

Photo by John Reese

Volunteers take part in a cleanup of the Santa Ana River Marsh Sept. 23 in Newport Beach, California, for National Public Lands Day. NPLD is the largest annual volunteer hands-on restoration activity of its kind.

## Corps, Newport Beach partner for cleanup at Santa Ana River Marsh

BY JOHN REESE  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — On a picture-perfect sunny California morning, representatives with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District and the City of Newport Beach hosted a cleanup event at the Santa Ana River Marsh in Newport Beach.

About 60 volunteers participated in the Sept. 23 event, removing trash and debris, with security and support accessing the site provided by the Orange County Sheriff's Department.

The cleanup of the 92-acre saltwater marsh area was in recognition of National Public Lands Day.

Corps Park Rangers set up shade with water safety information and a table with Bobber the Water Safety Dog coloring books that proved popular with the youngest volunteers.

Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander,

along with the district park rangers, biologists, division leaders and office workers combed the marsh to remove tons of debris by hand from the ecologically delicate bird nesting area.

Baker said he found several tennis balls — which was unusual, considering there are no nearby tennis courts — as well as ping pong balls and numerous plastic bottle caps.

The Corps and Newport Beach officials were partnering to clear debris and trash from the salt marsh for several reasons, he said.

"The first is pretty obvious, it's making a difference for our public lands, cleaning them up and being stewards of our environment, where we exist and live," Baker said. "The second reason is almost a spiritual thing. It's that sense of service, and this is a way to help our fellow man. For me, that's a

## LA District planners highlight Corps' Environmental Justice, Engineering with Nature

BY BROOKS O. HUBBARD IV,  
LA DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES — Two U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Planning Division team members participated in the 2023 State of the Los Angeles River Watershed Symposium Sept. 19 at the Autry Museum of the American West in Los Angeles.

The symposium brought together governments, non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, scientists, academics, agency representatives, land managers and other interested parties to discuss emerging concerns about the Los Angeles River in the era of climate change.

Megan Whalen, a watershed program manager with the LA District and urban waters ambassador, was one of four panelists who participated in a breakout session titled, "Weathering Change," in which audience participants discussed climate impacts on communities and strategies for resilience.

"I think the real emphasis today was on environmental justice and working with communities that will be even more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change," she said. "Severe weather has the ability to impact all communities; however, vulnerable communities are going to be even more at risk."

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin or income regarding the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies with no group bearing a disproportionate burden of environmental harms and risks.

For the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, environmental justice and dispropo-

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## For meritorious service



Photos by Dena O'Dell

Lt. Col. Charlie Jones, contracting officer and East Branch team leader for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, receives the Meritorious Service Medal from Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander, during a ceremony for Jones Sept. 25 at the district's headquarters in downtown Los Angeles.

During his time with the LA District, Jones spearheaded organizational changes to include the hiring of four new Department of the Army civilians. His talent and leadership drove the success of his branch during the third and fourth quarter of fiscal year 2022 by personally managing more than 200 contracting actions valued at more than \$400 million. Jones is departing the LA District for Fort Sam Houston. In addition to the Meritorious Service Medal, Baker also presented Jones with an LA District commander's coin for excellence. Best of luck, Lt. Col. Jones! Thank you for your service with the LA District!

## Official publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District

September 2023  
Volume 46, Issue 9

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The *NewsCast/e* is published monthly under the provisions of AR 360-1 for the employees and extended engineer family of the Los Angeles District, USACE.

Views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the district or of the Department of Defense.

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## National Preparedness Month, hiring, FY23 is a wrap!

Hello, SPL Team!

It's the end of September, and we've got a LOT going on in our area of operations!

### NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

September is National Preparedness Month. In the Army and specifically in USACE, we are always prepared(!), but this occasion is a great reminder to ensure you and your loved ones know what to do in the event of a disaster; natural (earthquakes, wildfires, floods, hurri-quakes, ...) or manmade (terrorism, cyberattacks, power outages, water shortages, ...).

The question is unfortunately not IF a disaster will strike, but WHEN. We can't predict this, but the steps you and your loved ones take before, during and immediately after a disaster can make all the difference.

There are excellent resources out there to help you prepare for nearly any type of emergency. Check out [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) — a comprehensive website from FEMA and the Department of Homeland



COL. ANDREW BAKER  
LA DISTRICT COMMANDER

Security that can guide you in planning for different types of emergencies, creating emergency kits, steps to protect pets, and how to set up alerts. Additionally, we are in hurricane season through Nov. 30; our Emergency Management Branch is always looking for volunteers to fill its ranks for planning and response teams

that deploy on a rotational basis to wherever they are needed across the country.

