

Falls City Engineer

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Louisville District welcomes
new Commander





Falls City Engineer

Vol. 15, Issue 4

District Commander

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On the cover: Col. L. Reyn Mann assumed command of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District in a change of command ceremony held at the Henry Clay Building in Louisville, Kentucky, July 27, 2023 (USACE Photo By Charles Delano)

Commander's Comments

Team Louisville,

I would like to start out by saying how excited I am to be a part of the Louisville District's winning team. It is a true privilege and honor to serve as the 62nd commander of the Louisville District—a district known for having an outstanding reputation for delivering programs and quality projects safely, on time, and within budget. I look forward to working with our partners and stakeholders to continue our mission of delivering engineering solutions in support of the region and the nation.

Summer is nearly over, and fourth quarter execution is full swing. I appreciate everyone pushing hard to deliver on our commitments, and I can't wait to celebrate alongside our team after we successfully close out this fiscal year.

Although I have only been in the Louisville District for a month, I am already in awe of this world-class workforce. This month, USACE Headquarters announced several of our teammates and projects as national-level awardees. This is truly a testament to the caliber of professionals here in Louisville. I also want to extend a hearty congratulations to the graduates of our Leadership Development Programs who invested in their personal and professional growth over this past year.

August is Antiterrorism Awareness Month, so I encourage you to stay vigilant and "if you see something, say something." Antiterrorism awareness must be a continuous effort throughout the year. Working together we can keep our teammates, our families and our nation safe.

Please enjoy the July/August issue of this Falls City Engineer, which spotlights the Change of Command ceremony, the completed construction of a Digital Air-



Col. L. Reyn Mann

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

Ground Integration Range at Fort Knox, continued progress on the Louisville VA Medical Center, and much more.

Lastly as I begin my command, I extend my sincerest appreciation to Col. Eric Crispino for his support during our transition. Through his leadership, this district has achieved remarkable successes, and I look forward in sharing in that tradition of excellence with each of you.

Building Strong...Together!
LOUISVILLE PROUD!


Col. L. Reyn Mann

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BUILDING STRONG®

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 **Please conserve:**
Think before you print.

Louisville District celebrates the groundbreaking for new Paddy's Run Flood Pump Station

Abby Korfhage, public affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District joined Louisville and Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) and local, state and federal officials to break ground on a \$230 million project to replace MSD's Paddy's Run Flood Pump Station in Louisville, Kentucky, Aug. 15, 2023.

"The upgrade of Paddy's Run Pump Station is a monumental first step in the repair, rehabilitation, and reconstruction of features within Louisville's flood protection system and is a testament to MSD's commitment to this project," said Col. L. Reyn Mann, USACE Louisville District commander. "We are proud to continue our long-standing partnership with MSD as we take a collective step toward ensuring the future of the Metro Louisville Flood Protection System."

Paddy's Run Flood Pump Station, built in 1953, is part of the larger Louisville Metro Flood Protection System that protects 216,000 people, 87,000 structures, and \$33 billion in property. In 2020, in partnership with MSD, USACE completed a study, which recommended repair and rehabilitation of 14 pump stations, such as the one at Paddy's Run, as well as improvements to floodwalls, gates, and road closure structures throughout the system. Once reconstructed, these measures will provide greater reliability to the Louisville Metro Flood Protection System by bringing 1950s-era components up to current standards.

MSD secured grant money from the Cleaner Water Grant under the American Rescue Plan Act to assist with construction of the new Paddy's Run Flood Pump Station. The new state-of-the-art facility will provide increased pumping capacity to reduce flood risk for 63,000 residents.

"The Louisville Metro Flood Protection System remains a top priority for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and we were encouraged by the recent announcement of \$1 million dollars of federal funding that will advance other features of the system into the preconstruction, design and engineering," Mann said. "While additional funds will still be required to see the project through completion, this funding has allowed us to take an important first step in



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Abby Korfhage

Louisville and Jefferson County Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) Executive Director Tony Parrott and Louisville District Commander Col. L. Reyn Mann greet one another at MSD's Paddy's Run Flood Pump Station groundbreaking ceremony Louisville, Kentucky, Aug. 15, 2023.

improving the system's reliability."

Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear, Congressman Morgan McGarvey, Louisville Mayor Craig Greenberg, State Director for U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell, Robbin Taylor and Councilwoman Tammy Hawkins were also in attendance at the groundbreaking ceremony hosted by MSD.

"It takes a tenacious team, and I know all of us here today are eager and committed to see this project through to completion," Mann said.

