

Army senior leader discusses transformational investments during LA visit, press conference



Photo by Stephen Baack

Deborah Weintraub, left, chief deputy city engineer for the City of Los Angeles, leads a March 29 tour on the Taylor Yard Bridge to give pertinent views of the LA River for Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) Michael Connor, second from left, and Maj. Gen. William Graham, right, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deputy commanding general for Civil and Emergency Operations. Joining the senior leaders are Josephine Axt, center, chief of planning and policy for the Corps of Engineers' South Pacific Division; Julie Balten, second from left, Los Angeles District commander; David Van Dorpe, background, deputy district engineer for the LA District; and others.

BY STEPHEN BAACK
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES – Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Michael Connor announced details of President Joe Biden's fiscal 2023 Army civil works budget and took an aerial tour of several projects during a March 28-29 visit to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District.

Connor, along with Maj. Gen. William "Butch" Graham, the Corps' deputy commanding general for Civil and Emergency Operations, kicked off the visit with a virtual press conference conducted jointly at the Port of Long Beach in California and with other Corps and ASA officials at the Port of Baltimore, Maryland.

Details about the Army Civil Works FY 2023 budget come on the heels of a Jan. 19 announcement from the Army that included a list of civil works studies, projects and programs the Corps of Engineers will implement nationwide

in fiscal 2022 with \$22.81 billion in supplemental funding provided in two recently enacted laws — the IIJA and the 2022 Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act.

The new Army Civil Works Program budget itself "continues to focus on investments that yield high economic and environmental returns, while building resilience to climate change, promoting environmental justice and increasing opportunities to work with disadvantaged communities," Connor said.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Addressing the president's FY23 Army Civil Works Program budget, Connor and Graham hosted their portion of the joint press conference from the Long Beach Container Terminal at the Port of Long Beach.

"We believe in smart investments that improve the durability of our water-management resources and moving to a more sustainable posture for our water resources all across Amer-

['TRANSFORMATION' continued on Page 4](#)

Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month 2022

As many of you may know, April is recognized nationally as Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. This year's Army theme is "Prevention Starts With You." This theme



COL. ANTOINETTE GANT
SPD COMMANDER

builds on the concept of upholding what it means to be a member of the Corps team. When it comes to sexual assault and sexual harassment, the only person responsible for committing the act is the perpetrator, but all members of the SPD team have the ability to look out for each other's safety.

Leaders, DA Civilians and Soldiers must work in unison to build comradery and trust in our workforce. This trust allows teams to focus on mission readiness and taking care of people to eliminate harmful behaviors by preventing sexual harassment, sexual assault, and associated retaliation. It's on all of us to build positive, trusting relationships that foster a climate where employees feel safe, valued, and are free from retaliation.

According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), someone is sexually assaulted every 68 seconds in America...and most will not report their experience. We all have a role in preventing sexual harassment and sexual assault within our workspace and our communities. From modeling healthy behavior to addressing inappropriate conduct; everyone can make a difference.

I encourage you to find the fortitude to step in and step up when you encounter potential or obvious sexual assault. Claiming our identity as preventers of Sexual Assault is critical to eradicating a culture of "I don't want to get involved" or "It's none of my business." This quote by Elie Wiesel,

['SAAPM' continued on Page 3](#)

Engineer Safety Gram:
Spring cleaning safety

BY LOS ANGELES DISTRICT
SAFETY OFFICE

Each year many of us look forward to that special time of year known as Spring Break. For many, it is that time of year when we emerge from our wintering shelters and engage in the annual ritual of spring cleaning. Follow these simple tips to keep this annual ritual safe for everyone.

Fire safety tips

- Spring is a great time to clean your house and throw away unwanted items. It's also a great time to check for potential fire hazards.
• Check your house for any stored papers or other combustible materials you don't need.
• Keep the area under your stairs clear of combustible material as well.
• Check your yard for any woodpiles, branches or papers that could prove tempting to someone wanting to light a fire.
• Make sure you clean your barbecue equipment and check for leaks, breaks, and other wear and tear.
• Check your smoke alarm monthly.

General cleaning tips

- While spring cleaning is a rewarding activity, it can also be a risky one. Falls, cuts and electrical shock are just some potential injuries.
• Wear protective clothing. Sturdy shoes will protect your feet if you drop something or step on something sharp. Wear gloves to protect your hands from minor injuries, and don't forget hearing and eye protection.
• Beware of electrical hazards. Keep moisture away from electrical appliances and outlets. Don't spray cleaning products directly onto light switches or the fuse panel area of an

- electrical stove.
• Slips, trips and falls are common household accidents, and they can occur easily when the house is in disarray during spring cleaning. Keep traffic areas clear of buckets, cords, boxes and other obstacles. Clean up spills promptly and move carefully on damp surfaces.
• Ladders are involved in many serious injuries at home. Make sure the ladder is in good condition. Place the base of the ladder on a solid, even surface. Do not stand on the top-few rungs of a ladder. Do not lean away from the ladder because this can cause it to tip over. Always watch out for overhead electrical hazards.

