

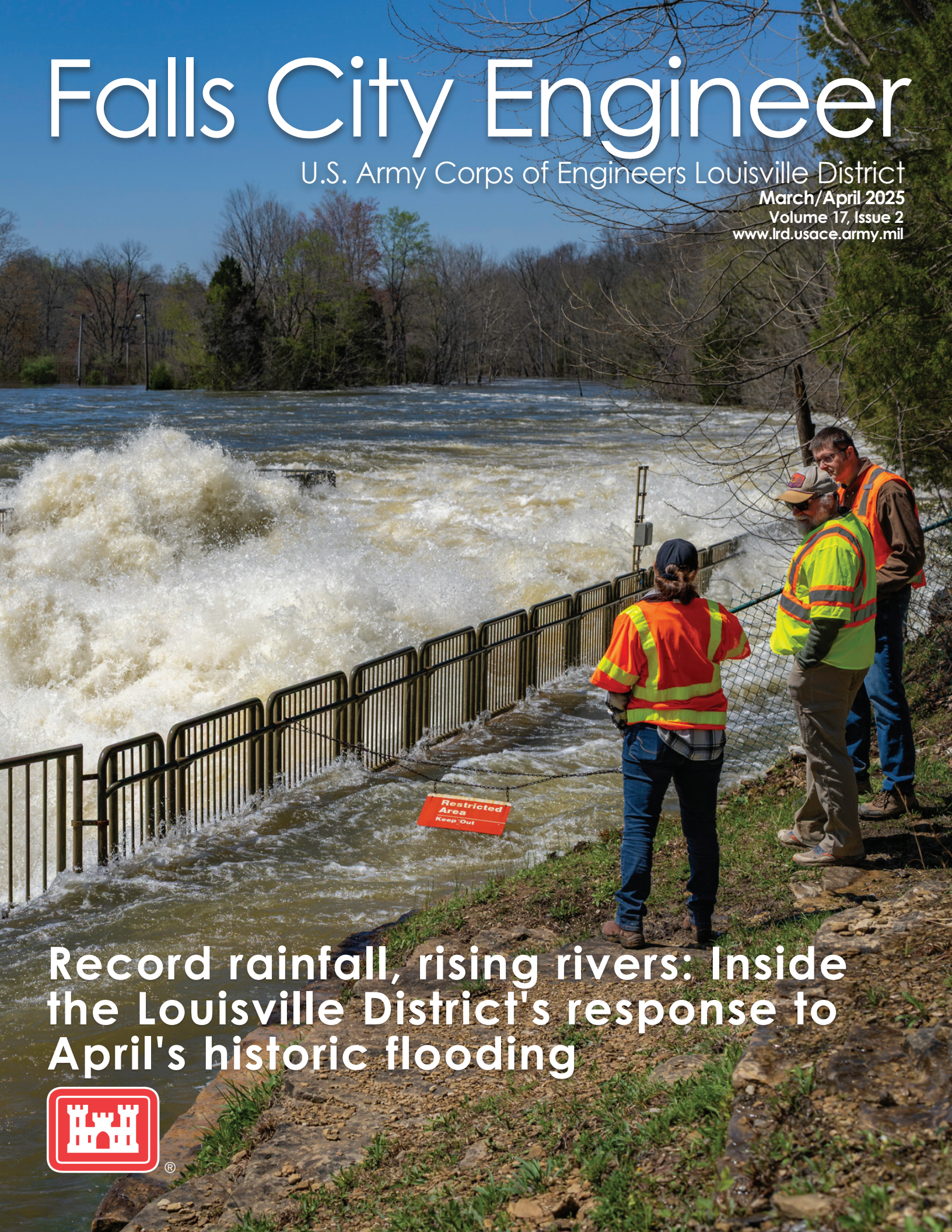
# Falls City Engineer

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District

March/April 2025

Volume 17, Issue 2

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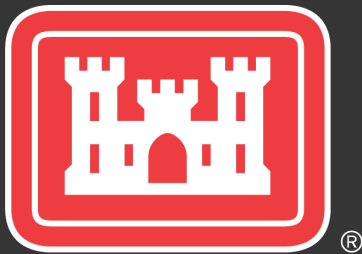


Record rainfall, rising rivers: Inside the Louisville District's response to April's historic flooding



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## Falls City Engineer

Vol. 17, Issue 2

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Falls City Engineer is an unofficial publication under AR 360-1, published bimonthly for Louisville District employees and members of the public by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CELRL-PA, P.O. Box 59, Louisville, Ky. 40201-0059 under supervision of the Public Affairs Office. Views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army or the Corps of Engineers.



On the cover: Members of Dam Safety and Water Management monitor the tailwater outflows, April 7, 2025, at Rough River Lake, Falls of Rough, Kentucky. (USACE photo by Charles Delano)

# Commander's Comments

Team Louisville,

Spring has arrived, and here in Louisville, that means one thing... DERBY! Whether you're attending the 151st running of the Kentucky Derby or enjoying in the festive spirit of other local events, I hope you take a moment to enjoy the excitement with friends and family.

