



Photo by Stephen Baack

Project partners break ground on a solar-over-canal system during a ceremony Nov. 14 for the Gila River Indian Community in Chandler, Arizona. The project, one of the first in the Western Hemisphere, is designed to conserve water and generate renewable energy for the community's tribal irrigation facilities.

USACE joins Gila River Indian Community to break ground on solar-over-canal project

BY ROBERT DEDEAUX AND STEPHEN BAACK
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CHANDLER, Ariz. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers joined the Gila River Indian Community Nov. 14 just outside Phoenix to break ground on one of the first solar-over-canal projects in the Western Hemisphere.

The purpose of the project is to conserve water and generate renewable energy for the community's tribal irrigation facilities using the installation of solar panels over portions of the community's canals to accomplish both functions.

It was about a year ago that Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander, joined Gila River Indian Community Governor Stephen Roe Lewis to sign the project partnership agreement for Phase 1 of the Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project Renewal Energy Pilot Project, which is the Army's first nontraditional Tribal

Partnership Program project using new guidance from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works.

Now, with the Nov. 14 groundbreaking, USACE and the Gila River Indian Community are another step closer to project completion.

"Our strategic vision for the South Pacific Division is delivering bold solutions to serve and strengthen all communities, and this solar-over-canal project is an outstanding example of the kind of bold solutions we are looking for to help protect the community's natural resources," said Col. James Handura, commander of USACE South Pacific Division, which covers 10 western states and four districts – including the Los Angeles District. "This is an innovative and environmentally friendly approach to meet resource challenges and provide renewable energy solutions."

Handura also mentioned this is the first LA District Tribal Partnership Program proj-

ect to reach active construction, which he said "is especially meaningful" to be able to celebrate during National Indian American Heritage Month.

"The South Pacific Division holds deep respect for the more than 180 federally recognized tribes within our region, and we're committed to working together through the USACE Tribal Partnership Program on projects like the one we're going to celebrate today," Handura said.

The estimated cost of this project, dubbed Phase 1, is \$6.7 million. It is expected to produce about 1,000 kilowatts of renewable energy to offset energy needs and costs for tribal farmers.

Phase 1 is designed to cover about 1,000 feet of canal, with the goal of expanding the project to include additional miles of the community's

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For superior service



Photos by Richard Rivera

Sean Hutchison, deputy project manager for the Prado Spillway and Santa Ana River Mainstem projects, Los Angeles District, left, receives the Bronze Order of the de Fleury Medal from Lt. Col. Stephen Brooks, LA District deputy commander, right, during a ceremony Nov. 18 at the LA District headquarters in downtown LA, while Hutchison's wife, Alexandra, looks on. Hutchison received the Bronze Order of the de Fleury Medal for his superior service to the Army Engineer Regiment and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers LA District.

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Moving into the holiday season; November district highlights

SPL Team,

Happy holidays! I'm writing this just ahead of Thanksgiving and looking forward to a "non-standard" celebration this year. My parents have been in San Pedro with us for about a week and are joining the crew for a Grand Canyon road trip. We'll head out early on Thanksgiving Day and rendezvous with my San Clemente in-laws at a "glamping" site just off the south rim. We'll miss the traditional turkey, stuffing, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes ... meal on Thursday, but will do a make-up on Sunday afternoon. Shannon, our girls, the dogs and I got an amazing sneak preview of southeastern U.S. wilderness adventures over Veterans Day weekend at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (see picture). We hiked the "Slot," suffered just three (minor) cactus incidents, made smores and observed the night sky through a cool telescope my uncle brought along, among many other activities. We had a wonderful time, and it was perfect shakedown cruise for our Arizona trip. This one is serious: five adults and two kids in a mid-sized SUV with all gear and luggage on the roof, about 1,000 miles round-trip, three days. ... With any luck, I'll report out in the next edition of *The NewsCastle*!

November was great month for the district. There are too many highlights for one column, so I'd like to hit just a few:

- We kicked off the final portion of our work for Phase 2 of the San Clemente beach renourishment project — an amazing feat that many outside and some inside of SPL thought impossible about a year ago. It truly took a whole-of-district effort to push this one across the finish line. I couldn't be prouder of the team for achieving success in the face of such steep odds!
- We hosted our SPD acting chief of programs, Joe Savage, at our SPL Governance Week. Savage provided welcome outside perspective (he comes to us from the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division) on how we're doing at seeing ourselves from a work-delivery standpoint as the division and USACE Headquarters see us, how we make data-informed decisions on work priorities, workload and hiring, how we



COL. ANDREW BAKER
LA DISTRICT COMMANDER

onboard new SPL teammates and the general vibe of the district. Savage was complimentary with his feedback and provided some great food-for-thought on things we can do from a governance standpoint to keep getting better. Justin and I have shared what we learned with the corporate board and are looking forward to continuing to evolve

our processes in the name of more effectively delivering quality projects safely, on time and on budget.

- We participated in a number of major regional activities with our stakeholders and partners this past month, including the annual Seven Counties meeting, which we hosted out at the Baseyard (phenomenal job by the team putting

this one together); the semi-annual SWD/SPD dam safety board meeting at Prado; and the annual Society of American Military Engineers Dam and Levee Resilience Conference at UC Davis (big thanks to Jon Sweeten and the team for prepping me to represent the district at this one)!

As we head into the holiday season in earnest, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you and the folks you care about the best! I'm so very grateful to be a member of this amazing team charged with delivering such an impactful program. Thanks for all you do for each other and for all those we serve!

Proud to be SPL — and happy holidays to you and yours!

Col. Andrew Baker





Photo by Stephen Baack

Stephen Roe Lewis, Gila River Indian Community governor, speaks during a groundbreaking ceremony Nov. 14 for a solar-over-canal project in Chandler, Arizona. The project, one of the first in the Western Hemisphere, is designed to conserve water and generate renewable energy for the community's tribal irrigation facilities.

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irrigation system — one of the most comprehensive irrigation systems in the state.

Although this project was initially intended to be the first in a series of solar-over-canal projects for the Gila River Indian Community, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation-funded “Phase 2” project, located about 25 miles southeast on the Casa Blanca Canal, was completed first, said David DeJong, director of the Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project.

“We understand there is a process that the Corps follows, and I believe we fulfilled that process,” said DeJong, who oversees all planning, design and construction of the P-MIP system, including the solar projects. “We are so very appreciative of the community being part of the first-ever (Tribal Partnership Program) project, which, in and of itself, is quite an accomplishment.

“As importantly, this agreement is a reflection of the federal government’s trust responsibility with tribal nations and that the U.S. is taking a whole-of-government approach to working with tribal communities on such important climate change issues as are being addressed by this project. Equally important, this project is enhancing the federal-Indian relationship but enabling tribal nations to be fully self-sufficient.”

DeJong said the groundbreaking is yet another milestone in helping the Gila River Indian Community become carbon neutral with respect to their irrigation project, which he said uses about 20,000 kilowatt hours of power. Once all four projects are up and running, DeJong anticipates the system will be able to generate 70 percent of that power in the form of clean, renewable energy.

