The ashes settle to the bottom of the pit. At the end of the day, operators begin placing root stumps into the inferno.

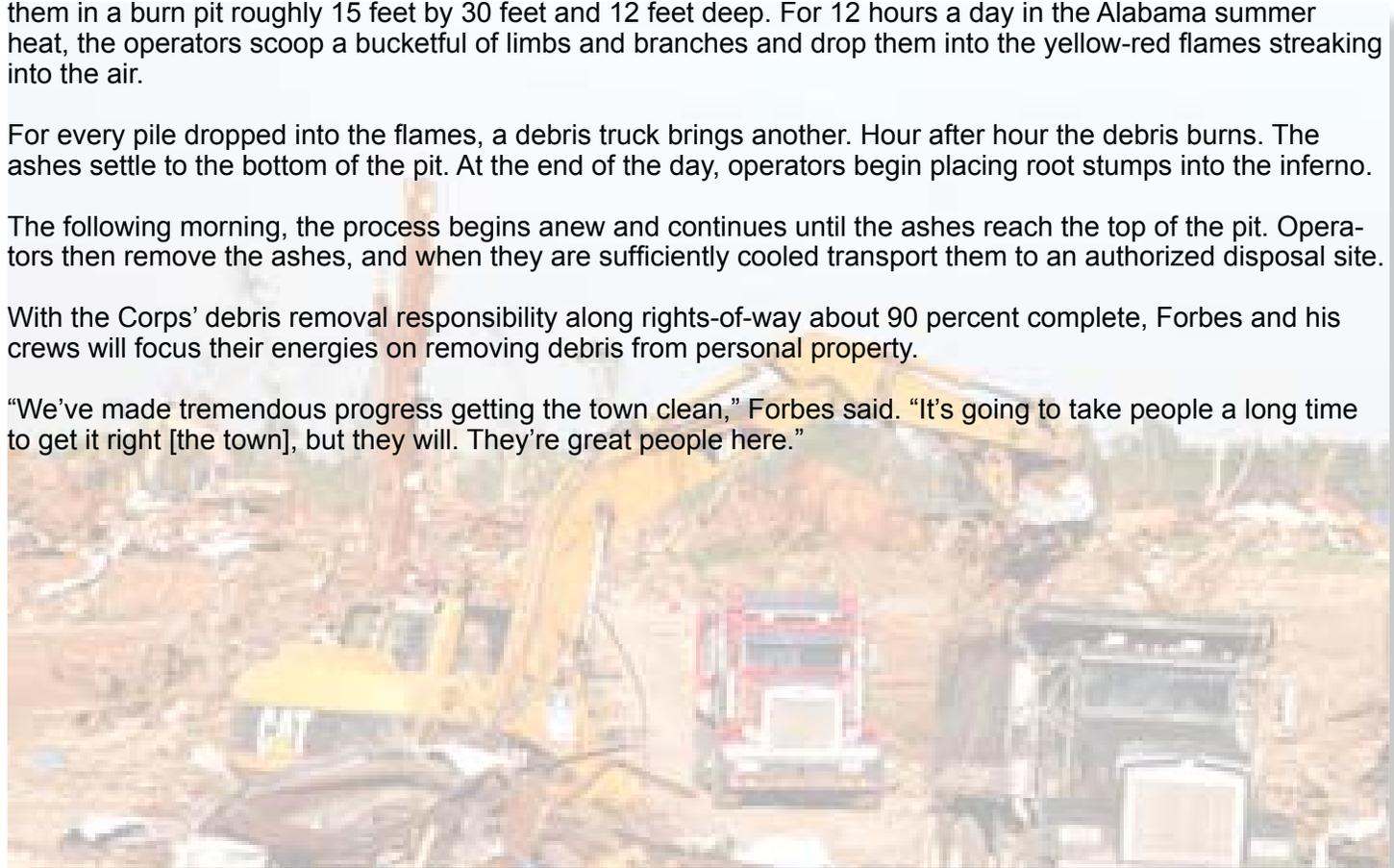
The following morning, the process begins anew and continues until the ashes reach the top of the pit. Operators then remove the ashes, and when they are sufficiently cooled transport them to an authorized disposal site.

