

Photo by Stephen Baack

Pictured is the San Gabriel River side of Whittier Narrows Dam in Pico Rivera Aug. 21, the day after Tropical Storm Hilary made landfall. Although the primary purpose of this and other Corps dams is flood-risk management, about 75 percent of stormwater runoff — an estimated 7,000 acre-feet, valued at \$7 million — passed through Whittier Narrows Dam and was captured downstream for groundwater recharge by the Los Angeles County Public Works.

LA District preps for Hurricane Hilary, keeps public safe, captures water from storm

BY DENA O'DELL
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES — In the week leading up to Hurricane Hilary — the first tropical storm to make landfall in Southern California in more than 80 years — the wheels were already in motion for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District.

Hurricane Hilary, which was downgraded to a tropical storm before making landfall Aug. 20, brought heavy rain and localized flooding to parts of Southern California and Nevada. Sporadic showers continued through Aug. 21, with the storm breaking rainfall records.

The LA District was prepared to ensure the safety of its workforce and communities, as well as capture additional water from the storm.

LIFE-SAFETY ALWAYS PRIORITY

On Aug. 17, LA District commander Col. Andrew Baker declared a state of emergency

for the district due to the impending storm. Additionally, the district's Emergency Management Branch activated its Crisis Management Team.

With 17 Corps-owned and operated dams across the district, which includes projects in Southern California, Arizona and portions of Nevada — and a majority of them in the potential path of the storm — the district's Water Management Team ran engineering models, based on the forecasted precipitation, to produce inundation mapping.

"Because all of the LA District's reservoirs were dry, the models' simulation predicted that all reservoirs would be able to contain rainfall from Tropical Storm Hilary," said Tim Fairbanks, chief of the LA District's Hydrology and Hydraulics Branch, Engineering Division. "As a precaution, the team ran the models based

New district commander honored, grateful to be part of LA District team

BY STEPHEN BAACK
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

As the newest commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, Col. Andrew Baker is exactly where he wants to be, even if it wasn't where he expected as a young cadet in the late 1990s.

Baker, who majored in civil engineering at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, originally had his sights set on becoming an aviator.

"I was obsessed with flight as a kid — 'Top Gun' had just come out, and before that, 'Iron Eagle' — but I also wanted to go to West Point," said Baker, who comes from an Army family. "When I got there, I wanted to be a helicopter pilot."

During his medical evaluations, however, it was discovered Baker had an astigmatism, which is an imperfection in the curvature of the eye that can cause various distortions in one's vision depending on the severity, including blurriness or double vision in certain circumstances. Although astigmatism is generally common, and he had otherwise perfect vision, his condition disqualified him from a career in aviation.

Although he was let down, he said, things ended up working out in a way he hadn't planned — with the Army placing him exactly where he ended up wanting to be.

"I was really impressed with the engineer officers, who primarily made up the faculty in that department at West Point," he said. "There were some other branches, but it was 80 or 90 percent engineers at the time, and they were great role models."

As a West Point cadet, Baker also had positive experiences during his academic internship with the Corps' Louisville District.

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Leading the way to safety



Photo by Dena O'Dell

Los Angeles District commander Col. Andrew Baker receives a Safety Coin from Chris Rainwater, deputy chief of the LA District's Safety Office, Aug. 28 in Baker's office at the LA District headquarters building in downtown LA. The Safety Coin is given out from the Safety Office to employees who continuously put "Safety First" into all endeavors.



Life is Good
ENJOY THE RIDE!



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I'm humbled, excited to be part of LA District team!

I'd like to start my first district newsletter column with a HUGE thanks to the team for the warm welcome for my family and me!

It is such a privilege and honor to serve with you in the storied Los Angeles District! This district has a phenomenal reputation throughout the entire Corps of Engineers — not only because of the size, scope and significance of the program that we deliver for the nation, but also because of the AMAZING people, who have come through — and continue to serve here.

What we do directly impacts our na-



COL. ANDREW BAKER
LA DISTRICT COMMANDER

tional economy, the safety and welfare of our citizens, and our national defense. It is hard for me to think of a more righteous and worthwhile mission. I am so humbled and excited to be a part of delivering it with you!

A lot has happened in the month or so since I arrived, but I'd be remiss if I didn't mention our phenomenal response to Hurricane Hilary (the first tropical cyclone to hit this region in 84 years for those keeping track)! In short, it could not have gone any better. Very notably, the dire weather forecasts leading up to the storm regarding the amount of water we'd get came true.

Despite this, our flood-control infrastructure did exactly what it was supposed to do. This didn't just happen — it was a team effort across the district — from the folks who provided highly technical and accurate storm and flood modeling for us and many of our partners, to our dam operators, to our Emergency Operations team, Public Affairs Office, Reservoir Operations Center, homeless outreach team and SO MANY others. This was truly a district-wide effort as we all depend on one another to deliver.

All told, our systems provided vital and highly effective protection to a significant percentage of the population throughout our footprint, AND we were able to capture 19,000 acre-feet of fresh water (enough to fill 9,500 Olympic-sized swimming pools — worth about \$19 million!) with our flood-control structures for local communi-

ties. I hope you are as proud of our collective efforts as I am to be a member of this team. Amazing work!

I've been lucky to have had a part in hosting a number of VIPs and distinguished visitors to the district over the past couple of months. Included on this list are the Mekong Sister River Delegation from Southeastern Asia (including former SPL and future SPD commander Maj. Gen. Kirk Gibbs!) and Pete Perez, the Corps' chief of Engineering and Construction.

I've also gotten around the district a little bit, including visits to our offices at Fort Irwin, Nellis and Creech Air Force bases, Prado Dam and the Long Beach Veterans Affairs medical complex. I am looking forward to making the rounds throughout our entire footprint over the next year or so and meeting and getting to know as many of you as I possibly can. I've also interacted with customers, stakeholders and partners all over and am proud to say the vast majority are happy and extremely grateful for our work.

Once more, it is an absolute honor and privilege to serve with you in the storied LA District!

