



Photo by Stephen Baack

Representatives with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, City of Norco, California Office of Emergency Services and Riverside County, along with U.S. Rep. Ken Calvert of California's 41st Congressional District and contractors, gather for the Upper Norco Bluffs Emergency Repair Project groundbreaking ceremony Oct. 3 in Norco, California.

## USACE, partners break ground on high-priority bluff repair project

BY STEPHEN BAACK  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NORCO, Calif. — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District joined city, state, county and congressional partners Oct. 3 to break ground on an emergency repair project for the upper bluffs of Norco, along the Santa Ana River.

The purpose of the project is to protect residents and their homes by repairing and stabilizing the bluffs that were damaged during storms in early 2024.

The groundbreaking ceremony included the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, City of Norco, California Office of Emergency Services, Riverside County and U.S. Rep. Ken Calvert of California's 41st Congressional District.

Addressing those gathered on the bluff for the ceremony, Col. Andrew Baker, LA District commander, thanked all involved for getting the high-priority project off to an official start so quickly.

"Today signifies the shift of this project from

designs on paper to shovels in the dirt, and it's a perfect example of what happens when we all work together," Baker said.

"I love being a member of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers," Baker added, "but I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that we in the Army Corps of Engineers are always part of a larger team. I firmly believe our mission and our role are indispensable to the safety and security of our nation's communities, but the same is true

[‘REPAIR’ continued on Page 4](#)

IN LOVING MEMORY



*Jennie Ayala*  
Feb 27, 1964 - Oct 1, 2024

**Monday, November 18, 2024**  
Visitation: 5-8pm. Rosary: 6:30pm  
Calvary Cemetery  
4201 Whittier Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90023

**Funeral Services**  
**Tuesday, November 19, 2024 | at 10am**  
St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church  
621 W Adams Blvd. Los Angeles, California 90007

Burial to follow services at Calvary Cemetery  
4201 Whittier Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90023

Jennie's career with the Los Angeles District spanned almost 40 years. She spent many years in Public Affairs as a public affairs officer, and more recently as the district's outreach coordinator in the Programs and Project Management Division.

Jennie truly enjoyed her career with the Corps. Her selfless nature, ability to form relationships and love for her work led Jennie to deploy on emergency assignments, spearhead public outreach events and support many hiring fairs throughout her career. We will remember her as a treasured teammate and friend, and will miss her deeply.



Courtesy photo

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## Saying goodbye to a treasured teammate; recent updates in SPL

I wanted to lead off the October column remembering Ms. Jennie Ayala. Jennie was a treasured teammate here for nearly 40 years in Public Affairs and as the district's outreach coordinator. I got to know Jennie quite well in her later role and so appreciated the opportunity to serve with her. She was amazingly kind and selfless — and a true pleasure to work with and be around. We'll miss her greatly.

My personal highlight in October was a cross-country drive from Washington D.C. to San Pedro, California, with my wife Shannon. The impetus for the trip was to bring out the last of our stuff that was in storage back east, along with a family car that we shipped up from Honduras. I've always wanted to drive cross-country but was dreading the trip as we had just a short time to knock it out. We took I-40 most of the way, which parallels old Route 66. Long story short, we had some good food (mostly ... try the Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives website), saw more than our fair share of kitschy roadside attractions, caught ALL THE WAY UP on podcasts and just generally had a really good time. Plus, we spent our first night in Arkansas (one state closer to hitting them all)! With that and after receiving our last household goods shipment from Honduras, we've got all our stuff under one roof for the first time in about four years (not necessarily a good thing across the



COL. ANDREW BAKER  
LA DISTRICT COMMANDER

board if you were wondering).

It was great to wrap up Fiscal Year 2024 on a high note, and we were right back in the mix to kick off Fiscal Year 2025 in October. A few highlights for you:

- We hosted the Department of Veterans Affairs' Chief Acquisition Officer and Principal Executive Director for the Office of Acquisition, Logistics and Construction Dr. Mike Parrish, along with USACE Deputy Commanding General for Military and International Operations (and former SPL commander!) Brig. Gen. Kirk Gibbs at our Veterans Affairs San Diego project for a meeting. Great job by the San Diego team on putting our best district foot forward on such a high-profile event. Looking forward to wrapping up the Spinal Cord Injury/Community Living Center project soon — an amazing facility that will have direct and immediate impacts on the health of our area veterans.
- We held our SECOND in-person SPL Leadership Offsite down in San Diego during the third week of October. Even though we were unable to get to the bowling alley for our social/teambuilding event this year (my money was on Tim Fairbank securing the SPL title after last year's performance), it
- We learned about congressional appropriations at the Future Directions Road Show. Did you know that we represent the largest share of the American public within our operational borders of any district in USACE (and therefore, the largest number of congressional representatives)? This was a great opportunity to hear from the experts at Headquarters USACE about how to do this more efficiently and effectively.
- Finally, we celebrated an awesome Fiscal Year 2024 with an end-of-year celebration/town hall (that's tomorrow as I write this. Can't wait!)

I hope you've had a great start to Fiscal Year 2025 and are sticking to your resolutions so far. Thanks for your service. Please take care of each other and be safe!

Proud to be SPL!

Col. Andrew Baker



Courtesy photo

Jennie Ayala, left, is pictured here with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers teammates during recovery operations in Puerto Rico.

[‘REPAIR’ continued from Page 1](#)

of our partners.”

Art Orozco, technical lead with the LA District’s Engineering Division, said that due to the nature of the project, it was particularly important to get started as soon as possible.

“Once we had the scope of work, the team got together and quickly figured out how to get everything done as quickly as we can,” Orozco said. “We knew that we didn’t want to wait another year or through the rainy season because that would really affect the project — the design and environmental considerations.”

Damien Lariviere, project manager with the LA District’s Programs and Project Management Division, said he was impressed by the dedication of the USACE team in getting it all together so fast.

“We usually take a little longer to design and engineer a project, but we were able to get funds authorized to us in an emergency manner, and we used those funds to really execute quickly,” Lariviere said. “By doing so, it’s going to help the overall stability of what we’re standing on and protect the local community.”

