



# ***THE MOBILE***

## Mobile District hosts Inland Waterways Users Board



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**COVER STORY TOP PHOTO CUTLINE:** *Inland Waterways Users Board members along with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other participants visited the Holt and Oliver Locks and Dams along the Black Warrior River Feb. 24 - the day before their 74th Board Meeting. The group is pictured at Oliver Lock & Dam in Northport, Ala. Photo by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office.*

**BOTTOM PHOTO CUTLINE:** *A view of the Black Warrior River Waterway is captured at Holt Lock & Dam in Cottondale, Ala. Photo by Lance Davis, PAO.*

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### Cover Story: Mobile District hosts Inland Waterways Users Board

Story by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office

Mobile District's [Black Warrior-Tombigbee & Alabama River](#) Waterways Project Management Office hosted the Inland Waterways Users Board for a two-day visit in Birmingham, Ala. Feb. 24-25, which included a tour of nearby projects Holt and Oliver Lock & Dams as well the Board's 74th meeting held at the downtown Hampton Inn.

The Inland Waterways Users Board is a federal advisory board established by Section 302 of Public Law 99-662. The Board's purpose is to make recommendations to the Congress and the Secretary of the Army on the priorities and spending from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund for construction and rehabilitation projects on the fuel-taxed system. Such recommendations reflect the independent judgment of the Board and are reflected in an annual report made to the Secretary of the Army and the Congress.



*Inland Waterways Users Board members tour the Holt Lock & Dam in Cottondale, Ala. The Holt Lock & Dam, located in Cottondale, Ala., is on the Black Warrior River and managed by Mobile District's Black Warrior-Tombigbee & Alabama Rivers Project Management Office in Tuscaloosa, Ala. Photo by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office.*

The Board represents all geographic areas on the fuel-taxed inland waterways system of the United States. The composition of the Board also reflects a balanced industry focus, including shopper and carrier members from companies of different sizes and specializing in the transport of different commodities.

The [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters](#) is the sponsor of the Board with the Deputy Commanding General for Civil Works and Emergency Operations, serving as the IWUB Executive Director and the Assistant Secretary of the Army (CW) serving as an Inter-Agency Observer, along with representatives of the Maritime Administration, NOAA and the Department of Agriculture. USACE Headquarters provides the Executive Secretary to the Board and USACE's Institute for Water Resources in Alexandria, Va. provides the Executive Assistant and other subject matter specialists that support the authorized activities of the Board.

The Board's 74th meeting was attended by nine of the [10 current Board members](#) along with leaders and representatives from USACE Headquarters, including the Deputy Commanding General for Civil & Emergency Operations Maj. Gen. John Peabody - the Board's Executive Director. The [South Atlantic Division](#) was represented by Alvin Lee - Senior Executive Service / Director of Programs; Susan Whittington - Chief of Operations & Regulatory; and Richard "Dylan" Davis - Navigation Program Manager. Mobile District Commander Col. Jon Chytka and Operations Division Chief Wynne Fuller were in attendance - with Col. Chytka providing welcoming comments on behalf of the District - and several other employees from around USACE.

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### Cover Story continued...

Story by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office

Representatives of the four federal observers were also in attendance which includes: the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works; Maritime Administration; U.S. Department of Agriculture; and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

A number of items were addressed during the meeting such as details of the Fiscal Year 2015 Work Plan; President Barack Obama's FY16 Budget for Navigation; status updates on the Inland Waterways Trust Fund; and project updates for locks and dams around USACE.

The meeting concluded with Maj. Gen. Peabody expressing gratitude to everyone involved, including highlighting the efforts of Operations Division Chief Wynne Fuller; Black Warrior-Tombigbee & Alabama River Waterways Operations Project Manager Danny Hensley; and other District staff.

"We were glad to host the Inland Waterways Users Board Meeting in our part of the country," Hensley said. "The project tour was an opportunity for the Mobile District and Black Warrior-Tombigbee Waterway Project

to showcase two of our locks and dams as well as our new maintenance facility. We were fortunate in being able to discuss the waterway and navigation locks while standing on the lock wall itself during the tour. The exchange of information with Corps representatives from Headquarters and other regions as well as Board members from the private sector was in itself very valuable."