“These goals of solar energy fit well with the community’s core cultural values (or ‘him-

dag’) of being good stewards of its resources and reducing the impacts of climate change,” DeJong said. “We believe there are ancillary effects that benefit everyone, including conserving water from evaporative losses.”

While current projections suggest a reduction in evaporation losses of about 50-60 percent (totaling about 7-acre feet on Casa Blanca Canal and about 5-acre feet on the one in Chandler) over the 25-year life expectancy of the projects, the amount of conserved water is potentially in the thousands of acre feet, DeJong said.

Stephen Roe Lewis, governor of the Gila River Indian Community, said he can trace the beginnings of the project back to November 2021 when he attended President Joseph Biden’s Tribal Nations Summit in Washington D.C. and was challenged with the question of how tribal nations are helping address climate change.

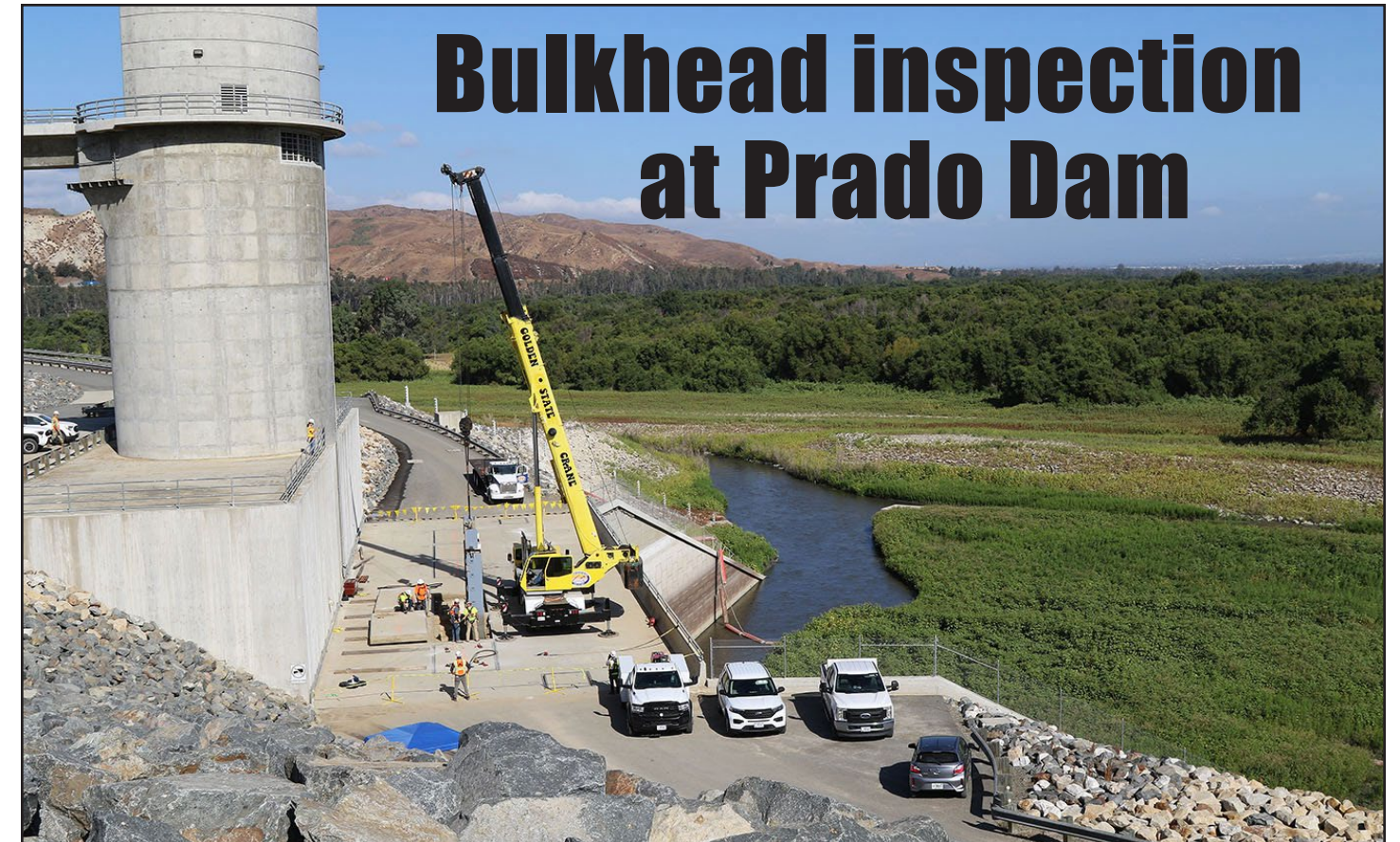
“I wanted to think big,” said Lewis, who, during one sleepless night at the height of the COVID pandemic, remembered an article he read about solar-covered canals in India. “I thought to myself, ‘We have a lot of canals here at the Gila River Indian Community’ and, ‘We lose so much of our water in those canals due to evaporation and system loss,’ and, at the time, we were facing the worst drought in more than 1,200 years.

So, water conservation is not just important; it’s a part of our survival moving forward.”

Lewis added that as the community shifts away from a reliance on the Colorado River and toward pumped water sources, electricity became their biggest costs. From there, the idea just “seemed to be common sense,” he said.

