

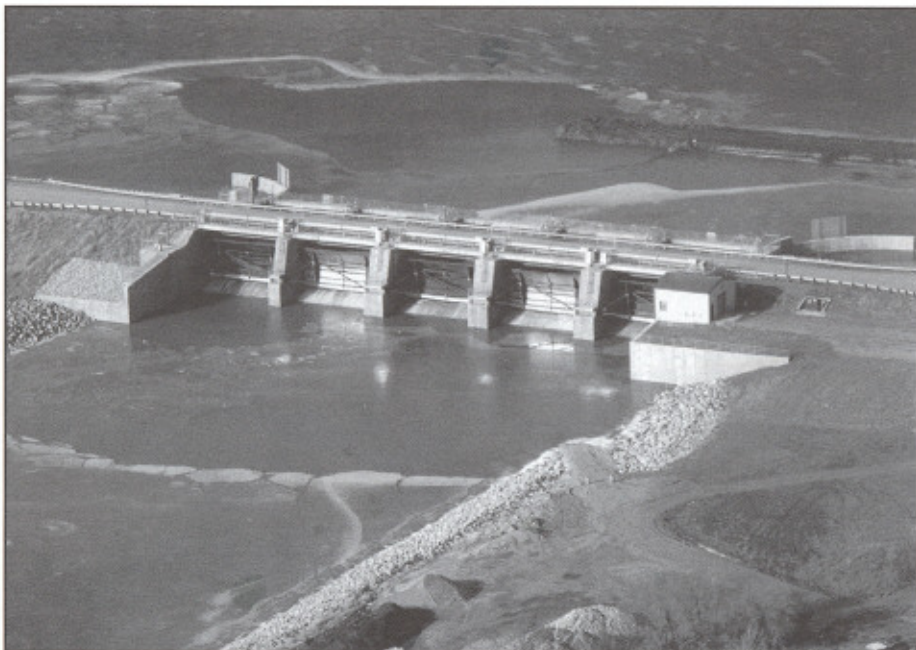


**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**  
St. Paul District

# Crosscurrents

Vol. 22, No. 5

May 1999



St. Paul District file photo

The Lake Darling Dam, above, along with reservoirs located in Canada, prevented flooding by the Souris River this spring in North Dakota. The St. Paul District and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operate the dam.

**Strategic Vision: *Satisfy the Customer***

## Souris River flood control works as designed to protect North Dakota communities

By Peter Verstegen  
Public Affairs Office

Call it the flood that wasn't. The Souris River Basin Flood Control Project this spring lowered the water level along the entire U.S. portion of the Souris River in North Dakota and by three feet in

Minot. The combined operation of reservoirs on the river in the U.S. and Canada reduced river levels.

The Lake Darling Dam, near Foxholm, N.D., operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is one such reservoir that

*Souris River, cont. on page 3*

**Strategic Vision:  
*Align for Success***

## Project report receives Partnership Minnesota Award

By Peter Verstegen  
Public Affairs Office

This April the Partnership Minnesota awarded the St. Paul District the 1999 Cooperative Public Service Award for the East Grand Forks and Grand Forks Local Flood Reduction Project General Reevaluation Report and Environmental Impact Statement. The award recognized the federal, state and local partnership that evaluated, selected, and designed an economically and environmentally acceptable flood reduction project on the Red River of the North at Grand Forks, N.D. and East Grand Forks, Minn.

Lisa Hedin, project manager, received notice of the award in a letter dated April 14. "The award represents the first step of the project," she said. "It's one step on a long journey. We need to

*Partnership award, cont. on page 3*

**Strategic Vision:  
Enhance Capabilities**

## 'Show me the money!'

By Col. Kenneth Kasprisin  
St. Paul District Commander

Trivia question: What makes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers so much different than virtually all other governmental organizations? Serious answer: We are a project-funded organization!

Now exactly WHAT does that mean to you and me? Everything! It directly impacts all we do.

- It determines where we work - projects pay for all office space rent.
- It determines what we do at work - project objectives focus our efforts.
- It determines how much money we make - projects pay our salaries.
- It determines what equipment is available - projects pay for all of our computers, vehicles, boats, cranes, phones, pencils, pens, and office furniture.

