Crosscurrents

Serving the St. Paul District since 1977

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US Army Corps of Engineers®
St. Paul District

Contents



(cover) Colton Sobiech, natural resources specialist, poses with an extra safe dog at Cross Lake Recreation Area, in Crosslake, Minnesota, Aug. 1. USACE St. Paul District courtesy photo

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Crosscurrents is an unofficial publication authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1. It is published quarterly for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District. Views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Articles and photography submissions are welcome. Submissions may be emailed. Submissions should be in Microsoft Word format. Photos should be at least 5 in. x 7 in. at 300 dpi.

The mission of *Crosscurrents* is to support the commander's internal information program for the St. Paul District and its stakeholders. *Crosscurrents* also serves as the commander's primary communication tool for accurately transmitting policies and command philosophy to the St. Paul District community and its customers.

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Comments from the top: A message from Lt. Col. Joshua Rud



MVP Teammates,

Fall brings a seasonal transition across the St. Paul District. As construction, navigation and recreation activities shift toward winter operations, our workload changes with them. The work ahead remains demanding, and this season's transition is one of many underway across our district.

We are preparing to transition our pay and performance appraisal systems to AcqDemo. Many of our technical professionals are adopting systems, changing how we manage and execute our work. With renewed opportunities to hire, we are welcoming colleagues, rebuilding teams and helping people take on new responsibilities. Our projects are also moving forward, transitioning from feasibility to design, from design to construction, and ultimately to operations and service to our communities. Each transition brings opportunity, but it can also bring uncertainty, friction and additional work. Learning a new system, welcoming a new teammate or moving a project into its next phase requires patience and effort. Some changes will be uncomfortable. We may not immediately see their benefits or agree with every aspect of how they unfold.

We will find our way through these transitions together, leaning on one another and keeping communication open and honest. Sharing what we know, asking questions and talking through challenges will help us move forward. Each of us brings experience and perspective that can make the path a little easier for someone else. Through all of this, we are one district and one team, united by our MVP values: delivering the mission, adding value and supporting our people. Those values provide a steady reference point as our tools, teams and workloads evolve.

As colder weather arrives, please carry that same teamwork into winter preparations. Review seasonal hazards, prepare facilities and equipment, and look out for the safety of one another. Thank you for the professionalism and commitment you bring to this district. I consider myself blessed to be a part of MVP and we should all be proud of what we continue to accomplish together.

-Lt. Col. Josh Rud, acting commander

Evans honored with lifetime achievement award

Stories by Ren Martin

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Headquarters, selected recently retired St. Paul District Regional Planning Division North Plan Formulation Branch Chief Craig Evans for its Corps of Engineers' Lifetime Planning Achievement Award. This award recognizes personnel whose careers have made outstanding contributions to civil works planning and environmental stewardship.



Craig Evans, retired plan formulation branch chief. USACE St. Paul District photo by Emily Chavolla

"Evans set the gold standard for public service. For over four decades, his sharp intellect and steady leadership helped solve our region's toughest water resource challenges," said Trevor Popkin, Evan's former supervisor. "More importantly, he poured his time into mentoring the next generation of planners, leaving a legacy that will shape the Corps of Engineers for years to come."

As chief of the plan formulation section and later the plan formulation branch, Evans guided multidisciplinary teams on some of the region's most significant water resource challenges, Popkin shared.

"Over Evans' 41-year tenure, his expertise, integrity and mentorship have left an unparalleled legacy on the Army's Civil Works program," Popkin said. Evans distinguished himself as a devoted leader and a champion for leadership development, Popkin added. He proactively invested in the next generation of professionals by serving as a leadership education and development facilitator and teaching the planning essentials course.

Kniep recognized as planning champion

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Headquarters, recognized St. Paul District civil engineer Michelle Kniep for its Corps of Engineer's 2025 Noel Clay Planning Champion Award.



Michelle Kniep, civil engineer. USACE St. Paul District courtesy photo

The award recognizes an employee that exhibits leadership, support and encouragement of planners and planning teams. Kniep was selected for her dedication and leadership of the Flood Risk Management Planning Center of Expertise during a period of organizational change.

As a flood risk management technical expert for the center, Kniep has been instrumental in tracking funding, leading meetings and shaping the future direction of the organization, said Elisa Royce, Kneip's supervisor. She played a vital role in ensuring the center met its commitments to milestones.

"Michelle's expertise has rightfully made her a sought-after national resource, and this award is a well-deserved recognition of her impact within the Corps of Engineers," Royce said. "Winning the award underscores her leadership and the high standard of excellence she brings to our team."

Kniep has worked for the Corps of Engineers for 30 years. She currently sits in the St. Louis District.

Bathke commended for planning excellence

Stories by Ren Martin

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Headquarters, selected St. Paul District water resource planner Jill Bathke for its Corps of Engineer's 2025 Planning Excellence Award.



Jill Bathke, water resource planner. USACE St. Paul District courtesy photo

Bathke received the award for her work on the Upper Mississippi River's Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program, or NESP. This program works to increase the capacity and improve the reliability of the inland navigation system while restoring, protecting and enhancing the environment.

Bathke was recognized alongside her coworker, Jesse Ray, an environmental specialist with the St. Paul District, for their vital contributions to NESP's ecosystem program, seamlessly integrating science and policy, interagency expertise, and public engagement to strengthen river and floodplain forest restoration.