Although National Preparedness Month wraps up soon, it's not too late to make the time to be prepared!

### HIRING OPPORTUNITIES

As we head in to FY24, there are several recruiting opportunities coming up! These include the Great Minds in STEM Conference, scheduled for Oct. 11-14 at the Pasadena Convention Center Exhibit Hall; Advancing Indigenous People in STEM Fair, scheduled for Oct. 19-21 in Spokane, Washington; Society of Women Engineers Career Fair, scheduled for Oct. 26-28 in LA; and the Fall UCLA Engineer Career Fair, slated for Oct. 31 in

LA. These are not the only way to find qualified, capable people to join SPL, but they are a great way! So, please don't miss out on these opportunities.

If you are looking to fill a specific position or just want to learn more, please reach out to Ms. Emily Wang, our workforce management administrator and/or Steve Dwyer, our recruiting and internship guru!

### FISCAL YEAR END

We are in the home stretch of a phenomenal FY23! Please keep focus on schedules and commitments and continue to communicate as we wrap it all up. It is amazing to think about all the mighty Los Angeles District has accomplished this year for the benefit of our partners, military, and the citizens of Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah. It all boils down to **SAFELY** delivering **QUALITY** programs and projects **ON-TIME** and **WITHIN BUDGET**. Thank you for enabling this!

Proud to be SPL!

Col. Andrew Baker

## Around the District

"The Corps is an amazingly diverse agency. From civil works projects, waterways, dams and levees to military projects and construction that literally build the foundation for our nation's defense both here stateside and abroad."

Sam just returned for the Polacca Wash Excavation Project on the Hopi Reservation in Arizona. He has been with the Corps for three years. Sam is a Marine veteran.



Sam Law  
Engineering Technician





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re-energizing kind of thing.”

Baker said he personally appreciated having the opportunity to take part in the cleanup.

“We get really busy in the day-to-day, and, in the Corps, we’re all serving our fellow man, all the time. That’s what we do, that’s what our job is, frankly.”

As Baker filled his bag with trash, he shared his own scouting experience with Boy Scouts Thomas Eng and Patrick Larose, who volunteered with Troop 93, out of Fullerton, Calif.

The scouts said they participated to do their part to assist the Corps.

“If we don’t do it, eventually, it’ll be full of trash,” Larose said. “It kinda’ already is.”

Some volunteers arrived at sunrise to participate, before moving on to other activities.

“This morning, we had folks come in to register early,” said Robert Moreno, LA District senior park ranger. “In fact, some of the people came in and wanted to work immediately, so we registered them, gave them the safety speech and sent them out.”

Picking up trash and pulling weeds was LA District biologist Tiffany Armenta, who put together planning documents that will guide the Corps’ stewardship of the marsh, including an especially sensitive section fenced-off to protect a nesting area from humans and dogs.

After advising volunteers not to uproot any vegetation, she returned to the trash drop off with two full bags of *Dittrichia graveolens*, or stinkwort, a sticky invasive species that earns its name.

“I pulled out about 90 percent of it,” she

said with a laugh. “I love this place. This is one of my favorite Army Corps’ sites. It is super unique to Southern California because there are just not a lot of coastal salt marshes remaining, and we’re lucky to manage and operate this area, so it’s a special place to me.”

Armenta said the marsh is home to many different species. As she removed a piece of trash at the water’s edge, she uncovered a whole bunch of crabs.

“It’s just wonderful to come out here and help preserve the habitat that is already hosting that many species, and to pull out some invasive weeds, that are poking around here and there,” she said, as she took a sprig of stinkwort from a bag for others to sniff. “I told everyone to stay out of the vegetation, and here I was pulling stuff out.”

A few of the more interesting items found, included a vintage Elvis cassette tape; a long shovel; a large metal boat dock; and a message in a bottle, addressed to a departed dog. The bottle was found by Cal State Fullerton roommates Emily Moreno and Elleanna Mauck. The message was written by a grieving pet owner to her dog, Hudson.

“He was with her for over 12 years,” Mauck said. “She said to have fun with his friends. I’ve never actually found a note in a bottle before.”

The message included the names of Hudson’s friends and paw prints, Emily Moreno added.

“It was really sweet when we saw it,” she said. “You see (messages in bottles) in the movies, but you never really see where it goes, and here’s one in the Santa Ana River Marsh.”

