

RIP RAP

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Albuquerque District

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District Engineer,
Lt. Col. Jason Williams

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PEOPLE FIRST, MISSION ALWAYS

New Commander highlights his main leadership principles

I know the Army advocates the philosophy of "Mission First, People Always," but the workforce is the number one priority, and if you don't have a viable workforce made up of people who want to do the job, it makes it extremely difficult to accomplish the mission. So, I know that if I focus my priorities on people, successful mission execution will follow.

Expectations are a two-way street, and you can expect that I will concentrate on ensuring good communication and effective time management. Communication is essential in any organization, and there is always room for improvement. I know communication is enhanced by sitting down and getting to know your team, building relationships and openly working toward solving problems. My commitment to you is that I will devote the time and effort to do all I can to improve communication and encourage continuous, open dialogue. While doing so, I want us to also concentrate on time management.

Everyone's time in this organization is valuable! When I join a meeting and look around at all the people in the room, I can't help but calculate what the government is spending to bring everyone together. I want to ensure we are using our time appropriately, wisely and in a cost-effective way. I know we can streamline our operations and find better uses of our time. I ask that you take a step back and individually focus on shrinking some of your meetings and consider options for better time management.

Finally, I have some expectations, as well. I expect your best, professional effort. You play an important role in our District operations, and you owe it to the other employees to put forth your best effort. Also, I expect you to do the

right thing always and treat others with respect. While doing so, I want to remind you that it is important that you are either a positive leader or a positive follower. Ultimately, I'd like you to understand your role in the team. The actions of one can easily falter the entire District. With those expectations in mind, I really look forward to working with you in continued service to our Nation and the Corps.



*Lt. Col. Jason Williams,
Commander and District
Engineer*

—BUILDING STRONG—

Did You Know...

The USACE slogan, BUILDING STRONG, was selected among 800 submissions from USACE employees, because it reaches our internal team and external partners, while demonstrating a "strong" connection to the Army. The correct use of BUILDING STRONG is all caps and no exclamation point.

Throughout our history, we've achieved feats within all four Operation Plan goals:

Goal 1: Deliver USACE support to combat, stability and disaster operations

Goal 2: Deliver enduring and essential water resource solutions by collaborating with partners and stakeholders

Goal 3: Deliver innovative, resilient, sustainable solutions to the Armed Forces and the Nation

Goal 4: Build and cultivate a competent, disciplined and resilient team equipped to deliver high quality solutions

USACE Happenings

Albuquerque District Celebrates 75 Years

A Town Hall gathering at Albuquerque District's headquarters on July 30 marked the culmination of a review of projects the District has undertaken during its tenure from 1935 to 2010.

Back in January, District personnel gathered to remember the events surrounding the District's birth and its first construction project at Conchas Dam. They learned about how the District was called upon to complete projects in New Mexico, Colorado and Texas, while the world was ensconced in a severe economic depression leading into World War II. To make matters worse, the District's operating area was experiencing a severe drought referred to as the Dust Bowl.

In April, District employees learned about the second 25 years of the District's existence, as the Corps became a key player in the Cold War arms race and a major contributor to the region's flood damage reduction efforts. This was also a period of intense military construction and environmental protection efforts.

The last 25 years of service took place during a time of dynamic change in the United States, as the District's very existence was called into question during the large-scale military draw down. Then, a surge of military and civil construction work beckoned, as well as unique projects like building schools for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and a significant portion of boarder fence for U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the District was thriving once again.



America's Great Outdoors Visits New Mexico

America's Great Outdoors Initiative, a listening session designed by President Obama to promote and support innovative community-level efforts to conserve outdoor spaces and reconnect people to the outdoors, visited Albuquerque, N.M., July 21.

The initiative was led by the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality. By November 15, a report of the public's comments will be compiled and provided to President Obama.

Members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Albuquerque District participated in a pre-press-event discussion of local projects orchestrated by the Corps and our partners and attended listening sessions.

At Albuquerque's nature center, Chief of Planning Kristopher Schafer, and Biologist Michael Porter, spoke about how the nature center was designed and constructed by the Corps, as well as revitalization efforts in the Rio Grande's Bosque.

