

Photo by Stephen Baack

Col. Julie Balten, Los Angeles District commander, foreground left, joins Justin Gay, the deputy district engineer, in hosting the district's end-of-year town hall and celebration Oct. 5 that highlighted the organization's many accomplishments throughout the fiscal year.

## End-of-year town hall

BY STEPHEN BAACK  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District command team celebrated the successes, collaboration and hard work of employees, leaders and teams across the district during an Oct. 5 hybrid virtual/in-person town hall and end-of-year celebration broadcast from the district's headquarters building.

Col. Julie Balten, LA District commander, joined Justin Gay, the LA District's deputy district engineer, in leading the event, which included recognition of not only organizations and teams, but also individuals who went above and beyond to help the district and the Corps deliver the program.

Though COVID-19 health and safety precautions have loosened since the onset of the pandemic, both leaders noted how LA District employees have worked to get things done despite the remaining obstacles.

"It's important to recognize the district was able to – in a remote capacity – make our commitments and deliver our mission once again this year," Gay said. "We've come together, despite the virtual environment and any hardships we might have faced due to our locations, to deliver our nation's mission. You should be very proud of the great work you've done."

"I do know this year was challenging," Balten said, citing the fiscal environment. "That includes inflation, the cost of materials and the cost of doing business. I appreciate you working through those challenges."

This past fiscal year, the LA District executed \$535 million in work, more than \$125 million in labor and nearly \$10 million of work from other districts.

While graphs and charts do tell a story, Balten said, not all the important information they contain would be immediately apparent from an outsider looking in.

"I would like to note that we received more than \$500 million in our FY22 civil works program," Balten said. "We actually have, for '23, a carryover of more than \$300 million to execute. That doesn't even include our '23 forecasts. I think it's important to note that our program, if you see our forecasts, is still quite a bit larger. Our mission never ends, so we're going to be busy."

"The fact that we delivered more than 900 actions at \$535 million – that's a huge effort by the entire district," Gay said.

These numbers include not only sending work to other districts, but receiving it from other districts, Balten said, referring to a slide showing the labor the LA District has received from other districts to support the enterprise.

"This really highlights that we really are an enterprise-support organization and that we don't do this alone," she said. "There's a lot ['TOWN HALL' continued on Page 4](#)

## Corps' team takes third place GMiS



Photos by Stephen Baack

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' team of college students took third place in the 2022 Great Minds in STEM Zone Competition. The students, who were at the GMiS Conference preparing to jumpstart their careers in the fields of science, engineering, technology and mathematics, were recognized for their achievement during an Oct. 7 ceremony at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium. The Corps' Danielle Storey, an archaeologist with the Los Angeles District, led and worked with the students as they tackled a root-cause analysis exercise and made a presentation of their findings, all while competing with teams led by other public and private agencies that specialize in STEM-focused disciplines. The Corps participated in the rest of the conference as well, which ran from Oct. 5-8 at the Pasadena Convention Center in Pasadena, California.

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## Celebrating FY22 accomplishments, making a difference

Hello, SPL Team!

A BIG thank you goes out to every one of you for getting us across the finish line of another fiscal year.

This past fiscal year, the Los Angeles District executed \$535 million in work, more than \$125 million in labor and nearly \$10 million of work from other districts. Wow!

But numbers are only part of the picture. There are also the intangibles, like the partnerships we made and strengthened. Without those, our mission would be impossible. Like I said at the end-of-year town hall celebration, there are just not enough great things I can say about the teamwork, long hours, innovation, passion, talent and care every one of you contributed this year to help us deliver the program successfully.

There was also not enough time during the town hall to recognize every fantastic employee and accomplishment I would have liked to. If I left anyone out, it was only because we had countless successes to celebrate this year. If you're reading this, I want to say thank you for all you do.

One last note related to this topic: We've all worked so very hard and put in so many hours this year. Please remember to take time off to decompress, spend time with your families, exercise and relax. Rest is a vital part of productivity, as is staying connected to those who love and support you.



