

Photo by Shawn Davis

Col. Joshua Bost, center-right, incoming U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander, receives the USACE colors from Brig. Gen. John Lloyd, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division commander and division engineer July 31 in the Fort MacArthur Community Center at San Pedro, California. The passing of the colors in a military change of command ceremony symbolizes the transfer of authority, responsibility and the unit's enduring history from an outgoing commander to an incoming commander.

LA District welcomes new commander

BY STEPHEN BAACK
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SAN PEDRO, Calif. — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District conducted a change of command ceremony July 31 overlooking the San Pedro Breakwater, the maritime project that launched the district's presence in the region in 1898.

During the traditional passing of the organizational colors at Fort MacArthur, Col. Andrew Baker relinquished command to Col. Joshua Bost. Bost becomes the 65th commander of a district that oversees a workforce of about 700 personnel and a \$750-million annual program

across 226,000 square miles in Southern California, Arizona, Nevada and Utah.

The ceremony's location, one mile from the breakwater, highlighted the district's civil works and military construction origins. Completed in 1912 by Army engineers, the two-mile-long rock wall created the modern Port of Los Angeles.

The event recognized the tenure of Baker, who commanded the district since July 2023. Brig. Gen. John Lloyd, South Pacific Division commander, presided over the ceremony and detailed the complex workload and historic response missions the district managed under Baker's leadership. These included the region's

first tropical storm in more than 80 years and a major wildfire response.

The wildfires tested the district's emergency operations capabilities. In response to the damage, USACE established Task Force Phoenix.

"The Corps of Engineers would go on to execute the largest debris removal effort in our organization's history, completing the work six months early," Lloyd said, adding that the disaster directly impacted district employees, retirees and their families.

During his remarks, Baker credited the civil-

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STRENGTHENING REGIONAL RESILIENCE



Photos by Shawn Davis

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District welcomes members of the Yorba Linda Water District June 24 for a site visit at Prado Dam in Corona, California. The visit highlighted the facility's critical role in flood-risk management and water conservation within the Santa Ana River Basin system. Although the facility is typically a dry dam, USACE coordinates with San Bernardino, Riverside and Orange counties during the wet season to mitigate flood risk across the basin. The district then temporarily captures water at the dam and conducts controlled releases into a large network of Orange County spreading grounds for groundwater recharge.

TOP PHOTO: Members of the Yorba Linda Water District join USACE Los Angeles District employees to walk across the Prado Dam service bridge during the tour. Mark Toy, Yorba Linda Water District general manager and retired Army major general, is second from left.

BOTTOM PHOTO: Toy, left, and Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander, right, discuss regional water partnerships. Toy, who served as the LA District commander from 2010 to 2013 and later commanded the South Pacific Division, visited the facility to review collaborative water management partnerships.

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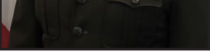
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From the new commander: Prioritizing people, delivering results

Los Angeles District Team,

It is the honor of my lifetime to join the Los Angeles District as your commander. I am excited to become part of an organization that delivers engineering solutions to our nation's toughest challenges and creates lasting impacts across Southern California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah and beyond.



COL. JOSHUA BOST
COMMANDER

Our work matters. Every project we deliver strengthens our military, strengthens our economy, protects lives and property, supports our communities and prepares our nation for future challenges. The accomplishments of this district over the past several years have been remarkable, and I am eager to learn from your experiences, understand our challenges and work alongside you to deliver results that few organizations can match.

As I begin command, I would like to share a few expectations.

First, we will take care of people. Our greatest strength has never been our buildings, equipment or budgets. It is our workforce. I want this to be a place where people are challenged professionally, respected personally and supported by one another. We will treat each other with dignity, communicate openly and honestly, and continue building a culture where trust is earned every day.

Second, we will remain relentlessly focused on delivering our mission. Great organizations make difficult work look routine through discipline, teamwork and accountability. We will prioritize what matters most, reduce unnecessary bureaucracy wherever possible, solve problems at the lowest competent level and make decisions with purpose. I value thoughtful debate before decisions are made, but once we decide, we will move forward together.

Finally, I want to hear from you. I ask a lot of questions — not because I have all the answers, but because I believe the best ideas

rarely come from one office. Innovation, continuous improvement and candid conversations are everyone's responsibility. My door is open, and I encourage you to bring forward ideas, concerns and opportunities to make this district even stronger.

I am excited about what lies ahead. We have an exceptional workforce, an important mission and tremendous opportunities before us. I look forward to meeting each of you, learning from your expertise and building on the proud legacy of the Los Angeles District.

My responsibility is simple. I will work every day to remove obstacles, empower our workforce and keep our focus where it belongs: delivering results for our partners and our nation.

Thank you for everything you do in service to our nation. I am honored to serve alongside you.

Essayons.

Col. Joshua Bost
Commander and District Engineer,
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District

Reflecting on our amazing team, historic era of delivery

Teammates,

As I take some time to look back on the past three years that I've been serving with you as a part of this amazing team, I'm awestruck by how we have faced head-on and overcome so many challenges, by how this special organization has continued to grow and mature to become even better, and by all that we've accomplished together for our partners and neighbors during this short but eventful chapter in the life of SPL.

The Los Angeles District has ALWAYS had a phenomenal reputation throughout the Corps of Engineers because of how we execute our amazing program of great consequence for so many, and because of the amazing people who have served and continue to serve on this great team. We've done the work

and we've got the stats to back it up: ironclad delivery, schedule, execution, real estate, regulatory and contracting numbers — all among the best in USACE across all of our programs. Some of these stats we've always had, but for others we had to work together developing systems and processes and then holding ourselves accountable to get to the precipice we now occupy. This is an impressive place to be for any district, but for one of such incredible scale and scope, it's nothing short of extraordinary.



COL. ANDREW BAKER
OUTGOING COMMANDER

We serve the biggest percentage of the American people within our borders of ANY district by a long-shot, and we do so with great distinction. Over the past three years, we were hit by the first tropical storm in Southern California in more than eight decades, innumerable atmospheric rivers testing the Los An-

geles County Drainage Area, Santa Ana River Mainstem and countless other flood risk management projects throughout our area of operations, monsoons in Arizona, and the most devastating wildfires in modern history here in Los Angeles. We answered the bell with flying colors every single time, coming through in spades for all the people our projects protect and otherwise serve. We also took care of each other in the face of significant churn tied to changes in how and where we do our work, unprecedented changes to our SPL team, and major staffing shortages exacerbated by hiring challenges. Against the odds, we balanced all of this while simultaneously delivering the largest program (in excess of \$2 billion last year) in the history of the Los Angeles District — a truly amazing feat and testimony to the aptitude, dedication and professionalism of our great SPL team.

I've been trying to wrap my head around the work we've delivered over the past three years; the studies

we've wrapped up and continue to progress, the exceedingly challenging projects and work that we've made amazing progress toward ultimate delivery, the permits we've issued and those we haven't and all of the associated work with our partners either way, the sometimes challenging communication with our partners — local, state and national — and the media in this super-intense environment that we've managed, the town halls and public meetings that we've attended and led, the DVs we've hosted, ground-breakings, ribbon-cuttings, the accolades, the legal opines, support to our tribal partners, successfully balancing the budget in one of the most expensive places to work and live in the U.S., working the razor's edge on funding and staffing to keep our aging infrastructure in great shape, the people we've protected and helped ... the list goes on and on. I can't possibly do all of it justice in this col-

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Photo by Stephen Baack

Col. Joshua Bost, left, incoming commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, shakes hands with Brig. Gen. John Lloyd, South Pacific Division commander, after delivering remarks during a change of command ceremony July 31 at Fort MacArthur in San Pedro, California. Lloyd served as the presiding officer for the transition ceremony.