**Col. Andrew Baker, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District commander, delivers remarks during the Upper Norco Bluffs Emergency Repair Project groundbreaking ceremony Oct. 3 in Norco, California.**



Photo by Stephen Baack



Photo by Areca T. Wilson

**Jonathan Hallemeier, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District interdisciplinary study manager and study team lead planner, speaks during a public meeting regarding the ongoing San Diego County Shoreline (Oceanside) Mitigation Study Sept. 16 at the Oceanside Civic Center Library in Oceanside, California. The study aims to mitigate shoreline erosion and other impacts, resulting from the construction of U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton Harbor.**

## Corps hosts public meeting for shoreline mitigation study

BY ARECA T. WILSON  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

OCEANSIDE, Calif. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hosted a public meeting to discuss the ongoing San Diego County Shoreline (Oceanside) Mitigation Study Sept. 16 at the Oceanside Civic Center Library.

The study aims to mitigate shoreline erosion and other impacts, resulting from the construction of U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton Harbor, which has interrupted sediment transport along the coast and contributed to erosion of southward beaches.

The study, which is 100 percent federally funded and authorized under Section 414 of the Water Resources Development Act, and, most recently, funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, covers six miles along the shoreline, from the northern tip of Camp Pendleton Harbor and Del Mar Boat Basin to Agua Hedionda Lagoon in the south.

The study team is developing two alternatives – beach renourishment and beach renourishment with groins. Other alternatives, such as seawalls, harbor structure alterations and offshore reefs were removed from consideration, based on criteria of completeness, effectiveness, efficiency and adherence to the study’s authorized purpose, which is identify-

ing a least-cost mitigation plan.

A Tentatively Selected Plan is expected in March 2026, while a Draft Integrated Report and Environmental Impact Statement are planned for May 2026. The Final Integrated Report and Environmental Impact Statement are scheduled for September 2027.

“It was important for the USACE team to share information about the study and engage directly with the community,” said Kaitlyn McClain, USACE Sacramento District planning technical lead and study team support planner. “The feedback collected at the public meeting and during the public comment period will be incorporated into the alternative evaluation process and National Environmental Policy Act document.”

During the meeting, attendees received a presentation about the study, which included information on various facets, including background, authorizations, planning processes, history, current and future conditions, project alternatives, evaluation processes and environmental compliance.

“It’s important for us to have meetings like these because there are a lot of questions about what’s happening on the coastline and there has been a lot of interest and advocacy groups growing because of our constant eroding conditions on the beach,” said Jayme Timberlake,

Oceanside coastal zone administrator. “So, it’s very nice that the Army Corps was able to come down and participate like this, talk to community members and answer questions directly.”

After the presentation, attendees provided public, verbal comments and spoke face-to-face with members of the study team. Some members voiced their concerns, regarding the implementation of groins.

“Public engagement is critical for effective project planning and implementation,” said Jonathan Hallemeier, USACE Los Angeles District interdisciplinary study manager and study team lead planner. “Local communities have important perspectives and knowledge that will help us as we evaluate alternatives. The meeting was an amazing opportunity to meet and learn from community members.”

Although the meeting is over, interested parties can still give their feedback by Oct. 31. To provide feedback, email [SDCS@usace.army.mil](mailto:SDCS@usace.army.mil) or send mail to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Planning Division, Attn: Kym Lyons, 915 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 930 Los Angeles, CA 90017.

For more information on the San Diego County Shoreline (Oceanside) Mitigation Study, visit <https://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Media/Public-Notices/Article/3894312/>.

# Around the District

*“I really like the focus, emphasis and requirements for safety, in all operations, that USACE brings to the day-to-day function of construction contract performance.”*

Billy manages several contracts to renovate and upgrade facilities at the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground. He has lived in Yuma, Arizona, since 1964 and has worked with the Los Angeles District’s Yuma Office for three years.

**Billy M. Taylor**  
Construction Control Representative



# Community donates time during National Public Lands Day

BY ARECA T. WILSON  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, in partnership with the Friends of the Los Angeles River, or FoLAR, hosted a National Public Lands Day cleanup event Sept. 28 at the Sepulveda Basin.

National Public Lands Day’s 2024 theme was “Together for Tomorrow.”  
“Today, we’re here to give back to the land; however, we’re also here to celebrate our green spaces and the privilege we have to enjoy them,” said U.S. Army Maj. David Paxton, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District project manager, during his opening remarks. “The purpose of this joint event is not just to celebrate our public lands and their many uses, but also to inspire environmental stewardship.”

According to the National Environmental Education Foundation, which organizes the event, “National Public Lands Day is the nation’s largest single-day volunteer effort for public lands.”

During the event, in further collaboration with the California Native Plant Society and the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, volunteers created seed balls to encourage the re-growth of native vegetation, picked up litter and participated in a nature/bird walk. They also removed black mustard, which is a non-native, invasive plant. The plant becomes very flammable during the dry season and can cause fires. When flowering, these plants also drop seeds that further their spread and do not support the local wildlife.

“FoLAR partners with the California Native Plant Society and the San Fernando Valley

Audubon Society on this big restoration event called Habitat Restoration and we usually do two hours of restoration work,” said Kevin Jauregui, FoLAR Education and Community Programs senior manager. “[This collaboration was] perfect because [the Corps’] event is the fourth Saturday of September, and we do this every 4th Saturday of the month.”

The event was open to the public. Forty volunteers turned out, which resulted in 160 volunteer hours donated and \$5,358.40 in savings.

“Today was absolutely a success — we would’ve liked to have seen more numbers, but the folks that came here today have been absolutely phenomenal and they have done some great work,” said Nicolas Figueroa, USACE LA District park ranger. “We are expecting to have picked up a couple thousand pounds of litter and vegetation.”



Photo by Areca T. Wilson

Volunteers gather during a National Public Lands Day event Sept. 28 at Sepulveda Basin in Los Angeles. During the event, in partnership with the Friends of the Los Angeles River, California Native Plant Society and the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, volunteers created seed balls to encourage re-growth of native vegetation, picked up litter and participated in a nature/bird walk.



Photos by Areca T. Wilson



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP-LEFT: Barbara Heidemann, San Fernando Valley Audubon Society volunteer walk leader, leads a nature/bird walk during a National Public Lands Day event Sept. 28 at Sepulveda Basin in Los Angeles. The theme for National Public Lands Day 2024 was “Together for Tomorrow.”