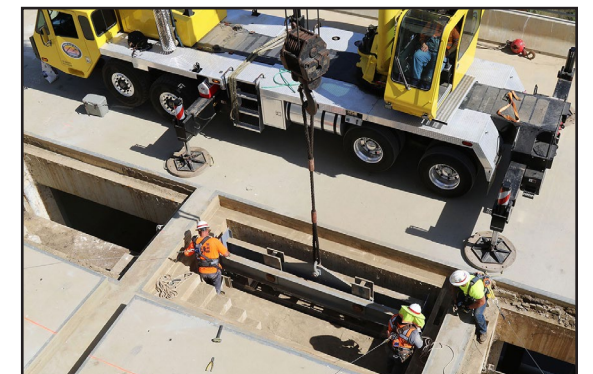
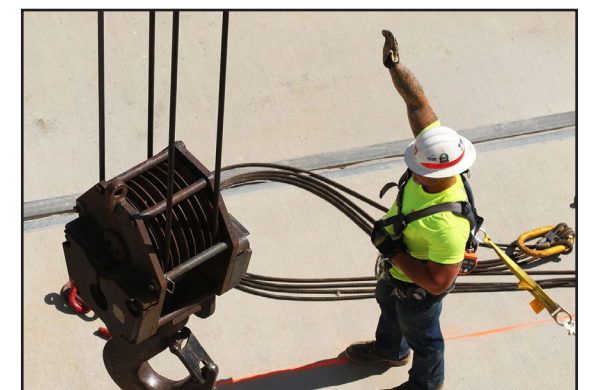
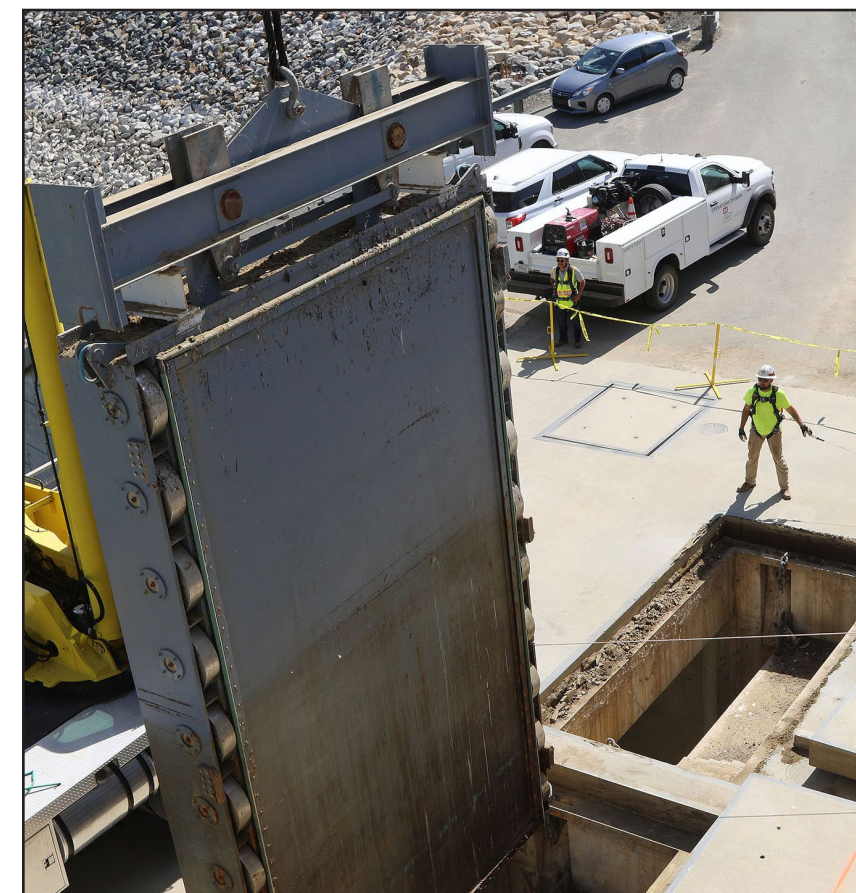
“I had no idea then what that one idea might launch,” Lewis said.

“We could never have made this progress without our strong federal partners,” Lewis said. “Those partnerships are so key and critical, especially when we’re doing things in such an innovative fashion. Now, while our project today is not the first one to launch, we would not have launched at all if we had not started with the Corps. Our agreement with you, signed back in November 2023, truly gave us the momentum to move forward to get to where we are today.”



Photos by Dena O'Dell

Have you ever wondered what it takes to move 50,000-pound bulkheads at a dam? With a 90-ton crane, months of preparation and safety protocols in place, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles and Tulsa districts conducted an inspection of three bulkheads Sept. 18 at Prado Dam in Corona, California, ahead of finalizing the design for six new bulkheads at the Prado Dam Outlet Works, which will be added in the near future.



ABOVE PHOTOS: Members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles and Tulsa districts conduct an inspection of three bulkheads Sept. 18 at Prado Dam in Corona, California.

Project partners celebrate forthcoming beach renourishment completion during San Clemente joint press conference

BY STEPHEN BAACK
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif. — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District took part in an Oct. 31 beachside press conference as it nears completion of its much-anticipated beach renourishment project in San Clemente.

The event provided project partners at the city, county, federal and congressional levels the opportunity to announce the anticipated completion of Phase 2 of the initial sand placement for the replenishment project, along with the Department of Transportation’s \$100-million grant for the Orange County Transportation Authority’s Coastal Rail Resiliency Study.

U.S. Rep. Mike Levin led the press conference and invited leaders from the City of San

Clemente, Orange County Transportation Authority and USACE to speak during the event. Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander, spoke on USACE’s behalf.

The LA District’s partnership with the City of San Clemente for this project began in 2023 with the signing of the Project Partnership Agreement before Baker assumed command of the district, and construction started shortly afterward.

“This was really one of the first big projects that I worked with personally as the commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Los Angeles District), and it is just such an honor to be here as we push this phase across the finish line,” Baker said. “I’m really just the spokesman up here; I’ve got a great team of

about 750 people working in the Corps.”

The authorized project is the construction of the beach along the San Clemente shoreline using the replenishment of about 250,000 cubic yards of sediment every six years or so, depending on need, for the next 50 years. When work started in late 2023; however, challenges with inclement weather, dredging maintenance and reaching beach-quality material resulted in the contractor relocating to another borrow site, after which work resumed.

“It was a rocky start, literally and figuratively,” Baker said, referring to the cobblestone and gravel that contractors encountered before the relocation.

Due to time constraints, the project was split

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Contractors place a dredging pipeline onto the beach Oct. 31 in San Clemente, California.

Photo by Stephen Baack

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into two phases, but the contractor was able to place 114,016 cubic yards of sand on the beach before Memorial Day.

“It was a big win to get that done, given the challenges we were faced with,” Baker said. “If it wasn’t for the close partnership and coordination between the Los Angeles District team — the team I’m so lucky to be a part of — the City of San Clemente and the sheer determination of everyone involved, we wouldn’t be here getting ready to wrap it up.”

Installation of the submerged pipeline was well underway by the time the press conference started, and dredging started Nov. 6. Sand placement is anticipated to take 22 days.

“For Phase 2, we were able to reprogram about \$7.4 million in federal funding, thanks to a Herculean effort from our partners and from my leadership up at South Pacific Division, for this project,” Baker said, adding this is coupled with the city’s cost share of \$4 million to get the full authorized amount of sand placed on the beach to protect community members, homes, businesses and transporta-

tion infrastructure, like the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor that runs along the shore.

“I like to say in the Army Corps of Engineers we’re very lucky to have such a righteous program,” Baker said. “Our projects in Southern California, Arizona and Nevada are of great consequence because it’s such a huge portion of the American population. We affect the economy directly, we affect public safety and we’re so honored to be out here to be a part of this, and we’re so lucky to be part of such a great team.”



Photos by Stephen Baack



ABOVE: Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander, third from right, speaks during a press conference Oct. 31 in San Clemente, California.

LEFT: Contractors transport a pressurized dredging pipeline toward the shore Oct. 31 in San Clemente, California.

LA District, county partners share updates, best practices at annual Seven Counties meeting

BY STEPHEN BAACK
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SOUTH EL MONTE, Calif. — Representatives from seven Southern California counties met with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District partners to share updates and best practices Nov. 7, 2024, at the LA District Baseyard.

The annual forum, called the Seven Counties Flood Control Directors Meeting, invites agency leaders and specialists to gather in a spirit of partnership and open communication to share information on regulatory and policy matters related to flood-risk reduction, water conservation, environmental and infrastructure issues, and to discuss the winter weather outlook.