Rubyann Prout, LA District Contracting team lead for the district, also volunteered during the event.

“I think it’s a nice day to come out and clean up to help the environment,” Prout said, as she hauled her bags of trash to the assembly area.

Mark Cohen, chief of the LA District’s Operations Division – who frequently participates in cleanups of Corps-owned and operated lands – said it was a great community event, which brought together the public, federal government and local agencies, while also doing something good for the environment and for Corps’ projects.

Cohen filled his trash bag with mostly plastic bottles and bottlecaps, and also found a bicycle basket he described as “something Dorothy used in the ‘Wizard of Oz.’”

“I think a lot of this washed in (following Tropical Storm Hilary). It’s the nature of being so close to the river channel and to the ocean,” Cohen said. “I’ve seen a lot of beach-related debris, so I’m not surprised that would just wash right in here, unfortunately.

“I look at it, and it makes me just want to keep going with the cleanup effort because this natural area is so unique in Southern California – these coastal wetlands, and I’m so proud that the Army Corps of Engineers gets to play a role in protecting them.”

Cohen described his volunteerism as a good feeling and spoke with several civilian volunteers from the local community.

“They want to help, and it’s great for us to

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Photo by John Reese

LA District commander Col. Andrew Baker picks up trash Sept. 23 with scouts and adult leaders of Boy Scout Troop 93, Fullerton, in Newport Beach, California, in observance of National Public Lands Day. Volunteers combed the salt marsh to remove more than two tons of debris from the ecologically delicate Santa Ana River Marsh, a biodiverse area rivaling a rain forest in its productivity.

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meet them, so that we know who we’re helping care for, and they know who is helping steward these lands,” he said. “Overall, just a feel-good event.”

Biologist Jon Rishi said there were many species present, such as the endangered and secretive light-footed ridgeways rail, the threatened California Belding savanna sparrow, California least tern, western snowy plover and the California gnat catcher, but most people don’t know about salt marshes.



Photo by John Reese

Cal State Fullerton roommates Elleanna Mauck, left, and Emily Moreno, right, display a message in a bottle found during a volunteer cleanup at the Santa Ana River Marsh Sept. 23 in Newport Beach, California. The message was written by a grieving pet owner to her dog. During the event, 54 volunteers came out to support the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the City of Newport Beach to protect the environment.



Photo by John Reese

Civilian and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers volunteers pose for a photo at the conclusion of a cleanup of the Santa Ana River Marsh Sept. 23 in Newport Beach, California, after removing 2.5 tons of debris from 92 acres in two hours with 54 volunteers. The combined 108 volunteer hours adds up to \$3,434.40 in savings to the government.

“Salt marshes are a rare, kind of a disappearing habitat,” he said. “It’s one of the most productive habitats on Earth. The productivity rivals a tropical rain forest. There’s a lot of productivity and a lot of biodiversity. This sort of habitat supports a lot of species.”

He pointed out a nesting platform high atop a tall pole that is home to an osprey, a raptor sometimes called the “fish eagle.” The big bird watched the cleanup from above, between foraging flights.

Sylvia Bissonnette, local community mem-

ber from Newport Shores, said she was aware of the trash in the marsh because she and her husband spotted it during paddleboarding.

“We paddle out here, we kayak, so we see a lot of trash,” she said. “It was our opportunity to come out here and pick up trash.”

Bissonnette noted that while Tropical Storm Hilary left a lot of debris in the protected area, she believes that much of what she collected came from homeowner’s decks at the water’s edge, such as deck chairs, pool covers and a heavy piece from a boat’s stern.

At the conclusion of the event, more than two tons of junk had been removed – bit by bit — by the volunteers, according to Nick Figueroa, LA District park ranger.

“We got 2.5 tons of debris removed from 92 acres in two hours, with 54 volunteers,” he said. “We accumulated 108 hours, which adds up to \$3,434.40 in savings to the government.”

Brian Paul, Natural Resource program manager with the LA District’s Operations Division, stationed himself at the entrance to the salt marsh, so he could open the gate and personally express his gratitude to those who gave up their Saturday morning.

“I want to thank everybody here for their commitment to environmental stewardship,” he said. “Every little thing that we do to clean up the environment helps out with endangered species and species of concern.”

Participants each received a gift before they left – a pass good for any federal or national park.

National Public Lands Day is the largest annual volunteer hands-on restoration activity of its kind. During the event, thousands of volunteers across the nation come out to show their support at more than 70 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ projects.





