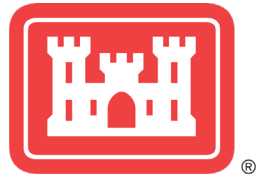


Los Angeles District NewsCastle



Vol. 45, No. 1

A monthly publication of the Los Angeles District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

January 2022



Photo by John Reese

Col. Antoinette Gant, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division, and Col. Julie Balten, commander of the Corps' Los Angeles District, examine Reach 5 from a viewing platform over the Los Angeles River, Aug. 26, 2021. The Corps maintains about 11 miles of the Los Angeles River for the safety of millions of citizens down river.

LA District to receive funding under Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

By Dena O'Dell
Los Angeles District Public Affairs

LOS ANGELES – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District is pleased to announce several studies and projects throughout Southern California and Arizona that will receive funding under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or IIJA.

Some of the major projects that will be funded throughout the District, include navigation improvements at the Port of Long Beach in Los Angeles; the Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Project; shoreline protection along the San Diego County coastline; and a flood-risk management project for the Little Colorado River in Winslow, Ariz., among others.

This comes on the heels of a Jan. 19 announcement by the U.S. Army that includ-

ed a list of Civil Works studies, projects and programs the Corps of Engineers will implement nationwide in Fiscal Year 2022 with \$22.81 billion in supplemental funding provided in two recently enacted laws — the IIJA and the 2022 Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act.

"We are so pleased with this announcement," said Col. Julie Balten, commander of the Los Angeles District. "This supplemental funding under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will continue to strengthen our economy and our partnerships here in the Pacific Southwest, assist with building and maintaining much-needed infrastructure in our communities, protect our vital shorelines from coastal erosion and assist our ports and harbors by keeping our federal waterways safe and navigable."

CONSTRUCTION WORK PLAN

In the Los Angeles District, more than \$65 million is slated toward the completion of the Little Colorado River project in Winslow; \$28 million will go toward the Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Project, which will allow initiation of the Public Private Partnership (P3) project agreement with the City of Los Angeles and officially begin construction efforts; more than \$30 million will go toward shoreline protection along the coastline in Encinitas and Solana, Calif.; another nearly \$8 million is slated for the preconstruction, engineering and design phase for navigation improvements at the Port of Long Beach; and more than \$4.1 million is being allocated to complete Brine Pipeline access improvements in South Peris, California.

Continued on Page 6

Flood after fire: your increased risk



Did you know wildfires dramatically alter the terrain and increase the risk of floods? Excessive amounts of rainfall can happen throughout the year. And properties directly affected by fires and those located below or downstream of burn areas are most at risk for flooding.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency reminds us that in 2021, nearly 6 million acres burned across the country. Flood risk in burn-scar areas remains significantly higher until vegetation is restored – up to five years or more after a wildfire. Protect the life you've built at floodsmart.gov/wildfires.

Why You Should Stay Up to Date with Your COVID-19 Vaccines



COVID-19 vaccines **slow the spread** of COVID-19.



Getting vaccinated and boosted **greatly reduces** your risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death.



COVID-19 vaccines, including boosters, are **effective** against known variants, including Omicron.



All COVID-19 vaccines currently approved or authorized in the U.S. are **proven to be safe**.



FIND A VACCINE NEAR YOU: [WWW.VACCINES.GOV](https://www.vaccines.gov)

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Ensuring a safe, healthy workforce



Col. Julie A. Balten, District Commander

Hello, SPL Team!

As many of you may be aware, the latest variation of COVID-19 – the Omicron variant – is spreading rapidly throughout the U.S.

The Center for Disease Control predicts that this could be a very tough month. Compared to last year at this time, COVID-19 infection rates have nearly doubled across the nation.

As of the date of this column, all of SPL is in a high transmission rate and at HPCON DELTA, which means severe – widespread community transmission.

Of note, all COVID infections are not contracted in the workplace but are occurring by close contacts from family, friends or from the community. Read through CDC's recommendation in preventing getting sick and protecting your family <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.htm>.

