



Photo by Dan Collins

Lt. Gen. William "Butch" Graham, 56th chief of engineers and commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, views wildfire damage Jan. 24 in Pacific Palisades, California. USACE Los Angeles District received a mission from FEMA Jan. 17 to assist with debris removal in support of the State of California following the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles County.

USACE responds to devastating LA County wildfires in Altadena, Pacific Palisades

BY LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND
RECOVERY FIELD OFFICE PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES — On Jan. 7, two large wildfires swept through Altadena and Pacific Palisades, burning more than 50,000 acres and destroying more than 16,000 structures — becoming one of the most destructive wildfires in California history.

As crews battled the wildfires, close to 200,000 people were under evacuation orders. Families, businesses and entire communities in Altadena and the Pacific Palisades were uprooted. Twenty-nine people died in the wildfires — 17 in Altadena and 12 in the Palisades Fire.

Within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Los Angeles District family, three district employees lost their homes, as well as did at least one of the district's retirees.

While firefighters were battling the largest blazes, additional fires broke out in the Los Angeles area, including the Lidia, Archer, Woodley, Sunset, Kenneth, Hurst and Auto fires, according to Cal Fire, all fueled by drought-like conditions and powerful Santa Ana winds that hit the region that week. An additional wildfire — the Hughes Fire in Castaic — ignited Jan. 22, north of Los Angeles.

Then-U.S. President Joe Biden approved a federal emergency declaration for California Jan. 8 that released money and resources to battle the wildfires.

LA DISTRICT RESPONSE

Following the Jan. 7 wildfires, Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander, declared an emergency for the district.

The district's top priorities were ensuring the safety and accountability of all employees and identifying any impacts to the district's missions

[‘WILDFIRES’ continued on Page 4](#)

'Fair winds and following seas'



Photos by Richard Rivera

Los Angeles District executive staff, division and section chiefs, and friends and family gathered March 26 at the district headquarters in downtown LA to thank Justin Gay for his more than three years of faithful service as the deputy district engineer and chief of the Programs and Project Management Division, during which he was responsible for oversight of the district's Civil Works, Military, and Interagency and International Services programs. Gay is slated to become the district's West LA Department of Veterans Affairs Integrated Project Office chief as he passes the baton to Kim Thomas, Operations Division chief with the Omaha District, for her six-month detail as LA District DPM. In the above photos, Justin is joined by his wife, Shannon, and LA District commander Col. Andrew Baker.

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Helping community heal in wake of tragic wildfires

Team,

Welcome to March! It's been an eventful start to the calendar year, to say the least. I am so proud of the team for not only successfully navigating what has been a tumultuous couple of months, but also for achieving so much during this time.

I relayed a personal story during

February's Town Hall that I'll recount here. On Sunday, Jan. 5, my family and I drove up to Malibu Canyon from our home in San Pedro to go for a hike around the famous "M*A*S*H" and "Planet of the Apes" lots. We wrapped up a surprisingly drama-less five-mile walk (you never know how such activities are going to go when you have a 6-year-old in tow), drove down the canyon to the Pacific Coast Highway, hooked a left and headed toward Santa Monica. After grabbing lunch at Dukes, we continued our journey down the coast. While we were stopped at a light, one of my daughters remarked from the back seat, "Wow — there are so many houses here, you can't see the ocean!" She was right — you really couldn't from the spot where we were sitting. About an hour later after an ice cream stop, we pulled up to the garage after



COL. ANDREW BAKER
LA DISTRICT COMMANDER

what had been an ideal Southern California day.

A week or so later, I was back in approximately the same spot again. The Pacific Palisades fire was not fully contained. The Pacific Coast Highway was eerily empty, devoid of traffic, except for the occasional emergency or National Guard vehicle. The row of houses that had previously

stood between our family's car and the Pacific Ocean was gone ... along with about 13,500 more homes and countless other structures — churches, schools, places of business ... all destroyed by the Palisades and Eaton fires. Twenty-nine people died in the fires. Twelve of our teammates evacuated their homes under duress during the previous week, and three of that number had lost them.

As I stood there after seeing firsthand so much devastation between Altadena, Malibu, Pacific Palisades and the other affected communities, I felt an intense sense of loss. I felt determination as well. The Corps was just beginning to bring its resources online. Many of the same folks who successfully delivered the debris mission in Maui only months before were already on the ground, to include Col.

Eric Swenson, the leader of that team, who was standing next to me ready to step into the breach. At that point, we already had countless SPL volunteers — more than we could put to work initially — stepping up to do whatever was needed. I've always been very proud to be a member of this great team. Lately, I've been even prouder ... if that's possible.

Fast forward about a month and a half, and the Recovery Field Office and Task Force Phoenix (organizations of which many of Team SPL are plank holders and that wouldn't exist but for what we poured into them) are in full delivery mode — way ahead of schedule, knocking down obstacles, building upon an already exceedingly high level of community trust and, above all, helping the community to heal. If that's not righteous work, I don't know what is.

Thanks for all you do — thanks for your service to the nation — thanks for your resilience in the face of adversity these past couple of months. I hope you are as proud of what we all do collectively as I am. We couldn't do it without YOU.

Proud to be SPL!

Col. Andrew Baker



Photo by Travis England

A fog-covered view of wildfire destruction along California's Pacific Coast Highway shows the remains of structures and debris left behind in the aftermath of the recent fires. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is leading Phase 2 debris removal efforts to clear hazardous materials and support community recovery.



Courtesy photo

Col. Brian Sawser, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Emergency Field Office commander, center, provides an update on USACE's debris removal operations to Secretary of the Army Daniel Driscoll, left, in Pacific Palisades, California.



Photo by Dan Collins

Lt. Gen. William "Butch" Graham, 56th chief of engineers and commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, left, thanks a military police soldier, right, for his service during a Jan. 24 site visit to assess wildfire damage in Pacific Palisades, California.



Photo by Dan Collins

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers commanders traveled Jan. 24 to Pacific Palisades to assess wildfire damage. USACE's Los Angeles District received a mission from FEMA Jan. 17 to assist with debris removal in support of the State of California following the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles County.

["WILDFIRES" continued from Page 1](#)

and projects. The district's Emergency Operations Center was elevated to an enhanced watch, and staff began preparing for future Stafford Act mission assignments.

USACE's South Pacific Division received a regional activation mission assignment Jan. 10 from FEMA in support of the State of California.

On Jan. 17, the LA District received a FEMA mission assignment for private property debris removal in both Altadena and Pacific Palisades in support of the State of California, which led to the establishment of recovery and emergency field offices in both locations. Teams from the LA District and across USACE traveled to and from throughout California to support the LA County wildfire debris removal mission.

During the second week of February, USACE, in coordination with the State of California and FEMA, began Phase 2 debris removal for private residential properties in the Eaton and Palisades wildfire impact zones.

The start of Phase 2 marked a major milestone in the recovery process for residents impacted by the wildfires.

"This mission is personal for us," said Maj. Gen. Jason Kelly, USACE deputy commanding general for Civil Works and Emergency Operations. "Our teams on the ground are bringing the same

urgency, precision and care to residential properties that we do with all our civil works and military construction missions around the world. We are grateful for the strong collaboration with FEMA, the State of California, Los Angeles County and the local jurisdictions impacted by the fire, and we remain committed to supporting these impacted communities every step of the way."

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, in partnership with six locally affected jurisdictions, worked with wildfire survivors to collect rights of entry, establish safe debris haul routes and coordinate the responsible transport and disposal of fire ash and other fire-related debris. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's removal of household hazardous materials during Phase 1 paved the way for USACE's debris removal process.