This month also brings important moments for reflection and awareness. April is Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month and I encourage everyone to show their support by participating in Teal Tuesdays and standing united in our commitment to a safe and respectful workplace. We will also observe Denim Day on April 30 which will give us another opportunity to advocate for education, prevention and change.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the incredible efforts of our district in supporting communities across Kentucky during recent historic flooding events in both the eastern and western parts of the state. Your swift action, technical expertise and compassion have not gone unnoticed. I am incredibly proud of your dedication and professionalism. This district rises to meet every challenge and the impact of your work is felt far and wide.

In this issue of the Falls City Engineer please enjoy stories on our district's response to historic flooding across the Ohio River Basin, the Red Zone meeting marking the last year of work for the Louisville VA Medical



**Col. L. Reyn Mann**

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

Center, a highlight on outreach coordinator, Brandon Brummett, and much more!

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to our mission and to one another. You are what makes the Louisville District strong and I couldn't be more proud to lead this world-class team!

Building Strong...Together!

Louisville Proud!


Col. L. Reyn Mann

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Volume 17, Issue 2 2

 Please conserve:  
Think before you print.



# Record rainfall, rising rivers: Inside the Louisville District's response to April's historic flooding



Charles Delano

*A historic rainfall event during the first week of April created widespread flooding affecting a large portion of the Ohio River Basin, reaching across Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio. During a span of four days, some areas saw between 6 to 16 inches of rain pushing rivers and reservoirs to record levels.*

*Abby Korfhage, public affairs*

Just weeks after the February 2025 flood event wreaked havoc on the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District was faced with another round of widespread flooding affecting an even larger swath of the Ohio River Basin, reaching across Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio.

A historic rainfall event during the first week of April, left the region inundated—some areas saw between 6 to 16 inches of rain in the span of four days, which pushed rivers and reservoirs to record levels. The Ohio River crested at 36.6 feet—moderate flood stage—in Louisville—the 8th highest level in recorded history.

“Our system of flood risk management reservoirs and projects performed as designed and prevented tens of millions of dollars in downstream damages. I am very proud of our team that jumped into action to do what they do best,” said Louisville District Commander L. Reyn Mann. “The district’s water management, operations, and dam and levee safety teams quickly mobilized in anticipation of this event. Working around the clock, they monitored conditions, managed reservoir releases and communicated with stakeholders to reduce

flooding impacts to local communities and to maintain safe navigation along the region’s waterways.”

“These historic events have been challenging and our hearts go out to all who were affected, but they have also served as a testament to the importance of our infrastructure and the dedicated team of individuals charged with operating and maintaining these critical projects. Without

these flood risk management reservoirs in place, we would have undoubtedly seen exacerbated Ohio River flooding and further loss of life and property damage across Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio. The dedicated professionals of the Louisville District squared off against two back-to-back flood events, and they never flinched.”

During this event, two of the district’s

*Continued on next page*



Abby Korfhage

*USACE Dam Safety Coordinator Roger Olson collects data at Rough River Lake in Falls in Rough, Kentucky, April 9.*



Kelsie Hall

*Members of the dam safety team assess flooding impacts across Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio at the district office, Louisville, Kentucky, April 2.*



Continued from previous page

FRM reservoirs reached record pools.

Barren River Lake in Glasgow, Kentucky, reached 583.6 feet MSL (mean sea level) April 7, 2025. The previous record was set 36 years ago in March 1989 when the pool reached 583 feet MSL. Rough River Lake in Falls of Rough, Kentucky, also reached record pool of 530.4 feet MSL April 6.

Notably, Rough River Lake reached spillway pool of 524 feet MSL April 4, 2025, and at its peak had more than 6.4 feet of water in the spillway with a total outflow (combined spillway and tower release) of approximately 8,500 cubic feet per second. The spillway provides a safe path for the excess flows once the dam reaches maximum capacity.

As water levels rose, the Louisville District developed the Rough River Lake Viewer—an inundation map for residents and emergency planners to enhance community preparedness. USACE partnered with local and state emergency operation managers to keep nearby residents safe and informed.

The new publicly accessible interactive map allowed property owners to evaluate where their properties were in relation to water levels ranging from 510 to 536 feet—a game-changer in how the district communicates with nearby property owners during these high-pool events.

Several other lakes hit levels within their top five record pools of all time, including Nolin River Lake, Green River Lake, Cave Run Lake, Taylorsville Lake,



Charles Delano

*View of McAlpine Locks and Dam, April 8, 2025, in Louisville, Kentucky. Locking operations at McAlpine Locks and Dam were suspended April 6, 2025 due to high water, after close coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard and our industry partners.*

William H. Harsha Lake and Brookville Lake.

Due to elevated lake levels, dam safety personnel were conducting high pool inspections at dams across Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio, and in some cases were conducting 24/7 monitoring.

“Several of Louisville District’s reservoirs reached record pool levels, with eight hitting top five historic highs—a huge challenge that our dam safety team rose to meet,” said Kate Brandner, Louisville District Dam Safety Section chief. “Under the leadership of dam safety program

manager, Jackie Henn, the team ensured that all of the reservoir dams impacted were appropriately inspected and assessed for performance, the team was ready to react quickly. Their vigilance in tracking instrumentation and communicating field conditions in real time allowed leadership to make informed decisions in highly dynamic situations. The team worked long days—often at significant personal sacrifice—including 24-hour surveillance operations at Rough River, to ensure that every risk was identified and managed. Their commitment, collaboration and technical expertise were nothing short of outstanding, and they exemplified what it means to serve with excellence and integrity under pressure.”

