



# SPN SURVEYOR

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Winter 2021

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## Waterway receives facelift

*A look back at Petaluma River dredging and other top stories from 2020*



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# COMMANDER'S CORNER

## District takes on the unprecedented challenges of 2020

By Lt. Col. John D. Cunningham  
San Francisco District Commander

2020 was an extraordinarily tough year on so many levels, but through some really immense challenges this District showed its resiliency at every turn. I cannot thank this staff enough for their steadfast commitment to service through all the bumps of this past year and finding ways to get the job done no matter the odds.

This issue of SPN Surveyor highlights the many accomplishments and milestones this District met despite a global pandemic that shifted completely how we operate and do business. In the end, we were able to meet our obligations to this great Nation and execute a staggering \$126 million of our Civil Works mission. We fiscally closed seven projects in 2020 and returned nearly \$3.5 million to our non-Federal partners in the process.

In Eureka, we kicked off construction for the Humboldt Harbor Jetty Repair Project with an Aug. 18 ceremony. These jetties were first authorized in 1881 and constructed in 1899, so they represent some of the District's earliest projects. They take a huge beating from storms, severe wave action and unusual high tides. Through it all, they have stood the test of time for well



over a century. The project will repair the North and South Jetties; combined they are approximately 15,400 linear feet in length. Rock is being delivered from a nearby quarry for placement as part of the repairs. It's a testament to this staff that we can continue to deliver on our commitments in support of local communities.

In nearby Petaluma, we completed a much anticipated dredging project of the Petaluma River reconnecting a vibrant downtown community with its beloved waterway. More than 150,000 cubic yards of mud and silt were removed from the channel clearing the way for increased commercial and recreational vessel traffic. With the diligence of our contract specialists, project managers and construction specialists, this District ensured the project was completed safely, on budget and ahead of schedule. Kudos to everyone involved in making this happen. I was proud to represent the District at the ribbon-cutting in September, alongside our local partners.

But these examples only tell a fraction of the story. In 2020, our Regulatory Division processed and issued an astounding 465 nationwide permits and 279 general permits. And our two navigational workhorses, M/V Raccoon (read about its 80-year history of service on page 4) and M/V Dillard, removed more than 800 tons of hazardous debris from our local waterways ensuring safe passage for our maritime communities.

Again, I cannot overemphasize how proud I am to be a part of this team. Thank You for your service during this extremely tumultuous year, and best wishes for a fresh start in a safe and prosperous 2021! Essays!

### SPN SURVEYOR

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## Fall releases for Coho completed

By Brandon Beach  
District Public Affairs

Fish biologists from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District wrapped up their fall release schedule for hatchery-raised Coho salmon in November.

More than 300,000 fingerlings were placed in five different net pens across the Dry Creek Watershed. The goal of these net pens, designed and built by partner agency Sonoma Water, is to "let the fish acclimate for a week before

we open up the cage and let them leave on their own," said Ben White, SPN fisheries biologist, who led the release efforts.

The fish were raised in tanks at the Mike Dillabough Russian River Coho Salmon Conservation Hatchery at Lake Sonoma.



The biologists hiked the salmon in backpack coolers releasing the final 2,000 fingerlings on Nov. 10. A percentage of the release population was PIT-tagged, "so we can monitor them leaving the creek system and eventually returning as adults," said White.

