

USACE

# Fort Worth

DISTRICT MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 2023 - ISSUE 01

CORNERSTONE OF THE SOUTHWEST

CORPS OF ENGINEERS WELCOMES NEW  
COMMANDER TO FORT WORTH DISTRICT

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A. KROEGER



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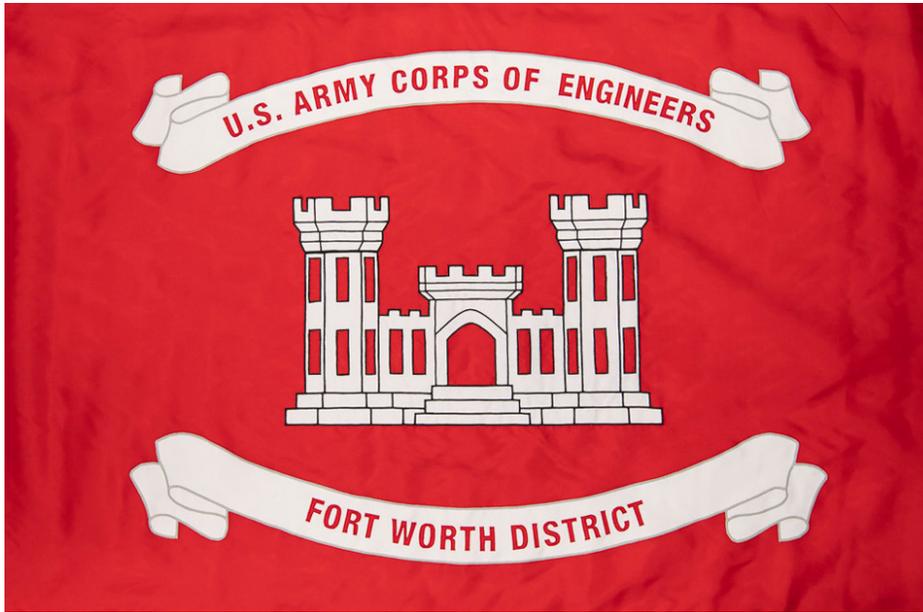
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Team Fort Worth,

There is no greater military honor to be entrusted with the responsibility and authority of being placed in command. It's an honor that I humbly accept while knowing the great expectations of leading this incredible Fort Worth District - over twelve hundred team members strong.

As we stand on the threshold between the past and the future, I wanted to take a moment to express my optimism for the journey that lies ahead.

Our district showcases exceptional teamwork, innovation, a commitment to excellence that sets us apart. The success of our initiatives has been rooted in our ability to collaborate effectively.

When we work together, we are capable of overcoming challenges that might seem insurmountable. This spirit of unity not only elevates our projects but also fosters an environment of mutual support and growth.

As we look to the upcoming year, let us carry forward the lessons we have learned. Our shared optimism and determination will guide us through the challenges that may arise and lead us towards even greater success.

Our potential is limitless, and our spirit is unwavering. Together, we will continue to build on our successes, forge new partnerships, and push the boundaries of what we can achieve.

Team, continue to remain vigilant in all our daily activities and PAUSE. Everyone is responsible for safety. If you see an unsafe act, stop and make the correction.

Thank you for your dedication, your hard work, and your commitment to our mission. Let us march into the upcoming year with heads held high, united in purpose, and ready to conquer new horizons. ESSAYONS!

With gratitude and anticipation,

Calvin A. Kroeger  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
Commanding

## CORNERSTONE OF THE SOUTHWEST



BROUGHT TO YOU BY YOUR  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS TEAM

**CHIEF**  
Richard Bumgardner

**DEPUTY CHIEF**  
Randy Cephus

**ADMINISTRATION**  
Regina Pinchback

**MEDIA ENGAGEMENT**  
Clay Church

**VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS**  
Audrey Gossett

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS**  
Brittany Scruggs

**SOCIAL MEDIA**  
Pat Adelman

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Do you have an idea for  
for a story?

Contact the Public Affairs  
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Look for the next  
edition of the  
Fort Worth District  
Magazine  
May 2024!