"Clearing debris is the first step toward recovery, and we are committed to helping residents in communities across LA County rebuild," said Col. Eric Swenson, commander of the USACE Recovery Field Office. "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is proud to support this mission alongside our federal, state and local partners to ensure families return home and begin the rebuilding process as quickly as possible."

During a February LA District town hall, Baker shared his gratitude for the support the team provided and continues to provide in support of the LA County debris removal mission.

"Throughout this mission, our team has stepped up at every level — from Emergency Management, Contracting, Engineering, Operations, Real Estate, Planning and more ... to our support offices — Office of Counsel, Security, Public Affairs, CIO/G6 ..." he said. "This mission was enormous, and I am so proud of our team for all of the work they are and have been doing to support this emergency mission."

["WILDFIRE" coverage continued on Page 5](#)



Photo by Travis England



Courtesy photo

TOP LEFT: A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contractor sprays water to control dust as heavy equipment removes fire-damaged debris March 1 in Malibu, California. USACE's environmental safety measures to minimize airborne hazards and protect public health during wildfire recovery operations.

TOP RIGHT: Lt. Gen. William "Butch" Graham, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers commanding general, greets a community member in a wildfire-impacted area in Southern California during a trip to meet with leaders and emergency personnel supporting recovery efforts.



Photo by Travis England

LEFT: Maj. Gen. Jason Kelly, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deputy commanding general for civil works and emergency operations, right of center, joins community members and leaders Feb. 7 to mark the first site to undergo private property debris removal in Altadena, California. At left is Col. Eric Swenson, Recovery Field Office commander for the Debris Removal Mission.

Wildfire debris removal statistics as of March 28

PRIVATE PROPERTY DEBRIS REMOVAL:

Private property debris removal for non-complex properties is ongoing, as of Feb. 11.

- Palisades Fire in Pacific Palisades, California: One crew is performing hazardous site assessments, three crews performing household hazardous materials removal and 78 crews performing debris removal.
- Eaton Fire in Altadena, California: One crew is performing hazardous site assessments; one crew is performing household hazardous materials removal; and 105 crews are performing debris removal.
- More than 7,000 rights of entry have been received to date. More than 2,800 for residences in Pacific Palisades; and more than 4,100 for residential properties in Altadena.
- More than 7,000 rights of entry have been

submitted to contractors — more than 2,800 for Pacific Palisades and more than 4,100 for residential properties affected by the Eaton Fire.

- More than 3,400 parcels have been cleared of household hazardous materials — more than 1,800 in Pacific Palisades and more than 1,600 in Altadena.
- More than 1,700 parcels have been cleared of debris — more than 650 in Pacific Palisades and more than 1,000 in Altadena.
- More than 900 private property debris removals are complete with final signoff approved — more than 370 properties in Pacific Palisades and more than 530 properties in Altadena.

DEBRIS REMOVAL AT THE PASADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT IS ONGOING:

- Four Pasadena Unified School District schools are cleared.

- Modification of the contract for tonnage increase at four of five schools. Eliot Arts Magnet School demolition was awarded Feb. 26.

- Coordinating mission assignment tasking order in support of shoring design to support historical preservation requirements at Eliot Arts Magnet School.

DEBRIS REMOVAL AT LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOLS:

- Palisades Charter High School: Final signoff was Feb. 24.
- Marquez Charter Elementary School: Final signoff was March 13.
- Palisades Charter Elementary School: Debris removal is ongoing and on schedule. Concrete breakup and hauling are ongoing.

Engaged leaders



Photo by Robert DeDeaux

From left to right: Col. Eric Swenson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Recovery Field Office commander for the Debris Removal Mission; Maj. Gen. Jason Kelly, USACE's deputy commanding general for civil works and emergency operations; and Col. Brian Sawser, Palisades Fire USACE Emergency Field Office commander, review USACE plans for the Los Angeles debris removal operation at USACE Los Angeles District's Emergency Operations Center Jan. 31 in downtown Los Angeles. USACE's Los Angeles District received a mission from FEMA Jan. 17 to assist with debris removal in support of the State of California, following the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles County.



“There aren't many opportunities to directly see the large-scale impact of your efforts, especially when giving back to a community. But this work is different. You can feel it. It's real and it's rewarding.”

Sarah Coles

Contracting Officer's Representative
California Wildfire Debris Mission
Los Angeles District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



SPL teams up with Red Cross for blood drive, surpassing goal

BY DECEMBER WINTERS
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH NURSE
LA DISTRICT SAFETY OFFICE

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles District hosted a blood drive March 11 at the district's headquarters in downtown LA, helping the American Red Cross surpass its collection goal.

“Due in part to your efforts, we were able to collect 33 pints of lifesaving blood, which will make a vital difference in up to 99 hospital patients,” wrote James Marcel Terrones, account manager with Donor Resource Development for the American Red Cross, in a thank-you letter to the LA District. “The collection goal for patient need was 22, so we surpassed our goal. Thank you all.”

According to the American Red Cross, every two seconds someone in the U.S. needs blood. Also, giving blood has a profound impact on both the donor and recipients:

- Saves lives: A single blood donation can save up to three lives by providing critical support for patients undergoing surgery, battling illnesses, like cancer, or recovering from traumatic injuries.
- Supports community health: Blood banks



Photos by Areca T. Wilson

A member of the Red Cross Blood Services team checks on a Los Angeles District employee while he is donating blood March 11 at the district's headquarters in downtown LA.

maintain essential reserves for emergencies and natural disasters, ensuring health care systems can respond swiftly when demand spikes.

- Health benefits for donors: Donating blood can improve heart health. Plus, you get a free mini-physical, including vital signs and blood tests, as well as a sense of purpose and connection.
- Promotes altruism and unity: Donating blood fosters a culture of generosity and shared responsibility, uniting communities through

the simple act of helping those in need.

By donating blood, individuals play a vital role in saving lives and strengthening the health resilience of their communities. If you couldn't give at this event, please consider donating at a location convenient to you.

Additionally, the LA District now has the SPL Wellness Committee, an important advisory group and forum set up to drive wellness initiatives for all district teammates. Be on the look out for new initiatives and events, and for opportunities to help those in need.



LEFT: Monique Vega, project coordinator with the Los Angeles District, elevates her arm and applies pressure to the needle site after donating blood March 11 at the district's headquarters in downtown LA. RIGHT: An LA District employee squeezes a makeshift stress ball to help maintain blood pressure while donating blood.

Assessing the damage



Photos by Robert DeDeaux

ABOVE AND LEFT: Baron Arakawa, civil engineer and program manager with the Los Angeles District's Emergency Management Branch, surveys two schools Jan. 31 in preparation for February's debris removal operations in Los Angeles County. USACE Los Angeles District received a mission from FEMA Jan. 17 to assist with debris removal in support of the State of California, following the devastating Eaton and Pacific Palisades wildfires Jan. 7 in Los Angeles County.



USACE command chaplain visit



Photo by Dena O'Dell

ABOVE: From left to right: USACE Command Chaplain (Col.) Jason Lorenzen and Sgt. 1st Class Renaldo Mathews, religious affairs specialist, speak with Aaron Tieu, facilities manager at the LA District's Baseyard, and Mike Turanitz, deputy chief of the Operations Division, during a March 6 visit to the Los Angeles District's Baseyard in South El Monte, California.

RIGHT: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Command Chaplain (Col.) Jason Lorenzen greets employees during a March 10 visit to the Los Angeles District's Arizona area office in midtown Phoenix.



Photo by Robert DeDeaux

Around the District

"Working with USACE allows me to be part of a mission that's critical to the country's development and resilience, all while supporting the military and civil sectors. I really appreciate the opportunity to contribute to projects that have a significant impact on both national security and public infrastructure."