The coalition, which was originally formed to help advocate for the region in the wake of national-level policy changes after Hurricane Katrina, has since expanded its scope to discuss all matters related to flood-risk reduction and water resources in Southern California.

Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Bernardi-

no, Riverside, Orange, Ventura and San Diego counties comprise the coalition, along with the National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies, which serves as the coalition’s coordinator and facilitator.

The counties, all of which are members of NAFSMA, have been meeting annually with the LA District for more than a dozen years. When combined, the seven counties’ area covers more than 43,000 square miles, is home to more than 22 million residents and holds 32 congressional seats.

These seven counties have united for this effort because they all have similar weather patterns, land-use history, transportation needs and geographic features, which differ from many other parts of the U.S.

“The Southwest is unique, including California, in that we have very arid and semi-arid climates we’re dealing with,” said Jason Uhley, general manager and chief engineer with the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District. “When you think of Riverside County — the Palm Springs community in par-

ticular — it’s as arid as Dubai. That doesn’t exist anywhere else in the nation. In the rest of the country, they have rivers that flow year-round, like the Mississippi and the Chattanooga.

“Our river systems are arid and ephemeral,” he added. “They only really flow when it rains. That makes our challenges very different from what the rest of the country sees.”

Uhley said the meeting is important to the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, and the Seven Counties group as a whole, because it gives everyone a chance to exchange information about opportunities and challenges the partners are jointly facing, and it provides them ways to work through those together.

“How do we magnify the good things we’re doing, and how do we improve the things where we’re facing challenges, so we can do better in the future? That open communication about what’s working and not working helps us all serve our communities,” Uhley said.

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Photo by Stephen Baack

David Kingston, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Emergency Management Branch chief, discusses U.S. Army Corps of Engineers authorities and programs, particularly in the context of emergency response, Nov. 7 during the 2024 Seven Counties Flood-Control Directors Meeting at the LA District Baseyard in South El Monte, California.



Photos by Stephen Baack

Dusty Williams, technical adviser with the National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies, center, provides his portion of opening remarks Nov. 7 during the 2024 Seven Counties Flood-Control Directors Meeting at the LA District Baseyard in South El Monte, California.

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One example is the recent changes to US-ACE’s vegetation management policy for federally constructed levees in the region.

“This group started that discussion when we talked about the uniqueness of levees across the nation and the need to have a policy that recognizes regional differences,” he said. “That discussion started here and ballooned out.”

Uhley said the group’s discussions over the years have also improved members’ abilities in obtaining Section 404 and 408 permits and to pursue projects more efficiently.

“There’s been a number of incremental and game-changing shifts to policies and procedures that have made all of our lives better,” Uhley said. “At the end of the day, we want to make sure we’re all rolling in the same direction, at the same time and the same cadence, to make sure we’re doing everything we can to keep our communities safe.”

Jason Uhley, Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District general manager, participates in a discussion Nov. 7 during the 2024 Seven County Flood-Control Directors Meeting at the LA District Baseyard in South El Monte, California.





Photo by Dena O'Dell

First Lt. Jacob Zendejas, right, speaks with a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers representative about careers with USACE during the Total Army Career Fair Nov. 2 at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California. Zendejas was one of 12 applicants who received an on-the-spot tentative job offer to work for USACE.

USACE leaders, hiring managers recruit talent at Total Army Career Fair

BY DENA O'DELL
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — The message to potential candidates from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' leaders and hiring managers was clear during a recent career fair: "We are hiring!"

Over a two-day period, Nov. 1-2, USACE's South Pacific Division was among several federal agencies that converged on SoFi Stadium for the Total Army Career Fair with one mission in mind: to recruit talent and fill critical vacant positions across all four of its districts.

"We are focusing on recruitment and retention at these types of events," said Col. James Handura, commander of USACE's South Pacific Division, which includes the Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento and Albuquerque districts. "I've got about 250 vacancies right now within our division – across our four districts – that we need to hire, and that's to support a more than \$3-billion annual program."

The event, which was open to the public, was hosted by Deputy Army Undersecretary

Mario Diaz and included representatives for Department of the Army civilian vacancies, as well as recruiters from active duty, National Guard and Reserve components, with the goal of highlighting the Army as an employer of choice and promote opportunities available to civilians in the Army.

In total, USACE's South Pacific Division presented 12 applicants with on-the-spot tentative job offers during the event.

Jinzaemon Kimoto was the first prospective employee to receive a job offer as a contracting specialist with the Los Angeles District.

"I came here to join the federal workforce — mission successful! I do have a job offer," he said. "I am very excited to start. I'm happy to help our nation and work for a better future for my child."

Kimoto said he gravitated to USACE because of its mission.

"I'm excited about our mission and look forward to doing different things: secure our nation, energize our economy and help reduce

disaster risk," he said. "A lot of (the mission) focuses on helping U.S. citizens and helping those abroad, who are a part of the service. It was just really (about) contributing toward our community — toward our environment. The mission really spoke to me. There's a lot of work to be done, and I'm happy to be part of the team."

According to Emily Wang, Los Angeles District Workforce Management administrator, the LA District is looking to fill positions in several areas, including civil engineers, specifically in hydraulics, hydrology, geotechnical and environmental engineers, but also administrative officers, workforce management specialists, budget analysts, accountants and public affairs specialists.

"It's a really large landscape of different professions and career levels ... but really, what we truly want to find, are people who just want to make that impact — that difference," she said.

One of the most important components of

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the hiring process, said Lt. Col. Stephen Brooks, deputy commander of the LA District, is ensuring candidates possess the necessary expertise and are team players.

"We have one of the most diverse portfolios of projects across the entire U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' enterprise," he said. "Can you take constructive criticism? Do you have the foundational expertise of what we're looking for? What we're looking for in employees is, quite simply, good teammates."

Mary Fronck, contracting chief for USACE's San Francisco District, was one of many USACE hiring managers at the career fair recruiting applicants.

"I'm representing the San Francisco District and contracting as a whole," she said. "We are extending tentative job offers to qualified individuals that seem to be a good

match for our organization, whether that's in San Francisco District, Los Angeles, Sacramento or Albuquerque. We're all one big family, and we just want to get good, talented people on board.

"Throughout this event, I've called my counterparts and said 'Hey, I've got this great candidate, and they're located here. I can't fulfil what they need, but maybe you can,'" she added. "We've gotten job offers from that, and it's a great, exciting opportunity."

Fronck has worked for USACE for more than six years and said she loves it.

"When I left (Veterans Affairs), they said, 'Go do construction the right way; go find a job at the Corps,'" she said. "I don't want to leave the Corps. It's a great family organization, we care about our people, and it's a lot of fun to build things for our nation."

Overall, USACE leaders, like Handura, said

they were grateful to showcase USACE job opportunities and are looking at ways to continue to recruit talent at events like this in the future.