The Louisville Metro Flood Protection

System consists of a more than 26-miles of levee and floodwall, with 15 federally constructed pumping stations for maintaining interior drainage in times of flooding. The project was constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in response to devastating floods that occurred in the Ohio River Valley in 1937 and was assigned to local interests beginning in February 1957. The project affords protection for loss of life and property damage to the City of Louisville against an Ohio River flood equal to the maximum flood of record in January 1937.

Surveys near Buckhorn Lake leads to discovery of new population of threatened Kentucky Arrow Darter

Abby Korfhage, public affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District recently organized a partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Kentucky Division of Water and the Office of Kentucky Nature Preserves to monitor for Kentucky Arrow Darter populations around Buckhorn Lake in Buckhorn, Kentucky. The Kentucky Arrow Darter is a federally threatened fish species from the upper Kentucky River Basin.

Surveys from May 2023 discovered a previously unknown population of Kentucky Arrow Darter on fee lands near Buckhorn Lake. Wildlife Biologists Steele McFadden and Jeff Hawkins and Limnologist Zac Wolf led the effort for the Louisville District.

“Environmental Support Section in Planning has been working for several years to develop a better understanding of what rare species occur on our lake projects. This is critical baseline information that needs to be collected, because it allows us as an agency to make management decisions for the lake that protect these resources and potentially grow them,” McFadden said. “When I first started with USACE nearly four years ago, I was surprised at how little we knew about



Louisville District Wildlife Biologist Steele McFadden and team performs surveys around Buckhorn Lake in Buckhorn, Kentucky.



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District recently organized a partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Kentucky Division of Water and the Office of Kentucky Nature Preserves to monitor for Kentucky Arrow Darter populations around Buckhorn Lake in Buckhorn, Kentucky.

what actually lives in our lake projects. I think a lot of people just assume that we know what's out there, but our region is very biologically diverse, especially in Kentucky. You really need boots on the ground looking for these special species and habitats, because so often they only occur in a very small area, and once they are lost it is very challenging to get them back.”

In Fiscal Year 2022, the district received funding to conduct Kentucky Arrow Darter surveys.

“I reached out to Zac Wolf from our Water Quality team to discuss my thoughts and see if he had any recommendations for the study, and it made sense for us to team up and collect Kentucky Index of Biotic Integrity data at the same time,” McFadden added. “Kind of a way to synergize with the funding and get a win-win for both our teams. We reached out to Mike Compton at the Office of Kentucky Nature Preserves and Mike Floyd at the USFWS and there was immediately a lot of interest in working together on this. It quickly turned into a multi-agency effort.”

According to the team, the surveys conducted served two purposes, and one of those purposes was to identify locations of fish species that are rare, endangered or threatened that occur on Louisville District property or waterbodies affected by Louisville District operations and activities.

“Awareness of these locations are important when making considerations on what USACE does so that we can minimize impacts to species of conservation concern,” Wolf said. “This study is special because we already know the Kentucky Arrow Darter occurs in the Buckhorn Lake Basin, but there are many data gaps on where specifically it is around the lake.”

The other reason for conducting these surveys was for the team to determine the overall water quality of the streams that flow into the lake as well as the tailwater downstream of the dam.

“Measuring the fish community can tell you the quality of the habitat because we know what a healthy fish community should look like,” Wolf said. “If you catch very few species and they are mostly species that are tolerant to pollution, then that indicates poor water quality. If you catch several species including many species intolerant to pollution, then that indicates good water quality. Biological assessments, like this, have the advantage of showing the overall health of the ecosystem over the long-term. Measuring water quality from water samples only captures the quality at a particular time and space. Plus, you actually get to see the impacts on the aquatic ecosystem.”

Several of the streams that flow into Buckhorn Lake were surveyed and KIBI

Continued on next page

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data was collected. The new population discovered was located in a stream that flows directly into the lake and is disconnected from stream-like habitats. Because this species has never been found in lake-like habitats, this new population is likely isolated from populations in other streams and vulnerable to pollution and land use changes that could more easily wipe it out, according to Wolf.

“The KIBI is basically a formula that you plug in your sampling results –how many species you found, how many individuals from each species, how many species that were pollution intolerant, etc.— and it spits out a score that tells you how healthy the fish community is,” Wolf said. “The KIBI can tell you if it’s very good, good, fair, poor, etc.”

With finding this new population, USACE can now better conserve threatened

and endangered species on their lands.

According to the Federal Register, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined the Kentucky Arrow Darter (*Etheostoma spilotum*), a fish species from the upper Kentucky River Basin in Kentucky, as a threatened species status under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

“The Kentucky Arrow Darter is a beautiful, charismatic species found only in a few places in Kentucky, and we are lucky to have such a special fish in our backyard,” Wolf said.