The district’s 17 reservoirs throughout Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio served their purpose and provided flood damage reduction for communities downstream. In fact, since their construction, these lake projects have helped prevent more than \$3.9 billion in flood damages.

With the Ohio River reaching moderate flood stage, navigation was also temporarily impacted. Locking ceased at various times during the flood event at Markland, McAlpine, Cannelton, Newburgh, John T. Myers and Smithland locks and dams. By April 19, each facility had resumed locking.

The Louisville District’s flood fight teams deployed three teams throughout Kentucky and Indiana monitoring river and levee conditions and assisting levee sponsors.



Charles Delano

*John Franek (left) and Terry Salyers take piezometer measurements, April 5, 2025, and were part of the dedicated maintenance crew at West Fork Lake in Cincinnati, Ohio, monitoring the dam and keeping watch 24 hours a day during this high water event.*



*Continued from previous page*

Additionally, the Louisville District also helped to provide 201,000 sandbags to 16 counties throughout the Commonwealth.

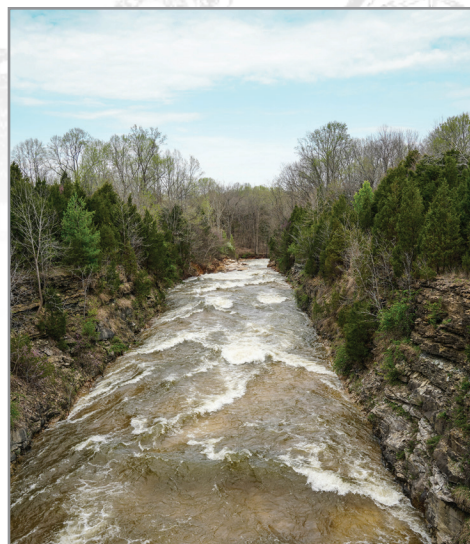
Now that the water levels have receded, the Louisville District's field staff have shifted focus to cleanup efforts. Evaluations are still underway to assess the conditions and safety of many recreation areas at the lake projects, but the teams are working hard to prepare for the 2025 recreation season.

The resilience and readiness of the Louisville District stand as a powerful reminder of the critical role that flood risk management infrastructure plays in protecting lives and property. While the back-to-back flood events were challenging, they also showcased the unwavering dedication of the team behind the scenes.



Abby Korfhage

*Rough River Lake Park Ranger J.D. Tucker cleans the inside of a toll house at Axtel campground, April 23, 2025.*



Abby Korfhage

*A view of the water flowing through the spillway at Rough River Lake, Falls of Rough, Kentucky, April 9, 2025.*

## Agency workshop provides recovery options in Eastern Kentucky flood efforts

*Sarah Atherton, public affairs*

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville and Nashville Districts, with cooperating federal and state agencies, participated in a Resources and Permitting workshop in Hazard, Kentucky, April 23, 2025. The workshop was a continuation of conversations with local government officials in Eastern Kentucky to discuss ways to recover from flood-related disasters and how to prevent future flooding. USACE Louisville and Nashville Districts, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) discussed what federal programs are available to help with debris removal and channel restoration, and the USACE Regulatory Division and Kentucky Division of Water (KDOW) discussed permitting requirements and applicability of Section 404 Clean Water Act exemptions.

"We wanted the people there to understand what resources are available to help them to mitigate flood risks and to better understand the permitting processes," said Brandon Brummett, Louisville District outreach coordinator. "We also wanted to de-mystify the permitting process and do some myth busting about some common things that will help local community members in the future. It was also an opportunity just to put some faces to the names so that they would know who to contact when they have issues."

Eastern Kentucky experienced severe

flooding after storm events in 2022 and again earlier this year on Valentine's Day weekend. As flood waters recede, residents must contend with debris jams, sediment deposition and eroding streambanks.

The State of Kentucky received a Major Disaster Declaration Feb. 24, 2025,

authorizing individual and public assistance for 24 counties in Eastern Kentucky. The Louisville District deployed personnel to assist the state and FEMA with conducting initial debris assessments in the affected counties.



Michael Maddox

*Louisville District outreach coordinator, Brandon Brummett speaks with local government officials about U.S. Army Corps of Engineers resources supporting flood recovery efforts in Eastern Kentucky.*



Michael Maddox

*The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville and Nashville Districts, with cooperating federal and state agencies participate in the Resources and Permitting workshop, Hazard, Kentucky, April 23, 2025.*



# USACE Levee Safety partners with local sponsors to brace for historic flooding

Abby Korfhage, public affairs

As historic flooding impacted parts of Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois in April, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District flood fight teams were on the front lines. Three Flood Fight Teams from the district's Levee Safety Program partnered with local levee sponsors to monitor conditions and protect communities from the high-water event.

"During flood events, USACE's Levee Safety Team offers technical assistance to local levee sponsors through recommendations, on-site monitoring and inspection of levee system features and required flood operations (which includes closing of gates to stop flow through pipes, installation of closures structures that in non-flood scenarios allow for vehicle or pedestrian traffic, and running pump stations to reduce interior flooding from rain), and tracking of the use and additional need for flood fight materials and equipment," said Neil Cash, Program Manager for the Louisville District Levee Safety Program.