The safety and wellbeing of the workforce

is ALWAYS our priority, and we ALL have an obligation to keep each other safe and lesson the spread of this highly transmissible virus.

TELEWORK | AT THE WORKPLACE

Supervisors and managers should strongly encourage their workforce to maximize telework, where the mission permits. The current policy in place is maximum telework through March 1, 2022.

If you need to come into the office or conduct in-person operations with other SPL employees and contractors, you are required to wear a mask and practice social distancing at all times, regardless of vaccination status. If you don't have COVID supplies – masks, sanitizer, wipes, etc. – please reach out to your supervisors.

If you feel sick – even if you think it's just a cold or the flu – notify your supervisor and stay home.

BOOSTER

In addition to DoD COVID-19 vaccine requirements, I strongly encourage everyone to get a booster vaccine.

Most people who are vaccinated and who have received their booster vaccines are less likely to suffer severe illness, hospitalization or worse from any of the COVID-19 variants, according to the CDC.

ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE

Employees receiving COVID-19 vaccinations can take up to four hours of administrative leave, per vaccination event, and no more than two workdays for adverse reactions of the employee only.

Employees can take up to four hours of administrative leave for COVID-19 boosters for themselves and family members, per

booster event, and no more than two workdays for adverse reactions of the employee only, retroactive to Sept. 22, 2021.

For weather and safety leave, please consult Safety and CPAC personnel.

SPL HEALTH PROTECTION MEASURES

And, lastly, while in HPCON Delta, in addition to social distancing and wearing mask, health protection measures at all SPL facilities and jobsites include:

- Less than 15 percent normal occupancy in the workplace. Gatherings at all SPL facilities and jobsites must be minimized to the minimal number of personnel required (not to exceed 10, at any time).

- Limited visitor access

- Canceling non-mission essential activities

- Facility managers/supervisors – Ensure the appropriate Delta and High Transmission flyers are posted for your facility.

Leaders are committed to maintaining an open line of communication with their workforce. Please reach out to your supervisors, managers and other senior leaders for any and all questions and concerns, as well as the Safety Office and Human Resources personnel.

Additional DoD guidance and military health information also is available at <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/Spotlight/Coronavirus/Latest-DOD-Guidance/> or on the Military Health System's website at <https://health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Combat-Support/Public-Health/Coronavirus>.

And remember, the most important thing is for our workforce to stay safe, healthy and resilient!

Sincerely,

Col. Julie A. Balten

Click the links below to find the Los Angeles District on social media!

Facebook



Instagram



Twitter



YouTube



Flickr



Leading the way

Commanders address challenges, rewards at women’s leadership circle



In this screenshot, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division Commander Col. Antionette Gant participates in the Jan. 19 virtual Port of Long Beach Women’s Leadership Circle. The senior leader shared how she balances her Army career with family life.

Story and photo by John Reese
Los Angeles District Public Affairs

It is still a time of “firsts” for women breaking through glass ceilings.

During a recent Port of Long Beach Women’s Leadership Circle, two female Army engineer commanders discussed how they were able to achieve those goals, while also balancing their military careers and family life.

Col. Antoinette Gant, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division, and Col. Julie Balten, commander of the Corps’ Los Angeles District, were the keynote speakers at the virtual event.

The mission of the POLB Women’s Leadership Circle is to empower leaders by promoting camaraderie and leadership. This year’s theme was “Leadership: Renew and Replenish.”

During introductions, Michal Loving, president of the POLB Women’s Leadership Circle, listed Gant’s and Balten’s many academic and military accomplishments, from high school to present, and their current responsibilities managing projects throughout vast regions of the nation’s west.

The topic of discussion was: “How do you practice self-care and still strive to achieve life milestones, despite already reaching significant professional and personal goals during such an unprecedented last 18 months?”

Both leaders were then asked to share their experiences as high-ranking Army officers serving in an engineering command. Gant and Balten spoke about their lives and answered the panel’s questions by interviewing each other.