McFadden agreed.

“The streams in Eastern Kentucky are absolutely beautiful and they support fish that are equally as stunning, sporting every color of the rainbow,” McFadden added. “To be able to work to protect this diversity is a dream come true.”



USACE

A previously unknown population of Kentucky Arrow Darter is found at Elkhorn Creek in the Kentucky River Basin.

Green River Lake becomes temporary paratrooper drop zone

Charles Delano, public affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District park rangers worked with the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Department to safely cordon off an area within Green River Lake for Kentucky National Guard Soldiers to parachute, Aug. 5, 2023, in Campbellsville, Kentucky.

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers along with Campbellsville Fire and Rescue and Kentucky Fish and Wildlife have been extremely accommodating in assisting us with ensuring the safety of our paratroopers,” said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Raymond Lunger, 20th Special Forces Group Military Intelligence Company readiness NCO and jumpmaster. “Working with the Army Corps of Engineers has been great. They have been extremely helpful and go out of their way to ensure we are taken care of for the airborne operation.”

The Kentucky National Guard chose Green River Lake to conduct a deliberate water jump because the size of the water area that is available to parachute is sufficient to safely accommodate paratroopers and their parachutes. Additionally, the available space at boat ramp one was able to accommodate the types of boats required for the operation. With the exception of 2022, the Kentucky National Guard has been parachuting into Green River Lake since 2011.

“The National Guard training day at Green River Lake is an event where the



Charles Delano

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District park rangers and Kentucky Fish and Wildlife officers cordon off a 'drop zone' for paratroopers to jump into Green River Lake, Aug. 5, 2023, in Campbellsville, Kentucky.

Kentucky National Guard, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Campbellsville Fire-Rescue, Kentucky Department of Parks, and USACE come together to ensure safe and successful training occurs,” said Lori Brewster, Green River Lake park manager. “It turns into a community event because it is publicized and members from the local community come out, set up on the dam or the visitor center point to watch the guardsman drop into the lake.”

To ensure a safe event for everyone, USACE park rangers ensured the jump area was clear of obstacles, coordinated communication between participating agencies and provided traffic control on the dam. During the jumps, park rangers directed boaters outside of the ‘drop zone’



Charles Delano

Soldiers with the Kentucky National Guard and other units practiced water jumps from a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter as family members and Green River Lake visitors watched from the dam and shoreline.

and assisted lake patrons and spectators.

“It’s just an enjoyable day and a joint cooperation between many agencies to make it happen,” Brewster said.

USACE completes unique live-fire range at Fort Knox

Charles Delano, public affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District completed construction of the Digital Air-Ground Integration Range at Fort Knox, Kentucky, June 9, 2023. The range complex is designed to replicate a complex operational environment and serves to train and qualify soldiers to detect, identify, engage and defeat stationary and moving targets.

The \$25 million contract for the construction of the high-tech live-fire range includes more than 400 target emplacements, which will accommodate new and renovated stationary and moving infantry and vehicle targets. The construction contract which also included an urban cluster, machine gun bunkers and new range control tower was awarded on Sept. 26, 2019.

The design for the roughly 2,000 square-acre range, which is only the second of its kind, was completed in-house by USACE engineers at the Louisville District.

“With the design being in-house, it made it easier for us in the construction division to communicate with the designers because they were with USACE,” said Drake Sullivan, USACE project engineer. “Streamlined communication helped the project move along quicker without needing to go through a third-party Architect-Engineer firm.”



A berm wall of a mobile armor target is being constructed with steel h-piles and wooden railroad ties.

The sheer size and environmental attributes of the project posed some unique challenges for construction. Travel through the construction site would often take 30 to 45 minutes to traverse. Partly due to the nearly three-and-a-half-mile length and partly due to the range occupying a low-lying area with a high-water table, the muddy conditions and river obstacle required constant communication between construction teams.

“It was a huge challenge for the contractor to supervise and communicate with the different construction teams because of the way the range is laid out,”

Sullivan said. “It was equally as difficult for us to navigate the range to complete our quality assurance checks.”

Another challenge was the fact that large portions of the existing range were not yet cleared of munitions. A staggered notice to proceed was implemented to allow construction to start in specific areas while other areas were being cleared of munitions.

“To overcome this challenge, we communicated very heavily with the contractor and the rest of the USACE team,” Sullivan said. “This project has had a great safety record that reflects no reportable or lost-time accidents.”



A battlefield trench and machine gun bunker of Fort Knox's digital air-ground integration range are completed and are awaiting revegetation.