# Fort Worth District Welcomes New Commander

Colonel Calvin A. Kroeger assumed command of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District, during an Assumption of Command ceremony, Aug. 3, 2023, at the Fort Worth Club. Kroeger took command from Maj. Joshua Haynes, who led the district since June 2023. Haynes will return to his assignment as the deputy commander of the Fort Worth District. As commander of the district, Kroeger will manage one of the Corps' largest military construction programs, which encompasses all design and construction on Army and Air Force installations in Texas and parts of Louisiana. He will also supervise the operation and maintenance of the district's 25 lakes, which furnish approximately 30 percent of the state's surface water supply and provide outdoor recreation opportunities for millions of visitors annually. The Assumption of Command is a time-honored military tradition which formally reaffirms the authority of command. It is a transfer of the total responsibility, authority, and accountability from one individual to another. The transfer is symbolized by the passing of the organizational flag, an icon which embodies the history of the unit or organization.



During the ceremony, the district flag, or colors as they are known, were passed from the deputy district engineer, Arnold "Rob" Newman, to the officiating officer, Col. James "Brooks" M. Schultze, deputy commander of the Southwestern Division. Schultze then presented the colors, which symbolized the transfer of command, to Kroeger.

Kroeger returned the colors to Newman, his senior civilian advisor, to complete a traditional act with roots to the Army's first Manual of Ceremonies, known as The Blue Book, written in 1779.

Distinguished guests for the ceremony included Kroeger's family and invited friends, joined by Congressman Marc Veasey, Texas 33rd District, other members of congressional staff within the region, local elected leaders, former district commanders and commanders of other districts within the Southwestern Division, and stakeholders from the many projects that the Fort Worth District manages.

Kroeger assumed command of the district from Col. Paul B. Culberson and Maj. Joshua M. Haynes, who had led the district through several transitional periods since December 2022. Haynes returned to his assignment as the deputy commander of the Fort Worth District.

In his remarks, Schultze thanked Haynes for his leadership and for holding down two jobs as the district's deputy commander, and as the acting commander.

"Josh, along with other senior district leaders, have all served in an exemplary manner to keep the district's missions on track," Schultze said. "We're all very appreciative of their steady leadership."

Schultze went on to welcome Kroeger, saying that being selected to command doesn't just happen by accident.

"The right candidate is a leader of high integrity, that lives the Army Values, and has also demonstrated proficiency as a consummate team-builder, communicator, strategist, life-long learner, along with a vast work ethic," Schultze said. "Cal, you have proven accomplishments in all these roles - and you are the right leader for command of this vitally important district."

As commander of the district, Kroeger will manage a team of more than 1200 military and civilian engineering and services professionals, at one of the Corps of Engineers' largest military construction programs on Army and Air Force installations in Texas and parts of Louisiana.

He will also supervise the operation and maintenance of the district's 25 lakes and reservoirs, which furnish approximately 30 percent of the state's surface water



supply and provide outdoor recreation opportunities for millions of visitors annually.

This is not Kroeger's first assignment in the state of Texas, as his very first military assignment more than 22 years ago was to Fort Cavazos.

"One thing that hasn't changed is the hospitality of Texans, and the genuine welcome we've received here in Fort Worth," said Kroeger.

"Many of you don't know this, but our family adamantly selected Fort Worth District as our No. 1 preference for command above the 78 other opportunities across the Army," Kroeger told the audience. "After being here only for a few days, I know we made the right choice, and we are truly humbled to be part of this amazing family of professionals."

Kroeger closed out his comments with a promise to the district workforce.

"As your commander, I will not ask you to do anything which I will not roll up my sleeves and do alongside you to achieve success," he said. "I am with you each step of the way as we deliver excellence for our partners and our communities. Essayons!" ■

*If you had the chance to step into their shoes for a day, would you do it?*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY: PAT ADELMANN