It was an earnest discussion about the challenges they faced as women and career Army officers. Both said they had to find a balance to become the best engineer-Soldiers they could be in a male-dominated culture and still have a family life.

In the process, they trailblazed a path for future women leaders to follow. Gant is the first woman of color to lead the Corps’ South Pacific Division.

“We really want to share with you some of our experiences,” Gant said.

“Hopefully hearing some things that have happened throughout our careers; things that we’ve done that will help you maneuver through the space, whether you are a new employee just starting out as a junior employee, a mid-level or someone who is senior.”

“It’s a great thing you are doing, having a women’s forum, where it’s not just about women; it’s also about males, who are part of your organization, to be able to be a part of it,” Balten added. “That is important because this is not just a women’s issue. This is something we want to make sure, all around, that everyone understands some of the challenges, especially with being a woman in some of the environments we’re in, and some of the challenges we face, so that we all can be able to help each other.”

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES, GROWING AS LEADERS

As female Soldiers, both women said they carefully considered decisions, such as whether to marry and have children, and how that would impact their careers (both are married to nonmilitary spouses). They described the similarities of their private lives and careers as they rose higher in leadership positions, while also raising their children.

Early on in her career, Balten said she was warned to avoid female leaders because “women are mean to each other.” After graduating from the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York, and earning her commission as a young lieutenant in 1997, Balten, who is now the 63rd commander of the LA District, found the truth to be the “exact opposite” after she served under two women leaders, one of them becoming her mentor.

“I firmly believe that we all have something to offer,” she said. “We should all hear our stories because we all can empower each other and can be there for each other. I just think this is a fantastic forum for that – to really believe in each other, share and build each other up and really learn from each other.”

Balten said it was her passion to serve her country and so she strove to excel as an Army officer and engineer.

“The experience outweighed the opportunities,” Balten said. “I would do it again in a heartbeat, even though there were some challenging days.”

Gant, too, had other opportunities, but as with Balten, the call to duty as an engineer officer was stronger. She strategized how an Army career would shape every aspect of her life after she decided to continue her military career, instead of leaving after four years.

“The plan was always to do four years and get out,” she said, knowing she had a civil engineer degree and could go anywhere. “It’s probably the same way between many of you all – you start moving up, and there’s another challenge,” Gant said. “It’s like, ‘I’ve done this already as a lieutenant; what’s going to happen when I become a captain?’ ‘They’re moving me here.’ ‘What’s going to be the next challenge I have to actually face? Am I ready for that?’”

Army life is difficult for family members, she said. Her family became accustomed to moving every two to three years. After her first child, Gant said she wondered if she should stay in the Army with its fast-paced, demanding grind. Gant said her husband supported her choice to remain in the Army and had her back. He assured her she had a helpmate and he would support her Army career together with her as a team. He made sacrifices that affected his career as a math teacher, Gant said, in support of her military career.

It was the challenge of “being all she could be” that kept her in the Army for 27 years, she said.

“There’s always been something different,” Gant said. “Every job has always been different. It’s allowed me to see places I never would’ve seen.”

During the event, Gant also shared one of her favorite quotes – one of many she tells herself daily to keep her motivated: “You may succeed if no one else believes in you, but you will never succeed if you don’t believe in yourself.”

ABOUT THE POLB WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

The POLB WLC, established in 2013 by and for women at the port (men also participate), was created for all divisions of the Port of Long Beach community to empower leaders by promoting camaraderie and leadership.

The Port of Long Beach WLC seeks powerful role models when considering keynote speakers, including sharing the experience(s) of women entering fields commonly male-dominated, to empower Port of Long Beach leaders by promoting camaraderie and leadership through networking and mentorship; education and training; self-awareness; social awareness; self-management; and relationship management.

“Teammates of every gender and profession are essential, for we can’t advance the cause of women in the workplace without all hands-on deck,” said Loving in a mission statement. “The mission of WLC is to create a community of empowered leaders, and we need diversity of thought and experience. Together, we are greater than the sum of our parts.”

