

# Falls City Engineer

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District

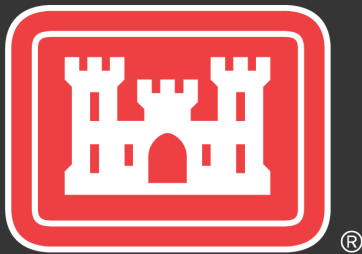
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Louisville VA Medical Center reaches  
“Topping Out” milestone





## Falls City Engineer

Vol. 15, Issue 6

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*On the cover: The final steel beam for the Louisville VA Medical Center is hoisted into place Nov. 30, 2023 – symbolizing the completion of steel placement. (USACE Photo By Katie Chandler)*

 **Please conserve:  
Think before you print.**

# Commander's Comments

Team Louisville,

'Tis the season! As the year comes to a close, I want to say thank you for your hard work and dedication. I hope you are able to spend quality time relaxing with friends and family during the holidays and recharge during your well-deserved leave.

The district has seen a busy first quarter as we continue to engineer solutions to our Nation's toughest challenges. Last month, we were able to celebrate a major construction milestone with a "topping out" ceremony at the construction site of the Louisville VA Medical Center. The state-of-the-art facility will provide world-class healthcare for over 45,000 veterans in Kentucky and Southern Indiana.

Louisville continues to lead the way on so many fronts! Kudos to our teammates who are using innovative approaches to maintain aging infrastructure on the Ohio River. The Heavy Capacity Fleet completed the J.T. Myers Main Chamber Miter Gate Rehab Project in early November, with a 12-week duration. The project was a monumental success compared to the 18-week duration of a previously-completed similar project in the Louisville District. We must not forget about the communities on Maui that were ravaged by wildfires this year, and our team members' selfless dedication to provide help to those affected with debris removal, public affairs expertise, and other assistance. We are thankful to have such an amazing team of skilled employees willing to give their time and talent, especially during the holiday season.

Please enjoy the November/December issue of the Falls City Engineer where we highlight several of our people and projects to include: The Louisville VA Medical Center Topping Out Ceremony, the completion of J.T. Myers Locks and Dam rehabilitation project, Fort McCoy's new Collective Training Campus, an inside



**Col. L. Reyn Mann**  
*Commander and District Engineer  
Louisville District  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*

look at our Office of Counsel's Open House, a highlight of our newly-appointed Engineering Division Program Manager for the National Roofing Program...and more!

I want to end where I started—by expressing my appreciation for your dedication, loyalty, and commitment. Remember to be safe while celebrating and enjoying time with family and friends. I am looking forward to tackling new challenges with you in the coming new year as we continue to deliver for our partners and stakeholders. May 2024 be your best year yet!

Building Strong... Together!  
**LOUISVILLE PROUD!**  
Col. L. Reyn Mann

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## USACE successfully completes gate rehab project at John T. Myers



The Great Lakes and Ohio River Division's Regional Rivers Repair Fleet work to rehab the miter gates in the 1,200-foot lock chamber at John T. Myers Locks and Dam on the Ohio River, Sept. 12, 2023.



Work progresses at John T. Myers Locks and Dam in Mt. Vernon, Indiana, Oct. 22, 2023.

*Abby Korfhage, public affairs*

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District, in partnership with The Great Lakes and Ohio River Division's Regional Rivers Repair Fleet, also known as R3F, recently completed rehabbing the miter gates in the 1,200-foot lock chamber at John T. Myers Locks and Dam on the Ohio River in Mt. Vernon, Indiana. The lock chamber officially reopened to navigation traffic Nov. 9, 2023.

The main chamber closed in mid-August as part of the miter gate rehabilitation project. The temporary closure allowed the R3F's heavy capacity fleet to rehab the miter gates and related equipment on each end of the chamber to increase reliability and efficiency on the inland waterways system.