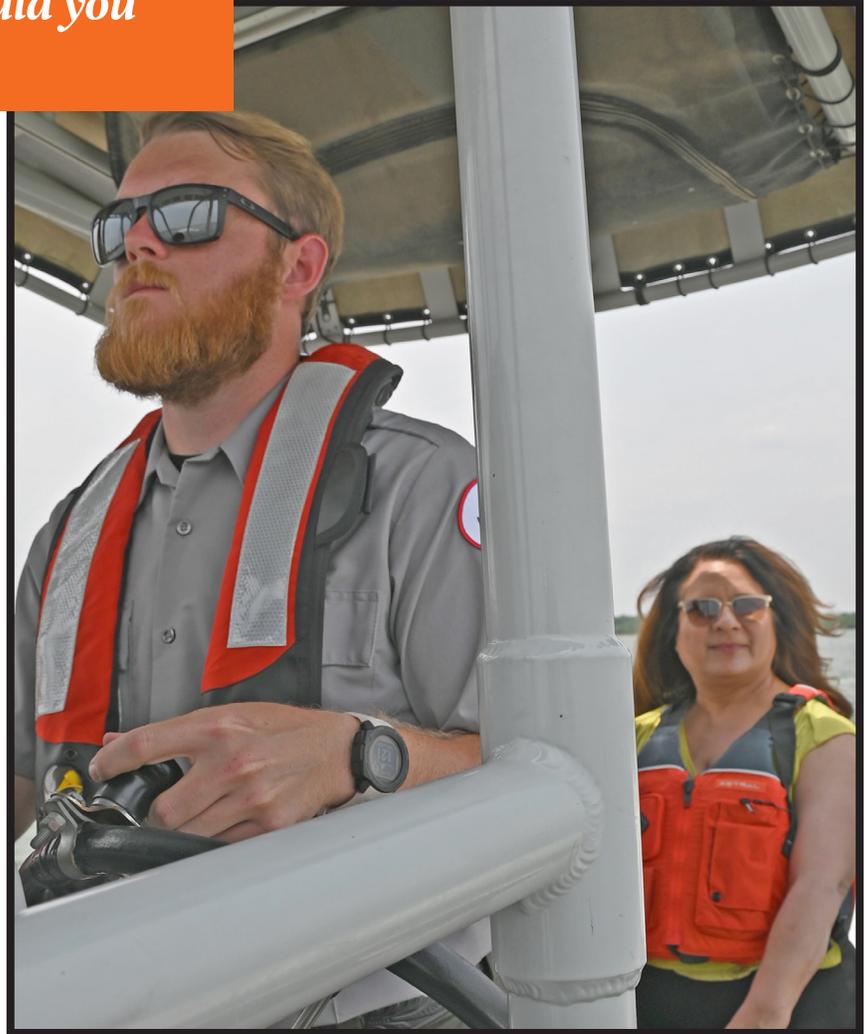
The park ranger is the face of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at each of its lakes and reservoirs. You see them patrolling the lakes, campgrounds, recreation areas and picnicking sites. If you had the chance to step into their shoes for a day, would you do it? Members of the local Dallas and Fort Worth media had that opportunity recently during a ranger orientation day.

The Fort Worth District along with Texas Parks and Wildlife created the media event as well as an outreach and education day during the Memorial Day Weekend, the unofficial start to summer, to educate boaters. The goal is to have a safer boating season.

Park rangers at Lewisville Lake, along with game wardens from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, invited local media to the reservoir to learn what they do on a day-to-day basis to protect and assist the public. Members of the media were able to ride along in game warden and park ranger patrol boats to observe what a normal day on the lake is all about. They were also able to learn how the rangers and game wardens educate people about boater and water safety while on routine patrol.

"We focus a lot on partnerships, whether it's with Texas Parks and Wildlife, or the LV Project with the life jacket loaner stations," said Lewisville Lake Park Ranger Chandler Sanford. "Being able to broadcast those partnerships and explain to people why we're doing what we're doing through articles, videos and interviews gets our message out there and lets people know why we're here and what our mission is."

The LV (life vest) Project is a non-profit organization founded in the memory of Connor Gage, a 15-year-old drowning victim. Providing free loaner life vests at local lakes is one of the



# RANGER FOR A DAY

many projects the organization supports.

While having different roles and responsibilities, and working with different agencies, park rangers and game wardens do regular boat inspections while on the water. From verifying boat registration to ensuring all safety equipment is on board, it's all about making the waterways safer for everyone.

