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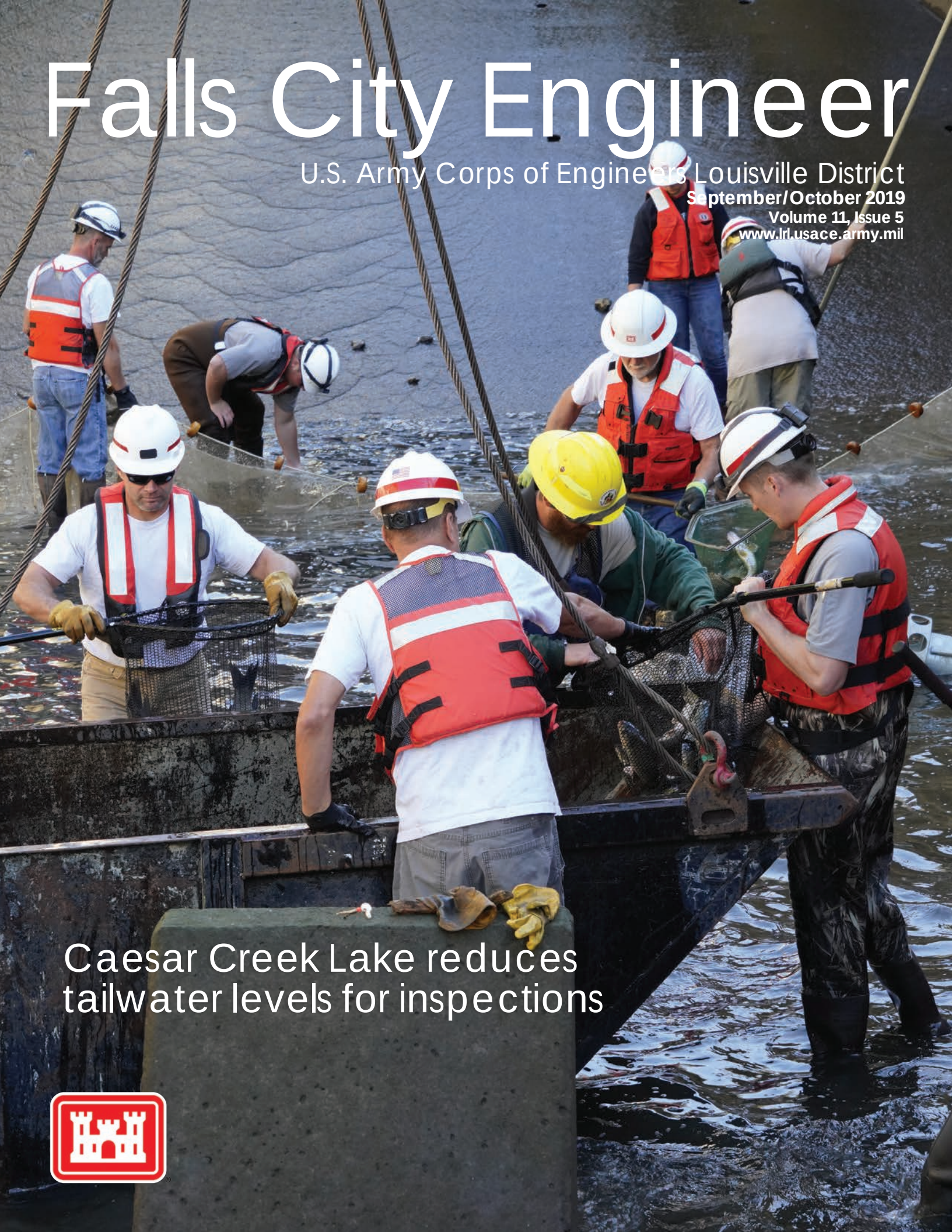

Caesar Creek Lake reduces tailwater levels for inspections

Falls City Engineer

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District Commander
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On the cover: *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife inspect the Caesar Creek Lake tailwater infrastructure during the week of Sept. 23. (USACE photo by Jack Sweeney)*

Please conserve:
Think before you print.

Commander's Comments

Col. Antoinette Gant
Commander and District Engineer
Louisville District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Team Louisville,

Happy New (Fiscal) Year! I want to start by taking a moment to say thanks to each and every one of you for your efforts in bringing a successful FY19 to a close. I know the end of year activities can be fast-paced but what an amazing team we have here in the District.