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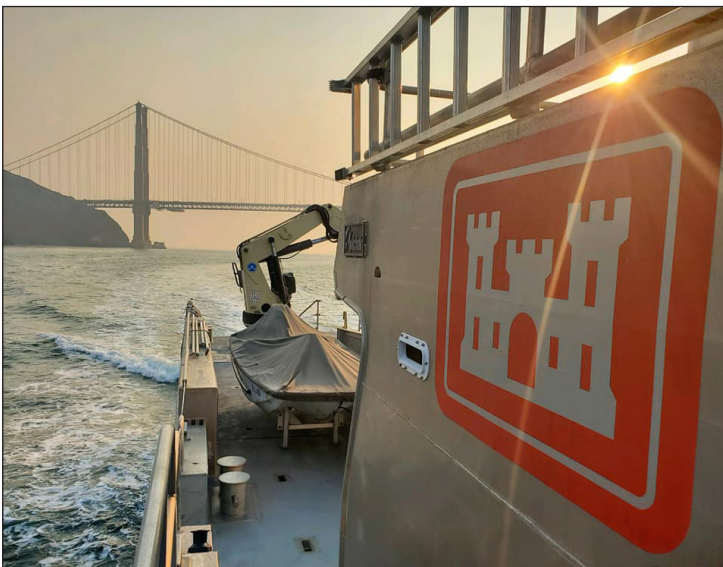
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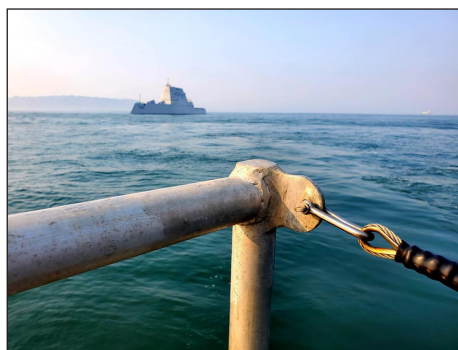
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### 2020 San Francisco Fleet Week and the Parade of Ships



Crewmembers of the M/V Dillard got an early start Oct. 2 to join an honor sail officially launching the 2020 Fleet Week. The highlight of the event was the arrival of the USS Michael Monsoor, a U.S. Navy Destroyer, as it passed under the Golden Gate Bridge.



### On the cover



The Petaluma River received a facelift in 2020 as the San Francisco District completed a two-month dredging project there in October. More than 150,00 cubic yards of mud and silt were removed from the channel by the Sandpiper, an all-electric cutter-head suction dredge owned and operated by San Diego-based Pacific Dredge & Construction. (Photos by Brandon Beach)

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### District News

#### Deputy commander promoted in ceremony



San Francisco District Commander Lt. Col. John Cunningham administers the oath of office to newly-promoted Lt. Col. Stephanie Radford on Jan. 5.

By Brandon Beach  
District Public Affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District officially honored Lt. Col. Stephanie Radford on her promotion to lieutenant colonel during a frocking ceremony Jan. 5 at the Phillip Burton Federal Building in San Francisco.

Radford has been the district's deputy commander since June 2019 but begins her transition to her next duty assignment as deputy commander of the USACE Transatlantic Division in Kuwait.

"Stephanie is a consummate leader and soldier," said Cunningham. "She's got incredible energy, focus and drive. I know all of you who have crossed paths with her over her career are well aware of that."

The ceremony was broadcast virtually via Webex to friends, family and colleagues spanning Radford's 17-year military career. She is a graduate of West Point and has served one tour in Iraq as the lead civil designer on several construction projects.

"I am where I am because of my friends [and] my family. Everybody I've worked with has been a great teammate," said Radford. "You've helped develop me and I appreciate that."

Presiding over the ceremony was Cunningham and Chris Schooley, the district's new civilian deputy commander, who read the official orders.

# 80 YEARS ON GUARD

## M/V Raccoon captain reflects on vessel's history

By Michael Roach  
District Public Affairs Office

For 80 years, the M/V Raccoon has dutifully traversed the waters of the San Francisco Bay upholding the hazard to navigation mission of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District.

Built by the Mare Island Navy Yard in Vallejo, Calif., and originally launched on Nov. 1, 1940, the boat was designated the YSD-14 and used by the U.S. Navy as a seaplane wrecking derrick during World War II. It is unknown when the boat was stricken from the naval register, but it was registered to USACE in 1960 with its new name moniker of Raccoon and given new life as a debris removal vessel, according to navsource.org.

Clearing the way for ferries, private vessels and cargo ships accessing some of the nation's most critical ports, the Raccoon has spent its career surrounded by an ever-changing world. When the ship first entered the waters with its new mission, the San Francisco Bay was a largely different landscape. The Golden Gate Bridge still shined with lead paint. Alcatraz would still be used as a federal penitentiary for another three years. It would be another 18 years before the Manhattanizing of the namesake's city financial district dotted the air with skyscrapers.