Kane provides computer and network oversight for District employees in the greater Los Angeles District area. He is a proud native of Los Angeles. Kane has been with USACE for 30 months.



Kane Morales
IT Site Supervisor





Photo by Areca T. Wilson

Maj. Gen. Kim Colloton, deputy chief of engineers and deputy commanding general with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, left, meets with LA County Public Works Director Mark Pestrella, second from left, Jan. 15 in Pasadena, California. USACE received three mission assignments from FEMA in support of the State of California in response to the LA County wildfires, which also includes Pacific Palisades. They include providing mission analysis and planning to FEMA and a debris removal mission.

USACE deputy chief visits LA Wildfires first responders

BY ARECA T. WILSON
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Editor's note: At the time of publishing this story, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has officially begun Phase 2 of wildfire debris removal in Los Angeles County.

PASADENA, Calif. — Maj. Gen. Kim Colloton, deputy chief of engineers and deputy commanding general with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, visited the USACE Los Angeles District Jan. 15 in Los Angeles.

During her visit, Colloton met with LA County Public Works Director Mark Pestrella at the Rose Bowl, where first responders

are stationed as they continue to fight the Eaton Wildfire.

“It was good to see people from the district and to be able to meet up with LA County,” Colloton said. “I think it’s really important understanding that they have a huge responsibility in responding and recovery efforts.”

As Colloton toured the area, she discussed the status of the fires and their effects with Pestrella and first responders, including the possible incoming atmospheric rivers, which could cause flooding. They also discussed USACE’s part in wildfire response in the form of a debris removal mission.

At the end of the tour, Colloton also visited

Altadena, witnessing first-hand the devastating effects of the fire.

“I think LA is a very resilient and a very special city for our country,” Colloton said. “I got a lot out of it just talking to city leadership — to county leadership — and knowing we’re here with them through the long haul.”

For more information on USACE’s debris mission, visit <https://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Emergency-Management/Los-Angeles-County-Wildfire-Debris-Removal-Mission/>.

[More photos from this story on Page 11](#)



Photos by Areca T. Wilson

Maj. Gen. Kim Colloton, deputy chief of engineers and deputy commanding general with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, meets with LA County Public Works Director Mark Pestrella Jan. 15 in Pasadena, California. Also pictured is Steph Bishop, information officer with the Command General Staff of the California Interagency Incident Management Team 4. USACE received three mission assignments from FEMA in support of the State of California in response to the LA County wildfires, which also includes Pacific Palisades. They include providing mission analysis and planning to FEMA and a debris removal mission.



Maj. Gen. Kim Colloton, deputy chief of engineers and deputy commanding general with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, meets with LA County Public Works Director Mark Pestrella Jan. 15 in Pasadena, California. USACE received three mission assignments from FEMA in support of the State of California in response to the LA County wildfires, which also includes Pacific Palisades. They include providing mission analysis and planning to FEMA and a debris removal mission.



Deputy chief of engineers visits LA River Ecosystem Restoration Project

Photos by Dena O'Dell

Representatives with the City of Los Angeles and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers walk along the pedestrian bridge at Taylor Yard Jan. 17 in Los Angeles. The group met to provide Maj. Gen. Kim Colloton, deputy chief of engineers and deputy commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, third from left, an update on the LA River Ecosystem Restoration Project. Taylor Yard is one of many areas in which the City of Los Angeles and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are working together to restore native riparian, freshwater marsh and aquatic habitat communities along the LA River as part of the project. This will be one of the widest stretches of the river once it's restored.

Monica Eichler, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District project manager for the LA River Ecosystem Restoration Project, center, and Justin Gay, USACE LA District deputy district engineer, right, brief Maj. Gen. Kim Colloton, deputy chief of engineers and deputy commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, left, about the status of Reach 1, Phase A of the LA River Ecosystem Restoration Project at Pollywog Park in Burbank, California.



LA District hosts Iron King Mine Project Industry Day

BY ROBERT DEDEAUX
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PHOENIX — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District's Mega Projects Division hosted the Iron King Mine Project Industry Day Jan. 28 at Gateway Community College.

The event, led by the Los Angeles District's Claudia Garcia, project manager, and Kinya "Roger" Minami, Small Business Office procurement analyst, invited vendors to discuss environmental remediation projects in Dewey-Humboldt, Arizona, located an hour north of Phoenix.

"The purpose of the industry day is to provide information to local contractors, including small businesses, about how to respond to contract work details for three contracts toward cleanup efforts for the Iron King Mine and Humboldt

Smelter site," wrote Garcia and Minami in a joint statement.

The district entered into a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to provide remedial action for the Iron King Mine site as part of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, located in Dewey-Humboldt, a small town with a population of about 4,500 residents.

The former Iron King Mine extracted and processed rock ores of zinc, silver, lead and gold. It was one of the largest silver and zinc mines in Arizona.

"The event also ensures equal distribution of information and economic opportunity for local, regional, tribal and rural vendors interested in supporting the project," Minami said.

More than 140 people representing about 80 firms attended the event. More than 20 were small business owners from Arizona, including vendors from Phoenix, Prescott, Tempe, Tucson and Yavapai County.

"Claudia and I have developed successful relationships with local nonprofit organizations and the Arizona Small Business Association to ensure small and disadvantaged populations have equal access to business development opportunities that result from the cleanup efforts," Minami said.

The Industry Day agenda consisted of a project presentation, an open forum for questions and answers, project site board displays and breakout sessions for more one-on-one discussions.

Learn more at www.spl.usace.army.mil/Business-With-Us/Small-Business-Program.



Photo by Robert DeDeaux

Kinya "Roger" Minami, a procurement analyst with the Los Angeles District's Small Business Office, reads project details from an overhead projector during the Iron King Mine Project Industry Day Jan. 28 at Gateway Community College in Phoenix. The event, led by the Los Angeles District's Claudia Garcia, project manager, and Minami, invited vendors to discuss environmental remediation projects in Dewey-Humboldt, Arizona, located an hour north of Phoenix.



Photo by Richard Rivera

Los Angeles District leaders host a town hall Feb. 19 at the district’s headquarters in Los Angeles. The event provided leaders the opportunity to communicate priorities and recognize employees. (Portions of this image have been blurred for security purposes.)

LA District hosts town hall, recognizes employees

BY ARECA T. WILSON
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES — U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District leaders hosted a town hall Feb. 19 at the district’s headquarters.

During the event, leaders thanked employees for their support to the mission, presented awards and communicated priorities.

“First of all, I really appreciate, everybody being here ... it’s always a privilege to just talk with you,” said Col. Andrew Baker, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ LA District. “I know it’s been tumultuous the past couple months ... we responded to massive wildfires, that really touched so many of the district personally or certainly you’ve got a friend or a family member who’s been affected directly. I just want to say thanks for everything that you’ve been doing.”

During his remarks, Baker reminded and encouraged employees to fulfill their safety training requirements. He also spotlighted the importance of employees’ con-

tributions to the response to the recent LA wildfires.

“I can’t really put into words how proud I am of the team on all of this,” Baker said about the district’s wildfire response. “I think it’s really touched just about every division in some way, shape or form. I mean, it’s really taken a village to kind of get this thing done, and we should all be really proud to be part of that.”

Baker also presented Fiscal Year 2025 First Quarterly Local Awards and certificates to employees who supported wildfire operations. Below are the recipients:

Kevin Inada Employee of the Quarter Award:

Trevor Snyder

Recognizes an employee with outstanding contribution to the organization, taking SPL from good to great.