COL. JULIE A. BALTEN  
LA DISTRICT COMMANDER

If you notice you are stressed out or have an issue you feel you can't deal with on your own, please don't be afraid to reach out to your supervisor, a co-worker or use one of the many resources at your disposal, such as the Employee Assistance Program, on which your supervisor has info.

### GIVING BACK

One of the things I love most about the Corps is the many, many opportunities to make a difference. Whether it's deploying to the site of a disaster to help those in need – as some members of the Corps recently did in the wake of Hurricane Ian – or making infrastructure safer through our civil works projects, there is no shortage of ways to help someone in need.

The annual Combined Federal Campaign is yet another way you can make a difference by giving to the charity of your choice and even signing up for volunteer efforts. In case you missed it, the CFC hosted a virtual kickoff event Oct. 4 to invite all federal employees and retirees to be the face of change. Since its inception in 1961, federal employees have contributed more than \$8.6 billion to charitable causes.

With COVID-19 and natural disasters, these last couple of years have been hard on many. It is your choice whether you want to contribute to a CFC charity, but if you do, just know it's a very

good time to do so – and there are thousands of charities to choose from to help build stronger and healthier communities throughout the nation – something the Corps knows all about.

To learn more about the CFC, how to give and the many reasons why you should consider contributing, visit <https://southerncafcf.org>.

### GREAT MINDS IN STEM

Thank you for all who made it out to the 2022 Great Minds in STEM as part of the Corps' outreach and career fair efforts there! If you missed it, I highly recommend you make it to another career fair or next year's GMiS conference. Connecting with and making a difference in the lives of young people excited about careers in STEM fields is definitely one of the best, most fulfilling parts of my job.

You can learn more about our team's experience at the most recent GMiS conference, as well as the end-of-year town hall and celebration, in this issue of the NewsCastle.

Last, but not least, I want to thank you all for your continued hard work and collaboration, getting out there and building stronger relationships with our partners and continuing to deliver the program. Essays!

Col. Julie A. Balten,

Los Angeles District commander

## Around the District

"I like working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers because there are so many diverse projects."

Walter is supervising the Fort Irwin land acquisition. He served 24 years in the Navy and earned a master's degree in business administration. Walter is from St. Louis, Missouri, and has been with USACE for eight years.



Walter Davis  
Installation support supervisor





Photo by Stephen Baack

Col. Julie Balten, Los Angeles District commander, left, and Justin Gay, the deputy district engineer, host the district's end-of-year town hall and celebration Oct. 5 that highlighted the organization's many accomplishments throughout the past fiscal year.

[‘TOWN HALL’ from Page 1](#)

of connectivity across the enterprise in making sure we all can deliver our entire program.”

Not only did the district work with other Corps districts and centers to deliver the program, but it sharpened its partnerships with outside agencies, too.

During the fiscal year, the district strengthened relationships with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Indian Health Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Veterans Affairs, Food and Drug Administration, NASA, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Health and Human Services, and more, through both newly awarded contracts and existing projects across the LA District footprint.

“We are supporting so many different agencies, helping them deliver their programs, so this continues to be very exciting for us,” Balten said. “We expect more work in the future. With our program managers and our teams out there working these relationships, that’s where it’s happening, and that’s where we’re creating these partnerships – and then,

of course, delivering on that construction and delivering a great product.”

While Balten said she had hoped for more robust funding for military projects throughout the past year, the district nevertheless completed 100 contract actions and \$195 million across all military programs. And, when it comes to environmental projects and sustainment, restoration and modernization projects for military programs, Balten said the LA District still outperforms many other Corps districts. Gay also pointed out that part of their totals included the last-minute awarding of a military construction contract at Fort Irwin, California.

“What’s significant about that is there were only three minor MILCONs awarded nationwide the entire year, and two of them were in the South Pacific Division: one in Sacramento and one was this last-minute award here,” Gay said. “It just goes to show the commitment from the teams and their willingness to come together and get it done. Somehow, we always get it done.”

“If you’ve ever been to Fort Irwin, you know it’s very remote,” Balten said. “The families who live out there, the additional services

and facilities that can enrich their lives, this work will go a long way to support that.”

