



US Army Corps
of Engineers
St. Paul District

Crosscurrents

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Army Communities of Excellence

District makes final round



Photo by Ken Gardner

Late on Oct. 28, the St. Paul District learned it was one of six finalists from the Corps in the Army Communities of Excellence (ACOE) competition. Awards for finalists are a minimum of \$25,000, with the best program receiving \$80,000. A team from the Department of the Army will soon visit the winning districts to make a final assessment. Earlier in October, the district's ACOE committee

hosted a thank you for district office employees. Behind the serving table are (left to right) Chris Schmitz from Design Branch; Maj. Bill Waugh of the Chaska Resident Office; Shelly Shafer from Eau Galle; Dave DePoint of Emergency Management; and Bob Stone from Lock & Dam. No. 3. Other Corps finalists are Pittsburgh, Louisville, Huntsville, Tulsa and Ft. Worth.

Riding the rivers from Minnesota to Manitoba

by Samantha Cumberworth
social science aide

Kevin Bluhm, a public involvement specialist, began July 25 in a fit of Sheer Madness.

That's when Bluhm and seven others launched their personal watercraft in the Minnesota River to begin an international adventure that spanned five days and nearly 1,000 miles. They rode personal watercraft from Bloomington, Minn., north into Manitoba, Canada and south to Roseau, Minn., 10 miles from the Canadian border. The name of their expedition was Sheer Madness.

Bluhm has worked in the Economics and Social Recreation Section, Engineering and Planning Division, for the last eight years. He is currently coordinating the public involvement program for the Upper Mississippi-Illinois Waterway Navigation Study.

His group planned to attend the 40th birthday party of Polaris, which manufactures snowmobiles, ATV's, and personal watercraft in Roseau. Bluhm and seven others wanted to promote watercrafting in the same way that others have promoted snowmobiling—as a touring adventure.

The trip as a challenge

They saw this trip as a challenge.

Like modern-day explorers, they launched their watercraft into the Minnesota River at Bloomington and rode into the Bois de Sioux River and to the Red River of the North.

The Red River carried them into Canada where it hooked up with the Roseau River, their gateway to the City of Roseau.

At the mouth of the Roseau River, they met up with Canadians who had traveled 1,900 miles from Edmonton, Alberta, to attend the corporate birthday party.

Being the guinea pig

"You only live once," said Bluhm, explaining why he decided to take this trip. He served as the navigator for this expedition and recalls having to be the "guinea pig" when it came to navigating unfamiliar waters.

"I always had to go first, especially when it looked dangerous," said Bluhm. "Because I work for the Corps, I had access to resources that the rest of the clan didn't have. I was able to talk to the Corps of Engineers Field Office in Fargo, North Dakota, and they kept me informed of the conditions on the Red River of the

North. Tim Bertschi and Kathy Halverson were great."

Hazards from undertows

Bertschi, the Western Area Manager in Fargo, informed the travelers that if they were going to attempt to make it up to Roseau by means of recreational watercraft, this was the year to do it. Bertschi told Bluhm that at this time of year, during normal summer conditions, the Bois de Sioux is usually dry. He also warned that this kind of trip could be hazardous because of the undertows around the dams.

Bluhm said that safety always came first. "We were a team. If one rider saw potential danger he alerted the others immediately," said Bluhm.

The riders had support crews that pulled the trailers, located gas stations, filled gas cans, and fixed lunch. "Without the support crew, the trip would not have been possible," said Bluhm.

Riding the Rivers, cont. on page 5



Photo courtesy of Sheer Madness Expedition

Kevin Bluhm (above) and seven others launched their personal watercraft in the Minnesota River to begin an international adventure that spanned five days and nearly 1,000 miles.



Photo by Peter Verstegen

CFC balloons sell out

The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Balloon Message Center on Oct. 19-20 sold out of balloons and raised more than \$300 for CFC. "CFC has a financial goal of \$30,000 this year. We also hope to increase employee participation above 31 percent," said Denise McCarthy, CFC coordinator. The CFC held its annual fund-raising campaign October 17-28. From left, volunteers are Joann Meier of the Equal Employment Opportunity Office; McCarthy from Contracting (CT); Theresa Thury from Logistics Management; Dawn Linder, CT; Luann Bartuah from Programs and Project Management; and Delores Aldinger, CT.