Much like the bay area itself, the Raccoon has gone through its own transformations. Now designated as a drift collection vessel, the Raccoon has been specifically designed to remove large flotsam and jetsam hazards from the bay's shipping lanes. The bow of the boat features a 20-foot wide removable chain net that lifts debris on deck when collecting and overboard when unloading. Three of these nets can be filled before the Raccoon and its crew must return to their facility in



All photos by Beach

Crewmembers from the M/V Raccoon, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District vessel based in Sausalito, Calif., patrol the waters along the San Francisco Waterfront for any navigational hazards.

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*"The guys are on the bow and its 40 degrees out and they're soaking wet. It can be like that."*

**Joe McCormick**  
M/V Raccoon Captain

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Sausalito, Calif., to offload. In 2006, the steel on the boat was completely replaced after approximately 60 years of wear, making the vessel theoretically viable until 2066. This vitality is not lost on the organization which has ensured that the vessel will receive three trips to the shipyard for maintenance every five years and is regularly outfitted with equipment that is designed for durability and dependability, according to Joe McCormick, captain of the M/V Raccoon.



**Captain Joe McCormick uses the boat's radio in this Jan. 26, 2010 photo taken onboard the Raccoon.**

The history of the Raccoon and the emphasis put on the hazard removal program by USACE San Francisco was solidified by a little-known moment in history. In June of 1942, Navy Admiral Chester Nimitz, who had recently been appointed the

Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, was traveling from Hawaii to Washington D.C. Nimitz's trip was abruptly interrupted by tragedy while landing in the San Francisco Bay. The admiral's seaplane struck floating debris, ripping open the bottom of the aircraft and capsizing it. During the event, the pilot of the plane was killed, and the hazard removal program was born of obvious necessity.

The chief of engineers directed the Corps to begin a hazard collection program in the San Francisco Bay following the accident. During WWII, this involved a cumbersome use of tugboats crewed by both civilian and U.S. Navy Sailors who had to tow debris to disposal sites. The fact that this mission would ultimately fall to USACE should have been no surprise as the organization had a long history of performing

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## Raccoon continued

similar tasks.

Considering that the Raccoon and its crew not only traverse the San Francisco Bay, but tributaries like the Stockton and Sacramento Rivers as well, a straight line can be drawn to the vessel's steamboat-era predecessor — the snag boat. During that time, the greatest danger when traveling navigable rivers were referred to as snags, or rather trees that had fallen into the river as a result of land erosion. Sitting just beneath the surface, these giant logs could easily puncture the hull of a boat. In 1824, USACE began their mission of removing these snags. Using twin-hulled boats that featured an iron-sheathed ramming beam, these boats would ram a snag and then pull it onboard with a windlass where it would be cut up into small pieces and tossed overboard to float harmlessly down river.

The crew of the Raccoon draws on this lineage with what they pull out of the water. McCormick recalls pulling a 150-foot tree with an eight-foot diameter trunk from the bay as one of the more memorable hazards. Other items of note include dead whales, an antique skiff and entire houseboat foundations.

"I was really taken under the wing by Oscar McGregor and as I did that, I grew in confidence level," McCormick said.

McCormick has been the captain of the Raccoon for decades and worked on former USACE San Francisco District vessels such as the Grizzly, and the Raccoon's old counterpart the Coyote. McCormick credits a lot of his experience to the tutelage he received from the Raccoon's previous captain Douglas Oscar McGregor. McGregor ran the Raccoon for approximately 25 years, beginning in 1971, according to McCormick.

McCormick's understanding of how the hazard removal mission has changed over time is due in large part to the education he was given by his predecessors.

"So, 1950s what was going on was a lot of landfill in



*Since 1960, the West Coast-based M/V Raccoon has been tasked with collecting and removed hazardous debris.*

the bay, right?," McCormick said. "Well when you have landfill, they're using not only dirt and rock and sand, but everything they can to make land in the bay—real estate. They're throwing in wood timbers, trees, everything they can

ings, to avoid this fate, and the transition serves as an allegory to how the communities of the bay area have adapted to arguably more responsible approaches toward their relationship with the

the Grizzly all working 12-hour days and seven days a week. There were tides that had gone three or

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*The Raccoon can't visually inspect the enormity of the Bay itself. For help, the crew relies on a network of community partners.*

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throw in there. So, it was really bad in the 1950s ... So back in the 60s, 70s and even 80s the average amount of debris they were hauling out of the bay per year with two boats like the Raccoon, or the Raccoon and the Coyote, back then they were pulling out of the bay 5,000 tons a year."