Projects also pay for job advertisements, training courses, complaint processing, and even that electricity you use to make coffee at work each morning! **BOTTOM LINE:** If we don't have projects, our organization will cease to exist and we'll have to find new jobs! Maj. Gen. Milton Hunter, director of Military

Programs, articulated this extremely well with the "Four Noes" in his keynote address at the July Project Delivery Team (PDT) conference in St. Paul. He said: "No customer...no project. No project...no money. No money...no work. No work...no job!"

In essence, it means **WE ARE A BUSINESS** and we face all the same challenges that each and every privately owned business faces. We face questions such as:

- Can we afford to hire a new employee or replace the one that recently retired?
- Can we afford to promote Mr. Ideal Employee or Ms. Ideal Employee?

• Should we spend more on training this year or direct more money into our awards program?

Every single day, people in the St. Paul District make monetary decisions that ultimately affect each and every one of us. The money we spend to upgrade our computer or to replace the vehicle we wrecked directly impacts how much is available for other needs within the district!

Years ago, we made these decisions in relative isolation. The federal government paid the majority of project costs. Things are different today. Local sponsors often pay between 25 percent and 50 percent of all project costs and guess what - they are rightfully demanding we bring our costs down. Some now even prefer to take their business elsewhere.

So what does all this mean to us? It means we must do a much better job at meeting our customers' needs at a reduced cost. Hence, the time has come to

conduct a thorough examination of all costs of doing business. Some examples:

- Last year alone we spent approximately \$350,000 processing EEO actions. To date this year, we have spent approximately \$150,000. How many additional training courses could have been attended or additional employees hired if we could have precluded these issues?

- On a \$55 million project, we spent close to \$20 million for engineering and design. This is almost three times the industry average! There is some real sensitivity with this example. Some assert that user and sponsor requests and changes caused 'lost design effort.' Others blame personality conflicts, while still others blame project complexity. Frankly, I don't believe the cause matters very much at this point. The practical reality is that we must collectively do a better job on future projects!

- In the last one and one-half years, we have had more than 35 Reports of Survey for lost and damaged equipment totaling more than \$350,000. We could have undertaken a tremendous modernization program instead!

**BOTTOM LINE:** We can and must do better! In a very broad sense, it means both individual and institutional productivity must improve. Yes, this is a lofty goal.

Specifically, how do we do this? We do it by assessing the entire organization. To make it better, we must reinforce that which we currently do well and either improve or remove the

*Money, cont. on page 6*



St. Paul District file photo

**The Souris River project lowered the level of the river at Minot, N.D., (above) by three feet this spring. The project also lowered water levels for other communities on the river in North Dakota.**

*Souris project, cont. from page 1* provides storage to prevent flooding for the U.S. portion of the Souris River Basin. The dam and reservoir are west northwest of Minot. Rafferty, Alameda, and Boundary provide reservoir capacity for flood storage in Canada. The Saskatchewan Water Corporation operates the Canadian reservoirs.

The project objectives are to provide up to 100-year level of flood protection at Minot and to reduce flooding along the Souris

River in the U.S.

The Corps' St. Paul District activates its flood operating plan for Lake Darling when the estimated Souris River spring water volume crossing the international boundary near Sherwood, N.D., is equal to or greater than the 10-year flood. The district placed the reservoirs in flood control mode this spring for the first time since completion of the Souris River Basin Project in 1990.

The flood operating plan makes

storage available in the three Canadian reservoirs and Lake Darling for floods equal to or greater than a 10-year flood. The operating plan establishes reservoir releases to meet target water levels at Sherwood and Minot. Target water levels depend upon the level of expected flooding.

The district analyzed what would have happened in 1999 both with and without the Souris project. The analysis showed that storing of floodwaters in the Saskatchewan reservoirs reduced the peak inflow rate of water into Lake Darling by about 60 percent. The reduced inflow rate, combined with the storage made available at Lake Darling, reduced the peak outflow by 35 percent — from 3,800 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 2,400 cfs.

This lowered the peak river level at Minot by about three feet and moderated the length of peak outflows by several days. The reduced flow extended downstream and resulted in reduced water levels and shorter durations of peak water levels.

*Partnership award, cont. from page 1* carry the momentum to design and construction. This award represents recognition of the commitment from the local, state and federal level to work together and make it succeed."

Partnership Minnesota, composed of officials from state and federal agencies, promotes intergovernmental cooperation.

