



SPN SURVEYOR

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Winter 2018

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DISASTER RESPONSE

How the District met the challenges posed by a string of national emergencies in 2017

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COMMANDER'S CORNER

Employees dedicated to nation's response efforts

By Lt. Col. Travis J. Rayfield
San Francisco District Commander

I want to take this opportunity to wish you a Happy New Year and hope that your holidays were spent deservedly enjoying time with your families.

I say that mindful of the fact that so many of you didn't get a break, having spent the holiday period responding to last fall's wildfires or the hurricanes that struck other parts of the country earlier. The quick succession of disasters certainly stretched the nation's emergency response system, and you are living proof of that. Some of you, remarkably, even deployed to respond to the wildfires as well as the storms. To you, we owe a great amount of gratitude for your selfless efforts over the holidays doing what the Corps does best: building strong and taking care of people, and I certainly can't imagine a more dedicated team. I join the nation in sharing my gratitude for your efforts and know that with the arrival of 2018, many of you will continue to volunteer to deploy, ensuring these recovery missions continue with great results.



I would be remiss if I didn't also express my gratitude for the incredible progress we have made with the wildfire cleanup. Nothing short of incredible can describe the amount of progress we have made in helping people across four counties pick up the pieces from California's most destructive wildfires, and it's hard to believe that only a few weeks into 2018,

we are way ahead of where we expected we would be when the recovery effort began last November. This operation was initially expected to continue well into the New Year, but given the tremendous progress, it now looks like we could wrap up the debris removal mission in the coming months, with our stated goal of 2nd quarter FY18. That's a testament to your hard work and sacrifice, and also great news for thousands of families and others who lost property.

I have only been in this job for a little over six months, but during that time, the dedication to service I have seen has only served to reinforce the reputation that I had heard about the district before I arrived, and I am looking forward to another year of overseeing projects that millions of Bay Area residents, coastal communities and the nation have come to rely on the Corps to perform as only it can.

2018 has barely begun, but we have already gotten off to a great start. Keep up the great work and I'll be dropping by from time to time to see how we can continue to make the District an even greater place to work in the New Year.

UP's "Spirit" train stops in Oakland

By Brandon Beach
District Public Affairs

Union Pacific's Locomotive No. 1943, The Spirit, made a stop in Oakland Dec. 7. This was the final stop of a 10-city Salute to the Military Tour for UP No. 1943, honoring the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Members of several Bay Area veteran groups were on hand to see the commemorative train in person and snap photos. This is the 16th commemorative train created by Union Pacific in the agency's 155-year history. The last one, "No. 7400 Pink Ribbon," was unveiled in 2010 to raise awareness about breast cancer.

Lt. Col. Travis Rayfield, San Francisco District commander, joined Council member Abel Guillen from the City of Oakland and Capt. Patrick Nelson from the U.S. Coast Guard SF Section in a formal pro-



Lt. Col. Travis Rayfield, at podium, gives remarks during a stop by "The Spirit" train in Oakland Dec. 7.

gram at Middle Harbor Park near the Port of Oakland and shared his thoughts on serving in the military.

"I'm proud to wear this uniform and carry on the traditions of so many who have served before me," he said.

For more on UP No. 1943, go to www.up.com/aboutup/special_trains

SPN SURVEYOR

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Feature Photo



Crewmembers from the M/V Raccoon, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District vessel, patrol Bay Area waters for any navigational hazards in this May 15, 2017 photo.

On the cover



[Top] A quality assurance specialist monitors cleanup efforts in Santa Rosa's Fountaingrove neighborhood, where the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is managing debris removal operations following a deadly wildfire that swept through the area in October 2017. [Bottom Right] A burned-out car is all that stands amidst the wildfire wreckage in this Santa Rosa neighborhood. Removing the wildfire debris is a FEMA mission managed by the Army Corps. (Photos by Brandon Beach)

[Bottom Left] A National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration satellite image, taken Sept. 7, 2017, shows Hurricane Irma moving through the Atlantic Ocean toward the Caribbean Islands.

Winter 2018

District News

SPN named 'best place' to work

By Nick Simeone
District Public Affairs

The Commander of the Army Corps of Engineers has recognized the San Francisco District as one of the best places to work within the agency, a determination based on the results of the most recent Federal Employment Viewpoint Survey.