Mike Cogan Safety Employee of the Quarter Award:

Aaron Padin

Recognizes an employee for

their outstanding contributions in safety and occupational health promotion to the organization.

Innovator of the Year: Brandon Colvin

Recognizes an individual’s innovation efforts, contributing to revolutionizing USACE services, processes, programs or products.

Pillar: Leah Carrera

Recognizes an individual who has established a pattern of excellence in the support they provide to their fellow team members and the organization and exemplifies the commander’s motto of “Taking care of People.”

Rising Star: David Schroeder

Recognizes new and up-and-coming individuals.

The Helping Hand for Others (H2O) Award: Alyson Reichstein

Recognizes individuals who have demonstrated the best example of selfless service.

Good Catch: Charles Fouty

Recognizes employees who report a near miss "good catch" that was intended to prevent damage, injury or illness.

Hazard Identification and Reporting: Sarah Diebolt

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.

Wildfire mission support

For outstanding support to the LA District in responding to the wildfires from Jan. 7 to Feb. 2.

- Aaron Burke
- Abigail Kretschmar
- Anthony Sirna
- Areca Wilson
- Arnold Gelacio
- Baron Arakawa
- Brenna Smith

[‘TOWN HALL’](#)

[continued from Page 14](#)

- Callie Russell
- Chadi Wahby
- Danielle Storey
- David Kingston
- Dena O’Dell
- Denny Foulk
- Douglas Hessler
- Douglas Ritchie
- Glenn Coalwell
- Grant Adams
- Hanna Weyland
- Hector Herrera
- James Marcilla
- Jason Padilla
- Jeffrey Geraci
- Jeffrey Owens

- Jenny Zuniga
- Jeremy Jackson
- Joaquin Torres Jr.
- John Fogarty Jr.
- John Rishi
- Joseph Gatti
- Juan Urena
- Kevin Bontomasi
- Kinya Minami
- Leah Carrera
- Leticia Zarate
- Lisa Sandoval
- Margie Tizon
- Mark Harvey
- Mark Turgeon
- Mark McLarty
- Megan Whalen
- Melanie Ellis

- Melanie Stalder
- Michael Curtis Jr.
- Michael Robinson
- Milthon Galindo
- Naeem Siddiqui
- Nancy Allen
- Nicholas Olsen
- Olufunke Ojuri
- Orville Collins
- Paul Underwood Jr.
- Philip Devine
- Raj Cooper
- Randall Lipari
- Robert DeDeaux
- Robert Moreno
- Robert Ramos
- Rubyann Prout
- Ryan Meersman

- Salvador Rodriguez Jr.
- Sarah Coles
- Sean Sackett
- Sergio Valdovinos
- Shaun Frost
- Stephanie Dang
- Susan Lee
- Susan Lyon
- Susan Yarbrough
- Timothy McIntyre
- Timothy Fairbank
- Travis England
- Trevor Snyder
- Vicie Graves
- William Reckling
- Wyatt Jenkins
- Yat Ku
- Yong Eo



Photos by Richard Rivera

Many LA District employees were presented with certificates for their support Jan. 7 to Feb. 2 in responding to the devastating wildfires that destroyed thousands of homes Jan. 7 in southern California. This response included ensuring the safety of our personnel and their families, responding to the mission assignments for debris removal from FEMA and providing post-wildfire modeling and analysis of the burn scars to predict potential flooding and debris flows.



Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander, right, presents the Kevin Inada Employee of the Quarter award to Trevor Snyder, program manager for the Los Angeles County Drainage Area, Operations Division, left, for his work on the LA Olympics 2028 Planning Team during a Feb. 19 townhall at the LA District Headquarters in downtown LA. The award is named after Kevin Inada, the LA District’s former deputy chief of the Construction Division, who died in 2012. The award is given to employees who demonstrate traits exemplified by Inada, who was known for his “taking care of people” philosophy.



Honoring Jennie Ayala and her family

Photos by Richard Rivera

The family members of Jennie Ayala, former outreach coordinator and congressional liaison for the LA District, pose for a photo following a memorial ceremony honoring Ayala Jan. 16 at the LA District headquarters in downtown LA. During the ceremony, Col. Andrew Baker presented Ayala's daughter, Alyssa Salas, with Jennie's Bronze Order of the de Fleury Medal (posthumous). Additionally, the new "Jennie Ayala Award: Beyond the Call of Duty" employee award was announced in honor of Jennie and her service to the district. The semi-annual award will recognize individuals who have established a pattern of excellence in the support they provide to their fellow team members and the organization, and exemplify the commander's motto of "taking care of people." Jennie leaves behind two daughters, Alyssa and Sierra, and numerous family members, friends and coworkers.



ABOVE AND LEFT: During the Jan. 16 ceremony, Col. Andrew Baker presented Ayala's daughter, Alyssa Salas, with Jennie's Bronze Order of the de Fleury Medal (posthumous). Additionally, the new "Jennie Ayala Award: Beyond the Call of Duty" employee award was announced in honor of Jennie and her service to the district. The semi-annual award will recognize individuals who have established a pattern of excellence in the support they provide to their fellow team members and the organization, and exemplify the commander's motto of "taking care of people."

Recognizing SPL safety professionals



Photos by Richard Rivera

Army Civilian Commendation Medal: December Winters. South Pacific Division Commander's Coin: Mayra Bosque.



Army Civilian Achievement Medal: Fany Anderson, Tony McCoy and Whitney Bishop.

Welcome, new SPL teammates!



Photo by Richard Rivera

New employees for the LA District pose for a picture during the New Employee Orientation Feb. 12 at the LA District headquarters building in downtown LA.



VA San Diego Progress

Col. James Handura, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division commander, toured the under-construction Veterans Affairs San Diego Spinal Cord Injury and Community Living Center Jan. 8 to survey construction progress and review contract modification resource requirements. The Los Angeles District is managing the construction of the SCI/CLC facility, which is part of the Jennifer Moreno Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in La Jolla, California.

Photos by Maj. Cristina Palomino

Todd Burdett, project manager with prime contractor Archer Western Federal Joint Venture, right, briefs Col. James Handura, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division commander, second from left, in the therapy pool area of the VA San Diego Spinal Cord Injury and Community Living Center, of which the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District is leading construction, during Handura's Jan. 8 visit to the Jennifer Moreno Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in La Jolla, California.



ABOVE: Todd Burdett, project manager with prime contractor Archer Western Federal Joint Venture, second from left, briefs Col. James Handura, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division commander, third from left, and Shaun Frost, LA District Construction Division chief, fourth from left, from the third floor of the east spinal cord injury patient balcony during Handura's Jan. 8 visit to the Jennifer Moreno Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in La Jolla, California. Those pictured are looking down on the central utility plant, while Burdett explains the installation procedure for four new 1,500-kilowatt backup generators and the plant's structural reinforcement, and how these will tie into the medical campus to provide critical power in the event of a municipal power outage.

LEFT: Capt. Gregory Sacenti, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District project engineer, left, briefs Col. James Handura, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division commander, right, on the features of one of the long-term spinal cord injury patient rooms during Handura's Jan. 8 visit to the Jennifer Moreno Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in La Jolla, California. The rooms, each of which includes an overhead lift, wheelchair charging capabilities, nurse call features and built-in medical gas systems, are intended for three- to six-month stays for recently paralyzed veterans who will recover and learn how to adapt to their new living and mobility constraints.

Reservoir Operations Center

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District activated its Reservoir Operations Center March 12 in response to rainfall forecasts for Southern California. The ROC remained activated through the afternoon of March 13.

