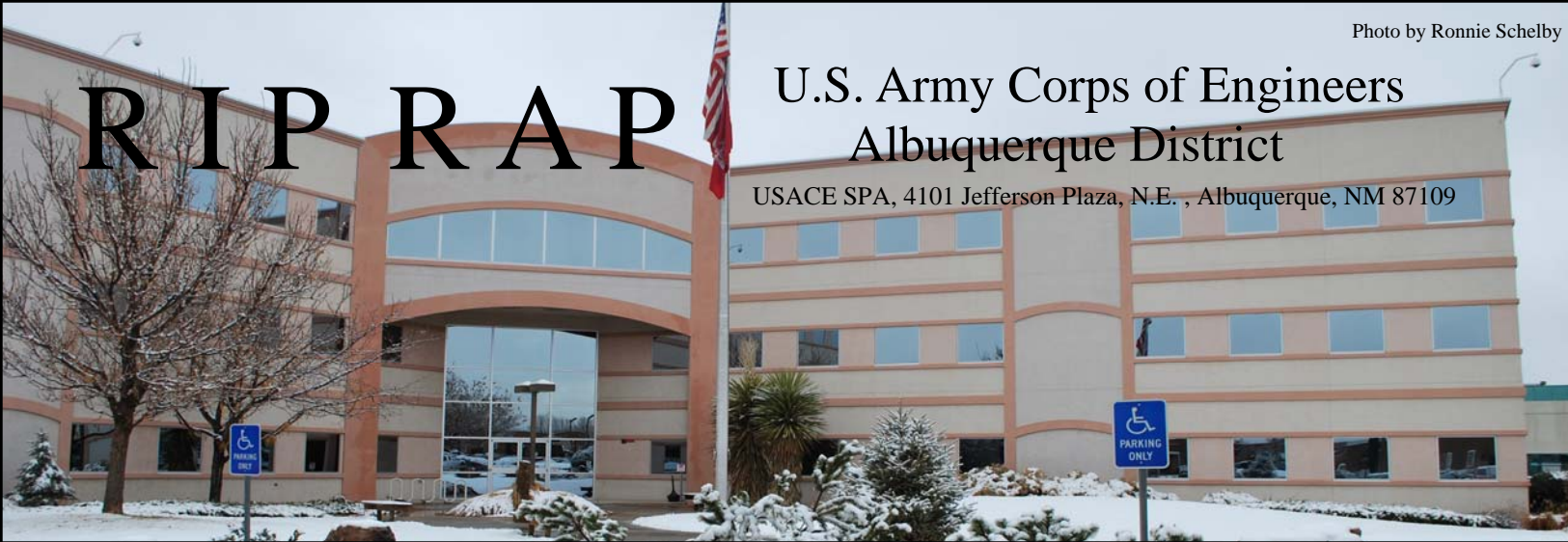


# RIP RAP

## U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Albuquerque District

USACE SPA, 4101 Jefferson Plaza, N.E., Albuquerque, NM 87109



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**®  
Albuquerque District

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District Engineer,  
Lt. Col. Jason Williams

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## South Pacific Division Welcomes New Leader

Col. William J. Leady, PE, became the 52nd Commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division at a change of command ceremony in Sausalito, Calif. Jan. 7, 2011.

He assumed command from Brig. Gen. Rock Donahue who has served as Division Commander since July 2009.


Brig. Gen. Donahue will deploy to Iraq and serve as Commander of the Joint Engineering Directorate (J7) in support of Operation New Dawn and the responsible drawdown of forces.

"I love the Army for many reasons, one of them is that it gets things done," said Col. Leady. "For the last six months I've seen the South Pacific Division from the seat of the district, and what I've seen is a team of dedicated professionals working hard to help the districts deliver."

Prior to commanding the South Pacific Division, Col. Leady commanded the Sacramento District for the past six months. He also commanded the Detroit District from 2006 to 2008.

He will serve as the Division Commander until the Chief of Engineers assigns a permanent replacement. As part of this command transition, Sacramento District's Deputy Commander, Lt. Col. Andy Kiger, assumed District Command earlier this week until Col. Leady returns.

"My tenure in command will probably be short, and that's okay," Col. Leady said. "It's just another example of how the Army is flexible enough to accomplish any mission."

The South Pacific Division encompasses four separate engineering districts located in Albuquerque, San Francisco, Sacramento, and Los Angeles. 