The tank bridge that provides access across the Rolling Fork River is refurbished to ensure safe access down range. The design for the roughly 2,000 square-acre range, which is only the second of its kind, was completed in-house by USACE.

Regulatory Division plays vital role in protecting the nation's aquatic resources



Photo courtesy of Sarah Atherton

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District Regulatory Division team participates in a training course and takes hydraulic measurements of Floyd's Fork in Louisville, Kentucky.

Abby Korfhage, public affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District Regulatory Division plays a vital role in protecting the nation's aquatic resources, as USACE evaluates permit applications for essentially all construction activities that occur in the nation's waters, including wetlands.

Regulatory Division also initiates compliance and enforcement actions as required to ensure strong protection of aquatic resources and navigation.

"Our mission is to protect the nation's aquatic resources and navigation capacity while allowing reasonable development through fair, flexible and balanced permit decisions," said Eric Reusch, USACE Louisville District Regulatory Division chief. "We try to find the balance. There is an environmental resource protection aspect of it but also understanding the need for development and timely regulatory decisions. Our role is like that of a mediator, and we make decisions that strike that balance."

The Louisville District's Regulatory Division is responsible for administering the Regulatory Program in the majority of Indiana and Kentucky, the southeastern portion of Illinois, and the Ohio River in southwestern Ohio. The Regulatory Division evaluates permit applications for essentially all work that occurs in waters of the United States that are regulated by USACE pursuant to Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Some examples of areas that may be within USACE jurisdiction include marshes, swamps, streams, rivers and lakes.

All regulated activities occurring within jurisdictional areas require a permit from USACE. Some example activities that require a permit include dredging of waterways, bank stabilization, recreational

ponds and lakes, as well as the construction of piers, docks, marinas, fleeting areas, boat ramps, roads, residential and commercial developments, utility lines and mining activities.

The Corps' Regulatory Program plays an integral role in ensuring environmental and other public interest factors are addressed in the planning and construction of many development projects, although this role may not always be apparent to the general public, according to Reusch.

For example, the construction of the \$5.8 billion Ford Blue Oval SK Battery Park in Glendale, Kentucky, is one of the largest economic developments in the history of the Commonwealth, and Louisville District's Regulatory Division played a significant role in getting the project off the ground by ensuring the developer met necessary environmental and cultural resource requirements.

Last year, a piece of Louisville's history was preserved thanks in part to the Regulatory Division's efforts to ensure a development project complied with the National Historic Preservation Act. The Paget House, a home which was originally built in the late 1700's and then added onto in the early 1800's at the request of Margaret Wright Paget, a descendant of George and Martha Washington, was restored as part of a preservation project required by the USACE permit.

In February 2021, a smokestack, associated with the demolition of the former Beckjord Generating Station, toppled into the Ohio River in New Richmond, Ohio. The waste debris in the river caused concerns from the local communities, and Regulatory Division, under the authorities of the Rivers and Harbors Act and Clean Water Act, quickly completed an enforcement action requiring the contractors to clean it up and ensure

safe navigation in the river.

"The vast majority of our work is looking at permit applications for proposed impacts to waters of the U.S." Reusch said. "Primarily we are looking at avoidance or minimization of those impacts. So, the developer will come in and propose something on a plan, and we will look at that and work with them to minimize the impacts to aquatic resources and any endangered species or historic properties that are associated with that work."

During the permit process, USACE considers the views of other Federal, state, and local agencies, interest groups, and the general public. The results of this careful public interest review are fair and equitable decisions that allow reasonable use of private property, infrastructure development, and growth of the economy, while offsetting the authorized impacts to the waters of the U.S. The adverse impacts to the aquatic environment are offset by mitigation requirements, which may include restoring, creating and preserving wetlands and streams.

Environmental policies and laws are ever-changing due in part to shifting priorities of different presidential administrations. This requires Regulatory Division to remain flexible and adaptable, according to Reusch.

Just last fiscal year, Louisville District's Regulatory Division issued 960 regulatory permits, which authorized impacts to approximately 240,000 linear feet of streams and 105 acres of wetlands. Approximately 162,958 mitigation credits were required to offset these permitted impacts. The team also completed 352 jurisdictional determinations and resolved 51 enforcement actions to ensure protection of aquatic resources and navigation.

"We have three branches which includes the North Branch and the South Branch - who take care of our permitting workload and we have a third branch for mitigation, compliance, and enforcement," Reusch said. "We also have field offices in Newburgh, Indiana, at Carr Creek in Sassafras, Kentucky, and in Indianapolis, Indiana."