As older piers become abandoned or neglected, their antiquated wooden structures give out during large storm years and pieces find their way to the debris fields of the bay. Modern piers are built with concrete pil-

waterways.

These large storm years promise loads of work for the crew of the Raccoon, none more notable than a series of storms from the late '90s, according to McCormick.

"Nineteen ninety-six to '97 was El Nino and we were in the bay for let's see, seven 12-hour days a week for four months straight," McCormick said. "We had the Coyote back then, so we had the Raccoon, the Coyote and

four feet over norm, waves were 50 feet up. There were times when we couldn't even get out because the storm was so bad. We were eating our lunch right in the channel as we went out in the channel because it was the only clean part



*Raccoon crewmembers gather debris using the boat's powerful hydraulic crane.*

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*The San Francisco District held a construction kick-off ceremony in Eureka, Calif., Aug. 18, with remarks from District Commander Lt. Col. John Cunningham, right, and SPN Project Manager Peter Mull, pictured in a blue cap.*

# STANDING THE TEST OF TIME

## District updates century-old Lost Coast jetties

Story & photos by Brandon Beach  
District Public Affairs Office

Construction for the \$22-million Humboldt Jetty Repair Project got underway last summer in Eureka, Calif., managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District. The project aims to repair the North and South jetties which together play an important role in the safe navigation into Humboldt Bay. Combined they are 15,400 linear feet in length.

"It's really powerful here, so this is impressive to me the design work and the way the project delivery team came together to get something that's technically feasible and that's going to stand the test of time," said SPN Commander Lt. Col. John Cunningham, during his remarks at the official construction kick-off ceremony Aug. 18. Also marking the milestone were Congressman Jared Huffman

(CA-2), SPN Project Manager Peter Mull and Humboldt Bay Harbor Commissioner Stephen Kullman.

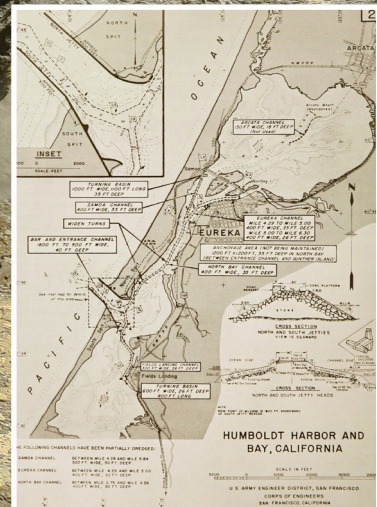
Historically, the jetties were first authorized in 1881 and constructed in 1899, so they represent some of the San Francisco District's earliest projects.

They take a huge beating from storms, severe wave action and unusual high tides. Through it all, they have stood the test of time for well over a century. Additional rocks are being delivered from a nearby quarry for placement as part of the repairs.

"Early pioneers and mariners of these tempestuous waters marveled at the power and fury of the waves that pound these shores, often in terror for their lives as they sought safe harbor in Humboldt Bay," said Mull. "These structures hold a special place in the early history and settlement of California and represent an impressive achievement in coastal engineering."



*Rocks are being delivered to the project site from a nearby quarry, pictured left, for placement as part of the repairs. The jetties were first authorized in 1881 and constructed in 1899 and represent some of the San Francisco District's earliest projects.*



# DISASTER RESPONSE

## Meet SPN's new infrastructure assessment team

By Michael Roach

District Public Affairs Office

In the wake of natural disasters, decisions must be made about what can be salvaged and what was lost. For members of the San Francisco District's Infrastructure Assessment (IA) Team—that's the job.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' IA teams work in tandem with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to triage the infrastructure of disaster-stricken communities so that responders and local personnel can begin to move toward normalcy. IA team members carry three tags which are analogous to a traffic light. The red, green and yellow markers indicate the loss, survival or salvageability of structures, respectively.

"We often times work with FEMA, or local and state governments to get a handle on how big of a response is needed, because infrastructure assessment is usually one of the first steps," said Jason Emmons, a physical scientist with the San Francisco District and the IA team lead.