*South Pacific Division Commander,  
Col. William J. Leady*



*With more than 23 years of experience in the Army, including tours in Afghanistan and Iraq, Col. Leady comes to the Division with a broad leadership perspective.*

## Engineering Division in Capable Hands

Frank W. Parker is a rehired annuitant who is acting as the interim Chief, Engineering and Construction Division (E&C).

Prior to his assignment to the District office, he was assisting the Cannon resident office, and from 2008 to 2010, he was the Ft. Wingate resident engineer.

Parker retired as the E&C Chief from the Tulsa District,

but he also served in the Charleston and Ft. Worth Districts, Europe Division and USACE Headquarters. He knows N.M. well, as he grew up in Gallup.

He is standing in for Gary Gamel who retired on Jan. 1 after more than 41 years of dedicated service.



Frank Parker

## Corps Inspects El Paso Levees

The inspection results for 11 El Paso, Texas levee systems built by the Corps of Engineers was delivered to El Paso Water Utilities and city officials in early January. The report includes suggested actions to help limit negative effects to the city from flooding.

More than 12 miles of levees along channels inside the city limits were inspected.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided funding to accelerate levee periodic inspections under the Corps' Levee Safety Program. The Albuquerque District received \$250,000 in ARRA funds and used the money on 13 Texas inspections.

The inspection findings determine levee systems' continued eligibility for the Corps' Rehabilitation and Inspection Program, the Corps' authority to provide federal assistance for flood fighting and the repairing of levees damaged by floods or storms. Systems rated "acceptable" or "minimally acceptable" meet the Corps levee safety criteria and are eligible for federal aid in repairing flood or storm damage under public law 84-99 concerning rehabilitation assistance.

All of the levees inspected in El Paso passed the inspection. The executive summary of the report can be found here: [www.epwu.org/stormwater/stormwater.html](http://www.epwu.org/stormwater/stormwater.html)



Photo by Lisa Lockyear

*The District hosted the Construction Contract Admin. PROSPECT Course, Dec. 6-10. Pictured is course instructor, Ruth Anne Ijames from Montana. The District requested so many seats in the course, it made sense and saved money to bring the course to Albuquerque. In addition to the District's twenty-five students, Charleston District sent five students and the Air Force sent one.*

*"Feedback from some of the students reinforced the value of this course and the ability of the course instructors to help develop the students' competency in the Construction Contract Administrative arena," said District Training Coordinator Craig Lykins.*



## Contracting Closes Deal on USACE-Level Award

The Albuquerque District's contracting team brought home the 2010 USACE Excellence in Contracting Award in the Customer Service award category.

It was presented at the FY10 National Contracting Organization Excellence in Contracting awards ceremony Dec. 8, held during the NCO Leadership Summit in Grapevine, Texas.

Leslie Molina, David Kam and Lt. Col. Williams accepted the Customer Service award on behalf of the office and District.

The award is based on fostering a climate and spirit of teamwork producing unprecedented operational results; significantly streamlining or improving the delivery of contract services, processes or support to customers (either internal or external); and providing a level of performance and care above and beyond that normally expected, which averted a detrimental outcome for a customer.

Other nominees for the award included: Jamie Jerde, Europe District; the HNC Business Operations Branch at the Huntsville Engineering and



(L-R) Chief of Engineers for the Army and USACE Commanding General Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp, Lt. Col. Jason Williams, Leslie Molina, David Kam and Mr. Kim Denver, SES Director, National Contracting Organization, take a congratulatory photo with the Excellence in Contracting award.

Support Center; Paulette Phillips, New Orleans District; Suzanne Wright Jetton, Fort Worth District; Carole M. Householder, Pittsburgh District; Maj. Christopher Emery, Afghanistan Engineer District - North, and Donna West, Alaska District.

### Crowd Spies Abiquiu Eagles



Photo by Phil Martinez

*Bird Handler Scott Bol and Maxwell the bald eagle of the Espanola Wildlife Center demonstrate eagle characteristics to volunteers at the eagle watch event.*

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Abiquiu Lake hosted its eighth annual midwinter eagle watch on Jan. 8.

There were 15 confirmed eagle sightings, the most ever.

The purpose of the watch is to collect data to assist in national and local tracking of the birds' numbers and to ensure Abiquiu Lake's habitat meets the needs of bald eagles.