*Black Warrior-Tombigbee & Alabama River Waterways Operations Project Manager Danny Hensley briefs Maj. General John Peabody - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Deputy Commanding General for Civil & Emergency Operations who serves as the Executive Director for the Inland Waterways Users Board - during the Board's tour of Holt Lock & Dam. Photo by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office.*



*Inland Waterways Users Board members along with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other participants visited the Holt and Oliver Locks and Dams along the Black Warrior River Feb. 24 - the day before their 74th Board Meeting. The group is pictured at Oliver Lock & Dam in Northport, Ala. Photo by Lance Davis, PAO.*

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### STEM Outreach: District employees support coastal Miss. career expo

Story by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recognizes the critical role that science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, education plays in enabling the U.S. to remain the economic and technological leaders of the global marketplace and is committed to teaming with others to strengthen STEM-related programs that inspire current and future generations of young people to pursue careers in STEM fields.

In support of STEM outreach, several Mobile District professionals participated in the Pathways2Possibilities, or P2P, as Pathway members at the Mississippi Coast Convention Center in Biloxi, Miss. District employees included: Engineering Division's Justin McDonald - lead project engineer for civil works - and Jacqueline Wittmann - a civil engineer in the coastal, hydrology and hydraulics design section; LeKeshia Reynolds, a biologist in the Planning & Environmental Division; and from Operations Division's Irvington Site Office, civil engineers Travis Dyess and Hunter Stanley. They spoke to several students about their careers and missions of USACE.



*Jacqueline Wittmann - a civil engineer in the coastal, hydrology and hydraulics design section of the Engineering Division - conducts a demonstration with two 8th grade students illustrating a sieve analysis, which is a tool used by engineers to help determine the particle size distribution of soil to better classify it. Photo by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office.*

“The Pathways 2 Possibilities event provided an excellent venue to highlight the importance of the USACE mission and display the diversity in career opportunities within the organization to the next generation of professionals,” said Justin McDonald.

P2P is an interactive career expo designed for 6,000 8th graders in private and public schools in the six lower counties of Mississippi. It includes 500 professionals and 435 volunteers. According to P2P's website, each student experiences a variety of the 19 Pathways, which are aligned with the career Pathways set forth by the Mississippi Department of Education. The students are prepped during class before attending the event in order to familiarize them with the Pathways ahead of time. Each Pathway is led by a Pathfinder who has coordinated with Pathway members to design and implement hands-on activities intended to inspire the students to further explore that Pathway. Software is used before and after the event to help the students corral their thoughts about the event and encourage a direction for their high school Pathway choice.

“Our demonstration illustrated a sieve analysis, which is a tool used by engineers to help determine the particle size distribution of soil in order to classify it,” Jacqueline Wittmann said.

To conduct the demonstration, the youth participants were given a stack of three sieves and a plastic tub that contained either sandy clay, fine, silty sand or a combination of the two. They hand shoveled their soil onto the top sieve until most of the visible sieve mesh was covered. After loading, they shook their sieve stack laterally to simulate a mechanical shaker until most of the soil passed through the mesh of the top sieve. The sieves were then separated and the eighth graders were asked to observe and feel the soil for differences in size and texture.

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### STEM Outreach continued...

Story by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office



Biologist LeKesha Reynolds, Planning & Environmental Division, greets a student at the career expo. Photo by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office.

be used as a building material and those with the silty sand suggested it for use on a beach. The students with the sandy clay material were correct about its use for a building material, but the students who said the silty sand could be used on the beach were incorrect. Wittmann then demonstrated what the soil samples looked like when they were wet by pouring water over the sieved samples into a bucket. They observed how the clay became suspended in the water, turning it red - and how the silty sand became a soft mud, also discoloring the water.

The concept of environmental stewardship in engineering was discussed as engineers are tasked with the great responsibility of delivering the right product for the right job but also ensuring protection of the environment and habitats in which they work.