At 11:58 p.m., Sept. 30, the last contract was awarded for FY19. As Contracting, Project Management and Office of Counsel were wrapping up the final action of the FY, Resource Management was gearing up to begin close outs. Special shout out to RM, CT, PM ED, and OC for burning the midnight oil over the last few months to ensure we successfully closed the books on FY19. I truly appreciate your commitment and determination to deliver our program.

As you were busy with the yearend hustle and bustle, I had the opportunity to visit four of our locks and dams on the Ohio River. I was thrilled to be able to present awards and commander's coins to our dedicated field staff and thank them for their service.

We are looking forward to the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division Commander Maj. Gen. Robert Whittle's visit later this month. He is excited to meet you and see firsthand why we are always Louisville Proud!

I would encourage all of you to read through this issue of the Falls City Engineer. You will see all the great things your teammates are doing. Specially highlighted this month is our partnership with the Metropolitan Sewer District to restore Beargrass Creek ecosystem, demolition of Lock and Dam 52, Caesar Creek Lake's tailwater inspection and more.

Finally, as we enter into the season of thanksgiving, thank you for your dedication, loyalty and commitment. I am excited for FY20 and look forward to continue working with you and tackling any challenges that may come our way.

Thanks again for all you do!

Building Strong! We are LOUISVILLE PROUD!

Col. G

Antoinette R. Gant

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Corps, MSD partner to restore Beargrass Creek ecosystem

Katie Newton, public affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District and local project sponsor, Louisville Metropolitan Sewer District hosted a news conference, Aug. 15, 2019, to announce their partnership to complete the Three Forks of Beargrass Creek Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study. The two entities are taking a big step in improving the Beargrass Creek Watershed in Louisville, Kentucky. Together - along with key stakeholders - they will investigate innovative restoration techniques and engineering solutions that will be in harmony with the watershed's urban environment.

Beargrass Creek is comprised of three main branches: the South, Middle and Muddy forks, which reach throughout the city of Louisville. Due to the watershed's urban environment, about one-third of all precipitation will land on impervious surfaces such as blacktop, where it collects toxins, pollutants and sediments as it drains into the creek.

"This is a monumental day and a monumental moment for Beargrass Creek," said Louisville MSD Director Tony Parrott during the news conference.

The commitment from both organizations is $1.5 million each for a total value of $3 million to complete the study over the course of the next three years.

"We are proud to partner with Louisville MSD to create a comprehensive plan which will identify methods for improving this beautiful natural resource of the Three Forks of Beargrass Creek for generations to come," said Louisville District Commander Col. Antoinette Gant. "This study has been the result of years of coordination, and one we are fortunate to have been selected for as it is one of only six new start projects across the Corps of Engineers and the only ecosystem restoration project selected nationwide."

Katie Newton

Louisville District Commander Col. Antoinette Gant speaks during a news conference Aug. 15, 2019, announcing the partnership with Louisville MSD to complete the Three Forks of Beargrass Creek Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study.

A multidisciplinary team of biologists, archaeologists, engineers, plan formulators, and economists along with technical experts from MSD has been assembled according to Andrew Reed, Louisville District Project manager.

"The team will focus on identifying creative solutions to restore the ecosystem of the Beargrass Creek Watershed," Reed said.

Next, the Corps will begin initial scoping meetings and public and stakeholder scoping opportunities to gain valuable feedback from the community.

"We want to come up with a plan that Louisville can be proud of and that we, as an organization, can showcase to the nation; highlighting the importance of ecosystem restoration and how it is equally valued among the Corps' diverse missions," Reed said.

Caesar Creek Lake reduces tailwater levels for inspections

Jack Sweeney

Louisville District employees work to lower the Caesar Creek Lake tailwater levels to inspect infrastructure, remove debris and transfer fish and wildlife to outside the work area Sept. 23.

Todd Hornback, public affairs

In a partnership involving the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife, the agencies worked to lower the Caesar Creek Lake tailwater levels to inspect infrastructure, remove debris and transfer fish and wildlife to outside the work area during the week of Sept. 23.

"Dewatering our stilling basin is a project which involves great synergy; everyone understands their role and key infrastructure inspection work gets completed," said Jim O'Boyle, park manager , Caesar Creek Lake. "While everyone played a vital role, our Maintenance Chief Leonard Bakker deserves to be recognized for bringing this together so flawlessly. There were a lot of moving

Continued on next page

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parts and pre-planning that went into this project - hats off to the team for making this happen."