Photo by Shawn Davis

Attendees of the July 31 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Change of Command ceremony await the start of the ceremony, while Soldiers of the 300th Army Band play in the Fort MacArthur Community Center at San Pedro, California. Col. Andrew Baker transferred command to Col. Joshua Bost during the ceremony, ending his tenure as the 64th U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander as Bost begins as the 65th.

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ian and military workforce for managing those emergencies while simultaneously executing the district’s regular operations.

“I’m awestruck by how we faced head on and overcame so many challenges, and by how we continue to grow and mature, to become even better,” Baker said. “The Los Angeles District has an amazing, amazing reputation throughout the Corps, earned over 125 years, delivering infrastructure critical to our economy, resiliency and defense on a grand scale.

“We answered the bell every single time with flying colors, coming through in spades,” Baker added regarding the district’s response to the region’s emergencies.

Baker also highlighted the dynamic inter-agency landscape the district navigated while executing its programs, particularly given the region’s high visibility.

“The permits we’ve issued, the drum beat of delivering communication with our partners — local, state and national — the town halls that we’ve led — some of them contentious, some of them are great — but always an adventure,” said Baker, pointing out that the Chief of Engineers, Lt. Gen. William “Butch” Graham, visited the district five times during his command.

Baker also highlighted the district’s fiscal discipline, noting that the team was “successfully balancing our budget in one of the most expensive places to work in the U.S., working a razor’s edge on funding and staffing, to keep our aging infrastructure in great shape.”

During Baker’s three years in command, the district executed the largest program in its history, surpassing \$2 billion last year alone. The district serves the largest percentage of the American population within its boundaries of any USACE district in the nation.

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That workload included completing strategically vital projects for military customers at Fort Irwin, Nellis Air Force Base and Vandenberg Space Force Base, alongside significant progress on Department of Veterans Affairs projects in Long Beach and San Diego.

Simultaneously, the district maintained navigation channels at 17 commercial and recreational harbors, from the Mexican border to Morro Bay. This included maintaining the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, which handle roughly 40 percent of all U.S. trade by volume. The district also pushed forward on major flood-risk management infrastructure, nearing the start of new modification project major construction at both Prado and Whittier dams.

Bost, who previously served as the deputy commander of the USACE Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, then addressed the district for the first time as commander.

“The men and women of the LA District, it is the honor of a lifetime to join this team and serve as your commander,” Bost said. “This district’s greatest strength is its people. Together, we’ll build on this foundation with trust, open communication and a relentless commitment to delivering to the American people.”



Photo by Stephen Baack

Col. Joshua Bost, left, incoming commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, and Col. Andrew Baker, outgoing commander, sit side by side during the change of command ceremony July 31 at Fort MacArthur in San Pedro, California.



Photo by Stephen Baack

Brig. Gen. John Lloyd, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division commander, recognizes outgoing Los Angeles District Commander Col. Andrew Baker during an awards ceremony and farewell gathering July 31 at the Fort MacArthur Community Center in San Pedro, California. Lloyd presented Baker with the Legion of Merit and the Silver Order of the de Fleury Medal, while district offices presented farewell gifts and tokens of appreciation. Baker’s wife, Shannon, and daughters also were recognized for their support and sacrifices during his three years in command. Baker relinquished command of the district later that morning to Col. Joshua Bost.

[‘TEAM’ continued from Page 3](#)

umn, but I’m so proud to have been a part of the team that pulled it all off. We’ve delivered and made amazing progress toward closing out some of the most challenging projects in the whole USACE portfolio with our Veterans Affairs work in Long Beach and San Diego. We delivered navigation and shoreline protection projects in the face of amazingly steep odds at Newport Harbor, Seaside Sunset, Oceanside and San Clemente. We pressed forward with the Salton Sea Study, closed out strategically vital projects out at Fort Irwin, Plant 42, Nellis Air Force Base, Vandenberg Space Force Base and so many others. We are continuing to deliver a miracle with Riverside Levees, and are at the cusp of starting construction at Prado and Whittier Narrows (wrapping up SARM!) with our Tulsa District partners. Amazing.

Apart from the LA District being the professional highlight of my Army service, it has been a wonderful assignment for Shannon and our girls. Having spent a little bit of time

over the years visiting family in LA and down in San Clemente, we were pretty sure that we would like actually living here full time quite a bit. We were caught off guard with just how much we love it. We’ve made the absolute most of our two years all together here – the parks, the beaches, the cities, the stunning beauty of a morning run along the coast in San Pedro, the weather (still a novelty even at this point for a guy from Maine), and of course the wonderful people in the District and beyond. To write that we’ll miss our home here is a massive understatement...but we’ll be back for sure!

I’m so proud to be SPL, so grateful for the opportunity to have served with you and to be a small part of the remarkable L.A. District Story, and so excited for what’s to come for this amazing team. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Col. Andrew Baker
Outgoing Commander,
Los Angeles District



Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander, foreground left; Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, center; and Lt. Col. Matthew Miller, USACE Albuquerque District commander, center-right, sign a \$3-million feasibility study agreement June 1 for the Birdsprings Flood-Risk Mitigation project in Window Rock, Arizona.

Navajo Nation signs feasibility agreement, recognizes Navajo Silver Jackets

BY ROBERT DEDEAUX
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Beneath the natural splendor of a sandstone arch, known as Window Rock, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Commander Col. Andrew Baker signed an agreement June 1 for a \$3-million feasibility study.

The hope is that the study will lead to construction of a flood-risk management project for the Birdsprings community — an area along the Little Colorado River that is prone to flooding during seasonal monsoon rainstorms.

The Bird Springs feasibility study — which received funding for this fiscal year — focuses on solutions to significant flooding issues in the area due to sediment and debris build-up under a bridge over the river that leads to the commu-

nity. Flooding in the area has resulted in damage to homes and road closures, and puts lives in the community at risk.

“The agreement between the Navajo Nation and the Department of the Army, signed by President Buu Nygren and Col. Andrew Baker, respectively, authorizes the Navajo Nation Birdsprings Flood-Risk Reduction Study and formalizes the partnership on the project,” said Crystal Tulley-Cordova, principal hydrologist in the Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources. “Birdsprings has experienced significant flooding due to sedimentation and debris buildup, and understanding the challenges through a feasibility study will benefit the project and help identify solutions.”

Birdsprings holds a special place for the Los Angeles District because it represents one of the earliest successes of a collaborative Silver Jackets’ effort, Baker said.

“This was a great opportunity to reflect on what we can accomplish when we all work together to find solutions,” said Danielle Storey, USACE LA District tribal liaison.

RECOGNIZING THE SILVER JACKETS

Before the signing ceremony, the Navajo Nation recognized the Navajo Silver Jackets Team for receiving the “Silver Jackets’ Team of the Year” award for 2025 for its work in Arizona.

The Silver Jackets Program brings local, tribal, state and federal agencies together to address flood risk and other natural hazards. It consists of state- and tribal-led interagency teams that develop and implement comprehensive strategies for flood-risk management and enhances community preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery efforts.

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Photos by Robert DeDeaux

LEFT: Pictured is Window Rock, a natural sandstone arch, serving as a landmark for the capital of Navajo Nation June 1 in Window Rock, Arizona. RIGHT: Casey Allen Johnson, Navajo Nation Council delegate for the Birdsprings Chapter, observes the signing of a \$3 million feasibility study agreement June 1 in Window Rock, Arizona. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District and the Navajo Nation partnered for the agreement to advance the Birdsprings Flood-Risk Mitigation project.

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“The Navajo Nation Silver Jackets Team helps increase technical capacity and resources to help address Navajo Nation’s flood-risk priorities through collaborative solutions,” said Tulley-Cordova, who also is the Navajo Nation Silver Jacket’s team lead. “I’ve enjoyed building our partnership with USACE and other partners,

and together we are mitigating flood risks on the Navajo Nation.”