Special attention was paid to the soil retained on the lowest sieve, which was the finest. They were asked to estimate the percentage of coarse, medium and fine material retained on each sieve. The children were shown a Unified Soil Classification System chart used to classify soils after the percentage of materials in a sample was known.

“Once an engineer knows what type of soil is present at a site, they can understand how the soil will behave and for what purpose it may be useful,” Wittmann explained to the students.

When the youth were asked how they thought their soil samples might be used, a majority of them with the sandy clay material said it could



More 8th graders participate in the sieve analysis conducted by Jacqueline Wittmann, Engineering Division. Photo by Lance Davis, PAO.



From left to right: Travis Dyess, Operations Division; LeKesha Reynolds, Planning & Environmental Division; Jacqueline Wittmann, Engineering Division; Hunter Stanley, Operations Division; and Justin McDonald, Engineering Division pictured at the career expo held in Biloxi, Miss. at the Mississippi Coast Convention Center. Photo by Lance Davis, PAO.

“The students were convinced they would not want to swim or walk in the clayey, muddy water and that fish, and other animals, would probably not survive if they had to live in it,” Wittmann said.

The hands-on demonstration showed the students how an engineer may perform a test in a lab and explained the connection engineers have to the environment as decision makers and stewards.

“I think this was a good opportunity to show our young people the types of activities we do at the Corps of Engineers,” Wittmann said. “It was also a great way to interact in a positive manner with members of the community we are working to restore through MsCIP [Mississippi Coastal Improvement Program].”

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### District engineers attend annual coastal engineering meeting

Story by Jacqueline Wittmann, Engineering Division



From left to right: Jacqueline Wittmann, Richard Allen and Elizabeth Godsey all from the Engineering Division's coastal, hydraulics and hydrology section attended the Coastal Working Group's annual meeting at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Engineer Research & Development facility in Vicksburg, Miss. back in November. CWG is a USACE Community of Practice that focuses on important issues affecting coastal engineering. Photo courtesy of Jacqueline Wittmann, Engineering Division.

District employees Elizabeth Godsey; Jacqueline Wittmann and Richard Allen of the Engineering Division's coastal, hydraulics, and hydrology section attended the Coastal Working Group's annual meeting at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Engineer Research & Development facility in Vicksburg, Miss. back in November.

CWG is a USACE Community of Practice that focuses on important issues that affect coastal engineering. This most recent CWG focused on reconnecting current CWG members and introducing new participants, including Wittmann and Allen.

The Coastal Engineering Research Board (CERB) members were present along with Stephen Deloach from USACE Headquarters, which offered a unique opportunity to get upper level feedback on district challenges.

CWG leaders and the CERB mediated candid, detailed discussions regarding technical challenges. In addition to the CERB session, panel discussions took place for sustainable coastal management, beach surveying, planning, risk processes, and training and technology transfer.

Godsey, a coastal engineer, participated in several of the panel discussions and presented the impacts and successes of the Mississippi Coastal Improvement Program (MsCIP) during the sustainable coastal management module.

The CWG groups were also guided through tours of the ERDC field sedimentation lab, the wetland sediment migration flume, the ship simulator, and the aquatic center.

The CWG provided several opportunities for networking among the attendees.

The 2014 CWG meeting was a great opportunity to collaborate with other USACE coastal engineers and the coastal hydraulics and hydrology section's team members were proud to represent the Mobile District!

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### LDP Class graduates, says farewell to advisor

Story by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office



Mobile District's 2014 Leadership Development Program Class graduated last fall in a ceremony held in the Readiness Support Center. LDP is a biennial, yearlong, collateral-duty, multifaceted leadership and management development program. Photo by Vincent Mouzon, ACE-IT / Visual Information Services.

A ceremony for graduates of the 2014 Leadership Development Program Class was held last fall in the Readiness Support Center.

The Leadership Development Program - better known as LDP - is a biennial, yearlong, collateral-duty, multifaceted leadership and management development program.

This continuous education program offers career-related courses designed to help LDP students realize their fullest career potential, improve their workplace performance, and enrich their lives overall. In addition, the program explains and demonstrates leadership skills and competencies required at the managerial level.