The multidisciplinary regulatory team is currently made up of 34 employees, which consists of biologists, geologists, soil scientists, physical scientists, archeologists, geographers and engineers.

Louisville VA project to include two parking garages

Michael Maddox, public affairs

One major difference the new Louisville VA Medical Center will boast over the current Robley Rex VA Medical Center is the addition of two parking garage structures compared to surface lot parking for patients. It's hoped that these parking garages will be a welcomed addition for patients as they will not only provide more parking but provide shorter distances to the medical center.

One garage will be located on the north side of the medical facility – providing more than 1,200 parking spaces including nearly 90 handicapped spaces. There will also be a south parking garage, which will provide another 1,200 parking spaces for patients that includes another 60 handicapped spaces.

Will Jasper, a quality assurance representative on the project for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District, said the garages were designed to accommodate the many visitors a facility of this size receives.

“When designing the garages, the designers had to think about many things such as making sure we will have enough parking for all staff, patients and visitors, and making sure that there will be an easy way to access each of the garages,” he said. “They also needed to take into consideration that some veterans may have issues that prevent them from moving around very well so the access to the hospital needed to be as easy as possible for these people.”

Some of these considerations include having 39 of the many handicapped parking spaces in the north garage on the first floor, as well as walkways from the garages to the medical facility.

While the two parking structures will be fairly similar, there are a few differences, said Nick Shell, a quality assurance representative on the project for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District.

“The most noticeable difference between the two garages is that the north garage is all above ground, whereas the first level on the south garage will be slightly underground. Because of this, there will be an entrance and an exit on both the first and second floors of the south garage due to the slope it is being placed in,” he said. “The north parking garage will be strictly level with the earth so there will only be access to the medical center via the first floor. Also, the north garage is only six floors whereas the south garage will have seven floors.”

Both the north and south garages are



Michael Maddox

A contractor guides one of the precast concrete pieces of the North Parking Garage into place on the site of the Louisville VA Medical Center June 28, 2023. The North Parking Garage will provide more than 1,200 parking spaces, including nearly 90 handicapped spaces.

being constructed using precast concrete pieces that are being assembled on-site to create the parking structures.

“These huge pieces are formed and poured in a plant offsite and hauled to the site where they are unloaded and placed together just like a large Lego set. Then when they are set together, the pieces are welded together at tabs in between which helps to hold everything in place,” Jasper explained. “There are also spots on the garage that are unfinished which will get a field applied topping in order to ensure everything drains the correct way once it is complete.”

“After that, there are many other key pieces to the garages that need to be added like the parking finishes, elevators and stairs before they are complete,” he added.

The north garage will have four elevators on the south end, which is closest to the hospital building, to provide easy access to the ground level of the building. It will also have two stair towers for use.

The construction of the precast concrete pieces for the north garage began

November 2022 and was completed July 2023. It's expected to be completely finished September 2024. Work has recently begun on the south garage with drilled pier work for the foundation starting in June 2023.

The \$910 million project includes the construction of a new 910,115 square-foot medical center, parking structures, a 42,205 square-foot central utility plant, roadways, sidewalks and other site improvements.

The new 104-bed, full-service hospital will provide world-class healthcare for more than 45,000 veterans in Kentucky and Southern Indiana by integrating modern patient-centered care concepts to provide the best possible care for veterans. In addition, to specifically address the needs of women veterans, the new hospital will include a Women's Health Clinic with four Patient Aligned Care Teams.

The project designed by URS-Smith Group Joint Venture is being constructed by Walsh-Turner Joint Venture II, Chicago, Illinois.

Construction is anticipated to be complete in 2026.



Michael Maddox

The North Parking Garage will have four elevators on the south end to provide easy access to the ground level of the hospital.



Michael Maddox

Construction of the North Parking Garage began in November 2022.

Louisville District welcomes new district commander



Louisville District employees gathered to witness Col. L. Reyn Mann assume command of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District in a change of command ceremony at the Henry Clay Building in Louisville, Kentucky, July 27, 2023.

Abby Korfhage, public affairs

Col. L. Reyn Mann assumed command of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District in a change of command ceremony held at the Henry Clay Building in Louisville, Kentucky, July 27, 2023.

As commander of the Louisville

District, Col. Mann will provide strategic direction, and command and control for the district's \$1 billion workload including civil, military, environmental and Interagency and International Services programs.

"I'm committed to giving you everything I have each day," Mann said. "You have

an outstanding reputation of delivering programs and quality projects on time and within budget. There are no words to describe how honored I am to join this winning team."