"This concluded 81 days of effort from the Louisville District and R3F and greatly reduces Ohio River System reliability risk," said Waylon Humphrey, Louisville District Operations Division chief. "The project didn't come without challenges,

but the team was adaptable and persevered, working multiple weeks of two, 12-hour shifts to minimize delays."

The \$13.3 million project was completed in just under 12 weeks, a full six weeks ahead of the original 18-week estimate.

"I want to recognize our team who continues to push for positive change, especially our Project Engineer Travis McKim, who has been onsite throughout and was instrumental to this success," Humphrey added.

The project included rehabilitating all four miter gate leaves in the primary chamber; replacing anchor arms, seals, pintle balls, bushings, and all new casting bolts contact blocks, five floating mooring bitt tracks in the primary chamber and dewatering and inspecting the auxiliary chamber.

"During the 2020 dewatering and multiple dive inspections, we found that the pintle casting nuts/bolts were in bad condition," McKim said. "The condition

of these, along with the gates not being rehabbed since 2001 (lower end) and 2003 (upper end), led us to perform the miter gate rehabs."

The team intends to take lessons learned from this project and apply them to the plan for Smithland Locks and Dam's dewatering project tentatively scheduled for 2024.

"It is a similar scoped project with a reduced schedule, so I'm hoping that we can optimize what we learned at J.T. Myers to make it successful at Smithland as well," McKim said.

McKim said he feels relief and is very proud that the project is successfully complete.

"With it being my first dewatering, I was nervous and stressed to say the least. After watching the first vessel lock through, I felt a major sense of accomplishment that will be hard to match," McKim added. "The project was a huge accomplishment for the whole team, and a step in the right direction for the maintenance program."

## Louisville VA Medical Center reaches “Topping Out” milestone

*Michael Maddox, public affairs*

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District, along with partners from the Department of Veterans Affairs and Walsh-Turner Joint Venture, marked a major construction milestone for the new Louisville VA Medical Center during a Topping Out ceremony onsite Nov. 30, 2023.

Audience members, including local and state officials as well as several special guests, watched as the final steel beam for the medical facility was hoisted into place – symbolizing the completion of steel placement.

During the ceremony, Brig. Gen. Mark Quander, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, discussed his pride in USACE’s role in the construction of the new facility.

“From what was once a grassy field, every inch of this site has transformed as you progress on the construction of this valuable addition to this city – enhancing [the] VA’s ability to provide top-notch healthcare for the veterans it will serve,” he said. “The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is proud to deliver this state-of-the-art facility providing world-class healthcare for over 45,000 veterans in Kentucky and Southern Indiana.”

“It takes a team, and I am proud of our partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs demonstrating our commitment to caring for those we serve. We’re pleased to strengthen this partnership – delivering world-class healthcare facilities for our veterans and their families across the United States,” he added. “Topping out [of] the structural beam is a celebration of a time-honored tradition symbolizing our commitment to each other and the backbone of this structure. As we move into the more complex features of the medical center and support facilities, I hope the spirit of teamwork we show today continues for successful project completion. I look forward to the day that the doors are opened to those first veterans.”

Ms. Tambour Eller, Chief of Interagency and International Service; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Headquarters, said the Louisville VA Medical Center continues to build on the Corps’ commitment to the VA and veterans.

“For close to a decade, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs to deliver the finest medical facilities that provide elite care for our nation’s treasured heroes, our veterans,” she said in a statement.

Commonwealth of Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear said the building of the Louisville VA Medical Center helps keep a promise to area veterans.

“This new Louisville VA Medical Center is so important to the people that call this region home and our entire commonwealth. Right here, we are building the most state-of-the-art veterans healthcare facility in the country, right here in Louisville, Kentucky,” he said. “This project keeps a focus on two of my highest priorities as governor, serving our veterans and providing high-quality healthcare. This new Louisville VA Medical Center is keeping a sacred trust that we have with our military veterans – when they sacrifice for us, we take care of them.”

The \$900 million project includes the construction of a new 910,115 square-foot medical center, parking structures, a 42,205 square-foot central utility plant, roadways, sidewalks, and other site improvements.