With the Corps' debris removal responsibility along rights-of-way about 90 percent complete, Forbes and his crews will focus their energies on removing debris from personal property.

"We've made tremendous progress getting the town clean," Forbes said. "It's going to take people a long time to get it right [the town], but they will. They're great people here."



USACE contractors burn vegetative storm debris in a pit at a temporary reduction facility located in Hackleburg, Ala. The site receives debris daily and operators remove the ash and transport it to a designated landfill. (Official USACE photo)



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Employee Spotlight: Nurse Mary Haynes

Story by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office



Nurse Mary Haynes pictured in her work space at the Recovery Field Office in Joplin, Ala. Haynes is on her second deployment to support the tornado recovery mission. Photo by Marcus Spade, USACE Headquarters

It was a hot summer day in June. Nurse Mary Haynes was deployed working on a tornado response mission at the Recovery Field Office in Joplin, Ala.

While sitting at her desk, she heard someone scream: “There’s a lady outside who fell down and needs help!”

Haynes immediately grabbed her medical bag and automated external defibrillator - an emergency device used to diagnose and treat the activities and rhythms of the heart - and made her way outside to the parking lot.

The woman who had come to pick up her cat up from the animal clinic was lying there nonresponsive with no breathing or pulse. Haynes directed someone to call 911 and started performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (or CPR). Assisting her was respiratory therapist Cindy Moss and safety mission manager Jeff McCrery.

Fortunately, the lady regained a pulse and began to breathe on her own after several minutes of CPR. Haynes continued to monitor her until the first responders arrived in the ambulance to take her to the nearest hospital.

“I was so thrilled this lady made it,” Haynes said, recalling a similar experience two years ago with a security guard she was unable to resuscitate in the parking garage of the Mobile District Office.

Because of her life saving efforts, Haynes received the military’s Humanitarian Service Medal. Although she is appreciative of the award, Haynes is very modest because she feels she was just “doing my job.”

“Most people experience moments where their training and preparation unfold and come together to affect some rewarding outcome. I don’t like to think I did anything great because another nurse would have done the same thing. And maybe another CPR-trained person,” she said. “I just feel fortunate to have been a part of the outcome.”

Haynes later found out that the woman she helped is a doctor named Sara Sale (it’s unknown whether she is a MD or Phd). Also, respiratory therapist Moss and her small children miraculously survived the tornado that moved their house as Moss was bathing with them in the bathtub.

“The real story is that somebody [Moss] was in a tornado but is out here helping other victims; someone who’s a doctor [Sale] will live on and probably impact the lives of others,” Haynes expressed with emotions. “During a recovery operation, you gain so much more than you give.”

She says her deployment experience with the Corps has been very rewarding and she is grateful for having the opportunity to do what she loves - being a nurse.

Haynes is the regional nurse manager for the South Atlantic Division and works in the Mobile District Office. She has 36 years of nursing experience and has worked for the Corps since 1996. She credits her mother and grandmother, who both were nurses, and her a father, who was a doctor, as her greatest inspiration.

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Cat, dog, pig: special survivors, their stories

Story by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office



Twister the kitten at a Phillips & Jordan, Inc. field office. Twister fell out of a pile of debris as it was being lifted from the ground. Photo courtesy of Nicole Wilson, Phillips & Jordan, Inc.

People weren't the only ones in Alabama impacted by the storms. A countless number of animals were affected too. Specifically, a cat, a dog and a pig. But thanks to the help of animal lovers who consist of Corps employees, contractors and a local family, these three don't have to ask the "little red hen" to share her cornbread because they each have new homes and are well fed.

Twister

Nicole Wilson, a contractor with Phillips & Jordan, Inc. (USACE's primary contractor for its debris missions) found a mother cat and her kittens dead in a pile of debris. The cat family had already started to decompose. As the truck was lifting the pile, out fell a kitten that was still alive but could hardly move.