I wish everyone a great and productive month as we head into the end of fiscal year 2023. Please remember to take care of yourselves, your families and your teammates as we continue to work on achieving Lt. Gen. Scott Spellmon's definition of winning:

SAFELY delivering **QUALITY** projects **ON TIME** and **WITHIN BUDGET!**

Sincerely,

Col. Andrew Baker



Click the links below to find us on social media!



[‘STORM’ continued from Page 1](#)

on two times the forecasted precipitation as a worst-case scenario. Even under these conditions, the model did not result in damages.”

Throughout the storm, the LA District monitored its flood-risk management projects to ensure they continued to operate as designed, as well as coordinated with other agencies and counties to keep communities informed about safety in and around Corps-owned and operated dams, levees and basins during this storm event.

The district’s Reservoir Operations Center was activated Aug. 20 to keep internal and external partners aware of precipitation and elevation levels for the district’s dams and reservoirs in the path of the storm — reporting actual precipitation, ranging from inline to less than what was forecasted.

“All of the LA District’s flood-risk management systems performed as they were designed, with no significant issues,” Fairbanks said.

HOMELESS EVACUATIONS FROM SANTA FE DAM

Additionally, the LA District’s Operations Division activated its Joint Protocol for unsheltered communities, collaborating with multiple agencies to evacuate homeless individuals from rivers and basins in and near Corps-owned dams and waterways.

“Life-safety is always our priority,” said Trevor Snyder, program manager and homeless encampment liaison with the Corps’ LA District. “The (Corps’) Los Angeles District activated its joint protocol for unsheltered

communities, working with multiple resource providers, to ensure the most vulnerable individuals are provided shelter options during this unprecedented storm.”

More than 65 homeless individuals were provided shelter during an Aug. 19 evacuation operation at the Santa Fe Dam, which also included collaboration with the City of Azusa and Irwindale police departments; LA County Sheriff’s Department’s Homeless Outreach Services Team; and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.

COLLABORATING WITH DOD PARTNERS

The LA District also began coordinating with its Department of Defense partner agencies prior to the storm, including the Army, Air Force and Naval Facilities Southwest, to ensure staff members were pre-positioned at military installations to respond to potential storm operations.

Support for shoaling, dredging and marine structures was offered to Navy and Coast Guard partners, although the district did not receive any requests. Navy Facilities Southwest requested follow-on dam safety support to inspect dam structures at their installations.

CAPTURING WATER FOR CONSERVATION DURING, AFTER THE STORM

Throughout the storm, the LA District was able to capture about 19,000 acre-feet of storm water — at a total value of about \$19 million — for ground water recharge from its dams, in collaboration with its partners, while also providing flood protection to the public.

One acre-foot of water is equivalent to 325,851 gallons of water; one-half the size of an Olympic-size swimming pool; and can serve two or more Southern California households for a year.

All projects in the Los Angeles County Drainage Area, including Whittier Narrows, were operated in accordance with the water control manual, to include water conservation during the storm.

About 75 percent of stormwater runoff — an estimated 7,000 acre-feet, valued at \$7 million — passed through Whittier Narrows Dam and was captured downstream for groundwater recharge by the Los Angeles County Public Works.

One hundred percent of water runoff passing through Prado Dam — an estimated 12,000 acre-feet, valued at about \$12 million — was captured downstream for groundwater recharge by the Orange County Water District.

“The forecasts for the region were extensively used in preparation of Hurricane Hilary’s landfall to help predict the potential impact of the storm on the dams and their downstream channels,” Fairbanks said. “This is in line with the Forecast Informed Reservoir Operation, or FIRO, concept; however, because the reservoirs were near empty, no pre-storm releases were required to help manage the event, and the dams were operated per their approved water control manual.”

Some dams in the path of Hurricane Hilary, such as Sepulveda Dam, do not have recharge facilities downstream to take advantage of this opportunity.

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Mojave River Dam and surrounding areas in San Bernardino County, California, are pictured Aug. 21 the day after Tropical Storm Hilary made landfall.

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YEAR-ROUND PREP FOR STORMS

Although Hurricane Hilary’s landfall in Southern California was a rare event, the LA District prepares for storm events year-round through tabletop and joint exercises with its partner organizations and communities.

The district’s Emergency Management Branch is funded to conduct two Flood Control and Coastal Erosion exercises per year. In fiscal year 2023, the EM Branch conducted an exercise focused on the Los Angeles River — with particular emphasis on the relationship between the LA County dams that are upstream of the dams on the LA River — and an exercise with the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs, focused on

supporting small towns, with Duncan, Arizona, used as the case study.

This year, the EM Branch plans to conduct an exercise with the State of Nevada, focusing on the relationship between the nonfederal flood control structures that are near the district’s Pine and Mathew dams. EM specialists also participate in nonfederal partnership and Silver Jackets’ exercises — most recently — the Santiago Creek Dam exercise in August in Irvine, California.

The district’s Dam Safety team conducted two tabletop exercises in fiscal year 2023 — Prado and Whittier Narrows dams. The team is scheduled to conduct seminars for Carbon Canyon, Fullerton and Santa Fe dams in September, incorporating the San Gabriel Levee 3 and 7 into the Santa Fe Seminar.

AFTER-ACTION REVIEW

District leaders involved in the Tropical Storm Hilary response conducted an after-action review Aug. 28 at the LA District headquarters building in downtown Los Angeles to identify what the team did well and what could be improved in preparation for future storm events.

“Everything went as well as it possibly could have,” said Baker, who took command of the LA District in July. “Everything performed exactly like it was supposed to, and there were no casualties. I was so impressed with what the district did and how we came together; the teamwork between all of the different divisions (within the district) was amazing, along with the initiative that our employees showed in this crisis.”



Looking north near the inlet of Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale, California, a higher-than-normal water level is visible Aug. 21 as a result of Tropical Storm Hilary. The dam is located 10 miles upstream of Whittier Narrows Dam and is part of the Los Angeles County Drainage Area flood-control system.



The upstream face of the Rio Hondo side of Whittier Narrows Dam in Montebello, California, is pictured Aug. 21 after Tropical Storm Hilary passed through Southern California the day prior.