Balten and Gay also highlighted key accomplishments throughout the district’s diverse array of organizations, including the Operations Division, Office of Small Business, Contracting Division, Construction Division, Planning Division, Regulatory Division, Office of Counsel and more.

“Sometimes I think the Office of Counsel is like Contracting in that they’re unsung heroes, based on just the number of actions they have to review to make the year end complete, which is huge,” Balten said. “They have a small team, and they have just done a fantastic job of getting after it.”

Balten highlighted the Office of Counsel’s support to the Prado Dam Safety Modification Study and Spillway Raise Project.

“It really is a fantastic consolidation of the work that this district has done, really proving that, for us to move forward in that project, the Office of Counsel is the one that really brought everything together in a solid docu-

[‘TOWN HALL’ continued on Page 5](#)

[‘TOWN HALL’ continued from Page 4](#)

ment,” Balten said. “It was a fantastic effort that went all the way up to headquarters and was really the foundation in moving in the right direction.”

The Construction Division celebrated several notable successes, including the awarding of two multiple-award task order contracts this fiscal year: one, a \$75-million small business MATOC, and the other, a \$49.5-million unrestricted MATOC to support the Military Munitions Response Program and environmental remediation services work at Formerly Used Defense Sites, primarily in the LA District’s area of operations; however, the latter can be used throughout the South Pacific Division.

Meanwhile, the LA District’s resident office at Vandenberg Space Force Base in Santa Barbara County, California, is expanding to support the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent program, and the district’s Department of Veterans Affairs program hit key milestones this year for the new mental health in-patient and out-patient facilities, and community living center at the VA Long Beach complex.

For the Contracting Division, Gay pointed out that more than 900 actions for nearly \$400 million throughout only 365 days is a lot of work. Throughout the year, Contracting maintained green status in the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System and closed out 421 contracts.

“I can’t say enough about the good work they’ve done,” Gay said.

Other successes Balten and Gay highlighted included the Operations Division executing 100 percent of their funds for the fiscal year; Planning Division’s awarding of an environmental services indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity contract worth \$10 million and the completion of the Port of Long Beach Deep Draft Navigation Chief’s Report and Record of Decision; Real Estate Division’s negotiation and execution of utility relocation contracts in support of the Whittier Narrows Dam Safety Modification Project; Office of Small Business achieving all goals and exceeding those goals in four of their business categories: Small, Disadvantaged, Woman-owned and HUB Zone.

“This has really been about celebrating everyone on their accomplishments,” Balten said, before moving onto her individual recognitions. “I know we only hit the wavytops. There are so many more.”

Next, Balten and Gay recognized individuals by name as end-of-year heroes, whose professionalism, dedication to duty and willingness to go above and beyond helped ensure the district was able to close out the fiscal year successfully.

The two leaders wrapped up the celebration with some final thoughts.

“Congratulations on all the accomplishments,” Gay said, adding that it’s important to take time off and also to reach out to supervisors and the district for support if needed. “Let’s reset our minds and prepare for this next fiscal year. Be safe as part of the holidays. Enjoy that time with your family. Make sure you take care of your own wellness.”

“I know we continue to deliver a great program,” Balten said. “Keep up the great effort. We can’t thank you enough, and it takes all of us to work and do our part.”



USACE file photo

In this file photo, Jenn Rivo, project manager with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District’s Mega Projects Division, Department of Veterans Affairs Branch, talks to leaders from the Corps of Engineers and the Department of Veterans Affairs during a Feb. 23 site visit to construction areas at the VA San Diego Healthcare System in La Jolla, California.



Liz Fiocchi, deputy chief of the LA District's Mega Projects Division, left, speaks with a college student and potential member of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, during the 2022 Great Minds in STEM National Conference Oct. 5-8 at the Pasadena Convention Center in Southern California.