At the listening sessions, Mark Yuska, chief of operations; Kristen Skopeck, chief of public affairs; Eric Garner, corps ranger at Abiquiu Lake; and Karl Martin, chief of lake operations, took notes on suggestions from the public about what is working regarding conservation, recreation, and reconnecting people to the outdoors.

They also noted what the public feels are challenges in this area, what the federal role should be, and what tools could be used to make the efforts more successful.

Listen Session Questions and Answers

What do you do when outdoors? Biking, swimming, hiking, playing soccer, camping, backpacking, bird watching, fishing, running, climbing, and learning about cultural and historical sites. **How do you protect the environment?** Community gardens, picking up trash, recycling, volunteering, tree planting, and trail building or maintenance. **What are obstacles and challenges preventing young people from spending time outdoors?**

Access, crime and dangerous settings at local parks, financial resources, and transportation.

What should the president do? Provide recreational opportunities that meet current recreational trends for youth, better access, public transportation to recreational areas, more money to repair neglected recreational areas, more jobs for youth in recreational areas, better communication with land managers, financial infrastructures that include non-profit partners and support local economies by investing in public lands.



U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar, discusses the America's Great Outdoors initiative with colleagues, press, and the public at the Albuquerque Nature Center on July 21, 2010.

This activity supports our Operation Plan: Action 4 (Execute the regional Civil Works Program and expand planning processes toward integrated and sustainable water resource projects) and Action 6 (Execute the regional Regulatory Program to protect aquatic resources).

These activities support our Operation Plan: Action 5 (Develop collaborative approaches to address watershed-based, multi-stakeholder and multi-benefit regional water resource challenges).

USACE Happenings

Lands Return to Kewa Pueblo, A First in New Mexico for USACE

By Mike Logue, SPA Public Affairs

For Kewa Pueblo Governor Tony Tortalita, July 8, was a day he and his community had prayed for during a period of many years, a time when precious land used for decades by the Army Corps of Engineers for flood control would be returned to his people.

Under sunny skies and joined by members of the Kewa (formerly Santo Domingo) Pueblo Council and Government, Governor Tortalita accepted from the Corps the map outlining 310 acres that returned through the federal disposal process to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, to be held in trust for the Kewa.

The land, part of the Corps' Galisteo Dam project located between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, had been deemed excess to the Corps' needs. The Kewa requested several years ago that the land be returned to their trust and use. The transfer was the first of its kind for the Corps in New Mexico. "We have cared for your land," District Engineer Lt. Col. Kimberly Colloton said, "and, we return it to you in a condition we believe will be pleasing to you."

"This is the happiest day of my life," said Governor Tortalita. "Mother Earth has heard our prayers and all these people have helped our land return to us."



Lt. Colonels Colloton and Williams and Ron Kneebone, USACE Tribal Liaison, pose with Governor Tortalita and other tribe members after the land transfer ceremony.



On June 8, Maj. Rick Collins, Albuquerque deputy commander, signed the New Mexico Charter for the Corps' Silver Jackets Program with John Wheeler, secretary of the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and Tony Russell, regional administrator for FEMA Region VI. The national Silver Jackets program provides for enhanced coordination, planning and public education associated with local flood response and flood damage reduction.

Zebra Mussel Inspections Make Positive Impact at Conchas Lake

By Kara Hickey,
ARRA Mussel Ranger,
Conchas Dam Project



Michael Martinez, summer park ranger, and Josh Enriquez, ARRA ranger, inspect a patron's boat. Having ARRA rangers on staff to inspect boats allows other Rangers to focus on water safety and other programs.

Three years ago, boaters at Conchas Lake would have been surprised to have park rangers crawling around examining their hulls and engines, but now it is accepted as a normal routine because of the Zebra mussel. The Conchas Dam Project has taken on the challenge of protecting project waters from this invasive species, which can be very harmful to the lake's ecosystem.

The Zebra Mussel, native to the Black and Caspian seas, is thought to have been transported to the Great Lakes in the bilge tanks of cargo ships in the late 1980s. Now, mussels have infested lakes across the nation, and this pesky species is responsible for causing millions of dollars in damage.

If the Zebra mussel is introduced into fresh water lakes and streams it can change the natural ecosystem and usurp native species. Zebra mussels are filter feeders, so they deplete plankton, which is the beginning of all aquatic food chains. They encrust any hard surface, including crawdads and other aquatic creatures, with hair-like bissell threads restricting movement, leading to death.