Fort Huachuca wastewater treatment plant project



Courtesy photo

David Van Dorpe, right, Los Angeles District’s deputy district engineer, joins U.S. Army Fort Huachuca community leaders Dec. 16 to break ground on a \$7.2 million project to upgrade the garrison’s wastewater treatment plant. Pictured from left to right: Arthur Rivas, president, KWR Construction Inc.; Jeff Jennings, deputy to the commanding general, U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence; Chris Higgins, physical scientist, Environmental & Natural Resources Division, U.S. Army Garrison Directorate of Public Works; Command Sgt. Maj. Clark Kuhling, USAG Fort Huachuca; Col. Jarrod Moreland, commander, USAG Fort Huachuca; and Van Dorpe.



Brig. Gen. Paul Owen, then-commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division, and the Corps' Los Angeles District team, led by Col. Julie Balten, commander of the Corps' LA District, take in a panoramic view of the Los Angeles and the LA River May 27 from the city's Elysium Park.

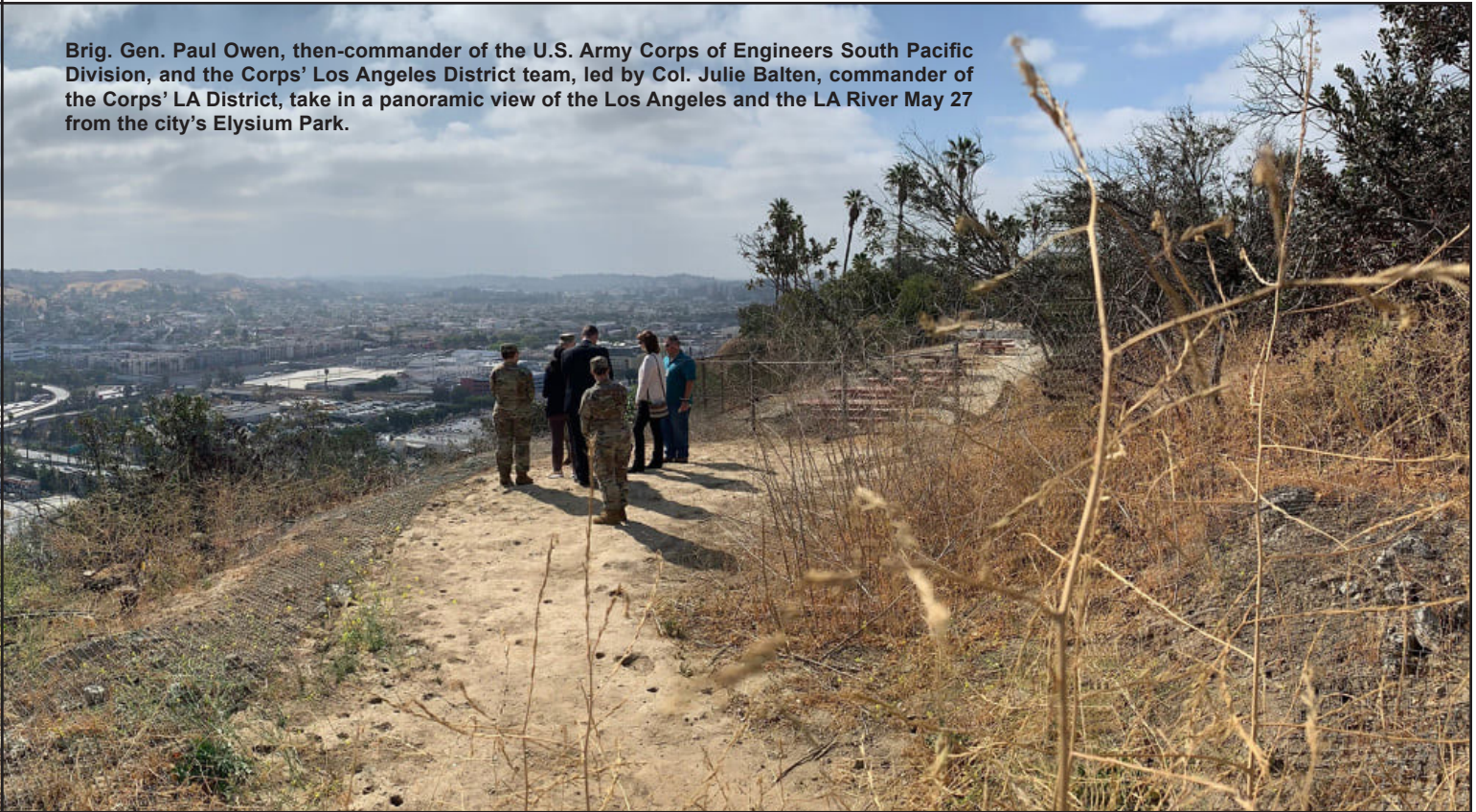


Photo by John Reese

Continued from Page 1

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE WORK PLAN

Under the Operations and Maintenance FY22 work plan, more than \$8.8 million is designated for the Los Angeles County Drainage Area for repairs to Sepulveda, Hansen and Whittier Narrows dams, a master plan update for the Santa Fe Dam, and channel assessment and inspections along the Los Angeles River; more than \$8.2 million will support dredging operations and surveys at Newport Bay Harbor; about \$1.8 million is slated to address repairs at Mojave River Dam; more than \$1.1 million will go toward the Santa Ana River Basin project to address the electrical modernization Phase 2 at Fullerton Dam; and more than \$400K is slated for the repair of the breakwater and surveys at Dana Point Harbor, among others.

In Arizona, more than \$330K in funding is allocated for the design of a new bulkhead gate installation system and other upgrades at Alamo Lake Dam; and more than \$600K will go toward testing relief wells and modernization efforts at Painted Rock Dam.

SECTION 595 PROGRAM - ARIZONA

In 2021, legislation was passed to expand the existing Section 595 Environ-

mental Infrastructure Program to include the State of Arizona, under the 2020 Water Resources Development Act. The program provides critical assistance to communities and tribal nations across Arizona to address their aging water and wastewater systems.