Bathke began her Corps of Engineers career in 2007 as a biologist. Since 2023, she has been the plan formulation lead for NESP.

"Jill is an exceptional planner who is incredibly reliable when facing Corps of Engineers' most complex and demanding tasks," said Natalie Mcglinch, Bathke's supervisor. "She is proactive in her work, adaptable when challenges arise and innovative in her planning approaches. Her dedication, consistency and commitment to excellence drive outstanding results and elevates all who have the opportunity to work with her."

Ray celebrated for planning excellence

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Headquarters, selected St. Paul District environmental specialist Jesse Ray for its 2025 Planning Excellence Award.



Jesse Ray, environmental specialist. USACE St. Paul District courtesy photo

The Planning Excellence Award, or Planner of the Year Award, recognizes personnel exhibiting exceptional job performance. Ray received the award for his work on the Upper Mississippi River's Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program, or NESP.

Ray began his Corps of Engineers career with the Walla Walla District in 2012 and joined the St. Paul District in 2019. Since 2023, he has served as senior environmental specialist with NESP.

"Jesse Ray is the person to seek when complex planning challenges arise. His deep knowledge, expertise, and relentless work ethic have earned him the respect of our entire community of practice," said Steve Acuff, Ray's supervisor. "From his early days in the infantry to his vital contributions in Army's Civil Works mission, this award recognizes only a fraction of Jesse's selfless service to the Army and the Nation."

Western Area Office team receives headquarters award

Story by Ren Martin

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Headquarters, named the St. Paul District Western Area Office, located in Fargo, North Dakota, as its “2026 Quality Team of the Year.”

The team is recognized for unparalleled technical expertise, innovative spirit and dedication to collaboration to the overwhelming success of a massive and complex construction program.

While managing and leading nearly 20 concurrent projects, the team has pioneered new district standards in risk management and fostered a culture of continuous learning, said Terry Williams program manager.

“The team’s commitment to mentoring has strengthened the technical competency of the entire organization, while their selfless contributions to their local community have built lasting goodwill,” Williams said.

The team includes: team lead Virginia Regorrah; team members: Shwan Al Mandalawi, Jacob Baranes, Joshua Bement, Sanjay Bimali, Mark Buringa, Anthony Carrington, Jhon Cerna, Jerry Cudney, April Erickson, Anthony Feilzer, Faith Fischer, John Fromuth, Ryley Haugen, Steven Heimark, Blake Hollingsworth, Tyler Jackson, Roy Lawson, Daniel Machado, Al-aa Saleh, Matthew Sayler, Vincent Schuyler, Rebecca Smith, Michelle Swanson, Troy Terhaar, Kyle Volk, Aung Win, Jordan Winter, Ethan Young, Joel Zietz



Western Area Office team members stand with (right) District Commander Col. Matthew Chase near Fargo, North Dakota, Aug. 7, 2025. USACE St. Paul District photo by Liz Stoeckmann

Mikonowicz receives national architecture award

Story by Ren Martin

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Headquarters, selected Aaron Mikonowicz, St. Paul District senior landscape architect as its 2026 Landscape Architect of the Year.

This award focuses on landscape architecture, site design, technical leadership and mentorship.

Mikonowicz was honored for his work in delivering complex projects, including the Fargo-Moorhead Metro Diversion Flood Risk Management Project, the Lower American River C3B Project and the Sny Magill Effigy Mound Protection Project.

As lead site designer for the diversion project's Red River Structure, Mikonowicz resolved critical construction challenges through innovative problem-solving and interdisciplinary coordination.



Aaron Mikonowicz, senior landscape architect. USACE St. Paul District courtesy photo

"Through technical expertise, quality reviews, mentorship of emerging professionals and leadership within the landscape architecture community of practice, Mikonowicz has strengthened the profession and advanced the USACE mission," said Renee McGarvey, Mikonowicz's supervisor

Mikonowicz has been with the St. Paul District since 2007.

St. Paul District inducts new member into the Hall of Fame

Story by Ren Martin

The St. Paul District recently named Michael Knoff of as its 2026 Hall of Fame inductee.

Knoff was honored for his exemplary service to the St. Paul District and the Corps of Engineers. During 21 of his 25 years in the St. Paul District, Knoff served as the chief of the Hydraulics and Hydrology Branch, helping tackle the district's most complex water resource problems. After taking over as the chief of the engineering and construction division, Knoff oversaw the completion of the Grand Forks Flood Risk Management project and helped the district transition to the Upper Mississippi River Restoration program.

Throughout his tenure, Knoff mentored 176 employees in the district's leadership program while also working as the chief of the project development branch and as the deputy district engineer.

"Mike's legacy extends far beyond his 25 years of service," said acting Commander Lt. Col. Joshua Rud. "The people he developed and the projects he helped build continue to shape the district today, leaving a lasting impact that makes him a deserving member of our Hall of Fame."



Mike Knoff (left), the St. Paul District 2026 Hall of Fame inductee. USACE St. Paul District photo by Liz Stoeckmann

Protecting people and property: Lac qui Parle Spillway rehabilitation

Story by Liz Stoeckmann

For more than 90 years, the Lac qui Parle emergency spillway has provided a controlled path for water during high-water events, helping relieve pressure on the dam. Now, the St. Paul District is rehabilitating the aging structure to preserve that flood risk management function and help protect downstream communities for years to come.