"I really think that's a testament to the employees in the district taking pride in their work," said Lt. Col. Travis Rayfield, the District's commander since June of 2017 who accepted the award from



Lt. Gen. Todd T. Semonite, the Corps' Commanding General and Chief of Engineers.

The districts recognized as being among the best places to work had to achieve a benchmark numerical rating from employees who took part in the viewpoint survey, and San Francisco was among the districts that scored above that threshold.

"What it means is that we are recognized amongst our peers, amongst all USACE executives and employees for creating an environment where the workforce feels like they can contribute," said Rayfield. "That's an awesome recognition."

The results of the survey were presented to employees at a district-wide town hall meeting.

The survey polled employees on issues relating to job satisfaction and commitment in order to help the agency determine areas that may need further focus with the goal of improving retention.

Lt. Col. Travis Rayfield holds up the "Best Place to Work" certificate, awarded to the SF District following results from a federal workplace survey.

YEAR IN PHOTOS

A brief look back at SPN events, milestones in 2017

JANUARY

Heavy rains, unusual for a non-El Nino year, push water levels at Lakes Sonoma and Mendocino to such heights that the district decides to begin flood control releases to prepare for what becomes an unusually wet winter.



MARCH

Students from Los Gatos High School visit the San Francisco District as part of a job shadowing event.

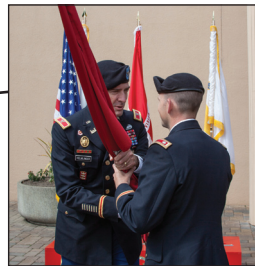
APRIL

The Corps' command and control vessel, the M/V Dillard, conducts an emergency mission to resupply conservation scientists working on the inhospitable and remote Farallon Islands, a patch of land in the Pacific 26 miles west of the Golden Gate Bridge.



JUNE

Lt. Col. John C. Morrow hands over three years of command of the San Francisco District to Lt. Col. Travis J. Rayfield.



JULY

The San Francisco District becomes the first to start a radio station aimed at delivering messages about water safety at Corps recreation facilities.

AUGUST

The district showcases a multi-agency study underway at its Don Clausen Fish Hatchery that could help better determine the migration patterns of endangered salmon.



SEPTEMBER

Dozens of ships from across the San Francisco Bay Area, including the District's own M/V Dillard, participate in the 21st annual Margo Brown Wheelchair Regatta in Oakland.

OCTOBER

The Corps is called to respond to the worst wildfires in California history that strike four counties north of San Francisco.

NOVEMBER

SPN project managers and engineers oversee a critical phase of the Upper Berryessa Flood Risk Reduction Project as they quickly operate within a 60-hour work window to remove and replace a Union Pacific Railroad Bridge in San Jose.



DECEMBER

Employees ring in the holiday season with the district's annual luncheon held at the Bay Model Visitor Center in Sausalito.





Beach

A U.S. Army train stands idle at the Military Ocean Terminal Concord, a 115-acre complex, where the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District is overseeing several military construction projects, including building a new police dispatch center and maintenance facility, among others.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Projects progress at strategic Military Ocean Terminal

By Nick Simeone
District Public Affairs

Approaching the Army’s Military Ocean Terminal Concord, you would never know that this rural stretch of land some 30 miles east of San Francisco bordering Suisun Bay is the base that serves as the Defense Department’s West Coast platform for supplying ammunition to U.S. forces in Asia.

MOTCO, as the base is more commonly known, is the military’s only facility on this side of the continent for doing that, underscoring the importance of three San Francisco District construction projects currently underway at the 115-acre complex, whose public profile is inversely related to its importance to national security, given that, as the base’s website says, it “has the capability to act as the strategic launch platform for the West Coast.”

Across the base, the Corps is overseeing the construction of a new police

Across the base, the Corps is overseeing the construction of a new police dispatch center and maintenance facility, among other projects.

dispatch center, a new maintenance facility that will service vehicles and train cars used to move ordinance, as well as a means to protect containers loaded with ammunition from being struck by a rare instance of lightening and perhaps repeating a historic disaster.

“That would be catastrophic if it were to happen, but it is extremely rare,” said Army Capt. Chris Garceau, MOTCO’s

project engineer.