Today’s event recognizes the extraordinary accomplishments of the Navajo Nation Silver Jackets Team and the partnerships that have been built to reduce flood risk and improve community resilience across the Navajo Nation, said Chris Stanton, Arizona Silver Jackets Team coordinator, adding this recognition is significant

because it highlights a model of collaboration.

“The greatest strength of the Navajo Nation Silver Jackets Team is our collaboration,” Stanton said. “I have really enjoyed working alongside our sister districts — with Albuquerque and Sacramento — in supporting the country’s first ever tribally led interagency team, the Navajo Nation Silver Jackets.”



Photo by Robert DeDeaux

Lt. Col. Matthew Miller, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Albuquerque District commander, far left; Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren, center-left; Crystal Tulley-Cordova, Navajo Nation Silver Jackets team lead, center-right; and Col. Andrew Baker, Los Angeles District commander, far right, gather beneath Window Rock June 1 in Window Rock, Arizona. The leaders met for an award presentation and signing ceremony to honor the Navajo Nation Silver Jackets Team as the national 2025 Silver Jackets Team of the Year.



Photo by Shawn Davis

Attendees at the July 24 Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center Community Living Center ribbon-cutting ceremony cut the ceremonial ribbon in front of the building at Long Beach, California.

USACE, Veterans Affairs cut ribbon for new community living center at Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center

BY SHAWN DAVIS
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LONG BEACH, Calif. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District joined the Department of Veterans Affairs and local veterans July 24 to celebrate the opening of a new 120-bed Community Living Center in Long Beach.

The facility, located at the Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center, marks a significant milestone in providing state-of-the-art care to the nation's veterans.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony unveiled a modern, three-story facility designed to provide long-term care with a focus on dignity, healing and a sense of home. The project represents a collaborative effort between the VA, USACE and construction partners to deliver on the nation's promise to care for its veterans.

"For the veteran who comes here, this is not a project; it is a place to rest, it is a place to recover, and it is a place to feel at home," said Maj. Antony Palocaren, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District deputy commander.

Palocaren continued to highlight the legacy of the facility's namesake, Tibor Rubin, a Ho-

locast survivor and Medal of Honor recipient, who served in the Korean War where he built a legacy of helping his fellow Soldiers, even after his service, at the now Tibor Rubin VAMC.

"Tibor Rubin believed we should show up for our veterans again and again and again — for as long as it takes," Palocaren said. "That's the legacy we're honoring today."

USACE provided project management and technical expertise, overseeing construction to ensure the facility met the complex specifications required for a modern medical center. Palocaren emphasized the shared mission of all entities involved.

"The VA brings its enduring commitment and care for the veterans," he said. "(USACE) brings its responsibility to deliver. Our industry partners bring the skill to turn a shared vision into a place of healing. Different roles, one mission."

The new center replaces aging residential facilities, offering veterans private rooms, modern amenities and terraces with views of the campus. USACE is involved in multiple projects on campus aiming to modernize infrastructure and construct new facilities that enhance health care outcomes for veterans. Just last year, the LA

District participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for two mental health facilities on campus. Acting VA Long Beach director Cristina White said the project is an ongoing part of the journey for the medical center to become the nation's top health care system.

At the forefront of the ribbon cutting was Resident Council President Bill Jimenez, a veteran, who thanked the nursing staff directly.

"You guys are the backbone of this industry," he said. "That gives us the will to keep walking, keep running, keep going forward ... to better ourselves and to heal ourselves."

USACE continues its progress across its portfolio of VA projects, aiming to deliver vital engineering solutions to its nation's veterans. The LA District is involved in projects at Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center in Long Beach, California; Jennifer Moreno VA Medical Center in San Diego, California; and West Los Angeles VA Medical Center in Los Angeles, California. To learn more about these projects, visit spl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Mega-Projects/Veterans-Affairs-Medical-Facilities.

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Photos by Shawn Davis

The Community Living Center sits on the east side of the Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center campus, which had a ribbon-cutting ceremony July 24 in Long Beach, California.



Maj. Antony Palocaren, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District deputy commander, provides remarks during the July 24 Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center Community Living Center ribbon-cutting ceremony at Long Beach, California.



Col. Andrew Baker, USACE LA District commander, receives a USACE Park Ranger campaign hat during his last USACE LA District town hall June 3 in the LA District headquarters building.

LA District commander hosts farewell town hall, awards ceremony

BY SHAWN DAVIS
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES — U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Commander Col. Andrew Baker hosted his farewell town hall and the district's Second Quarter Awards Ceremony June 3 at the LA District headquarters building in downtown LA.

"It's hard to believe it's been three years," Baker said. "It's been a crazy, very eventful three years for the district for sure. It has been an absolute honor for me to be here."

Baker will relinquish command of the LA District to Col. Joshua Bost July 31. Bost most recently served as the district deputy commander of the USACE Great Lakes and Ohio River Division.

During the town hall, Baker highlighted several of the district's project success stories during his tenure, including the Gila River Indian Community Solar-Over-Canal project in Arizona — the first of its kind to start construction in the U.S.; the Fort Irwin Simulation

Center, which prepares the nation's warfighters at the National Training Center, and some of the district's collaborative projects with the Department of Veterans Affairs, including the VA mental health inpatient and out-patient facilities at Long Beach and the VA Spinal Cord Injury facility at San Diego.

Baker also spoke about one of the district's largest emergency management missions — the 2025 Los Angeles County Wildfires Debris Removal Mission. The LA District received a mission assignment from FEMA in January 2025, in support of the State of California following wildfires that ignited Jan. 7, 2025, in Altadena and Pacific Palisades. In just six months, USACE removed more than 2.6 million tons of debris from more than 9,500 properties, making this the fastest debris removal mission in USACE history.

"Each one of those properties represents a family — a story," Baker said. "We've helped thousands of those folks take the first crucial step toward rebuilding their lives."

Baker also discussed current and future LA District projects, like the Whittier Narrows and Prado dam safety projects; continuing the district's navigation mission; and coordinating with local communities as the federal permitting agency for vital waterway projects.

Following Baker's presentation, LA District Park Ranger Marlene Schmitt received her official title and badge during the district's first-ever LA Park Ranger Pinning ceremony. Baker performed the honors of pinning the badge on Schmitt.

"For those of you who don't know Marlene, she is here not because she needs to be; I think just about everybody in the Corps loves the work we do; loves the projects we do. Marlene is here because she really wants to be. She does it for the love of the program," Baker said. "She's increased our interpretive program. Her impact has been 400 percent, which is incredible."

Baker went on to describe some of Schmitt's duties, including her dedication as the district's water safety mascot, "Bobber, the Safety

Dog," during outreach events — one of many things Schmitt does for the district.

Following the ceremony for Schmitt, Baker's park ranger team also recognized him, presenting him with his own USACE Park Ranger campaign hat.

"They say that when you become a leader, you forfeit your right to think about yourself," said Nick Figueroa, LA District park ranger. "I really do feel that you've done that with everybody with the (Deferred Resignation Program), working with the health fitness program — everything that you have set out for, you've shown and proven that to us, and we really appreciate everything that you've done for us. We're sad to see you go."

The event concluded with a Second Quarter Awards ceremony. Awards and recipients are as follows:

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- Joseph Ryan received the Kevin Inada Employee of the Quarter Award, which recognizes employees who exemplify a "taking care of people" philosophy.
- Frank Montelongo received the Commander's Eagle Award for decisive actions and unwavering commitment.
- Shari Johnson was presented with the Jennie Ayala "Beyond the Call of Duty" Award for her willingness to go beyond normal expectations.
- Antal Szijj earned the Com-

pass Award for demonstrating consistent and highly effective coaching and mentoring.