Wilson immediately called her mother Kim Wilson who was working back at the P&J field office and said come get the kitten because "I don't want her to die."

Of course, Mother Wilson didn't think twice about it and made her way to the location in Cullman County, Ala.

"She [the kitten] was pitiful. I honestly did not think we could keep her alive," said Mother Wilson. "She was so weak and very thin. And couldn't even stand on her own."

Well, Mother Wilson did keep the female kitten alive with the help of other P&J employees and even a few USACE employees. Mother Wilson adopted the kitten, naming her Twister, and has been taking care of her for the last three months.



USACE reemployed annuitant Kathy Mauffray feeds Twister her bottle. Mauffray was one of many Corps employees who visited Twister. Photo courtesy of Kathy Mauffray, Birmingham RFO

Debri

Sean Fritzges, Baltimore District, was deployed to the Birmingham Recovery Field Office and working as a quality assurance inspector. It was a very hot 4th of July. Fritzges was out in Tallapoosa County, Ala. locating properties that would qualify for the right of entry debris removal. He got sidetracked on directions and came to a dead end street. As he turned around, he noticed a puppy walking in front of the car. He stopped the car and got out. The puppy came running to him.

"She was in pretty rough shape, covered with ticks and fleas," Fritzges said. "I could tell she was thirsty as well as hungry, and I thought, there was no way she could belong to anyone."

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Cat, dog, pig...continued

Fritzges took the puppy with him and offered her to some homeowners he came across with no success of finding her a home. He considered adopting the puppy but then decided to offer her to several of his colleagues. Zachary "Cody" Corlew, Nashville District, who then was serving as the quality assurance wet debris supervisor, volunteered to adopt the puppy.

"I was glad that Cody stepped up," Fritzges said. "I could tell they were attached to each other."

Corlew named her Debri. He said while he was thinking of names, he overheard a conversation with the word debris coming up and decided to take off the s and give his new dog that name. Debri now lives in Kentucky with Corlew.

"It was definitely worth it," Corlew said.

Francis

Fritzges was on another round locating properties when came across a piglet running around in the front of a yard. His daughter loved pigs and he had never seen a pig as a pet. He then decided to pull over and meet the homeowners and the pig.

"The people were very friendly and I told them I had never seen a pet pig before," Fritzges said.



Sean Fritzges, Baltimore District, take a pose for his pig-loving daughter with Francis the piglet. Francis mysteriously appeared in the front yard of Tallapoosa County homeowners the day after the tornadoes hit and was adopted by them. Photo courtesy of Sean Fritzges

According to Fritzges, the people told him that the pig showed up out of no where the day after the tornadoes hit Tallapoosa County. The family decided to give the pig a home and named him Francis.

"They took him under their wing and treated him just like a cat or dog. I thought it was pretty amazing," Fritzges said.

Fritzges says animals are sometimes overlooked in the aftermath of a natural disaster.

"I wish I could've find them all a home but am glad I could help out," he said.



Zachary "Cody" Corlew, Nashville District, pictured with his puppy Debri. Corlew adopted Debri while he was deployed to support the tornado recovery mission. Debri was found and offered to Corlew by Baltimore District's Sean Fritzges. Photo courtesy of Cody Corlew

Editor's note: A special thank you to Harriette Holland, project management, for pitching this story.

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Behind the scenes: Small team delivers big support

Story by Sara Corbett, Charleston District

Behind the scenes at the Recovery Field Office, there is a small cadre that has provided big support for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers tornado recovery missions in Alabama.

The geographic information systems team, or GIS, has supported the three missions USACE was tasked with: debris removal, temporary housing and critical public facilities. GIS is a system used to analyze, manipulate and store geographical data.

The GIS section in the RFO uses this technology in several different ways. One way is to track the progress of debris removal, temporary housing installation and the installation of critical public facilities. It is also used to ensure that homes submitted for private property debris removal fall in the FEMA approved grid. And finally, they produce maps for field team members with the information they need.