The new 104-bed, full-service hospital will provide world-class healthcare by integrating modern patient-centered care concepts to provide the best possible care for veterans. In addition, to specifically address the needs of women veterans, the new hospital will include a Women’s Health Clinic with four Patient Aligned Care Teams.

The project designed by URS-Smith Group Joint Venture is being constructed by Walsh-Turner Joint Venture II, Chicago, Illinois.

Construction is anticipated to be complete in 2026.



The final steel beam for the Louisville VA Medical Center is hoisted into place Nov. 30, 2023 – symbolizing the completion of steel placement.



Brig. Gen. Mark C. Quander, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, signs the beam before it is placed on the new Louisville VA Medical Center.

*Michael Maddox*

*Katie Chandler*

# Phase 1 of Canandaigua VA Medical Center Project complete

*Michael Maddox, public affairs*

Another milestone was recently reached on the Canandaigua VA Medical Center construction project in Canandaigua, Ny, as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers team was able to turnover the Phase 1 facilities back to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The work taking place at the Canandaigua VA Medical Center is currently allotted into three phases. Phase 1 included demolition of Building 2, construction of an outpatient clinic, a chilled water/emergency power plant, new power and water systems and temporary laboratory and main kitchen to support ongoing healthcare operations throughout the nearly six-year construction period.

Gerry DiPaola, USACE Project Manager for the Canandaigua VA Medical Center construction, attributed success thus far to the teamwork and dedication of the entire project delivery team.

“Over the past six years, the number of team members working tirelessly towards this milestone, including those that have moved on from the project, is impressive. They have overcome many challenges to ensure the work in Phase 1 was able to be completed,” he said. “I want to acknowledge the efforts of our Construction and Facilities Management partners, working together, to bring this project to reality for the veterans of the Finger Lakes region.”

Matthew Lowe, Chief of the Veterans Affairs Division for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District, agreed that partnership has been key to the success of the project.

“Renovating and upgrading a VA medical center influences multiple stakeholders with a variety of interests and issues to navigate. It was very encouraging



*Construction in Building 2 of the Canandaigua VA Medical Center as construction neared completion.*

to have everyone involved working together to ensure success for this project,” he added. “The VA team, both CFM and the Canandaigua Medical Center, have been instrumental in working through challenges and unknowns throughout these projects. I believe any success on the project is directly tied to the partnership having a mutual interest and overall goal of delivering for our veterans.”

DiPaola said there are many issues that need to be considered when working on an active medical facility campus.

“One key consideration is to be able to have an active functioning medical center, in other words, maintaining patient services and seeing them with minimal disruption to their normal routine while the work was taking place,” he said. “It’s a great accomplishment - keeping the existing facility up in operation while constructing new infrastructure and renovating the existing.”

The work being done at the Canandaigua VA Medical Center is possible due to recommendations from the Department of Veterans Affairs Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services study, which identified that some decades-old facilities were being underutilized.

“This project enhances the use of the current VA Medical Center in Canandaigua, Ny. A study was conducted by the VA and it identified an underutilization of facilities at Canandaigua. To improve services and veteran access, planners at the Department of Veterans Affairs called for a modern and consolidated 21st-century outpatient clinic along with a community living center complex, to include cottages and

a community center, to provide housing to veterans that would benefit from an assisted living type of environment,” DiPaola explained. “So basically, the project improves the delivery of healthcare by consolidating infrastructure and clinical services under one roof and enhances the assisted living care type of facility.”

Lowe said he is proud to be a part of this project that will benefit thousands of veterans for years to come.

“For over 25 years, I’ve had the pleasure to be involved with new construction and renovated facilities and infrastructure projects on various military installations, but VA projects are special. You are proud to be part of something that supports and takes care of our veterans,” he shared. “In a small way, all of us working these projects get to serve the men and women who were willing to sacrifice it all for our country. It’s humbling and I’m grateful to be part of what we’re doing to benefit veterans.”