Household chemicals

- Many household chemicals and paints can present hazards to you and your family, particularly children. Ensure you take these precautions to keep everyone safe and sound.
• Get rid of old household chemicals and paints. Know your community's disposal rules and dispose of them properly.
• Close lids to chemicals and paints when not in use. Ensure they are always put away safely when the work is finished.
• Never leave children unsupervised when paints and chemicals are in use.
• Read the instructions carefully and make sure you adhere to them. Pay particular attention to flammability cautions and ventilation requirements.

While you are enjoying the beautiful weather and dusting off the cobwebs of winter, remember to take your on-the-job safety awareness with you.

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

April 2022
Volume 45, Issue 4

District Commander: Col. Julie A. Balten

Public Affairs Chief: Dena M. O'Dell

Editor: Stephen Baack

Contributing Editors:
John Reese, Jay Field, Robert DeDeaux

Tel: (213) 452-3922 or Fax: (213) 452-4209.

The NewsCastle is published monthly under the provisions of AR 360-1 for the employees and extended engineer family of the Los Angeles District, USACE.

Views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the district or of the Department of Defense.

Address mail to the Los Angeles District
Public Affairs Office
ATTN: NewsCastle Editor
Room 1105, 915 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90017-2325

Email the Public Affairs Office at:
publicaffairs.SPL@usace.army.mil



What a great time to be part of the Los Angeles District!

Hello, SPL Team!

Let me first just tell you all how much I appreciate the great work everyone in the Mighty LA District is doing!

In late March, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Michael Connor and Maj. Gen. William "Butch" Graham, the Corps' deputy commanding general for Civil and Emergency Operations, chose our district from which to host a press conference to discuss the transformational investments the Army is making in the LA District!

During their visit, we took an aerial tour to give these leaders a better look at our work throughout the district, and I couldn't be prouder to show off the fruits of our hard work, expertise, professionalism and the strong relationships we have with our partners.

While I'm on the topic of gratitude, I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight the Month of the Military Child, when we show our appreciation for the children of service



COL. JULIE A. BALTEN
LA DISTRICT COMMANDER

members and the sacrifices they make. Since April 1986, the Army has observed Month of the Military Child to recognize and honor the role military children play in the armed forces community. The theme of this year's observance is "Military Children and Youth: Standing Strong and Proud."

Another group I'm particularly thankful for is those who give their time and energy to provide quality programs and services to military families: our volunteers. Every year during the third week in April is Volunteer Appreciation Week, when the Army recognizes the commitment, contributions and sacrifices of our volunteers - all of whom are essential to the Army's mission and who help conserve valuable resources.

These volunteers include Soldiers, family members, veterans and civilians, who selflessly give their time to the Army community. Volunteers contributed more than 109,000 hours, valued at an estimated \$3 million cost savings, to the Army in fiscal 2020! Join me