The process is part of the Corps' inspection of the dam tailwater areas where the forces of released water from lakes can affect infrastructure. Using pumps, the team removed water from the section below the dam in a process called dewatering to aid in visual inspections.

According to Eric Springston, geotechnical engineer, at Caesar Creek Lake, "The last time this was done was 1977. So as part of maintaining our infrastructure, we dewater them from time to time to see the shape they are at the bottom, and we found some areas that need to be repaired. We set up a water bladder to hold the water back for the river then we shut off flow, and we dewater everything."

The inspection team found some wear and tear in the area which is normal for dams. Repairs to concrete work will be completed by contractors--schedule to be determined.

For the fish removal, members from the Corps engineering team, lake staff and members from the DOW worked side by side to net fish to assure their survival during the inspection's low water levels. Fish Management Supervisor Kipp Brown worked with this dewatering.

"Kipp has been a supporter of educational programs, research projects, and efforts like dewatering for USACE lakes in the Miami River area for many years, and his support and partnership were exemplary once again," O'Boyle said.

During the work, the fish were transferred to a bin by nets, lifted by crane over the water bladder and released into Caesar Creek.

Scan to play video

Demolition of Locks and Dam 52 underway

Katie Newton, public affairs

Demolition of Lock and Dam 52 in Brookport, Illinois, began Aug. 8, 2019, marking yet another historic milestone for navigation on the lower Ohio River.

The original structure of Lock and Dam 52 was constructed in 1928, and the 1,200 ft. temporary lock chamber was completed in 1969. It was in service for nearly 90 years, ensuring safe navigation on the Ohio River, until the fall of 2018 when the Olmsted Locks and Dam became operational eliminating the need for the infrastructure.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awarded the contract for the demolition work to C.J. Mahan Construction Company out of Columbus, Ohio.

The demolition is being completed using blasting methods to fracture portions of the concrete structure to break it up for easier removal with heavy machinery. The crew first began by blasting the fixed weir on the Kentucky side of the river. Simultaneously, portions of the lock, such as the miter gates, are being disassembled and removed from the water.

"The blasting operation has been going very smoothly with great cooperation from the navigation industry," said Bill Gilmour, project manager. "The entire fixed weir, pier 1 and the 1,200 foot chamber lower approach wall have been completely blasted. All downstream miter gates have been removed and disposed of along with numerous temporary wicket boxes."

Demolition of the marine features, which includes removal of all lock and dam components, is expected to last through December 2020.

USACE

Demolition of Lock and Dam 52 in Brookport, Illinois, began Aug. 8, 2019. The demolition is being completed using blasting methods to fracture portions of the concrete structure to break it up for easier removal with heavy machinery.

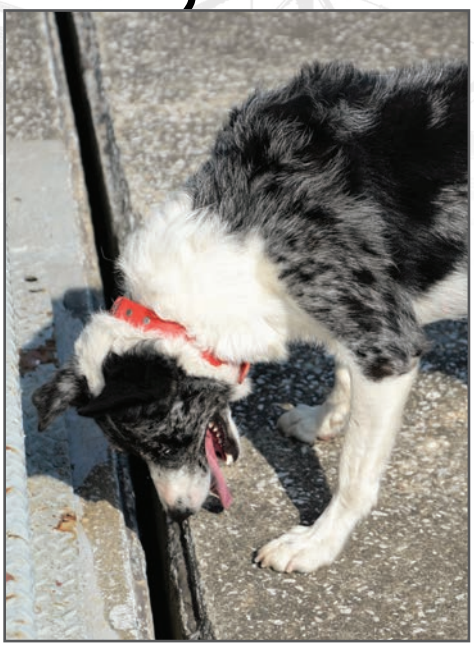
Jack Sweeney

Ohio River Locks and Dam 52 Fixed Weir demolition took place Aug. 21, 2019. With the completion of Olmsted Locks and Dam the concrete demolition of LD 52 begins with the explosion of the fixed weir on the Kentucky side of the river.

Breeze still hard at work at locks, dams

Abby Korfhage

Larry Dunning, Cannelton Locks and Dam lockmaster, pets Breeze as a way to reward her for her hard work and so that she understands she is doing what is expected of her.