- Sonny Pothis was the recipient of the Mike Cogan Safety Employee of the Quarter Award for the second quarter of fiscal 2025.

- Genevieve Safi Holdridge and Theresa Schreckler received the H2O Helping Hands for Others Award for their selfless service and initiative.

- Arturo Orozco was recognized as an Outstanding PDT Member for his exceptional professionalism and leadership.

- The San Diego County Shore-

line (Oceanside) Mitigation Study team was named the Outstanding Project Delivery Team and included Amy Thornton, Jonathan Hallemeier, Caleb Lodge, Juan Dominguez, Daniel Grijalva, Kymberly Lyons, Daria Mazey, Luis Sepulveda, Doland Cheung, Matthew Wesley, Eric Nguyen, Thomas Sentner, Erin Burns, Tiffany Troxel and Joseph Lamb.

Honorary awards also were presented to two teams for their dedication and significant contributions:

- The SPL Footprint Project Delivery Team was recognized for its

pivotal role in advancing critical mission objectives. Members of the team included Arjay Augustin, Elaine Chyr, Joseph Gatti, Geneva Lee, Carlos Tabares, Latonya Taylor, Aaron Tieu, Glen Tucker, Michael Turanitz and Kimberly Warshaw.

- The Protection Working Group was honored for exceptional achievement in enhancing force protection for mission-essential assets. The team consisted of Shane Bush, Lesly Pineda, Edgard Soto, Margie Tizon, Glen Tucker and Michael Turanitz.



Col. Andrew Baker, USACE LA District commander, gives remarks to employees during the June 3 employee town hall in the LA District headquarters building.



Col. Andrew Baker, USACE LA District commander, pins a park ranger badge onto USACE LA District Park Ranger Marlene Schmitt's uniform during a pinning ceremony June 3 at the USACE LA District headquarters building.

LA District hosts Seven County Flood Directors Meeting, discusses future initiatives, partnership

BY SHAWN DAVIS
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES — Officials from San Bernardino, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Riverside, Orange, Los Angeles and San Diego counties met with senior leaders of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District on April 7 at the district's headquarters in downtown Los Angeles.

The meeting focused on coordinating efforts to better serve communities across Southern California and discussing ongoing changes at the agency.

The Seven County Flood Directors Meeting is normally an annual event, but the 2025 meeting was postponed due to the then-ongoing federal government shutdown, leading this event to be a more comprehensive synchronization between partners and the LA District since their last meeting in 2024.

A major focus of the meeting was the new “Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork” initiative. The nationwide plan is designed to streamline processes, increase efficiency and accelerate the delivery of key projects.

“I think we can all get behind that,” said Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander. “We’re all about serving the population, providing safety and security — we want to be able to do that, and, frankly, these initiatives help us do that in a faster way.”

The meeting, which included both in-person and virtual participants, enabled the LA District to apprise local partners on the changes being implemented across USACE and what that means for the communities that rely on LA District projects.

A major topic, especially for counties in the Los Angeles County Drainage Area, was USACE’s growing emphasis on giving local communities more power to drive their own projects. Daria Mazey, the district's plan formulation branch chief, explained that recent amendments to the Water Resources Development Act now allow non-federal partners to conduct their own feasibility studies and even carry out federally authorized projects.

“We have learned that we need to provide some assistance and access to people at each step of the way for these to be successful, and now we have the ability to do that based on some of these amendments,” Mazey said.

This new partnership model, where projects remain under USACE authority but are driven locally, is designed to cut costly delays.

“What we found is that regular engagements with the assistant secretary of the Army for Civil Works during the development of the study and the proposed recommendation are really helpful



Photo by Shawn Davis

Jason Uhley, chief engineer with the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, background center, speaks to Col. Andrew Baker, USACE Los Angeles District commander, right, during the April 7 Seven Counties Flood Directors meeting at the LA District headquarters building in downtown Los Angeles.

in terms of getting a successful authorization in the end,” Mazey said.

These changes also affect counties outside LACDA, where the LA District conducts coastal dredging for navigation and shoreline protection. The district is heavily involved in annual maintenance dredging across the Southern California coast. These projects operate on time-constrained cycles because of seasonal weather patterns, making them sensitive to permitting delays.

Such delays can lead to off-cycle dredging projects, which can inconvenience communities that rely on their shorelines for tourism and recreation. The new initiative provides a direct solution by giving municipalities more control. Provisions in the Water Resources Development Act now allow them to fund their own studies, or, in some cases, even manage the projects themselves, giving them the flexibility needed to avoid disruptive delays.”

Matt Frary, assistant deputy director for Los Angeles County Public Works, spoke about how

the initiative can help local communities speed up project delivery.

“It goes back to the (Build Infrastructure, Not Paperwork) — the spirit, the intent, that is to provide this type of resilience and risk reduction, flood-risk mitigation more efficiently and realize that public benefit rapidly before something else does happen,” Frary said. “So, I think it’s very in line with the whole BINP effort, really reducing this exact kind of red tape.”

The leaders also reviewed lessons from recent emergency response operations to enhance future coordination. USACE is an active participant in emergencies involving its projects but can also apply its expertise to support FEMA, as directed by the president under the Stafford Act, as it did during the 2025 Los Angeles County wildfires, by clearing debris in the Pacific Palisades and Altadena communities. The “Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork” initiative does not affect USACE’s execution of its emergency response support to natural and man-made disasters.

LA District briefs legislative officials on Prado Dam safety project

LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CORONA, Calif. — The Los Angeles District hosted local legislative officials July 16 to discuss a \$1.13-billion safety modification project at Prado Dam.

The district and its Orange County partners led staff from the offices of state Sen. Bob Archuleta, U.S. Rep. Derek Tran and state Assemblywoman Diane Dixon on a site visit at the facility. District officials briefed the representatives on upcoming construction plans, flood-risk management operations and water conservation efforts for downstream Southland communities.

The tour follows a recent contract award to upgrade the dam's spillway. The two-phase project will replace the existing spillway with a labyrinth-style control structure and raise the spillway’s crest by 20 feet. The modifications are designed to provide a higher level of safety for about 1.4 million residents and protect more than \$200 billion in property and infrastructure between the dam and the Pacific Ocean.

“At Prado Dam, we’re pairing smarter contracting with the innovative engineering of a labyrinth spillway to provide a higher level of safety for 1.4 million Americans,” said Adam Telle, assistant secretary of the Army for Civil Works, in a [recent statement](#).

Completed in 1941, Prado Dam requires modernization to address decades of regional urbanization and increased runoff. Significant construction is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2027 and conclude by 2033. District officials noted the facility will remain fully operational to reduce flood risk throughout the construction process.



Photos by Shawn Davis

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District employees brief legislative officials July 16 at Prado Dam in Corona, California. The group discussed the dam's critical role in providing flood-risk management and water conservation for Orange County communities. The briefing gave representatives a firsthand look at the facility ahead of a major safety modification project. The district recently awarded a \$1.13 billion contract to replace the dam's existing spillway with a modernized labyrinth-style control structure and raise the spillway crest by 20 feet. Originally constructed in 1941, the dam now protects about 1.4 million residents and more than \$200 billion in downstream property. The upcoming upgrades will ensure the infrastructure meets modern safety standards amid increasing regional urbanization.



LEFT: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District officials, Orange County Public Works employees and local legislative staff tour Prado Dam July 16 in Corona, California. The visit allowed representatives to assess ongoing construction and collaborative water conservation efforts between the agencies. RIGHT: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District and Orange County Public Works employees view the Prado Dam basin July 16 from atop the facility’s control tower.