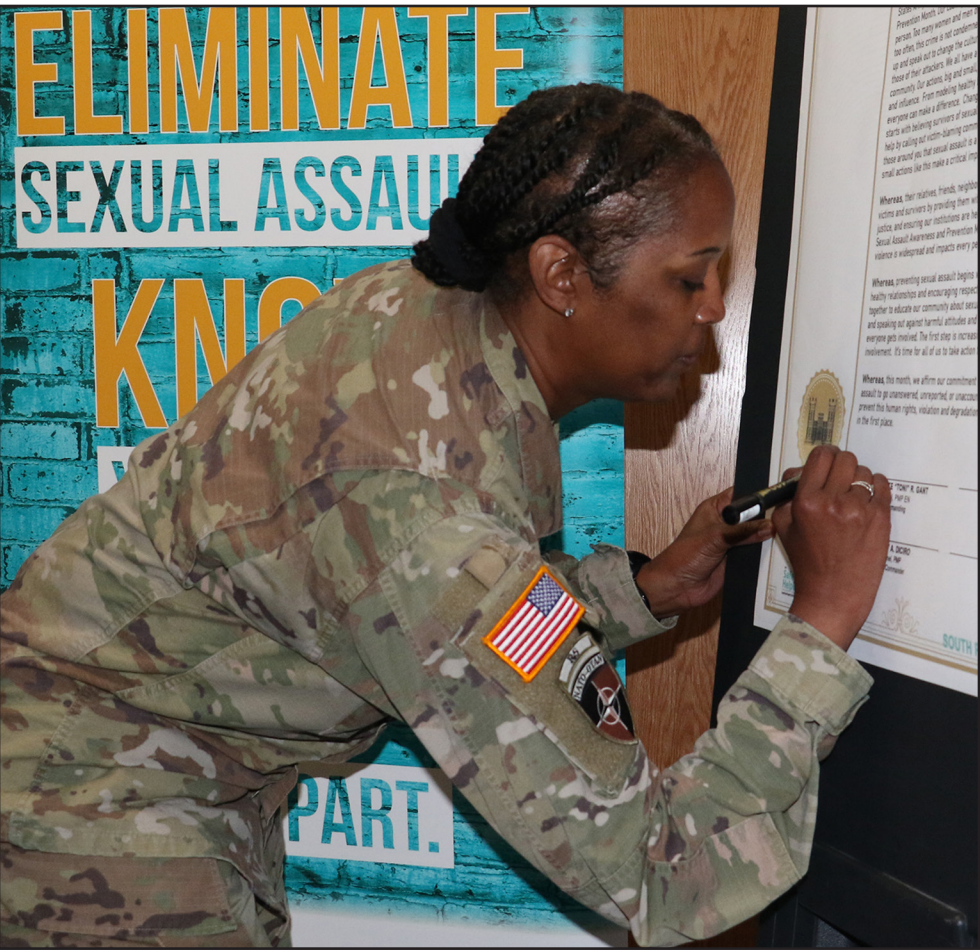
in saluting their efforts to make a difference in the lives of our Army community.

Are you interested in volunteering? The Army Family Web Portal is one great place to start, and the Volunteer Management Information System is an excellent way to see volunteer opportunities available in real time.

I'd also like to remind everyone that April is Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Month. The awareness and prevention of sexual assault and harassment is vital to our readiness every day of the year, but this monthlong observance is a reminder how important we take this issue, and that it's a responsibility we all share. I encourage you to read the column on this topic from Col. Antoinette Gant, the South Pacific Division commander, which starts on Page 1 and continues below.

Finally, I want to thank you all again for what you do on a daily basis, and please keep up the great work!

Sincerely,
Col. Julie A. Balten



Courtesy photo

'SAAPM' from Page 1

holocaust survivor and author, reflects the potential of building an identity as an oppressor, if we don't take this responsibility seriously:

"We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

For those who have access, a "Lunch & Learn" with the topic of "Understanding EAP & Work-Life Services," scheduled for April 14 at noon Pacific Standard Time. You can also leave a message of support for survivors of sexual violence on the SPD SAAPM Virtual Message Board: https://team.usace.army.mil/sites/SPD/Org/pages/SAAPMboard.aspx.

I look forward to you joining me this month and beyond, as I recommit to ending sexual violence within our workplace, USACE, the Army, and our communities.

Remember:
"Prevention Starts With You."

District hosts Business Opportunities Open House

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ROBERT L. DEDEAUX
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PHOENIX – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District hosted the spring Business Opportunities Open House March 30 at the midtown Hilton Garden Inn.

The semi-annual Business Opportunities Open House, or BOOH, focused on facilitating partnerships with businesses and highlighting contract opportunities.

“The purpose of today’s event is to network,” said Eric Ravelli, the District’s deputy of the Small Business program. “This is a signature event that makes the process of working with the Corps easier. We are able to talk to contractors and contractors can talk to us on a one-on-one basis, so that we can make connections, build business relationships and delivery our programs by finding out what capabilities are available through local industry.”

During the BOOH, about 300 business owners met with District division chiefs and project managers.

“Leadership’s role is to create connection between contractors, and the Corps of Engineers and our partners, to try and see what kind of contract opportunities we can bring together for the future,” said LA District Deputy Engineer David Van Dorpe.

The BOOH had three distinct goals – to create competitive bids on upcoming projects, support small business in the area and build partnership through open lines of communication with stakeholders.

“We also have lots of opportunities for small businesses,” Van Dorpe said. “This is a great way for small businesses to get to know



U.S. Army Corps of Engineer Los Angeles District's Small Business Program Deputy Eric Ravelli speaks with participants of the Spring Business Opportunities Open House March 30 at the midtown Hilton Garden Inn. Small businesses represented 78 percent of the participants. This is Ravelli's fifth year hosting the event for the LA District.

the Corps, but also meet other contractors and forge relationships. More than two-thirds have never worked directly on a prime contract.”