The LA District owns and operates 16 dams, 11 of which are located in Southern California, three in Arizona and two in Nevada, all with the primary purpose of flood-risk management. Water managers in the ROC monitor real-time telemetry data, including current water levels, rainfall, river flows and discharge from the dams. ROC water managers use this real-time information, inflow and weather forecasts from the National Weather Service and hourly reports from Operations Division's dam operators to maximize flood-risk management protection benefits within the guidelines of each project's water control plan. The ROC water managers also regulate discharge from Whittier Narrows, Hansen, Lopez, Santa Fe and Prado dams during these rain events to support groundwater recharge operations by Los Angeles County Public Works and Orange County Water District.

Real-time data and background information on our flood-risk management projects are publicly accessible at <https://resreg.spl.usace.army.mill/>.

Photos by Areca T. Wilson



ABOVE PHOTOS, LEFT AND RIGHT: Ken Lawler, Reservoir Operations Center shift leader with the Los Angeles District, keeps apprised of the latest information and data coming into the ROC during its activation March 12 in response to rain forecasts in Southern California.



BOTTOM LEFT AND TOP PHOTOS: Vahideh Sahleh, Reservoir Regulation Section engineer with the Los Angeles District, monitors pertinent, real-time data at the Reservoir Operations Center, which the Los Angeles District activated March 12 in response to rain forecasts in Southern California.

SPL awards, milestones and recognition



Photo by Richard Rivera

Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander, congratulates Angela Fuller Caldwell, lead budget analyst for the Programs and Project Controls Branch, Programs and Project Management Division, on her retirement Jan. 27 at the district's headquarters in downtown LA. During the ceremony, she was presented with a Civilian Service Commendation Medal for her dedicated service as a budget analyst and account manager for various Civil Works programs, including General Investigation Studies and the Tribal Partnership Program.



Photo by Richard Rivera

Lt. Col. Stephen Brooks, LA District deputy commander, right, poses for a picture with Patty Kimura, project manager with the Programs and Project Management Division, left, after he presented her with the Bronze Order of the de fleury Medal during her retirement ceremony Jan. 21 at the LA District's Baseyard in South El Monte. Kimura was paramount to developing and maintaining positive relationships with project stakeholders over the years and set a high standard of how to execute and lead projects to mission success.



Photo by Richard Rivera

Chris Rainwater, chief of the Safety and Occupational Health Office, presents Mary Garrett, administrative support assistant for the Safety and Occupational Health Office, with a Civilian Service Achievement Medal during her retirement ceremony Dec. 10 at the district's headquarters in downtown LA. Throughout her time with the Safety Office, Garrett ensured the office operated efficiently and effectively, demonstrating her commitment to the organization's mission and the safety of its personnel.



Photo by Richard Rivera

Capt. Christina Palomino with the DVA Program, LA District, center, is pinned by mentors Andrea Rodriguez, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, right, and Jennifer Williams, Veterans Affairs, left, as she receives a promotion to the rank of major during her Feb. 3 promotion ceremony in Long Beach. Palomino began working for the LA District in April 2022 and said she enjoys working for USACE because it provides her with the opportunity to do work that directly impacts people in a positive way and allows her to learn a lot about construction management.



Photo by Stephen Baack

Maj. Gen. Jason Kelly, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deputy commanding general for Civil Works and Emergency Operations, foreground left, gives a coin to Priyanka Wadhawan, project manager with the Los Angeles District's Mega Projects Division, right, during Kelly's Feb. 27 tour of the LA River.



Photo by Stephen Baack

Maj. Gen. Jason Kelly, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deputy commanding general for Civil Works and Emergency Operations, left, gives a coin to Paul Underwood, chief of the Los Angeles District's Engineering Division, right, during Kelly's Feb. 27 tour of the LA River.



Photo by Dena O'Dell

From left to right, Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander; Derek Walker, LA District project manager for the Santa Ana River Mainstem Project; and Maj. Gen. Jason Kelly, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deputy commanding general for Civil Works and Emergency Operations, pose for a picture March 4 after Walker received a Civilian Service Commendation Medal for his work on the project at the Prado Dam Resident Office in Corona, California.



Courtesy photo

Los Angeles District Chief of Safety Chris Rainwater, left, presents the Chief of Safety coin to Ivan Caceres, construction control representative for the Department of Veterans Affairs Long Beach projects, right, Feb. 21 for excellent support of safety on these vital projects.





Photo by Robert DeDeaux

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District’s Painted Rock Dam is pictured March 2024 near Gila Bend, Arizona. Most of the year, the reservoir remains dry; however, the last two years have seen an increase of waterflow, potentially raising the risk to the dam’s drainage area of 50,800 square miles. According to USACE records, Painted Rock Dam was built specifically to protect downstream agriculture, Yuma, and other towns and small businesses along the Gila River.

South Pacific Division leads dam safety collaboration

BY ROBERT DEDEAUX
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PHOENIX — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division’s Dam Safety Production Center conducted a multi-district dam safety awareness event Jan. 27-30 at the Los Angeles District’s Arizona area office in midtown Phoenix.

Under the leadership of Anthony “Mike” Carter, division dam safety support specialist, more than 30 dam safety experts and stakeholders met in person to enhance collaboration among dam safety professionals.

“The failure of a dam can lead to devastating consequences, including loss of life, damage to the ecosystem in the affected area and significant economic costs,” said Carter, who has coordinated several dam safety projects in the U.S. “Dam safety is paramount in preventing catastrophic flooding and preventing economic instability.”

The Dam Safety Production Center’s program supports the long-term sustainability of essential infrastructure, like water supply, hydroelectric power and flood control systems.

“SPD provided a platform to share project updates, align on risk-management priorities, and enhance coordination across our regional and national teams,” said Carter, who also supported the Pipestem Lake Dam Safety Modification Project in North Dakota.

The training sessions of the three-day meeting focused on three objectives:

- Enhancing technical expertise during normal and emergency operations.
- Assessing and communicating the effectiveness of USACE risk evaluation methods.
- Enhancing project coordination and execution strategies, which directly strengthens the ability to deliver safe and reliable infrastructure.

“Participating in meetings like this one reinforces my belief in the strength of the USACE Dam Safety Community of Practice,” Carter

said. “I feel truly honored to be part of the dam safety mission and take immense pride in supporting districts across the Corps.”

The Dam Safety Production Center operating principles are outlined in the USACE Management Business Process, or Engineer Regulation 5-1-11, focusing heavily on conducting regular assessments, implementing necessary modifications, engaging in coordinated safeguards for communities, ensuring reliable water resources and protecting economic assets around the nation.

“I take great pride in knowing that my work directly contributes to these efforts — helping to protect and save lives and improve community readiness and resilience across the nation, and contributing to national well-being,” Carter said.

For more information about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Dam Safety Program, visit: <https://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Dam-Safety-Program>.

Operations Division Safety Heroes recognized



Photos by Richard Rivera

Recently, four employees from the Operations’ Division demonstrated exceptional professionalism and dedication to safety even in the face of tragedy. Joseph Carranza, Jaime Torres, Aaron Tieu and Aaron Padin witnessed a fatal accident in which a pedestrian was struck and killed by another vehicle. Despite the difficult and emotional nature of the situation, these LA District heroes demonstrated exceptional dedication to public safety by promptly taking control of traffic to prevent further harm and ensured a safe environment for first responders and investigators. Their quick thinking and teamwork were instrumental in managing the scene under extraordinary circumstances. Their collective actions in protecting the victim, the scene and others make them Safety Heroes!



Three LA District Safety Heroes separately receive a Chief of Safety coin. Pictured in sequence from left to right: Aaron Tieu, Joseph Carranza and Jamie Torres, each receiving the coin from Chief of Safety Chris Rainwater. Aaron Padin was not available for the photo.