"You can give somebody a citation and they'll get upset and they may or may not make the corrective action," said Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) Game Warden David Spangler. "If you educate them, the hope is that they learn and they understand not only what to do, but why it is important. It's kind of like the old saying, if you give a man a fish he will eat for a day. But if you teach him to fish, he can eat for a lifetime. So, what we're trying to do on the lake is to get everyone to boat safely for life."

On a sundrenched Friday morning before embarking on a patrol of the lake, members of the media toured the patrol boats and were introduced to the safety equipment onboard. Just like the boats they inspect, rangers and game wardens ensured everyone had a proper fitting life jacket on and knew where the fire extinguishers were before heading out on the lake with the reporters.

"I am familiar with many of the laws," said Rebecca Lopez, a reporter with WFAA, the local ABC affiliate. "I think it's just important to remember to follow safety rules and think of others when you are on the water. I'm glad the wardens are out there checking."

Along with the game wardens, other members of TPWD were at the lake to talk about boater safety.

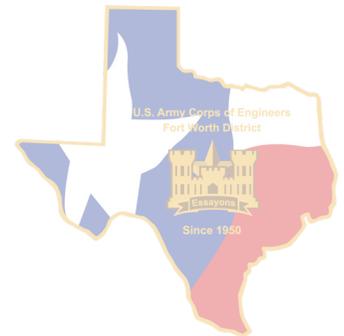
"There's a lot of responsibility in boating. I want people to make sure that they are safe on the waterway and that they take precautions because boating accidents are preventable," said Texas Parks and Wildlife Boating Education Manager Kimberly Sorensen. "If you pay attention while you're driving, if you use your safety equipment like life jackets and kill switches, if you avoid alcohol out on the water,



all of those things can make it a lot safer environment when you're out boating."

Safety is the most important message the park rangers and game wardens want to share with the public, not just today but every day. They stress that you can be safe while still enjoying what the lakes and reservoirs have to offer.

"I like to have fun like everyone else, but it's important to do it responsibly and safely," said Lopez. "I've covered too many tragedies over the years where people drowned in a lake and all of it is preventable if we all follow the rules, laws and safety measures." ■



# 31 *USACE and Local Elementary continue -Year Partnership*

Story by: Regina Pinchback



Photo by: Regina Pinchback

In August of 1992, during National Volunteer Week, more than 100 Fort Worth District employees, led by former district commander, Col. John A. Mills, signed up to volunteer in the adopt-a-school program.

But it was Efen Martinez, a US Army Corps of Engineers employee and his wife who worked for H.V. Helbing who were the catalysts which ignited the bond between the Fort Worth District and H.V. Helbing Elementary school. This couple's vision resulted in

a partnership which has lasted more than 30 years.

According to Brittany Scruggs, the Fort Worth District community outreach coordinator, initiatives and activities included in the partnership with Helbing include the Celebrity Reader Program, Earth Day Project, Pen Pal Program, Spelling Bee judges for 3rd to 5th graders, and science fair judging. District personnel also served as judges and speakers for school contests, participated in field trips and sponsored

the Project Charlie Program.

Two of the older programs the Corps sponsored were the Project Charlie and the Celebrity Reader Projects.

Project Charlie was a key drug abuse prevention program for elementary school children based on building self-esteem. The focus was to teach students how to say no to drugs. This very successful program ran from November 1998 through April 1999 and targeted third grade students, who

met with district volunteers every Tuesday or Thursday for 17 weeks.

"Celebrity Readers was a program where Corps team members read to Helbing's pre-kindergarten through second grade to increase awareness of the importance of reading," said former Fort Worth District community outreach coordinator, Denisha Braxton.

The Earth Day celebration is an example of an ongoing event the Corps celebrates with the school. Every year during Earth Day, Corps team members meet with the school counselor and students to teach them about the different types of soils, landscaping techniques, animals, and water safety.

"Currently, with this program we include many of these same types of activities not only on Earth Day, but also throughout the school year as a part of our ongoing STEM outreach effort," said Scruggs.