Photo by Stephen Baack

Col. Andrew Baker, who assumed the role of Los Angeles District commander in July, foreground left, listens as Derek Walker, Santa Ana River Mainstem project manager with the LA District, right of center, describes the work progress April 6 at Alcoa Dike in Corona, California, as part of his pre-command visit to the district area of operations.

[‘COMMANDER’ continued from Page 1](#)

“I worked with the district commander, who was amazing,” Baker said. “His name was Gary Spear, and he retired a long time ago, and then I worked with and shadowed a captain.”

Baker added he also discovered the Corps offered a program that gives engineer officers a chance to earn a master’s degree in engineering and a utilization tour with the Corps afterward, which also greatly appealed to him.

“I thought, ‘Maybe this is going to be good. Even though aviation didn’t work out, this is super fun,’” he said, adding that engineering began to seem like a better option for him than aviation.

“Of course, aviation is important, but with engineering, there’s a tangible product you’re working on that’s going to help either protect people or serve as a facility for the military to make them better,” he said. “It was then that I realized it was a noble endeavor, so I was excited about that.”

Now, 24 years after graduating from West Point and entering the Army Engineer Branch, Baker said he is excited about serving in the capacity as a district commander — a goal he first set for himself as a cadet after his inspiring introduction to the Corps.

“I feel extremely humbled to have this position and to be working with such a storied district within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,” said Baker, the district’s 64th commander. “It’s got an amazing reputation. To

have the chance to serve with people in this district is a privilege and an honor.”

Baker comes to the LA District from his assignment as the chief of operations for Joint Task Force Bravo at Soto Cano Air Base in Honduras. He’s also served as the commander of the 54th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team in Vicenza, Italy; as the operations and executive officer of the 27th Engineer Battalion at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; and as the commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, with a tour with the division during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005 and 2006.

Other assignments include chief of operations at the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs; Mission Assurance Team deputy team chief at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency; aide-de-camp to the chief of engineers and commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; as a project manager and chief of design for the Corps’ Wilmington District; and as Central America Area commander, where he managed projects throughout the sub-continent for the Corps’ Mobile District.

Baker’s wife also works for the federal government and is still in Honduras with their daughters, as she serves the rest of her tour there, after which they are slated to move to LA to join him.

Baker’s first experience with the LA District was in April during his pre-command visit, when he met with Col. Julie Balten, former LA District commander, and the rest of the district team. During his visit, he had the chance to see Whittier Narrows and Prado dams, the LA River, and projects at the Veterans Affairs medical complexes in Long Beach and San Diego, among others.

“The scale of these things is enormous,” he said. “During my other Corps’ experience, I was in the Wilmington District in North Carolina. It was an awesome mission, but really, when I first got there, it was almost all civil works. We got a little military construction toward the end of my time there, but comparing the scope of what LA does and the mission with Wilmington, the scale here is much bigger, and that struck me when I arrived here: ‘This is serious. These guys are doing a lot.’”

As the commander of the LA District, Baker said is looking for the best ways to help the district team deliver quality projects on time and within budget.

“I’m looking forward to being able to contribute however I can, to delivering the program and also getting to know the people responsible for that — all the talented employees that make up the team,” Baker said. “I enjoy interacting with people, and I like to help solve issues as I can. I’m just looking forward to being part of the team.”

Yorba Linda exercise unites Corps’ partners, stakeholders

STORY AND PHOTO BY JOHN REESE
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PLACENTIA, Calif. — Catastrophic rainfall leading to an imminent uncontrolled flow of the spillway at Prado Dam was the scenario facing multiple city, county and federal agencies at a tabletop exercise July 18 at the Yorba Linda Water District.

Participants in the discussion-based exercise assessed how the Corps’ alert notifications flow for a significant flood event at Prado Dam.

The exercise was conducted by the Los Angeles District and hosted by the Yorba Linda Water District’s general manager, retired Maj. Gen. Mark Toy, himself a former LA District commander. Toy provided opening comments before the exercise, noting the many community stakeholders and partners participating.

“This is a great opportunity to bring all of the agencies together to increase flood-risk awareness, as well as educate them about the dam,” said Kristen Bedolla, deputy lead engineer for the Prado Dam Spillway Modification Project.

The large Yorba Linda Water District conference center was filled by emergency responders and local government representatives.

“We manage a lot of outreach, public engagement and public involvement, as well as stakeholder engagement and in partnership with groups like the emergency management community of practice here,” said Hunter Merritt, social scientist with the Corps’ Institute for Water Resources and an exercise facilitator. “We want to strengthen relationships, so that we can have a friend when we need a friend and not try to make those friendships in the middle of a disaster.”

An important goal of the exercise was for the many different agencies to interact and learn about each other’s capabilities to merge into one emergency operation well before any potential flooding event.

“That’s not the time to start updating your emergency action plan,” Merritt said.

Sgt. Maj. Angela Drew, slated to retire from active duty later this year and currently interning with the LA District’s Emergency Management Branch, was attending her first emergency management tabletop exercise. And while she has a master’s degree in emergency management, the tabletop offered an opportunity for hands-on training to prepare for her future as a Corps civilian.

“It was amazing because I got the chance to work with various agencies in my group, and I’ve learned so much just coming to this exercise,” Drew said. “So many knowledgeable people from various agencies in here. It’s amazing.”



Trevor Snyder, Santa Ana River Basin program manager, right, speaks to city and county emergency responders July 18 in Placentia, California, about the Santa Ana River Mainstem and the potential impact of catastrophic flooding.

Groups sharing tables watched scenario videos before discussing how to respond based on their individual agency’s emergency action plans. Firefighters and hospital managers worked with police officers and politicians to best answer questions posed by the facilitators, such as what equipment was available and how to best deploy it, and how they alert their own personnel or the public.

Some of the participants recognized each other from a 2022 exercise hosted by the Chino Police Department.

“It’s great to give all of our different partners and stakeholders an opportunity to connect with the Corps — another touchpoint,” said Denise School, emergency services coordinator for the Chino Police Department. Chino is upstream from Prado Dam. “Although the scenario itself didn’t necessarily address issues with Chino, it’s going to impact us. It’s always a good idea to get more familiar with the Corps, the dam and other partners we may be assisting with or other impacts that may affect us indirectly.”