Nine agencies join wetland agreement

Late this summer, the St. Paul District was among four federal and five state agencies to sign an agreement to eliminate some of the redundancies of wetland regulation. The agreement also expands the wetland banking program in Minnesota.

The agreement streamlines the permit process and eliminates the need for district approval for many projects, since the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act addresses many of the Corps' regulations.

Eliminating red tape

"This agreement achieves a delicate balance—it eliminates some of the red tape, meaning that people have fewer bureaucratic hoops to jump through, but it also continues to

provide a high level of protection for the resource," said Jim Nielsen, chair of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

St. Paul District Commander Col. James Scott praised the agreement as one that formalizes the informal cooperative efforts of the agencies, while also indicating where more work is needed. "We've all had different starting points and we've all come together now. This agreement points out areas where we've come to agree and where we need more work," Scott said.

Also under the agreement, all agencies will participate in the wetland banking program recently established under the state Wetland Conservation Act. Wetland banking allows someone wishing to drain or fill a wetland to replace

that wetland by purchasing wetland "credits" from someone who has previously created or restored a wetland. Replacement of lost wetland areas is often required under various state and federal laws.

Who the nine are

The signing ceremony was August 24 at the State Capitol. State agencies with representatives signing the agreement include the BWSR, the Pollution Control Agency, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Transportation. Federal agencies which signed on to the agreement are the Corps, the Soil Conservation Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

History pays in project dividends

by Peter Verstegen
public affairs specialist

A peek into the past is giving project managers and local sponsors a "heads up" on environmental cleanup costs.

This historical detective work, called an environmental site history, allows planners to design around a site, develop remediation, or alert construction contractors if a site has the potential to contain contaminants. A site history can also fulfill National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.

The environmental site history is part of the Environmental Assessment. "An environmental site history investigates past land use in particular areas," said Jane Carroll, historian. "The purpose is to identify how areas were used and to identify the potential for hazardous, toxic, or contaminated soils. It's done when projects are in the feasibility stage."

One route to savings is knowing where to test the soil. "The district may save money by reducing the number of random soil borings and by targeting its borings," said Carroll. "The site history helps avoid costly and unforeseen cleanups."

Early histories save money

To be cost effective, the site history has to be done early in the planning process. "The site history should be done as part of feasibility or general design memorandum phase," said Marsha Risch, chief of programs management branch. "You get the

most value when it's done early in the process and you use the information as you proceed with the design."

The district has conducted nine environmental site histories since 1990. In doing a site history, Carroll reviews old maps, historical records, aerial photographs, and city directories. She may also visit a project site.

A records search can spot the potential for chemical contamination in the soil. "In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, business owners frequently discarded or buried wastes on or near the business' premises. Therefore, it was possible to contaminate the soil surrounding these areas of commerce and manufacturing," said Carroll.

Lessons learned at Rochester

Stage 1B3 of the Rochester Project taught the district to conduct site histories. "Stage 1B3 was a major problem," said Deb Foley, project manager. In 1990, the evacuation of contaminated soils during construction of the district's Rochester Project required remediation and contingency funding.

For Stage 2A in Rochester, Carroll discovered a dry cleaning business in the site's history—indicating potential contamination from solvents. "In Stage 2A, a geotechnical investigation came up with a soil boring that indicated contamination," said Foley.

"The site history helped in planning the stage 2A specifications. When we brought a contractor on board, they were prepared," said Foley.

Lead contamination at St. Paul

In another case, a site history forewarned the district and the City of St. Paul, the local sponsor, of lead contamination in a project area. The project is located in an industrial area along the banks of the Mississippi River. The district conducted a site history for the St. Paul Project during the design phase.

"For Stage 3 of the project, the history pointed out areas of contamination were the city potentially needed to do cleanup," said Risch. "Testing confirmed that the site was contaminated with lead. The city cleaned it up prior to the contractor working on site."