National Wildlife Federation officials have asked participants

in each state to count eagles along standard routes to provide data trends.

The annual midwinter survey represents a unique source of long-term, baseline data. Unlike nesting surveys, it provides information on both breeding and non-breeding segments of the population at a potentially limiting time of year. The count has become a national tradition since 1984.

## Office of Counsel 101—Why do we need lawyers?

By Mark Slimp, Public Affairs

Sometimes lawyers feel like Rodney Dangerfields' of the professional world—"they don't get no respect!" But the truth is very little would happen in our District if we didn't have a very strong and very competent legal team, led by Supervisory Attorney LeeAnn Summer in Office of Counsel.

The Office of Counsel or "Legal" is a full service operation. Most obviously, they provide legal review and advice on the majority of the acquisition documents done by contracting. However, anything of significance that the Corps does will eventually need the Office of Counsel to review the work, before the District Engineer will sign off, and Legal does much, much more.

Legal works closely with the Regulatory Division as they issue and administer permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

The Legal staff works with the Resource Management office on all types of fiscal issues, from travel compensation time to garnishment of wages. Most recently, they provided support when questions arose regarding the carryover of funds from the Bureau of Land Management.

Working closely with Project Managers on development and administration of project agreements and providing support to the Operations Division and their project offices is just part of the routine service provided. In addition, the Legal team works with the Environmental section, advising on National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, documents and assisting in coordination matters with the State Historic Preservation Office and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The Hazardous Toxic and Radioactive



(L-R) Attorney Jorge Avitia, Attorney Gayle Chestnut, Supervisory Attorney LeeAnn Summer, Attorney Regina Schowalter and Legal Technician Jessica Roybal.

Waste office needs support too with Legal working on everything from the Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program to Formerly Used Defense Sites and everything in between. In addition, real estate closings on acquisitions for District projects, including Civil Works, Military Construction and Inter-agency and International Services Opportunities come under the keen eye of Legal. For example, the Office of Counsel had an active role in the acquisition of all property interests for the District's border fence work, including more than 50 condemnation actions.

The Albuquerque team serves as legal advisors to Human Resources on all labor, management and employee relations matters. And, Logistics calls upon Legal whenever there are claims arising from the use of government vehicles. The Construction Contracts section calls on them regarding claims and requests for equitable adjustment, and Legal coordinates witness preparation when the Department of Justice gets involved in litigation matters.

And, as if all the work and responsibilities outlined so far are not enough, this hardworking group of lawyers and legal staff administers the Freedom of Information Act program for the District, and they have the Contractor

*Continued from previous page —*

Industrial Relations Officer duties too.

Furthermore, there is the ethics training program. Legal is in charge of making sure appropriate District employees get their annual ethics training completed and that those people also complete appropriate paperwork. In addition, they process claims for reimbursement of Real Estate expenses when people move into or out of the District.

This year, 2011 will present some challenging times for a couple of new members of the team, Jorge Avitia and Regina Schowalter, as they become involved in various federal government matters and familiarize themselves with the key areas of the District's mission.

As LeeAnn Summer notes, the core of her team's work doesn't change much from year to year. However, when new laws are passed or guidelines implemented, the Office of Counsel has to move quickly learning the ramifications of any changes. Summer used ARRA

(American Reinvestment and Recovery Act) as an example. "SPA staff across the board quickly turned to Legal to see what applied to their work actions affected by ARRA," she said. "We had to get smart very quickly on these new needs."

In 2011, the Office of Counsel will continue to provide timely and effective counsel for everyone in the District. But Summer says they have one added goal. She would like them to work more timely. But to do so, they need everyone's help.

"We would like to work with everyone to get more involved in matters needing Legal attention earlier on in the process, so my team can help avoid delays in execution," she said.

She continued by saying, for her team, there is never a slow day in the Office of Counsel.

"But, we always take time to have fun," she said. "Laughter is the most important thing we do."



## Employee Explains First Days of Corps Deployment

*By Lance Farber, Kabul, Afghanistan*

After five days of training and paper work at the deployment center in Winchester, Va., eight of us left Dulles airport and flew to Dubai, landing 13 hours later.

We spent the night, and the next day we flew to Kabul International Airport.

We were met at the airport by a local national, and he led us to the team who took us to Qalaa House where the Corps of Engineers is located.