LA District commander meets with congressman, discusses Oceanside shoreline mitigation effort

BY STEPHEN BAACK
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

OCEANSIDE, Calif. — U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander Col. Andrew Baker met with California’s 49th Congressional District Rep. Mike Levin Feb. 20 to discuss the status and future of Oceanside shoreline mitigation.

Baker and Levin were joined by USACE subject-matter experts, partners from the City of Oceanside and stakeholders from the non-profit organization Save Oceanside Sand.

The focus of the meeting was the San Di-

ego County Shoreline Mitigation (Oceanside) Study. The LA District annually places 200,000 to 400,000 cubic yards of beach-quality sand from Oceanside Harbor along Oceanside’s beaches; however, the purpose of the study is to develop ways to mitigate sand erosion and other impacts, resulting from the construction of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton Harbor, which has interrupted sediment transport since its construction in 1942.

The study area, centered in Oceanside, encompasses six miles of shoreline from

Camp Pendleton to Carlsbad, all in San Diego County.

The study aims to recommend a plan to mitigate impacts and restore shoreline conditions that existed before construction of the harbor.

“I very much appreciated the opportunity to meet with Representative Levin, his staff and representatives from the city of Oceanside on site,” Baker said. “It was very helpful to see firsthand how erosion has affected the beach at Oceanside juxtaposed with our own modeling of the situation. We’re looking forward to working with our local, state and federal partners on the solution.”



Photo by Stephen Baack

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander Col. Andrew Baker, left, talks with California’s 49th Congressional District Rep. Mike Levin during an onsite meeting Feb. 20, 2025, to discuss the status and future of shoreline mitigation in Oceanside, California.



Photo by Stephen Baack

Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander, left, joins Erica Schenk, tribal council chairwoman for the Cahuilla Band of Indians, right, Feb. 26 to sign a Feasibility Cost Share Agreement as part of an effort to restore the tribe’s hot springs at the Cahuilla Reservation near Anza, California.

LA District takes big step toward Cahuilla Hot Springs restoration

BY STEPHEN BAACK
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CAHUILLA RESERVATION, Calif. — U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District officials joined the Cahuilla Band of Indians for a Feasibility Cost Share Agreement signing ceremony Feb. 26, as part of an effort to restore the tribe’s hot springs.

Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander, joined Erica Schenk, tribal council chairwoman for the Cahuilla Band of Indians, to sign the agreement as part of USACE’s Tribal Partnership Program.

The Cahuilla Hot Springs has been in use for the Cahuilla people for generations, serving as an important place for bathing, swimming and washing clothes, as well as fulfilling medicinal, cultural and spiritual purposes.

More recently, degradation of the ecosystem and the surrounding structure has begun to take its toll on the site, presenting safety risks, loss of habitat, water quality issues and even

impairment of the circulation, drainage and overall function of the hot spring as a dynamic, living, breathing system.

Schenk said the location was upgraded about 15 years ago, which she said was the tribe’s first step in restoring it. In 2021, the tribe reached out to USACE for assistance. USACE’s Tribal Partnership Program turned out to be the best vehicle to find the right solution for the tribe.

“It’s been a couple of years to get this process moving, and it’s taken a lot of collaboration to get to where we are now,” Schenk said. “We’re happy that we’re in a good place and ready to move forward with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the tribe.”

Danielle Storey, project manager and Tribal Partnership Program co-manager for the LA District, said this is the district’s first TTP project in California, “which is really exciting,” she added.

“These are incredibly important natural hot springs,” Storey said. “Water is incredibly im-

portant to the Cahuilla. It’s incredibly important to desert peoples in general, but it’s both spiritually and culturally significant. It’s also been a social, cohesive gathering place.”

For the TPP study, Storey said the LA District will be reviewing a range of alternative configurations for the project, with each accomplishing the overarching goals the tribe has for it: restoration, continued use and bringing back plants that are both good for the local habitat but also important to the tribe.

“There’s going to be a lot more public outreach with the Cahuilla Cultural Committee and vetting ideas on what it is they want to see as their traditional cultural property,” she said. “It has to be restored in a way that’s meaningful to them.”

Michelle Salgado, chairwoman of the Cahuilla Cultural Committee, said she’s pleased USACE and the Cahuilla are now at this point in the journey together.

“It’s very exciting,” said Salgado, who had with tears in her eyes. “It’s heartwarming.”



Photo by Stephen Baack

Mark Cohen, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Operations Division chief, second from left, greets attendees of the 2025 Business Opportunities Open House, which the LA District hosted March 6 in Montebello, California.

Hundreds attend LA District’s 2025 Business Opportunities Open House, Industry Day

BY STEPHEN BAACK
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

MONTEBELLO, Calif. — More than 450 attendees gathered March 6 at the Quiet Cannon Banquet Hall for networking, discussions and to strengthen business relationships during the 2025 Business Opportunities Open House.

The Business Opportunities Open House, or BOOH, is an annual event that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District hosts to facilitate direct dialogue with senior leaders, project managers and those looking to do business with USACE and the federal government.

Also in attendance were representatives from USACE’s Albuquerque and Sacramento districts, as well as from LA County Department of Public Works, LA

City Department of Public Works, Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Small Business Administration.

In his keynote address, Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander, outlined the many missions that comprise the LA District’s work.

“I like to say that the LA District has a program of great consequence,” Baker told attendees. “What we do has major impacts to the nation, to national security and to public safety, and we can’t do what we do without you.”

The LA District typically hosts its BOOH in a different location every year, with event organizers tailoring messaging and outreach materials to the projects happening in each area. Last year’s BOOH was in Phoenix, where

vendors had more interest in project developments at Davis-Monthan or Luke Air Force bases, for example, whereas this year’s BOOH attracted more attention to work in the Los Angeles River, at Prado Dam and Vandenburg Space Force Base.

Rebecca Wetzstein, president of Allie Bridge Energy Solutions, said she attended the event primarily looking for opportunities to do energy modernization and resilience work with local installations through USACE.

“We’re hoping to be helpful as a contractor providing engineering and professional services and trying to understand where the best fit is and where to bring the most value to the Corps,” Wetzstein said.

This is especially true, she added, considering current shifts

within the federal government.

“We find every four or five years, big shifts happen,” Wetzstein said. “COVID was one. We’re all having big shifts right now with organizations and funding. What remains consistent is energy resilience, regardless of technologies. Energy is important to all administrations. In our world, the technology set is very similar; the goals of how to use that technology is what changes.”

This year, the Society of American Military Engineers’ LA Post also hosted its Industry Day in conjunction with the BOOH, scheduling it the day prior.

“Combining the BOOH and Society of American Military Engi-

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[‘OPEN HOUSE’ continued from Page 26](#)

neers’ Industry Day was good, as it enabled the LA District to support their efforts to help the local industry keep track of what is happening with government agencies at all levels,” said Roger Minami, procurement analyst with the LA District’s Office of Small Business and one of the chief organizers of the 2025 BOOH. “The effort also served to encourage firms that normally do business with just state and local government to consider working for the LA District. I think both groups should work together to cross-promote larger government projects where there is a tie-in at local, state and federal levels.”

One other major difference be-

tween this year’s BOOH and those of years’ past is the addition of USACE representatives from Task Force Phoenix, which is overseeing debris removal from the January Southern California wildfires.

Minami said this year’s event was an important opportunity to provide Task Force Phoenix representatives with knowledge about local vendors and their capabilities as they relate to ongoing disaster recovery efforts in Pacific Palisades and Altadena, California.

“The task force knows what contracts they need, but they’re not familiar with the vendor base,” Minami said. “So, we’re trying to familiarize the task force with the capabilities here, since we want to use local contractors.”