The Canandaigua VA Medical Center project includes the construction of a new 84,000 square foot outpatient clinic, a new chiller/emergency generator plant, renovations to 85,000 square feet of existing facility space, and upgrades of existing roadways and site utilities as well as the construction of eight Cottages comprising 96 individual rooms in a neighborhood like setting and a community center.

These state-of-the-art facilities were designed to blend seamlessly into the existing historical campus and provide world-class healthcare to approximately 65,000 veterans living in the greater Finger Lakes region.



*The Atrium/Patient Intake area of Building 2 at the Canandaigua VA Medical Center.*

# Fort McCoy's new Collective Training Campus is well underway

Abby Korfhage, public affairs

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District is currently managing the design and construction of the Collective Training Campus at Fort McCoy Reserve Center in Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

Once completed, the new \$190 million campus will include four barracks, a brigade headquarters and two additional buildings to serve as officer quarters.

The new campus will serve those in transit to and from deployments and for annual training purposes, where servicemen and servicewomen could stay anywhere from a few days to a couple of weeks.

"These barracks, these officers' quarters, these brigade headquarters are set up where people can come in and use these facilities while they train on the various ranges around the area and whatever else they may have to do depending on their MOS (military occupational specialty)," said Jason Cain, Louisville District project manager. "We talked about this when we were designing the brigade headquarters; they may have a medical unit come in and need to rearrange furniture to accommodate their training needs. So, that is how the whole campus is designed to function."

In the past, Fort McCoy Reserve Center occupied barracks that were built during World War II.

"When I was coming back from deploying overseas with the National Guard in 2005, I came through Fort McCoy



Rendering of the Collective Training Campus in the 1600 Block at Fort McCoy Reserve Center in Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

and actually stayed in the old WWII barracks," Cain said. "Being part of the Fort McCoy project delivery team is very special to me."

Some of the old World War II-era barracks buildings have been moved and placed in open lots to make space for the new training campus.

Cain and Louisville District Project Engineer/Architect Michael Barry, along with project delivery teammates from the Omaha District and the U.S. Army Reserve Command, participated in an Industry Day Oct. 18, 2023, for the Collective Training Enlisted Barracks, the fourth and last of the new barracks as part of the Collective Training Campus.

"We enjoy working with USACE, we are directly linked with all of the project managers for all of our projects where Louisville runs and constructs our entire portfolio," said Gary Prime, USAR Command Construction Branch engineer.

The new east four-story Collective Training Enlisted Barracks, similar to the other three the Louisville District designed for the campus, will provide a 400-person open bay barracks for soldiers to participate in major exercises, annual training, battle assembly and mobilization training.

Each barracks building is approximately 62,000 square feet and made up of four sleeping bays per floor with each sleeping bay providing 24 single beds. The buildings have, or will have, a total of 16 sleeping bays, with leadership sleeping quarters accommodating two leadership beds per floor. Each floor provides Soldiers with a laundry facility, latrines with individual showers and a company storage area.

The Louisville District has been involved with this project since Dec. 2017 when the team initiated the design of the first barracks.

"The west Collective Training Enlisted Barracks was the first one we designed, and it was completed in April 2022," Barry said. "Then the north Collective Training Enlisted Barracks was just turned over to the base in April 2023."

The north barracks recently achieved a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design silver certification for new



Louisville District Project Manager Jason Cain (middle) and Omaha District Contracting Officer's Representative Ken Green (right) discuss the project with U.S. Army Reserve Command Construction Branch Engineer Gary Prime during a site visit Oct. 18, 2023.



Abby Korfhage

*The four-story, 62,000 square foot north Collective Training Enlisted Barracks was turned over to the base in April 2023, and includes four sleeping bays per floor with each sleeping bay providing 24 single beds and two leadership beds per floor.*

buildings and major renovations, meaning that the facility was designed and built with an emphasis on sustainable site design practices, energy efficiency, water conservation, sustainable materials and indoor environmental quality.