The award ceremony was May 19 at the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Center.

## Coming in the June Crosscurrents

- Kasprisin convenes Town Hall meetings
- O&M takes the biggest slice of HQ, district funds
- First district coin highlights tradition, missions
- Julson, Maybach and Crump honored as 1999 Civil Servants of the Year
- Life jackets float, you don't

Strategic Vision: *Align for Success, Satisfy the Customer***Is your telephone Y2K safe? Will locks operate?**

By Peter Verstegen  
Public Affairs Office

*Editor's note: Y2K Project Manager John Johnson retired from the St. Paul District in late April 1999. Gary Jones is the new Y2K point of contact in Information Management.*



Is your telephone Y2K compliant? Will the locks and dams work when calendars and clocks turn to the year 2000? These are just a few of the questions asked by the St. Paul District's Y2K compliance review team. "Everything in the district is either compliant or being replaced," said John Johnson, the district's Y2K project manager who worked in Information Management.

Johnson and his team managed a compliance review of items ranging from the telephone on your desktop to the operation of locks on the Mississippi River and the gauges that determine reservoir levels. "We were concerned about areas where there were hidden problems," he said. "We reviewed

all infrastructure and went as far as surveying rental real estate buildings. We looked at reservoir gate operations, gauging systems, satellite positioning data and telephones."

"We have even tested backup generators at the locks and dams and developed a contingency plan," said Dave Christenson, chief of Readiness Branch. "We are also testing out high frequency radio capabilities to be able to operate on backup power. Readiness Branch also has an action plan to coordinate with other Corps of Engineer districts and state emergency management offices on Y2K."

Y2K stands for Year 2000 with the K designating the "thousand."

Y2K refers to a past computer industry practice of designating years with just two digits – 1999 would be "99." Pioneers in programming widely used this digital shorthand. "Two digits were used back then because storage was so expensive. It was a matter of conservation of available resources," said Johnson. "Computer memory was a scarce resource."

Because of this digital shorthand, on Jan. 1, 2000, some computer systems, software, and certain devices with microchips might treat "00" as "1900" and shut down or malfunction. Affected systems, equipment and devices that recognize the year 2000 are called "compliant."

The Y2K compliance effort at the district and throughout the public and private sectors is to guard against a variety of systems failing.

Johnson and seven others from a cross-section of divisions and offices embarked on a four-phase plan to ensure that the district was Y2K compliant. Phase one was to assemble the team; two was to inventory computer hardware and software and infrastructure throughout the district; three was to establish priorities and to conduct a risk analysis of critical systems; and four was to execute a plan and establish a timetable to comply with Y2K standards.

"We were the first district in MVD (Mississippi Valley Division) to report that we are 100 percent compliant," said Johnson. "Even though we are Y2K compliant, the effort is ongoing and will go into next year."

**Prepare your home and family for Y2K**

Start by going from room to room and taking note of all the devices that may contain embedded systems (time or date sensitive.) Record the manufacturer's name, model and serial numbers along with any other pertinent identifying information and write the manufacturer for compliance information. The following are a few samples from [www.y2k.state.mn.us](http://www.y2k.state.mn.us):

Furnace/AC controls	Lawn sprinkler system
Room thermostat	Home medical equipment, alert devices
Security system	Telephone
Fire/smoke protection	Home computer: hardware and software

## Group nominates Julie Ritter for Considering Others Award



Photo by Anna Wetterling

**St. Paul District Commander Col. Kenneth Kasprisin presented the April Considering Others Award to Julie Ritter, Real Estate Division. She received the award on April 15 near her cubicle.**

By Peter Verstegen  
Public Affairs specialist

Twelve individuals, the majority from Contracting Division, nominated Julie Ritter for the April Considering Others Award. Ritter works as a secretary in Real Estate Division. St. Paul District Commander Col. Kenneth Kasprisin honored Ritter with the award on April 15. The award recognizes her considerate and unselfish assistance to the Contracting Division (CT).

When CT was without a division secretary, Ritter crossed division boundaries to help with travel, timekeeping, personnel processing actions and financial management.

When a new secretary was hired in CT, Ritter provided a detailed orientation in financial management application software, personnel processing, travel and timekeeping. Her efforts went beyond the requirements of her job and showed consideration and sensitivity to CT personnel and the new secretary. This is the first nomination by a group of people of an individual for the Considering Others Award.