## Corps joins 2022 Great Minds in STEM Conference

STORY AND PHOTOS BY STEPHEN BAACK  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PASADENA, Calif. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers took part in the 34th annual Great Minds in STEM conference Oct. 5 – 8 at the Pasadena Convention Center, which brought together dozens of public and private organizations, agencies and companies specializing in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Professionals from the Corps' Los Angeles District, along with the South Pacific Division and other districts and centers across the enterprise, networked with, interviewed, and, in a handful of cases, offered jobs to college students looking to jumpstart their careers in STEM fields.

One of those students was Ileana Callejas, who is finishing her doctorate in environmental engineering at the University of California, Los Angeles. Callejas, who focused on water in her graduate studies, spoke at length with employees of the LA District at the event about their ongoing projects.

"I really like that they discussed the LA River ecosystem rehabilitation project," Callejas said. "I worked on a project for my own dissertation on the LA River, so that was one of the projects that excited me."

Callejas talked with subject-matter experts not only from the LA District, but from across the Corps.

"They were all very friendly, and they gave me plenty of information about their different sites," she said. "There's a lot of great things going on and a lot of big projects. I'm glad that it was a very streamlined process to provide my resume, talk to someone, get an interview and then get an offer."

"It was really exciting to see so many young, eager students," said Liz Fiocchi, deputy chief of the LA District's Mega Projects Division.

"You cannot teach people to care, and I can tell that people I spoke to have that passion and that care – and they're young and malleable, and we can train them in how we do business," Fiocchi said. "It was encouraging to see that in the new generation."

Fiocchi named Callejas as one of those caring individuals.

"Ileana is a definite win for LA and from an engineering standpoint, and for a such a complicated project," Fiocchi said. "The enterprise has never done that type of urban environmental restoration inland. She's going to be a real asset to the district."

The Corps also took part in the STEM Zone Competition, which had groups of students working with different agencies to formulate plans and presentations based on problem-solving exercises. The Corps' team, led by LA District archaeologist Danielle Storey, took third place. The students were recognized for their achievement during an Oct. 7 ceremony at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium.

Storey, an archaeologist with the Los Angeles District, led and worked with the students as they tackled a root-cause analysis exercise and made a presentation of their findings, all while competing with teams led by other public and private agencies specializing

['STEM' continued on Page 7](#)



Employees from across the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers enterprise stand with college students, who were offered positions with the Corps, Oct. 8 during the 34th annual Great Minds in STEM conference at the Pasadena Convention Center, which brought together dozens of public and private organizations, agencies and companies specializing in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Professionals from the Corps' Los Angeles District, along with the South Pacific Division and other districts and centers across the enterprise, networked with, interviewed, and, in a handful of cases, offered jobs to college students in STEM fields looking to jump-start their careers.

['STEM' continued from Page 6](#)  
in STEM-focused disciplines.

From 4 to 11:30 p.m. on their first day, each group engaged in root-cause analysis for a different case study – analyzing exactly what happened, why it happened, and what steps the organization and the people involved could have taken to prevent it. The next day,

the group presented their findings to a panel of judges. It was Storey's job to guide them through the process.

The Corps' scenario was based on a real event – in this case, the inadvertent mishandling of classified documents.

"The focus could be about how this person had access to that information and how he

could have even made that mix-up," Storey said. "It's not just about correcting this person; it's about getting to the root cause. It's making sure it doesn't happen in the future and determining what you could have done to prevent it from happening."

"I did stuff like this when I was in school," Storey added. "It gets you into a different headspace. I think when you're in college, you tend to focus a lot on what the teacher's telling you to do by trying to solve problems in an ideal world, but we all know the real world isn't always like that."

Along with recognition at the awards ceremony, the students on the teams that placed first, second and third received a small amount of scholarship funds, and, of course, bragging rights.

"I am really jazzed we placed," Storey said. "The students worked so hard."

Other conference events included seminars and a meeting between a group of Army cadets and two Corps leaders – Col. Julie Balten, LA District commander, and Col. Antoinette Gant, South Pacific Division commander.

The 35th annual GMiS Conference is scheduled for Oct. 12-14, 2023.



LEFT: Jennifer Corley from the Engineer Research and Development Center in Vicksburg, Mississippi, left, interviews a student alongside Van Crisostomo with the Los Angeles District Oct. 8 during the GMiS National Conference at the Pasadena Convention Center in California.