Emmons

The team will first start with critical items like hospitals and schools before moving into commercial and residential properties for assessment. From there a process which stresses common sense and safety takes them

building by building.

"It means you start with an inspection around the perimeter of the building you're looking for any obvious signs of damage, anything that can impair the infrastructure of that building," Emmons said. "Once we have the perimeter done, we will go inside if it looks safe, and we'll see what further damage [is] inside. It's a bit of an art at some level, because you're really looking at what the likelihood is of this building having a collapse or presenting a danger."

Future issues such as mold initiate a yellow tag that allows people to retrieve valuables but not return to a structure permanently until issues are resolved. Conversely, green and red tags fill their traditional stop and go roles.

Emmons took the helm of the San Francisco District's first IA team this year, coordinating with district experts to build a roster that could handle the incalculable variables of natural disasters. It is the first time that the district has ever stood up its own team.



Beach

*A infrastructure assessment volunteer from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers surveys storm damage at Rockaway Beach, N.Y., following Hurricane Sandy which devastated the region in 2012.*

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*"It's a bit of an art at some level, because you're really looking at what the likelihood is of this building having a collapse or presenting a danger."*

**Jason Emmons**  
District IA Team Lead

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"It was kind of a dash in order to recruit our final members and have a final team ... a full roster," Emmons said. "It took a bit of flexibility in order to ask members 'hey we originally recruited you for this, but in order to make the team a full roster, are you able to fulfill a different role?'"

Emmons first experience with emergency management came with the Camp Fire in Paradise, Calif., an event that struck close to home for the Yuba City, Calif., native.

"I was fortunate, I was able to do a couple months of a deployment, kind of getting my feet wet with emergency man-

agement," Emmons said. "They actually placed trailers in Yuba City, my heart was in it for sure."

Building the team meant not only procuring all the equipment that they would need in the event of a deployment but making sure they had a diverse skillset as well.

"A lot of the team is engineers and structural engineers especially are required for training officer and subject matter expert [roles]," Emmons said. "But outside of that we have a variety of different folks from the Corps who are working."

Recently, the team has deployed its first engineer in support of a major disaster. The San Francisco District's new IA team has yet to deploy to a disaster in full, but in August, they were able to send their first team member to southern Louisiana in the wake of Hurricane Laura.

Hurricane Laura was a Category 4 Atlantic hurricane, which made landfall on Aug. 27, in Cameron, La. By Aug. 28, President Trump had declared a federal disaster and on Aug. 29 Seattle's IA team was deployed to the disaster.

Tony Candotti, a supervisory civil engineer with operations and technical support office, San Francisco District, spent 25 days deployed as a supplement to the Seattle Dis-

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## IA Team continued

trict's IA team. It marked his first deployment as a member of any IA team and his first deployment since coming to the San Francisco District.

"I've got a lot of experience in let's say forensic engineering – looking at damage of infrastructure—so I thought I'd be a good asset, and it turned out to be that way," Candotti said. "You know the learning curve was steep, but I thoroughly enjoyed it."

Candotti's expertise made him a natural choice for selection by the Seattle team. However, he credits members of that team as well as partners from FEMA as having mentored him during his initial experience.

"I did the technical side of it, I hit the ground running there," Candotti said before describing the bureaucracy and paperwork inherent in the process as his only stutter-step.

As members of the relief effort, Candotti and his colleagues were careful not to occupy accommodations that could be used by locals seeking refuge. This meant commuting multiple hours a day to and from their area of operations.

"Very intense, long days and a lot of distance covered," Candotti said, speaking about the nature of the workdays common during the deployment. Most of the work revolved around performing inspections. Some major highlights included water treatment plants, wastewater facilities, a hospital and a firehouse. Compounding the challeng-



Michael Glasch, USACE Omaha District

*SPN's Tony Candotti examines the damage to a fire station in Cameron, La., as part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers response to Hurricane Laura, which made landfall on Aug. 27, 2020.*

es of traveling large distances was the fact that the team didn't know the area very well.