Each female mussel can produce as many as one million eggs per year. They cluster together, more than 700,000 per square meter, causing problems for boat motors, pipes, and dams. To prevent this nuisance species from endangering the Conchas Lake ecosystem, Corps employees set up a station

where visitors receive routine mussel inspections, courtesy boat inspections and education about the Zebra mussel. Three American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) Park Rangers have been hired seasonally for this work.

The mussel inspection program was started in the summer of 2009. During that season, more than 1,300 boats were inspected. This summer, more than 1,500 boats have already been inspected and approximately 4,000 visitors have received the message to clean, drain, and dry. Also, having designated ARRA Park Rangers on staff has given several college students U.S. Army Corps of Engineers experience.

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This activity supports our Operation Plan: Action 6 (Execute the regional Regulatory Program to protect aquatic resources).

This activity supports our Operation Plan: Action 5 (Develop collaborative approaches to address watershed-based, multi-stakeholder and multi-benefit regional water resource challenges).

USACE Happenings

Dam Works to Protect Gallup During Summer Storm

By Kristen Skopec, SPA Public Affairs

Someone once said, “Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional,” and those words may have had some resonance with the officials in the City of Gallup, N.M., who made the decision to partner with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Albuquerque District to find relief from an historical flooding problem with the Puerco River.

Systematic floods had been recorded in the Gallup area since the late 1800s, and a flood in 1990 resulted in one person’s death and more than a million dollars in damages. As the city’s population increased, officials reasoned that future floods would result in even costlier consequences. In fact, a study suggested that if a 100-year flood were to occur, it could result in more than \$5 million in damages, and, although the flooding appeared to be inevitable, suffering that extent of damage was not something city officials wanted to tolerate.

Working with the Corps to undertake a feasibility study and an environmental assessment, the city was provided a plan incorporating flood protection measures, water quality improvements, wildlife habitat improvements and recreation enhancements for Gallup. The main



The drain in the Little Puerco Wash is typically dry and visible during most of the year.

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spillway, as well as improvements to existing culverts and some work at the river’s edge near the Gallup municipal golf course.

Under the direction of the Corps, the construction of the dam took place immediately upstream from Gallup’s Pepsi bottling plant and the reconstruction of existing culverts occurred near the confluence of the river and a drainage course called the Little Puerco Wash. Like other silt-laden drainage courses, the Little Puerco Wash was shallow, broad and meandering, but this tributary enabled flood water to surge directly toward Gallup’s urban, Central Business District.

As with any important and costly project, especially one put forth to ease the “pain” from inevitable environmental damage,



Drain is nearly submerged July 29.

Corps personnel and city officials were optimistically waiting for proof that the project worked as designed.

“As

witnessed in a storm event

July 29, the dam on the Little Puerco Wash performed as intended by reducing the flood flow rate through Gallup,” said Bruce Jordan, geotechnical engineer with the Albuquerque District. “By reducing flood flow rate, the likelihood of large economic losses as the result of future flood events is greatly diminished.”

Corps personnel, city officials and residents of Gallup can now rest easier knowing Gallup is much more protected. Despite knowing flood events are inevitable, the Corps is dedicated to implementing projects to help keep suffering to a minimum.

Corps Provides Bulk Fuels Contract Support at Kirtland

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Albuquerque District, as the local district project manager, is working closely with the Huntsville Engineering & Support Center on the most recent solicitation for Kirtland Air Force Base's Bulk Fuels Facility.

A hybrid performance work statement and statement of objectives was issued July 9, to the Worldwide Environmental Remediation Services Unrestricted (large business) Multiple Award Task Order Contract pool in anticipation of an award this fiscal year.

A USACE team, consisting of members from the Albuquerque District and the Huntsville Engineering & Support Center, is providing

contracting and technical management support in the initial planning stages, as well as continued technical resources to support the completion of this task order throughout its period of performance.

Air Force Center for Environmental Excellence (AFCEE) is the headquarters command for environmental restoration for the Air Force.

AFCEE is currently providing overarching guidance for Kirtland as well as executive level support to the Air Force Secretariat for Coordination with the New Mexico Environmental Department (NMED).