# MCAS MIRAMAR AIR SHOW



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' DTOS team pose with the Emergency Command and Control Vehicle Sept. 25 at MCAS Miramar near San Diego. From left are Baron Arakawa, Emergency Operations Branch; Capt. Donnell Smith, San Diego Resident Office; and Sergio Valdovinos, LA District Operations Branch.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SAN DIEGO – During a recent air show at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego, hundreds of visitors toured one of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Emergency Command and Control Vehicles, or ECCVs.

The vehicle, one of just 15 in the Corps'

inventory, deploys in the event of man-made and natural disasters. This particular ECCV is one of only two located on the West Coast.

A two-man team drives the vehicle to the needed location during an emergency deployment, where it can then be set up in 15 minutes and allows workspace for up to 11 users simultaneously. Together, the team

and the equipment, make up what is known as a Deployable Tactical Operations System, or DTOS.

During the Sept. 25 air show, the vehicle sat at the center of the airfield tarmac, shadowed only by the likes of other nearby military aircraft, like a KC-130J Hercules Tanker – an aircraft that allows for in-flight refueling, and an MV-22 Osprey – a multi-mission, tiltrotor military aircraft.

The ideal location brought in additional visitors to the Corps' vehicle and recruitment booth, including those watching the nearby precision landings of the U.S. Army

[‘AIR SHOW’ continued on Page 13](#)

LEFT: An Air Force C-17 Globemaster III takes off Sept. 25 at the 2022 Marine Corps Air Station Miramar Air Show near San Diego. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District's DTOS team hosted a static display during the fun with an Emergency Command and Control Vehicle, drawing hundreds of visitors.



A Soldier of the Golden Knights parachute unit lands on the X at Marine Air Station Miramar Sept. 25 near San Diego, Calif. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District's Deployable Tactical Operations System at the landing zone is in the background.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The CH-53E Super Stallion heavy-lift helicopter, the F-22 and the F-35 were just a few of the aircraft that came out for this year's air show at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego. The LA District's DTOS team hosted a static display during the fun Sept. 25 with their Emergency Command and Control Vehicle.



# Corps takes part in American Indian Science and Engineering Society national conference

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ROBERT DEDEAUX  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PALM SPRINGS, California – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was among several agencies recruiting potential employees during the American Indian Science and Engineering Society National Conference Oct. 7 at the Palm Springs Convention Center in California.

The AISES National Conference is the largest college and career fair in the U.S. for Indigenous students and professionals in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics field.

“The Corps is here today to support STEM, recruit the best future engineers from a more diverse background and promote inclusion,” said Kimberley Oldham, a senior hydropower program manager with Southwestern Division.

During the Conference, the Corps conducted the Tribal Partnerships for Water Resource Projects presentation. More than 50 visitors attended the informational presentation, which discussed the Tribal Partnership Program, or TPP. The TPP provides authority for the Corps to investigate water-related planning activities related to the study, design and construction of water resources development projects located on tribal lands.

“I hope through this conference we increase our presence in native communities



Koi Quiver, right, a mechanical engineer major at Northern Arizona University, talks with Jeremy Decker, an archeologist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, during the American Indian Science and Engineering Society National Conference Oct. 7 in Palm Springs, California. Decker is a post-graduate student of Northern Arizona University class of 2007.

and develop better partnerships with tribal governments,” said Oldham, a Muscogee Creek Yuchi Indigenous American. “It’s also a great opportunity to network with other Native Americans within the Corps. This is the first time we had six Indigenous Corps employees working at the event.”

More than 60 participants visited the Corps’ booth to discuss engineering projects and civil works programs, while also applying for available positions. The three-day conference attracted about 2,000 members and attendees. The conference featured professional development discussions, networking opportunities, student presentations, a career fair, cultural events and other activities.

“I was inspired that we had so many American Indigenous employees from around the Corps present at the event,” said Corina Zhang, a senior resident engineer with Omaha District. “It was a great opportunity to see our origination’s commitment to American Indigenous communities.”