Orange Fire Department plans examiner and public information officer Rosie Flores concurred with School on the concept of bringing critical players together before an emergency.

“It’s great to see a combination of different agencies get together and really understand a process like this that we’re not necessarily familiar with on an everyday basis,” Flores said. “Just knowing how the process itself works in the background definitely puts a little reassurance on the lower end for the agencies that may not have to deal with something like this.”

Flores added the exercise helps Orange Fire Department to know the contracts and procedures in place that will enable them to know when they need to activate an emergency operations center.

Corps engineer Jon Sweeten, Reservoir Regulations Section in the LA District’s Engineering Division, helped create the scenario.

“The importance is that people understand what it means when we issue notifications or they at least know who to reach out to for better information,” Sweeten said. “It’s all about making sure we’re clear communicators and that they get follow-up data if they have any questions. It’s really about communication.”

According to Sweeten, this was the first time for the district to conduct a tabletop exercise with Yorba Linda.

Prado Dam is a flood-risk management project constructed, owned and operated by the Corps’ Los Angeles District, located in San Bernardino County, California, about two miles west of the city of Corona, and on the lower Santa Ana River, about 30.5 miles upstream from the confluence with the Pacific Ocean. Prado Dam and Reservoir serves as the principal regulating structure on the Santa Ana River, and is comprised of more than 11,500 acres: 4,100 acres of which are riparian habitat; 4,823 acres are recreation areas, and 2,400 acres of which belongs to the Orange County Water District. The Corps owns 9,100 acres in the basin. The primary authorized purpose of this project is flood-risk management, followed by authorization for recreation and water conservation.



Women’s Equality Day observed at LA District

BY JOHN REESE
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES — A recent “Lunch and Learn” session commemorated the progress made in gender equality in the U.S.

Women’s Equality Day is nationally observed Aug. 26; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District’s program was live-streamed Aug. 17 from its headquarters in downtown Los Angeles.

The program was co-hosted by the district’s Civil Works senior project manager Leanne Van Tuyl and Contracting Division secretary Hillary Innerbichler, with opening comments by deputy commander Maj. Stephen Brooks. Innerbichler is also co-chair for the Federal Women’s Employment Program.

Van Tuyl noted that Aug. 26, 2020, marked the 100th anniversary of the greatest victory of the suffrage movement after women achieved full voting rights “after a courageous and long 72-year political movement carried out by not only women, but also men working together.”

Equality Day is a celebration of the progress made to date for gender equity and represents a call to action to continue progressing toward a fair and equitable life for all of us, Van Tuyl said.

The discussion was well-attended by about 50 participants, mostly virtual, but also by some from their offices, marking the first in-person Women’s Equality Day event since COVID measures were enacted.

“We had a great turnout this time,” Innerbi-

chler said. “I remember our last event was when I first started. And, right before COVID hit, and we had a great speaker. It’s so great to be able to see you guys.”

Innerbichler and Van Tuyl shared anecdotes and stories about remarkable women, who broke glass ceilings and contributed to gender equality throughout American history, focusing mostly on military women.

“All of us stand on the shoulders of those who have been doing the work of advocating for gender equality for generations,” Innerbichler said. “Seek out the past and the present leaders of the movement and have faith in yourself as a future leader.”

She added the LA District has a “fantastic leadership development program.”

“If you want to be a leader, you can make yourself a leader,” she said.

Employees may join the Federal Women’s Employment Program or any of the other Special Emphasis programs offered by the LA District’s Equal Employment Opportunity office.

“Your voice matters,” Innerbichler said.

South Pacific Division Commander Brig. Gen. Antoinette Gant said that Women’s Equality Day presents an opportunity to reflect on the work that still lies ahead.

“We must continue to address the persistent challenges and barriers that women face in various spheres of life,” Gant said. “By advocating for gender equality, breaking down stereotypes and promoting equitable practices, we can build a world where everyone, regardless of gender,

can thrive and reach their full potential.”

LA District deputy commander Maj. Stephen Brooks asked participants to take a moment to reflect on the progress made to gender equality and to recommit to the work that still needs to be done.

“As we know, the fight for gender equality is not new,” Brooks said. “It’s a fight that’s waged for centuries by both men and women all over the world, and while we’ve made a lot of great strides, there’s still much work.”

Innerbichler said even though great women have pushed for women’s equality and broken barriers to give women the rights we currently have, it is never time to stop pushing for gender equality.

“The gap is not closed,” she said. “It is up to us, today, tomorrow, yesterday, to continue the journey and practices that women have been advocating for generations ... even though great women have pushed for women’s equality and broken barriers to give women the rights we currently have,” Innerbichler said. “It is never time to stop pushing for gender equality. The gap is not closed. It is up to us, today, tomorrow, yesterday, to continue the journey and practices that women have been advocating for generations.”

Van Tuyl said we all benefit when we create and enforce a workplace culture free of toxicity and sexism.

“It is up to each and every one of us to commit to a healthy workplace culture,” she said.

LA District commander visits people, project sites

BY BROOKS O. HUBBARD IV
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

FORT IRWIN, Calif. — In an effort to strengthen national security and ensure the readiness of military installations, Los Angeles District commander Col. Andrew Baker embarked on a two-day tour Aug. 17-18 to assess ongoing military construction projects.

Baker, who was accompanied by Justin Gay, LA District deputy district engineer, and John Oshima, chief of the Military Programs and Project Management Division, visited the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, and Creech and Nellis Air Force bases in Nevada, where he witnessed firsthand the significant strides being made in support of the military construction program.

On the first day of the trip, the team met with project engineers and construction operation representatives from the Fort Irwin Resident Engineer’s Office, and toured ongoing military construction projects, including the Fort Irwin Simulations Center, ongoing renovations of the Shockwave Soldiers Club, barracks and the future Training Support Center site.