Minami said the contracting

process for the wildfire response mission is very fast moving, and that it was a learning experience for many of the vendors.

“Knowing about the fires and hearing the update on what the concerns are and how hard everybody is working on that mission — and just knowing what a big effort it is — is fascinating, even just as a member of the public, to hear that and what the Corps is doing,” said Stuart Strum, with GreenPoint Engineering. “I’ve learned here about things we can do to be ready to serve the Corps and be responsive when there’s a solicitation.”

Strum said he attended the BOOH to network, learn more about the work the LA District has been doing recently, as well as the

outlook for future projects.

“The firm I’m with does master plans and feasibility studies,” said Strum, who joined GreenPoint about six months ago. “We also do a lot of engineering work, mainly for localities, cities and counties. We have a lot of that technical knowledge that we want to leverage and use to work with the Corps.”

Strum, who worked as a planner and project manager for the LA District between 2010 and 2021, said USACE’s mission has always aligned with his skill set and professional interests.

“It’s what I learned to do,” Strum said. “I’ve been a water resources professional for more than 20 years now. The Corps is just a driver for that. Its mission is where the action is.”



Photos by Stephen Baack



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Lt. Col. Stephen Brooks, LA District deputy commander, right, speaks with an attendee of the 2025 Business Opportunities Open House, which the district hosted March 6 in Montebello, California.

Grace Parnell, project manager with the LA District, right, gets to know an attendees of the 2025 Business Opportunities Open House March 6 in Montebello, California.

Sean Sackett, LA District Contracting Division chief, speaks to attendees of the 2025 Business Opportunities Open House.

Justin Gay, LA District deputy district engineer for project management, center, talks with attendees of the 2025 Business Opportunities Open House.



Photo by Stephen Baack

Robyn Colosimo, senior official performing the duties of the assistant secretary of the Army for Civil Works, right, receives a briefing on the LA River Ecosystem Restoration Project from Edward Belden, LA River Ecosystem Restoration project manager for the City of LA, third from left, as she gets an advantageous view of Reach 8 of the river from a helipad at the LA Transportation Center located downtown. Reach 8 of the LA River is a mile-long portion that begins at Main Street Bridge and extends downstream to the 1st Street Bridge. Reach 8 restoration components include some features that are on LATC property, and some that are not.

Army Civil Works senior leader gets updates on LA River Ecosystem Restoration Project

BY STEPHEN BAACK
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES — Robyn Colosimo, senior official performing the duties of the assistant secretary of the Army for Civil Works, visited three reaches of the Los Angeles River Feb. 27 to receive a close-up look at the LA River Ecosystem Restoration Project.

Colosimo’s LA River site visit was the final part of her three-day visit to the Los Angeles District area of operations in the last week of February, with much of her time dedicated to meeting with leaders and their teams taking on the California wildfire response mission.

For the LA River Ecosystem Restoration Project site visit, Colosimo was joined by a group of leaders including Maj. Gen. Jason Kelly, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deputy commanding general for Civil Works and

Emergency Operations; Joseph Savage, senior executive and programs director with USACE South Pacific Division; Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander; Justin Gay, Deputy District Engineer, and Priyanka Wadhawan, project manager and deputy chief with the LA District’s Mega Projects Division, as she spoke with City of Los Angeles officials Edward Belden, LA River Ecosystem Restoration project manager, and Mara Luevano, capital projects delivery manager, about the status and direction of the project.

The LARER Project is a joint effort between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District and the City of LA to ecologically restore an 11-mile stretch of the river, extending roughly from Griffith Park to downtown LA, and includes plans for riparian habitat and freshwater marsh resto-

ration to support increased populations of wildlife and enhanced habitat connectivity throughout 719 acres and eight reaches or segments of the river.

“There are not many urban ecosystem restoration projects like this that exist in the world,” Wadhawan said. “We’ve looked for case studies and sample studies, and projects of this magnitude in similar urban settings are relatively unprecedented. There may be fewer than a handful that have been put into place. That’s what makes this project unique and significant locally, nationally — and globally, I would even say.”

For the tour, Colosimo and the accompanying group visited key vantage points along three reaches.

The U.S. Geological Survey defines a reach

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as “a section of a stream or river along which similar hydrologic conditions exist, such as discharge, depth, area and slope.” For the 11-mile stretch of the LA River, other distinguishing features can factor into that definition as well, such as the presence of distinct geographic features, real estate and river channel configurations.

“Every reach has its own unique features and its own unique challenges,” Wadhawan said. “That’s what makes the project so complex, both as an engineering effort and an environmental restoration project. The challenge is to bring back a thriving riparian habitat within an urban environment while maintaining current levels of flood protection.”

Additionally, project responsibilities at each of the three reaches are split differently: Per the current plan, USACE is responsible for delivery of work at Reach 1 at Pollywog Park, which is the northern most feature; the City of LA is responsible for Reach 6 near Taylor Yard, which is mid-stream near Elysian Park; while Reach 8 at the LA Trailer and Container intermodal facility near Union Station is a joint effort.

Wadhawan said the City of Los Angeles and the LA District are still working on their own distinct pieces of the project, each navigating its own separate requirements and processes, but the agencies are still working in lockstep as partners in the project.

“USACE’s relationship with the City of LA, including urban development of the city, goes back at least a century — when the Corps started working on a lot of these big infrastructure projects like the dams and channelization of LA’s rivers and streams to help mitigate flood risk throughout the city,” Wadhawan said. “It’s an old relationship we have with them. We are still in alignment with them, and we are going to continue that partnership, whichever direction that is for the benefit of our communities. Whether it’s flood risk, ecosystem restoration, or emergency operations and debris cleanup, the LA District has an important and long-standing tradition of partnership with the City of LA.”

Learn more about the LARER project here: <https://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Projects-and-Studies/Los-Angeles-River-Ecosystem-Restoration/>.

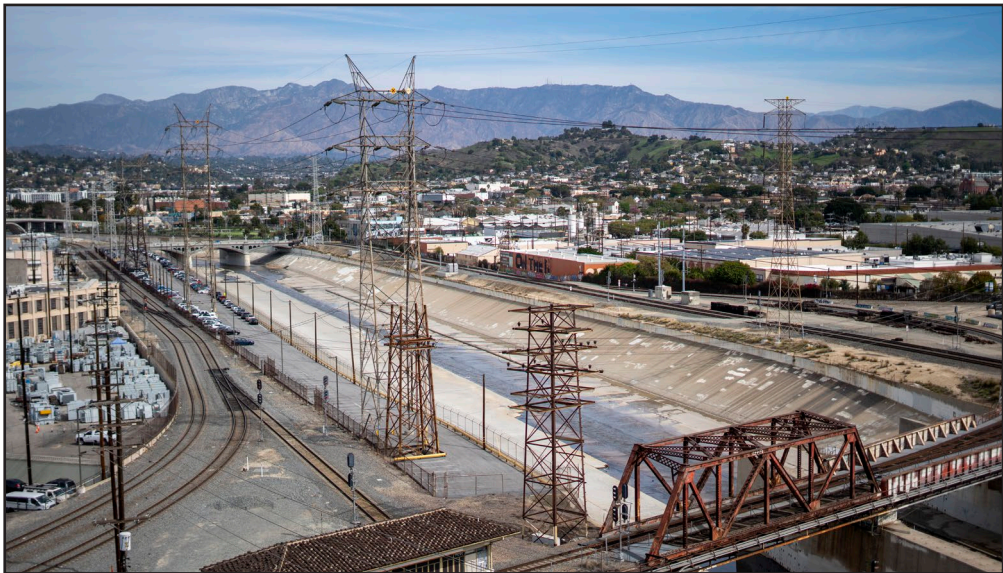


Photos by Stephen Baack

Priyanka Wadhawan, project manager with the Los Angeles District’s Mega Projects Division, center, briefs Robyn Colosimo, senior official performing the duties of the assistant secretary of the Army for Civil Works, second from left, during a visit to Reach 1 of the LA River during an onsite discussion of the LA River Ecosystem Restoration Project Feb. 27 in Burbank, California.