Volunteers remove invasive black mustard plants during a National Public Lands Day event Sept. 28 at Sepulveda Basin in Los Angeles. During the dry season, the plant becomes very flammable and can cause fires.

Wildlife is spotted during a National Public Lands Day event Sept. 28 at Sepulveda Basin in Los Angeles. During National Public Lands Day, 40 volunteers turned out, which resulted in 160 volunteer hours donated and \$5,358.40 in savings.

Volunteers attend a National Public Lands Day event Sept. 28 at Sepulveda Basin in Los Angeles. According to the National Environmental Education Foundation, which organizes the event, “National Public Lands Day is the nation’s largest single-day volunteer effort for public lands.”

Volunteers pick up litter during a National Public Lands Day event Sept. 28 at Sepulveda Basin in Los Angeles. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, in partnership with the Friends of the Los Angeles River, hosted a National Public Lands Day clean-up event.

# USACE South Pacific Division commander tours military construction projects in Southern Arizona

BY ROBERT DEDEAUX  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

FORT HUACHUCA, Ariz. — U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division and Los Angeles District senior leaders toured several military construction project sites Sept. 18 – 19 in Southern Arizona.

Col. James Handura, SPD commander, joined LA District senior leaders Col. Andrew Baker, commander, and Justin Gay, district deputy engineer, to meet with several military leaders and tour several installation projects at Yuma Proving Ground and Fort Huachuca.

“It’s always worthwhile for me to get out to see the projects firsthand, to talk to the folks in the field and to get a sense of how things are going,” Handura said in a previous statement. “I like to discuss with our team where I can help at my level or how we can help at the division level.”

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ military construction mission supports demands created by growth within in the military, global resta-

tioning, and base realignment and closures.

According to the South Pacific Division official website, the military missions provide premier engineering, construction, real estate, stability operations, and environmental management products and services for the Army, Air Force, other assigned U.S. government agencies and foreign governments.

DAY 1: Yuma Proving Grounds

The South Pacific Division commander started his project tour at the Yuma Proving Ground.

The U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground’s primary mission is to test the nation’s military ground combat equipment; however, for nearly 30 years, its vast desert ranges also have been used by the Military Freefall School to train thousands of the military’s most elite paratroopers.

“For us it’s extremely important that we show the commander the fruit of his team’s efforts,” said Ramon Noriega, Yuma Proving Ground facilities manager, as he escorted Handura through one of the Los Angeles District’s project sites. “Their support is critical for us —

collaboration between their team, the Garrison’s (Department of Public Works) and our team at the Army Test and Evaluation Command. We work in a harmonious way because we’re all striving for the Army mission.”

The Los Angeles District has several military construction projects on the installation, including the recently completed two-bay hangar for the Military Freefall School.

DAY 2: Ground Transport Equipment Building Project at Fort Huachuca

The next day, Handura joined LA District senior leaders to review construction progress at the Ground Transport Equipment Building project before meeting with Fort Huachuca installation commander Maj. Gen. Richard T. Appelhans to discuss current and potential future projects on the installation. One of the projects mentioned, the Ground Transport Equipment Building project, will create additional vehicle storage on the installation.

“We work as a team with the Corps,” said Victor Moreno, a safety and health officer at the Ground Transport Equipment Building project.

“Personally, as a safety officer, it’s important to me that we build this facility for the Soldiers without anyone being hurt. We do daily safety inspections. There is always someone from the Corps here. We haven’t had an accident in 662 days.”

The Fort Huachuca project office, under the Tucson Resident office, has an additional 15 active projects with a combined value of \$74.6 million.

According to Fort Huachuca’s Army homepage, the installation is the largest employer in Cochise County and the largest single economic contributor in Arizona. The Arizona Commerce Authority website states that Fort Huachuca accounts for an annual economic impact of more than \$2.4 billion for the State of Arizona.

**Col. James Handura, South Pacific Division commander, right, who was joined by Los Angeles District senior leaders and contractors, reviews construction progress at the Ground Transport Equipment Building project Sept. 19 at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. The project will create additional vehicle storage at the installation.**



Photo by Robert DeDeaux



Photo by Robert DeDeaux

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District’s Painted Rock Dam is pictured March 2024 near Gila Bend, Arizona. According to USACE records, Painted Rock Dam was built specifically to protect downstream agriculture, Yuma, and other towns and small businesses along the Gila River.

## Yuma hosts Painted Rock Dam tabletop exercise

BY ROBERT DEDEAUX  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District’s Dam Safety Program and the Emergency Management team conducted a tabletop exercise Sept. 18 at the Yuma Public Works Department in Yuma.

Under the leadership of Kyle Hayworth, LA District Dam Safety program manager, representatives with local, state, federal and nongovernment agencies practiced several scenarios focused on emergency response operations at Painted Rock Dam.

“The purpose of this exercise is to familiarize all the first responders with Painted Rock Dam and the impact they could see from a release of significant water, or, even worse, a breach of the dam,” said Hayworth, after presenting the history of Painted Rock Dam.

According to USACE records, Painted Rock Dam was built specifically to protect downstream agriculture, as well as Yuma, and other towns and small businesses along the Gila River. Most of year, the reservoir remains dry; how-

ever, the last two years have seen an increase of waterflow potentially raising risk to the dam’s drainage area of 50,800 square miles.

“One of the things we focused on was ensuring state and local leadership knew how to coordinate and execute our emergency action plan during specific disaster scenarios,” Hayworth said. “I want them to come away with the knowledge of what to do in a worst-case scenario concerning Painted Rock.”

The training focused on three objectives:

- Enhance roles and responsibilities of going from normal operations to emergency operation, in conjunction with USACE reservoir regulations.

- Assess the effectiveness of USACE emergency messaging to external agencies, in accordance with the USACE Emergency Action Plan.

- Enhance interagency coordination and procedures in operating a Joint Information Center composed of public information officers with local, state, federal and non-government organizations for a flood event at Painted Rock Dam.

“We are training with many agencies to

better coordinate and make sure we can protect lives and property in this area,” said David Kingston, LA District emergency management branch chief. “The last two winter storms have caused flooding.”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Yuma has a population of about 101,000 people, making it the 14th largest municipality in Arizona.