Shifting focus to Creech Air Force Base, the team had the opportunity to oversee the expansion of crucial infrastructure and operational facilities projects. The upgrades will allow for the integration of advanced technologies, enabling the Air Force to tackle evolving national security challenges.

Lastly, at Nellis Air Force Base, Baker was briefed on the plans to renovate several existing facilities to support the Air Force’s growing needs. Baker said he was deeply impressed by the teamwork, expertise and commitment demonstrated by the Corps’ personnel, who are working diligently to ensure the timely completion of the construction projects.

“The progress and commitment I have seen throughout this tour have been nothing short of impressive,” he said. “Our collaboration with these military bases underscores our shared goal of bol-



Photo by Brooks O. Hubbard IV

Col. Andrew Baker, commander of the Los Angeles District, and Ray Smith, project superintendent, Miwok construction discuss ongoing renovations Aug. 17 at the Shockwave Community Club at Fort Irwin, California. Baker embarked on a two-day tour Aug. 17-18 to assess ongoing military construction projects.

stering national security and demonstrates the district’s dedication to supporting our armed forces.”

Baker assumed command of the LA District July 14.

He is responsible for a \$750-million annual budget for planning, engineering, construction, real estate, regulatory, emergency management and environmental services for three Army and eight Air Force installations, interagency and international customers, and for the nation’s water resources infrastructure in the Southwest, valued at about \$240 million. He leads about 800

military and civilian personnel operating in a 226,000-square-mile area of Southern California, Arizona, Nevada and Utah.

The district also provides engineering, design and construction support services to agencies like the U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as disaster and emergency response support to the nation and contingency operations overseas.

“I’m really looking forward to getting around and meeting everyone as soon as I can,” Baker said.

Multiple agencies collaborate to provide homeless individuals shelter before tropical storm's landfall



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Park Ranger Nick Figueroa assesses the situation, while two law enforcement officers with the Azusa Police Department escort an unhoused individual and her pet for evacuation out of the riverbed near Santa Fe Dam to a hotel in Azusa, California.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DENA O'DELL
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

AZUSA, Calif. — About 65 homeless individuals living in unauthorized areas near the Santa Fe Dam received shelter prior to tropical storm Hurricane Hilary's landfall in Southern California, thanks to the efforts of multiple local, county and federal agencies.

About 35 law enforcement officers with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's Homeless Outreach Services Team, Azusa and Irwindale police departments, along with representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District's Operations Division and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority were out in full force Aug. 19 to evacuate homeless individuals living in the riverbeds near the dam.

The teams began their main sweep of the area in the morning and throughout the day, urging homeless individuals to seek shelter prior to the impending storm.

"Life-safety is always our priority," said

Trevor Snyder, program manager and homeless encampment liaison with the Corps' LA District. "The (Corps') Los Angeles District activated its joint protocol for unsheltered communities, working with multiple resource providers, to ensure the most vulnerable individuals are provided shelter options during this unprecedented storm."

The land is owned and operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Individuals living in Corps-owned lands, rivers and basins can be cited for illegal camping and federal trespassing; however, the goal of all agencies involved over the weekend was to get those in need evacuated and into safe locations.

"We are in a once-in-a-lifetime storm, at least in my lifetime, coming through California," said Azusa City Mayor Robert Gonzales. "As it gets to be a tropical storm, it's still significant and could have significant impacts to the region. I'd rather be prepared for the worst and expect the best."

The LA County Sheriff's Department's

HOST, deployed to the area Aug. 17 and began aerial notifications to unhoused individuals in the area, urging them to seek shelter. The HOST team remained in the area through Aug. 21.

In addition to aerial notifications on a PA speaker from the agency's helicopter, Sgt. Matthew Coppes, lead operations sergeant for the LA County Sheriff's Department's effort, said the team was using all of its department's resources — from the aerial bureau to its mental evaluation team, mounted horse patrol and off-road all-terrain vehicles to ensure they are able to locate every person living in the riverbed, educate them on the dangers from the storm and assist them with interim housing.

"Right now, we have about 20 personnel that we have broken up into separate teams that cover from the Santa Fe Dam, the spillways — all of the way down through the San Gabriel River, Rio Hondo, Coyote Creek and into the LA River," he said.

As of Aug. 19, Coppes said his team — in

['AGENCIES' continued on Page 11](#)



Officers with the Azusa Police Department, along with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Park Ranger Nick Figueroa, look for homeless individuals living in the riverbeds near Santa Fe Dam Aug. 19 in Azusa, California.

['AGENCIES' continued from Page 10](#)

coordination with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority — had contacted about 50 to 60 unhoused individuals, who agreed to accept shelter.

"We are a humanitarian effort. This is what we do," he said. "We go out there with our civilian outreach personnel to make sure we address everyone that is potentially in a life-threatening area, as far as the impending storm and the high floods. Our effort is to make sure no one dies in the riverbed due to this storm and the rising water levels."