Kirtland Air Force Base is the installation with responsibility for completion of environmental remediation at two sites, as well as working level coordination



Mark MacEwan and Christine Bicksler of AECOM conduct a site survey of Kirtland's Bulk Fuel Facility. Final contractor selection is expected in August.

with NMED and the City of Albuquerque.

Kirtland and AFCEE have requested Corps assistance in preparing a Performance Based Contract to complete remediation at the sites. USACE Albuquerque & Huntsville Center will work closely together to accomplish this goal.

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

Did You Know...

The Corps is the nation's largest federal provider of outdoor recreation, managing more than 400 lake and river projects in 43 states and hosting more than 350 million visitors per year. The Corps estimates that nearly 89 percent of its recreation projects are within 50 miles of metropolitan areas and provide a diverse range of outdoor activities to people of all ages. For more information, visit <http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/visitors/visitors.cfm>

This activity supports our Operation Plan: Action 10 (Promote the Common Regional Picture and execute the strategic communication plan).

Focus On People

Abiquiu Park Ranger Selected as Interpretation Finalist

By Dave Dutton,
Operations Manager, Abiquiu Lake

Abiquiu Lake Park Ranger Phil Martinez will be traveling to Las Vegas, Nev., to participate in the National Association for Interpretation Workshop (NAI), in November. Earlier this year, Martinez was selected as the South Pacific Division's (SPD) nominee to compete nationally with other Corps' Hiram M. Chittenden award recipients. The coveted Chittenden award is presented each year to a Corps employee in recognition of outstanding achievements using interpretation to enhance the public's understanding of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Although Martinez was not selected as the Corps-wide winner, he's been invited to attend the Excellence in Interpretation Awards Banquet at the NAI conference, where each

federal agency award recipient will share details about their program at a workshop.

Martinez was recognized for his commitment to bilingual water safety education and for his selection as a "Hispanic Role Model," for The National Hispanic Environmental Council's Minority Youth Environmental Training Institute held in Glorieta, N.M. Martinez has orchestrated bilingual water safety awareness in area schools, parades and has done numerous radio and television public service announcements, programs and seminars, reaching thousands of Northern New Mexicans in the process. In 2004, Ranger Martinez was also the SPD nominee for the Hiram Chittenden Award.



District's Most Senior Retiree Attends Anniversary Bash

By Ronnie Schelby, SPA Public Affairs

Several important guests and retirees attended the 75th birthday celebration of the Albuquerque District on July 30, 2010. Among the many guests was Mrs. Ella Pierce, the District's most senior retiree.

At 102 years young, Pierce, who still drives herself, took an active part in the cake-cutting and festivities.

She was born Dec. 13, 1907, on a farm in Cambridge, Iowa. Pierce married her husband in 1929. At that time, her husband's brother was working in New Mexico, so, hoping to find employment, Mr. Pierce and his wife followed his brother and headed out West.

In August, 1946, at the age of 39, Pierce began her career as an Albuquerque Corps of Engineers District employee, first as a stenographer, then later as an auditor in Program Development and Civil Works. When Pierce decided to retire 31

years later she recalled that, "back in 1977, the fiscal year started January 1, and I couldn't retire any earlier than December 30, because I had to get the budget ready for the next year." Pierce worked her entire federal career in the Albuquerque District.



Ella Pierce, oldest District retiree, at 102.



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This activity supports our Operation Plan: Action 12 (Develop and implement the Regional Human Capital Plan).

Youngest Employee Eyes Mussels and Career in Nursing

By Lisa Lockyear, SPA Public Affairs

At 18, Pedro Valdez is one of the District's newest employees; he is also the youngest. Valdez just graduated from Coronado High School in Gallina, N.M., near Abiquiu, N.M. He is part of a group that Dave Dutton, operations manager at Abiquiu Lake, calls "Zebra Rangers" because they are the front line protection against aquatic invasive species at the project." Valdez's position is funded by the American Recovery Act and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

While he had no prior knowledge of zebra mussels, Valdez is now certified to inspect boats entering Abiquiu Lake to help prevent the mussels from infecting New Mexico's waters.

The number of boats inspected at Abiquiu varies and can total 120, or more, a day. The inspectors' attention is focused more on out-of-state boats, which comprise roughly half the boats.

Valdez said that one of his favorite aspects of the job is interacting with the species such as zebra and quagga mussels. Once these mussels invade a body of water, they are impossible to eradicate with current technology. They upset the ecosystem, harm and kill native wildlife and damage infrastructure, including marinas and dams, resulting in millions of dollars of damage each year.