While preparedness is always a factor, some disasters lend themselves more handily to preparation than others. For instance, hurricanes give the teams an opportunity to coordinate with other agencies and plan

necessary deployments before or immediately following landfall. In any case, the impact of the work is something that the team members consistently circle back to. "We have a number of disasters like hurricane

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## Raccoon continued

of the bay. They had to shut down traffic to ferry boats at one point. [Then] they mandated that ferry boats were at half throttle, and they actually restricted or stopped shipping up the delta because what was happening was that ship wakes were destroying the levees."

Before he gets to work, McCormick is thinking about where the debris is going to be. He bases his expectations on recent events, weather patterns and his experience with the waterways.

"A couple of days ago the wind was blowing this direction and the tides were doing this," McCormick said, intersecting his hands to show the connection. "A lot of times when we have a big storm event that comes through

and knocks a lot off of the banks and out of the rivers, and maybe breaks up some piers; that's all out there that next day but it doesn't come together in the bay and float and really show itself for anywhere from two to seven days. Now it's really kind of ironic, a lot of new people don't realize that you have to wait for it to gather and kind of float into the debris rifts and out into the channels because that is where we get a lot of visual spotting."

The Raccoon can't visually inspect the enormity of the San Francisco Bay by itself. For help, the crew relies on a network of community partners. The crew of the Raccoon is in constant contact with the U.S. Coast Guard, with whom they coordinate efforts regularly. They also get a lot of calls and

intel from ferry boat captains out of Vallejo, Calif. This network of seafarers coupled with advancements in communication increases the efficiency of the whole operation, according to McCormick.

"We used to get faxes. They would fill out a form, and they would fax it in," McCormick said. "I would walk in at 6 a.m., get my fax and I'd be on the boat in 15 minutes having coffee with the guys and we'd be on our way. That was every day with the Raccoon, but now with the Dillard, we're doing every other day. It gives us structure and a chance to maintain the vessels and do what we need to do."

While the importance of the mission has never changed and hazard removal with the Raccoon is far more advanced than it was with simple tug-

boats in WWII, the tumult of the workdays can be as varied as that of the bay itself, according to McCormick.

"Some of the best days out there, and a lot of times this happens when we have media on board, or even the colonel out there," McCormick said, referring to the San Francisco District commander. "Like a fall or spring day, everything is glass, beautiful day out there and we have a few calls and we pick them up successfully and we come in. That is one of the scenarios that I would say is a real pleasant day. But come on out in January or February when it's storming out here and we've got 10 calls coming in on three radios and the phone is ringing. The guys are on the bow and its 40 degrees out and they're soaking wet. It can be like that."

# EMPLOYEE PROFILE

## You know what's cool? Safety and following the rules

By Michael Roach

District Public Affairs Office

“Masks save lives, wear a mask, social distance, and if you’re sick stay home,” said Gregory “Tony” McCoy, a safety and occupational health specialist for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District.

In 2020, McCoy has become a mainstay in the email inbox of employees across the San Francisco District. His sometimes-daily updates help employees make sense of the cacophony of information that has been unleashed with the COVID-19 pandemic, and how it all affects them professionally.

McCoy is right at home in the San Francisco district, having grown up in San Jose. He attended San Francisco State University as a liberal arts major with a minor in animation and enlisted in the Army Reserves where he became a first sergeant.

“I was an army reservist at an engineering unit out at Mare Island in Vallejo,” McCoy said.

When a sergeant major informed him of an opportunity with USACE, McCoy took the chance and came onboard the San Francisco District as a green suiter.

“I’m a native up here, so that’s been one of the coolest things about getting the position ... the fact that I could be working with the crew that helped protect the water resource in my hometown,” McCoy said. The transition from uniform to civilian clothes was eased by the nature of the work and how well the former position supported the latter.

Experiences as a first sergeant, such as communicating across multiple platforms to disparate groups of people spanning a wide area of operations, happened to apply directly to working as a safety and occupational health specialist. So too does the enormous responsibility of mitigating risks in the face of a world filled with variables and unknowns, perhaps it is no wonder that McCoy estimates that three quarters of his classmates at the safety course on Fort Rucker, Ala., were retired first sergeants.

Safety on the jobsite is no small consideration for projects at USACE, this was especially true during one of McCoy’s more memorable missions three years ago. Following massive wildfires, he was charged with assisting in the debris clean-up effort in 2017.