In addition to the west and north barracks, the south barracks building is in the initial phase of construction and is expected to be complete in October 2025, and the east barracks is currently in design and in process of solicitation.

The campus currently also includes a \$13.8 million brigade headquarters, commonly referred to as BHQ east. The new two-story, 23,000 square foot, two-brigade unit is more than 90 percent complete, and each floor provides the administrative and support spaces required for one full brigade unit with administrative offices, conference rooms and classrooms. Additionally, the BHQ east is the first building of the Collective Training campus to introduce renewable energy source in the form of photovoltaic panels on the roof. The BHQ building is scheduled to be completed in Feb. 2024. There are also plans for the campus to potentially include an additional two BHQs in the future.

In addition to the barracks and BHQ, both of the 48,500 square foot, four-story Collective Training Officers Quarters, commonly referred to as OQ, are in final design with construction anticipated to begin Summer 2024.

The projects, or buildings, that make up this new campus were all designed in-house, meaning USACE employees designed the facilities themselves.

“Our work at Fort McCoy is a perfect example of successful teamwork within our

in-house design team,” said Kevin Jasper, Louisville District Planning, Programs and Project Management Branch deputy chief. “We are very proud of our team for all their hard work at Fort McCoy.”

However, like with any project, there have been some challenges.

“The groundwater is always a problem, whether it is infiltration based just because the water table is so high in this part of Wisconsin,” Barry said.

During WWII, the area the campus is on now was originally a swampy area that was filled in, according to Ken Green, Omaha District Contracting Officer’s Representative who is onsite at Fort McCoy and oversees the construction of

these projects.

“Groundwater here has caused a few challenges for us. We raised the first building under construction two feet and never missed a beat,” Green said. “Once we started to build, we couldn’t keep up with the groundwater and that’s when I raised the concern. We had 20-30 people talking daily trying to figure out what we could do with a limited budget.”

The team took lessons learned from constructing the first barracks and applied them to the others to help ensure successful project delivery.

The entire campus is currently scheduled to be complete in spring 2028.



Abby Korfhage

*Louisville District Project Manager Jason Cain stands in front of Fort McCoy’s old barracks that were built during World War II. Cain stayed in these barracks when returning home from deploying overseas with the National Guard in 2005.*

# Public meeting held for Lockbourne Airforce Base

*Katie Newton, public affairs*

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District held a public meeting to accept comments on the Proposed Plan for a No Action preferred alternative at the Air Show Drop Zone on the former Lockbourne Air Force Base in Ohio Dec. 12, 2023.

The former Lockbourne Air Force Base is a formerly used defense site located in Columbus, Franklin and Pickaway Counties, Ohio where the district is currently conducting environmental investigations as part of the Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) program.

Based on the findings of the Remedial Investigation and previous studies,

USACE has determined the No Action preferred alternative is appropriate, as there is no unacceptable risk to human, health, safety and the environment from exposure to Military Munitions or Munitions Constituents (the metals and explosive chemicals that comprise munitions) associated with the activities of the former Air Show Drop Zone.

The public meeting gave stakeholders and members of the public an opportunity to comment on the proposed plan. Comments, which will be considered in the final decision-making process for the site, will be accepted until Jan. 8, 2024.



## PUBLIC NOTICE

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Louisville District announces the availability  
of the

### Proposed Plan

for the

### Air Show Drop Zone (Project 26)

at the former Lockbourne Air Force Base in  
Lockbourne, OH

To learn more, visit:

[www.lrl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Lockbourne-Air-Force-Base](http://www.lrl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Lockbourne-Air-Force-Base)

Submit comments by January 8 to:  
[lrl-pao@usace.army.mil](mailto:lrl-pao@usace.army.mil)

*Public notice for the proposed plan for the Air Show Drop Zone at the former Lockbourne Air Force Base.*

USACE Graphic

## Spotlight

# New geospatial resources help streamline decision making

*Kelsie Hall, public affairs*

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District employees, Christy Cox, operations division geographic information system technical lead, and Lance Filiatreau, engineering division GIS coordinator, hosted a lunch and learn event to celebrate GIS Day and introduce new geospatial resources to the workforce, Nov. 15, 2023.