More than \$18 million in funds included in the IIJA under the Section 595 Environmental Infrastructure Program for Arizona include 10 projects, like \$3.5 million for the construction of a waterline in Maricopa County; \$3 million to connect the Camp

Verde School District and an area assisted living facility to the Yavapai-Apache Wastewater Treatment Plant; more than \$2.2 million to install reclaimed water pipeline and rehabilitate an existing infiltration gallery at the Queen Creek Restoration Project in Superior, Ariz.; and more than \$2.2 million for wastewater treatment plant improvements in Buckeye, Ariz., among others.

INVESTIGATIONS WORK PLAN

Under the 2022 Investigations Work



A maintenance dredge operates May 24, 2021, in Newport Bay Harbor.

Photo by Stephen Baack

Plan, the San Diego County Shoreline (Oceanside) Mitigation project will receive more than \$1.8 million to complete the feasibility phase of the study; and the Imperial Streams Salton Sea project will receive \$1.5 million to initiate and complete the feasibility study phase.

PL 84-99 PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES

Additionally, about \$5.4 million in funding is slated for Public Law 84-99 Emergency Management preparedness activities to complete initial eligibility inspections throughout the Los Angeles District, which includes projects throughout 226,000 square miles of Southern California, Arizona, and portions of Nevada and Utah.

Other construction projects receiving funding in the FY22 Work Plan, include:

- South Perris, Calif., to complete well siting for wells 211-214 – \$360K
- Cambria Seawater Desalination project for Cambria Design and Environmental documents – \$200K
- City of Inglewood, Calif., for work on Finding of No Significant Impact report, environmental documents and initiating a Project Partnership Agreement – \$250K

Under the FY22 Continuing Authorities Program Work Plan:

- Carpinteria shoreline – Continuing Feasibility Study – \$500K

Additionally, more than \$160K under the Operations and Maintenance FY22 Work Plan will fund project condition surveys of navigation structures at the following Southern California ports and harbors: Morro Bay, Port San Luis, San Diego Harbor, Ventura Harbor, Channel Islands Harbor, San Diego River and Mission Bay,

Port Hueneme, Oceanside Harbor, Redondo Beach (King Harbor), Long Angeles-Long Beach harbors and Marina Del Rey.