Mann, a native of Fair Play, South Carolina, commissioned in the Engineer Branch May 27, 2000, upon graduation from the United States Military Academy at West Point. Prior to joining the Louisville District, Mann served as the Headquarters G3, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Washington DC. In this assignment, she was responsible for operations, training and plans for the enterprise.

Mann's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Navy Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Parachutist Badge, Air Assault Badge, and the German Armed Forces Efficiency Badge (Gold).

She is a registered Professional Engineer in the State of Missouri and has a Project Management Professional certification.

Coombs' success in running mirrors success in USACE



Craig Coombs, chief, Environmental Support section pictured during his first marathon – the 2012 Kentucky Derby Marathon.

Charles Delano, public affairs

Completing one marathon is an accomplishment for some and a goal for many others. For Craig Coombs, U.S.

Army Corps of Engineers Environmental Support Section chief, that number is 51, or a marathon in every state plus Washington D.C. He has completed marathons in 18 states so far and has plans to complete five to six marathons per year until his goal is met.

The 21-year Louisville District veteran's first marathon was the Derby Festival Marathon in 2012. His approach to running is the same as his approach to successfully completing environmental projects for USACE - planning, maintaining consistency and celebrating the wins.

"Looking back to celebrate the wins is an important part of anything in life," Coombs said. "After completing 23 miles of the Chicago Marathon, I was averaging an eight-minute pace then slowed to an eight-thirty pace for my last 5k. I could have focused on the slower pace but ended up running my personal record."

Coombs started in the Louisville District Engineering Division Co-operative Student Internship Program in May 2002, while attending Murray State University, eventually earning an environmental

engineering technology degree in May 2004.

He has worn many hats at USACE including intern, project engineer, project manager, program manager and chief. Coombs has many memories during his eleven years of supporting the Reserve mission and recalled his most memorable time as supporting the people of New York during Super Storm Sandy. He enjoyed the experience because he saw the capabilities of USACE put to good use helping people after the storm.

When asked about how he faces challenges with running or when completing a project for USACE, Coombs said that making short-term attainable goals was the key to successfully overcoming the challenge.

"Craig puts great emphasis on the goals he has set and achieved for himself both as a marathon runner and a Section Chief in Project Management," said Rachael Haunz, chief, Military/IIS Project Management Branch. "His goals and achievements are an inspiration to all around him!"

Louisville District hosts 2023 Governor's Scholar Program

Katie Chandler, public affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District hosted 55 high school students participating in the 2023 Kentucky Governor's Scholars Program and their instructors at McAlpine Locks and Dam in Louisville, Kentucky, July 19.

According to the Governor's Scholars Program website, this program is a five-week summer residential program for outstanding high school students in Kentucky who are rising seniors. The program originated in 1983 as a result of Kentucky leaders' concern that the state's "best and brightest" were leaving the Commonwealth to pursue educational and career opportunities elsewhere without fully understanding the potential of their talents at home.

Scholars in Engineering focus areas came from two of the three GSP campuses, Morehead State University and Centre College, to participate in the field trip to McAlpine Locks and Dam. The Louisville District has been hosting scholars from GSP since the early 2000's and has hosted scholars at a variety of project sites over the years including Fort Knox, Taylorsville Lake, William H. Harsha Lake and McAlpine Locks and Dam.

"As a Governor's Scholar Program alum (1987, Centre College), I thoroughly enjoy having the chance to talk with scholars each year, tell them what a great team the Louisville District is, see them work through the design exercise, and let them see that the need for USACE engineers to solve our nation's toughest problems is greater than ever," said Steve Thibaudeau, chief of



Katie Chandler

A group of 55 high school students join together on the observation deck at McAlpine Locks and Dam before the day's activities, which included surveying exercises, a site visit to Sand Island to complete a mock project and a briefing from McAlpine Locks and Dam Lockmaster, Jay Rickman July 19, 2023.

the Louisville District Civil Design Section in Engineering Division. "Every year the scholars impress me with the questions they ask and the solutions they develop. If we can attract these students to careers with USACE, they'll certainly have an impact in delivering our mission."

The Louisville District partners with the Society of American Military Engineers each year to educate students about the engineering design process and the missions of USACE and SAME. SAME is a professional organization of approximately 30,000 architects, engineers, constructors, consultants, and suppliers of engineering products. SAME members lead collaboration between government and industry to solve national infrastructure challenges. SAME also provides multiple, substantial scholarship opportunities,

primarily to students entering a science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) degree program.

Kate Brandner, the SAME Kentuckiana Post Treasurer, briefed the students on the benefits of SAME.