The Qalaa Compound is small and surrounded by other bases. The weather and elevation in Kabul is very similar

to Albuquerque, but there is more pollution.

The first few days were spent on briefings. Everything was well organized and everyone was very helpful.

Almost everyone here shares a room; you have to be here at least eight to nine months before you get your own room. There are phones and computers in your room; you can call home anytime you want. Bathrooms are down the hall but private.

The dining facility is open 24-hours-a-day; there is a variety of food and always



fresh fruit and a salad bar.

Also, there is a gym here with treadmills, stationary bikes and weights.

Small items you need can be bought at a nearby base.

Currently, I am working in Engineering, and most of our projects are site adaptations.

*Rip Rap — January 2011 — Page 5*

**This activity supports our Operations Plan: Action 2 (Deploy Field Force Engineer and personnel in support of full-spectrum Overseas Contingency Operations).**



This activity supports our Operations Plan: Action 8 (Develop a risk-informed and budget-aligned regional lifecycle asset management plan to optimize critical infrastructure investment).

## District Happenings

# Cleaning up Cochiti

By Elizabeth Lockyear, Public Affairs

While old transformers, antifreeze and aerosol cans aren't significant archeological findings at the District's Cochiti field project, they do signal that an environmental clean-up could be necessary.

Last spring, staff from both the Cochiti field office and the District office proactively engaged in ensuring the project was up to the Corps' Environmental Compliance policy guidelines and principles.

The effort started as an "in-house project to identify, characterize and remove two old 1947-vintage transformers discovered in a 'boneyard' on the project," said Mark Rosacker, the District's supervisory natural resources specialist, Cochiti field office.

The job grew to include other potentially hazardous waste material. Items such as used motor oil and antifreeze, old batteries, left-over paint, aerosol spray cans and old cleaning products had accumulated over time.

The timing of the discovery of the transformers coincided with an ERGO/OMBIL training session in Albuquerque, N.M. and a required five-year inspection at Cochiti.

ERGO, or "Environmental Review Guide for Operations," is part of the Environmental Compliance Assessment Program. It is a Corps tool

used to conduct annual environmental compliance assessments at projects and has become synonymous with the assessment process.

OMBIL stands for "Operations and Maintenance Business Information Link" and is part of the Corps' Environmental Stewardship Program. With the Corps-wide emphasis on environmental stewardship, every Corps project has a designated Environmental Compliance Coordinator, or ECC. Rosacker is the ECC for Cochiti, Jemez and Galisteo.

During the ERGO training session Steve Carpenter, a safety and occupational health specialist in the District, arranged for a visit to Cochiti as a practical demonstration. Afterward, there was a "better understanding of the issues to be fixed," Rosacker said.



*Contractors from Advanced Environmental Solutions, Inc. of Belen, N.M., wore personal protective equipment and performed the actual clean up at the Cochiti project.*

"The ERGO training and inspection is what made us aware of the problems," he added. "After which, we 'took the bull by the horns' and initiated the process to correct the problems. Cochiti Lake is now a better and safer place for everyone."

# Holloman Projects Keep Corps Team Hopping

By Mark Slimp, Public Affairs

One of New Mexico's oldest military bases, Holloman Air Force Base, continues to successfully grow in mission, scope and responsibility, thanks in part to the Corps' Holloman resident office staff's work on numerous base projects.

Last year, the Corps finished several significant projects on base and is actively designing or preparing to begin work on even more, larger-scale construction projects spread out over the next few years.

At Holloman, the 49th Wing of the Air Force is the primary tenant and "host wing." The 49th wears many "hats" within its mission of supporting national security objectives by deploying aircraft worldwide in support of both peacetime and wartime contingencies.

Besides providing combat ready Airmen, the Wing is home to the F-22 Raptor, trains Predator and Reaper pilots and sensor operators, supports and manages facilities for German Air Force Flight Training Operations and delivers Air Transportable Clinics and Expeditionary Airfield Resources, plus it has been tasked with rebuilding and repurposing 15 T-38 planes over the next 18 months.

This complex mission requires a huge base infrastructure to support the approximate 17,000 military and civilian personnel working on and around Holloman. That's where the Corps comes into play. In the Past 18 months, the Corps has managed a number of major projects such as an F-22

flight simulator building and the renovation of existing hanger 500. Additionally, the Corps has started moving forward with the design and construction for a number of projects to include: a new Crash Fire Rescue Station, updating historic Hangar 301 (pictured below), constructing a new hangar facility to house the Predator and Reaper program, repairing runway drainage ditches, extending runways and building a new Child Care Center. Interestingly, Hangar 301 was selected as a set for several scenes in the *Transformers* movie.