Abby Korfhage

Breeze investigates an area she last saw a pigeon nest to see if they have returned.

Abby Korfhage, public affairs

It has been a year since Breeze, a blue merle smooth coated border collie trained to deter birds, arrived at Cannelton Locks and Dam in Cannelton, Indiana, and she continues to be an energetic and hardworking member of the Louisville District team.

"Breeze is doing great," said Larry Dunning, Cannelton Locks and Dam lockmaster. "She is smart and very good at her job."

The project used to have problems with nuisance bird behavior, which can be costly to projects, consuming funding and labor hours. Breeze was brought on in September 2018 to deter vultures, which were eating away the expansion joints on the dam.

"As soon as we would replace the expansion joints, the vultures would tear them right back out," Dunning said.

She is also used to scare away pigeons and geese that often covered the site in bird droppings causing health hazards to the employees and visitors.

Breeze will be 3 years old in January, and the staff at Cannleton enjoys her being around.

"I have to remind the guys that she is a working dog and not a pet," Dunning said.

Dunning is her primary caretaker. Breeze stays at the facility most nights except for the few times a month when Dunning takes her home to rest and bathe her. He also takes her in for routine veterinarian checkups; however, the Louisville District covers the cost of her food and veterinary appointments.

"She works everyday on the dam," Dunning said. "She is let out to run around on the dam for at least 30 minutes, up to three times a day to keep the birds away."

Dogs are natural predators whose presence can be a deterrent to birds. Dogs like Breeze are trained to actively discourage birds by patrolling specific areas of a project. Using a dog can be substantially less costly than conventional deterrence methods like baiting or trapping.

Dunning can tell a big difference in the presence of birds around the facility since Breeze's arrival. He said there is about a 90 percent difference, and the birds have gotten to a point where they see her, and they leave.

"She doesn't bark at them; she uses her eyes," Dunning said. "She remembers where she last saw them and goes to those areas first."

Breeze has also been to Newburgh Locks and Dam in Newburgh, Indiana, and J.T. Myers Locks and Dam in Mt. Vernon, Indiana, to help frighten off the birds.

"Breeze did excellent," said Jerry Edwards, Newburgh Locks and Dam lockmaster. "As soon as she spotted them she was on her game. The geese had been here for about three days in a row, but they haven't been back since."

Breeze is the second dog within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Tulsa and Chicago districts share a dog named Ellie, who is also used in bird prevention.

Abby Korfhage

Breeze, a blue merle smooth coated border collie, runs on top of Cannelton's dam to scare away birds.

District closes RI/FS at former Nike C-47 ahead of schedule

USACE

Two contract workers monitor drilling of IP-7 in the southwest region of the injection area at former Nike C-47.

Shatara Riis, public affairs

The Louisville District completed the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study ahead of schedule for the former Nike C-47 launch and control areas and obtained project closeout at the nearby control area.

"We had a good understanding of the geological conditions leading to selection of the appropriate bioremediation technology for an effective treatment at the launch area," said Corey Knox, Louisville District chemist.

In 1956, the Department of Defense acquired Nike C-47 missile base in Hobart, Indiana. The control and launch areas consisted of 20.46 acres and 14.16 acres, respectively.

It was used as a missile battery base until its deactivation in 1972. Under the Formerly Used Defense Sites program, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District manages the site cleanup for DoD.

The former Nike C-47 was a unique situation, where the team was able to perform a pilot study at the launch area early on within the RI phase of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act process.

According to Clayton Hayes, district project manager, the project wasn't overly complex. There was known trichloroethene contamination at the launch area, which was located relatively shallow in the groundwater and confined within a small defined area.

"To add, there was a single contract in place covering both the launch and control projects, which helped the project move forward more efficiently and contributed to saving time and money – finishing earlier than planned," Hayes said. "Leading up to the Decision Document, we investigated areas of concern, analyzed it, tested and determined what needed to be done. Also, we re-evaluated human health risks and any mitigation efforts that may be needed following the CERCLA process."

According to Knox, given that this bioremediation technology proved to be effective in other locations with similar conditions, it seemed to be a good candidate for the pilot study at the launch area.

Within a few months following injection into the groundwater wells, the initial results showed that the microbes had effectively reduced TCE concentrations in the groundwater; however, vinyl chloride (breakdown of TCE) did become present. To mitigate this effect, a second microbial treatment had to be employed specifically designed to target vinyl chloride, which later also proved to be effective, Knox said.