Located in Watson, Minnesota, the spillway was constructed in the 1930s. Its original protective layer of rock and grout has deteriorated over time. During the past two decades, water seeped beneath that surface, requiring repeated repairs.

“We are rehabilitating a portion of our dam, the spillway, that was constructed back in the ’30s,” said J Mark Nesvig, site manager and supervisory facility operations specialist. “The project work replaces deteriorated material with a more durable concrete structure designed to maintain a critical safeguard within the Lac qui Parle flood risk management system.”

A controlled path for high water

During major flood events, the emergency spillway provides a designated location for water to flow; reducing pressure that would otherwise build behind the dam.



Adam Rasmussen (left), technical lead, and Kevin Bigalke, senior project manager, conduct a site visit at the Lac qui Parle Spillway near Watson, Minnesota, July 14. USACE St. Paul District photo by Liz Stoeckmann

“Rather than having all the water pressure behind the dam itself during a flood event, water will come and flow over the spillway,” said Kevin Bigalke, senior project manager. “This helps restore and keep in place the purpose of the emergency spillway, to alleviate flooding.”

The project was divided into two construction phases because initial funding supported rehabilitation of approximately 1,300 feet of the spillway. Additional funding covered the remaining 1,200 feet. Together, the two phases will rehabilitate the full 2,500-foot spillway.

“We wrapped up final restoration of Phase 1 of the project in July. Phase 2 of the project began in August,” Bigalke said.

The St. Paul District is overseeing the project’s budget, schedule, construction, quality assurance and coordination with contractors.

Story continued on Page 9

Story continued from Page 8

Rebuilding from the foundation up

The spillway requires more than replacing its surface, said Technical Lead Adam Rasmussen.

“Crews are removing those rock layers and excavating until they reach consistent foundation material. They are then rebuilding the area with engineered layers of sand, gravel, and clay to create a stronger, more reliable foundation,” Rasmussen said.

Steel sheet piles are also being installed to provide structural support and help prevent water from seeping beneath the spillway.

Rasmussen said the work has presented significant challenges, including groundwater entering the excavation at substantial rates. That requires continuous pumping and close coordination among the project team and contractor.

“Once you break that sand plane, it is a gush of water,” he said. “We had close to 300 gallons per minute gushing in on our excavation.”

Weather, seasonal limits on concrete placement, rain, rising lake levels and groundwater management have also affected the construction schedule, Rasmussen said. The team is working to minimize impacts on the public, including those associated with the road closure near the work area.

“We are doing our absolute best to keep the public’s interests at the top of the list,” Rasmussen said.

When Phase 2 is complete, the rehabilitated spillway will provide a more reliable path for high water, reducing pressure on the dam and flood risk for downstream residents.

“We want this fully open to the public in 2027,” Rasmussen said.



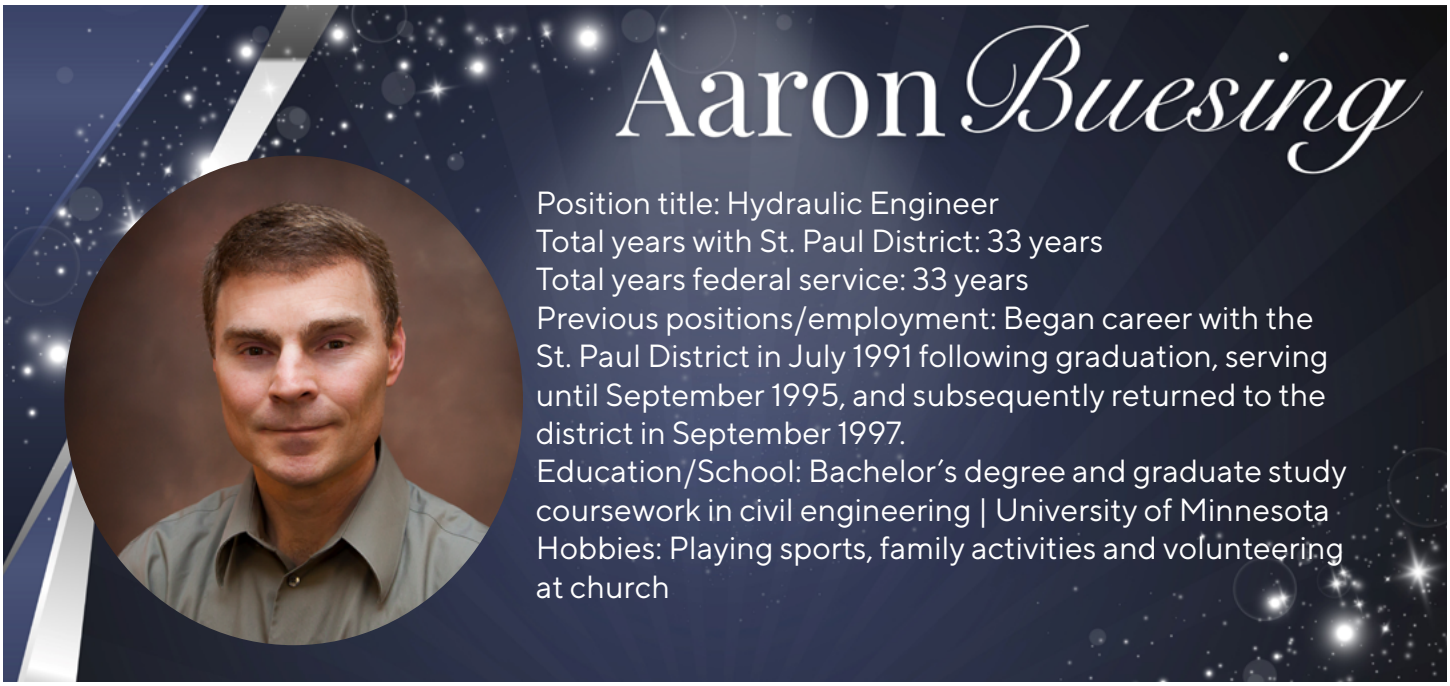
Maintenance on Lac qui Parle Spillway, near Watson, Minnesota, July 14. USACE St. Paul District photo by Liz Stoeckmann