“The GeoPortal Site Page is where [the district’s] GIS Community of Practice is able to create and share GIS content, such as web maps, scenes, apps and other geographic information with other team members in our organization,” said Lance



Katie Chandler

*Christy Cox, operations division geographic information system technical lead and Lance Filiatreau, engineering division GIS coordinator, host a lunch and learn Nov. 15, 2023.*

Filiatreau.. “The site improves access to quality data and powerful, but user-friendly GIS tools that everyone in the district should know.”

The platform benefits a wide variety of groups throughout the district, such as emergency management, engineering, operations (including park rangers), planning and real estate, according to Christy Cox.

“GIS technology enables us to capture, analyze, and visualize complex data, helping us make more informed decisions and improving our operations,” Cox said. “The goal is to make data trusted and accessible to all levels of users to make more educated decisions.”

The portal has already proved to be an invaluable resource for the Louisville District. By making dredging vessel data easily accessible via ArcPortal,

district employees can readily show leadership and headquarters where low water dredges are, what current low water restrictions are in place and stream gauge statuses happening in real time that allow leadership to get a more accurate picture of what is happening on the waterways.

“Posting the dredge location and the low water restrictions on the GeoPortal dashboard has helped keep other USACE stakeholders informed during our extreme low water event this year,” said Shawn Kenney, operations division technical support branch chief. “This has saved our team time in reporting and answering questions, and likely helped other members of the USACE team keep track of USACE resources to have a better big picture understanding of the event.”

“Sharing is caring,” said Cox. “If you care about your data, the more you share it, the more valuable it becomes.”



Katie Chandler

*USACE employees gather for a lunch and learn event to celebrate GIS Day and learn of new geospatial resources available to the workforce.*

# Impellizzeri fills key role delivering National Roofing Program



Katie Chandler

*Sheryll Impellizzeri, engineering program manager, leads a group discussion with members of the National Roofing Program training event at during a site visit to the Army Reserve Center in Jeffersonville, Indiana, Dec. 12, 2023.*

## *Katie Chandler, public affairs*

Sheryll Impellizzeri, the engineering lead and newly appointed engineering program manager for the National Roofing Program, began her tenure at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a Department of the Army intern in 2010. With a degree in mechanical engineering, she worked several years in mechanical design and in 2015 transferred to Engineering Management Branch, Reserves. Her career path included a significant role as the design manager and sustainability engineering program manager for the USACE, Japan District, where she dedicated three years of her career.

The Louisville District manages the National Roofing Program as part of its nation-wide Army Reserve mission. The NRP began in 1997 and was brought to the Louisville District in 2005 for nation-wide roll out and execution.

The NRP is a roof inspection and replacement program with the goal of minimizing cost through high-quality design and construction. Last year alone, the NRP replaced approximately 20 roofs at an estimated cost of nearly \$30 million.

Impellizzeri's goal as engineering's new program manager is to continue to build this program. She said she strives to bring coordination and communication between the customer and construction and provide clear expectations for each project.

"Sheryll has been instrumental in improving the communication with our customers," said Tim McClellan, engineering division reserves section chief, who also previously served as engineering's NRP program manager. "She has set up periodic meetings with the

stakeholders to ensure our focus aligns with their priorities. She has also significantly improved the programmatic communication in the district between engineering, construction, contracting, and project management. Sheryll has increased the focus on the program and future planning as opposed to a focus on just project execution."

Before Impellizzeri took on this key role within the NRP, she dedicated her time and experience to mentor others to bring versatility to the program.