As a result of the positive results achieved from the pilot study, "We achieved a signed DD, Aug. 27, 2019, allowing the completion of the RI phase of work following the CERCLA process," Hayes said. "Therefore, we are now moving into the next CERCLA phase (Remedial Action – Operations) to monitor the groundwater at the launch area for at least another six quarters."

Quarterly groundwater sampling is slated to continue at the launch area as required by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management to demonstrate that the groundwater continues to remain free of contamination, according to Knox.

The former Nike C-47 control area obtained project closeout based on the no further action DD. This resulted from conducting a re-evaluation of the risk assessment by comparison of soil data to updated U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regional screening levels, thus, showing no significant risk to human health and the environment.

"We are fairly confident that the results will be favorable, and the launch area project can potentially be closed," Hayes said.

According to Hayes and Knox, having technically proficient team members, timely reviews, the right resources, implementing a pilot study early on in the CERCLA process, and having an effective treatment all played a significant role in the timely closure of the RI/FS phase at the launch and control area projects.

The team is now focused on taking the right steps and actions aimed toward the close out of the launch area project.

USACE

A contract worker observes the injection system inserting material into the subsurface of IP-3 in the northeast corner of the injection area at former Nike C-47.

District applauds 2019 LDP II grads

Katie Newton, public affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District's Leadership Development Program Level II participants graduated Aug. 15, 2019, in a ceremony held at the Romano Mazzoli Federal Building in Louisville, Kentucky. This 11-month professional development program is designed to help mold the future leaders of the Louisville District and the Corps of Engineers.

Wes Sydnor, director of intergovernmental relations with Louisville Metropolitan Sewer District, served as the keynote speaker at the ceremony offering his personal insights on leadership.

"We all have blind spots and sometimes you don't want to hear the ugly truths about your behaviors," said Sydnor to the 20 graduates who spent the last year focusing on introspection. The program is designed to develop and improve leadership skills of participants through formal training, mentoring, experiential learning and life-long self-development.

"You are not a failure if you can learn from mistakes, grow from it, move on and do something better," said Sydnor speaking of the many inevitable missteps and challenges one will face throughout their career. Sydnor said it is at those crossroads where one has to make the choice to go all in and live up to one's potential or languish.

"You have a bright future in this community and in this organization, so I applaud you for that," Sydnor said. "Continue to find your passion, be mindful of the time you have and manage it wisely."

Dr. Michael Evans, Evans and Associates Consulting Corporation, emphasized the importance of self-awareness. Evans has served as the instructor for the past 13 years helping more than 200 Louisville District employees become a better version of themselves.

"Leadership is in all of you," Evans reminded the group. "It's up to you what you do with that leadership. It's a choice on whether or not we're self-aware, whether we self-manage ourselves appropriately, whether we're socially aware of what's going on with other individuals around us and whether we use the concepts of emotional intelligence to embrace the relationships around us."

Louisville District Commander Col. Antoinette Gant also addressed participants during the ceremony inspiring them with excerpts from "Oh the Places You'll Go" by Dr. Seuss.

Jack Sweeney

Leadership Development Program Level II graduates include Kate Brandner, Candi Burchel, Brad Faulkenberg, Andrew Fleming, Derek Gray, Jennifer Henry, Brian Herron, Sean Hoben, April Judd, Shawn Kenney, Daniel Kornblum, Quyet La, Bridget Mason, Jonny Meyer, Nate Moulder, Carl Mudd, Lena Perry, Tim Rinehart, Bryan Smith and Morgan Strong.

"LDP is all about understanding yourself better and taking what you have learned and applying it," Gant said. "It's so easy to go back to what you were comfortable with, but now that you have received some of these tools for your toolkit, the challenge is to keep going and doing it, even if it's outside of what you are comfortable with. Keep doing the things you have learned throughout this program to develop as a person. Because when we're better people we ensure our organization becomes better; when our organization is better, we help to make the world better."

Gant also encouraged the graduates to recruit colleagues who might benefit from the Leadership Development Program.

"You are all charged with being ambassadors. Find one person that you can talk to and mentor and encourage them to take that great leap and learn about themselves in LDP 1, 2 or 3," Gant said.