Adam Rasmussen, technical lead, inspects the Lac qui Parle Spillway, near Watson, Minnesota, July 14. USACE St. Paul District photo by Liz Stoeckmann

St. Paul District announces Civil Servants of the Year

Story by Ren Martin



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, selected Aaron Buesing as one of its four 2025 Civil Servants of the Year.

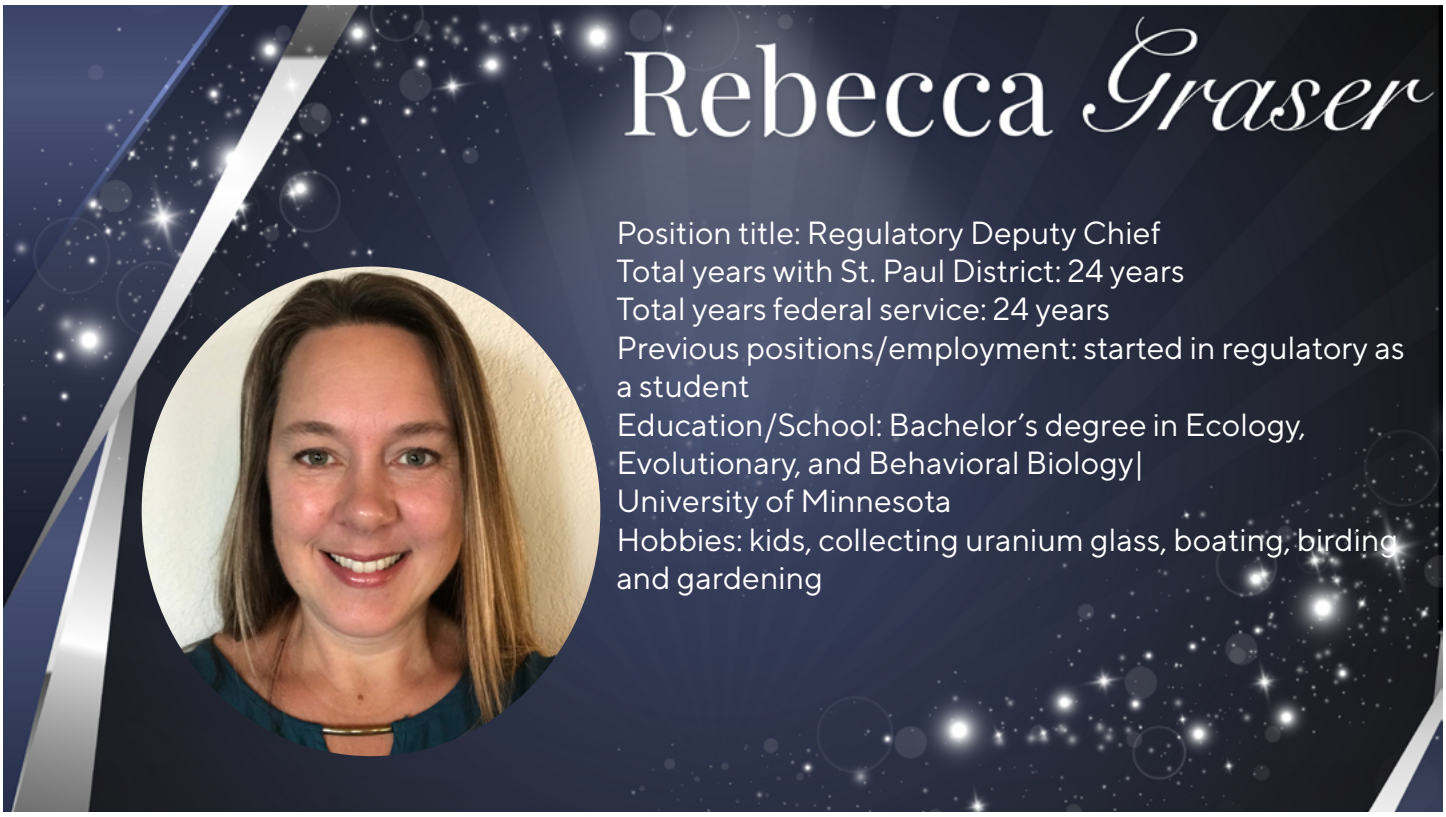
The St. Paul District presents this award annually to employees who have distinguished themselves through sustained, superior performance, special acts, community service or other noteworthy contributions during the previous calendar year. Buesing, a hydraulic engineer, was selected for his unique combination of technical expertise, mentoring skills and dedication to the USACE mission.