"When I started back in 2020, I was brand new to the government," said Andrew Mccauley, Louisville District project engineer. "My supervisor at the time assigned me to work on the NRP Program despite having no prior experience with roofing. Through Sheryll

and Tim's mentorship, I was able to learn about the various roofing systems, their respective strengths and weaknesses, and which systems should be used based on the situation. In addition, being introduced to the NRP early on and being mentored by Tim and Sheryll really helped me with learning USACE processes and the different phases of designing and constructing a project. The experience I have gained from being on the NRP team, I believe, has made me a better and more versatile Project Engineer as the skills and knowledge I've gained translate directly to other vertical construction projects that I help to execute for our Army and Air Force Reserve customers."

With Impellizzeri's passion to build and better the program, she recently hosted the first program training event specifically for USACE NRP employees from all over the nation to learn from senior personnel on how to properly execute the program.

The Program Training held Dec. 12-14, 2023, covered the history and overview of the program, case studies and break downs of roof types and details. Participants also had the opportunity for open discussions and a site investigation visit to an Army Reserve Center in Jeffersonville, Indiana.

"I have a vested interest in ensuring this program maintains being a Winning Program," said Impellizzeri. "It allows opportunities for new engineers in Engineering and a partnership with Construction Division to execute this program for our stakeholder."



Katie Chandler

*USACE National Roofing Program personnel from all over the nation gather at an Army Reserve Center in Jeffersonville, Indiana, Dec. 12, 2023, for a site investigation as part of a three-day inaugural training event.*

# Retired Soldier continues to serve on Louisville VA project



*Dave Kopecky served as an enlisted Soldier and as a commissioned engineering officer during his 25 years of service to the nation. He currently serves as a project engineer and contracting officers representative on the Louisville VA Medical Center construction team.*

*Michael Maddox, public affairs*

Dave Kopecky has worn quite a few hats, and military ranks, since he first enlisted in the Army in 1996. He went on to serve for 25 years before retiring from military service. Now he continues to serve the nation and other veterans as member of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville VA Medical Center construction team as a



*Dave Kopecky is a project engineer and contracting officer's representative on the USACE Louisville VA Medical Center construction team.*

project engineer and contracting officer's representative.

This is Kopecky's second time working in the Louisville District. His first assignment with USACE was from June 2011 to June 2013 while he was still on active duty. During that time he served in the Fort Knox Resident Office as a project engineer for the Warrior Transition Unit construction project; then as the deputy chief of engineering division. He was later hired on to the Louisville VA Medical Center project as a project engineer in November 2021.

His journey with the military began when he enlisted as a Signals Intelligence Voice Interceptor/Linguist where he specialized in Arabic languages. He later decided he wanted to apply to become an officer and entered the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York in 1998, and later graduated as a commissioned engineering officer in 2002.

Kopecky's time in the Army allowed him to hone his skills as an engineer and a leader while serving in units like the 27th Engineer Battalion, Fort Liberty, North Carolina; the 173rd Infantry Brigade, in Vicenza, Italy, the 5th Special Forces Group, at Fort Campbell, Kentucky; U.S. Army Europe Headquarters, in Wiesbaden,

Germany and Special Operations Command Headquarters, at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. He also completed two deployments each to Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as a deployment to Syria, Turkey and Jordan.

"My military service has offered me the opportunity to be exposed to a wide variety of organizations and leadership styles, in a multitude of environments and mission sets," he said. "That has enabled me to better navigate the complexities of life - from a private focused on getting assigned tasks done well, and quickly, through being a field grade officer and planner trying to piece an entire Army's worth of resources together to figure out how to best enable an operation, I have learned how to filter out the less important and trivial matters that seem to bog down a lot of other people."

Kopecky said he feels his military experience has helped prepare him for his career with USACE and the Louisville District

"Spending those 25 years, working my way up to the Combatant Command level, I worked all levels of policy and system development and task tracking," he said. "I think it has been really beneficial as I was hired while this LOUVAMC project office was still getting staffed only weeks after the contractor received notice to proceed. I'd like to think I'm making a difference with helping develop the systems and resources to make the team better."

"I'm keeping an eye on the long-game, making sure anything that any system/process/procedure I touch gets improved upon in a way that will enable the VA Division to have tools that could be effectively used when they have to establish another project office in the future," he added.