The program included remarks from District Commander Col. Jon Chytka; then LDP Chairwoman / Advisor Brenda Whitehurst, who works in the

Programs & Project Management Division; and LDP Mentor Brian Ivey, Resource Management Office.

The LDP graduates provided a special presentation that highlighted their experiences and paid tribute to Whitehurst who has decided to step down from her position after 16 years of service and four years of preliminary work to help start LDP.

This LDP Class participated in several workshops, trainings and/or seminars to develop leadership skills.

The class members also played a significant role in planning Mobile District's first-ever Dining Out - a ceremonial military dinner for members of a military unit, their spouses and/or guests that includes a dinner and other events to foster camaraderie and esprit de corps (French for morale) - held last summer.



Leadership Development Program Chairwoman / Advisor Brenda Whitehurst, who works in the Programs & Project Management Division, gives remarks to the graduating LDP Class. Whitehurst played a significant role in the creation of LDP. She recently stepped down after 16 years of service. Photo by Vincent Mouzon, ACE-IT / Visual Information Services.

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### LDP Class continued...

Story by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office

District Commander Col. Jon Chytka presented the following LDP graduates with certificates of completion:

<b>Stephen Beams</b>	Operations Division
<b>Russell Blount III</b>	Real Estate Division
<b>Eric Caufield</b>	Construction Division
<b>Kyle Gilbert</b>	Operations Division
<b>Liz Gross</b>	Contracting Division
<b>Philip Hegji</b>	Regulatory Division
<b>Geanette Kelley</b>	Contracting Division
<b>Steven Koon</b>	Operations Division
<b>Rocky Millenbine</b>	Operations Division
<b>Rita Perkins</b>	Engineering Division
<b>Courtney Perry</b>	Engineering Division
<b>Jennifer Pritchett</b>	Fish & Wildlife Service
<b>Martha Resto</b>	Programs & Project Management
<b>LeKesha Reynolds</b>	Planning & Environmental Division
<b>Courtney Shea</b>	Regulatory Division
<b>Terrell Stoves</b>	Operations Division
<b>Jody Timmons</b>	Operations Division
<b>Lauren Torres</b>	Resource Management Office

**Rhonda Capes**, Engineering Division; **Christopher Macon**, **Operations Division**; and **Crystal Taylor**, from the Planning & Environmental Division were graduates unable to attend the ceremony.

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### NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center opens new 'green facility'

Story by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office



The National Aeronautics & Space Administration's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala. marked its official opening of Building 4220 last August.

Mobile District was responsible for overseeing the design and construction of Building 4220 - the newest environmentally friendly facility on the Marshall Space Flight Center's high-tech campus - housing the Marshall office's leading development of the nation's next flagship launch vehicle.

Marshall Center Director Patrick Scheuermann and Deputy Director Teresa Vanhooser were joined for the ceremonial ribbon-cutting by U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama; U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks of Alabama's 5th District; and Lt. Col. Tom Nelson, who was the deputy commander for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mobile District at the time. Since then, he has been succeeded by Lt. Col. Landon Raby.

*NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala. officially opened the doors of its newest environmentally friendly facility -- one set to house the program office leading development of the Space Launch System, the nation's next flagship launch vehicle. Designed and built to meet federally mandated standards of energy and water efficiency, Building 4220 and other "green" facilities help cut the center's operating and maintenance costs by 65 percent, and reduce utilities expenses by 35 to 40 percent. Photo credit: Emmett Given, NASA.*

The ultra-modern facility reflects Marshall's success in applying the federal government's "repair-by-replacement" plan, which replaces old structures, costly to maintain and operate, with new facilities, providing enormous health, safety and cost benefits. Building 4220 replaces the nearby Building 4202, built in Marshall's early years and now awaiting demolition.

The new office building primarily houses Marshall Personnel supporting the Space Launch System (SLS) Program Office. SLS oversees all work at NASA and partner facilities to develop, build and fly a powerful new launch vehicle, which is poised to lift new exploration missions to space in the coming decades -- including unprecedented human voyages to Mars and other destinations.