As an engineer, Buesing brings sound judgment, humility and a commitment to doing things the right way, said Brian Alberto, chief of the hydraulic engineering section. "He's selfless when it comes to assisting teammates, showing a strong ability to communicate complex engineering concepts to both technical and non-technical audiences, gladly taking time to explain the details of a hydraulic model, riprap sizing or any number of other topics he has experience with."

Praised for his innovation, leadership and communication skills, Buesing is viewed as an invaluable colleague by his peers.

"Buesing exemplifies the best of the Corps through his exceptional technical expertise, innovative problem solving, unwavering commitment to mentoring others and dedication to our mission," Alberto said. "His ability to collaborate and solve complex engineering problems, share knowledge freely, and develop the next generation of engineers has strengthened the St. Paul District and the engineering capabilities across the enterprise."





The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, selected Rebecca Graser as one of its four 2025 Civil Servants of the Year.

The St. Paul District presents this award annually to employees who have distinguished themselves through sustained, superior performance, special acts, community service or other noteworthy contributions during the previous calendar year. Graser, the deputy chief of the St. Paul District's regulatory division, was selected for her leadership during nationally significant permitting actions.

Karl Jansen, deputy for programs and project management, praised Graser's dual focus on people and operations during her tenure as acting chief of the regulatory division. He noted that Graser fostered a superior culture, proving that mission accomplishment and the well-being of the workforce are complementary.

"She provided steadfast direction through a leadership transition, government shutdown and fundamental shifts in environmental law all while championing a culture of health, safety and team cohesion," Jansen said.

"Becky Graser has been the driving force behind the St. Paul District regulatory division's success," said Paul Leffler, regulatory division branch chief. "Over the past year, she has confronted every difficult or seemingly impossible task with exceptional expertise, professionalism and transparency."





The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, selected Kevin Hanson as one of its four 2025 Civil Servants of the Year.

The St. Paul District presents this award annually to employees who have distinguished themselves through sustained, superior performance, special acts, community service or other noteworthy contributions during the previous calendar year. Hanson, a geographic information system (GIS) subject matter expert for the district, was selected for his superior technical performance and his work during his 90-day deployment to the California Wildlife Debris Mission.

Hanson consistently delivered high-quality geospatial solutions that enhanced data integrity, accessibility and analysis across the district, said Jacqueline Kovarik, GIS chief. "His expertise directly improved decision-making and efficiency. As head of the Geospatial Data and System Technical Committee, he helped build a culture of collaboration and ensured GIS capabilities were aligned with district-wide needs."

During his voluntary deployment to the California Wildfire Debris Mission, Hanson delivered critical geospatial analysis, visualizations and applications that supported the debris removal operation. After returning to the district, he was selected to continue providing remote GIS support to the mission through January 2026, contributing to contract closeout efforts as part of a small team of experts.

"Hanson's expertise and dedication have made a tremendous impact on our district," Kovarik said. "But what stands out most is the way he always puts the mission and his teammates first. He leads by example, he's incredibly generous with his knowledge and he is someone people instinctively turn to when they need help. I can't think of anyone more deserving of this recognition."



Civil Servants cont.



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, selected Susan Malin-Boyce as one of its four 2025 Civil Servants of the Year.

The St. Paul District presents this award annually to employees who have distinguished themselves through sustained, superior performance, special acts, community service or other noteworthy contributions during the previous calendar year. Malin-Boyce, an archaeologist for the district, was selected for her work as lead archaeologist of the Fargo-Moorhead Flood Risk Management project.

For the project, Malin-Boyce oversees a $6.5 million cultural mitigation program, directing efforts across over 50,000 acres and addressing mitigation of two dozen historic properties across Minnesota and North Dakota. She has expertly coordinated with contractors and USACE historic preservation partners to facilitate compliance efforts including preparations for the relocation and restoration of a historic farmhouse.

“Malin-Boyce’s leadership in cultural resources exemplifies leadership and collaboration at the highest level,” said her supervisor, Cultural Section Chief Vanessa Alberto. “She meets each unique challenge with professionalism, ingenuity and thoughtful coordination with agency partners and the local community. Her efforts ensure that the project not only delivers critical flood risk management infrastructure but also preserves the Red River Valley’s rich history and cultural integrity for generations to come.”



Safety is no accident: St. Paul District reaches key milestone in safety program

Story by Melanie Peterson

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, marked the full implementation of the Corps of Engineers Safety and Occupational Health Management System Stage 3, in August, advancing forward to the Army Star.

The safety milestone validates the district's number one goal – protecting employees.

"A safety culture focuses on continuous improvement and being proactive," said Aaron Pieplow, safety and occupational health chief. "The ultimate goal is a workplace where safety is second nature with an unwavering response to protect the irreplaceable, you."

The management system provides a framework for the safety program and acts as a detailed report card for the safety programs and processes that help advance safety culture toward the ultimate goal - better protection for employees.

"Change does not happen overnight," Pieplow said. "That's why CESOHMS is designed to be a phased approach following the 'crawl, walk, run' method – positioning the district for the Army Star recognition."

Since 2017, the district has been navigating the safety management system through three stages: documentation; implementation and execution; and sustainment and continuous improvement.

"This accomplishment is a reflection not just on the dedication of our safety team, but on the district as a whole," said Jilliane Jaeger, acting deputy district commander. "It has taken everyone's commitment toward a safe and healthy workplace to reach this destination. I'm proud of what we've accomplished together."