Even so, Garceau and others working on the projects are leaving nothing to chance, quick to remind a visitor that this base was the site of the worst domestic war-related disaster during World War II. In 1944, more than three million pounds of explosives detonated while being loaded onto ships destined for the Pacific, killing more than 300 people. A memorial stands dedicated to those who died in the explosion. But the monument, which is now a national park, remains one the most inaccessible in the country given its location on a secure base. Those interested can visit but are required to make a reservation.

The inherent risks involved in moving ammunition on and off MOTCO’s three piers as well as onto an Army rail system connecting to public railways have implications beyond this base, part of the reason why construction of the new police dispatch

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All photos by Beach

A sign of hope stands out amidst the remains of homes in the Fountaingrove neighborhood of Santa Rosa, Calif., devastated by last October's wildfires.

SPN volunteers join multiple disaster response efforts around the nation

By Nick Simeone

District Public Affairs Office

Just over a month after the mission began, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had completed 30 percent of debris removal from the four counties north of San Francisco that were devastated by October's wildfires, and is on track to have the mission completed by early this year, much sooner than initially anticipated.

Since Nov. 11, Corps contractors have completed debris removal at more than 2,300 properties. More than 200 Corps employees from around the nation have been deployed on 30-day assignments to support fire debris removal, which agency officials had earlier predicted

"The scale is so significant that the response is beyond what most emergency preparedness people could envision."

Lt. Col. Travis Rayfield

San Francisco District Commander

could continue well into the New Year. But there has been so much progress across Lake, Mendocino, Napa and Sonoma Counties that Sacramento District Commander Col. David G. Ray, who is managing the program, predicts 'mission accomplished' could be declared much

sooner. "The Corps is committed to completing this mission in early 2018 in order to clear the way for communities to begin the rebuilding process." Initial reports had estimated that the debris removal process could take up to eight months.

Nearly a million tons of haz-

ardous fire-related debris has been removed, and the San Francisco District is now working with the lead agency, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to provide temporary housing for displaced families at Lake Mendocino. Among district employees working the debris removal assignment is environmental manager Cynthia Fowler, who was first deployed to Florida last year to manage hurricane recovery-related operations, and has now been dispatched a second time — to respond to a second set of devastating wildfires in Southern California that have burned several hundred thousand acres there. "It feels good to work on something that really makes a

Continued next page



Some of the deployed personnel from SPN include (from left to right) Tony McCoy, Brian Emmons, Carla Robinson, Keith Hess, Jessie Anderson, Jenn Judy and Gwen Davis.

continued ...

difference in people's lives. I love this work," she said.

Holly Costa, a regulatory branch chief in the San Francisco District, was also among those deployed for hurricane duty in Florida last year and went on to serve as a local government liaison in Sonoma County for the wildfire mission. "I've been incredibly lucky to have been assigned to teams of smart, dedicated people who are generous with their time and knowledge. It ensures the success of the mission,"

she said from the Santa Rosa-based Regional Field Office where she worked to keep local officials up to date on the progress of debris removal.

Through the holidays, hundreds of Corps employees continued to respond to a range of national emergencies that struck the nation last year seemingly at once, from the hurricanes that devastated Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as Florida and Texas — to the worst wildfires in California history.

In Puerto Rico and the

Virgin Islands, the Corps has dispatched more than 850 people whose top priority is the life, health and safety of those affected. They along with officials from other agencies have surged into the affected areas to provide debris removal, power and other basics while reconstructing roads, airports and bridges, and building temporary housing — all to get life back to normal for those impacted. In

Continued page 10

Faces of the Deployment

Carla Robinson, SPN Park Ranger

By Brandon Beach
District Public Affairs

Carla Robinson vividly remembers the call she received from a neighbor Oct. 9, warning her of a fast-approaching wildfire in Redwood Valley.

"It was about 5:05 in the morning, and she was saying we had less than five minutes to pack up and leave," said Robinson, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers park ranger at Lake Mendocino. "I grabbed things like my contact



Carla Robinson, left, and Brian Emmons, SPN park rangers, inspect debris removal operations in a Santa Rosa neighborhood.

lenses, toothbrush and keys and then just jumped in my car."

She sped out of her rural Mendocino County neighborhood still dressed in her pajamas but wide awake. "When I finally got to Highway 20, I stopped and looked back, and the whole ridge was on fire."