Photo by Stephen Baack

Jason Uhley, Riverside Flood Control and Water Conservation District general manager and chief engineer, second from right, joins Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, right, May 8 to discuss the Riverside Levees Rehabilitation Project with local, county and congressional stakeholders. They are joined by Julianna Adams, chief of emergency management and government affairs for the Riverside Flood Control and Water Conservation District, second from left, and Damien Lariviere, USACE LA District project manager.

USACE, Riverside County celebrate milestone in critical levee rehabilitation project

BY STEPHEN BAACK
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District joined the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District May 8 for a hard hat tour of the Riverside Levees Rehabilitation Project in Riverside, California.

The tour brought together USACE leaders, project team members, local partners and stakeholders, including U.S. Rep. Mark Takano of California's 39th Congressional District. Participants gathered on the still-active left

side of the levee system, where construction is currently focused, to highlight ongoing engineering efforts and gain a clear view of the recently completed repairs on the right side.

Originally built in the 1950s to channel floodwater safely through urban areas, the two parallel levees help provide vital flood-risk management for nearby communities, including the cities of Riverside and Jurupa Valley.

After storms in 2010 and 2011 brought substantial water flows through the Santa Ana River and caused riverbank erosion and damage to portions of the levees, US-

ACE was able to leverage its authority under Public Law 84-99 to ensure the levees were not left to degrade. Also known as the Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies Act, PL 84-99 grants USACE the ability to assist in the repair and restoration of both federal and nonfederal flood control works that have been damaged by natural disasters.

The scope of work included reinforcing and extending the existing rock slope protection to address areas where erosion had gradually worn down the levee, ensuring long-term stability and continued protection.

During construction in 2023,

however, more recent storms resulted in elevated groundwater levels, creating a new challenge: the need for design revisions and additional coordination to keep the project moving forward. This made way for innovative solutions, including the addition of "launchable stones" for dynamic scour protection. The stones are designed to activate during extreme storm events, providing levee protection when traditional revetments are not always viable.

With the right levee now successfully rehabilitated, the project

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team has turned its full attention to the left side of the system. This final phase of work is on track to be completed this fall, marking the completion of the project.

"The Los Angeles District and the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District have overcome some huge obstacles in bringing this project to the point where construction is anticipated to be completed by the end of September," said David Kingston, chief of the LA District's Emergency Operations Branch. "This partnership greatly contributed to the continued support of this project at Headquarters USACE and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)."

At the time of the construction contract award, this was the largest Public Law 84-99 Rehabilitation Project in the history of USACE, Kingston said.

The levees range in height from 15 to 22 feet and were originally designed to carry water flows of up to 195,000 cubic feet per second — well above the 100-year flood estimate of 140,000 cubic feet per second. They protect more than 4,300 structures in the area, including more than 4,000 homes and about \$1.5 billion in infrastructure.

"The completion of this project will greatly enhance the flood protection of the City of Riverside and surrounding communities," Kingston said.

During the tour, project subject-matter experts highlighted the on-

going work, discussed the importance of maintaining federal levee systems and recognized continued partnerships.

"The Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District has been an incredible partner for the Los Angeles District throughout this entire process and in everything we do with them," said Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander. "From the initial damage assessments following the 2010 and 2011 storms to the extensive design and construction phases, we achieved this milestone together. We value their collaboration and share their commitment to the Riverside community."

Jason Uhley, general manager and chief engineer of the Riverside County Flood Control and Water

Conservation District, shared Baker's sentiment.

"One of the things we've always appreciated about the LA District is that they lean in with the local sponsors to treat us as partners," Uhley said. "When we partner, we're able to get a lot more done, a lot faster, a lot cheaper — and this is really an incredible example of that. There were a lot of moving pieces that were external to the project that we also had to coordinate, and we did that exceptionally well to the benefit of our communities."

Through continued collaboration with local sponsors and elected leaders, the LA District remains committed to delivering projects that reduce flood risk and improve the resilience of Southern California communities.



Photos by Stephen Baack



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Jason Uhley, Riverside Flood Control and Water Conservation District general manager and chief engineer, far right, joins Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, May 8 to discuss the Riverside Levees Rehabilitation Project with local, county and congressional stakeholders.

Adina Ortiz, construction representative with the LA District, left, briefs U.S. Rep. Mark Takano of California's 39th Congressional District on the construction progress of the Riverside Levees Rehabilitation Project May 8 in Riverside, California.

Partners and stakeholders gather May 8 for a group photo by the left levee in Riverside, California.

The left levee in the USACE-led Riverside Levees Rehabilitation Project, still in progress in this photo, is visible May 8 in Riverside, California.

Whittier Narrows Outreach

The Los Angeles District continues to engage with communities adjacent to and downstream of Whittier Narrows Dam to discuss the upcoming Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Project. Throughout the spring and summer, district representatives hosted town halls, site visits and community meetings with residents, city officials, congressional representatives and local school districts in Montebello and Pico Rivera. These engagements aim to inform the public about construction impacts — including changes to traffic, trails and park availability — and gather vital community feedback.

Construction on the three-mile earthen dam, scheduled to begin in late fall 2026 and conclude in 2033, upgrades critical infrastructure to handle unprecedented rain-storm events. As one of the most urban dams in the US-ACE portfolio, future-proofing Whittier Narrows remains a priority to protect more than 1 million people and \$200 billion in property across the Los Angeles County Drainage Area. For the latest project updates, visit wndsafety-project.sec.usace.army.mil.



Photos by Dena O'Dell

Aaron Smith, dam safety adviser for the Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Project, speaks to residents and city officials during a town hall June 30 in Montebello, California. The meeting addressed the project's long-term benefits and impending construction impacts, with work scheduled to begin in late fall 2026 and conclude in 2033.



Photos by Shawn Davis

Aaron Smith, dam safety adviser for the Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Project, briefs the El Rancho Unified School District board April 21 at the El Rancho Adult Education Center in Pico Rivera, California. The presentation covered upcoming construction impacts on surrounding parks and roads, while exploring potential civil works learning opportunities for local students.



ABOVE: Maj. Antony Palocaren, LA District deputy commander, left, and Dennis Nguyen, deputy lead engineer for the Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Project, right, answer questions from Montebello residents June 30 in Montebello, California. The district hosted the town hall to discuss the project's upcoming construction timeline and potential impacts on local city infrastructure.

LEFT: A Montebello resident views poster boards detailing the Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Project June 30 in Montebello, California. The event provided community members an opportunity to learn about the project's long-term benefits and to share feedback.



ABOVE, LEFT: Aaron Smith, dam safety adviser for the Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Project, foreground left, hands a microphone to a Pico Rivera resident during a town meeting May 6 at the Pico Rivera Golf Course Clubhouse in Pico Rivera, California. The district hosts regular neighborhood meetings to keep residents informed and gather valuable community feedback.

ABOVE, RIGHT: Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander, kneels down to speak with Pico Rivera residents about their concerns April 16 at the Pico Park building in Pico Rivera, California. The town hall provides downstream community members an open forum to discuss the upcoming Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Project.



LEFT: George Sunny, project manager for the Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Project, left, briefs a visitor July 27 while looking out over the Pico Rivera Municipal Golf Course from the top of Whittier Narrows Dam. The three-mile earthen structure is undergoing vital infrastructure upgrades to protect more than 1 million downstream residents in the Los Angeles basin.



Photo by Robert DeDeaux

Marlene Schmitt, a park ranger with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, poses for a photo upstream of Whitlow Ranch Dam after conducting an environmental compliance assessment of the area May 13 near Queen Valley, Arizona. Schmitt previously worked for the National Park Service as a seasonal park ranger at Mount Rainier National Park in Washington for six years before working with USACE. She has a master’s degree in environmental science from Washington State University.

Park ranger leads environmental inspections of Arizona dams

BY ROBERT DEDEAUX
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

QUEEN VALLEY, Ariz. — A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District park ranger led several environmental inspections of USACE-controlled dams and radio towers to protect public safety and preserve natural resources in Arizona.