"Over the next few months, the safety team will be working hard to polish its processes, survey the workforce, organize/deliver safety trainings, and prep program elements for the next milestone. There will be more to follow in the coming months," Jaeger said.



(left to right) Dalton Eide, Matt Stanton and Adam Kiedrowski, maintenance and repair, inspect the Tainter valves at Lock and Dam 2, near Hastings, Minnesota, Oct. 1. USACE St. Paul District photo by Liz Stoeckmann



Mike Holzer (left), civil engineer, and Jim Cook, project manager, at the Lock and Dam 9 miter gate replacement, July 21, near Genoa, Wisconsin. USACE St. Paul District photo by Melanie Peterson

St. Paul District determined to not lose the plot

Story by Ren Martin

In an ever-changing world, it is sometimes hard to appreciate just how much things have changed until you take a step back. For some, this is as simple as watching an old movie or opening a dust-bound book. For others, like Josh Stohr and Caleb Redick, it's not so easy. The two St. Paul District foresters recently completed sampling of permanent forestry plots located in Pools 4 and 5 of the Mississippi River.



Josh Stohr, forester, uses a metal detector to find rebar stakes, in Pool 5 of the Upper Mississippi River, Aug. 12. USACE St. Paul District photo by Ren Martin

Permanent plot sampling is not new to the Corps of Engineers. The process, used to determine the changes to the forest over the course of time, was first completed almost 20 years ago on 110 plots across the district. Armed with GPS plot points and decade old photographs, it is up to Stohr and Redick, with occasional help, to try and find these old plots as they hike through the summer heat. Oftentimes, the only hint is a metal post, its tip spray painted white, planted when the area was first surveyed almost two decades ago.



Caleb Redick, forester, records plot points in Pool 5 of the Upper Mississippi River, Aug. 12. USACE St. Paul District photo by Ren Martin

Once the original plot is found, the work can begin. Equipped with a clipboard and previous measurements, the foresters must first find their witness tree, a tree marked during the original sampling with a scar in the bark. The radius and health of the tree is examined and written down before a new scar is etched. The next step, with the help of a metal detector, is to find the secondary guide poles, smaller rebar stakes that are often hidden under piles of newly deposited sediment. The depth of this sediment is recorded, indicating to the foresters how much sand the Mississippi River has left on the island over the past twenty years, or alternatively, how much has eroded.

The process is thorough. The plant diversity of the understory and herbaceous layers, the soil composition, the presence and size of new trees, the growth and health of old; all must be painstakingly recorded before the group can move on. "The usefulness of this data," said Redick, "is not only in knowing how the forest

Story continued on Page 16

Story continued from Page 15

has changed across our federal landownership and why, but hopefully in helping us determine where to plant new trees and what species to focus on. In essence, it lets us see the forest for the trees!"

"[It helps us] determine where to plant new trees and what species to focus on. In essence, it lets us see the forest for the trees!"
-Caleb Redick, forester

Sometimes there is only enough time in the day to finish one plot. Some are easily accessible; others require a boat and a pair of waders.

Once the tired foresters return from their odyssey, the carefully charted data is put into their database. Here, the new data is compared to the old data and analyzed with the help of the United States Geological Survey. Findings are compared to those in other districts and shared with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The process is finally complete. The Corps of Engineers no longer has to rely on nostalgia to determine how much things have changed; the data paints the picture for them.



Josh Stohr, forester, uses a metal detector to find rebar stakes in Pool 5 of the Upper Mississippi River, Aug. 12. USACE St. Paul District photo by Ren Martin



Matt Trumper (left), United States Geological Survey, and Caleb Redick, forester, search for plot points in Pool 5 of the Upper Mississippi River, Aug. 12. USACE St. Paul District photo by Ren Martin

St. Paul District uses Oracle to see the future

Story by Ren Martin

Aging doesn't always have to be unpleasant; recent trends have been to emphasize exercise, discourage smoking and insist on sunscreen. But no amount of medical advice could save the original Program and Project Management Information System, a scheduling and reporting tool for Corps of Engineers project managers that has been in use since 2003. PROMIS will be replaced this fall by Oracle Primavera Cloud, a new and improved system promising a faster and more effective experience.

In development since 2022, OPC has been introduced to the district slowly. Despite only having access to a training platform of the system, Zach Kimmel, chief of the programs and project support branch, noticed a big difference. "One thing is clear," said Kimmel, "the new interface is more user friendly. It's easier to view projects, create a 'favorites list,' and update project data."



Zach Kimmel, chief of the programs and project support branch. USACE St. Paul District courtesy photo

While relatively unknown outside the realm of project management, the new system represents a big part of the Corps of Engineers' mission. "It'll be relied upon as the roadmap to project and program delivery, detailing the financial and milestone schedules while concurrently documenting key project details," said Kimmel.

With OPC's capability to support more than 30,000 active projects and over $40 billion in annual program delivery, that roadmap just got a whole lot bigger.

As of late September, the St. Paul District has migrated over 100 projects to OPC, representing just over half of the total portfolio maintained on the Program and Project Management Information System. The district intends to be fully transitioned to OPC by the end of October, with the understanding that certain projects may need to be transferred later. The transition began September 9.

A league of their own: The St. Paul District continues a long tradition of a golf league

Story by Melanie Peterson

There's no putting around in the golf league; for over 40 years, current and former St. Paul District employees have teed up to build lasting connections. Paul Fleming, senior engineering technician and the current golf league president, said this unofficial league is about camaraderie and getting to know people outside of your division.