Situated at the southeast corner of Marshall's Building 4200 administrative complex, the new building is a five-story structure with workspace for approximately 400 team members. It includes state-of-the-art green technologies and energy-conservation systems. The entire structure is specially insulated, with much of the exterior covered in low-emissivity glass that deflects heat to reduce cooling costs within. Rooftop solar-power units absorb energy to augment electrical power, and a 10,000-gallon cistern collects storm water to irrigate the surrounding greenery. Even the facility's new parking lot has a green element: Rather than gutters, it includes a "bioswale," a natural, soil-and-vegetation-based means of capturing and filtering storm water runoff, which is directed into a nearby collecting pond.

Designed and built to meet federally mandated standards of energy and water efficiency, Building 4220 is awaiting LEED® certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) from the U.S. Green Building Council, the national standard for the development of high-performance, sustainable structures.

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## FEMA responds to historic flooding in coastal Alabama

Story by Lisa Parker, Public Affairs Office

Severe weather struck Alabama on April 29 and April 30, 2014. The National Weather Service reported more than 22 inches of rain fell within a 36-hour period along the coastal areas of Alabama and Florida.

This historic flooding event was considered by many experts to be a 200-year Rainfall Event. Simply, there is a 0.5 percent chance of such a flood occurrence within any one year. The widespread flooding caused sink holes, road closures due to washouts and collapsed culverts, and resulted in record flooding of local rivers and local tributaries. Hundreds of homes and properties were significantly damaged by the flood waters.

The Governor of Alabama declared a state of emergency on May 2, 2014. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) executed Public Assistance to 19 Alabama counties and Individual Assistance to nine counties. Under the Public Assistance Program, a wet debris mission was authorized to remove debris from navigable waterways in Baldwin County. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) was tasked to provide Technical Assistance on Aug. 29, 2014, and provide biological expertise, and technical oversight for removal of wet debris generated during the storms and flooding under Presidential disaster declaration 4176-DR-AL.

The initial survey of the debris encumbered waterways in Baldwin County was conducted through a series of boat surveys, helicopter flyovers and highway inspections. The Applicant, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources identified 642 "potentially eligible" debris targets scattered across 13 square miles of bays and bayous and along 24 linear miles of streams. These proposed targets resulted in approximately 5,000 cubic yards of debris within the four zones, which may have been eligible for collection. The FEMA and USACE monitors were responsible for determining the actual eligibility of each and every piece of "potential" debris prior to its removal.

In this incident, FEMA provided support to the State and Applicant to facilitate their receipt of all necessary permits for the debris removal operation. For approximately two and a half months, FEMA consulted extensively with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Endangered Species and Marine Fisheries Divisions, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management to ensure that regulatory requirements of all environmental laws would be met.

The wet debris mission was authorized to address atypical circumstances such as how to conduct a debris operation in a large estuary that was purchased with federal funds to serve as a national estuarine research reserve. The Reserve and surrounding vicinity within the project area include various habitats for eight federally listed endangered and or threatened species: the Alabama Red-Bellied Turtle, Gulf Sturgeon, West Indies Manatee, Kemp's Ridley, Green, Loggerhead, Hawksbill, and Leatherback sea turtles. The project area also includes submerged and emergent aquatic vegetation which is considered Essential Fish Habitat and protected by the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

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*The Governor of Alabama declared a state of emergency on May 2, 2014. FEMA executed Public Assistance to 19 Alabama counties and Individual Assistance to 9 counties. A wet debris mission was authorized to remove debris from navigable waterways in Baldwin County. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was tasked to provide Technical Assistance on Aug. 29, 2014, and biological expertise, and technical oversight for removal of wet debris generated during the storms and flooding under Presidential disaster declaration 4176-DR-AL. Photo by Lisa Parker, Public Affairs Office.*

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### FEMA responds continued...

Story by Lisa Parker, Public Affairs Office



Woody debris and construction debris was loaded onto barges and removed from navigable waters. Photo by Lisa Parker, Public Affairs Office.