Kopecky said being on the team bringing such a large project to life that will benefit thousands of veterans is allowing him to continue to serve.

"I am truly honored and humbled to be working with so many great people coming together to bring this new facility to life," he said. "I know it has been a long time coming, but now that it is underway it's great to see everyone dedicated to play their part to ultimately provide great care for all us veterans. There are not many mega projects out there, so I count myself lucky to be on one and part of this team."

# Office of Counsel hosts open house, recognizes employees

*Kelsie Hall, public affairs*

The faces in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District Office of Counsel, also known as OC, look very different than they did just two years ago. Since Spring 2022, the team has undergone its largest staff transition since 2018. Coupled with post-COVID turnover, Louisville District Counsel, Janice Lengel, knew something needed to be done to help her employees connect with other district employees and strengthen the relationships of project delivery teams.

“From observation, I knew OC wasn’t the only office that had significant staff turnover,” said Lengel. “My goal was to provide a networking opportunity in a collegial laid-back atmosphere not only for others in the district to meet OC staff but for them to meet new team members from other offices.”

Lengel decided the best way to accomplish this goal was to host an Open House event, which was held Nov. 15, 2023. OC staff pitched in to make sure the event was a success by clearing out old boxes and furniture, decorating, contributing refreshments and organizing a friendly, but competitive, chili cookoff.

Assistant District Attorney, Max Mohr, described the event as “an opportunity for USACE personnel to meet and get to know new members of Office of Counsel and further develop professional relationships.”

Upwards of 100 district employees, including middle management, stopped by OC throughout the day to mingle and enjoy the provided refreshments.

“The result was a great turnout,” said Assistant District Attorney, Robert D’Andrea. “I was able to meet clients from Contracting, Construction, Regulatory, Civil Works, Real Estate and Project Management, including those I’ve worked with before and others I hope to work with in the future.”

Significant staff turnover within OC presented significant workload challenges during Fiscal Year 2023. Many members of the OC staff volunteered to step outside of their practice areas and work extra hours to ensure the district met its execution goals.

“It was an ‘all hands-on deck’ and very tough fiscal year for the team; however, all OC team members in all practice

areas stepped up to help and worked collaboratively to get the job done,” added Lengel. “So, in addition to an Open House it was important for me to recognize staff with an awards ceremony which [Louisville District Commander] Col. Mann coined as ‘OC Appreciation Day.’”

Louisville District Commander Col. L. Reyn Mann presented the following awards to OC staff:

The Louisville District Commander’s Coin was presented to Mette Bahde, Thomas Barrett, Jackie Bassett, Tyler Belcher, Timothy Dodson, Timothy Eaddy, Benjamin Fitzgerald, Heather Foxx, Matthew George, Ruschell Greer, James Inman, Emily McKinney and Sarah Urchek.

The Louisville District Commander’s Award for Civilian Service was presented to Matthew George, Erin Konopa, Vicky Schneider and Lisa Taylor.

A Certificate of Appreciation was also presented to the Office of Counsel

Paraprofessional Team; Jackie Bassett, Timothy Dodson, Timothy Eaddy, Benjamin Fitzgerald, Ruschell Greer and Rebecca Stone.

The Great Lakes and Ohio River Division (LRD) Star Award was presented by Kristin Budzynski, Division Counsel, to Nicole Angst.

“I am so very proud of my team’s accomplishments,” Lengel said. “We ended the FY meeting execution goals in our various practice areas and with zero bid protests on the procurement actions. We review nearly all actions of the district. Thousands of actions come through OC from the other district offices for legal sufficiency determinations usually on very tight schedules. We serve on PDTs and are integral team players helping to develop solutions and prevent problems that could impact execution goals for the district. It turned out to be a banner year for us despite the staffing turmoil.”



Nicole Angst (left), senior procurment counsel for the Louisville District, is presented the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division Star Award by Kristin Budzynski (right), division counsel.



Upwards of 100 district employees visit the Office of Counsel Open House Nov. 15, 2023.