"Not only is this a fun opportunity to play golf with all different skill levels, but it's also a great way to network across the district with people you may not normally interact with," Fleming said. "We have people who have been in the league 40 years and people who just started this year. It's men and women from a wide age range and variety of disciplines."

The group of 24 players is divided into six teams at the beginning of the season based on skill level and handicap. The league plays every other Tuesday in the summer starting in May near Stillwater, Minnesota, for a total of 10 outings during the regular season. The season culminates in a final round and banquet that is held at a different venue.

"We do keep score and compete, but, at the end of the day, it's casual and friendly recreation that is meant to be affordable and accessible," Fleming said. In addition, the league hosts an annual golf event as part of the summer awards ceremony that is open to everybody.

At the end of the 10 outings, there is a final competition and awards are distributed. "We give out awards for areas like most improved, most valuable player and best score. The competition between the winners of the first half of the season and the winners of the second half of the season results in 'The Champions of the Universe award,'" said Dave Potter, biologist and 15-year member of the golf league.

Skill level is not a factor, ultimately the competition is for fun and promoting the game. "I was hesitant to start because I wasn't that good at golf, but I made the leap and it was a great decision," said Trevor Cyphers, biologist, and this year's most valuable player. "I've been in the league for seven years now, and I hope we can continue this tradition and grow the league."

If anyone is interested, please reach out to Fleming, Potter, or Cyphers.



The 2026 Golf League photo. USACE St. Paul District courtesy photo

Recognizing our Employees of the Month: The MVPs of MVP



June
Ashley Kiley
Recreation and Natural Resources



July
Anthony Levine
Engineering and Construction

Summer Awards Ceremony

USACE St. Paul District photos by Liz Stoeckmann and Ren Martin



St. Paul District recognizes its employees

Lower American River Contract 3 project delivery team (no photo present)
Travis Burrier, Anthony Levine, Brian Alberto, Dan Mielke, Trevor Kough, Michael Snyder, Reid Olson, Dan Adams, Kevin Hanson, Ben Nelson, Adam Rasmussen



Mike Snyder
Mississippi Valley Division
Hydraulic Modeling and Design Award



Jeremiah Jazdzewski
Mississippi Valley Division
Hydaulic Modeling and Statistics and Risk Award



Patrick Dowd
Mississippi Valley Division
Planning Studies Support Award



Western Area Office
Army Safety Risk Management Award and Quality Team of the Year



Aaron Mikonowicz
Mississippi Valley Division
Landscape Architect of the Year



1st Lt. Shaunna George
Headquarters Individual Award for Excellence in Safety

Length of Service Awards

10 years

Craig Bauer, operations
Sanjay Bimali, engineering and construction
Andrew Buell, operations
Jarrett Cellini, regulatory
Matthew Cihaski, planning
Sharon Frank-Scheierl, contracting
April Marcangeli, regulatory
Alexander Meincke, regulatory
Jeffery Rindal, operations
Faith Sandberg, engineering and construction
William Schmidt, operations
Michael Snyder, engineering and construction
Jonathan Sundquist, operations
Jason Tidwell, engineering and construction
Shawn Weissenfluh, operations



10 years

15 years

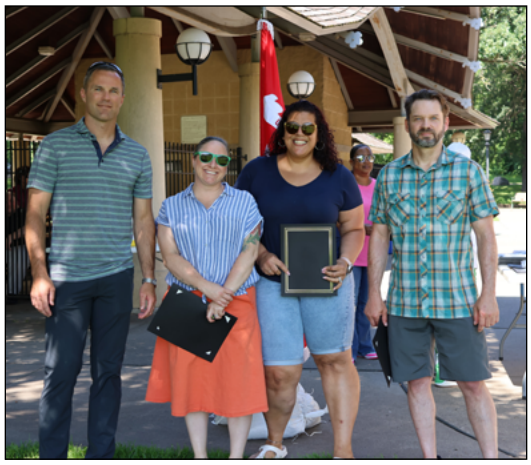
Vanessa Alberto, planning
Lucas Anderson, operations
Travis Brantner, operations
Brittney Haupert, real estate
Steven Heidbrider, operations
Joel Hermann, operations
Jilliane Jaeger, office of counsel
Craig Jarnot, regulatory
Branden Johnson, operations
Jesse Kramer, operations
Christopher Laine, operations
Scott Rolbiecki, operations
James Schneider, engineering and construction
Karla Sparks, programs and project management
Cynthia Ward, programs and project management



15 years

20 years

Robert Altmann, security and force protection
Charles Boyd, engineering and construction
Jarrod Brown, engineering and construction
Michelle Butler, operations
Michael Gunderson, operations
Timothy Hermann, operations
Jessica Kempke, regulatory
Ashley Kiley, operations
Trevor Kough, engineering and construction



20 years

Length of Service Awards cont.

20 years, cont.