The recent projects, coupled with a host of new ones on the way, have kept the Holloman project office staff extremely busy, with no likely let up. The team, led by Supervisory Engineer John Long, includes Project Engineer George Fish, Project Engineer George Hostler, Project Engineer Ron Niemi, Construction Inspector Tom Flanigan, Construction Inspector Carroll Ragland, Construction Inspector Sean Moore, Construction Inspector Sam Miller, Engineering Technician Glenda Kohliember and Project Technician Amber Scyoc.

This team of professionals has played and continues to play an important and successful role in aiding Air Force operations.

With the Corps continuing involvement improving Holloman's assets and infrastructure via updating, repurposing and building new construction, this crucial Air Force base will be poised to accept any new challenges in the future.



Rip Rap — January 2011 — Page 7

**This activity supports our Operations Plan: Action 7 (Execute the regional Military Program and capitalize on Interagency and international Services opportunities).**

District Happenings

## Corps Works at Former World War II Air Field

By Elizabeth Lockyear, Public Affairs

In the early 1940s, the U.S. Department of Defense acquired approximately 1,000 acres near Fort Sumner, N.M., for an Army Air Field to train aircraft pilots during World War II. The site housed 3,000 soldiers and included a mechanics school, aircraft maintenance shops, sub-depot, hospital, laboratory and a dental clinic. It also had a Prisoner of War camp.

Almost 70 years after the Defense Department declared the site excess and transferred it to the Village of Fort Sumner for use as a public airport, the Corps is actively engaged in its environmental restoration through the Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) program.

The Defense Department is responsible for environmental restoration of properties that the department used prior to October 1986 and designated as FUDS. The Army oversees the FUDS program, using the Corps of Engineers to identify eligible properties, investigate their condition and manage any required cleanup.

About a year ago, work began on the Fort Sumner site. The District conducted a preliminary assessment of how the property was used by the Army to determine if there was possible contamination. Enough indication of possible contamination was found to move the project

to the Site Inspection phase.

A Site Inspection involves the collection and analysis of soil and groundwater samples to verify if there are actual contaminants present and what impact they have had on the environment. While at the site, inspectors also look for physical hazards such as open holes or derelict buildings that could pose a risk.

At Fort Sumner, the District contracted with an Alaskan small business contractor, Bristol Environmental, to conduct the site inspection and perform any necessary hazard removal with a focus on three areas.

The first is groundwater monitoring and soil sampling. A special device called a Bar-Cad multilevel groundwater monitoring system allows water samples to be taken from differing depths using a single hole.

Inspectors detected solvent contamination around the landfill area on the site. While the Army did not actively use the landfill, it was used under the county's control. Now, the District is working to find the source of the contamination: did it come from the Army's airfield activities or from later landfill use by the county?

Inspectors installed wells

to monitor the groundwater upstream from the landfill. These wells will allow the Corps to pinpoint where the contamination is coming from.

Another concern is not chemical contamination, but physical hazards on the site, including a free standing chimney and foundation walls with exposed rebar, both of which will be removed. There are also open manholes which will be filled in.

— Continued on next page



The Bar-Cad multilevel groundwater monitoring system allows water samples to be taken from different depths.



Continued from previous page —



## Employees of the Year for 2010

The last major issue involves approximately 10 to 12 water wells that were left open and exposed from the 1940s. Aside from the potential physical risk to people from open holes, the water wells also provide a conduit for contamination into the groundwater.

When a well is abandoned in 2011, there are certain procedures which the person or organization abandoning the well legally must follow to prevent injury and contamination. However, these procedures weren't required 70 years ago. Thus, as part of the clean up of the site, the Corps is working to abandon these old wells according to today's requirements.

The entire project is estimated to take another nine months, including the reports, said Michael Bone, a civil engineer in the District's Environmental Project Management Section. Bone also credits his coworkers within the District for their excellent handling of the field work.

The village of Fort Sumner is one of the most cooperative property owners Bone said he has worked with in the FUDS program and that Fort Sumner has a "great bunch of people out there."