Over the 31-year partnership, students who are now adults often recall the positive impacts of the adopt-a-school program,

Athena Leal, a former fourth-grade student at H.V. Helbing who now teaches at the school, recalls meeting her very first professional business lady, her U.S. Army Corps of Engineers pen pal. Leal fondly recalls that each time she received a letter from her pen pal it made her feel grown up.

"I loved it and grew up knowing that because of what was said to me from my pen pal that I could be

anything I wanted to be if I just did the work and got a good education," she said.

According to H.V. Helbing school counselor, Irma Morin, many children are their family's first generation to attend school in the United States as their parents left Mexico to give their children a good education and a chance at a better life.

"For the children to meet a professional businessperson and to become close to them via writing the letters, listening to volunteers read to them in English, and all the outreach to them personally means so much to the students and their parents," said Morin, who has been with the school for 32 years.

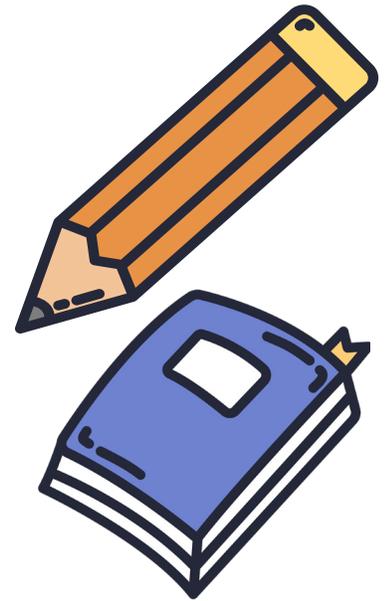
On the Fort Worth District side of the partnership, many retired and former employees still volunteer and continue to give their support to the program.

For example, former deputy commander, Lt. Col. Andrew Liffing, still sends donations of supplies to the school for the pen pal program no matter where in the states or overseas his assignments have taken him. Liffing began the still popular tradition of the deputy commander push-up challenge back in 2013.

Braxton, who has since moved on to become the chief of media relations, with Headquarters, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, has fond memories with her time as the former lead for the Pen Pal program and checks in with the program periodically.

"Being part of the tradition that the Martinez family started and knowing we are still making a significant impact on the students' lives is very rewarding," said Braxton.

The 31-year partnership is as strong as ever and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District, will continue its outreach efforts with H.V. Helbing Elementary School with the goal of increasing student test scores in reading, science and math. ■



Anyone wishing to be a part of the Adopt-a-school program can contact Brittany Scruggs at 817-886-1313, or [Brittany.d.scruggs@usace.army.mil](mailto:Brittany.d.scruggs@usace.army.mil)





Key leaders from Fort Johnson, the Corps' Fort Worth District and the contractor of record cut the ribbon during a ceremony on May 23.

# USACE and partners complete renovation of TEMF

**Stakeholders gathered to celebrate the completions of the renovations of Tactical Equipment Maintenance Facilities during a ribbon cutting ceremony.**

On a bright and steamy Louisiana morning, members of the Fort Johnson garrison, along with leaders of the 46th Engineer Battalion, SGS Construction and staff from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District eastern area office, gathered to celebrate the completions of the renovations during a ribbon cutting ceremony, May 22.

"It is an absolute honor for me to be with you to celebrate this significant accomplishment in the renovation of the Tactical Equipment Maintenance Facilities," said Col. Paul Culberson.

Located on the recently redesignated Fort Johnson, the renovations at maintenance buildings 3824 and 3830, or TEMFs, came in at a cost of over \$12 million.

Renovations to the facilities include roof replacement, exterior wall panel replacement, exterior and interior renovations and improvements. Additionally, improvements were made to the petroleum, oil and lubricant delivery systems, and to the joint sealing for the hardstand area. With all the renovations and modifications, the life cycle of the buildings has been extended by 20 years.

Getting this project to the finish line was the Fort Worth District's senior construction representative for the Fort Johnson Resident Office, Christopher Woolley.

"Thank you to the Fort Johnson Leadership, 46th Engineers, and SGS Construction team for working together with the USACE team to deliver these modernized facilities for our Soldiers," said Woolley.