Omaha District works with 53 federally recognized American Indigenous tribes. The

[‘AISES’ continued on Page 11](#)

LEFT: Grace Kelly, right, shakes hands with Shyreese Moncivais, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers talent acquisition specialist, during the American Indian Science and Engineering Society National Conference Oct. 7 in Palm Springs, California. Kelly, a civil engineering major at Cornell, discussed engineering career possibilities with Corps’ representatives from Northwestern Division and South Pacific Division.



[‘AISES’ continued from Page 10](#)

district is the largest by landmass, spanning an area from Wisconsin to Montana.

“It was one of the best career fairs I’ve attended,” Zhang said. “As a civil engineering body, it was important to represent how the Corps supports and helps the nation. I felt like there were many interested and brilliant candidates with diverse skill sets. I was energized being able to share my experience and expertise with future engineers and scientist.”

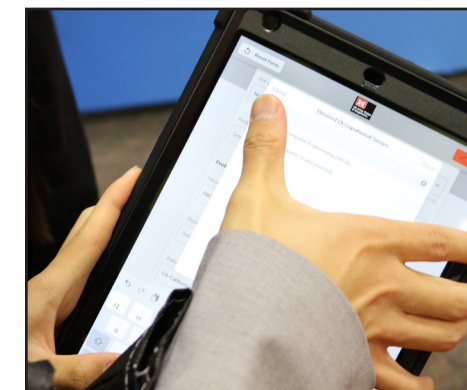
At the conclusion of the college and career fair, Omaha District awarded a letter of intent to hire to Madison Phelps, a civil engineer major from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. Like many attendees, Phelps traveled to the event to support AISES, network among American Indigenous professionals and explore career opportunities. She said she has an interest in the Corps’ Emergency Management and Response program.

“As an engineer, I would like to make a positive impact in local communities,” Phelps said, before the presentation. “I’m very excited to see how I can contribute to the Corps’ rapid response team.”

The Corps’ mission is to provide engineering solutions to the nation’s toughest challenges. The organization employs more than 32,000 people worldwide.

The Corps’ South Pacific and Northwestern divisions presented a total of three letters of intent to hire during the conference. The Corps’ Civilian Personnel Advisory Center also was present at the event to assist and support the selection process.

For more information about U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ careers, visit [www.usace.army.mil/careers](http://www.usace.army.mil/careers).



Albuquerque District Hydrology and Hydraulic Branch Chief Stephen Scissions, left, helps attendee Cline Cannon with registration during the American Indian Science and Engineering Society National Conference Oct. 7 at the Palm Springs Convention Center in California. Cannon, an earth and science major at Cornell, came to the Corps booth to discuss career opportunities in coastal management.



(ABOVE) Beth Coffey, Northwestern Division program director, right, and Corina Zhang, an Omaha senior resident engineer, left, present a letter of intent to Madison Phelps, a civil engineer major from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, during the American Indian Science and Engineering Society National Conference Oct. 7 at the Palm Springs Convention Center in California. (LEFT) More than 60 participants expressed desire for employment through digital registration at Corps’ booth during the AISES National Conference. The conference hosted approximately 2,000 members, sponsors and visitors.

# National Public Lands Day

PHOTOS BY STEPHEN BAACK  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Twenty-five volunteers made it out to the 2022 Los Angeles District's National Public Lands Day cleanup event Sept. 24 at Santa Fe Dam in Irwindale, California. The LA District Park Rangers led the effort, which resulted in the collection of roughly three tons of trash along the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area bicycle and pedestrian paths.

RIGHT: A volunteer transports debris to a consolidated site for disposal during National Public Lands Day at Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area.

BELOW: Robert Moreno, LA District senior park ranger, lifts bags of trash into a Corps heavy-duty pickup truck.



Trevor Snyder, a project manager with the Los Angeles District's Operations Division, finishes loading up a heap of debris collected by volunteers alongside the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area bicycle and pedestrian paths Sept. 24 in Irwindale, California. The collection and removal of trash and debris was part of the 2022 National Public Lands Day volunteer event.