Park Ranger Marlene Schmitt detailed the importance of these compliance assessments during a May 13 inspection at Whitlow Ranch Dam.

“Everything we are doing is to help keep people safer from the possibility of flooding,” said Schmitt, a former National Park Service ranger. “All of the Los Angeles District dams have a flood-risk management mission.”

Located about 50 miles east of Phoenix, the nation’s fifth-largest city, Whitlow Ranch Dam is one of three operated by USACE in Arizona.

Built in 1960 to provide flood protection for farmland and developed areas, the facility — like all district-operated dams — undergoes annual environmental inspections, according to the Environmental Review Guide for Operations, or ERGO.

“ERGO inspections are important because they help keep everyone as safe as possible,” said Schmitt, a former school principal with a master’s degree in environmental science. “These inspections are the Corps’ official internal control tool used to conduct annual self-evaluations to ensure compliance with federal, state and Army environmental laws.”

ERGO inspections differ from those conducted by the Operations and Maintenance and Safety Office sections, which focus on dam functionality throughout the year. By contrast, the annual ERGO assessments focus on

the natural environment surrounding the dam, monitoring wildlife, invasive plants, insects and hazardous materials. The process provides facility assessments, compliance management and corrective actions.

“Park rangers are another pair of eyes and ears to support operations and maintenance activities and to assist engineers with any potential issues that may occur,” said Nicolas Figueroa, the Los Angeles District’s senior park ranger. “The ranger team is well trained, and they have keen eyes to identify potential safety or hazardous issues.”

The May 13 inspection identified no major hazards affecting the dam but did note potential situations of concern. Cattle had encroached onto the federal property and were grazing up-

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stream less than 150 meters from the dam. The cattle could be in potential danger of drowning in rainy conditions. Private livestock grazing is an unauthorized use of federal property along the Whitlow Ranch Dam.

“As stewards of the lands, it’s our duty to ensure that we are all performing our duties safely and efficiently without sacrificing the health of our natural resources,” said Figueroa, a 23-year veteran of USACE. “The goals are to prevent any containment to the wildlife stemming from our mission goals to protect downstream residents.”

USACE is responsible for more than 750 dams across the U.S. that provide multiple benefits, such as flood-risk management, navigation, water supply, hydropower, environmental stewardship, fish and wildlife conservation, and recreation.

“In addition to ERGO, we also work closely with the Natural Resources Management biologist with the Corps’ environmental stewardship mission,” Schmitt said. “Part of my job includes coordinating Los Angeles District partnerships and volunteer programs, which include participating in education and outreach events.”

Communicating about dams, including why they are there, the benefits they provide, how they work and how flooding may occur, helps those who live and work near dams understand possible flooding and take protective actions.



Photos by Robert DeDeaux

Park Rangers Emily Hibbard, right, and Joseph Carranza Escobar find encroaching cattle during an environmental inspection of the Whitlow Ranch Dam Area May 13 near Queen Valley, Arizona. Although the black bovine beauties seemed content to graze on U.S. Army Corps of Engineer land, it is an unauthorized use of federal property and is a potential safety hazard for the herd grazing upstream.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers park rangers observe an encroaching cow during an environmental inspection of the Whitlow Ranch Dam May 13 near Queen Valley, Arizona. Although the cow, labeled 106, seemed content with the photographer, she wasn’t particularly fond of the park rangers. The dam area is controlled by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is not authorized for private grazing. It is also a potential safety hazard for the herds grazing upstream during sudden rain.



Pictured is the downstream portion of Whitlow Ranch Dam May 13 near Queen Valley, Arizona. Whitlow Ranch Dam is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District and is about 50 miles east of Phoenix.

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Photo by Shawn Davis

Agency representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, U.S. Navy, Ventura County Harbor Department, city and port of Port Hueneme and community members near Hollywood Beach gather April 30 at Hollywood Beach Elementary School to discuss the Channel Islands Harbor dredging project.

USACE, partners meet with residents ahead of 2026 harbor dredging

BY SHAWN DAVIS
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

OXNARD, Calif. — U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials met with residents April 30 at Hollywood Beach Elementary School to discuss impacts from the Channel Islands Harbor dredging project when it returns in fall 2026.

The meeting brought together representatives from the LA District, U.S. Navy, Ventura County, and the city and port of Port Hueneme. The LA District oversees the congressionally mandated dredging project in Oxnard, which performs an essential function for Ventura County, as Port Hueneme is the only deep-sea port in California between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Port Hueneme, not to be confused with the city of the same name, was built during the late 1930s and is owned and operated by the Oxnard Harbor District, which is composed of the Board of Harbor Commissioners, the U.S. Navy and the State of California. It is a major logistical hub that allows agriculture and other

industries, as well as the U.S. Navy, to trade, operate and employ residents within Ventura County, bringing jobs and tourism to the local communities of Oxnard and Port Hueneme.

“These dredge projects are a super high priority,” said Kristen Deca, CEO and port director of the Port of Hueneme. “We’ve done a lot of work with the U.S. Army Corps (of Engineers) in the commercial harbor from cleanups back in the 1990s and building confined aquatic disposal cells to contain materials, and then we’ve done a bunch of deepening projects inside the port to support the Navy and the port.

“It’s really important to the integrity of our infrastructure, inside the gate for the military and the commercial seaport,” Deca continued. “We’re just grateful that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers comes out and helps us with these really vital projects for our community.”

The dredging project began in the early 1960s under USACE to solve the problem of coastal erosion caused by the construction of Port Hueneme’s jetties, which disrupted the

natural north-to-south flow of sand along the coast, also known as littoral drift. This disruption led to coastal erosion at down-shore beaches, which threatened port infrastructure and local communities.

In response, USACE constructed the Channel Islands Harbor primarily to act as a sand trap to collect sand deposited by the littoral drift to then dredge it down-shore, replicating the natural flow of the littoral drift before port construction. The Channel Islands Harbor also provided the secondary benefit of supporting local recreational boating and fishing communities within Oxnard’s shores.

“The dredging is an important part of the whole system that we need here to keep our harbor open,” said Michael Tripp, Ventura County Harbor Department harbor director. “If we didn’t have the dredging, we’re going to have the sand close the north side of the harbor pretty quickly — and it’s also important

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because it keeps the beach of Port Hueneme from eroding.”

Contractors working for the LA District move sand through pipelines across Hollywood and Silver Strand beaches to deposit it on Hueneme Beach. Dredging typically occurs every two years in the fall. A mid-cycle dredging in 2025 was necessary to make up for material shortfalls and delays from the previous year. At the school meeting, residents expressed concerns regarding noise, light and air pollution from the diesel-operated dredge, which operates 24 hours a day to meet strict scheduling criteria. LA District employees noted these concerns as they plan for the dredge’s return later this year. The team also detailed the federal contracting process to help the community better understand how projects move from planning into reality.

“I think it was really important to see the community in person and hear them directly about what problems they’ve been having with the dredging,” said Victor Andreas, LA District project manager. “It makes a difference to have our other agency partners in the meeting working together to come up with solutions that can help mitigate some of the discomfort caused by the dredging because this is a really important



Photos by Shawn Davis

Victor Andreas, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District project manager, briefs members of the Hollywood Beach community April 30 at Hollywood Beach Elementary School on the Channel Islands Harbor dredging project.

project that does a lot for the nearby cities and overall county. I’m proud of my team and our partners for making this happen.”

During the last cycle, the district reduced engine noise at night and adjusted lighting angles to minimize the footprint without compromising safety. The project team is also

implementing in-depth noise monitoring for future operations.

The LA District continues to fulfill its congressionally mandated duties, while considering the impacts to the community on Hollywood Beach.