More details about the amounts provided to various programs, projects and activities by state for each of the five appropriations accounts for FY22 are found at www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Budget.



Photo by Stephen Baack

Col. Julie Balten, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, talks with onsite Corps of Engineers' personnel and contractors to learn more about the progress of the Newport Bay Harbor maintenance dredging and east jetty repairs during a May 24, 2021, visit. While there, she met with Newport Beach Mayor Brad Avery and District 1 Councilwoman Diane Dixon.

Corps dams help Los Angeles, Orange counties capture \$25M in December stormwater runoff



LA District Public Affairs

Pictured is Whittier Narrows Dam, a flood-risk management and water-conservation project that serves as a central element of the Los Angeles County Drainage Area flood control system. With the help this dam and three others in the Los Angeles District’s inventory, stakeholders in Southern California captured approximately 30,000-acre feet of stormwater runoff valued at \$25 million for local groundwater replenishment during heavy rainfall in December 2021.

By Stephen Baack
Los Angeles District Public Affairs

LOS ANGELES — With the help of the Los Angeles District, stakeholders in Southern California captured approximately 30,000-acre feet of stormwater runoff valued at \$25 million for local groundwater replenishment during December’s heavy rainfall.

Prado and Whittier Narrows dams actively captured the runoff, with Hansen and Santa Fe dams playing a passive role in retaining widespread storm flows for groundwater replenishment instead of running into the Pacific Ocean.

Impounding and slowly releasing the water is not an automatic process, however. It’s a team effort that requires planning, expertise and close coordination between agencies, all while factoring in flood risk,

changing weather forecasts and prescribed U.S. Army Corps of Engineers water-control plan requirements.

Each dam has its own operating criteria and ability to assist downstream water agencies to divert the dam’s outflow into their spreading grounds for percolation into the ground as a means of recharging the groundwater basins.

“Not every dam has the ability to recharge downstream, but those four do,” said Rene Vermeeren, chief of the Hydrology & Hydraulics Branch, in the district’s Engineering Division.

Prado and Whittier Narrows dams are more operationally intensive than Hansen and Santa Fe dams, Vermeeren added, and it was those first two that helped capture the lion’s share of runoff during the storms of Dec. 14, 24, 27 and 30.

WHITTIER NARROWS DAM

Located in a gap in the hills forming the southern boundary of the San Gabriel Valley, Whittier Narrows Dam is a flood-risk management and water-conservation project that serves as a central element of the Los Angeles County Drainage Area flood control system. The San Gabriel and Rio Hondo rivers flow into the east and west sides, respectively, of the reservoir that impounds behind Whittier Narrows Dam.

“Whittier Narrows is complex because there’s two sides,” Vermeeren said. “There’s the San Gabriel side – which is actually the spillway for the dam – but the main component is the Rio Hondo side. That’s where a lot of our effort is focused and where coordination goes on with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works.”

The primary purpose of the dam is

Continued from Page 8

flood-risk management, but both sides of the system have capacity for water conservation downstream, Vermeeren said. The LA District coordinates closely with the LA County Department of Public Works to direct the dam’s water releases into the county’s spreading grounds.

The San Gabriel River below the dam is a soft-bottom channel with hardened sides, where the county has built a series of rubber dams to impound the water for percolation. The Rio Hondo downstream is a concrete channel. About a mile downstream from Whittier Narrows, the county has gates that divert the water into their spreading grounds.

The district closely coordinates releases with the county to match their diversion capacity up to the point where the reservoir conditions require the Corps to begin making flood-control releases according to their approved water-control operating plan.

Reservoir Operations Center activation
“The Reservoir Operations Center is not activated normally because most of our dams are dry for the better part of the year, but when there’s significant rain forecasted,

then we activate,” Vermeeren said. “We also work with our operations folks to man the dams for flood operations. All releases from district projects are directed by our Reservoir Regulation Section within the Hydrology and Hydraulics Branch.”