Buried fuel tanks at Crookston

A site history looks for activities or structures that might indicate soil contamination. The past presence of a service station suggests the possibility of buried fuel storage tanks. "The concern with buried and abandoned fuel tanks is that they might still contain oil and gas or that the contents leached out and contaminated the soil," said Carroll.

Such was the case with the feasibility study for the Crookston, Minnesota, Flood Control Project. Crookston is on the Red Lake River in northwestern Minnesota. "Historical maps indicated the existence of a wholesale oil station

History, cont. on page 5

Riding the Rivers, cont. from page 2

Looking for boat ramps

At all of the larger dams, the group had to find the nearest boat launch, pull their machines out of the water, and bring them to the nearest launching spot on the other side. They found that this could be tricky. Sometimes the boat ramps weren't easy to find, especially when fuel was getting low.

Once they had to rely on resourcefulness to get the machines out of the water. "A friendly farmer near Granite Falls, Minn. realized that the supply trailer was stuck and helped pull the truck and

trailer out with a tractor," said Bluhm.

Kevin figures he used about 125 gallons of gas in his machine that week.

Television coverage

Television stations in Fargo and Grand Forks, North Dakota, covered the event for their newscasts. "It was interesting to see how fascinated the people up north were about this trip. Kathy Halverson, from the Field Office in Fargo, came out to photograph the event. This is real public interest stuff," said Bluhm.

Polaris donated several machines to the Sheer Madness Expedition, the trek's official name. In fact, Polaris will make a detailed assessment of how well its watercraft performed.

"All in all, the trip was a lot of work and a lot of fun. Luckily, the weather cooperated, which contributed to the huge success of the voyage," said Bluhm.

These days, Bluhm has settled back into the day-to-day routine of a public involvement specialist and dreams of the day when he can do it again.

History, cont. from page 4

and railroad tracks in the project area," said Carroll. "The map showed five large fuel storage tanks as well as several coal sheds or containers. Nearby, the maps showed a passenger depot and additional coal storage facilities."

"The site history was really valuable because it identified potential sites that we wanted to avoid in our design," said Ed McNally, technical manager. "It also allows us, if necessary, to include the cost of the recovery in our cost estimating."

Today, Crookston's Central Park stands where the oil station used to be, with a park department building in place of the passenger depot. Evidence of the railroad tracks has vanished.

Savings also come from knowing the potential for toxic waste. "The North end of Central Park, where the oil plant was located, has a high

potential for contaminated soils problems unless the fuel tanks were removed and the site was cleaned up prior to the park's development," said Carroll.

"We are using a site history to point out potential problem areas at the Grand Forks project," said Bill Spychalla, project manager. "We expect that the site history, which we completed in August, will be useful as we proceed with the design of the project."

For the Grand Forks project, old insurance maps revealed a toxic history within a portion of the project area. Between 1880 and 1920, a boiler shop and a gas and fuel company occupied the area, followed by a foundry-machine shop, a gas and electric plant and an oil company. Carroll recommended more detailed investigations to confirm the presence of contaminants

or hazardous-toxic wastes at these sites.

A shortcut to NEPA

"A final benefit of the site history," said Risch, "is that it can be a shortcut to fulfilling the NEPA requirements. A comprehensive site history on our Stillwater Project substituted for an archaeological-cultural resources investigation. In the case of Stillwater, we had enough information from the site history."

At Stillwater, the site history showed that the project area, home of early industrial and commercial activity from the logging era, contained fuel tanks, railroad tracks, logs, debris and silt. The study turned up 117 contaminated sites, and soil borings confirmed petroleum contamination. Risch is in the process of drawing up a design memorandum outlining the project's features.

Army Ideas Program keeps innovation alive

by Ann Marie Scheie
AIEP coordinator

"We need to keep innovation alive. I want to generate an attitude that looks at how ideas can be adopted versus why they should not." These words in Col. Scott's handwriting were attached to the suggestions that were approved during the fourth quarter fiscal year (FY) 1994.

The bottom line on the District Commander's memo said, "It appears we've made progress." Submissions were up 45 percent over 1993. In FY 93, 25 percent of AIEP suggestions were approved; in FY 94 it was 44 percent.