Photo by Dawn Lyn

Members of the Los Angeles District's Public Affairs Team stand together with members of the district's Emergency Management Team while performing outreach Sept. 25 during the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar Air Show near San Diego. From left to right: John Reese, senior public affairs specialist; Stephen Baack, public affairs specialist; Capt. Donnell Smith, San Diego Resident Office; Dena O'Dell, public affairs chief; Sergio Valdovinos, LA District Operations Branch; and Baron Arakawa, Emergency Operations Branch.

## ['AIR SHOW' continued from Page 8](#)

Golden Knights parachute team. Also parked nearby were a B-52H Stratofortress and C-5M Super Galaxy, drawing in long lines of attendees waiting to get a glimpse inside the two massive aircraft.

### RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

In addition to providing tours of the ECCV, several members of the Corps' Los Angeles team spoke with air show attendees about the mission and careers with the Corps. Those representing the LA District were Capt. Donnell Smith, project engineer with the LA District's San Diego Resident Office; Baron Arakawa, a civil engineer with the Emergency Operations Branch; Sergio Valdovinos, engineering equipment operator leader with the LA District's Operations Branch, as well as Dena O'Dell, John Reese and Stephen Baack with the LA District's Public Affairs office.

Many of the visitors to the Corps' booth and ECCV included those who previously served in the Army or Army engineer fields; high school and college students interested in engineering as a career; and parents and small children, who picked up give-away bags filled with fun Safety goodies and Bob-

ber the Water Safety Dog activity books.

A few guests recovered from the hot, sunny day by spending a few minutes inside the ECCV, listening to the team explain the many functions of the vehicle and how the Corps uses it during emergencies.

The purpose of bringing the emergency vehicle to the air show was to represent "the civilian side of the Army, specifically the emergency management aspect and our role in the federal response to disasters, but overall showcasing the variety of the Corps of Engineers' work to the general public," Arakawa explained.

One example Arakawa referenced of how the vehicle support disasters in California was during the Santa Barbara Debris Mission in January 2018. The debris slide took the lives of 23 people in the Montecito area. The Corps' mission was to clear out 11 of the county's debris basins and channels.

The vehicle served as the Corps' command center during the mission, he said.

The DTOS team provides critical communications in the event of significant man-made or natural disasters in the U.S., the District of Columbia, and the territories of the U.S.

ECCV drivers are often tasked to deploy to another district to support emergen-

cy operations. Valdovinos was deployed to Puerto Rico in 2017 to support the DTOS mission following Hurricane Maria.

"There have been multiple occasions where our DTOS team was placed on alert to be prepared to deploy if needed following a disaster that occurred in various regions of the country," Arakawa said. "There also have been occasions where our ECCV was driven out of state to the areas of responsibility of other Corps of Engineers' districts, to be staged near a location where a hurricane was expected to hit, in anticipation that a DTOS would be needed in the impacted areas immediately."

Fortunately, on those deployments, the impacts of the hurricanes weren't as severe as anticipated, so the DTOS wasn't used.

### AIR SHOW RETURNS AFTER COVID-19 HIATUS

This was the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic that the air show returned to the San Diego area. It is deemed one of the military's biggest recruitment events, bringing in about 500,000 visitors over a three-day period. In addition to numerous military static displays and recruitment booths, a featured highlight of the air show was an air performance by the U.S. Navy Blue Angels.



Jose Sanchez, deputy of research and development for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, right, speaks to college students at the Great Minds in STEM National Conference Oct. 7 in Pasadena, California. At left is South Pacific Division commander Col. Antoinette Gant.

## GMiS seminar offers students path to joining Corps

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOHN REESE  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PASADENA, California — What does it take to become an intern with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers?

That was the first question posed to a seminar of potential employees by Jose Sanchez, deputy of research and development for the Corps, at the Great Minds in STEM National Conference Oct. 7 in Pasadena, California. About 50 college students and interested parties chose the Corps' seminar to look into Army internships versus the major corporations simultaneously conducted their own recruiting.