“We provided maps to mission leaders to help coordinate logistics for field personnel and were also working on forecasting maps to try to predict good locations for group sites for temporary housing,” said Chris Jones, a GIS specialist from the Los Angeles District who was previously deployed to the RFO. “For example, we created maps for the safety office to pass out with the location of nearby hospitals for any location in the field where the Corps was responding.”

GIS specialists from Mobile District, Mark Penton and Jay Woodroof, supported the debris removal mission by printing maps on a daily basis with updated status and information. It helps the debris removal mission manager and team track the progress in each city, town and county.

USACE can update FEMA as well as the municipalities on how much debris has been removed and how much is left. By updating them, they are able to plan accordingly. This team also looks up homes that have been submitted for personal property debris removal to make sure they are in the FEMA-approved grid.

Kyle Williams, a critical public facilities mission GIS specialist from Los Angeles District, provided maps to the critical public facilities teams to show where USACE had set up facilities and locations for pending facilities, such as temporary fire stations and police stations for cities and counties whose stations were destroyed by the tornadoes.

Jones also assisted with the temporary housing mission by creating maps that show where a site assessment has been made; where a work order has been issued; and where a house has been installed. This helped the temporary housing mission team members in the field to be more efficient and better track temporary houses.

“We couldn’t do this mission without the GIS team,” said Dick Aldrich, a debris removal mission manager said. “They have done a great job.”



The geographical information systems team, or GIS, provided behind the scenes support to the USACE tornado recovery mission. Pictured are Chris Jones, Los Angeles District, left; Mark Penton, right; and Jay Woodroof, far back, both from Mobile District. Photo by Sara Corbett, Charleston District

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RFO admin says ‘we all matter’

Story by Nakeir Nobles, Jacksonville District

Quietly sitting in her workspace, the constant rhythm of the keystrokes from her keyboard are the only sound that indicate she is in the cubicle. An instrumental component of the Birmingham Recovery Field Office, Tamiko Murray and others who serve in administrative roles are important to the success of the RFO.

“The mission isn’t complete until the paperwork is done,” she said.

Murray, like many others who volunteered to deploy, knew the mission was huge and would require hard work and long hours.

Arriving by 6:30 each morning, Murray’s gentle voice greets co-workers with a good morning and a smile. Murray realizes that not everyone views her role as one of importance. But those who know the significance of her job quickly say the role is very essential to RFO. One of Murray’s chief responsibilities is inputting time for payroll.



Tamiko Murray at her desk in the Birmingham Recovery Field Office, which supports the federal response to the Alabama tornadoes. Murray provides administrative support and supports more than 300 USACE employees. Photo by Adrian Bostick, ACE-IT Vicksburg District

Fellow Mobile District employee Carolyn Seaman who is also deployed at the RFO says, “Tamiko gets everything in order so we get our pay. She’s a very nice girl with a winning personality. In her position,” Seaman says, “her personality helps a lot, people don’t mind talking to her.”



Administrative assistant Tamiko Murray pictured at the Recovery Field Office in Birmingham out-processing Ryan Hoben, a civil engineer from the Vicksburg District. Photo by Lisa Coghlan, Public Affairs Office, Mobile District

Kimberly Green serves in an administrative role at the RFO and knows firsthand the importance of timekeeping, and she states Murray’s position is very important.

“This is a huge mission.” Greene says. “Because we are sometimes in such a hurry and may make a mistake, she can catch timesheet mistakes. It’s the little things that, if not resolved at her level, can get big and become more complicated. And of course time is important.”

After about 10 days of diligently working at her desk, Murray finally leaves the office for lunch. Smiling, Murray says she doesn’t usually have lunch away from the office because “I just want to be here in case there is an issue.”

This is Murray’s first deployment and she says if the opportunity presents itself again, she would deploy.

“I’ve had the opportunity to meet some very interesting people but I would like to be able to go out in the field. The stories that are shared by the outgoing personnel who work in the field makes me want to share in their experiences,” Murray said.