"SAME-Kentuckiana Post was thrilled to be a part of this outreach," Brandner said. "SAME is committed to building the nation's STEM pipeline. We relished the opportunity to talk with the best and brightest, those eager to have careers in engineering and hope we developed in them a desire to be involved in SAME. We took the opportunity to make GSP attendees aware of great things SAME offers, such as annual scholarships, training, camps, and mentoring. SAME wants to continue their interest in engineering and leadership for years to come."

The day's activities started with presentations on the USACE mission, the SAME mission, and locks and dams. Students then participated in a briefing on the McAlpine Locks and Dam at the visitor's area with Lockmaster Jay Rickman, a site visit to the design exercise location and outdoor surveying exercises using levels and laser rangefinders.

"I was proud to share an overview of McAlpine Lock operations with the Kentucky Governor's Scholar Program," Rickman said. "The tour included discussions on history, water management, construction techniques and emergency action plans. The opportunity to share real world challenges that are part of managing a facility of this size is important for our



Katie Chandler

Lockmaster, Jay Rickman, providesw students with an overview of McAlpine Locks and Dam where he discussed history, water management, construction techniques and emergency action plans.

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future engineers. The site visit reinforced my feeling that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and McAlpine Locks will be in good hands, their sense of wonder and spirit of learning was refreshing for me personally. Programs and outreach such as this will certainly benefit our nation in the future.”

After lunch, teams of 6-7 scholars participated in the design exercise to “design” a roadway, bridge, new nature

center, and parking lot on Sand Island near McAlpine’s facility in Louisville, Kentucky.

Students enjoyed the hands-on activities and received a practical introduction to the engineering design process.

One student commented that the field trip and design exercise represented civil engineering well and that it was engaging, interactive and properly aligned with their purpose here.

Denise Owens, the GSP Engineering focus area instructor from Centre College agreed.

“Many of the scholars said it was their favorite field trip of the summer,” Owens said.

The day’s activities benefit the scholars, and are an outstanding opportunity to recruit high-achieving students to the engineering profession and USACE.

District employees receive national recognition

LOUISVILLE DISTRICT NATIONAL AWARD WINNERS



**LAUREN
ALEXANDER**



**KATHY
FEGER**



QUYET LA



**DERYCK
RODGERS**



**BRANDON
BRUMMETT**

★ **Montgomery Lock - New River Chamber BIM Team**

★ **Patrick Air Force Base - 130J General Maintenance Hangar & Westover Air Reserve Base Regionalized Isochronal Maintenance Hangar**

Kelsie Hall, public affairs

Five Louisville District employees have recently been recognized at the national level for their outstanding contributions to their profession and to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and its missions.

“I am truly impressed by the exceptional caliber of professionals within the Louisville District,” said Louisville District Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Guillermo Guandique. “Their recent recognition at the national level is a testament to their commitment and dedication to public service and the Corps of Engineers.”

Lauren Alexander, chief of Hydraulics and Hydrology Modeling Section, was awarded Climate Champion of the Year for her contributions to the USACE Climate Preparedness and Resilience Community of Practice through technical work, leadership, and mentoring. Alexander was recognized specifically for serving as the lead on the update of the Civil Works Vulnerability Assessment Tool, which aims to capture the vulnerability of USACE infrastructure regarding climate exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity. In addition, she led the riverine mapping teams for the International DoD Climate Assessment

Tool and the Climate Assessment Tool for partner nations, which included developing 1 percent annual exceedance probability mapping for 71 international military installations and six partner nations.

Kathy Feger, civil engineer, was recognized as Structural Engineer of the Year for her leadership and expertise in advancement in the field of structural engineering, faithful commitment to excellence, duty, and her tireless efforts continuing to drive USACE forward as a world-class leader in engineering. She has led efforts as a structural technical lead for the Montgomery Lock Megaproject, New 3rd Lock at the Soo Lock Megaproject, and operations and maintenance projects for Markland, Smithland, JT Myers, and Olmsted Locks and Dam.

Quyet La, Louisville District value officer, was awarded Value Engineering Professional of the Year for his leadership, workload execution and mentorship within USACE fulfilling many needs at Louisville District, Europe District, and Great Lakes and Ohio River Division. La has led the district in exceeding cost avoidance and savings goals with high returns on investments, putting the Louisville

District as a leader in compliance among the enterprise. He has also solidified the standardization of the Value Engineering program management and championed the approval of the VE pilot program for the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division.

“I am delighted that we have three national award winners from Engineering Division this year,” said Louisville District Engineering Division Chief, Ian Mitchell. “As a fellow alum, I am proud to say that all three are University of Louisville Civil Engineering Department graduates!”