The team also acts as a liaison between the USACE Emergency Operations Center and local levee sponsors to make sure that requests are received, and the appropriate channels are used to meet the needs of the communities behind the public's flood risk management infrastructure.

These efforts, part of USACE's Levee Safety Program, not only provide real-time inspection but also help guide future risk assessments and operations planning.

"Observations of levee performance during events, especially ones of this magnitude, will better inform future risk assessment analyses to determine which



The Louisville District Flood Fight Teams from Levee Safety work with the local levee sponsors on sandbag placement in Frankfort, Kentucky, April 6.

future Operation and Maintenance activities the sponsors could perform to buy down the most risk," Cash added.

As of April 10, USACE Louisville District had flood fight teams monitoring levee systems along the Wabash River and its tributaries in western Indiana/eastern Illinois and along the lower Ohio River and its tributaries covering areas in western Kentucky and southern Illinois. These teams coordinated with levee sponsors to ensure they had the necessary equipment and materials for proper levee performance.

"Our team visited more than 30 levees, including those at both rural areas and urban communities such as Paducah, Covington and Frankfort in Kentucky; Harrisburg and Mt. Carmel in Illinois; and Vincennes, Evansville and Terre Haute in Indiana," said David Lasoski, Louisville District Levee Safety Section chief.

Teamwork with local sponsors is crucial.

"Communication, communication, communication! Ensuring the sponsors have what they need and in a timely manner is a big focus during flood fight missions," Cash said.

The Louisville District's response was robust, involving a wide range of personnel.

"Events of this size are typically 'all-hands-on-deck'. Several Levee Safety personnel are fulfilling roles beyond their daily responsibilities by inspecting levees across our whole portfolio and at the direction of the mission manager. Events of this scale even expand beyond the Levee Safety section," Cash said.

Support comes from across the Louisville District.

"Special thanks have to go out to our water management team, dam safety personnel and our partners in Emergency Management who continually provide support to our teams and help our sponsors connect to the appropriate channels," he added.

According to the team, this year's flooding has rivaled some of the region's most severe historical events, including the 1997 flood in Louisville. As the high-water event unfolded, it was clear that the routine collaboration and focus on preparedness between USACE and its local partners is key in responding to emergency events.

## New monitoring system at Rough River Dam streamlines data collection, enhances safety

Michael Maddox, public affairs

Members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District's Dam Safety Section recently completed the installation of a new dam monitoring system at Rough River Dam in Falls of Rough, Kentucky. The system, known as the Monitoring Instrumentation Data Acquisition System (MIDAS), will provide several benefits in

future dam monitoring operations.

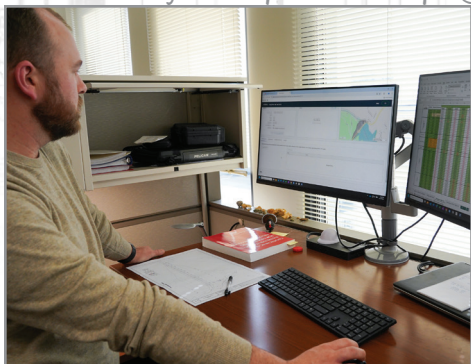
Jackie Henn, Dam Safety's program manager for the Louisville District, said the system will allow for a more modern way of monitoring the dam.

"MIDAS is used to acquire, store and visualize instrumentation data in a centralized location that's easily accessible online. The system allows manually acquired data from projects to be added

on-line giving district staff the ability to quickly view data based on pool elevations and determine the health and integrity of dams during flood situations," she said. "The Louisville District Dam Safety team worked with United States Geological Survey members to automate the data collection system at Rough River eliminating the need for project staff to

*Continued on next page*





Connor Estes, a geologist with the Dam Safety Section, reviews data from the MIDAS system installed at Rough River Dam in Falls of Rough, Kentucky from his workstation in the Louisville District March 13, 2025.

Michael Maddox

walk the dam and manually collect the data. This allows for more frequent readings and real time transfer of data to the MIDAS system allowing a quicker response to instrument changes at the district level.”

“The dam safety team worked with the MIDAS programmers to set up all automated instruments in MIDAS so we could begin monitoring data real-time,” she added. “This included importing millions of points of data already collected in the old system and moving it to MIDAS. We then had to create new plots to better monitor the data and be able to perform QA/QC [Quality Assurance/Quality Control] efforts for the data.”

Henn said the installation of the system not only modernizes data collection, but also serves as a model for other districts.

“The goal for headquarters is to have all projects within USACE eventually added to the MIDAS system. The Louisville District is one of the first districts to migrate all instrumentation for all projects into MIDAS,” she said.

All reservoirs in the Louisville District utilize MIDAS for instrumentation monitoring, but the unique automated collection system at Rough River lake now allows dam safety personnel to monitor the health of the dam from the district office in real time.

## Environmental

# USACE, EPA advance long-term water quality improvements in Milford, Ohio

Sarah Atherton, public affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District is partnering with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to use innovative technology to address a decades-long groundwater contamination concern at the Milford Contaminated Aquifer Superfund Site in Milford, Ohio.