Reach 6 of the Los Angeles River is pictured Feb. 27 next to LA’s historic Taylor Yard.



Reach 8 of the Los Angeles River is pictured Feb. 27 at the LA Trailer and Container intermodal facility near Union Station in downtown LA.



Photo by Dena O'Dell

Maj. Gen. Jason Kelly, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deputy commanding general for Civil Works and Emergency Operations, center, talks to engineers, and program and project managers for the Prado Dam Spillway Modification Project during a March 4 visit to Prado Dam in Corona, California.

Army senior leader tours Whittier Narrows, Prado dams

BY DENA O'DELL AND STEPHEN BAACK
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES — An Army senior leader joined a group of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers leaders and subject-matter experts to tour two dams March 4 in USACE Los Angeles District's area of operations.

Maj. Gen. Jason Kelly, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deputy commanding general for Civil Works and Emergency Operations, joined fellow USACE representatives with both the Los Angeles and Tulsa districts, as well as the South Pacific and Southwestern divisions, during his tours of Whittier Narrows Dam in Montebello, California, and Prado Dam in Corona, California, while receiving project updates.

Particularly relevant was the Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Modification Project, which is intended to increase the dam's capacity to more safely handle extreme storms. The USACE team made the best of their time to strengthen Kelly's understanding of the project and the resources they need to deliver it.

The three-mile-long earthen-embankment dam is about 12 miles from downtown LA and protects about 1.25 million people in 25 municipalities who live and work between the dam and the Pacific Ocean.

PRADO DAM

Following his tour at Whittier Narrows, Kelly met with leaders from both districts and divisions for an updated overview of the completed and ongoing work at Prado Dam and the surrounding basin in Corona, California.

The project leadership team updated Kelly and other key leaders about the Santa Ana River Mainstem and Prado Dam Spillway Replacement projects, and associated environmental actions, explaining why performing the Prado Spillway/Dam Safety Habitat Mitigation is essential for implementation in 2025.

Following the brief, the team traveled to the top of the dam and spillway to provide Kelly with an up-close view of the projects.

For the Prado Dam Spillway Modification

project, USACE plans to replace the existing spillway with a labyrinth weir design, as well as the spillway chute and walls; raise the spillway elevation from 543 feet to 563 feet and extend the auxiliary embankment and Prado Dam to the new spillway. The team plans to award a base integrated design and construction pre-construction services contract in April. This type of contract is a firm-fixed price agreement that outlines the services provided during the pre-construction phase of a project, including consultation, and may include an option for the construction phase at a firm-fixed-price with a maximum ceiling price.

The team also plans to award an environmental habitat mitigation contract in fiscal year 2025.

Projects in active construction under the Santa Ana River Mainstem project include the Lower Norco Bluffs Toe Protection, and work on the Alcoa and River Road dikes.

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[‘SENIOR LEADER’ continued from Page 30](#)

For the Lower Norco Bluffs, the contractor is completing the final punch-list items under quality assurance supervision. Both the Alcoa and River Road Dike projects are complete and in the 12-month landscape maintenance period. All Operations and Maintenance manuals and real estate actions are in progress, supporting the project turn-overs in 2025 and 2026.

Following his tour of both Whittier Narrows and Prado dams, Kelly said he was impressed by the work that had been done and was looking forward to seeing the projects completed.

“It is very clear these are two important projects for Los Angeles, USACE and the people that we serve,” Kelly said. “The importance was absolutely conveyed to me. It’s clear to me that there’s a lot of really good work that is taking place. It’s clear to me that there’s some innovation underway to make sure that we deliver. It’s clear to me that we’ve been thoughtful about getting the engineering right. It’s clear to me that we have been thoughtful about how we manage the schedules to get the project management right. It is clear to me we have been thoughtful about our acquisition strategies, and it’s clear to me that we’ve got the right team to deliver.”



Photo by Dena O'Dell

Brian Dillard, chief engineer for the California Mega Project Office, Southwest Division Dam Safety Production Center, far left, discusses the Prado Dam Spillway Modification Project with Maj. Gen. Jason Kelly, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deputy commanding general for Civil Works and Emergency Operations, and other leaders March 4 at Prado Dam in Corona, California.

“I’m leaving impressed,” Kelly said. “I’m leaving with a clarity that I didn’t have when I arrived. ... And now that I’m on the ground, I have met those who are going to deliver. I’m impressed, and I look forward to coming back and seeing the construction and seeing us deliver for the people.”

Learn more about the Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Modification Project at <https://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Dam-Safety-Program/Whittier-Narrows-Dam-Safety-Modification-Project/>. Learn more about Prado Dam at <https://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Asset-Management/Prado-Dam/>.



Photo by Stephen Baack

The Rio Hondo tributary side of Whittier Narrows Dam is pictured March 4 in Montebello, California.

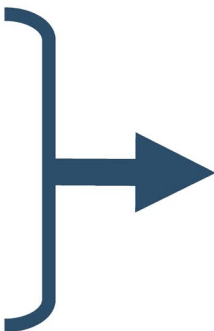


EPA'S PHASE 1 WORK IS COMPLETE WHAT COMES NEXT?

EPA PHASE 1 COMPLETE?

DEFERRED TO PHASE 2?

DEBRIS REMOVAL
QUESTIONS?



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS



DEBRIS CALL CENTER
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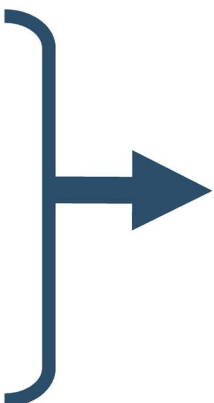
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Emergency-Management/Los-
Angeles-County-Wildfire-Debris-
Removal-Mission](http://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Emergency-Management/Los-Angeles-County-Wildfire-Debris-Removal-Mission)

RETURNING HOME?

AIR QUALITY CONCERNS?

CLEANING UP ASH/SOOT?

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE
EQUIPMENT?



LA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



GENERAL HOTLINE
(833) 540-0473

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH HOTLINE
(626) 430-9821

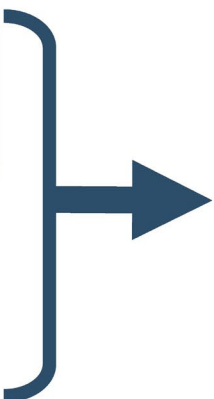
WEBSITE
[www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/
wildfire](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/wildfire)

ALTADENA

540 W. Woodbury Road
Altadena, CA 91001

**UCLA RESEARCH PARK
WEST**

10850 West Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90064



DISASTER RECOVERY CENTERS

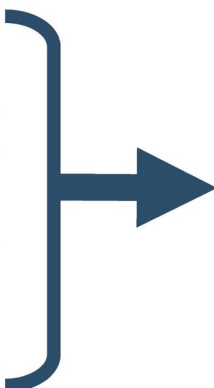


WEBSITE
[www.recovery.lacounty.gov/
recovery-centers](http://www.recovery.lacounty.gov/recovery-centers)

"RIGHT OF ENTRY" FORM
STATUS?

PERMITTING?

REBUILDING?



LA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS



HOTLINE
(626) 458-5100

WEBSITE
www.dpw.lacounty.gov