“Historically, the Painted Rock Dam is the only dam in our district that had water run over the spillway,” said Kingston, a retired Army colonel. “It happened in the floods of 1993, which means it could occur again. That’s why it’s important to have these training exercises.”

Following the presentations and small-group scenario exercises, several participants toured Painted Rock Dam, located about 120 miles northeast of Yuma.

The USACE South Pacific Division also sent subject-matter experts to assist the LA District with training objectives. The South Pacific Division provides engineering services to respond to national and natural disasters to minimize damage and help in recovery efforts.



Photo by Stephen Baack

Senior leaders with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Department of Veterans Affairs gather Oct. 9 at the Jennifer Moreno DVA Medical Center campus in San Diego for a tour of the Spinal Cord Injury/Community Living Center, which is scheduled to replace the current facility and open its doors to veterans in 2025.

## Senior leaders tour VA San Diego project, review projects

BY STEPHEN BAACK  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SAN DIEGO — Senior leaders with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Department of Veterans Affairs met Oct. 9 at the Jennifer Moreno DVA Medical Center campus in San Diego to review progress on VA projects throughout USACE.

Gathering at the USACE Los Angeles District's San Diego Resident Office, the group included leaders with the LA District and the VA's Office of Construction and Facilities Management, currently managing the construction of the San Diego VA Healthcare System's Spinal Cord Injury/Community Living Center, which the group toured.

"Meetings like this are critical for leadership

to get us all on the same page," said Michael Parrish, chief acquisition officer and principal executive director for the Office of Acquisition, Logistics and Construction with the Department of Veterans Affairs, adding that, though the VA and USACE may be separate agencies, "We are one team."

Brig. Gen. Kirk Gibbs, deputy commanding general for Military and International Operations at USACE, emphasized to the group that building strong relationships at every level is an indispensable part of a team's ability to work together smoothly and effectively, particularly when challenges arise.

"The key to delivering projects efficiently, effectively, on time and within budget is often the strength of the relationship among USACE,

the stakeholders and the other partners working on that project together," he said.

Gibbs said this applies at every level.

"People have to know each other," Gibbs added. "They need to find some common ground where they can connect, even on a personal level. Once they do that, they start caring about each other and then the trust begins to develop. Partners will then welcome the opportunity to pick up the phone and communicate more comfortably because they trust each other, and they are more likely to want to work together to deliver and get results."

The nearly complete Spinal Cord Injury/Community Living Center, which is scheduled

['PROJECTS' continued on Page 11](#)

['PROJECTS' continued from Page 10](#)

to open its doors to veterans in 2025, will provide care to veterans and active-duty personnel with spinal cord injuries and disorders, who live in the San Diego and Imperial counties in California, and in Arizona and southern Nevada.

The 197,000-square-foot, four-story stand-alone structure, which is replacing the current building, will be the newest of more than 20 spinal cord injury and disorder facilities at VA centers throughout the U.S.

Capt. Gregory Sacenti, project engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, right, leads a tour Oct. 9 for senior leaders with Headquarters USACE and the Department of Veterans Affairs of the Spinal Cord Injury/Community Living Center at the Jennifer Moreno DVA Medical Center campus in San Diego.

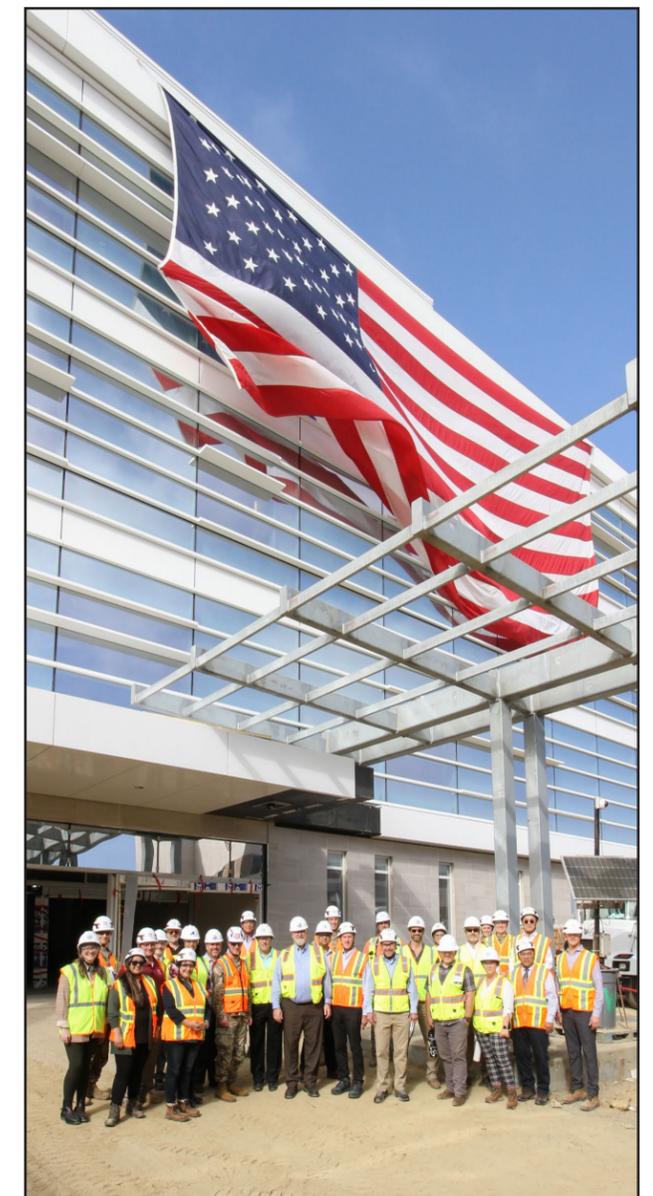


Photos by Stephen Baack



ABOVE: David Van Dorpe, chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division's Department of Veterans Affairs Project Execution Office, left, talks with Brig. Gen. Kirk Gibbs, deputy commanding general for Military and International Operations at Headquarters USACE, during a tour Oct. 9 for senior leaders from both USACE and the Department of Veterans Affairs of the new Spinal Cord Injury/Community Living Center at the Jennifer Moreno DVA Medical Center campus in San Diego.