Small businesses represented 78 percent of the participants.

“I think it’s a wonderful opportunity for us and all small businesses with construction interests,” said Daniel Esquivel, business devel-

opment director with Pattinson Engineering. “It’s good that the Army Corps is involving us, getting us into all these projects and helping us through the process, so we can get work on those projects.”

The BOOH featured two morning training sessions: The American Indian Chamber Procurement Technical Assistance Center and the Small Business Administration Phoenix District conducted the first training session on the SBA Mentor-Protégé Program, as well as the benefits of the Joint Ventures Program. The second training session was conducted by the LA District’s chief of the Safety Office on how to submit accident prevention plans to USACE.

“This is the most successful BOOH thus far,” Ravelli said. “I know it makes an impact for our small business communities and allows us to fulfill the Corps’ mission.”

The event also was supported by the Arizona Procurement Technical Assistance Center, Society of American Military Engineers and the 56th Contacting Squadron from Luke Air Force Base.

The next BOOH is scheduled for the fall in California. Visit www.spl.usace.army.mil/Business-With-Us/Small-Business-Program to learn more about doing business with USACE and the Small Business Program.



Col. Julie Balten, LA District commander, welcomes participants and partners to the Spring Business Opportunities Open House, or BOOH, March 30 at the midtown Hilton Garden Inn. During the BOOH, about 300 business owners met with District division chiefs and project managers.



Photo by Stephen Baack

Col. Julie Balten, second from left, Los Angeles District commander, briefs Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) Michael Connor, second from right, March 28 during an aerial tour of the Los Angeles area in a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter. At left is Josephine Axt, chief of planning and policy for the Corps of Engineers' South Pacific Division, and at right is David Van Dorpe, deputy district engineer for the LA District. Maj. Gen. William Graham, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deputy commanding general for Civil and Emergency Operations, sits just out of frame.

‘TRANSFORMATIONAL’ from Page 1

ica,” Connor said. “This is a matter of increasing urgency, given the water resource challenges facing many communities.”

On site at the Port of Baltimore, Lt. Gen. Scott Spellmon, the Corps’ commanding general, joined Jaime Pinkham, principal deputy assistant secretary of the Army for Civil Works; Stacey Brown, deputy assistant secretary of the Army (management and budget) in the Office of the ASA (Civil Works), and Wesley Coleman, acting chief of the Corps’ Civil Works Programs Integration Division.

Spellmon said it was his goal to host the press conference at locations “where we see the administration’s and the secretary’s priorities coming together” with investments made to upgrade waterways; protect communities and ecosystems; better serve disadvantaged communities, with a focus on science, research and development; and strengthen relationships and partnerships.

AERIAL TOUR

Following the press conference, Connor

and Graham boarded a UH-60 Blackhawk Helicopter with other senior leaders from the LA District for a 360-degree, bird’s eye view of a number of the District’s projects, including Prado Dam, Santa Ana River Mainstem, Whittier Narrows Dam, the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, various portions of the LA River, East San Pedro Bay and Newport Beach Harbor.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION

During the second day of their tour, Connor and Graham met with City of Los Angeles officials at the Taylor Yard Bridge – giving them a prime spot to discuss the LA River Ecosystem Restoration Project – which focuses on restoring 11 miles of the river, from Griffith Park to downtown Los Angeles, while maintaining existing levels of flood-risk management.

The restoration project, which received \$28 million in funding under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, aims to create and re-establish historic riparian and freshwater marsh to the area that will support wildlife and enhance habitat, as well as provide oppor-

tunities for regional connectivity to ecological zones, such as the Santa Monica Mountains, Verdugo Hills, Elysian Hills and the San Gabriel Mountains.

Restoration also includes reducing ecological and fluvial processes through a more natural hydrologic regime that will reconnect the river to historic floodplains and tributaries, with the hopes of reducing flow velocities, increasing infiltration and improving natural sediment processes.

“This is a fantastic team here in LA and great partners with the city and the county, and I’m really proud to be part of this,” Graham said. “We’re working on getting the maximum amount of benefit for the people here that we can possibly get. Flood control has to work, but if we can also help restore some of the environment, then that’s a win-win.”

For more information on the president’s fiscal 2023 budget, visit www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget. The FY 2023 Civil Works budget press book is also available at www.usace.army.mil/Missions/CivilWorks/Budget.aspx, under the heading Program Budget: Press Books.

Corps’ team builds bridges with STEAM

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOHN REESE
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES – Future Army officers joined a team from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District to bring awareness to science, technology, engineering, arts and math March 23 at Stephen White Middle School in Carson, California.