"We've had a great two days here, with the opportunity to bring in folks to learn about the Corps of Engineers' mission, to learn about the mission in the South Pacific Division and for the opportunity to hire, and that's what we're doing today," Handura said. "We appreciate the opportunity to highlight what we do and the need to bring talented folks on the team, here at SoFi Stadium."

"We're looking at the next event where we can do this at – whether that's here, in the Bay area, in Sacramento or Albuquerque," he added. "All within our area, we cover 10 western states and four districts ... We're ready to hire. We are looking at bringing talented folks on our team to deliver that \$3-billion-plus program."



Photo by Dena O'Dell

Col. Michael Baim, deputy commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division, left, and Erika Powell, Chief of the Civil Design Section, Engineering Division, USACE San Francisco District, right, present an on-the-spot job offer to Dionne Lu of Los Angeles, center, during the Total Army Career Fair Nov. 2 at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California.



Photo by Stephen Baack

Chris Rainwater, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District chief of safety, left of center, speaks with attendees of the 2024 Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers National Convention career fair Nov. 1 in Anaheim, California.

Hiring managers reach out to new talent at SHPE National Convention

BY STEPHEN BAACK
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

ANAHEIM, Calif. — A team with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was on hand Nov. 1 and 2 at the Anaheim Convention Center reaching out to new talent during the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers National Convention.

The convention, which just celebrated 50 years, serves as the nation’s largest annual gathering of Hispanic students and professionals in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics – better known as STEM. The convention itself took place this year from Oct. 30 through Nov. 3, with the day-and-a-half career fair hosting hundreds of hiring companies and agencies.

Participation at the event was part of USACE’s continuing effort to attract and recruit a diverse pool of talent for its mission of “delivering vital engineering solutions, in collaboration with our partners, to secure our nation, energize our economy and reduce disaster risk.”

“I was extremely excited to be part of the team that represented the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the hiring event,” said Chris Rainwater, Los Angeles District chief of safety. “The opportunity to attract bright new minds and talent to the Corps ensures that we can fulfill our important mission and do our best for the American people. To do that, of course, we need great team members.”

The USACE hiring effort, led by its Talent Acquisition Center of Excellence and conducted

in partnership with the Army Civilian Career Management Agency, brought together hiring managers with a diverse set of backgrounds.

“We need people who want to serve their nation and want to give back and have the talents to serve in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,” Rainwater said. “These hiring events give us a way to reach out to them, introduce our organization to them, ensure they know what it is we do and really, truly the nobility of our mission.”

Joel Rodriguez, supervisory civil engineer and chief of the Contract Administration Branch for the LA District’s Construction Division, said he encountered “a tremendous amount of interest” in USACE from event at-

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tendees, even if not everyone knows at first what USACE’s mission entails.

“It was interesting to see how many have yet to understand what our great organization does for our nation and the opportunities it has to offer,” Rodriguez said. “Once we started showing them all information that was provided at the career fair, like in the brochures and through the QR codes, they were very surprised at to hear that we had our fingerprint on a lot of our infrastructure, such as in the Civil Works Program, Veterans Affairs hospitals, military construction and that we are spread out all over the country and beyond. They were very intrigued to hear that.”

Stephen Wheeler, team leader for the USACE Talent Acquisition Center of Excellence, said participating hiring managers were able to make two offers at the event, with more applications they were still working through.

Whether the USACE representatives at these kinds of events are attracting new team members or spreading the story of USACE’s mission, Rainwater said interacting with the public in person and in real-time is where it starts.

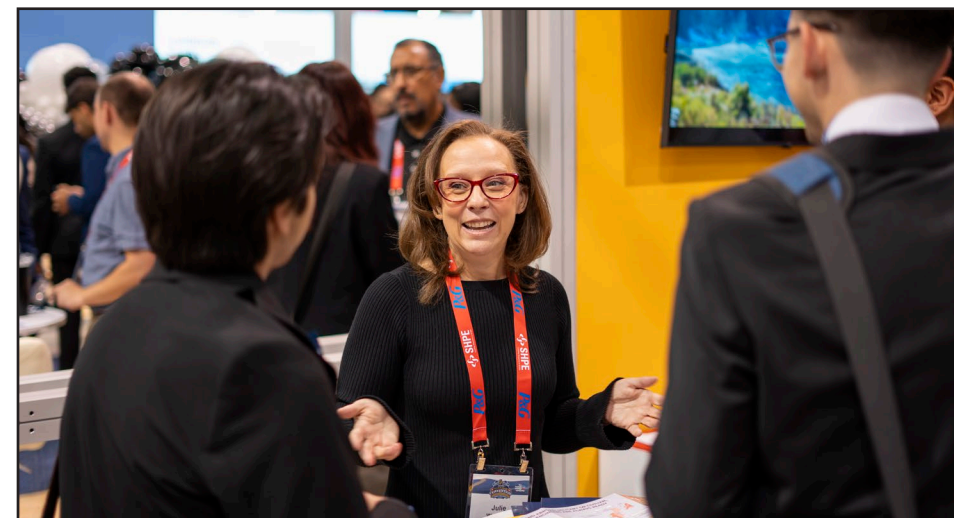
“Getting out there and representing the organization at these hiring events is critical to mission success,” Rainwater said.

RIGHT: Julie Woodruff, human resources specialist with the Albuquerque District, center, speaks with attendees of the 2024 Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers National Convention career fair Nov. 1 in Anaheim, California.



Photos by Stephen Baack

Joel Rodriguez, supervisory civil engineer and chief of the Contract Administration Branch with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District's Construction Division, center, speaks with attendees of the 2024 Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers National Convention career fair Nov. 1 in Anaheim, California.



Joel Rodriguez, supervisory civil engineer and chief of the Contract Administration Branch with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District's Construction Division, right, speaks with attendees of the 2024 Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers National Convention career fair Nov. 1 in Anaheim, California.

Corps hosts Senior Executive Board at Prado Dam

BY ARECA T. WILSON
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CORONA, Calif. — U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific and Southwestern divisions came together for a Senior Executive Board meeting Nov. 6 at Prado Dam.

The purpose of the meeting was to align the divisions on key topics related to training and ongoing projects, and fostering collaboration to ensure the successful delivery of critical infrastructure projects.

"Coming to these, they provide us a great opportunity to achieve alignment on problems, which is why we're here," said Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander. "If there's something that we can help with, we want to do that. So, please don't suffer in silence. Let us know how we can help to keep moving things along the line."

First, the meeting attendees discussed the divisions' approach to coaching, training and mentoring USACE personnel to lead, manage and deliver critical infrastructure projects.

They then reviewed ongoing activities at Whittier Narrows Dam in South El Monte, California. As the most urban dam in USACE's portfolio, it presents unique challenges, such as utility relocations and environmental coordination, underscoring the complexity and importance of the project.

"People who are around the area want their gas, their electricity, water, things along those lines. That means that utility relocations are a critical component of all of the work that we're doing,"



Photos by Areca T. Wilson

George Sunny, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District project manager, provides a briefing during a Senior Executive Board Nov. 6 at Prado Dam in Corona, California. Sunny provided an update on ongoing activities at Whittier Narrows Dam in Pico Rivera, California.

said George Sunny, USACE LA District project manager. "Like many projects in California, we have a lot of environmental coordination that we need to do; we recently had success with getting water quality certification and a biological opinion, both of which are needed to advance construction when we get to that point."