The project is currently in the Remedial Design Phase, which includes additional data collection as well as a treatability study that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Remedial Plan selected by the USEPA. This phase, expected to be completed in 2026, marks the final step before implementing a plan that will clean up the groundwater at its source, rather than relying on expensive treatment methods.

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) were identified in the Milford municipal water supply wells in 1986. Due to the presence of VOCs, a portion of the drinking water in Milford from wells containing VOCs has undergone “air stripping” treatment since 1990. Since 2011, all drinking water has been processed through the air stripper. While VOCs remain in the raw water, the finished drinking water meets both state and federal standards, according to the USACE team.

“In many environmental projects, the benefits of the project are harder to quantify and visualize. For the Milford Contaminated Aquifer, we can see the



Courtesy Photo

A contractor takes a groundwater sample from a monitoring well in January 2025 prior to initiation of the treatability study.

direct benefit the project will have on the community,” said Jeremy Renner, Louisville District environmental engineer. “This remediation project will provide long-term environmental, public health and economic benefits to the local community. A clean water supply and improved environmental conditions enhance the attractiveness of Milford for businesses and residents.”

There are many steps between identification of contamination and implementation of the Remedial Plan that require communication, transparency and cooperation between federal, state and local government entities, the community and private landowners. Groundwater does not discriminate between public and private

land so obtaining access for data collection can be challenging.

“A significant portion of the project area consists of private property. Property owners must be consulted and must sign Right of Entry agreements to allow work to proceed. Obtaining these agreements is critical for successful cleanup,” Renner said.

Once the Remedial Design Phase is complete, large-scale treatment following the Remedial Plan will begin.

“By addressing contamination at its source, this project ensures a healthier, safer and more sustainable future for the City of Milford while reducing long-term environmental and financial burdens on the community,” Renner said.



# USACE military construction enables expanded research capability at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base



Charles Delano

Construction efforts are underway for the addition of a ninth floor to an existing 13-story research tower located on Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Feb. 10, 2025.

*Charles Delano, public affairs*

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District is undertaking a vital construction project at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, designed to enhance research capabilities critical to national defense. The \$8.4 million project will add a ninth floor to an existing 13-story research tower, addressing a unique operational need while presenting challenges that demand innovation and close collaboration.

The project involves constructing a 750-square-foot ninth floor beneath the current 10th floor of the research tower. This new space will provide state-of-the-art laboratory facilities, including updated fire suppression systems, restrooms, power and lighting, mechanical, electrical, plumbing upgrades and modernized elevators.

The decision to place the new floor below the 10th floor reflects the specialized nature of the mission it will support. Current lab spaces in the tower are occupied by other programs, which cannot share space with the new lab space due to security and operational requirements.

Constructing a new floor in an existing high-rise research tower is no small feat. Elevated work introduces logistical challenges, including accessing confined spaces and managing differing site conditions. USACE teams are prepared to address these complexities by employing advanced construction methods and ensuring strict safety protocols.

“Working at these heights and in these conditions requires meticulous planning and execution,” said Chris Hesse, Wright-Patterson AFB resident office project engineer. “Our team is leveraging its expertise to deliver a facility that meets both the operational and security needs of Wright-Patterson AFB.”

The project’s location—adjacent to and above occupied spaces in the tower—requires seamless collaboration among USACE, contractors and the Air Force. Construction activities must be carefully coordinated to minimize disruptions to the critical research already underway in the building.

“Collaboration is key,” Hesse said. “We’re working closely with the base to ensure that construction doesn’t interfere with ongoing operations. This level of cooperation is essential to the project’s success.”

Environmental factors such as outside air temperature and wind velocity introduced the challenge of curing the epoxy used on the structure’s fasteners. The solution came in the form of teamwork between the contractor and the USACE resident office.

“The challenge was to create a solution to keep a minimum cure temperature of 40 degrees that could withstand the wind speeds encountered at more than 90 feet in the air,” said Jerald Zwiesler, USACE mechanical engineering technician. “The solution was to have the contractor mount a

system of heating blankets to moderate the temperature and withstand the wind gusts.”

As the project progresses, USACE remains focused on overcoming challenges, maintaining strong collaboration and delivering a facility that meets the highest standards of quality and functionality. Construction for the facility is scheduled to be completed by July 2025.



Charles Delano

A Louisville District employee and contractor monitor construction at the 13-story research tower located on Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Feb. 10, 2025.



# Louisville VA Medical Center construction marks last year of work with Red Zone meeting



Representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Veterans Affairs, Robley Rex VA Medical Center and Walsh-Turner Joint Venture II discuss the current status of construction as well as topics to ensure success over the last year of construction during the Red Zone meeting held on the site of the Louisville VA Medical Center March 12, 2025.

*Michael Maddox, public affairs*

While there are many ways to score points on a football field, the ultimate goal of any team is to push the ball into the end zone for a touchdown. Crossing the goal line into the end zone and finishing the scoring drive for a construction project means a successful completion for all those involved in the building process.

The team building the new Louisville Veterans Affairs Medical Center held a “Red Zone” meeting March 12, 2025, marking the approach to the “end zone” for the construction of the new facility and supporting structures.

Ben Bruder, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project manager for the Louisville VA Medical Center mega-project, said red zone meetings are a pivotal milestone in the lifecycle of a construction project.