2019 LDP II graduate Candi Burchel, lead procurement analyst in the Regional Business Oversight Branch, discussed the benefits she received from the LDP program.

"LDP II has allowed me to step back and take a look into myself as a leader within the organization, as well as, in my personal life," Burchel said. "The program challenged me to get out of my comfort zone and make real progress toward becoming a leader within USACE."

Similarly Shawn Kenney, operations manager for the locks and dams project office, joined the class to elevate his performance as a leader.

"I was very comfortable working in the trenches alongside the incredible folks in locks and dams, but they deserve a leader of the highest caliber who can support them by establishing a vision, aligning resources and doing those intangible things that make USACE a great place to work," Kenney said. "LDP certainly gave me the cross-functional knowledge to know where my element fits into the bigger picture for the district. I learned many valuable communication techniques to improve interaction and assure success on a daily basis, and seized the opportunity to network with senior leaders and my 19 classmates from around the district. LDP 2 definitely helped me elevate my game, and inspired me to keep growing and challenging myself."

Jack Sweeney

Louisville District Commander Col. Antoinette Gant speaks at the LDP II graduation Aug. 15.

Corps geologist plays vital role in Mosul Dam completion

Courtesy of David Robison

David Robison, Louisville District geologist, poses on top of Mosul Dam, Iraq's largest dam. Robison served on the Mosul Dam Task Force for nine months.

Abby Korfhage, public affairs

David Robison, Louisville District geologist, recently returned home from Mosul, Iraq, after serving on the Mosul Dam Task Force for the past nine months, where he was able to see the completion of the Corps' involvement with the project.

Robison, who has been with USACE for 12 years, is a geologist and facilitator in the Geotechnical and Risk Cadre Section of Engineering Division, but held many roles during his deployment.

"My titles have varied during my time at MDTF in the engineering and construction office, but have included geologist, instrumentation lead and acting drill-and-grout lead," Robison said.

Mosul Dam is Iraq's largest dam and the fourth largest dam in the Middle East. The main embankment is 371 feet tall and 2.1 miles long and provides water supply, irrigation, flood control and hydropower for the people of Iraq. According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Transatlantic Division, the dam is unique in the fact that it was built on a water-soluble foundation. This means it needs constant maintenance grouting so the dam doesn't collapse as the foundation erodes.

As a geologist with the MDTF, Robison analyzed rock core samples and data collected from boreholes to determine the effectiveness of the grout curtain. A grout curtain is a mixture of cement, clay and water used to fill in the foundation's voids to make it more stable, lengthen flowpaths and minimize embankment erosion.

Robison also guided the instrumentation and/or exploration program to ensure proper monitoring of potential geologic hazards and increased understanding of the foundation conditions under, and near, Mosul Dam.

"It was rewarding to have played a part in a construction project that had such immediate benefits," Robison said.

Robison first heard about Mosul Dam early in his career. However, concerns about being deployed and away from his family caused him not to pursue the opportunity at that time. That changed a few years later when Robison was encouraged and reminded about how it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

"I guess I like a challenge, and there seemed no greater challenge than working on what was then considered the 'highest risk' dam in the world," Robison said.

During his time in Iraq, Robison worked and trained Iraqi engineers and geologists as part of the Integration Program, so the Iraqis were able to continue the dam safety work once USACE left the site. The training sessions involved several site visits, discussions in the office to solve problems, formal classroom instruction and hands-on exercises with data and software from the field.

"It was great to see their increased understanding and learning why we accomplish the work we do," Robison said. "For example, the Iraqis found it odd that we search for potential dam safety issues and geologic hazards, instead of only dealing with the issues that are evident. Those with whom we have worked closely now understand the importance of understanding all the potential dam safety risks and how to monitor for them."

Although there were many successes while working on the MDTF, there were also many challenges.

"Language barriers and communication issues are nearly daily issues with over seven languages being spoken onsite," Robison said. "Equipment and materials can also be difficult to obtain, as it often has to travel in from Europe across several borders with various custom laws."

Robison enjoyed his time working at

Continued on next page

Courtesy of David Robison

Louisville District geologist David Robison, and other members of the Mosul Dam Task Force, survey the grout drop as part of a routine dam safety inspection May 19, 2019.

Continued from previous page

Mosul Dam and solving the problems that came with working at a massive construction site where every day is different.