“That was our first major wildfire in our AO,” McCoy said, using the acronym for area of operations. “It was actually the first



Photos courtesy of the McCoy Family

Tony McCoy, a SPN safety and occupational health specialist, kayaks along the Petaluma River.

wildfire debris mission that the Corps has ever taken on. It’s always been for floods. It was a learning experience. It was learning on the go.”

McCoy arrived at the site during an extremely fluid time and had to jump in with both feet. Considerations ranged from on-the-job safety to political and bureaucratic entanglements. As there was a shift from one debris contractor to another so to shifted the use of union labor to non-union. This brought with it contract stipulations and fluctuations.

“I came in and it was such a rapid build-up that they didn’t have the response field office built yet,” McCoy said, explaining that the RFO serves as a flagpole for other satellite office sites on missions like this.

McCoy found himself explaining risk management and assessment to the workforce as well as the media.

“As the safety manager, you’re also the loss and the risk management expert for the unit,” McCoy said. “In that role, you do all you can to prevent accident, injury and costs. If we have an injury or accident, most of them are preventable. But, in an emergency response everything is so dynamic that people take more risks than they should.”

More recently, McCoy has been taking

the lead for the district during the COVID-19 pandemic. He encourages everyone to treat their body like they would any other piece of equipment, by doing a standard check in the morning. Evaluating oneself for whether they are feeling healthy or if they should mitigate the risk to their coworkers and others by staying home or taking further action is critical, McCoy said.

“That’s the first action that everyone at the district should take,” McCoy said, referring to the organization’s ability to conduct business via teleworking. “The operations guys don’t have that luxury; they have to come into work. We have a lot of people especially at operations who are still going out because the world doesn’t stop because of this pandemic. A hat tip to the ones who have been working the entire time. They’re essentially our front-line responders.”

As the greater organization raced towards solutions to keep the workforce safe in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, part of McCoy’s job became working with other districts as a member of the larger safety community within USACE.

“My input mattered and had an impact in the organization all the way up to Washing-

Continued page 11

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## McCoy continued

ton [D.C.] at headquarters,” McCoy said. “It’s a great opportunity to help apply some of the energy that I have to efforts that I felt were of importance. So, it has given me an opportunity to not only apply myself outside of the specialist realm but at the safety manager position.”

### Tragedy leads to a new calling

This is not the only role which McCoy has adapted to. He is also the suicide awareness trainer for the district. A family tragedy has pushed him to advocate for suicide prevention and awareness, especially in the LGBTQ community.

“It’s now my primary calling in life to prevent young gay men and women from killing themselves. This time last year was probably the hardest that I have ever had to endure,” McCoy said, referring to the loss of his son in 2018.

McCoy’s son Marcus was 22 years old when he took his own life over an internal conflict between his faith and his sexual orientation.

“I thought I had talked him off of that

bridge, but I didn’t ask him the quintessential question about whether he was going to kill himself,” McCoy said. “When I do the training, I hammer that point hard. Ask them because they will tell you. If they answer yes, then you drop everything and get to them.”

Now, McCoy is a board member of the San Francisco chapter of Parents Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. At PFLAG, McCoy helps steer the chapter to meet goals and provide support to the LGBTQ community while doing the best he can to prevent suicide amongst young gay men and women.

His main mission in life lies with his remaining children, according to McCoy, who has taken a life-altering tragedy and turned it into a motivation to help others moving forward.

“I don’t want my son’s life to not matter,” McCoy said. “I want his story to [matter]. If I can save at least one more person from doing that—and already from the last year that I’ve advocated I know of four people, who have said they thought of my son’s story and it saved them.”



## IA Team continued

season for instance that we plan on,” Emmons said. “I think it’s something that I don’t think anyone is ever happy that they have to deploy. You’re going to see the destruction and the lives devastated. I think it takes a positive person to be on this team—overwhelmingly positive—because you’re affecting change in real time. I’m in the planning section, takes years at a time, but when you go out for an emergency, you’re seeing the work you’re doing in real time. ... Seeing how our work positively affects a region is the thing that probably motivates us the most.”