Additionally, Operations Division and Planning, Programs and Project Management Division each had an employee nationally recognized.

Deryck Rodgers, Nolin River Lake project manager, was awarded Natural Resource Management (NRM) Employee of the Year for his outstanding achievements in the field of natural resources management exemplifying the USACE commitment to natural resources stewardship, environmental compliance, and recreation management, as well as demonstrated leadership and commitment to the USACE natural resources management community.

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Rodgers recently served as Project Manager for the revision of the Cecil M. Harden Lake Shoreline Management Plan and currently manages an environmental stewardship program which benefits Nolin River Lake. The program has caught the attention of the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center who is looking at Nolin River Lake as a case study involving novel use for reef ball structures.

Brandon Brummett, Louisville District outreach coordinator, was awarded Silver Jackets Coordinator of the Year for his leadership of the Indiana and Kentucky

Silver Jackets Teams. Silver Jackets teams bring multiple agencies together to find solutions to mitigate flood risks. In 2022, Brummett stepped into the role of Infrastructure Systems Recovery Support Function Field Coordinator following the Eastern Kentucky floods in 2022. Brummett also served as the interim leader of the Indiana Silver Jackets team while a new state lead was identified. His leadership and strong interagency relationships established over the last 15 years as the Silver Jackets Coordinator for Indiana and Kentucky has added great value to these teams and their

recovery efforts.

In addition, Louisville District employees played a significant role as members of the Montgomery Lock – New River Chamber BIM Team, which was awarded the 2023 CAD/BIM Team Award of Excellence. The Patrick Air Force Base – 130J General Maintenance Hangar and the Westover Air Reserve Base Regionalized Isochronal Maintenance Hangar were also selected as winning projects for the 2023 Value Engineering Achievement Award, both from the Louisville Air Force Reserve Program.

Contracting pushes towards fourth quarter finish line

Kelsie Hall, public affairs

The fourth quarter is often the busiest time of the year for businesses and the same is true for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District. However, unlike most businesses who are pushing Black Friday deals and extending hours for the holidays, the Louisville District is feeling the stress a little earlier, pushing to award projects by the end of the fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30.

While the fourth quarter push is felt amongst many divisions within the district, Contracting especially feels the pressure, often making awards literally up to the last minute. In 2022, the final action was awarded at 11:55 p.m. Many projects being worked in the fourth quarter are at risk of being cancelled if not awarded by the end of the fiscal year due to expiring funding from customers.

“The fourth quarter, especially for contracting, is the busiest time of the year. This is the period where we are against the clock to obligate funds for that respective fiscal year,” said Louisville District Contracting Division Chief Misty Bock. “Additionally, we often have numerous projects with tight deadlines. Imagine hundreds of actions that require execution in one month. That is a consistent scene when it comes to the end of the fiscal year for the Louisville District. Since contracting personnel are the last stop in a highly time-constrained acquisition process, our staff usually feels the stress of meeting milestones to deliver for our stakeholders.”

This year, the district continues to be a leading producer for the enterprise with the third highest number of actions executed and the seventh highest total dollars obligated, while also providing support to other USACE districts and emergency response missions. As of Aug. 11, 2023, 1,786 actions had already been executed at a



Members of the Contracting Division Reserves Team discuss the end of year workload during a meeting held Aug. 22, 2023.

value of more than \$630 million.

While the contracting team may make the work look and sound easy, there's a lot more happening behind the scenes to making an award than just pushing an “award” button. Contract actions require multiple rounds of review, including those from the Regional Business Oversight Board, Office of Counsel, coordinate funding with RM, advertisements team, and internal peer reviews to ensure federal and internal policies are being met and best practices are being utilized. These reviews help to mitigate the need for modifications in the future, and ultimately save stakeholders money in the long run.

With so many pieces to the puzzle, Contracting begins planning for end of year workload months in advance. Leadership also places a significant focus on keeping morale high and working together as a team – areas where Contracting Division feels

they truly excel.

“We make great efforts to try to complete activities required as early as possible to help with an expeditious award,” said Bock. “We ensure that each of our team members know to ask for help. While the Contracting Division is consistently good about helping one another, the end of year is when we have ‘all hands on deck’ to ensure that we cross the finish line together.”

“Selfless cooperation is the biggest factor in keeping up spirits during this high-pressure quarter,” added Contracting Officer Blake Gevedon. “In fourth quarter I regularly see folks from the Chief of Contracting to the newest specialist doing what’s needed at the working level to help with team workload, and letting everyone know we’re in it together. Our office truly lives out the spirit that we succeed or fail as a unit, and it turns out our office likes to win.”