“Red Zone meetings are typically held when a project reaches about 80% completion. Their primary purpose is to align all stakeholders and establish a clear and unified plan for closeout and final delivery,” he said. “It serves as a forum to identify remaining critical tasks, coordinate schedules, clarify roles and proactively resolve potential issues that could impact the successful completion of the project. Essentially, it marks the transition from construction execution to project turnover.”

Bruder said the meeting was a key moment to set expectations and chart the path forward for project closeout.

“All major stakeholders were at the table—including representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs, current

Robley Rex VA hospital leadership, the Walsh-Turner Joint Venture II team, and several USACE team members. The meeting served to confirm that we are aligned not only on what still needs to be done but also on “how” we’re going to get it done—with clear priorities, ownership and accountability,” he said. “This level of collaboration is critical for a complex and high-visibility project like this one, where medical services and Veteran care are the ultimate mission.”

“The meeting was productive, collaborative and forward-looking. There’s a strong sense of shared purpose across all teams, and it’s clear that everyone is committed to delivering a first-class facility for our Veterans,” he added. “Construction is progressing steadily—we’re hitting key milestones and continuing to mitigate challenges as they arise. The momentum is there—we just have to keep the focus and

energy going through the finish line.”

Monthly Red Zone meetings are planned to help keep up and build upon that momentum.

“From here on out, ‘our play’ is all about tight coordination, proactive issue resolution and aggressive scheduling,” Bruder explained. “We’ll be holding recurring coordination meetings with all stakeholders to maintain alignment. Currently templated for monthly installments, they will likely occur more often as we get closer to the end of construction.”

He said those meetings will provide opportunities to:

- Finalize and execute commissioning and turnover plans.
- Ensure all pertinent stakeholders have a voice through closeout.
- Ensuring quality and schedule adherence in accordance with the contract.
- Keep close coordination with the VA activation team to ensure a seamless handoff.

“Just like in football, we’re in the Red Zone—it’s all about execution now. No room for missteps,” Bruder added.

Bruder said that just like in many sports, it takes a team to win at the end of the day.

“I’m proud of the teamwork and collaboration across all entities involved. This project is more than a building—it’s a commitment to those who’ve served our country,” he shared. “We owe it to our Veterans to deliver a facility that meets the highest standards of care and performance. We’re on the final stretch, and I’m confident in this team’s ability to finish strong.”



Red Zone meeting participants gather for a group photo at the Louisville VA Medical Center March 12, 2025.



# Louisville VA Medical Center Team shares contingency management strategies, sets new standard for VA construction

*Michael Maddox, public affairs*

The work on the new Louisville Veterans Affairs Medical Center has provided the project team opportunity to set the standard for future Department of Veterans Affairs projects managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The team is sharing its lessons learned with the contingency management process.

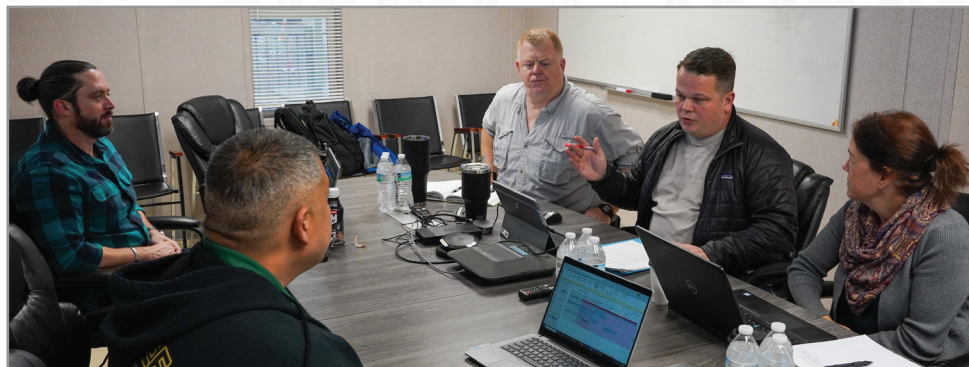
Several USACE South Pacific Division (SPD) employees were recently able to take advantage of this knowledge as they visited the site to learn how the Louisville District has been working change management items.

Drew Henry, a USACE Louisville District risk manager for the Louisville VA Medical Center project, lead a two-day learning opportunity with four employees from the SPD Feb. 12-13. Eileen Nixdorf and Kevin Kenworthy, South Pacific Division, Earl Chow, Sacramento District and Joshua Keever, Los Angeles District took part in the two-day training event to learn about the review process and tools the district uses for contingency management on the project.

Henry said a wide variety of topics were covered during the visit.

“We reviewed Louisville District collaborative and coordinated team efforts between multiple stakeholders including USACE, VA, and VA’s Office of Construction and Facilities Management to track, manage and report on contingency funding, contract changes, contract modifications, contingency funding and Cost and Schedule Risk Analysis projections related to the VAMC replacement project,” he said. “We also reviewed how the Louisville team uses strategic engagements including the monthly bi-weekly VAMC project coordination meeting, monthly joint risk management meeting, monthly change management meeting, monthly contingency management meeting, annual Cost and Schedule Risk Analysis update and bi-weekly project leadership reporting to track, manage and report on project contingency status.”

Kenworthy, a risk manager for the SPD, said the information shared was invaluable for others working on future VA projects.