“I am here to help those who need it. There is no task too big or small with this mission. Some people think you have to be a ‘big wig’ to matter. We all matter,” Murray said. “I would tell anyone who is interested in deploying that it is a great experience. The area was devastated. Knowing the Corps is working and getting people back in their homes and that I am helping in my role, makes it all worth it.”

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NEPA role in disaster recovery

Story by Nakeir Nobles, Jacksonville District



Biologists Melody White, Jacksonville District; and Greg Wahl, Charleston District; inspect a debris site in Cullman County, Ala. for environmental compliance. The duo makes sure there are no stormwater impacts and burn pits are located from houses and live vegetation. Photo by Lisa Coghlan, Public Affairs Office

Terms such as right of entry (ROE), right of way (ROW), debris removal, and blue roof seem to be synonymous with recovery efforts after a disaster. In the aftermath of Alabama’s 2011 spring tornadoes, the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, became a term used almost as frequently as ROEs, ROWs and debris removal.

During the aftershock of a disaster, victims’ concerns are centered on being able to secure as much of their personal belongings as possible.

After receiving a mission from FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provides assistance as quickly and safely as possible to help victims return to a life of normalcy. In this phase, NEPA comes up over and over again making some wonder what it is and its role in disaster recovery.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, NEPA is “one of the first laws written that established a broad national framework for protecting our environment.”

The agency says NEPA requirements go into effect when federal activities with the potential for impacts are proposed.

Melody White, a biologist with the Jacksonville District’s Palm Beach Gardens Office, and Greg Wahl, a biologist with the Charleston District, are in Alabama to ensure NEPA environmental compliance at worksites.

On a recent day of inspections, the first site visited by the duo is located southeast of Tuscaloosa, Ala., in Bibb County, a burn reduction site that uses the air curtain method.

Burn reduction sites reduce vegetative debris by using either open burning, pit burning or an air curtain. The air curtain method uses a big blower of open air to make the debris burn faster.

“An example of how the air curtain works,” White said, “is something like when you blow on fire. It makes the debris burn hotter and faster.”

The duo notices upon entrance to the site that the tower is not staffed; this was due to debris not being hauled to the site that day. Wahl also notes that although they were not at the site to perform safety checks, the site had several safety measures in place.

“I see they have an eyewash station over there, fire extinguishers are available and they have port-a-potties. There is also a hazardous waste containment area as well,” Wahl said.

“See over here,” Wahl points to a black silt fence that had been possibly compromised by the previous night’s heavy rain.

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NEPA...continued

“This shouldn’t be this way. There should be a different erosion control device used,” White said. “This is something we will put in our report. We’ll wait a couple weeks and return to the site to make sure the violation has been fixed.”

After finalizing the inspection, White and Wahl, with boots weighted down with mud, trek back to their vehicle.

Another site on the duo’s list of visits was a grind pit where vegetative debris is ground into mulch. White noted that the location had been reported as not having a fire lane. Upon arriving at the site, she was informed that the fire lane had been installed within the last 24 hours.

Site notes indicated, “This is a great looking site. Dust control with water truck being conducted during site visit. Site was utilizing tub grinders for vegetation. Silt fence around perimeter of site was in great condition.”



A USACE contractor observes the operations at a safe distance for a debris burn site for vegetative debris in Cullman County, Ala. Photo by Lisa Coghlan, Public Affairs Office

Rehired annuitant Arch Middleton, Wahl and White’s RFO supervisor, accompanied the duo on their round of inspections. He said the debris can be recycled and sold as mulch or it can be incorporated into sludge and compost as well. There are issues with either method of debris reduction, according to Wahl. If debris is burned, there may be air quality issues. If the debris is ground, dust and noise may be an issue for surrounding communities. “Whether the debris is ground or burned depends on the site location.”

There have been other NEPA specialists at the Birmingham (Ala.) Recovery Field Office where White and Wahl are deployed. “We are the third wave of staff since the disaster,” Wahl said.