RIGHT: Senior leaders with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Department of Veterans Affairs stand together for a photo Oct. 9 in front of the new Spinal Cord Injury/Community Living Center at the Jennifer Moreno DVA Medical Center campus in San Diego after a tour of the facility. The new SCI/CLC is scheduled to replace the current facility and open its doors to veterans in 2025.



# Leaders engage at two-day offsite

PHOTOS BY ARECA T. WILSON  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SAN DIEGO — U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District leadership, chiefs and deputies attend a two-day leadership offsite Oct. 16 to 17 at the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Southwest. During the event, attendees discussed the way forward for the district and worked cross-functionally to produce solutions. They also received training on several topics, including dealing with burnout, wellness, hiring, planning and resource management.

**Diana Bishop, board-certified health and wellness coach and certified wellness practitioner, speaks during the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District two-day leadership offsite Oct. 16 at the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Southwest in San Diego. Bishop taught attendees methods on how to deal with burnout.**

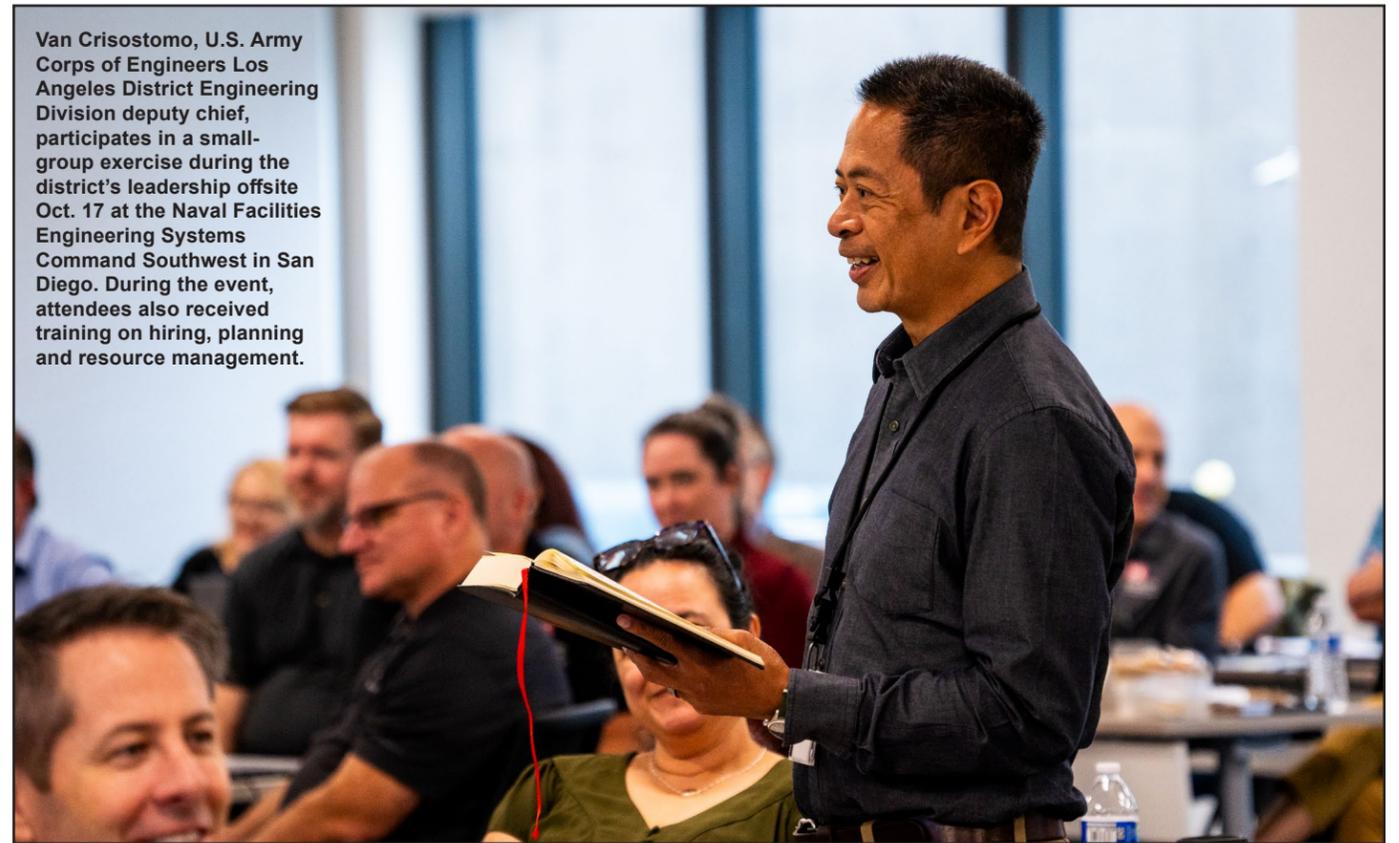


Photos by Areca T. Wilson



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District leadership, chiefs and deputies attend a two-day leadership offsite Oct. 17 at the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Southwest in San Diego. During the event, attendees discussed the way forward for the district and worked cross-functionally to produce solutions.

From left, Mark Cohen, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Operations Branch chief, and Tezra Hamilton, LA District East Branch Contracting acting chief, discusses SMART, or Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound, objectives during an exercise during the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District two-day leadership offsite Oct. 17 at the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Southwest in San Diego. During the two-day offsite, attendees participated in training focused on strategic planning and leadership core competencies.



Van Crisostomo, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Engineering Division deputy chief, participates in a small-group exercise during the district's leadership offsite Oct. 17 at the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Southwest in San Diego. During the event, attendees also received training on hiring, planning and resource management.

Photos by Areca T. Wilson



Van Crisostomo, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Engineering Division deputy chief, participates in a small-group exercise during the district's leadership offsite Oct. 17 at the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Southwest in San Diego. During the exercise, each team worked together to determine timelines to achieve mission goals.

Jeff Owens, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Roadrunner Resident Office resident engineer, discusses how to improve processes during an exercise during the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District two-day leadership offsite Oct. 17 at the Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Southwest in San Diego. During the two-day offsite, attendees participated in training, which included communication skills, talent development and productivity.