*Drew Henry (center right), a risk manager on the Louisville VA Medical Center, shares some lessons learned in change management on the Louisville VA Medical Center project Feb. 12, 2025.*

“The Contingency Funds Management overview and training the SPD team received from the Louisville Team was excellent—the level of detail unequalled, and it provided a fresh new perspective for the Department of Veterans Affairs projects in the \$1 billion range requiring an Integrated Project Office level team,” he said. “At the present time all the SPD DVA construction projects have Resident Engineer level teams and none of the construction phases are near the \$1 billion level. This new risk management tool that was gone over provides a great way to provide transparency and effective financial management for USACE, the DVA and the American taxpayers.”

Henry said he was happy to share these tools and tips that could provide value for VA construction projects in the SPD's footprint.

“I hope they gained a better understanding of the contingency

management tools developed at the Louisville District and are able to take that knowledge applying it to their VA projects adding value for our stakeholders,” he said.

Kenworthy added that he felt one benefit beside the technical aspects of the training was how it allowed everyone to share and learn.

“The most valuable take-away for me was the positive team climate this contingency management tool provided for the working level stakeholders to sit down and communicate the simple to complex construction variables a \$1 billion project will always have,” he said. “This positive team climate at the Louisville IPO project had a secondary order of effect of allowing working level stakeholders to evaluate engineering and contractual project details and develop the best solutions possible and, at times, determine a potential modification was not in the best interest of the taxpayers.”



*South Pacific Division employees are led on a site tour by Dave Kopecky, a resident engineer on the Louisville VA Medical Center project, to get a hands-on look at the work taking place on the project Feb. 13, 2025.*



# Connecting people, project and purpose: The story of an outreach coordinator

*Kelsie Hall, public affairs*

An outreach coordinator is often the public's first point of contact with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during times of need and plays a dynamic role on projects that can have lasting impacts for communities. For Brandon Brummett, Louisville District outreach coordinator, the position is a way to connect people, projects and purpose.

"This is definitely NOT where I thought my career would take me," said Brummett.

This year, Brummett celebrates 30 years with the Louisville District, a journey that began while he was still an undergraduate student at the University of Louisville.

As part of the co-op program, Brummett sent his resume to several potential companies. Several weeks later, he received a letter from the Louisville District. "I didn't even know what the Corps of Engineers did back then, other than building Lake Cumberland, but my parents told me that it would probably be a good job," he said. "Based on their advice, and advice from UofL, I accepted the offer."

He joined the soils section of geotechnical engineering, going on to complete all three of his co-op rotations with the district and continuing to work part-time while finishing his undergraduate degree in Civil Engineering. Upon completing his master's thesis, he joined the district full-time through the Department of the Army Intern Program, a two-year program that provides opportunities for civilians to receive broad on the job training and development across a spectrum of positions within USACE.

"I think that time as a DA Intern was very valuable because I got to get a lot of

first-hand experience that has helped me throughout my career," Brummett said. "I was able to see military construction first-hand, see what a dewatered lock chamber looks like and look for cracks in the gates, visit each one of the district's lakes and check out the bypass valves in the control towers, and get a good feel for what project managers do."

From there, Brummett moved into a planner and project/study manager position in the Planning Division. During his time there, he passed the Professional Engineer licensure exam, gained experience with the district's multi-disciplinary work and signed up to be the debris team action officer, deploying to assist with debris removal in West Virginia, and spending a couple of weeks in Arlington, Virginia serving as a liaison between the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and USACE after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

A few years later he moved into a project manager role focused on supporting the district's Army Reserve mission until he ultimately settled into the outreach coordinator role in 2007, a vital position that helps people understand how USACE can support them.

He says his diverse experience with the Louisville District has enabled him to better explain what we do, how we do it and why we do it.

"I help teach people about what the Corps of Engineers does and how they can get help from us when they need it," said Brummett. "A lot of times that is directed to cities, towns and counties but also to state and other federal agencies, as well as members of Congress and their staff."

Brummett says he most enjoys building relationships with and helping people in his current role.

"I've always heard that you need to have a friend before you need a friend, and a big part of my job is building relationships with folks and then getting them connected to the different authorities we offer to get them the help they need. "This job gives me a chance to serve others, and I enjoy that."

While Brummett enjoys his position, he notes it can be tough to balance a wide variety of responsibilities, from serving as the lead for the district's Silver Jackets Interagency Flood Risk Management Team,



Michael Maddox

*Brandon Brummett, Louisville District outreach coordinator, discusses USACE resources for Eastern Kentucky flood recovery efforts with local government officials. April 23, 2025.*

which conducts diverse collaborative efforts in Indiana and Kentucky to reduce risk from floods and sometimes other natural disasters, and answering questions from Congressional staff and the general public, to trying to respond to communities after they have experienced flooding and being proactive to build relationships so that when issues arise they know how to get in contact.

"Managing stakeholder expectations is also a challenging part of my job," he said. "When I go out to meet with people that need our help, explaining our timeline to them so they aren't expecting us to start construction in a few weeks can be tough."

Brummett has played a hand in many of the district's ongoing civil works studies and projects from the beginning, and recognizes that even though his work is important, it's all a team effort.