JROTC cadets from James Monroe and Washington Preparatory high schools, and younger students from the 186th Street Elementary School, learned about STEM – or STEAM, adding an A for the arts – and JROTC, while building model bridges tested by the Corps’ LA District team.

During the event “West Point Leadership Ethics and Diversity in STEM,” the students were led by cadets with the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. The Corps’ LA District’s participation was led by Capt. Derek Schwartz, deputy resident engineer with the Fort Irwin Resident Office.

“The LEADS workshop is really crucial for our students to be able to have opportunities to see cadets and learn about leadership skills, leadership qualities, ethics and honor,” said Marva Woods, principal at Stephen White Middle School. “It’s important to have these young people molding and guiding even younger people, so it’s a great opportunity for our students and elementary students, middle school and high school students to have these experiences with other individuals, aside from the school staff.”

JROTC cadets watched a message of encouragement from Lt. Gen. Darryl Williams, 60th superintendent at West Point, before breaking into groups for outbreak sessions. The Corps’ challenge for students was to design and build a small model bridge to determine its load-bearing potential. Thad Fukushige with the LA District’s Construction Division, along with Vanessa Navarro, John Greenheck and Yolanda Novak from the LA District’s Regulatory Division, recorded measurements of the bridges and added weight



From left, West Point Cadet Sgt. Vivian Tsai, along with John Greenheck, Vanessa Navarro and Thad Fukushige, Los Angeles District, examine model bridges built by STEM and JROTC students at Stephen White Middle School March 25 in Carson, California. A team of volunteers from the District participated in the military academy’s “West Point Leadership Ethics and Diversity in STEM” event to bring awareness to science, technology, engineering, arts and math.

until they reached their structural limits.

“During our bridge competition, our winning team constructed a K’NEX bridge that weighed just 80 grams, but was able to support 7.5 lbs.,” Schwartz said.

JROTC Cadet Col. Jessica MacDonald-Gonzalez, 17, commander of the James Monroe’s Viking Battalion, said she appreciated STEM support from the Corps and West Point.

MacDonald-Gonzalez serves as the LA Uni-

fied School District all-city colonel and applied for national four-year scholarships. She is considering the college she’ll attend to study psychology or cognitive science, and, ultimately, become a lawyer.

“As far as STEM goes, I feel like there are so many different opportunities,” she said. “It’s such a diverse area of work and study, that there’s always something for everyone in STEM, regardless of age or gender.

“Everyone has an opportunity to study something that they love, and I think that science, outside of humanities, should be explored a little bit more, because it provides so much more technology for the future of the students.”

JROTC is great for honing leadership skills and getting ready for the adult world, she added, noting she began the program at 13 years old as a “shy freshman.”

“When (JROTC cadets) enter the program,

[‘STEAM’ continued on Page 7](#)

JROTC Cadet Col. Jessica MacDonald-Gonzalez, 17, commander of the James Monroe’s Viking Battalion and LA Unified School District all-city colonel, receives guidance March 25 from retired Command Sgt. Maj. Arturo Ramos Martinez, a JROTC instructor who continues to serve his community, in Carson, California.



[‘STEAM’ continued from Page 6](#)

some of them are English learners and don’t know what they want to do,” MacDonald-Gonzalez said. “They just wanted to start an extra-curricular activity to figure out what they want to do, and they end up with fluent English and want to go to college. They have all of these resources, and they know what they want to be in the future. It’s really amazing because (the LA Unified School District) has some wonderful students.”

Events like West Point LEADS are investments in people and future generations, Schwartz said.

“Our greatest asset in the LA District is our people,” he said. “Events like West Point LEADS provide us an opportunity to invest in our next generation by fostering an appreciation for science, technology, engineering and math, and showcase the dedication and expertise of our people.”



Los Angeles District volunteers pose for a photo March 25 at Stephen White Middle School in Carson, California. The District team participated in the military academy’s “West Point Leadership Ethics and Diversity in STEM” event to bring awareness to science, technology, engineering, arts and math. From left to right are Thad Fukushige; Frank Montelongo; Greg Gregorian; Capt. Derek Schwartz; Vanessa Navarro; John Greenheck; and Yolanda Novak.

LA, Philadelphia engineers conduct hydraulic steel structure inspection at Sepulveda Dam

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOHN REESE
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

VAN NUYS, Calif. – Engineers with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles and Philadelphia districts performed a periodic hydraulic steel structure inspection of Sepulveda Dam March 22-23 in Van Nuys.

The dam on the Los Angeles River is a massive concrete structure, easily visible from two major freeways and has been used as a location for numerous films. To perform the inspection, structural engineers Robert Lawrence and Joseph Cervantes, both of Philadelphia, ventured deep into its cavernous rooms of hydraulic equipment with the LA District team.