Here are the fourth quarter FY 94 suggestions, the people who have contributed to that progress and who have given permission to use their name, the description and the benefits of their ideas.

Tax Exempt Forms for TDY Travel by Lon Mathis

Verification of official business status is now included with all TDY travel indicating to operators of hotels and motels that the individual is traveling on official business and entitled to tax exemption for lodging. This has resulted in the savings of many tax dollars.

Bulkhead Devices by Marvin Pedretti

This suggestion recommends reusing the latch centers of the existing pick-up booms. By using this idea the lock and dam will not require an additional boom or modification to the bulkheads, and will make the

operation of placing and lifting bulkheads a safer and more efficient operation.

Time Sheets by Thomas Heyerman

This idea indicated the need to reduce estimated labor in some offices in Engineering and Planning Division, improving timekeeping efficiency and accuracy in project cost reporting.

Installation of Suction Pump for the Oil-Water Separator by Arnold Wodarz

Implementation of this suggestion resulted in the purchase of a new high-suction lift pump at the Fountain City Boatyard, saving many hours of labor and reducing the chances of oil spills.

CC:Mail Bulletin Board Addresses by Roland Hamborg

This suggestion resulted in the creation of a new CC:Mail address exclusively for field offices, reducing the non-pertinent information sent to field offices and eliminating hours of labor and telephone connect-time charges.

Processing of all Payroll Documents by Jane Shafer

This suggestion provides timekeepers with a new method of processing payroll documents and has reduced paperwork. The idea has been adopted in the district and forwarded to North Central Division and HQUSACE for consideration nationwide.

Steam Cleaning and Power Washing Containment Area by Robert Haney

This idea presented the design and construction of a containment area where equipment of all types could be placed while being steam-cleaned or washed, centralizing cleaning operations and eliminating potential contamination of grounds and water. It will also satisfy anticipated regulatory requirements at a relatively low cost.

Prevention of Body Fluid Contamination by Charles Hiam

This idea resulted in the purchase of CPR Assistance Kits to protect employees from the risk of hyperventilation and exposure to blood-borne pathogens during CPR. The idea was implemented as part of the new blood-borne pathogen protection program, and forwarded to NCD for possible Corps-wide adoption.

Pin System for Gate Control Stop Button by Marvin Althoff

This idea suggested a simple but effective method of preventing unintended over-travel of the lock and dam tainter gate which could result in a serious incident. The suggestion prevents both serious damage to equipment and delays to the commercial towing industry.

The following suggestions were approved but the suggesters have elected not to have their names published.

Ideas, cont. at right

District provides incentives to promote suggestion month

by Ann Marie Scheie
AIEP coordinator

November is suggestion month. All "eligible" suggestions accepted into the Army Ideas for Excellence Program (AIEP) will be rewarded with a thank you gift for participating. Incentives include cups, aprons, notebooks, pens, desktop pen and pencil holders and flashlights.

If you're wondering what an "eligible" suggestion is, read on.

Four elements to a suggestion

1. Determine the present practice, system or problem area that needs improvement.
2. Outline a workable solution or method for improvement and a way to implement it.
3. Determine where and how your idea can be used.
4. Provide a statement of savings or benefits which will result if the suggestion is adopted or implemented.

Preparing your suggestion

1. Pinpoint the problem. Have a clear understanding of the problem. State the problem clearly and concisely so

that someone unfamiliar with it will understand your reasoning.

2. Analyze the facts. Collect the facts, study them, and determine the possibilities for improvement.
3. List possible improvements:
 - a) Can the entire problem or operation be eliminated? Are there cheaper, faster, or better ways to accomplish the same task.
 - b) Could it be done in another section/department quicker, cheaper or better? Could it be combined with another task or job?
 - c) Can it be done better or more efficiently in another way? Can less expensive material be added to make the task run more smoothly or efficiently?

Writing your suggestion

1. Identify the problem. State what is now being done to give the reader a clear, concise understanding of the current situation and give them the background of the problem area.
2. Explain your proposed solution. Be as clear and complete as possible without going into unnecessary details.