# Retirements

## Jon Vivanti



Photos by Richard Rivera

Col. Andrew Baker, Los Angeles District commander, right, congratulates Jon Vivanti, section chief with the Planning Division, left, on his retirement from the Los Angeles District Sept. 25 in downtown LA. Vivanti worked for the district for 39 years, working as the section chief for Planning Section A for the past 14 years. During his career he served in various positions. In addition to his role as the Planning Section A section chief; Vivanti served as a civil and geotechnical engineer; a planner and senior planner; and on a temporary assignment as the Plan Formulation branch chief in the Planning Division.

During his tenure as section chief, his team completed feasibility studies, including the Tres Rios Validation Report, Prado Basin Ecosystem Restoration Study and Malibu Creek Ecosystem Restoration. During his 24 years in the Plan Formulation Branch, he oversaw many critical civil works projects for flood control, water conservation and ecosystem restoration in Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Imperial and San Diego counties, and in Las Vegas, Nevada. Vivanti's leadership and planning skills also were instrumental in expanding tribal and other partnership programs and leveraging them to better serve tribal nations and traditionally underserved communities. His tireless efforts over his many decades at SPL have been critical for delivering critical water resource projects, while fostering strong relationships with partners and stakeholders.

## Louis Munoz



Photos by Richard Rivera

LEFT: Louis Munoz, Emergency Management specialist, left, poses for a picture with David Kingston, Emergency Management Branch chief, right, during Munoz' retirement ceremony Sept. 26 at the LA District Baseyard in South El Monte, California. Munoz served for 50 years with the federal government – 29 of those years with the Los Angeles District – and deployed in support of USACE and FEMA on numerous occasions, most recently in support of the Maui Wildfire mission.

CENTER: Munoz receives the Meritorious Civilian Service Medal from Col. Andrew Baker, Los Angeles District commander, right, during Munoz' retirement ceremony.

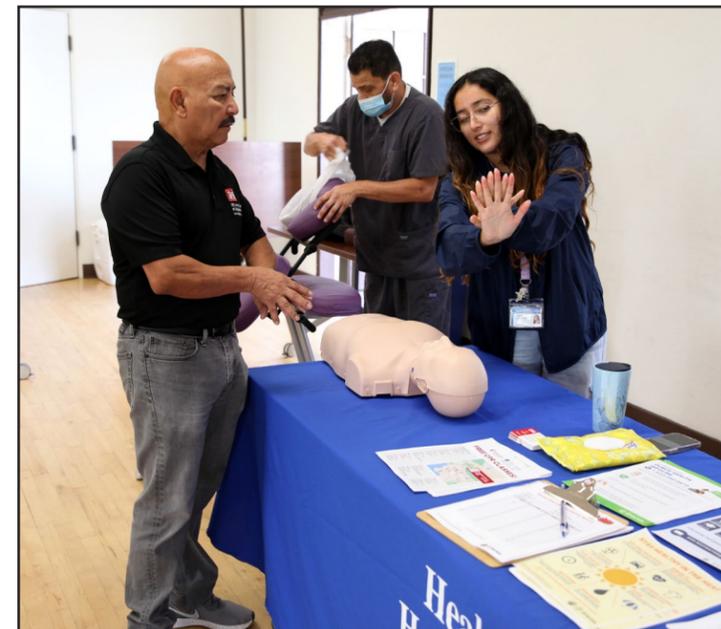
RIGHT: Munoz speaks to those in attendance about his time with the Los Angeles District during his Sept. 26 retirement ceremony at the LA District Baseyard.

# LA District Health Fair

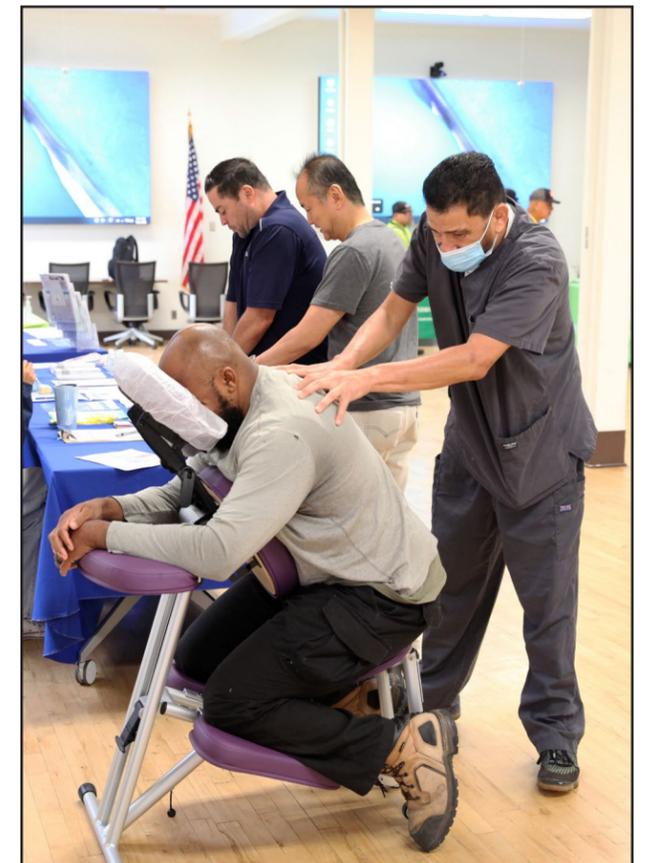


Photos by Richard Rivera

Los Angeles District Park Ranger Marlene Schmitt, left, and Monica Martinez, maintenance control technician, speak with a local health care vendor during a Health Fair Sept. 26 at the district's Baseyard in South El Monte, California.



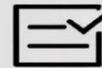
Richard Cadena, with Resource Management, learns how to do CPR from a local health care vendor during a health fair Sept. 26 at the Los Angeles District's Baseyard in South El Monte, California.



Los Angeles District employees check out health care information, take advantage of massages and speak with health care vendors during a Health Fair Sept. 26 at the L District's Baseyard in South El Monte, California.

# CE-SO<sup>💡</sup>HMS Weekly Tip

An easy bite-sized approach to CE-SO<sup>💡</sup>HMS implementation!



## See a hazard, report a hazard

Reporting hazards in your workplace is critical to keeping all SPL employees safe! **Between now and Dec. 1, each employee should strive to identify and report at least one hazard that exists in their workplace** (it can include hazards found on project sites).

Visit this link or, depending on how you are seeing this newsletter, use the QR code below to submit the reports. It only takes 30 seconds to complete.