Seven submersible spillway crests – drum, gates and vertical lift gates – were visually inspected, said Gabby Bernaldino, LA District civil engineer.

“The crest gates are designed to float on water in a chamber, located inside the spillway crest,” she said. “They operate automatically and rise as the reservoir water surface elevation rises. The gates are set for fully automatic operations, but (they) can also be operated in semi-automatic or emergency manual mode.”

The purpose of the inspection was to detect any potential damage, deterioration or signs of distress within the structure and to identify any maintenance repair requirements.

Inspections are done in accordance with the Corps’ regulations to ensure the dam’s critical internal infrastructure – structural elements that could render it inoperable – is fit for service. The inspections are best done when there’s no water present, as per engineering regulations. During the inspection, the LA River at Van Nuys was very shallow.

“The inspection procedure was designed to detect damage, deterioration or signs of distress to avert any premature failure

of the structure and to identify any future maintenance or repair requirements,” Bernaldino said.

Prior to the inspection, LA District personnel received confined space training. Before anyone entered the structure, heavy steel plates and matching gaskets on top of the dam were removed from deep ventilation shafts that descend to a tunnel spanning the length of the dam. Ventilation hoses like those used by firefighters were inserted to remove any toxic gas buildup, and then the air quality was checked. Once the safety protocol was completed, Corps’ personnel went inside.

Entry to Sepulveda Dam’s interior is a boxy, castle-like concrete cube at the top. Inside, a series of long stairwells lead to the seven spillway gates and the tunnel at the very bottom. Now 80 years old, the dam contains a mixture of vintage and modern equipment. Time-yellowed schematics used during construction hang on walls, along with an ancient intercom system, while modern LED lighting provides illumination. At some points, daylight can be seen through heavy grates above the LA River.

The Corps acquired more than 2,100 acres of land for construction, operations and maintenance of the Sepulveda Dam, which was built in response to historic flooding of Los Angeles in 1938. The dam was completed in December 1941 and dedicated in 1942. It marks the beginning of the channelized LA River. Together with Hansen and Lopez dams, Sepulveda is vital for flood-risk management for portions of the San Fernando Valley and areas contiguous to the LA River.

The primary purpose of the dam and reservoir is flood-risk management, but the project also is authorized for recreation. Of the total acreage, the Corps reserves 313 acres of land for dam operations, and more than 1,500 acres have been leased to the City of Los Angeles for recreational purposes.

The Sepulveda Basin is a popular recreation area with a model plane airport, softball fields and a Japanese garden. It is home to a variety of species and is an important nesting area for birds.

An engineer safely ropes from the crest of Sepulveda Dam into the Los Angeles River March 22 in Van Nuys, California. Workers first had to open ventilation shafts and test the air quality inside the structure before they could enter. The dam – constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in response to the Los Angeles floods of 1938 – underwent a hydraulic steel structure inspection March 22-23.

CSM visits Los Angeles District, shares his ‘people’ philosophy



Photo by Jay Field
Command Sgt. Maj. Patrickson Toussaint, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers command sergeant major, speaks to employees March 29 at the Los Angeles District’s baseyard facility in South El Monte, California. The purpose of his visit was to see how things are going out in the field and to engage with the workforce. Toussaint, the organization’s 14th command sergeant major, is charged with advising leaders at all levels of concerns and best practices across the enterprise.

BY JAY FIELD
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Command Sgt. Maj. Patrickson Toussaint engaged with employees of the Corps’ Los Angeles District during a visit March 28-31 to the West Coast. Toussaint, the organization’s 14th command sergeant major, advises the office of the commander on everything that affects the workforce. “I’m charged to go out, whether in the field or at the district headquarters, and engage with the workforce and try to get a sense of, a feel for, a pulse on what’s going on in the organization,” Toussaint said. “I share that information with leaders at the different levels and say, ‘here are some concerns we have or here are some great things we’re doing that we can share across the enterprise.’”