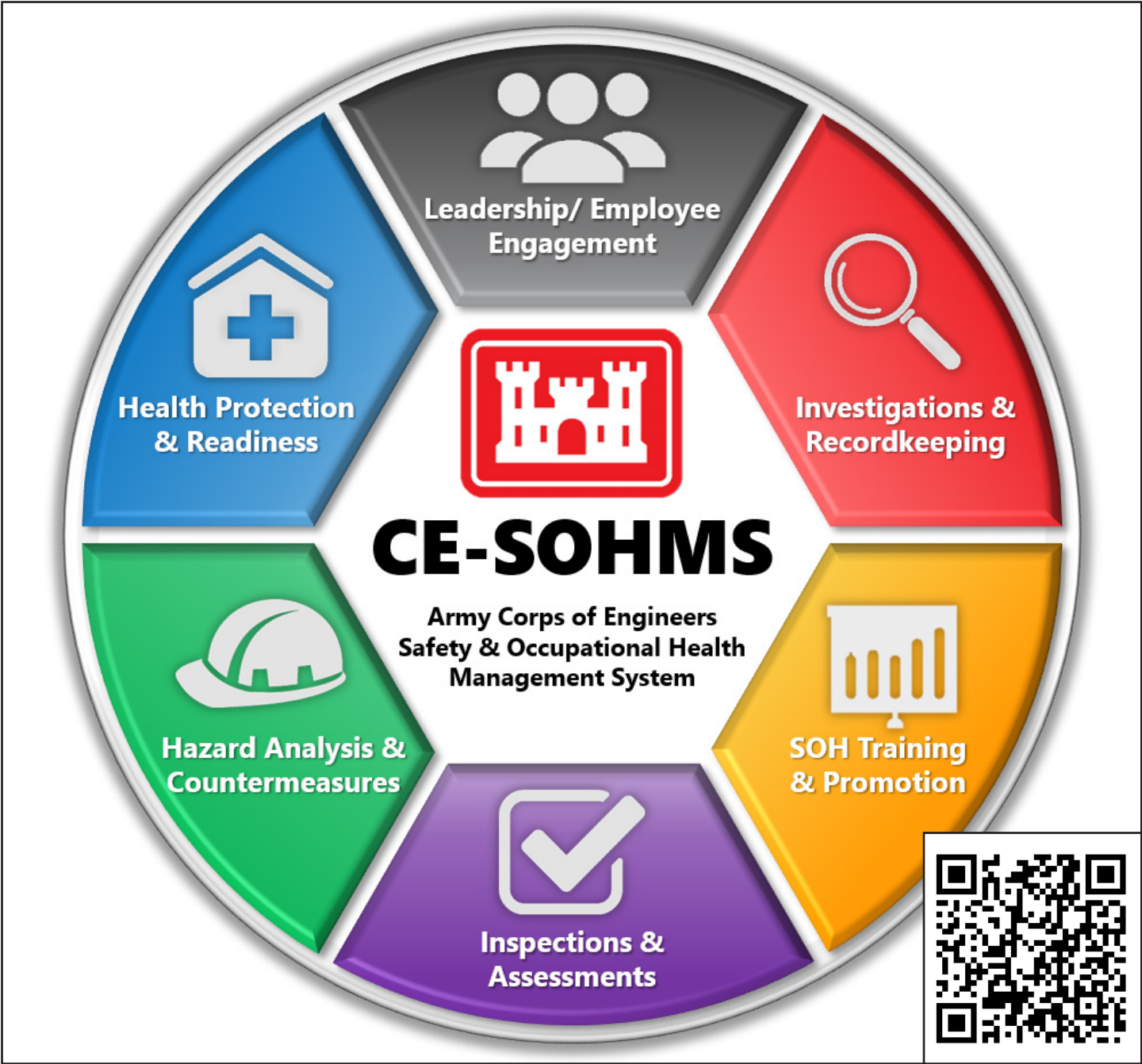
Gonzales said the biggest take-away is being proactive to ensure everyone's safety.

"There are folks in the riverbed, that their safety is compromised, so it's extremely important that we be proactive to protect human lives," he said. "You and I see it on television, our phones and our computers, but these folks, unfortunately, may not have access to that information, so it's important for us to let them know this is real; this is coming."

"You also have to remember in the event of emergencies, we may be stuck and not be able to get to these folks ... so it's better to be proactive and get them out of there for their safety, so that our police officers and first responders can handle other emergencies as they arise."



A representative with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, right, speaks with a homeless individual Aug. 19 near the riverbeds of Santa Fe Dam in Azusa, California.



Courtesy graphic

Safety Perception Survey available now through Sept. 7

LA DISTRICT SAFETY OFFICE

A central and vital component to every safety management system, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Safety and Occupational Health Management System, or CE-SOHMS, is how employees perceive the program.

Do the employees believe that leaders support the program? Do employees feel empowered to participate, even lead, in the safety program? What concerns do employees have about their safety program?

To answer these questions and more, the LA District has contracted with the National Safety Council to administer the Safety Perception

Survey to all district employees. Access the link to the survey by scanning the QR code above with your smartphone, which you can easily complete in only a few minutes. Col. Baker, LA District commander, sent the link to all district employees Aug. 9.

In his email, Baker wrote, “As I work through my onboarding tasks here at SPL headquarters, it is appropriate that my first district-wide send relates to safety. After all, safety is a key component to Lt. Gen. Spellmon’s definition of winning: SAFELY deliver QUALITY projects ON-TIME and WITHIN BUDGET. I humbly ask for your participation in this survey. Your thoughtful an-

swers have the potential to shape our program and make us better.”

Your participation in this survey is critical to our collective success, as we move forward with CE-SOHMS. This is your opportunity to help the commander fine-tune this essential program to ensure it meets its very fundamental primary function — to send all of you home safely to your families each day!

Employees have until Sept. 7 to complete the survey. Have five minutes and want to take it now? Scan the QR code above! For questions, contact deputy chief of Safety Chris Rainwater at Christopher.s.rainwater@usace.army.mil.

Solar energy to power Joint Forces Training Base at Los Alamitos

STORY AND PHOTO BY JOHN REESE
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ALAMITOS, Calif. — Col. Andrew Baker and other leaders with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Energy Resilience Project Aug. 11 at Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos, California.

The project was a joint effort, involving the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Installations, Energy and Environment), California Military Department, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Bright Canyon Energy.

The Corps’ support for the project was provided by the Los Angeles District’s Real Estate Division, which included an array of products and services — from survey and appraisal services to issuance of the solicitation documents and execution of real estate outgrants.

“We worked to provide easements for the start of the project,” said Walter Davis, chief of the Installation Support, Real Estate Division. “We provided an easement, so Southern California Edison, Bright Canyon Energy and Frontier Cable could come in and do the work here. Then, we provided three other easements for each one of them.”

Both the Civil Works Branch, Technical Support section, and the DoD Branch, Installation Support section, contributed to the project. While expediting the easements was the most recent support the LA District provided, the Corps has been actively working the project for more than eight years, starting with drafting of the request for proposals and managing the solicitation process.

The new micro grid will provide the base with 100-percent backup power during emergencies to support the Army and California National Guard’s mission on base. It also generates clean, renewable solar energy during normal operations. It includes 26 megawatts of solar power, a 20-megawatt / 40-megawatt-hour battery, 3 megawatts of power for backup generators and a microgrid control system that can provide power to the training base for two weeks during electrical grid outages.