**Megan Whalen, center, watershed program manager with the LA District, speaks with audience members during panel discussions at the 2023 State of the Los Angeles River Watershed Symposium Sept. 19 at the Autry Museum of the American West, Los Angeles, California.**

Photos by Brooks O. Hubbard IV

#### [‘JUSTICE’ continued from Page 1](#)

portionate impacts to Justice40 communities are considered throughout the agency’s Civil Works programs and in all phases of project planning and decision-making.

Environmental justice is when everyone receives the same degree of protection and equal access to Civil Works programs and services to achieve a healthy environment in which to live, learn and work.

“So, in being here today, we not only are able to represent what we do,” Whalen said, “but also (represent) the partnership that we have with the Council of Watershed Health.”

A poster session followed the evening reception at the symposium, where attendees were able to walk around and discuss various collaborating agencies’ posters.

Manya Singh, a study manager for environmental justice initiatives with the LA District, presented her environmental justice and engineering with nature posters and discussed the Corps’ goals in achieving Justice40, as well as the Corps work with engineering with nature.

“We’re here today to talk about these two initiatives and to indicate to our friends and partners these are two initiatives that we are looking for new connections and new opportunities to work on,” Singh said.

Singh’s environmental justice poster shows a recently developed map of the district’s area of operations, with various overlays that highlighted the environmental justice outreach con-

ducted in local communities in 2023.

Singh’s engineering with nature poster was highlighted in the symposium’s pamphlet.

“I did spend a lot of time on this poster,” Singh said. “Engineering with nature is an initiative out of (the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Research and Development Center), and, previously, the San Francisco District was considered the proving ground ... recently the whole (South Pacific Division) has become a proving ground. That includes the Los Angeles District, so we are trying to let our communi-

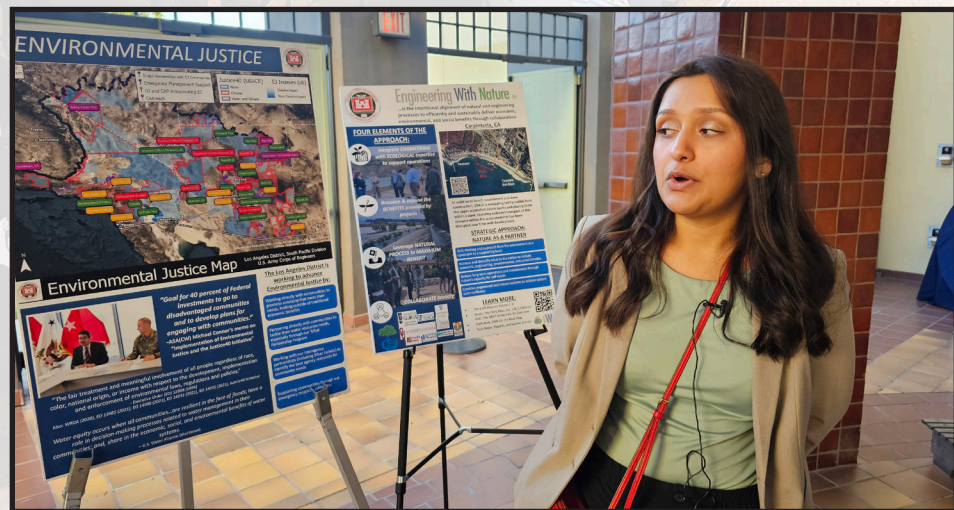
ties know we are really pushing the engineering with nature approach. This poster highlights the four elements of the approach.”

*For more information about the Corps’ environmental justice and engineering with nature initiatives, visit:*

<https://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental-Justice/>

<https://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Projects-Studies/>

<https://ewn.erd.dren.mil/about/>



**Manya Singh, an Environmental Justice study manager with the LA District, talks with attendees about her U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Environmental Justice and Engineering with Nature posters at the 2023 State of the Los Angeles River Watershed Symposium Sept. 19 at the Autry Museum of the American West, Los Angeles.**

## Corps team meets with partners for Little Colorado River at Winslow project

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAN COLLINS  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PHOENIX — Representatives with the City of Winslow, Navajo County and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District met Sept. 19 to discuss the Little Colorado River at Winslow Flood-Control project in Winslow, Arizona.

The project received more than \$65 million in federal funding in 2022 through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law — formerly known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act — and is being fully funded through design and construction.