Sanchez' civilian grade as a member of the Senior Executive Service is equivalent to the rank of a brigadier general. Sanchez explained how the Corps works and how it's different from other parts of the Army. The bottom line was the Corps is hiring smart, new interns to cope with the many infrastructure and military projects.

"We're hiring — and like crazy," Sanchez said. "I've been with the Army 27 years, and I've never seen the requirements we have right now for engineers."

Sanchez added the Corps is also seeking new professionals in varied career fields, such as psychologists.

"We want to make sure we bring the best and brightest. This is a really difficult mission that we have, and if you walk around any of our buildings, any of our places that we go, the people you interact with are amazing," Sanchez said. "Smart, talented, driven — which is probably the number one thing we look for — this drive to succeed."

In her presentation, Corps South Pacific Division commander Col. Antoinette Gant emphasized to the students that they do not have to join the Army to be part of the approximately 38,000-strong Corps workforce.

"I just had a conversation with a few people, and one of the things they said to me was that, 'I'm a little leery about the Corps of Engineers,' and I asked why. 'Because I don't want to serve in the military.'"

Gant explained how the majority of personnel working on "this side of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers" are civilians.

Some of the students were ROTC cadets, who said they didn't want to go into active-duty service, looking instead to join the U.S. Army Reserve or National Guard, while also looking for the opportunity to go into civilian work. Gant pointed out the opportunity to do both as a member of the Corps.

Recent graduates now working for the

Corps detailed their personal experiences.

One of them was 2019 graduate and current U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center research civil engineer Margarita Ordaz, who attended a past conference.

At that conference, she met Maj. Gen. Mark Toy and told him what she wanted to do for her career. Toy advised her she could become a scientist for the Corps and how she could contribute if she joined. She said 'yes' and is now a research scientist in the Airfields and Pavement Branch.

One of her duties is ensuring airfields are up-to-date and determining what fixes are necessary. She spoke about how she was in the students' position a couple years back and was anxious about interviewing for a Corps internship. She then explained how she and her colleagues solve problems.

"In all of these different lives, they work on different areas of expertise, and we all come together to solve challenging problems that the military faces, and, basically, provide them with solutions," Ordaz explained about her job at ERDC.

Toy, although now retired from the Army, was in attendance at GMiS.

['SEMINAR' continued on Page 15](#)

['SEMINAR' continued from Page 14](#)

"This is just one example of coming to Great Minds in STEM and what it can actually offer for you," Gant said, adding, "And then you get to come back and talk about what it is that you do."

Los Angeles District commander Col. Julie Balten pointed out the vast expanse that makes up the district and division, describing how the highest, lowest and hottest places in the country are all in the western U.S. She also noted the number of ports, channels and dams, as well as projects for military communities within the district. Students who join the Corps can expect making direct contributions to community safety through engineering.

"We have such a diverse environment that we live and work in," Balten said. "That's the one thing we look forward to — bold solutions in order to provide those for our communities. It's something to get really passionate about."

Balten added to Gant's earlier comment about the types of career fields, pointing out the need for professional, technical and administrative opportunities, including park rangers, throughout the Corps.

"We don't need just engineers. We need architects, scientists, technicians, project managers, people managers, representatives — we have HR, we need finance personnel,



From left, South Pacific Division commander Col. (promotable) Antoinette Gant; retired Maj. Gen. Mark Toy; LA District commander Col. Julie Balten; and Jose Sanchez, deputy of research and development for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, pose for a photo at the Great Minds in STEM National Conference Oct. 7 in Pasadena, California.

contracting officers, construction — if you like to be out on construction projects, we have those opportunities, too," Balten said. "You can run the gamut."

"That's why we love our Department of the Army internship program because when you do an internship program with us, we like to move you around," Balten said. "When you come to us in a two-year program, we're go-

ing to give you a little taste of everything ... we are very proud of our diversity. We feel that diversity is our strength."

Most of the students at the Corps' seminar remained after the presentation to ask more questions from the senior Corps leaders and learn how to submit their resumes.

The four-day GMiS National Conference concluded Oct. 8.





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