"The other enjoyable thing is the people," Robison said. "Onsite we had people from various countries, cultures and backgrounds, but everyone is friendly, eager to help and genuinely wants to do a great job to ensure the integrity of Mosul Dam."

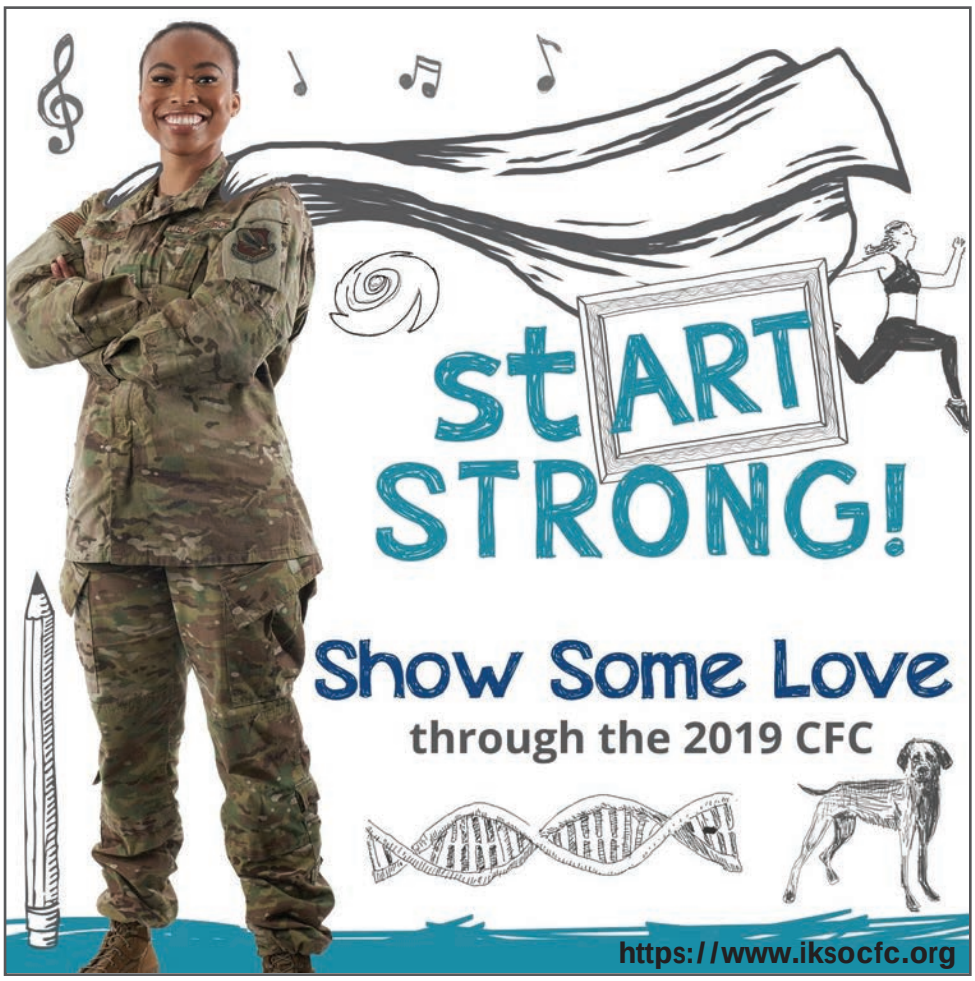
The three year project was done in collaboration between USACE, the government of Iraq and Italian contractor Trevi S.p.A and was completed in June 2019.

"What I like most about working for the Corps of Engineers is the variety of projects I have been able to be a part of," Robison said. "I have analyzed geologic hazards from Alaska to Iraq. I have learned from great geologists and engineers from all over the world. Whether the problems are big or small, I like watching my teams work together to come up with solutions."

Although he is home, and the maintaining of Mosul Dam has been handed back over to the government of Iraq, Robison will always be able to say he played a part in that project's success.

Courtesy off USACE, Transatlantic Division

Workers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Iraqi Ministry of Water Resources and Italian Company Trevi S.p.A. stand ready to unveil a new plaque that will hang at Mosul Dam, commemorating the three-year partnership between the three countries of Iraq, the U.S. and Italy. The plaque was unveiled during a ceremony on June 15, 2019, at the Mosul Dam in Iraq. The Mosul Dam Project started in 2016 as a joint project among the Iraq Ministry of Water Resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Trevi in an effort to stabilize and repair the infrastructure of Mosul Dam. The dam, which is the largest in Iraq, and the fourth largest in the Middle East, supplies water, hydropower, irrigation and flood control to the region.