The Redwood Valley Fire, one of a dozen wildfires to sweep across Northern California that night, would claim eight lives, burn 36,523 acres and destroy more than 540 structures. Robinson would return seven days later to find the single family home, where she rents a

Continued page 11



[Above] Debris removal crews work around-the-clock in the Fountaingrove neighborhood of Santa Rosa. [Right] The visible scars of the worst wildfire disaster in California's history are shown here in this family home in Santa Rosa.





Ben White, a San Francisco District fisheries biologist, passes a net of coho salmon to a volunteer Jan. 12 for release in Redwood Creek at Muir Beach.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Coho, once threatened, return to Redwood Creek

By Brandon Beach
District Public Affairs Office

Two hundred coho salmon were returned to Redwood Creek Jan. 12, after being raised in tanks at the Warm Springs Fish Hatchery for the past three years.

The fish represent a cohort collected as juveniles in the summer of 2015 by biologists from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the National Park Service.

It was due to the prolonged drought that occurred between 2013 and 2016 in this Marin County enclave that biologists made the decision to collect the young fish and embark on a short-term rescue mission to prevent local extinction in Redwood Creek. This was the second of three planned releases, with the next one scheduled for winter 2019, marking the end of what Ben White, SPN fisheries biologist, called a “temporary hatchery intervention.”



Volunteers [inset photo] wheel a cooler of coho salmon Jan. 12. The adult salmon were transported via truck from Warm Springs Hatchery for release in Redwood Creek.

Readiness chief keeps district prepared

By Nick Simeone
District Public Affairs Office

Duke Roberts is chief of Readiness for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District. His job is to make sure his agency is prepared to respond to natural disasters including the kind never far from the minds of San Franciscans: earthquakes. He vividly remembers the October day in 1989 when a deadly magnitude 6.9 quake shook the city and caused billions of dollars in damage, the last major tremor to strike the Bay Area.

"I was at work but couldn't get home until 3 a.m.," he recalls. That's because bridges, including the Bay Bridge which was heavily damaged in the quake as well as the Bart underground subway system were shut down, leaving thousands of commuters stranded at the height of the evening rush hour. Perhaps most memorably, millions around the world watched on live television as game three



Roberts

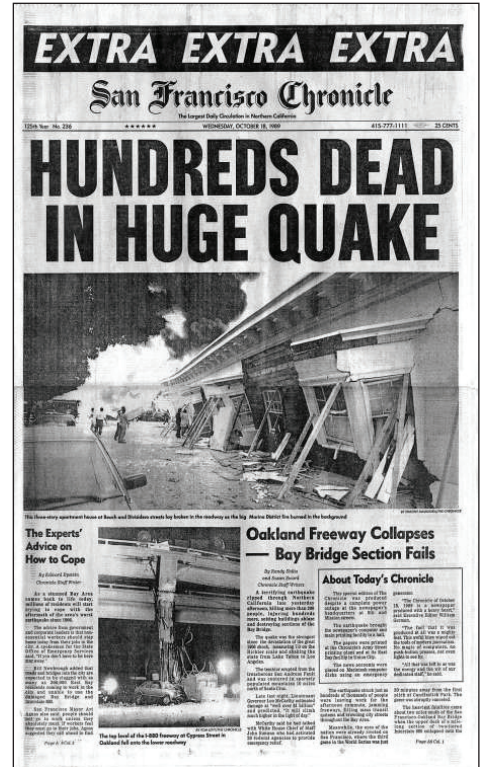
"I was at work but couldn't get home until 3 a.m. The city had to charter ferries to get people home."

Duke Roberts
On the Loma Prieta Earthquake

of the World Series between the Oakland A's and the San Francisco Giants which was underway at Candlestick Park was disrupted by the unfolding event. "The city had to charter ferries to get people home," said Roberts, who is among the handful of employees in the Corps' San Francisco District who was working for the agency at the time of the Loma Prieta quake and still is today.