The Soldiers of the



46th Engineers were particularly helpful with this project. They were called upon to assist with moving equipment during and after the renovation process and as the team prepared for the ribbon cutting ceremony. While in the maintenance facility, Soldiers were instrumental in validating one of the environmental features of the project.

"Soldiers liked the filtered, bottled water

dispensers that were part of the design, and many commented on the fact they like the quality of the water," said Woolley.

There is a tracking feature on the system that gives an estimate of how many plastics bottles are saved by refilling rather than purchasing several single bottles of water. The system is like those found at many airports and provides an environmentally friendly alternative.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a common green building rating system used all over the world. LEED provides a framework for healthy, efficient, and cost-saving green buildings and provides an option for many new or renovated building structures.

"Although these buildings are not LEED-certified facilities, the TEMFs do feature low-flow faucets, flush valves, and a utility monitoring and control system to help curb energy consumption," Woolley said. ■



Brig. Gen. David W. Gardner, Commanding General Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Johnson provides remarks during the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Tactical Equipment Maintenance Facilities on May 23.



**Thank you to the Fort Johnson Leadership, 46th Engineers and the SGS Construction team for working together with the USACE team to deliver these modernized facilities to our Soldiers.**



Christopher Woolley, Fort Johnson Resident Office

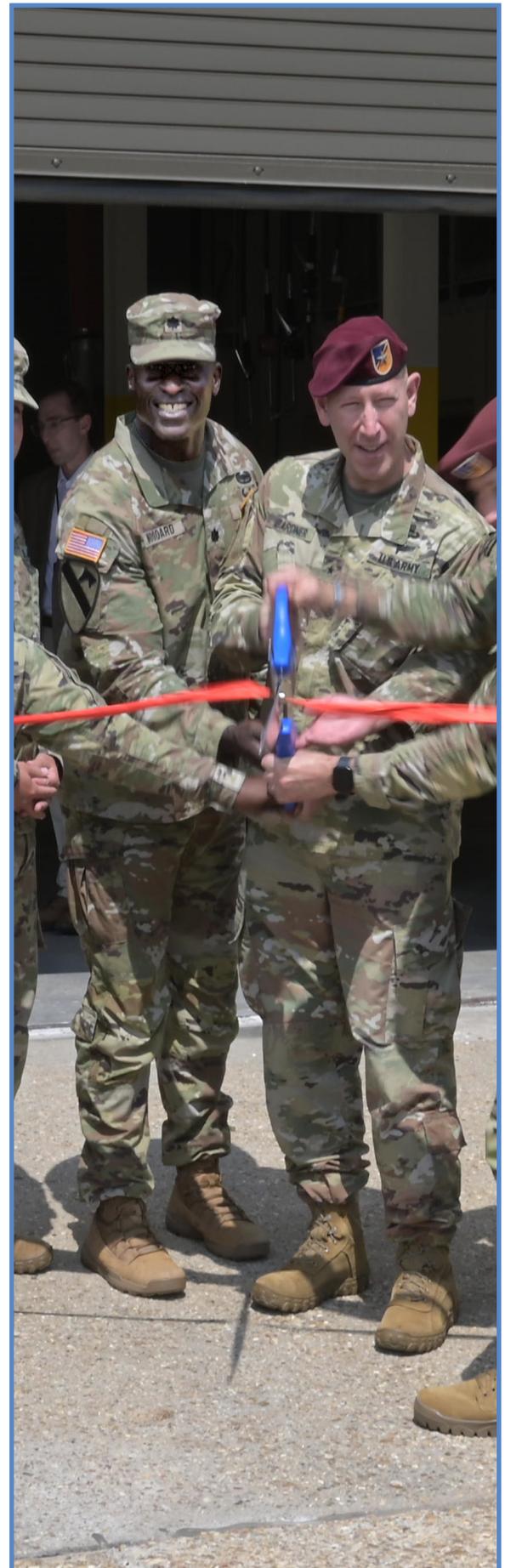




Photo by: Rick Bumgardner

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE, ONE PROJECT AT A TIME.