Noting the importance of the training base’s mission to provide critical emergency support for California, Maj. Gen. Matthew Beevers, Adjutant General, California Military Department, expressed his appreciation for the Corps during his remarks.

“Army Corps is crushing it as they always do, so thank you so much,” Beevers said.

The 100-acre project site is in a remote sec-



Officials gather Aug. 11 for the ribbon-cutting on the Energy Resilience Project at Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos, California.

tion of the base, directly adjacent to its airfield. The ceremony was conducted under an opportune heavy cloud and marine layer that held off intense triple-digit temperatures that week.

Completion of the project is an impressive milestone, said Rachel Jacobson, assistant secretary of the U.S. Army Installations, Energy and Environment.

“It seems like just yesterday that we broke ground on this impressive energy resilience project,” she said. “And, it’s really only a little more than a year ago, so Army Corps of Engineers, you really helped deliver this — thank you so much. I mean, that’s kind of lightning speed to go from breaking ground a year ago to celebrating this ribbon cutting today.”

Jacobson noted there are existing microgrids that supply mission-critical power to particular areas of the base, but this is the first project of its kind to provide a 14-day energy supply for the entire installation, making it a prototype that supports readiness.

Additionally, the project will provide energy for San Diego Gas and Electric to make available for customer use through the California Edison energy transmission system. It supports the Army’s Climate Strategy goal to build a mi-

crogrid on every installation by 2035.

“It’s integrated with the community; it’s integrated with utilities,” Jacobson said. “Also, that’s what we should be doing, what we should strive for. We can’t just be islands. We have to make sure we’re fully integrated with resilience in the community as well.”

Energy-resilient bases are a readiness multiplier, she added.

Deputy undersecretary of the Army Mario Dias said the importance of the project impacts more than Army National Guard readiness because the region is a “doorstep” to the Indo-Pacific area.

“There’s a lot of dialogue and a lot of focus on what happens in the Indo-Pacific region; how we are postured — both in our active armed forces, in particular our Navy and Air Force partners, and, increasingly, the Army’s role in the Pacific,” Dias said. “It all starts right here. This is the doorstep of the Pacific.”

The primary mission of the Joint Forces Training Base at Los Alamitos is to provide a safe and up-to-Army standard training center, operational airfield, storage and repair facility for use by all branches of U.S. armed services, including active and reserve components, in addition to other federal, state and city agencies.



Photo by Brooks O. Hubbard IV

Pete Perez, chief of Engineering and Construction for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, right, meets Aug. 1 with leaders and other subject-matter experts with the Corps' Los Angeles District to discuss recent, ongoing and planned work as part of the Prado Dam Safety Modification and Santa Ana River Mainstem projects. Perez also received a comprehensive overview on both the Carbon Canyon and Mojave River dam safety modification studies. Briefing Perez in this photo is Kristen Bedolla, deputy lead engineer for the Prado Dam Spillway Safety Modification Project.

Corps' Engineering, Construction chief visits LA District to discuss projects

LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Pete Perez, chief of Engineering and Construction for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, met with leaders and other subject-matter experts with the Corps' Los Angeles District July 31–Aug. 2 to discuss recent, ongoing and planned work throughout the district's area of operations.

Perez was joined by John Moreno, programs director for the Corps' South Pacific Division; Susan Lucas, deputy of the South Pacific Division/South Atlantic Division Regional Integration Team; Micah Buchholz, water resources engineer with the Corps' Headquarters; and John Keever, Engineering and Construction chief for the South Pacific Division, as they met with Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander, and Justin Gay, deputy district engineer — as well as a range of LA District key leaders and engineers.

Perez, Moreno, Lucas and Buchholz visited Whittier Narrows and Prado dams to see the

progress of the safety modification projects; see several key areas along the Los Angeles River to better understand the LA River Ecosystem Restoration Project; and receive a comprehensive overview on the Carbon Canyon and Mojave

River dam safety modification studies.

Perez also made time to lead a town hall for Engineering and Construction employees of the LA District.

[‘CHIEF’ photos continued on Page 15](#)



Photo by Stephen Baack

Pete Perez, chief of Engineering and Construction for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, fifth from right, joins leaders and other subject-matter experts with the Los Angeles District for a group photo Aug. 2 as part of his three-day visit to LA to discuss recent, ongoing and planned work throughout the district's area of operations.



Photo by Stephen Baack

Robert Kwan, lead civil engineer with the Los Angeles District's Design Branch, left of center, briefs Pete Perez, chief of Engineering and Construction for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, right of center, Aug. 2 during Perez's three-day visit to LA to discuss recent, ongoing and planned work throughout the district's area of operations.

Priyanka Wadhawan, left, chief of the Los Angeles District's LA Metro Project Branch, Mega Projects Division, gives an in-depth update on the LA River Ecosystem Restoration Project to Pete Perez, chief of Engineering and Construction for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, fourth from left, Aug. 2 during his three-day visit to LA to discuss recent, ongoing and planned work throughout the district's area of operations. At right is Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander.



Photo by Stephen Baack



Members of the Mekong-Mississippi Sister Rivers Partnership Exchange, along with and including representatives from a variety of organizations such as the Mekong River Commission, Mississippi River Commission, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Department of State, gather for a group photo near the entrance to NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory before their Aug. 15 tour of the facilities in Pasadena, California.

LA District hosts 2023 Sister Rivers Partnership Exchange

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

The Los Angeles District hosted the 2023 Mekong-Mississippi Sister Rivers Partnership Exchange Aug. 13-18, which consisted of sharing best practices and cutting-edge technology the U.S. is using to help monitor water, assess climate impacts and forecast flooding.

The Mekong River Commission and Mississippi River Commission Sister Rivers Partnership was launched in 2010 to promote the sharing of best practices in water and river management through collaborative engagements and technical exchanges. The goal of the exchanges is to reinforce partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region and the commission's role in the U.S. Global Water Strategy.