Agency representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, U.S. Navy, Ventura County Harbor Department, city and port of Port Hueneme and community members near Hollywood Beach gather April 30 at Hollywood Beach Elementary School to discuss the Channel Islands Harbor dredging project.

2026 Torrance Armed Forces Day

LA District continues tradition of support for annual community event



Photo by Stephen Baack

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District vehicles travel down the parade route May 16 during the 64th annual Torrance Armed Forces Day Parade in Torrance, California. Leading the procession, from right, are a utility task vehicle, an Operations Division truck and a vintage Dodge M37 cargo truck, which Daniel Jennings, LA District Construction Division administrative officer, drives ahead of a line of military Humvees.

TORRANCE, Calif. — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District continued its tradition of participating in the Torrance Armed Forces Day Parade, joining fellow service members from across the military May 16 for the 64th annual event.

This year, the LA District joined service

members representing all six branches of the military, along with veterans, students and a long list of community organizations as the Torrance community gathered along the parade route to honor those who serve and those who have served.

Also making an appearance: Bobber the Water Safety Dog, who greeted families

and helped share the message of staying safe in and around the water during the summer months, as well as a Dodge M37 3/4-ton Army truck, owned and driven by one of LA District’s employees, who also is an Army first sergeant.

We honor all who have served and continue to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces.



Photos by Stephen Baack

Participants from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District gather May 16 next to a Dodge M37 3/4-ton cargo truck before the 64th annual Torrance Armed Forces Day Parade in Torrance, California. The vintage truck belongs to Daniel Jennings, LA District Construction Division administrative officer and retired Army first sergeant, pictured standing closest to the vehicle.



LEFT: Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander, left, stands with Bobber the Water Safety Dog May 16 before the start of the 64th annual Torrance Armed Forces Day Parade in Torrance, California. Bobber greeted families and shared critical water safety tips with attendees. RIGHT: Bobber cheers on parade participants from a utility task vehicle before the start of the event.



Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander, center-left, and 1st Lt. Alexander Cummings, LA District project engineer, right, carry the district banner May 16 during the 64th annual Torrance Armed Forces Day Parade in Torrance, California.



Photo by Robert DeDeaux

Representatives with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Border Task Force install the final border barrier panel July 17 at the National Defense Area 1 project site near Antelope Wells, New Mexico. The project features up to six miles of new permanent border barrier, access gates, patrol roadways and access improvements. The secretary of War directed USACE to construct the barriers in response to a Jan. 20, 2025, presidential national emergency declaration.

Border Task Force completes final panel installation at Antelope Wells

BY NATHAN GILL
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

ANTELOPE WELLS, N.M. — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Border Task Force engineers performed final panel placement July 17 at National Defense Area 1 in Hidalgo County, New Mexico.

The placement signals a major construction milestone for the Smart Wall border barrier system. The president determined that military construction of permanent border barrier on the New Mexico NDA, NDA-1, is vital to national security.

“This emergency military construction project ultimately contributes to the U.S. gaining operational control of its Southern Border,” said Col. Andrew Sinelli, commander of the

South Pacific Border Task Force.

Construction of permanent border barrier on the New Mexico NDA will help close existing gaps and increase the mobility and operational flexibility of Department of War service members on the Southern Border. The project ties into a mountain to the east and will tie into future Department of Homeland Security projects. The access roads will facilitate the movement of joint patrols.

On Jan. 20, 2025, the president declared a national emergency on the Southern Border that would require the use of the armed forces. On April 11, 2025, the president directed the secretary of War, secretary of the Interior, secretary of Agriculture and secretary of Homeland Security to support securing operational control of

the Southern Border through the establishment of National Defense Areas.

USACE support to permanent border barrier construction started in the late 1990s with design, real estate and environmental support to troop deployments through JTF-Six (later JTF-North) and progressed to more robust contracted design and construction efforts in 2008 and beyond. From 2017 to 2020, USACE awarded multiple contracts for border barrier construction, totaling more than \$10 billion under DHS and DOW authorities and appropriations.

The total mileage installed by USACE South Pacific Division from 2019 to now is 367.24 miles. The Antelope Wells project consists of

[‘PANEL’ continued on Page 25](#)



Photos by Robert DeDeaux

Representatives with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Border Task Force complete border barrier installation July 17 at the National Defense Area 1 project site near Antelope Wells, New Mexico. The project includes about six miles of new permanent border barrier, access gates, patrol roadways and access improvements through the Roosevelt Reservation Corridor in Hidalgo County. The secretary of War directed USACE to construct the barriers in response to a Jan. 20, 2025, presidential national emergency declaration.

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about six miles along the border of the U.S. and Mexico (west of Antelope Wells, New Mexico) installing new, permanent 30-foot steel bollard border barrier with anti-climb plating and vehicular/access gates. Construction also includes patrol roads. The total cost of this emergency military construction is about \$79 million.

“Though a significant milestone was achieved with the final border panel placement, several critical ancillaries are underway and should be completed in several weeks,” said Project Manager Mike Tuttle. “Providing services to support permanent border barrier construction aligns with the USACE mission of delivering vital engineering solutions, with our partners, to secure our nation, strengthen our economy and reduce disaster risks.”



Representatives with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Border Task Force install the final border barrier panel July 17 at the National Defense Area 1 project site near Antelope Wells, New Mexico. The project features up to six miles of new permanent border barrier, access gates, patrol roadways and access improvements. The secretary of War directed USACE to construct the barriers in response to a Jan. 20, 2025, presidential national emergency declaration.

Prado and Whittier: Building resilience

Senior engineering director reviews pre-construction progress at dam sites

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District hosted Thomas Smith, USACE director of engineering and construction, June 16 for an operational overview of Prado and Whittier Narrows dams during site visits in Orange and Los Angeles counties.

During the briefings, district engineers highlighted the Integrated Design and Construction method, which leverages early contractor involvement during the pre-construction phase to test and resolve design issues before groundbreaking. IDaC serves as an invaluable tool for both the Prado and Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Modification projects, combining private sector expertise with rigorous USACE safety standards. This collaborative approach improves cost efficiency, minimizes construction modifications and reduces project delays as the district strives to deliver vital infrastructure with speed and efficiency to its regional stakeholders.



Thomas Smith, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers director of engineering and construction, center, reviews ongoing pre-construction designs June 16 with Los Angeles District team members for the Prado Dam Safety Modification project at Prado Dam in Corona, California.



LEFT: Kirsten Bedolla, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District lead civil engineer, right, briefs attendees June 16 during a site visit from Thomas Smith, USACE director of engineering and construction, to Prado Dam in Corona, California.



RIGHT: Thomas Smith, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers director of engineering and construction, left, receives a project update June 16 from Los Angeles District engineers on pre-construction efforts for the Prado Dam Safety Modification project at Prado Dam in Corona, California.

LA District reaches foundation milestone on KC-46A Pegasus hangars at March ARB



Photos by Pete Gauer



ABOVE: A newly placed concrete foundation cures June 30 at the site of a future aircraft hangar at March Air Reserve Base in Riverside County, California. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District is managing the construction of the facility to support the 452nd Air Mobility Wing's transition from the legacy KC-135 Stratotanker to the state-of-the-art KC-46A Pegasus.

LEFT: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District personnel review construction progress June 30 as contractors place the concrete foundation for a new KC-46A Pegasus hangar at March Air Reserve Base in Riverside County, California. The modernized facility, scheduled for completion in 2028, will accommodate and support Airmen maintaining aircraft critical to the Air Force Reserve mission.

Azusa police join LA District park rangers for rough-terrain UTV training

Police officers from the Azusa Police Department joined U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District park rangers July 9 for a utility task vehicle training course at Whittier Narrows Dam in Los Angeles County, California.

The dam's surrounding recreation area provides a unique environment for operating specialized vehicles designed for rough-terrain navigation.