Federal law designates the Corps' San Francisco District, the lead federal agency in the Bay Area, to respond in the event of a future devastating quake, and as chief of Readiness for a frontline agency, Roberts is at the tip of the spear. Despite the often-repeated warn-

ings about the 'big one' still to come, he is uncharacteristically sanguine in discussing how events would unfold during a region-wide emergency of a similar or larger magnitude. "The governor is going to send a request, and the president is going to issue a declaration. Then, the Corps would be responsible for removing debris from waters, providing structural engineers to assist the city in identifying structures that may have been dam-



Front page of the San Francisco Chronicle from Oct. 18, 1989, covers the Loma Prieta earthquake, the last major tremor to strike the Bay Area.

aged and any other duties as deemed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency

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Environmental News Continued

District employees join cleanup effort

At Angel Island, San Francisco District volunteers hauled out an estimated 500 pounds of trash and recyclables during the annual California Coastal Cleanup Sept. 16. More than 25 volunteers signed up for the Saturday work, boarding the district-operated vessel M/V Dillard at 8 a.m. for a 20-minute voyage across the Bay, with views of Alcatraz, Golden Gate Bridge and the city's skyline. The half-mile beach on Angel Island was one of more than 800 sites where cleanups took place in a state-wide volunteer effort. Serving every year as the CA Coastal Cleanup volunteer coordinator for Marin County was Joanne Jarvis, a ranger at the Bay Model Visitor Center.

[Right] Volunteers of all ages pitch in to clear trash and recyclables from Angel Island Sept. 16. [Far Right] Monica Kaulfers, a district budget analyst, fills her bag with discarded items.

-- Reporting by Brandon Beach



Response continued ...

Puerto Rico, Steve Rohner of the Corps' San Francisco District helped restore power to thousands of homes as well as a nursing home. "The people in these communities are so grateful and excited to get their power back," he said, after many had gone without electricity for months. "I've been involved in energizing almost 5,000 homes since I've been here."

In St. John, St. Thomas and St. Croix alone, the Corps has overseen the removal of more than one million cubic tons of debris — the equivalent of 350 Olympic-size swimming pools.

"It feels good to work on something that really makes a difference in people's lives."

Cynthia Fowler
SPN Environmental Manager

The near simultaneous disasters across the country have stretched the range of the government's emergency response assets, impacting not only the Corps but the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the National Forest Service, as well as many local agencies and volunteers. Even so, these frontline agencies continue to perform their important day-to-day missions in support of the nation. "The response of the Corps of Engineers, federal and local agencies is impressive," said San Francisco District Commander Lt. Col. Travis Rayfield. "The scale is so significant that the response is beyond what most emergency preparedness people could envision."

From Costa's perspective, it's a response in which teamwork and dedication proved critical to success. "I think what I'll remember best is the drive and camaraderie shown by everyone here. They are all engaged and dedicated to making this mission run smoothly."



Faces of the Deployment

Maj. Kevin McCormick, SPN Deputy Commander



Photos by Clay Church, Fort Worth District

Parents, teachers and emergency response personnel were on hand to welcome back students from Saint Rose Catholic School in Santa Rosa Jan. 22 for the first time since last October's wildfires.

One of those first responders was Maj. Kevin McCormick, San Francisco District deputy commander. He was interviewed on camera by ABC 7 reporter Amy Hollyfield for a piece on the school's opening.

"Just to see all the kids, the smiles on their faces, it was very heartwarming," he said.

McCormick is currently serving on a 30-day deployment as the deputy commander in the Corps's Recovery Field Office in Rohnert Park.

MOTCO continued ...

center is moving ahead full steam.

"The idea is that MOTCO would eventually be self-sufficient with its own police force on land and on the water requiring more space for staffing as the Army begins to assume full responsibility for operations," said Resident Engineer David W. Franzen.

The projects being overseen by the Corps are slated to be completed by next June and several more are in the pipeline.



A contractor operates an excavator at the Military Ocean Terminal Concord, where the San Francisco District is overseeing the construction of this new maintenance facility on post.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

SPN replaces UPRR trestle bridge at Berryessa Creek

By Brandon Beach
District Public Affairs

Project managers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District oversaw a critical phase of the Berryessa Creek Flood Risk Management Project last October, as construction crews operated within a 60-hour work window to remove and replace a Union Pacific Railroad Bridge in Milpitas, Calif.

The clock began ticking on Monday, Oct. 2, as the only scheduled UPRR train of the day crossed the bridge shortly after noon. Crews worked around-the-clock to complete all the in-creek work, including installing a series of concrete box culverts, each weighing 44,000 lbs., in the creek bed under the new bridge. Train service resumed three days later with no delays to the schedule.

In the months following the replacement of the bridge, contractors wrapped up the final list of project activities including installing new erosion control blankets along the slopes of the creek and planting over 100 native trees and shrubs. All physical work on site was completed by Dec. 31, 2017.