USACE file photo by Shannon Hodges

# CE-SO<sup>✔</sup>HMS WE'VE GOT THIS!

Click on the icons below to connect with SPL on social media!



## Orange County STEM Expo SPL outreach team helps make learning fun for Girl Scouts



Photo by Emily Wang

Emily Hibbard, Los Angeles District park ranger, right, and Lt. Col. Stephen Brooks, LA District deputy commander, left, work with Girl Scouts on an Urban Flood Fighters activity at the eighth annual Orange County STEM Expo Oct. 13 at the Orange Coast College Planetarium in Costa Mesa, California. The objective of the activity was to keep water flowing safely out to the ocean to keep flood waters from the Gummy Bears' homes.



Photo by Emily Wang



Courtesy photo

ABOVE: From left to right, Lt. Col. Stephen Brooks, Los Angeles District deputy commander; Aelna Sakamoto, LA District Planning Division biologist and her two children; Brandon Samson and Emily Hibbard, LA District park rangers; Jaime Kaskowitz, LA District project manager; Emily Wang, LA District Workforce Management director; and Monique Vega, LA District project coordinator, attend the eighth annual Orange County STEM Expo Oct. 13 at the Orange Coast College Planetarium in Costa Mesa, California.

LEFT: Orange County Girl Scouts work on an Urban Flood Fighters activity at the Los Angeles District's table during the eighth annual Orange County STEM Expo Oct. 13 at the Orange Coast College Planetarium in Costa Mesa, California.

# Outreach at Dia de los Muertos

LOS ANGELES — An outreach team with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District was on hand Oct. 22 at the LA River Center and Gardens for the Día de los Muertos community event to speak with community members of all ages and backgrounds about water safety, flood preparedness, ongoing civil works projects, environmental concerns, LA River topics, career opportunities with USACE, recreation and more.

Hundreds of community members attended the event, which was organized by Mujeres de la Tierra, a nonprofit group whose mission is to “inspire, motivate and engage women and their children to take ownership and leadership of their neighborhood and local community issues.” Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is a holiday that originated in Mexico and is observed Nov. 1 and 2, with events like this one that take place leading up to the officially designated days.



Photos by Stephen Baack

Danielle Storey, Los Angeles District's Tribal Partnership Program tribal liaison and manager, thanks a community member for stopping by the USACE outreach booth during the annual Día de los Muertos community event Oct. 22 at the LA River Center and Gardens in Los Angeles.



LEFT: A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers outreach team is joined by Irma Muñoz, founder and president of Mujeres de la Tierra, second from left, during the annual Día de los Muertos community event Oct. 22 at the LA River Center and Gardens in Los Angeles. From left to right: Eileen Takata, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division environmental manager; Muñoz; Danielle Storey, USACE Los Angeles District's Tribal Partnership Program manager and tribal liaison; Julio Ramos, LA District Rivers and Channels project manager; and Emily Wang, LA District workforce management administrator. RIGHT: Emily Wang, LA District workforce management administrator, left, provides USACE outreach booth visitors with stickers, pamphlets and other educational offerings.



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## AZ MILLION DOLLAR CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE

LEADING THE WAY IN SUPPLIER DIVERSITY

# 2024 INDUCTION

5TH YEAR

**US Army Corps of Engineers**  
Los Angeles District

# Inaugural district 5K offers teammates camaraderie, fun at Prado Dam

BY DENA O'DELL  
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

More than 100 SPL employees, family members and friends met up Oct. 19 at Prado Dam in Corona, California, to participate in the inaugural SPL 5K walk/run.

“It was a great event — our first one — 122 people registered for the event between here (Prado Dam) and the Carlsbad office,” said Lt. Col. Stephen Brooks, LA District deputy commander. “People are still here talking — that’s the number one thing. Camaraderie is what we are trying to build at the district. We ended up raising about \$2,700 for Engineer Day 2025. That’s the most we have ever had by a lot.

“Most importantly, our district is so geographically dispersed, that many people don’t get the chance to talk to each other,” Brooks added. “Everyone is using Microsoft Teams, Zoom or email. Face-to-face, when you get people to talk, it’s awesome. A lot of people are out enjoying the beautiful Southern California weather.”

Taking first place was Julio Ziranda, 17, cross country runner at Silverado High School in Victorville and brother of Alyssa Ziranda, LA District project engineer and one of the event organizers. Second place was Lt. Col. Stephen Brooks, LA District deputy commander. Brandon Kavanaugh and Perla Rubio took third and fourth, respectively.