“The existing levee system doesn’t provide the flood-risk reduction for which it was designed,” said Michele Bick, LA District project manager. “The agenda encompassed in-depth discussions on work breakdowns by discipline, project schedule, budget considerations and outlined the subsequent steps in our project trajectory.”

About 5,000 people in Winslow — families who live, work and call the area their home — along with critical infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, nursing homes and utilities, are located within a 100-year flood plain and are at the potential risk of flooding.



**Tim Westover, Public Works director with the City of Winslow, left, points out a part of the Little Colorado River at Winslow Flood-Control project during a tour of the site Sept. 19 in Winslow, Arizona.**

This is largest public works project in northeastern Arizona that will help protect thousands of Winslow residents, protect infrastructure, and allow for new industry and construction in the area, according to the Navajo County government’s website.

“I can’t express in words how wonderful

this is to myself, our team, the community and our surrounding neighbors,” said Roberta “Birdie” Cano, mayor for the City of Winslow. “This will guide us to the next steps — to the beginning, where we break ground. We have all dreamed about this moment for more than 15 years, and we are so thankful.”



**David Coolidge, city manager with the City of Winslow, center, discusses the Little Colorado River at Winslow Flood-Control project with members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Los Angeles District and others during a tour of the project Sept. 19 in Winslow, Arizona.**





In this file photo, a contractor uses a safety harness while working on a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers bridge.

Photo by John MacPherson

# What to know about personal fall arrest harnesses

## LA DISTRICT SAFETY OFFICE

Your personal fall arrest harness is designed to stop your fall long before you hit the ground, thereby saving your life. But did you know that if your harness does not fit correctly and is not equipped with a suspension trauma device, you'll have between five and 30 minutes to be rescued before passing out and suffering serious, even fatal, injuries?

Suspension trauma is a deadly phenomenon associated with the compression of the femoral arteries on the inside of your thighs. During a fall, the leg straps of your harness restrict deoxygenated blood from returning to your heart. Without a proper fit, suspension trauma straps and training on both, you may not survive.

Always ensure you are using the correct style of lanyard with an approved anchor

point. Make sure the lanyard is inspected before each use and that it has been inspected by a competent person in accordance with the manufacturer's requirements (typically every six months). Not sure about any of this? Don't use the fall protection!

Harnesses, like clothes, come in different sizes. One size does not fit all. Be sure your harness fits well by making sure the shoulder straps cannot be lifted freely, that the chest buckle is located over your sternum and the leg straps are snug but still allow for four fingers to slide between the strap and your leg. The dorsal ring should be centered between your shoulder blades — no higher or lower. Get a buddy to help you ensure you have a good fit before use.

Be sure your harness is equipped with sus-

pension trauma straps. These straps, which you lower immediately after your fall is arrested and place your feet inside, relieve the pressure on the femoral arteries and allow deoxygenated blood to return to the heart. Without these, blood will pool in your legs, cause you to pass out and possibly lead to death.

It all starts with training! All employees must receive end-user training from a competent person in fall protection. The requirements to become a competent person are higher than you might think. Never try to substitute experience with training — just because you've been wearing fall protection for years is no guarantee you'll know how to use it correctly when the time comes. Ask questions, inspect your fall protection and ensure you're trained to use it before you put it on.

# Cal Poly Pomona Career Fair



Steve Dwyer, LA District Navigation Branch chief, speaks to a potential future employee about working at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District during a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, or STEM, Career Fair Sept. 22 at Cal Poly Pomona in Pomona, California.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY EMILY WANG  
WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Representatives with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District met with students and potential future employees during a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, or STEM, Career Fair Sept. 22 at Cal Poly Pomona in Pomona, California.

During the event, representatives with the Corps' LA District met with students with STEM majors and provided information about working for the Corps, as well as gathered resumes from the students.

More than 40 resumes were collected at the event — 20 from recent graduates and 21 from current students.

Those participating from the Corps' LA District, included Christopher Romero, project manager with PPMD; Manya Singh, Planning Division study manager; Frank Montelongo civil engineer; Chris Chabot, biologist with the Planning Division; Steve Dwyer, Navigation Branch chief; and Emily Wang with the Workforce Management Office.



Members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District gather for a photo during a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, or STEM, Career Fair Sept. 22 at Cal Poly Pomona in Pomona, California.



**TODOS SOMOS,  
SOMOS UNO:**

**WE ARE ALL,  
WE ARE ONE**

**NATIONAL  
HISPANIC  
HERITAGE  
MONTH**

**SEP 15 - OCT 15**