3. Explain how and where your idea can be used. Who will benefit? What task might be eliminated? What area would benefit the most?

4. Identify the savings or benefits which would result. Determine actual dollars saved by reducing costs, saving hours, supplies, space or equipment. How might the suggestion improve a task or eliminate waste within the government?

Send your suggestions to Resource Management

Send your suggestions on a DA Form 1045, Suggestion Form, to the Army Ideas for Excellence Program (AIEP), Resource Management Office (RM-BM). Be sure to include your social security number on the form, your job title, location, and name of your supervisor so that awards can be processed quickly. Also enclose any photographs, diagrams and whatever else that can help explain your suggestion. All "eligible" suggestions accepted into the AIEP will be rewarded with a thank you gift for participating.

If you have any questions or need assistance in submitting your suggestion, call Ann Marie Scheie, AIEP coordinator, at 612-290-5237.

Ideas, cont. from previous page

Software Inventory of PRIP-Funded Software

PRIP-funded software will be hand-receipted and excessed the same as hardware. Currently unused, unnecessary or obsolete PRIP software will be returned to IM and de-capitalized to decrease incremental PRIP payments in various offices.

Change to Routing Slip in Contracting Division

Routing slips were changed from a one-sided form to a two-sided form, reducing paper consumption by giving it twice the use, and reducing waste.

District Art Contest

The district will be holding an art contest open to all current employees. This contest will not only increase employee morale, but the district will benefit by using winning selections for display in the district offices.

Bits and Pieces

Workshops, activities pave way "On the Road to Diversity"

Workshops and activities paved the way "On the Road to Diversity"—this year's Diversity Appreciation Week (DAW) theme. The Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEO) sponsored eight diversity workshops from Nov. 1-4 in the training room, at the Jerome Hill Theatre, in the executive conference room and on the skyway level.

"The EEO office has developed a varied program aimed at eliminating personal and organization behaviors that hinder achieving and valuing a diverse work force," said District Commander Col. James Scott. "We have a successful EEO program and in order to capitalize on their strengths, we must continue to maintain our leadership role as an agency that not only seeks a diverse work force, but embraces it as well."

Lynn Harris, chief of Human Resources, officiated as master of ceremonies.

Workshop titles included: She has a Head for Numbers; Amazing Jeffo; The Care Source; Disability and Elder-Care Fair; Count Me In; Empowerment in a Diverse Work Force; Inappropriate Humor; and Gender Issues in the Work Force. DAW ended with the popular Ethnic Food Taste.

Dec. 22 set for Holiday Awards Ceremony

The St. Paul District Holiday Awards Ceremony will be held on December 22, 1994 at the Southview Country Club in West St. Paul. Tickets will be sold from Nov. 16 to Dec. 14. Meal tickets cost \$11; non-meal tickets are \$2.50. For tickets, retirees may contact Jan Graham at 612-290-5305; field personnel may contact Jan Pream at 612-290-5312.

Public presentations

Three district employees participated in the 27th annual Water Resources Conference on October 25-26 sponsored by the American Society of Civil Engineers-Minnesota Section and the University of Minnesota. Pat Foley, chief of hydraulics section, moderated a concurrent session titled "Floods and Hydraulic Structures." Foley also co-moderated a concurrent session titled "Sediment," which evaluated alternatives in the Lake Florence Basin and Whitewater River for lake or river restoration. (The Whitewater River comes in at Weaver Bottoms on the Mississippi River.)

Paul Madison, a geotechnical engineer in Design Branch, presented examples of how local volunteers modified levees during the 1993 flood to provide protection from a 500-year flood. Madison was assigned to the Quincy, Ill., flood office.

Karen Nagengast, landscape architect, explored the basic principles of soil bio-engineering in her session under the topic "Plants and Wildlife."

Jon Hendrickson, a hydraulic engineer in Hydraulics and Hydrology Branch, spoke to 80 students on Oct. 17 in an introductory engineering class at the University of Minnesota (UM). He related his engineering experiences in the public sector. Hendrickson received his Master of Science in civil engineering at UM.



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