Finally, the board met with local representatives from Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties to sync on projects regarding the Santa Ana River Mainstem, or SARM. USACE subject-matter experts provided information on several topics, including contracts, environmental assessments, timelines, real estate actions, utility relocations, active constructions and project turnover.

After the meeting, The LA District offered those interested the chance to tour Prado Dam and nearby Lower Norco Bluffs.

Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander, attends a Senior Executive Board Nov. 6 at Prado Dam, Corona California. During the meeting, attendees discussed the divisions' approach to coaching, training and mentoring USACE personnel to lead, manage and deliver critical infrastructure projects.



New Employee Corner

What is your name and title? Gilchrist Fajardo Arroyo. I'm a Workforce Management specialist.

Where are you from? Originally born in the Philippines. I grew up in Sherman Oaks and Woodland Hills, California.

How long have you worked for USACE? I started here Aug. 11.

What program/project are you currently working on? I'm preparing for our district's New Employee Orientation Nov 13. I'm also assisting with actions for the some of the divisions that need assistance.

What do you like most about working with USACE? For the time I've been here, I do like that the Corps is looking out for its employees through its morale events, periodic award recognitions and focusing on work/life balance.



Photo by Robert DeDeaux

Around the District

"I love working in an organization that contributes so much to our country. For me, any project I work on makes me feel like I am contributing to the USACE overall mission in delivering vital public and military engineering services."

Luis is inventorying the district's excess equipment and preparing to transfer those items to the Defense Logistics Agency. He is a native of Anaheim, California. Luis has been with the USACE for three years.



Luis Martinez
General Supply Specialist

LA District celebrates accomplishments, recognizes employees at end-of-year town hall celebration

BY ARECA T. WILSON
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES — U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District leadership hosted a town hall Oct. 29 at the district’s main office to celebrate the district’s accomplishments from the past fiscal year and recognize employees.

During his remarks, Col. Andrew Baker, Los Angeles District commander, congratulated the district on a successful inaugural 5K run/walk, encouraged members to participate in this year’s Combined Federal Campaign if they can and thanked those who took the time to respond to the 2024 Defense Organizational Climate Survey. He also addressed concerns raised by the survey and reaffirmed his expectations.

“LA — we’re unlike most districts out there; we’ve got a larger percentage of the American population within our operational borders compared to any other district in the nation,” he said. “That comes with a lot of focus on what we do. It’s been a fantastic year — I can say with confidence that we’ve maintained our reputation for delivering projects of great consequence on time, safely.”

In Fiscal Year 2024, the LA District completed more than \$876 million in work, including about \$386 million in Military Construction in support of warfighters and their families; about \$320 million in Civil Works projects in communities; and \$113 million in International and Interagency Support Services in support of veterans and other agencies.

The district also completed 674 contract actions, worth more than \$463 million, and closed out 207 contracts, still ranking first on a regional scale.

In addition to the preceding accomplishments, chiefs from each division, including Construction, Contracting, Engineering, Mega Projects, Office of Counsel, Operations, Planning, Real Estate, Regulatory, Resource Management, and Programs and Project Management shared highlights from their teams with the district.

“If you take away one thing today, I hope it’s, ‘Wow, it’s amazing how much we’ve accomplished this past year,’” Baker said. “Thank you so much for all you do. It’s the folks in this room and the folks online who allow us to deliver quality projects on time and within budget, which is what we were charged with for the American people. It’s a righteous job, it’s a righteous program and I’m so proud to be part of it.”

At the end of the event, leadership presented the FY24 Third and Fourth Quarterly Local Awards. Below are the recipients:



Photo by Areca T. Wilson

Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander, hosts a town hall Oct. 29 at the district’s headquarters in Los Angeles. During his remarks, Baker congratulated the district on a successful inaugural 5K run/walk, encouraged members to participate in this year’s Combined Federal Campaign and thanked those who took the time to respond to the 2024 Defense Organizational Climate Survey.

Fourth Quarter Award Winners:

Commander’s Eagle: Danielle Lenox
To the employee with outstanding demonstration of specific actions reflecting the LA District commander’s motto, “Building Strong and Taking Care of People!”

Kevin Inada Employee of the Quarter Award: April Emerson
For the employee who serves as the best example of outstanding contribution to the organization, taking the LA District from good to great.

Mike Cogan Safety Employee of the Quarter Award: Mayra Bosque
To recognize an employee’s outstanding contributions in safety and occupational health promotion to the organization.

Compass Award: Tiffany Troxel
The best example of an employee who provides experience-based advice to help show the way to other employees and navigate through unfamiliar terrain.

H2O Helping Hands for Others: April Emerson and Danielle Lenox
Recognizes individuals who demonstrated the best example of selfless service for which the individual voluntarily took initiative to assist others making an impact on the LA District community.

Good Catch Award: Aaron Burke
Recognizes employees who report a near miss “good catch” that was intended to prevent damage, injury or illness (mishaps).

Hazard Identification and Reporting: Florin Nistor
Recognizes employees who identified and reported hazards that, when mitigated, affected a change in policy, updated a work procedure or rectified a physical or health hazard exposure and resulted in a safer working environment.

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[‘Town Hall’ continued from Page 16](#)

Outstanding PDT: L1H0520 Project Controls Section Team
Reflects the best example of a team on which the members took individual responsibility, communicated well, worked hard, had fun and efficiently achieved an important accomplishment.

Shane Frost Sr.
Nathaniel Van Loan
Thang Ma
Juan Vasquez Jr.
James Northup
Steven Weiss
Robbie Shum
Pamela Workman
Douglas Tuccio

End-of-Year Heroes
For outstanding performance from August to September 2024, significantly contributing to the successful implementation of high-priority, extensive, end-of-year activities for the LA District.