### **Strategic Vision: *Revolutionize Effectiveness***

## **Our goal: no mishaps**

By Dana L. Werner, Safety Office

With the retirement of Ron Scott in April from the St. Paul District Safety Office, one of the more important positions within the Corps was vacant – the position of safety officer.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as your acting safety officer. My background is in the Construction-Operations Division.

For the next few months, I look forward to working with you with the goal of making the St. Paul District the safest within the Corps of Engineers.

We are off to an excellent start in fiscal year 1999, compared to other Corps districts across the county and our previous performance at the same time last year. Keep up the good work!

But we are still a long way from the goal of zero mishaps suggested by Maj. Gen. Phillip Anderson, Mississippi Valley Division commander. The goal of zero mishaps is obtainable if we all work together to

recognize the potential hazards before starting a job and by stopping unsafe work practices. With the zero mishap goal in mind, every district employee can take pride that their skills and performance in the conduct of their duties is sufficient to compile such an enviable safety record.

As we work throughout the year, I encourage each of you to become an extension of the Safety Office, making the safety of yourself, your family, your fellow employees, our contractors' employees, and most of all, the public, your top priority.

During my term, I plan to visit project sites to review safety practices and to make recommendations to improve site safety when necessary. My visit will include a review daily safety procedures and employee hazard awareness. Also, I hope to listen to your concerns about safety.

Future articles will review some commonly reported mishaps and how they could have been avoided. Many of these mishaps occur in both the workplace and the home. Again, safety is a full-time job and does not end once the workday is over.

Until next time, "Think Safety."

*Money, cont. from page 2*

weaknesses. Those weaknesses may be in organizational structure, internal processes, or even within individual employees. When is the last time you stepped back from your job and took a hard look at what you do and why? Better yet: How many times have you said to yourself that the way we do things is really inefficient? What have you done to change it? Have you ever thought a fellow employee to be inefficient and ineffective and wondered why their supervisor hasn't corrected the problem? Folks, we do great things around here, but we must strive to improve some entrenched organizations, systems and even a few non-performers. What are our plans and what will we do next?

**Process and organization**

- I chartered a small team last fall to examine our Project Management Business Process and supporting organization. We have now instituted about 99 percent of their recommendations. What remains

is to clearly document and implement well-defined roles and responsibilities; train all personnel; adjust as necessary; and reward those striving to make it work while eliminating those who remain resistant to the change.

- I have recently tasked the chiefs of PM (Planning, Programs and Project Management Division) and CO (Construction Operations Division) to examine thoroughly our operations and maintenance (O&M) process and supporting infrastructure. I fully expect to see recommendations for change in the very near future.

- We have received some relatively specific marching orders regarding Resource Management activities and the respective consolidation of personnel involved in these functions. It is time to move ahead with this initiative.

- We have a material weakness in the property accountability arena. Accordingly, I have directed greater leader-supervisor involvement and accountability

in the entire report-of-survey process. We will also make some organizational changes within the Logistics Management Office to properly accommodate the enhanced responsibilities.

**Process**

- We had a runaway awards program. The true purpose of the program - recognizing our best performers - was lost. A new policy has been promulgated to get it under control.

- Our training program has been refocused. A clear linkage between operational tasks, individual skills and performance, organizational priorities and programmed training should now exist.

There is obviously much more that we can and will improve. Help me identify the weaknesses and find ways to make them strengths!

We will succeed as a team or we will fail as a team!

**District honors 3 Civil Servants of the Year**

The Incentive Awards Committee for the St. Paul District named Thomas L. Crump, James Maybach and Denise Julson as the 1999 Civil Servants of the Year for the St. Paul District.

Crump works in Project Management. Maybach and Julson work in the Mississippi River Project Office in Fountain City, Wis., in Construction-Operations Division.

The luncheon in their honor was held in Minneapolis on May 7, 1999. A profile of each will be in the June Crosscurrents.



**US Army Corps of Engineers.**

St. Paul District

*Crosscurrents* is an unofficial publication, authorized under the provisions of AR 360-81. It is published monthly by offset for the St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Editorial views and opinions are not necessarily those of the Corps of Engineers, nor of the Department of the Army.

*Crosscurrents*

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