For more information on the FUDS program check out: [http://www.environmental.usace.army.mil/prog\\_fuds.htm](http://www.environmental.usace.army.mil/prog_fuds.htm)



**E**l Paso native Ray Macias was selected as Albuquerque District's Supervisor of the Year for 2010. He has spent more than 20 years with the Corps of Engineers, most of it with the El Paso resident office, and he is responsible for projects worth approximately \$100 million that are scheduled for 2011 for the Department of Homeland Security, as well as numerous on-going projects.



*Ray Macias*

As the Resident Engineer in El Paso, Macias handles many different aspects of work in the office: administrative, supervisory and working with contracting. He oversees multiple Operations and Maintenance contracts, to include border fence maintenance from the New Mexico and Arizona border to the city of Presidio, Texas (about 300 miles). He has been intimately involved in the construction of multiple Border Patrol Stations to include those in Fort Hancock, Presidio and El Paso, Texas, as well as the Port of Entry in Antelope Wells, N.M. Macias' subordinates unanimously supported his nomination for this award and agreed that he is an excellent supervisor and completely dedicated to the Corps of Engineers.

**S**tephanie Whatley was chosen as Albuquerque District's Employee of the Year for 2010. She is a Contracting Officer who, in fiscal year 2010, helped complete 411 simple acquisition procedures worth more than \$27 million, which was double the amount in the prior fiscal year.



*Stephanie Whatley*

Whatley took over work normally handled by a base installation contracting office and awarded 14 office furniture requirements, worth nearly \$3 million, for offices at Kirtland Air Force Base and the replacement of hot water heaters and garage doors for housing units at Cannon Air Force Base, worth nearly \$1 million.

In addition, she awarded a record breaking 30 environmental service requirements, worth nearly \$9 million. She also devised a new filing system that has greatly freed up space in the Contracting Division's office.

Throughout the year, Whatley's supervisors were told repeatedly that her outgoing personality, extensive knowledge of the Corps' contracting system and bountiful energy enable her to quickly accomplish very complicated tasks.

# Engineer Completes MBA While on Deployment

By Paul Giblin, Afghanistan Engineer District North

Electrical design engineer Paul L. Cravens, who joined the District in October after spending ten months in the Afghanistan Engineering District, drew upon personal experiences to complete his master's of business administration degree while deployed.

He chronicled some of the unique difficulties of rebuilding the war-torn country in a research paper for a business ethics class offered by the University of New Mexico.

The paper, entitled "A Clash of Globalizations," deals with the economy and ethics of terrorism in Afghanistan. Cravens argued in the paper that the country's business structure has been demolished by three key developments – the Soviet invasion and occupation, the emergence of al-Qaida and the Taliban terrorist organizations and the expansion of the illegal drug trade.

Cravens detailed some of the violence the Corps of Engineers and its contractors have encountered while trying to rebuild the country's infrastructure.

"I've been to several places and observed quite a few things, as far as the way we're doing business and the way we're interacting with the Afghan people," he said.

He wrote about shootings, kidnappings other tactics used by insurgent groups against construction workers to hinder U.S.-funded rebuilding efforts.

Former District Chief of Engineering Mark Hoague, who reviewed the paper, credited Cravens for looking beyond his immediate job responsibilities of reviewing hundreds of building designs and shop drawings to ensure electrical compliance with codes and contract specifications.

"There are a lot of challenges. I think he identified them all," Hoague said. "I don't think there are any easy solutions."

Cravens wrote the 18-page document and took the final exam for his business ethics

class during a two-week vacation in Seoul, South Korea. He initially tried to work on the paper after work hours in Kabul but only had limited success, he said. Corps of Engineers personnel in Afghanistan work seven days a week, leaving little free time for other activities.

Instead, Cravens spent the bulk of a two-week vacation at the Dragon Hill Lodge, a recreation center for U.S. armed forces at the Yongsan Army Installation, bent over his laptop, surrounded by books and other research materials. He finished the coursework in time to spend his final few days sightseeing in Seoul.

Cravens lives in Tijeras, N.M. and started the master's degree program at the university in 2007. He received his degree on July 10, 2010. It is his third degree from the university. He also earned a master's in electrical engineering in 2006, and a bachelor's in electrical engineering in 2001. He took his PE license exam at the end of October and is waiting for the results.

The Corps of Engineers has approximately 34,000 civilians and soldiers delivering engineering services in more than 90 countries worldwide. It is the primary organization building army bases, police stations, roads, airstrips and other infrastructure projects in Afghanistan to increase the country's stability and bolster its economy.