Dina Aman
Raj Cooper
Kristin Dowling
Alma Anderson
Aaron Cruz
Brandon Durham
Fany Anderson
Julio Cuadra
Tracy Eccles
Maria Ang
Kelly Davis
James Elsberry



Photos by Areca T. Wilson

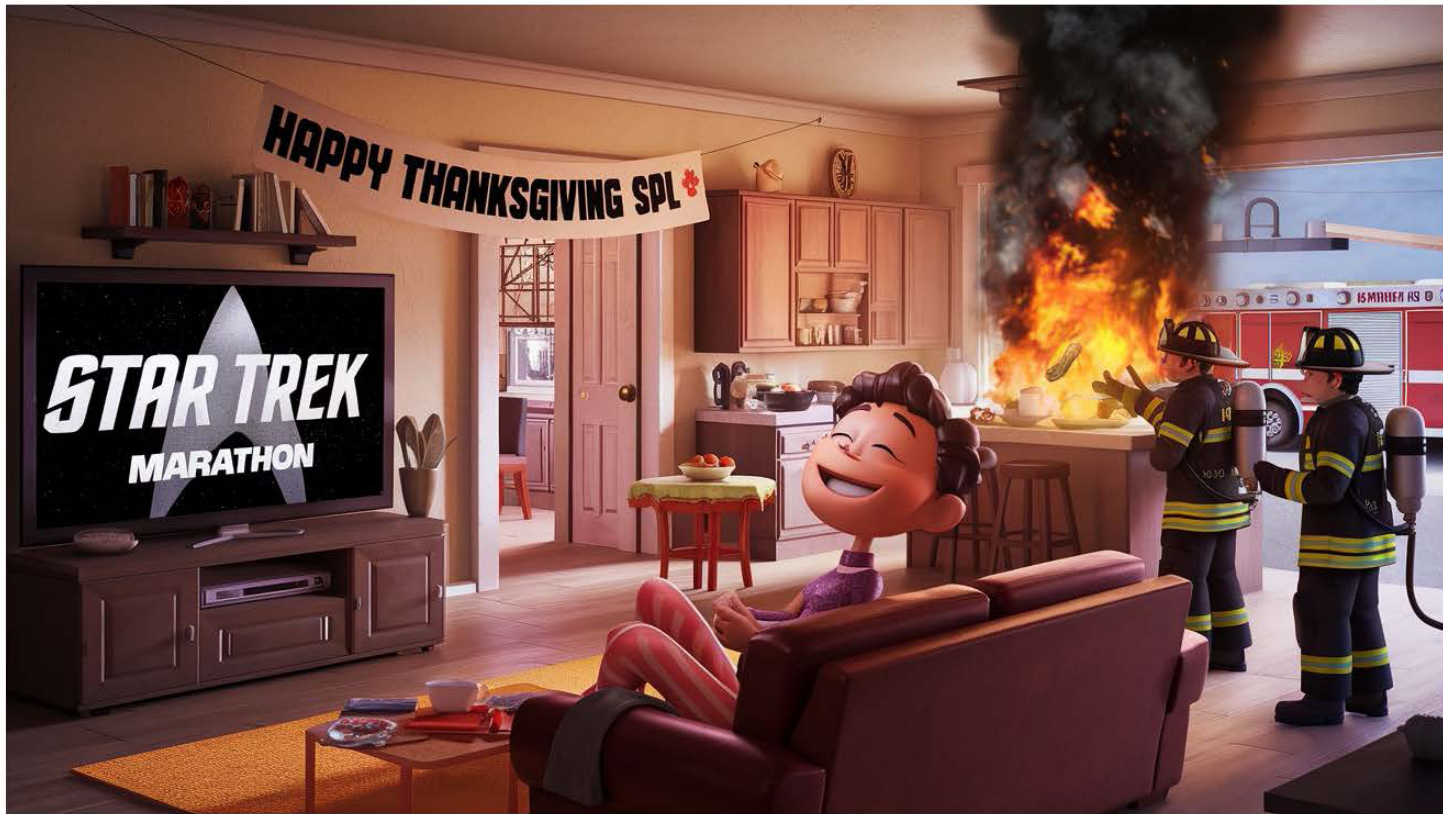
Los Angeles District employees attend a town hall Oct. 29 at the district’s headquarters in Los Angeles, during which leaders presented Fiscal Year 2024 Third and Fourth Quarterly Local Awards.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District leaders host a town hall Oct. 29 at the district’s headquarters in Los Angeles. During the event, leaders celebrated the district’s accomplishments from the past year and recognize employees.

Enoch Burrola
Robert DeDeaux
Melody Engler
Casey Cai
Norma Deharo
Sandra Estrada
Mary Carmona
Sally DeSimone
Gonzalo Galvan
Christina Chavez
Joseph Devincenzo
Elvis Garay
Louis Clementz
Ling Do
Roberto Garcia
Orville Collins
Juan Dominguez
Susan Gayagas
Tezra Hamilton
Wendy Luo
Dominic Pebenito
Kelly Howard
Jeffrey Luong
Portia Pham
Crystal Huerta
Thomas Luu
James Piersa
Johnny Inthirath
Sophia Ma
Ashley Powell
Harlan Jefferson
Maj. David Paxton
Alyson Reichstein
Patrick Klein
Clarence Manalang

Roxanna Rivas
Robert Kwan
Margaret Marks
Angela Rollock
Carmen Lara
Marissa McGowan
Max Roseman
Michael Lawton
Edward Mitchell
Alexandra Ryan
John Lee
Janice Opperman
Helen Sanchez
Luis Sepulveda
Michele Tugaoen
Bimayendra Shrestha
Matthew Wagstaff
David Silvertooth
Douglas West
Jenni Snibbe
Cynthia Wong
Trevor Snyder
Stephen Woody
Kristen Steinmann
Capt. Jeff Yin
Danielle Storey
Kevin Yu
Ewelina Zielinska-Thomas
Jonathon Thorpe
Margie Tizon



THANKSGIVING SAFETY TIPS FROM THE SPL SAFETY OFFICE

The Turkey Isn't a Fireball: If you're deep frying, remember: turkeys should be golden brown, not "crispy meteor." Thaw that bird or prepare to launch it into orbit.

No Fireworks in the Kitchen: If your cooking involves flames shooting up, you're doing it wrong. It's Thanksgiving, not the Fourth of July.

Turkey Fryer Placement 101: Outside, far away from the house, and definitely not under the porch. You're frying a turkey, not auditioning for a disaster movie.

Don't Taste Test Straight from the Oven: The roof of your mouth is not a test dummy. Let that gravy cool before slurping.

Keep a Lid on It—Literally: If something starts smoking, cover it with a lid. Don't blow on it like it's birthday candles; it's not your wish to burn down the house.

Microwaves Don't Like Aluminum Foil: If you want fireworks, watch the Macy's Parade. Aluminum in the microwave is not a holiday tradition.

Keep It Cool with Kids: Little hands are adorable, but not when they're grabbing hot pans. Assign them to "napkin folding duty" far away from the stove.

Thaw Safely: Turkeys need a spa day in the fridge, not a crash defrost in the sink. Skip the salmonella special!

No Cross-Contamination: Turkey juice belongs in the trash, not in the salad. Keep raw meats and veggies far, far apart.

Use a Meat Thermometer: Guessing if the turkey's cooked is a game of roulette you don't want to lose. Aim for 165°F and a happy belly.

Highlighting milestones

2024 Leadership Development Program students graduate



Photo by Richard Rivera

Congratulations to our latest Leadership Development Program tier 1 and 2 graduates! The goal of Los Angeles District's Leadership Development Program is to develop leaders at all levels of our organization and across all functional areas and career programs. The 20 LA District employees presented their ideas on process improvements for the district during their graduation ceremony Nov. 18 at the LA District headquarters in downtown Los Angeles.