Joel Miller-Oates, operations
Kristin Moe, operations
Cary Moriarty, security and force protection
Elizabeth Moriarty, office of counsel
Angelo Pedretti, operations
Rachel Perrine, planning
Jonathan Peters, operations
Adam Rasmussen, engineering and construction
Benjamin Reeser, operations
Thomas Rohrer, operations
Bryanna Sauer, resource management
Joseph Shoemaker, regulatory
Matthew Stanton, operations
Clayton Tallman, programs and project management
Bobby Wunderlich, operations
Travis Zabinski, operations

25 years

Teresa Allen, planning
Tony Broxson, operations
Dwight Deloney, operations
Aimee Eberle, operations
Kathryn Fechter, planning
Kevin Henricks, contracting
Chris Hill, operations
Elizabeth Nelsen, engineering and construction
Marcus Patterson, operations
Michael Schamaun, operations
Langston Spencer, operations
Christopher Stai, operations
Timothy Tabery, operations

30 years

Jason Hauser, operations
Bonnie Meyerhoff, programs and project management
Angie Phipps, equal employment opportunity
Vincent Schuyler, engineering and construction
James Ulrick, engineering and construction
Doyle Wilkins, operations

35 years

Ann Banitt, engineering and construction
Tim Grundhoffer, engineering and construction
Patrick Harding, logistics
Kelly Obermiller, resource management



25 years



30 years



35 years

Length of Service Awards cont.

35 years, cont.

Susan Robinson, resource management
Robert Wachholz, operations

40 years

Christine Afdahl, engineering and construction
Craig Evans, planning
Kenneth Mertes, operations
Terryl Williams, programs and project management

45 years

Lupe Santos-Jensen, equal employment opportunity



40 years

PROJECT update

Final touches are happening at the Upper Pool 4 Pierce County Islands project located near Bay City, Wisconsin, on the Upper Mississippi River. The $30 million investment is strengthening the local community by creating four islands, building aquatic overwintering habitat, stabilizing shorelines, improving fish and wildlife habitat and expanding recreational opportunities for river users.







New Hires

Blake Evanson, deckhand, operations, Fountain City, Wisconsin
John Lee, lock and dam equipment mechanic, operations, Welch, Minnesota
Dawson Wiersgalla, deckhand, operations, Fountain City, Wisconsin

Promotions

Lauren Allin, civil engineer, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota
Keith Barta, program analyst, executive office, St. Paul, Minnesota
Mark Buringa, civil engineer, engineering and construction, Fargo, North Dakota
Charles Fimon, facility services assistant, operations, Crosslake, Minnesota
Edward Frey, program analyst, programs and project management, St. Paul, Minnesota
Jacob Gosnell, safety and occupational health specialist, safety and occupational health, St. Paul, Minnesota

Eric Hammer, channel maintenance manager, operations, Fountain City, Wisconsin
Joshua Hawkins, lock and dam operator, operations, Welch, Minnesota
Sydney Hines, geographer, regional planning and environment division north, St. Paul, Minnesota
Joshua Isakson, general maintenance supervisor, operations, Fountain City, Wisconsin
Daniel Morales, biologist, regulatory, Brookfield, Wisconsin

Gavin Olson, civil engineer, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota
Marcus Patterson, program analyst, operations, St. Paul, Minnesota
Aaron Pieplow, safety and occupational health manager, safety and occupational health, St. Paul, Minnesota
Hannah Rasmussen, engineering technician, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota
Thomas Reinhardt, civil engineer, engineering and construction, Hastings, Minnesota

Marianne Ronquillo-Salas, general attorney, office of counsel, St. Paul, Minnesota
Brandon Snell, natural resources specialist, operations, McGregor, Minnesota
Connor Spaeth, civil engineer, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota
Aaron Springer, natural resources specialist, operations, Crosslake, Minnesota
Joshua Stohr, forester, operations, La Crosse, Wisconsin

Angela Stone, biologist, regional planning and environment division north, Illinois City, Illinois
Alan Vorse, administrative support assistant, operations, St. Paul, Minnesota
Michael Walker, cartographer, public affairs, St. Paul, Minnesota
Helen Walz, civil engineer, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota
Shawn Weissenfluh, supervisory natural resources management specialist, operations, Grand Rapids, Minnesota

Scott Williamson, lock and dam operator, operations, Trempealeau, Wisconsin
Pa Xiong, administrative support assistant, operations, St. Paul, Minnesota
Leigh Youngblood, civil engineer, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota

NEWS & Notes

Retirements



Ray Marinan, realty specialist, retired after 28 years with the St. Paul District working his way up from a temporary position in the forestry program to a realty specialist in the management and disposal branch. During his career he deployed multiple times, including to Grand Forks, Minnesota, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to help with the clean-up of the 1997 Grand Forks Flood and Hurricane Katrina.

Congratulations



Bill Odell, engineering and construction, was promoted June 6, to Chief Warrant Officer 4 in the Army Reserves. He also graduated May 16 with a Master of Science in Construction Management from Louisiana State University.



Joel Porterfield, regional planning and environment division north, and his wife welcomed Alessia, Aug. 9. She weighed 7 pounds and 14 ounces.

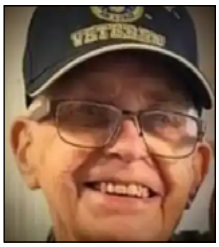
Taps



Mary Fay DeFlorian passed away Oct. 3. She worked as an administrative professional at Lock and Dam 7 in Dresbach, Wisconsin, and Lock and Dam 8 in Genoa, Wisconsin, before retiring after many years of service.



James "Jim" Greene passed away July 4. In 1973, Greene accepted a temporary position at Lock and Dam 9. He retired in 2003 as lockmaster at Lock and Dam 8 after many years of service.



Ellis "Ellie" Poquette passed away Aug. 22. He was a survey crew member in channels and harbors back in the 90s