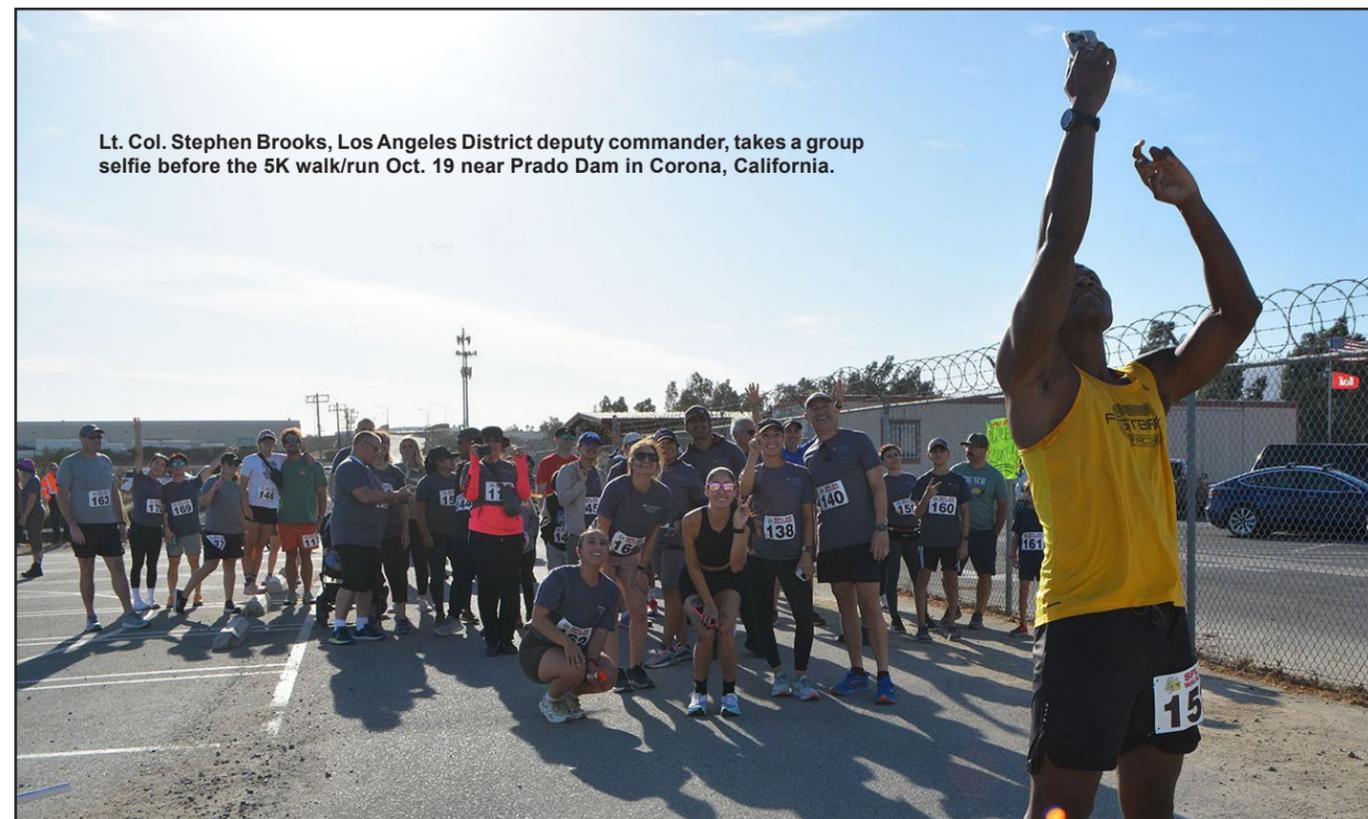
“This is my first time getting first place,”

Julio said. “If you think I’m pretty fast, you should see the people I run against.”

About beating Brooks, he added, “This is my 5K; this is my sport. He (Lt. Col. Stephen Brooks) was telling me about the marathon he ran at 3 hours, 30 minutes; I don’t think I can do that, but for the 5K — my sport right here.”

Angel Fuentes, who has been with the district for 10 months as an engineer and the Section 408 coordinator — and who also was a district employee from 1984 to 1989 — said the event challenged him but was worth it.

“It was tough,” Fuentes said. “I ran and then walked the rest of the trail. My body was telling me I needed to turn around. It was nice to meet people; I talked to the colonel. It’s nice to see them outside of the office. ... It was a good turnout. I definitely wanted to come out and would do it again next year.”



Lt. Col. Stephen Brooks, Los Angeles District deputy commander, takes a group selfie before the 5K walk/run Oct. 19 near Prado Dam in Corona, California.

Photo by Dena O'Dell



Photo by Dena O'Dell



Photo by Dena O'Dell

FAR LEFT: Sarah Coles, left, and Alyssa Ziranda, LA District employees and the chief organizers of the 5K walk/run, get participants pumped up before the event Oct. 19 right outside Prado Dam.

LEFT: LA District employees and family members celebrate making it to the home stretch of the 5K walk/run.



Photo by Crystal Syed



Courtesy photo

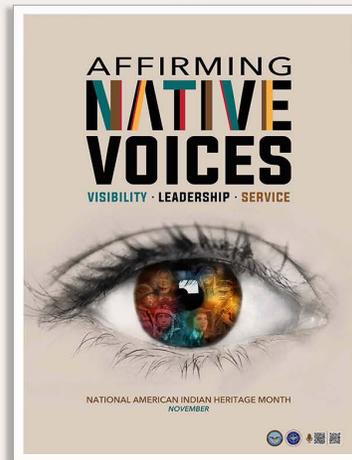
LEFT: Los Angeles District employees, family members and friends participate in the 5K walk/run Oct. 19 at Prado Dam in Corona, California. RIGHT: LA District employees in San Diego gather for a photo during their local 5K walk/run.

CULTURAL  
AWARENESS



# OBSERVANCE

National American Indian Heritage Month - November



Every November, the Department of Defense (DoD) joins the Nation in celebrating National American Indian Heritage Month, also known as Native American and Alaska Native Heritage Month. It's an opportunity to recognize the rich and diverse cultures, traditions, and important contributions of Native American and Alaskan Native peoples.

As of 2020, over 9 million people identified as American Indian and Alaska Native, making up around 2.9% of the U.S. population. This number nearly doubled from the 2010 Census.

There are over 574 federally recognized tribes with unique cultures and individuals. Their diverse cultures reflect many ways of life. Some of the largest groups of Native Americans include members of the Navajo Nation, Cherokees, and Choctaws.

The 2024 theme for National American Indian Heritage Month is *"Affirming Native Voices: Visibility, Leadership, Service."* This reflects the essential perspective of American Indians and Alaska Natives, their outstanding commitment to service, and the need to elevate their voices.

American Indians have served in U.S. conflicts since colonial times. According to some estimates, Native Americans have even served at higher rates compared to their actual population in the United States. To many, Indigenous peoples' service history is deeply connected to their homeland and honor.

One example is Nellie Locust, a member of the Cherokee Nation and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Women's Reserve, or SPARS.

Locust grew up speaking Cherokee with her six siblings. She attended Indian Boarding Schools and balanced her Native American heritage while learning English and, eventually, secretarial skills.

When World War II erupted, Locust joined SPARS as part of the Sooner Squadron, a team of women from Oklahoma. She traveled to Florida in 1943 for training, worked at a vessel repair base, and served in the Coast Guard Identification Office.

Locust's service was often covered in the news, often with outdated language and stereotypes, but she would quickly push back. She brought attention to the Trail of Tears and emphasized her average American girlhood and culture.

The Sooner Squadron, which had five other American Indian women among its ranks, embodied pride and service for the United States and Native heritage.

Shortly after WWII, Locust passed away at just 26 years old from illness. Her SPARS service is memorialized on her gravestone.

During National American Indian Heritage Month, the DoD honors the millions of American Indians and Alaska Natives who serve our country and make our Nation great.