During his four-day visit, Toussaint traveled more than 750 miles to meet with employees at six different area, project and resi-

dent offices, from San Diego to Vandenberg Air Force Base, California. Toussaint told the employees he met with that the time he spent with them was theirs and it was important for him to listen to their concerns. He also said he felt it was imperative for him to carry out and convey the USACE commanding general’s message. “There are five things that I think each of us need to understand about USACE – the mission, the vision, the priorities, the intent behind the priorities and the definition of ‘winning’ for USACE,” Toussaint said. “Winning for USACE means building quality projects, on time, within budget, and, ultimately, safely. That’s winning for us.” “If we understand those things, then we understand how and why each of us is important and what we do is important, regardless of who you are, where you work or what your grade or position is,” Toussaint continued. “What you do is important because,

without you, we cannot get after the big business.” The command sergeant major then led a discussion over the commander’s priorities of people, readiness, partnerships and revolutionize. He said leaders too often prioritize mission over people and readiness. If we take care of people, he added, the other three priorities fall right into place. “We care about our employees, or we’re supposed to anyways, that’s what these priorities are trying to get us to do,” Toussaint said. “It’s to let you know that we care about you. We want you to be on our team forever, but we have to do our part in that, as leaders and as individuals.” Toussaint challenged each of the employees, whether leader or subordinate, to develop and implement a personal leadership philosophy as a sort of guide or moral compass. That philosophy can help one navigate life’s day-to-day activities and serve as a reminder of one’s personal values during decision-making. He said he’s used the word “people” as the leadership philosophy he formed more than a dozen years ago. He told employees the first “P” is for passion and asked them what they were passionate about and what motivates them. “In my travel across the enterprise, so far, I have not witnessed a shortage of passion in USACE,” Toussaint said. “Folks always say, ‘I enjoy working for this organization. I love USACE.’” The “E” is for empowerment. Toussaint said employees need to assess risk, but they are empowered to make decisions. “There’s not enough time in the day to always have to ask, ‘Can I?’ If it’s at your level to make a decision, make it,” he added. “O” is for ownership. He said employees need to own the decisions they make, whether good, bad or indifferent. “What we owe you is that top cover when you make a decision, if it does not go the way you expect it to go,” Toussaint said. “We don’t feed you to the wolves; we’ve got to have your back or you’re not going to make decisions ever again.

“We’re supposed to have your back and tell you, ‘It’s OK. Figure out what went wrong. Learn the lessons from that and then share those lessons, so somebody else doesn’t make the same mistakes.’ That’s what we owe you, as leaders. That’s how we learn and grow and develop. That’s how we gain experience. I want to believe that whatever decision you made, you made it in the best interests of your people, of the project, of the program, and, sometimes, it just doesn’t work out.” The second “P” is for purpose. Toussaint posed these questions: “What is your purpose? Why are we here? Why do we have the mission we have on behalf of this nation? Why this project? Why you? Why us?” “It’s important to know and understand that purpose, just think about what or who this project is for,” he said. “I think that’s what ties that passion back into it.” “L” is for loyalty. “Loyalty is to the families we left at home this morning before we came to work, to our teammates, to this project, to the district, to the division, to the Army, to the nation – loyalty, it’s important,” Toussaint said. “It’s an Army value, but I want you to think about that loyalty like the other Army value of duty – the obligation that we have to do the right thing.” And the “E” is for empathy. He said he believes empathy helps people to be good human beings, and, more importantly, good leaders. “How well do you truly know your people?” he asked. “When Toussaint walks in the door, and he’s having a bad day, how do you deal with that? Do you even care? Ask yourself, ‘If that were me, what would my reasonable expectations of my leader be? What would I expect my leaders to do for me if I were in the situation that this person is in?’” Toussaint concluded his meetings at each location with the opportunity to recognize employees for specific achievements. He said USACE strives to promote a culture of employee appreciation and recognition, and timely employee recognition is key to enhancing satisfaction with the organization and critical to retaining valued teammates.

Command Sgt. Maj. Patrickson Toussaint, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers command sergeant major, meets with the LA District’s High Desert team and visits an air traffic control tower project construction site March 30 in Palmdale, California. Toussaint presented coins for excellence to three outstanding Corps employees, before he traveled to another District project site at Vandenberg Space Force Base.



Photo by John Reese

LA District employees receive recognition at division, national levels

SPD LIFETIME PLANNING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Ed De Mesa, former chief of the Planning Division with the LA District, recently received the South Pacific Division’s Lifetime Planning Achievement Award.

De Mesa was among five individuals and two project delivery teams recognized as Regional Planning Award recipients for fiscal year 2021.

The Planning Community of Practice nominates individuals and teams annually for various awards, including SPD’s Planner of the Year, SPD’s Planning Team of the Year, SPD’s Planning Champion and SPD’s Lifetime Planning Achievement Award. Following recognition at the division level, nominations are then submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters to be compete on a national level.

De Mesa received the award for exemplifying “a spirit of dedication and problem solving,” as well as standing out as an LA District leader, “whose expertise and planning acumen have facilitated issue resolution and teaming across the organization for more than two decades.”