LA District safety specialists earn prestigious certifications



Courtesy photos

ABOVE: Safety specialists Aaron Burke (left photo) and Josh Pendergrass (right photo) are presented with the prestigious Professional Certificate in Safety and Occupational Health during a Oct. 31 ceremony. The certificate represents successful completion of a rigorous certification process encompassing a comprehensive curriculum that includes 16 prerequisite courses and 34 fundamental competencies. These courses cover a wide range of topics essential for safety professionals, such as risk management, accident investigation and safety program management.

RIGHT: Josh Pendergrass, safety specialist assigned to the Los Angeles District's Phoenix Office, is presented with the Army Civilian Achievement Medal Oct. 31 for his outstanding contributions to the district's safety program through comprehensive and innovative technology reforms.



District hosts Little Colorado River Project Industry Day

BY ROBERT DEDEAUX
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

WINSLOW, Ariz. — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, in partnership with Navajo County, hosted the Little Colorado River Project Industry Day Nov. 13 in Winslow.

The event, led by the Los Angeles District’s Michele Bick, project manager, and Kinya Minami, procurement analyst, invited vendors to discuss the aptly named Little Colorado River at Winslow Flood-Control project, a USACE flood-mitigation project.

“This event creates collaboration among USACE, local government representatives and regional small businesses in support of the flood mitigation project, which will improve public safety for the city of Winslow,” wrote Bick and Minami in a joint statement. “The event also ensures equal distribution of information and economic opportunity for local, regional,

[‘Industry Day’ continued on Page 21](#)



Photos by Robert DeDeaux

Kinya “Roger” Minami, a procurement analyst with the Los Angeles District’s Small Business Programs office, left, joins Little Colorado River Project Industry Day participants on a tour of the Little Colorado River levee Nov. 13 in Winslow, Arizona.



ABOVE: From left to right, Christopher Wheeler, technical lead from the St. Louis District; Lt. Col. Stephen Brooks, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District deputy commander; and Michele Bick, project manager with the LA District, pose for a picture after welcoming participants and partners to the Little Colorado River Project Industry Day Nov. 13 in downtown Winslow, Arizona.

LEFT: More than 50 participants attend the Little Colorado River Project Industry Day Nov. 13 in downtown Winslow, Arizona.

[‘Industry Day’ continued from Page 20](#)

tribal and rural vendors interested in supporting the project.”

During the event, more than 40 small business owners, including vendors from Colorado, New Mexico and Navajo County, met with leaders and representatives from USACE to discuss challenges and best practices for the project.

“We have a team of invested stakeholders, sponsors, dedicated contractors and committed USACE employees to build strong and enduring flood-mitigation projects for the communities we serve,” said Lt. Col. Stephen Brooks, LA District deputy commander. “This event brings dedicated people together.”

The Industry Day agenda consisted of a project presentation, an open forum for questions and answers, a project site visit along a portion of the

Little Colorado River levee and break-out sessions for more one-on-one discussions.

“I think the Corps is really showcasing the project to industries, not just here in Arizona, but throughout the U.S., so any interested construction companies can pursue this project,” said Madhav Mundle, director of Navajo County Public Works. “Based on the audience I see, there are contractors from all over the U.S. willing to come here, so that’s a good thing.”

According to the Navajo County’s public website, the Little Colorado River at Winslow Flood-Control project is the largest public works project in northeastern Arizona, which is anticipated to help protect thousands of Winslow residents and its infrastructure.

“This project is of local and regional im-

portance because it will reconstruct the levee that had been decertified by FEMA,” Mundle said. “The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for the engineering and procurement of this project. We are the nonfederal sponsors of the project, and I think our partnership is going really well.”

About 5,000 people in Winslow — families who live, work and call the area their home — along with critical infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, nursing homes and utilities, are located within a 100-year flood plain and are at risk of flooding.

“The vendors attending the event could potentially serve to eliminate the regional flood zone, protect the Santa Fe transcontinental train line and improve economic growth in the region,” read Bick’s and Minami’s statement.



Photo by Robert DeDeaux

Presenters, partners and participants at the Little Colorado River Project Industry Day tour the Little Colorado River levee Nov. 13 in Winslow, Arizona. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, in partnership with Navajo County, the City of Winslow and the St. Louis District, conducted presentations and an open forum before leading vendors to the future flood-mitigation project site along the Little Colorado River.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLE CERTIFICATION

LA District park rangers, survey team train on UTVs

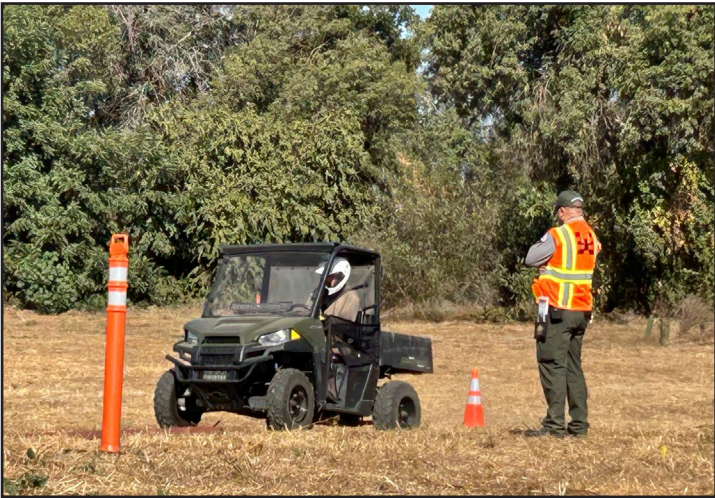


Park Ranger Nicolas Figueroa, third from left, leads hands-on utility terrain vehicle training and certification for LA District park rangers and survey team members Oct. 29 near Whittier Narrows Dam in Pico Rivera, California.

After completing an E-Course through the Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association), Figueroa provided the hands-on Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Basic Driver Course for nine LA District team members. Closed-range exercises included safety; understanding and identifying primary vehicle parts and controls; starting and stopping smoothly; two- and four-wheel-drive steering while driving forward, turning and backing up; braking quickly and normally; and swerving. Steep hill and sandy terrain operations were part of the Open Trail Experience exercises.



LEFT: A driver ascends a steep hill Oct. 29 near Whittier Narrows Dam in Pico Rivera, California, as part of hands-on utility terrain vehicle training and certification. RIGHT: Park Ranger/Trainer Nicolas Figueroa observes a driver on one of the Closed Range exercises.



ABOVE: A Los Angeles District employee prepares to take on driving exercise during utility terrain vehicle training and certification for LA District park rangers and survey team members Oct. 29 near Whittier Narrows Dam in Pico Rivera, California.

LEFT: LA District teammates celebrate completing their hands-on utility terrain vehicle training. Participants included Park Rangers Nicolas Figueroa (trainer), Brandon Samson and Marlene Schmitt; and Survey Team members Cameron Amick, Enoch Burrola, Nathan Duffy, Tyler Overmire, Michael Rivera, Odafe Umukoro and Cristina Yu.

AFFIRMING NATIVE VOICES

VISIBILITY · LEADERSHIP · SERVICE



NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH
NOVEMBER