"I enjoy seeing something that started out as a meeting between a couple of folks from the Louisville District and some local governments turn into a project that we will construct," he said. "Me being out there meeting with folks to lay the groundwork for these projects and studies allows more of our folks in the district to focus on delivery and execution."

"USACE does stuff that no one else in the world can do, and I get to help connect people who have major problems with our organization which is world-renowned for being able to solve major problems."



*Brandon Brummett, outreach coordinator, observes damage following the 2022 floods in Eastern Kentucky.*

Courtesy Photo



# Man on a mission: "Kayak Ron" works to keep Patoka Lake pristine

*Katie Chandler, public affairs*

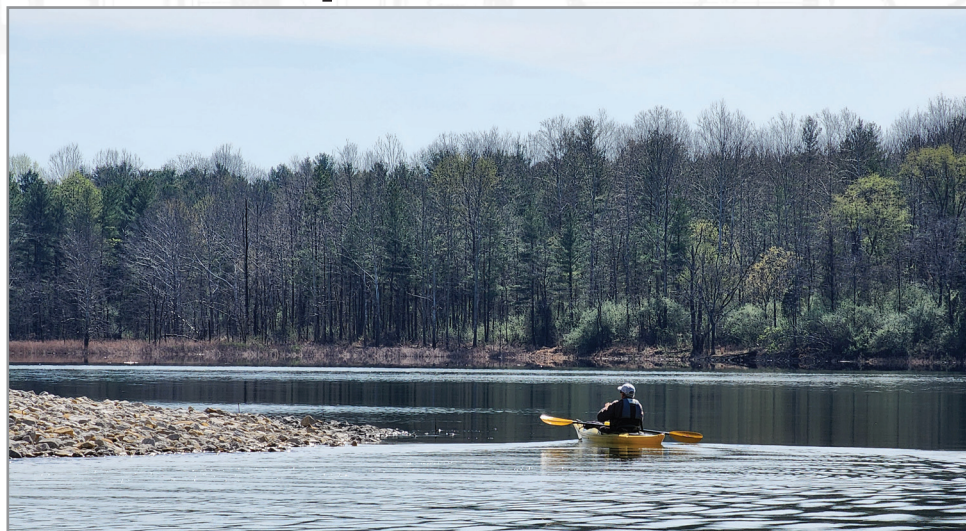
Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' mission, and one volunteer was recently recognized for his dedication to keep Patoka Lake pristine.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District's Patoka Lake staff recognized Ron Sergesketter, also known as "Kayak Ron", for winning this year's National Volunteer Award at Patoka Lake in Dubois, Indiana April 7, 2025.

Patoka Lake Park Ranger Jim Merkley, who nominated Sergesketter for the honor, said the National Volunteer Award is presented by the Corps Foundation to recognize exceptional volunteer service. The award honors individuals, couples, or families who go above and beyond in donating their time, skills and talents. Their contributions must result in a meaningful impact to one or more of the USACE's mission areas.

Besides being an avid kayaker, Sergesketter is driven to take care of Mother Nature by collecting and removing trash he comes across in his journeys. In winter when the lake is frozen, Sergesketter hikes along the water's edge looking for trash or other issues that might need attention. The rest of the year, he can be found working from his kayak retrieving items such as dock buoys, tires, and in 2016, his most impressive find, a prosthetic leg—which he later returned to the owner.

The nickname "Kayak Ron" is more like a badge of honor for the countless hours of dedication to a place he knows like the back of his hand. A name used by not only USACE and the Indiana Department



*Sarah Atherton*

*Ron Sergesketter, Patoka Lake volunteer, kayaks along the lake's shoreline to pick up trash and personal items that have washed up from recent flooding events April 7, 2025, Dubois, Indiana.*

of Resources, but other local volunteers and frequent lake visitors, too.

Between mid-2021 and the fall of 2024, "Kayak Ron" volunteered 1,212 hours across 279 days.

"I just don't like people coming here from out of town and thinking this place looks like trash," said Sergesketter. "I treat it like my own. I call it my lake."

This volunteer journey didn't just start in 2021 though, its started in the late 1970's with him, his brother and their canoe. They would paddle the waters together often returning with more trash than they did fish. Over the years, his instinct to pick up trash became habit, and the habit grew into a mission.

As time has passed, he has gotten more and more creative with his cleanup tactics. He's turned discarded beach balls into trash bags, constructed a tow-behind trash float

for his kayak and even repurposed items he finds along the way.

"Nature always provides," said Sergesketter. "Well, not nature. People."

His volunteer efforts are often solo, but he has joined forces occasionally with local scout troops and churches and plays a large role in the annual Patoka Lake Cleanup. The September 2024 Cleanup saw a rain event from Hurricane Helene and Sergesketter, along with 85 other volunteers, braved rainy and windy conditions to make the day a success.

For "Kayak Ron", his volunteer efforts aren't about recognition, it's about setting an example and reminding others to pick up after themselves, as well as inspiring people to pitch in.

"You don't have to join a group," said Sergesketter. "Just do it."



*Katie Chandler*

*"Kayak Ron" holds up a rusted metal kerosene container discovered along the shoreline of Patoka Lake, Dubois, Indiana, April 7, 2025.*



*Courtesy photo by Ron Sergesketter*

*A collection of discarded items gathered by volunteer Ron Sergesketter during a kayak cleanup at Patoka Lake April 7, 2025.*