USACE park rangers coordinate with municipal police departments to ensure the safety of recreational visitors and personnel working around project sites. Collaborative training events like these strengthen regional partnerships, enhance communication between agencies and build essential skills that support future emergency operations.



Photos by Shawn Davis

A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District park ranger observes as participants maneuver utility task vehicles through an obstacle course July 9 during a joint training event at Whittier Narrows Dam in Los Angeles County, California. The district hosted Azusa police officers to build off-road driving skills and strengthen interagency partnerships for future emergency operations.



Participants from the Azusa Police Department observe from a staging tent, left, as a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District park ranger, center, evaluates utility task vehicle drivers as they prepare to navigate a training course July 9 at Whittier Narrows Dam in Los Angeles County, California. The recreation area's varied terrain provides a unique, realistic environment for specialized vehicle training.

Strengthening tribal partnerships



Photos by Stephen Baack

Danielle Storey, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District tribal liaison, left, discusses regulatory consultations June 16 during an Environmental Protection Agency meeting at the Soboba Casino Resort with Roman Orona, Ak-Chin Indian Community environmental programs manager, center, and Gabriel Lopez, Ak-Chin Indian Community chairman, right. District leadership hosted the regulatory listening session with federally recognized tribes from California, Nevada and Arizona at the facility to provide updates on legislative changes to the Regulatory Program and open a dialogue to improve how the district considers tribal views during the decision-making process.



Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander, right, speaks with Gabriel Lopez, Ak-Chin Indian Community chairman, left, June 16 during a regulatory listening session at the Soboba Casino Resort. The forum aimed to improve how the district considers tribal views in its decision-making processes. The forum aligns with the chief of engineers' directive for district commanders to conduct annual listening sessions to ensure effective communication with tribal nations and underrepresented communities.

FUDS 'First Friday' outreach



Photo by Robert DeDeaux

Lisa Schutzberger, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District project manager, left, hands out educational toys and books about Formerly Used Defense Sites to children June 5 during the Kingman First Friday event in Kingman, Arizona. USACE representatives discussed the Kingman Skeet Range, a FUDS remediation project, with Mohave County residents and educated attendees on the dangers of remaining skeet debris at the site. The team engaged 150 more residents this year than last year. Subject-matter experts and program managers from the USACE South Pacific Division, and the Sacramento District and Los Angeles districts, along with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, answered questions from residents about the project.

LA River tour with Rep. Laura Friedman



Photos by Stephen Baack

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District leadership and subject-matter experts host Rep. Laura Friedman April 13 during a tour along the Los Angeles River to review channel capacity and flood-risk issues.

LEFT: Discussing river operations, from left, are Eric Nguyen, river and channels project manager; Friedman; Col. Andrew Baker, district commander; and Andrew Goodall, acting deputy district engineer.

RIGHT: Speaking near the water, from left, are Friedman; Baker; Goodall; and Michael Turanitz, Operations Division chief.

LA District celebrates Engineer Day, 251 years of history



Photo by Stephen Baack

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District celebrated its people, achievements and nearly 251 years of Corps history June 4 during the annual Engineer Day event at the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area in Irwindale, California. The celebration featured remarks from Col. Andrew Baker, district commander — who has since transitioned leadership during a change-of-command ceremony in July — along with a fun run, a team photo booth, friendly athletic competitions, food and fellowship. The district also formally recognized its civil servants during a length-of-service awards presentation.



Photo by Richard Rivera



Photo by Stephen Baack

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Team members bounce toward the finish line during a potato sack race June 4 during the annual Engineer Day celebration at the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area in Irwindale, California.

A district team member, right, tosses a beanbag during a game of cornhole June 4 as colleagues, center and left, look on during the annual Engineer Day celebration at the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area in Irwindale, California.

Members of the Regulatory Division gather June 4 with Col. Andrew Baker, district commander, third from left, for an informal team photo during the annual Engineer Day festivities at the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area in Irwindale, California.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District employees, family members and retirees gather June 4 on the boat dock at the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area lake in Irwindale, California. The annual Engineer Day group photo captures the district's workforce and extended community as they celebrate nearly 251 years of USACE history.

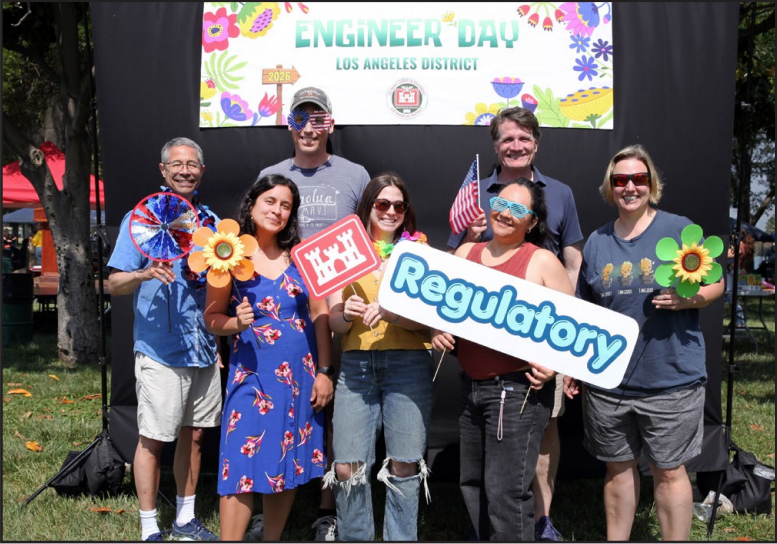


Photo by Richard Rivera

- ✓ RECOGNIZE HAZARDS.
- ✓ TAKE ACTION.
- ✓ PREVENT INCIDENTS.

GO HOME SAFE.



US Army Corps
of Engineers®



LESSONS LEARNED

Roadside Trailer Tire Blowout – *Preparedness Prevented a Mishap*



**HAZARDS
RECOGNIZED.
ACTIONS TAKEN.
INCIDENT
PREVENTED.**

INCIDENT SUMMARY

While traveling eastbound on Highway 60 near mile post 100, a trailer tire suffered a blowout.

The sudden tire failure created the potential for:

- ⚠ Secondary vehicle accidents
- ⚠ Struck-by hazards from passing traffic
- ⚠ Injuries during roadside tire replacement
- ⚠ Additional equipment damage

✓ WE WERE PREPARED!

Because we prepared before the trip, we had what we needed to respond safely and prevent the situation from becoming a serious incident.



WARNING
TRIANGLES



HIGH-VISIBILITY
VESTS



SPARE TIRE(S)



TOOLS & JACK



PRE-TRIP
INSPECTION

*Preparation today.
Protection tomorrow.*

✓ WHAT WENT RIGHT?



Vehicle and trailer were safely moved out of the travel lane.



High-visibility safety vests were immediately donned.



Warning triangles were properly deployed to alert approaching motorists.



Personnel assessed the situation before beginning repairs.



The damaged tire was safely replaced and the trailer inspected before resuming travel.



POSITIVE OUTCOME



No injuries occurred.



No additional property damage occurred.



The mission continued without further incident.



Employees returned home safely.



KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Conduct thorough vehicle and trailer inspections before travel.
- Ensure spare tires, jacks, and tools are serviceable and accessible.
- Verify warning triangles are available and ready for use.
- Wear high-visibility apparel when working near traffic.
- Establish a safe work zone before beginning roadside repairs.
- Continuously assess risks and maintain situational awareness.



SAFETY TAKEAWAY

Preparation + Hazard Recognition
+ Proper Controls =

MISHAP PREVENTION

THE TIRE FAILED.

THE SAFETY PROCESS DIDN'T.

Proper use of traffic control devices, PPE, and safe roadside work practices helped prevent a minor issue from becoming a major incident.