Louisville District former Planning Division Assistant Chief is a recipient of the WLKY 2019 Bell Awards

The prestigious Bell Awards program recognizes individuals who have demonstrated the true "spirit of Louisville" through selfless volunteer efforts and seeks to inspire all residents to engage in community service.

Fred Bennett (retired) former Assistant Chief of Planning, Louisville District is one of the 2019 Bell Award winners. Bennett serves as a volunteer at the Together With Important Goals Shared, also known as TWIGS, gift shop located in Norton Women's and Children's Hospital in Louisville, Kentucky. He also serves as treasurer for the TWIGS Executive Board and is active with all their fundraising projects, including the Festival of Trees and Lights. In 2018, TWIGS raised more than $180,000 for the foundation.

Employee shares life story as testament to contributions of Hispanic Americans

Shatara Riis

Puebla, Mexico-native, Isaíd Cabrera, Louisville District Engineering Division architect, shares his journey of coming to America, serving in the U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard, and working for the Corps of Engineers as a part of Hispanic Heritage Month.

Shatara Riis, public affairs

The Dominican Republic dance, Bachata, and some Cuban cuisine all rounded out the Louisville District's Hispanic Heritage Month observance, which is traditionally celebrated from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15.

Some 50 district personnel took part in a lunchtime observance to learn more about and honor the contributions of Hispanic Americans.

"Our observances are not necessarily for people who are of this ethnicity, but it's for people who are not, so that we can understand how much we have alike as well as some our differences," said Louisville District Commander Col. Antoinette Gant.

As a part of the Hispanic Heritage Month observance, Isaíd Cabrera, Engineering Division architect, shared his story of coming to America for a better life.

A native of Puebla, Mexico, a city known for its pottery, Isaíd and his family moved to New Jersey from Mexico in 1999. His oldest brother, Israel, was already here in law school. His family was not rich, but his mom always sent them to private schools, and they had their own house while living in Mexico.

"We moved to the states; we had nothing but plastic bags with some clothing. I didn't know the language. I didn't fit in," Cabrera said. "I stayed home, didn't hang out, and I fell into a bad depression. For several years, I would just go to work, come back home, stay in bed and watch television."

According to Isaíd, his mother played a critical role in bringing him out of his bleak state.

"My mother used to walk in my room and say, 'son sadness is in your mind. If you were busy working, going to school and getting things done for your life, you wouldn't have time to be sad,'" Isaíd said of his mother's guidance. "I just didn't have the energy to do it."

Isaíd elaborated more on not being a native-speaker of America.

"At one job, many times I didn't understand. I would get frustrated," he said. "I would get the keys, walk into one of the empty rooms, and just go on my knees and cry, 'God why is it that I cannot understand. Why am I so stupid? Why am I so dumb?"

Isaíd finally took this frustration and used it as an energy to overcome his issues, troubles and woes he had.

"One of the best things that happened to me was serving in the U.S. Army – it really showed me courage and strength as a person," Cabrera said. "The war was happening, and I thought to myself, 'I need to help out; I need to do something.' So, I joined the Army Reserve. We got mobilized a few times to help out with the war; then I joined the National Guard."

Isaíd earned his bachelor's degree and master's degree with the assistance of the Post 9/11 GI Bill.

"Now when you see me, I have a smile, and I am happy and positive," Cabrera said. "This is what I took from my mom – the way she approaches life. Whatever you do in life, do your best at it."

Gant thanked Isaíd for sharing his story and told him that his mother was influential in letting him know there was a better life for him.

"You are a true example of what serving our nation is all about," Gant said. "We don't have to (accept and stay) where we are right now because that is not what we can become. You came to America, didn't speak English, and now have a master's degree in architecture."

Isaíd worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Washington, D.C., and began working for the Louisville District in 2016.

"We need more people like you in our world to help us understand how much we are alike," Gant said. "Your story has touched me and is a testament that we can do anything we put our minds to in difficult times – the best is yet to come."

Shatara Riis

Louisville District Commander Col. Antoinette Gant presents Isaíd Cabrera, Louisville District Engineering Division architect, with a Certificate of Appreciation following his presentation for the Hispanic Heritage Month observance.