Recipients of the Regional Planning Awards demonstrate they can overcome obstacles, partner with colleagues, resolve issues creatively and make risk-informed decisions to complete the mission.

De Mesa retired from the LA District in March.

“It has been an honor to serve our communities in this great Southwest,” De Mesa said.



Ed De Mesa

As the recipient of the Corps’ first place “Communicator of the Year” award, DeDeaux’ entry will now be submitted to the Department of the Army-level Keith L. Ware Journalism competition. If he receives first place in that competition, he would then be eligible to compete in the Department of Defense Thomas Jefferson/Defense Media Activity Journalism Awards competition.

PDT OF THE YEAR

The LA District’s 2021 FEMA COVID-19 Hospital Support Mission project delivery teams in Southern California is one of three PDTs nominated by the South Pacific Division for the “USACE FY22 PDT of the Year.”

This project, which was assigned to the Los Angeles District on New Year’s Eve 2020, was critical in increasing the ability of local hospitals to respond to the large surge in COVID-19 cases from December 2020 through April 2021.

The project required the LA District to evaluate the oxygen distribution systems of 11 hospitals in the Los Angeles County area, and then to design and construct, if directed, improvements that increased the ability of the hospitals to care for COVID-19 positive patients.

The Hospital Support Mission PDT was formed with members of the Sacramento, Omaha and LA District teams to evaluate the hospitals for infrastructure improvements, such as oxygen delivery, back-up and redundancy of critical functions, as well as needed repairs and upgrades.

The team developed performance work statements and current working estimates for five hospitals, including Beverly Hospital in Montebello; White Memorial Medical Center in Los Angeles; Mission Community Hospital in Panorama City; Parkview Community Hospital in Riverside; and Emanate Queen of the Valley Hospital in West Covina.

FEMA and the State of California ultimately requested for the LA District to complete design and construction at three hospitals: Beverly Hospital, White Memorial Medical Center and Mission Community Hospital.

The Corps’ mission and the PDT’s goal was to provide each facility with more space for hospital admissions; hospital personnel with increased working space; and to upgrade critical medical systems, such as oxygen delivery.

“The dedication, expertise and professionalism of this team resulted in this project being completed ahead of schedule and within the approved budget,” said Col. Julie Balten, LA District commander, in her endorsement of the team’s nomination.

The nomination is now competing at the Corps’ national level for the “USACE FY22 PDT of the Year.”

USACE COMMUNICATOR OF THE YEAR



Robert DeDeaux

Robert DeDeaux, Public Affairs specialist with South Pacific Border-now LA District, recently received first place as the “Communicator of the Year” and third place as the “Photographer of the Year” in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Herbert A. Kassner Journalism competition.

His entries were a mix of products – video, print, infographics and photography – covering South Pacific Border and LA District projects and events, including in support of SPL’s emergency response to flooding in Coconino County, Arizona.

The Los Angeles District’s 2021 Federal Emergency Management Agency COVID-19 Hospital Support Mission project delivery teams in Southern California is one of three PDTs nominated by the South Pacific Division for the “USACE FY22 PDT of the Year.” This project, which was assigned to the Los Angeles District on New Year’s Eve 2020, was critical in increasing the ability of local hospitals to respond to the large surge in COVID-19 cases from December 2020 through April 2021.



Photo by Stephen Baack

CSM coin of excellence



Photo by Jay Field

Command Sgt. Maj. Patrickson Toussaint, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers command sergeant major, presents a coin for excellence to Los Angeles District Park Ranger Annel Monsalvo during a March 29 visit to the District’s baseyard facility in South El Monte, California.

Monsalvo was recognized for her efforts engaging Los Angeles community organizations that led to enhanced relationships at Sepulveda Dam. Toussaint is the 14th Command Sergeant Major of USACE and is charged with advising leaders at all levels of concerns and best practices across the enterprise.

As the field agents of the Corps’ recreation program, USACE park rangers have two primary responsibilities: promoting and protecting public safety, and practicing good stewardship of the public lands in their care. Those two responsibilities take place on public lands that receive more than 370 million visits a year.



Photo by John Reese

Command Sgt. Maj. Patrickson Toussaint, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Headquarters command sergeant major, presents a coin for excellence to Los Angeles District Park Ranger Annel Monsalvo during a March 29 visit to the District’s baseyard facility in South El Monte, California. Monsalvo was recognized for her efforts engaging Los Angeles community organizations that led to enhanced relationships at Sepulveda Dam.

ACKNOWLEDGE PRESERVE HONOR

DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

April 3 - April 10

*"For the
dead and the living,
we must bear
witness."*

*- Elie Wiesel
(Holocaust Survivor)*