The ROC runs three eight-hour shifts for around-the-clock coverage and remains activated while there are ongoing water management activities under their direction. ROC staff has access to customized weather and river forecasts, real-time rainfall, streamflow and reservoir field gages, keeps track of all notifications made to impacted entities, and collects field reports from channel observers, among other duties.

According to Jon Sweeten, a senior engineer in the Reservoir Regulation Section, it’s not uncommon for personnel in the section to work holidays when the ROC is activated.

“Having worked in the section for about 15 years, it seems to always rain on a holiday,” said Sweeten, who takes on the role of shift leader in the ROC. “The last big event we had was 2010 on Christmas. It’s just the nature of the beast. When you sign up in Reservoir Regulation, you accept that that’s part of the deal.”

PRADO DAM

Located in Riverside County on the Santa Ana River, Prado Dam is a flood-risk-reduction project protecting Orange County and the Santa Ana Coastal Plain. It also has a water conservation function in conjunction with the downstream Orange County Water District.

Though they are different projects, operations at Prado Dam during storms are similar to those at Whittier Narrows Dam.

“They also use a rubber dam to do the same kind of thing,” Vermeeren said. “They’ll inflate the rubber dam, hold water, and it also diverts water through an outlet in the levee that goes into their spreading grounds. The rate of recharge for this facility maxes out at about 600 CFS. We try to accommodate that with any kind of runoff event at Prado. If the runoff event is large, like what occurred on December 23rd, we have to go into flood-control mode and make releases larger than the water district can divert.

“They want to capture as much water as they can, but they understand that our primary mission is flood control,” Vermeeren said. “So, they can’t capture 100 percent of all flood runoff, but they can capture some. It’s continuous coordination.”

Engineering With Nature makes stop in LA

Los Angeles District Public Affairs

“EWN On the Road,” a video series by Todd Bridges, senior research scientist at the Corps’ Engineer Research and Development Center, interviewed Los Angeles District subjects-matter experts for the traveling show Jan. 21.

Bridges is the national lead for Engineering With Nature, the EWN on the road that’s visiting Corps locations across America. He meets people to talk about projects around the country and the world.

Some of the places are wild and natural, while others are entirely the product of human design. Most of the visits are to places in the landscape where nature, people and infrastructure come together, sometimes in an easy harmony, but oftentimes showing the tensions and strains of an uneasy, forced or changing order.

“The creative process involves seeing, perceiving and conceiving,” Bridges said. “I hope that through these travel blogs you’re able to experience some of the joy and learning that I experienced by visiting these places, people and projects. Even more so, I hope that the shared images and reflections might kindle your creative process toward new solutions for people with nature.”

Bridges will be back to the LA District in May to continue the series. Check it out at [go.usa.gov/xtNRA](https://www.usace.army.mil/EngineerResearchandDevelopmentCenter/EngineeringWithNature/).



Photo by John Reese

Todd Bridges, center, welcomes interviewees before recording comments for his Corps’ travel series Jan. 21. About 20 brief interviews were recorded, with stakeholders, interested civic groups and LA District Corps employees.

2022

Life Jacket Video Contest

CONTEST DEADLINE: AUGUST 1, 2022



THE PRIZE:

\$5,500 for 55-second Video PSA

\$2,500 for 25-second Video PSA

*ONE WINNER PER CATEGORY WILL BE SELECTED



TO LEARN MORE:

www.LifeJacketVideoContest.com

The Corps of Engineers Natural Resources Education Foundation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are proud to announce the 2022 Life Jacket Video Contest. The contest invites anyone 18 or older nationwide to create a video public service announcement to help encourage adults to wear life jackets. Deadline for submissions is Aug. 1, 2022. Winners will receive a cash prize and the opportunity for national exposure for their winning entries.

For full submission guidelines, official rules, FAQs, and resources, visit www.lifejacketvideocontest.com.