Though the mission demanded his full attention, Candotti still found moments to experience Louisiana, getting to know the locals and the wildlife. Candotti, originally from rural Australia, is no stranger to large reptiles, but according to him, alligator on a stick was still quite the experience.

“It was something else, couple of takeaways for how resilient the people are down there, they didn’t sit around



Glasch

*SPN’s Tony Candotti traverses a ladder in order to examine roof damage to a fire station near Cameron, La., during his deployment in response to Hurricane Laura, which made landfall on Aug. 27, 2020.*

waiting for help,” said Candotti. “I couldn’t wait to see an alligator and then all of a sudden once we got down near the coast every puddle of water seemed to have one. I got really excited to see the first one and then I started trying to avoid it.”

Of course, deploying in 2020 meant deploying in a COVID-19 environment, as

such, special precautions had to be taken.

“We did the social distancing, the masks, the sanitation and all the recommendations. I personally had a test as soon as I got back just to put my family and friends more at ease,” Candotti said, having already looked into the COVID-19 rates in the region before deploying there. “Everyone at the

deployment center wore masks and used hand sanitizer—they took it really seriously. Actually, they took our temperature every morning and asked if we had symptoms.”

COVID-19 changed the way in which the IA team itself was stood up as well as how it conducts its trainings.

“Given that we’ve had to do virtual training and we’ve had less time to come together as a team maybe means that we’ll have to flush out the group dynamic when we’re deployed,” Emmons said. “That could be a challenge for the team. ... I have no doubt that despite the challenges of not being able to meet in person, that we will work together in a great way. As far as the necessities of training and capability, we’re 100 percent.”

The IA team is still looking for more members. There are a variety of positions still open including structural engineer slots, according to Emmons. Those interested in joining the team or those interested in doing a singular deployment should email [CESPN-EOC@usace.army.mil](mailto:CESPN-EOC@usace.army.mil).

# YEAR IN PHOTOS

## A brief look back at SPN events, milestones in 2020

### JANUARY

The San Francisco District hosts its bi-annual Business Opportunities Open House for the first time at the district's new headquarters building at 450 Golden Gate. More than 100 industry representatives attended.



### MARCH

Members of the district's Corporate Board sign a long-term Strategic Plan that sets the course for the district over the next five years. It details strategic initiatives that support the three foundational goals of *Build Trust*, *Build Talent* and *Build Capability*.

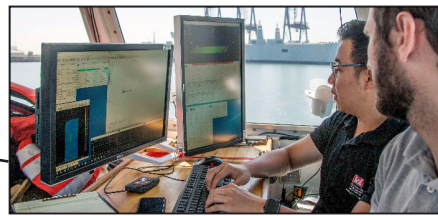
### APRIL

The Government Dredge Yaquina completes dredging in the Humboldt Bay interior channels. The Harbor District identified a high-priority area in the Eureka channel, in part to provide improved access and operations for a USCG vessel that docks there.



### MAY

NOAA's Office of Coast Survey certifies the district's hydrographic surveys for Pinole Shoal Channel in San Francisco Bay — a critical waterway for bulk carriers and tankers — the highest possible data quality rating. This is the first USACE federally-maintained channel to receive the highest-level certification.



### JULY

A joint assessment team from the San Francisco and Sacramento Districts conduct initial engineering evaluations of the Neumiller Hospital at San Quentin Prison. The team toured the four-story, 50-bed facility as a potential hospital conversion and forwarded their recommendations to FEMA and the State of California for consideration in the fight against COVID-19 outbreaks at the prison.



### AUGUST

The Humboldt Jetty Repair Project gets officially underway following a construction kick-off ceremony in Eureka. Congressman Jared Huffman and SPN Commander Lt. Col. John Cunningham were among several speakers marking the milestone.

### OCTOBER

USACE wraps up dredging in the Petaluma River Channel and to mark the long-awaited milestone the City of Petaluma hosts a ribbon-cutting ceremony at its historic waterfront district. "We are so looking forward to welcoming people back up the river and all the wonderful events we put on here," said Marie McCusker, executive director of the Petaluma Downtown Association & Visitors Center, later adding, "A dredged river raises everyone economically."



### DECEMBER

Lt. Col. John Cunningham signs the Project Partnership Agreement for the Dry Creek Restoration Project Construction Phase.

