

Employee Spotlight:

Brian Balukonis, Planning Division

Brian Balukonis is the Silver Jackets Coordinator and a Project Planner in the District's Planning Division. "Even USACE veterans ask me to explain my program, since it's relatively new, and different from other parts of our mission," said Balukonis. "Silver Jackets teams facilitate collaborative solutions to state flood risk priorities. My role involves initiating and supporting teams in the six New England states to gather many relevant state, federal, tribal, and local agencies to learn from one another and apply that knowledge to reduce the risk of flooding and other natural disasters. The idea is that no single agency has all the answers, but leveraging multiple programs and perspectives helps form cohesive solutions."

"Based on my involvement with Silver Jackets, I volunteered for the Long Term Recovery Coordinator role in the New England District Area of Responsibility," he said. "I will represent the District within the Natural Disaster Recover Framework addressing infrastructure systems identified for long term recovery."

According to Balukonis, "This has already been rewarding as the training included the recovery process for a New York City table top exercise, Operation Gotham Shield, in which an urban nuclear bomb was detonated in the New York/New Jersey area."

Balukonis is also a Project Manager in the Continuing Authorities Program for several Civil Works projects.

Though employed at the District since April 2016, Balukonis's face and name are long familiar to many. Not only had he worked as a consultant on USACE contracts, building his knowledge of standards and protocols, but his leadership within the Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) helped build relationships.

"SAME feels like family to me, since it's how others coached and advised me on my career and development, and how I now pay it forward helping people understand how military engineering ties in with public infrastructure, national security, ethics and more. Of course, we have fun too, from golfing to clambakes."

Having become involved with the SAME Boston Post right after college, Balukonis aided organizational development by launching its website and digital communications, key to its success in attracting and retaining the next generation of engineers and allied professionals. He currently serves on the SAME National Board of Direction and SAME National Executive Committee on his own time.

Balukonis earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Earth Science from Norwich University, the nation's oldest private military college, in Northfield, Vermont.

He is a professional geologist and the SAME Fellow. He enjoys cooking, craft beers, family gatherings and traveling. He recently traveled to Iceland with his wife, Dr. Wendi Goldsmith. "As two married geologists, we were basically in the Disney World of Earth Science, the Land of Fire and Ice," he said. "We collected rucksacks of rock samples, toured glacial lagoons, visited extinct and active volcanos, and admired geothermal springs—including one where the world's deepest borehole extracts supercritical heat from the magma layer to produce power."

Another life highlight was working in New York City from 2008 to 2010 on the 7 Line Subway Extension, mapping bedrock to vouch for the stability of the largest cavern below Manhattan. Of the experience he said, "My 15 minutes of fame was on History Channel's reality show, 'Sand Hogs.'"