“I’m proud to report we delivered a complex project on time and under budget,” said Lt. Col. Travis Rayfield, SPN commander.

The overall project site encompassed 2.2 miles of Berryessa Creek from Calaveras Boulevard to Interstate 680.



Crews demolish the old trestle bridge [right], while installing a series of box culverts [above] at Berryessa Creek in Milpitas Oct. 2.



Robinson continued

one-bedroom apartment, had been spared. But many in her neighborhood were not so lucky. She began to help people pick up the pieces, first as a neighbor and then as a disaster response volunteer for the Corps.

Following the devastating fires, FEMA tasked the Corps with managing debris removal operations in four Northern California counties — Lake, Mendocino, Napa and Sonoma — where upwards of 5,000 homes were lost.

So weeks after her own harrowing experience, Robinson decided to sign up for a 30-day deployment as a quality assurance specialist, working out of the Corps’

“I feel a real sympathy when they talk about having to evacuate, the difficulty of coming back.”

Carla Robinson

Lake Mendocino Park Ranger

Santa Rosa Emergency Field Office. She had been deployed for 26 days when I met up with her one brisk afternoon in December as she was conducting site assessments in Coffey Park, a Santa Rosa neighborhood reduced to ash by the Tubbs Fire. We recounted that harrowing morning she evacuated

her apartment in Redwood Valley, her decision to join the first wave of emergency response volunteers and the countless homeowners she had met along the way, each with similar accounts about how they escaped the fires, with many not as lucky as she was.

“I feel a real sympathy

when they talk about having to evacuate, the difficulty of coming back,” she said.

Robinson was often the first person a homeowner would meet when they returned to inspect their property or what remained of it. The Corps gives each homeowner a courtesy call informing them about the site assessment and when it will take place. Robinson said she has completed over 200 such assessments during her deployment.

“As somebody who evacuated the Redwood Valley Fire, I feel like this has helped me process, in a way, the experience I had there by getting to come and help people here,” she said. “It’s been really positive to be part of something like this.”

Dillard crew hosts military vets in regatta event

By Brandon Beach
District Public Affairs Office

Dozens of ships from across the San Francisco Bay Area, including the district's own M/V Dillard, participated in the 21st annual Margo Brown Wheelchair Regatta at the Encinal Yacht Club in Oakland, Calif., Sept. 23.

With assistance from local firefighters, more than one hundreds veterans, many in wheelchairs, boarded the fleet of ships for a mid-morning outing around the Bay. The large catamaran Dillard was able to host over 40 veterans.

Kixon Meyer, Dillard captain, said he and his crew are honored to be part of this event year after year and welcome so many local veterans onto a boat named after a man who died in Vietnam, Maj. Gen. John A. B., Dillard Jr., former South Pacific Division Commander and Chief of the Engineer Command.



[Top] The M/V Dillard gets underway during the Margo Brown Wheelchair Regatta Sept. 23. [Left] A World War II veteran gets assistance from local firefighters as he boards the Dillard. [Middle] A veteran takes in the Bay Area scenery. [Right] Dillard crewmember Francis Fitzpatrick, left, talks with veterans.

Chief continued ...

and in cooperation with city and state agencies.”

The long-standing requirement that the Corps’ San Francisco District ensures the bay remains free of debris for navigation would become even more critical during an earthquake since ferry service would likely be essential if major roads, bridges and subways are shut down as they were during the ‘89 quake. “The

(debris removal vessel) Dillard would sail from Sausalito to the city to pick up the district commanders and take them to a command center where they could operate, but at the same time would also have responsibility to ensure that the bay is navigable for other emergency vessels,” said Roberts.

But what if a quake or another natural disaster was so severe that it left the district itself unable to respond? As you might expect from the chief of

Readiness, Roberts said there are also plans for that. “The (district’s Army) commander would move his flag from here to the Sacramento District and, depending on the severity of the event, he would make a decision that Sacramento or Los Angeles or Albuquerque or some other district would come in to perform our mission until such time that we could get back on our feet.”

That’s happened before. During Hurricane Katrina in

2005, the nation’s costliest natural disaster, Roberts said it took the New Orleans District two years before it could get up and running again, during which time the Corps had to rely on other districts to lead recovery efforts there.

And if a natural disaster of the same magnitude strikes the Bay Area? “If the San Francisco District cannot respond within the first 48 to 96 hours, then we are considered the victim district.”