Representatives from a variety of organizations participated, including the Mekong River Commission, Mississippi River Commission, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the International Boundary and Water Commission and the U.S. Department of State. Countries representing members on the Mekong River Commission include Vietnam, Lao PDR (Laos), Cambodia and Thailand.

The Mekong-Mississippi Sister Rivers Exchange is a crucial element to promote and enhance public safety and community welfare by fostering research, improving water resources development and advancing systems for more economical, efficient and environ-

mentally sound water resources management in the two river basins.

The group kicked off the formal portion of the event Aug. 14 at the LA District headquarters building, followed by in-depth site visits throughout the week to places such as NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California; the LA Department of Water and Power's Castaic Lake Pumped-Storage Plant

in northern LA County; Prado Dam in Corona, California; Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego; the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant in San Ysidro, California; and the nearby Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, which encompasses the Tijuana River Estuary and Border Fields Park along the U.S.-Mexico border.

[‘EXCHANGE’ photos continued on Page 15](#)



Robert Klein, plant manager for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's Castaic Lake Pumped-Storage Plant in northern LA County, center, leads a tour Aug. 15 during the Mekong-Mississippi Sister Rivers Partnership Exchange, which took place in the LA District's area of operations Aug. 13-18.

[‘EXCHANGE’ photos continued from Page 14](#)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: From left to right: Sivannakone Malivarn, who advises with the Lao National Mekong Committee Secretariat; Sophearin Chea, chief river basin planner for the Mekong River Commission Secretariat; and Santi Baran, chief strategy and partnership officer of the Mekong River Commission Secretariat; walk together Aug. 17 at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography campus in San Diego during the Mekong-Mississippi Sister Rivers Partnership Exchange, which took place throughout the LA District's area of operations Aug. 13-18.

Sophort SO, secretary general of the Cambodia National Mekong Committee, right, listens to a presentation about weather tracking Aug. 17 at the Robert Paine Scripps Forum at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego during the Mekong-Mississippi Sister Rivers Partnership Exchange, which took place throughout the LA District's area of operations Aug. 13-18.

Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander, right, sits with members of the Mekong River Commission and Mississippi River Commission at the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory's Space Flight Operations Facility during a presentation Aug. 15 as part of the Mekong-Mississippi Sister Rivers Partnership Exchange, which took place in the LA District's area of operations Aug. 13-18.



Photo by Robert DeDeaux

Los Angeles District environmental lead and Formerly Used Defense Site program manager Harry Hendler, pictured in white, answers questions for Clark County residents during a public meeting discussing the Nellis Remedial Action FUDS Project July 25 at the Aliante Library in Las Vegas.

LA District FUDS team makes progress on Nellis Remedial Action projects

STORY AND PHOTO BY ROBERT DEDEAUX
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LAS VEGAS — Representatives with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District hosted a public meeting to discuss a Formerly Used Defense Site, or FUDS, project with Clark County residents July 25 at the Aliante Library in Las Vegas.

Geophysicists, munitions experts, chemists and program managers with the South Pacific Division's Sacramento and Albuquerque districts answered questions about the Nellis Remedial Action Munitions Response Site 03 FUDS Project.

"Once the remediation process is complete, the city will benefit by being able to use the land that once presented a potential hazard," said Harry Hendler, Los Angeles District environmental lead and FUDS program manager.

The Department of Defense is responsible for environmental restoration of properties that were formerly owned by, leased to, or other-

wise possessed by, the U.S. and under the jurisdiction of the U.S. secretary of defense before October 1986. The Corps executes the program pursuant to the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liabilities Act.

"MRS 03 is currently in the remedial investigation phase, but after cleanup is completed, the City of North Las Vegas plans to develop the MRS 03 site into a restaurant and entertainment center (will be zoned as commercial area) to support future UNLV-north campus and nearby communities in North Las Vegas," wrote Kay Chang-Minami, Los Angeles District FUDS project manager, in a provided statement.

There are more than 10,000 potential FUDS properties across the country and its territories ranging in sizes from less than an acre to hundreds of thousands of acres. The FUDS areas can be found in industrial or residential areas as well as on federal, tribal or state properties.

"Nellis MRS 03 FUDS Project is going

well," Chang-Minami said. "Stakeholders are currently reviewing the draft final Quality Assurance Project Plan as it relates to remedial investigation process."

The Corps is dedicated to protecting human health and the environment by investigating and, if required, cleaning up potential contamination or munitions that may remain on these properties from past Department of Defense activities.

"Investigation is currently scheduled to start in January 2024 after the holidays," Chang-Minami added.

As of Sept. 30, 2021, approximately 5,400 FUDS areas nationwide have been identified for investigation and cleanup.

The LA District supports the public and military in Arizona with a variety of projects and planning, engineering, construction and environmental services. Projects include flood-risk management, navigation, recreation, and infrastructure and environmental stewardship.

Around the District

"I joined USACE to apply the knowledge I gained from the military as an explosive ordnance disposal technician and give back to our community by facilitating safe cleanup of our public lands."

Mario works on several Formerly Used Defense Sites, or FUDS, projects in California, Nevada and Arizona. He has been with the Corps for two years. Mario is a Marine veteran.



Mario Maldonado
Ordinance Explosive Safety Specialist

From MG to GM



Photo by Stephen Baack

Retired Maj. Gen. Mark Toy, former commander for several divisions with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and a former Los Angeles District commander, talks to LA District employees about the benefits of taking care of people, developing relationships and the power of positivity during one of the district's Leadership Development Program classes Aug. 24 at the LA District Headquarters in downtown LA. Toy is now the general manager of the Yorba Linda Water District.

PREPARE

An emergency kit.



Prepare for disasters to create a lasting legacy for you and your family.

VISIT READY.GOV/PLAN

September is National Preparedness Month. As your children prepare to go back to school, make sure you have a plan in case an emergency happens. Use these tips from [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) to stay prepared for the school year:

- Update records and emergency contacts with your child's school.
- Talk to teachers about their emergency plans. Make sure to discuss with your family.
- Follow the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](https://www.fema.gov) and [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) on Facebook for up-to-date and reliable information.