*Paul Cravens is recognized for his effort by his co-workers. He was deployed to Afghanistan from Nov. 29, 2009 to Oct. 23, 2010*



## Budget Analyst Receives Civilian Service Award

Lt. Col. Williams presented the Commander's Award for Civilian Service to Rebecca Perez on Jan. 11 for her exceptional devotion to duty, professionalism and outstanding leadership and vision in support of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The award's citation explains that during the period of Jan. 2009 through Sept. 2010, Perez implemented a commercial-off-the-shelf software tool that builds upon the existing decision



support capability of the Corps' mandated Integrated Manning Document. The

improved human capital decision support became the standard in the Division.

### SAVE THE DATE

**13 - 17**  
**JUNE 2011**  
ATLANTA, GA  
HYATT REGENCY



#### The 2011 Infrastructure Systems Conference

*"Quality Design and Construction for a Stronger Future."*

The 2011 ISC will be held in Atlanta from 13 - 17 June 2011 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. The conference will provide the engineering and construction community an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas and share technical knowledge.

#### The primary goals of the Infrastructure Systems Conference are:

- Enhancement of National Technical Competence
- Commitment to Quality
- Commitment to Meeting the Needs of the Army and the Nation

A learning organization, USACE has always had technical engineering capability at its heart.

For more than 200 years, the Corps has demonstrated this capability in a variety of military and civil works projects. The 2011 Infrastructure Systems Conference is an important step in continuing to build our technical competence and carry on our tradition of being prepared to meet the nation's current and future engineering and construction needs.

[www.usace-isc.org](http://www.usace-isc.org)

## Sick Leave to Count for Retirement

Since 1969, Civil Service retirement System (CSRS) employees have received credit toward retirement for unused sick leave, but this incentive was not part of the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), until now.

The National Defense Authorization Act (HR2647) was signed by the president on Oct. 28, allowing FERS employees to receive retirement credit for unused sick leave.

Not surprisingly, studies on sick leave use by the Office of Personnel Management, Congressional Research Service and others in recent years reveal significant differences in usage patterns between the two federal retirement systems. It is not uncommon for CSRS employees to retire with a year (2,087 hours) or more of accrued sick leave. Conversely, FERS employees tend to use high rates of sick leave in the years leading up to retirement and end their careers with far lower (or zero) sick leave balances.

Thus, the new sick leave credit will enhance the FERS program and should encourage employees to build a balance that will be a great value to them at retirement.

Under the new provision, FERS employees will receive an additional one percent of their high-three average salary

for every 2,087 hours of sick leave they have on the books at retirement.

Be aware that the law prescribes a phase-in feature that provides only 50 percent credit for unused sick leave to those who retire before Jan. 1, 2014. FERS employees who retire on or after Jan. 1, 2014, will receive 100 percent credit for unused sick leave.

## Committee Seeks New Members

The Recreation Committee is seeking new members. Watch for the committee's by-laws to be posted on the intranet in the next couple of weeks. Commitment is one to two years with no grade requirements. Contact Leslie Rodriguez (505-342-3697) or Jeannette Alderete (505-342-3431) for more information.

## Vegetation Clearing Exceeded Contract

In December, during routine monitoring of the Southwest Valley Flood Damage Reduction Control Project, the Corps of Engineers project management team observed a larger than required clearing of vegetation in an area that was approximately a third of an acre surrounding the open culvert currently under construction.

The contractor failed to

heed the boundary markers.

The contractor was not supposed to execute work closer than 75 feet of the Rio Grande river bank.

Instead, workers came within two to three feet of the river bank, as they cleared and graded the area in question.

A formal cease and desist order letter was issued by the Corps on Dec. 23.

Lt. Col. Jason Williams said, "while there is no flooding danger to the public, the Corps has proactively ordered additional measures to be taken to insure the ongoing safety of nearby property and sensitive habitat."

Among the efforts will be the construction of a small earthen diversion berm, and placing the Cochiti Dam operations team on alert should there be a need to reduce the river flow for a short time.

Additional actions to be taken by the parties responsible for the incident include repair to any damage done to the levee and to make appropriate restoration efforts of the denuded areas in order to promote rapid new-growth.

All appropriate federal and state agencies, as well as project stakeholders, were quickly notified of the incident.