“The Alabama Red-Bellied Turtle was a species of high concern since its critical habitat (non-designated) was included in the project area and we had to ensure that sufficient suitable vegetative debris was left for ARBT cover and basking habitat. We monitored the work areas for the presence of sea turtles and manatees and followed protocol to protect these species. We had maps of the aquatic vegetation within the project area to ensure the debris removal work in these areas was performed by hand,” said Tom Brooks, FEMA environmental specialist.

“The debris was reviewed and inspected in the first couple weeks following the declaration. It was hard to tell what had been here prior to the storm. Our responsibility was to clean up only the debris that was left by the storm, under a 4176 declaration. As we progressed with the different federal and state agencies, FEMA determined that the state of Alabama has a very unique emergency management agency and it has primary control over the event, and we take a back seat to them,” said Joe Ford, FEMA Operation Section Chief, 4176.

“We noticed a stronger influence on the engineering aspect of the recovery for cleaning up the debris, and not as strong as the biological environmental aspects, such as, the environment would seem to warrant. We tried to balance that out. One way we did that early on was working with USACE,” said Ford.

“By working with and consulting with USACE we were able to understand how this area was laid out down here. We had a better understanding of who the local companies were, and how they would be working with us on this project. Two weeks before the project start-up, we knew that ADCNR had hired an engineering company to handle the project, and our concern was how we would balance the concern of engineering and identifying what was habitat for any endangered species,” said Ford.

FEMA and USACE monitoring teams worked together to identify all eligible debris along the various waterways. Eligible targets, such as stumps, trees or parts of collapsed boat houses, were flagged, photographed and their locations fixed with global positioning system coordinates. Woody debris that was clearly serving as habitat, debris located above mean high tide on private property, or debris located in adjacent marshes was not removed. Of the 642 potential debris targets, 50 percent or more, were deemed not eligible for removal.

“It wasn’t just the engineering aspect of going out and just cleaning up everything. Our guidelines are debris that could cause injury or death trumps environmental habitat. Any debris target that was in navigable waters was collected. If it was on the banks or in the marsh areas, we left that. If we would have destroyed more of the habitat to get it, it remained,” Ford stated.

“Initially we were working five days-a-week and off on the weekends. There are numerous residential areas on the waterways and recreational activities on the weekends and we didn’t want to interfere with those activities. We had five working locations where contractors were working with the debris, and four FEMA monitoring vessels that were providing support for supervision, safety, security, and operations,” said Ford.

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### FEMA responds continued...

Story by Lisa Parker, Public Affairs Office

“Work started a little slow; there was a little confusion with the contractors on what was eligible and non-eligible debris. Certain areas were not that deep, and for fear of disturbing the habitat, those areas were left untouched,” Janice E. Simons, FEMA Public Assistance Project Specialist.

“As a FEMA monitor, I was present during the start through finish of the operation on the waterway. I provided oversight and management as to what was considered to be debris from the storms and what was eligible to be removed. Our main mission was to remove debris from navigable waters and to minimize harm to the wetlands and its species,” said Simons.

Most of the debris was removed during high tide working conditions than low tide. There were some targets identified during the low tides that were removed when the water went back down for a sustained period of time.

“The high flood waters resulted in vegetative debris deposition in freshwater streams, rivers and coastal estuaries, scoured or eroding stream banks, in-stream debris dams, loss of rootbank/undercut bank habitat and excessive or accelerated sediment inputs to the system. Additionally, waterways were affected by deposition of construction and demolition (C&D) material from collapsed boat shelters, bulkheads, and piers, along with any other residential or commercial materials which were not adequately secured during the floods. These materials all found their way into our local waterways,” said Sandy Gibson, USACE, Biologist.

The USACE’s main concern was ensuring compliance with the regulatory permitting conditions for debris removal operations and providing habitat conservation and protective oversight to endangered species within the work area, with special emphasis in the Fish and Magnolia Rivers.