Prevention is relatively easy compared to the price of putting up with the pests once they permanently move in. Valdez plays a key defensive role in keeping Abiquiu mussel-free. Because of this, Dutton said that boat inspection is a "critically important job." "Thankfully we haven't found any," Valdez said.



To help celebrate the District's 75th anniversary, Valdez participated in the cutting of the District's birthday cake.

When Valdez finishes his seasonal job at Abiquiu in August, he said he plans to start at the University of New Mexico majoring in nursing with the goal of getting a Certified Family Nurse Practitioner license and then more studying to become a doctor.

In addition to his interest in medicine and mussels, Valdez is also among the state's best basketball players. He was selected to participate in New Mexico's All Star basketball team. The game happens once a year and is broken into divisions based on school size; Valdez played in division 2A. The big game took place July 29 in Albuquerque with Valdez on the Northern team which won 97-96.

Fishery Biologist Michael Porter (left), and Regulatory Project Manager Chris Grosso collect data on the Silvery Minnow.



Monitoring Shows Silvery Minnow Prospering in River

By Kristen Skopec, SPA Public Affairs

For three seasons, Army Corps of Engineers Fishery Biologist Michael Porter, with assistance from the Friends of the Rio Grande Nature Center, has closely monitored the habitat and numbers of the endangered Silvery Minnow. He has documented water temperatures, captured live fish and observed habitat improvements that look promising for the species.

At a recent Research Committee meeting of the Friends of the Rio Grande Nature Center, Porter explained the monitoring he has done to document the minnows' road to recovery, and he spoke of the long-term goal of being able to reclassify the minnow from an endangered species to a threatened species, or remove it from the list altogether.

"We've got some great water-quality data that supports a healthy environment for fish," Porter said. "It is encouraging to see the Silvery Minnow population doing well."

Porter told the group a key component of the recovery effort was the Corps' construction of two habitat features along the high-flow channel called embayments that fill with water on a seasonal basis to allow the minnows and other fish to gather and spawn outside of the river's channel. During this season, Porter said the embayments were

connected by water to the high-flow channel off and on for two months, but fish seemed to know when the embayment would be cut off and would exit the structure accordingly.

This behavior, as well as other curious aspects of the minnows' migratory and mating patterns, are being captured by Corps personnel to fully understand the environmental conditions necessary not only for the minnows' survival but to allow them to thrive.

According to Porter, all of the data collected during the past three seasons falls in the viable range for the minnow, so the embayments are working as designed. He was asked if it might be important to construct more embayments, and Porter said more monitoring is necessary, but based on current use additional features aren't needed at this project.

"Progress takes time, but the minnows' resurgence will have a positive effect on the entire Rio Grande ecosystem," Porter said.

Porter reminded the group that in order for the minnows' status to be upgraded, the population has to be self-sustaining, and there has to be one other independent population living outside the current range for five years. To de-list the minnow altogether, there has to be a third self-sustaining population, as well.

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This activity supports our Operation Plan: Action 5 (Develop collaborative approaches to address watershed-based, multi-stakeholder, and multi-benefit regional water resource challenges) and Action 6 (Execute the regional Regulatory Program to protect aquatic resources).

This activity supports our Operation Plan: Action 12 (Develop and implement the Regional Human Capital Plan).

Features

Corps Employees Participate in University's Ropes Course

By Ronnie Schelby, SPA Public Affairs

The ropes courses at the University of New Mexico look daunting, just ask our employees in the Leadership Development Program (LDP) Level II who stepped up to the challenge July 27.

Participants said that once they overcame their initial reservations the course turned out to be fun, challenging, a lot of endurance, and required communication and teamwork. Joining the LDP students were individuals from the mentors and protégé program.

Groups were given the option of choosing from either the low or high ropes course, and each course offered different challenges.

"These exercises stressed how important the elements of trust, communication and support are in creating effective teams," said Jeannette Alderete, executive secretary.

Many participants commented that the experience at the course was worthwhile and helped enhance the employee and mentor (or protégé) relationship.



Ondrea Hummel rests on the high ropes.



"The Ropes Course reinforced the teamwork that we have within the Environmental Section," said Mickey Porter, fishery biologist.