According to him, the first wave of staff did an initial NEPA review. “They looked for archeological sites, wetlands, historical and cultural properties and coordinated with other agencies to be sure things were copasetic.”

Wahl said the second group of staff began NEPA compliance inspections. They made sure there were no stormwater impacts, and that burn pits are located in non-dangerous locations away from houses and live vegetation.

Wahl and White both agree that site visits allow them the opportunity to meet new people and hear personal stories of tornado survival.

“We build a rapport with onsite quality assurance (QA) folks. That really helps. I’ve learned a lot from being in the field. It’s been interesting to hear about different people’s experiences with the storm and the work that the Corps is doing,” Wahl said.

“The local contractors will talk about what happened and it gives us good insight,” White said. Serving as White’s navigator, Wahl said there are 40 sites. “I put the address in my phone, print directions and have my GPS.”

“Sometimes we get in areas where we lose satellite and have no phone, Internet or GPS service,” White said.

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To Your Health, Safety

Heat Stress

When the body is unable to cool itself by sweating, several heat-induced illnesses such as heat stress or heat exhaustion and the more severe heat stroke can occur, and can result in death. **Factors leading to heat stress are:** high temperature and humidity; direct sun or heat; limited air movement; physical exertion; poor physical condition; some medicines; and inadequate tolerance for hot workplaces.

Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion

Headaches, dizziness, lightheadedness or fainting.

Weakness and moist skin.

Mood changes such as irritability or confusion.

Upset stomach or vomiting.

Symptoms of Heat Stroke

Dry, hot skin with no sweating; mental confusion or losing consciousness; seizures or fits;

Preventing Heat Stress

Know signs/symptoms of heat-related illnesses; monitor yourself and coworkers.

Block out direct sun or other heat sources.

Use cooling fans/air-conditioning; rest regularly.

Drink lots of water; about 1 cup every 15 minutes.

Wear lightweight, light colored, loose-fitting clothes.

Avoid alcohol, caffeinated drinks, or heavy meals.

What to Do for heat-related illness

Call 911 and Supervisor at once.

While waiting for help to arrive:

Move the worker to a cool, shaded area.

Loosen or remove heavy clothing.

Provide cool drinking water.

Fan and mist the person with water.



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Briefs

Get Ready for Kindergarten Month. A lot of U.S. children will start school for the first time in September, and August is the time to make sure they're prepared. Read to them out loud, encourage them to ask questions, and see if your child's school has any special events or activities planned.

National Catfish Month. Celebrating the work of U.S. catfish farmers. Most U.S. farm-raised catfish are produced in pure freshwater ponds on family-owned farms in Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, and Louisiana, where many of these growers are second- or third-generation farmers.

National Golf Month. Whether you golf for money, enjoyment, or because you're obsessed, National Golf Month gives you an excuse to hit the links a few more times before summer ends.

National Assistance Dog Week, Aug. 7-13. Assistance dogs transform the lives of their human partners by providing friendly companionship and unselfish aid. National Assistance Dog Week recognizes and honors these hardworking animals, and it seeks to raise awareness and educate the public about how these specially trained animals are aiding so many people in our communities.

National Farmers Market Week, Aug. 7-13. The number of farmers markets in the United States has grown from 1,755 in 1994 to 6,132 today, as reported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Farmers Market Directory. Get some fresh fruit and vegetables from your local farmers market this week and thank them for their hard work.

National Safe at Home Week, Aug. 22-26. More injuries occur at home than in the workplace, and they tend to be more expensive as well. National Safe At Home Week promotes and encourages safety in and around the home to prevent needless injuries.

International Homeless Animals' Day, Aug. 20. Sponsored by the International Society for Animal Rights, this event features candlelight vigils, adoption campaigns, microchip clinics, and other activities designed to raise awareness of pet overpopulation.

International Waffle Day, Aug. 24. The anniversary of the first U.S. patent for a waffle iron, awarded to Cornelius Swarthout of Troy, N.Y., in 1869. His early waffle iron, used with a coal stove, consisted of a griddle and a cover, and required flipping the device to cook both sides of the waffle.

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