“A certain amount of vegetation debris within a stream or river system is a good thing. Debris dams may act as natural energy dissipaters and alter sediment deposition, creating small plunge pool habitats. Trees trunks, root balls and branches provide for protective cover from predator species, woody habitat and foraging opportunities for larger aquatic and terrestrial species, basking opportunities for the reptiles’ for temperature regulation, and contribute to water quality enhancement by temperature regulation in-stream for protection of dissolved oxygen levels, and provide an avenue to supplement nutrients into the systems’ food chain” said Gibson.

“While the decision to remove vegetative debris was made on a case by case basis, the C&D was often recovered as it was not indicative to the natural habitat. We needed to address navigational hazards while performing due diligence to avoid altering the natural process in the river for the habitats of fish, and other aquatic animals. Logs and stumps provide great in-stream structure for recreational fisherman, so it was a balancing act between eliminating the hazard, addressing the concerns of the residents and environmental stakeholders, and ensuring adequate habitat remained for the species that depend on these systems. One of the successes that I have witnessed during this mission is how diligent FEMA and USACE teams have acted in order to protect and safeguard these species,” said Gibson.

“As the lead Federal Agency, FEMA’s early coordination with other Federal, State and Local authorities were essential in the overall success of this wet debris mission. Our primary concern was protecting and safeguarding the waterways for the residents, recreational boaters, fishermen and the ever-present endangered and protected species. The wet debris mission was completed on Oct. 15, 2014, with approximately 4,091 cubic yards of material removed from one of the largest and most complicated and complex water estuaries in the United States,” stated Ford.

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### Employee Spotlight: Brenda Whitehurst

Story by Lance Davis, Public Affairs Office

Brenda Whitehurst is a program and budget analyst for the Program Management Support Team in the Programs & Project Management Division. She manages, analyzes and budgets funds on a day-to-day basis in support of various programs for Mobile District, but for several years, Whitehurst has gone beyond the call of duty, serving as a visionary, mentor, task manager and event coordinator.

In 1994 while working as secretary in the Engineering Division, Whitehurst, her supervisor Howard Whittington [Former Hydrology & Hydraulics Section Branch Chief] and Hal Smith [Former Chief of Engineering] came up with the idea of starting a local leadership and management development program for non-supervisory employees in their division. After a few years of development within the Engineering Division, it was established as the Emerging Leadership Forum (presently known as the Leadership Development Program).

Whitehurst served as the LDP Chairwoman / Advisor for the first class of participants who graduated from the program in 1998 and continued her roles with each new class. Her duties included sending out application packages to employees interested in LDP; reviewing applications and making class recommendations to the District Engineer; scheduling classes and facilitators; serving as a liaison to address questions or concerns and reviewing class evaluations to improve the program.

“I have a passion for encouraging and helping people to identify and strive to reach their greatest potential,” Whitehurst said.

In addition to LDP, Whitehurst volunteered for the last 12 years as the Engineers Day Chairwoman, coordinating fundraisers (shirt sales, food sales, etc.) as well as managing the planning and setup of activities and food for the annual event. She also has served as chairwoman for the Special Events Committee, which is involved with any event pertaining to employee morale.

“I enjoy coordinating social activities, meeting and getting to know so many people in the District - locally and in the field offices. I feel like I know not only the employees, but I know their families too.”

After years of volunteer service, Whitehurst recently stepped down from her long-time positions. She said it is time for a new generation of District employees to get involved in ways other than their day-to-day duties.

“I feel retiring from these positions now gives me an opportunity to help the incoming chairpersons before I retire from my job.”

Whitehurst said the best advice she can give to her successors is to have organizational skills and a passion for people.

“I would like to thank two retirees from EN Division: Hal Smith and Howard Whittington. Both these men gave me the opportunity to help start a leadership program for the non-supervisory employee. They always encouraged me to keep it going.

“I would also like to thank all the participants in the LDP from the first Class of 1998 to most recent Class of 2014. Each person made a difference in my life. I enjoyed getting to know you all.

In her roles with the Special Emphasis Committee and Engineers Day Whitehurst thanks “the entire Mobile District family for allowing me the opportunity to serve you and hopefully I made a difference in the morale of the district.”

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