**Volunteers are filling roles at lakes across the nation. Thanks to the volunteers, many of the lakes were able to complete projects that would have otherwise been delayed.**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers utilizes volunteers as a workforce multiplier across the nation which resulted in an equivalent value of more than \$45 million in volunteer hours last year. Volunteers are filling roles at lakes across the nation. More than 2,100 volunteers assisted the Fort Worth District in 2022. Thanks to the volunteers, many of the lakes were able to complete projects that would have otherwise been delayed.

Some volunteers only volunteer for one-time pro-

jects such as National Public Lands Day. These volunteers are typically scouting groups or church groups that are interested in team activities for their organization, or completing a project that benefits the public or introduces youth or other groups to outdoor activities. Other volunteers will stay on for multiple projects or even years. Many of the long-term volunteers are retirees who are still interested in working, staying active and/or giving back.

"Volunteers who work over 20 hours a week usually receive the use of a campsite or RV site and utility hookups during their volunteer service," said Jennifer Linde, a natural resource specialist at the district headquarters. "Some of our lakes have volunteer villages where volunteers can socialize with other volunteers."

One of the lakes with a robust volunteer program in the district is Benbrook Lake. With 15 volunteers currently assisting the full-

time staff, many projects are being completed that otherwise would have been delayed or not accomplished at all without their assistance. Volunteers at the lake work as receptionists, maintenance crew members, park hosts and completing area beautification throughout the lake's parks. "I think all of our volunteers play a really important role in making this place great," said Stefan Flores, Benbrook Lake Manager. "But where you see the most things



actually happening is our construction and maintenance crew which averages anywhere from 10 to 15 volunteers."

Lyndy Black, a natural resource specialist with the district, spent more than 10 years working at Benbrook Lake before moving to the district headquarters. As the lead ranger she was responsible for the day-to-day coordination of the lake's volunteers.

"It's a massive undertaking because it's so important to the lake and the volunteers are force multipliers," Black said. "I would work with the park hosts and lake office volunteers, but it only makes sense for someone in maintenance to coordinate the daily efforts of the construction and maintenance crews."

That is where Allen Delima comes in. Allen is the civil engineering technician at Benbrook and has been coordinating the volunteer's activities for more than 10 years. With welders, plumbers, mechanics and other specialists on his volunteer team, there isn't a project they can't accomplish. Being all retirees, they may not get the job done as fast as some, but get the job done they will.

"These guys have a lot of talent," Allen said. "I just organize and guide them. Without them we wouldn't accomplish half of what we do at the lake.

We do everything from fixing leaks, laying new plumbing lines, running electrical, trimming trees and building maintenance. We're a little slower, but we get things done safely."

Volunteers receive safety training and are certified by lake staff to operate any equipment they may use to perform their tasks.

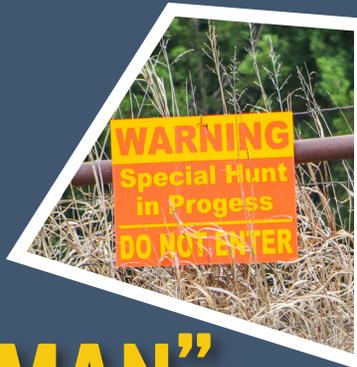
John Powell came to Benbrook Lake 12 years ago to be closer to where his daughter lived. Now, at 83, he is the oldest and longest serving volunteer at the lake. John is ready to do any project that Allen assigns him.

"I just enjoy it," he said. "I enjoy working for him (Allen). He's very easy to work for. He says what we have to get done and everybody just gets it done. He doesn't have to breathe down our necks all day."

Benbrook's volunteers make up a small portion of the volunteers nationwide that support the Corps of Engineers. Over the last five years, the volunteer workforce has averaged approximately 33,000 volunteers providing more than 1.5 million service hours annually across the Corps of Engineers. Locally, last year the Fort Worth District's volunteers accumulated more than 318,800 hours which saved taxpayers more than \$9.5 million.

"I feel like it's an honor and a privilege to be a part of this professional organization," said Wes Blue, a volunteer at Navarro Mills Lake. "When I look out at all the projects and improvements that I've helped complete or been a part of throughout the last 5 years I have a feeling of accomplishment. That is what the volunteer program has given me." ■

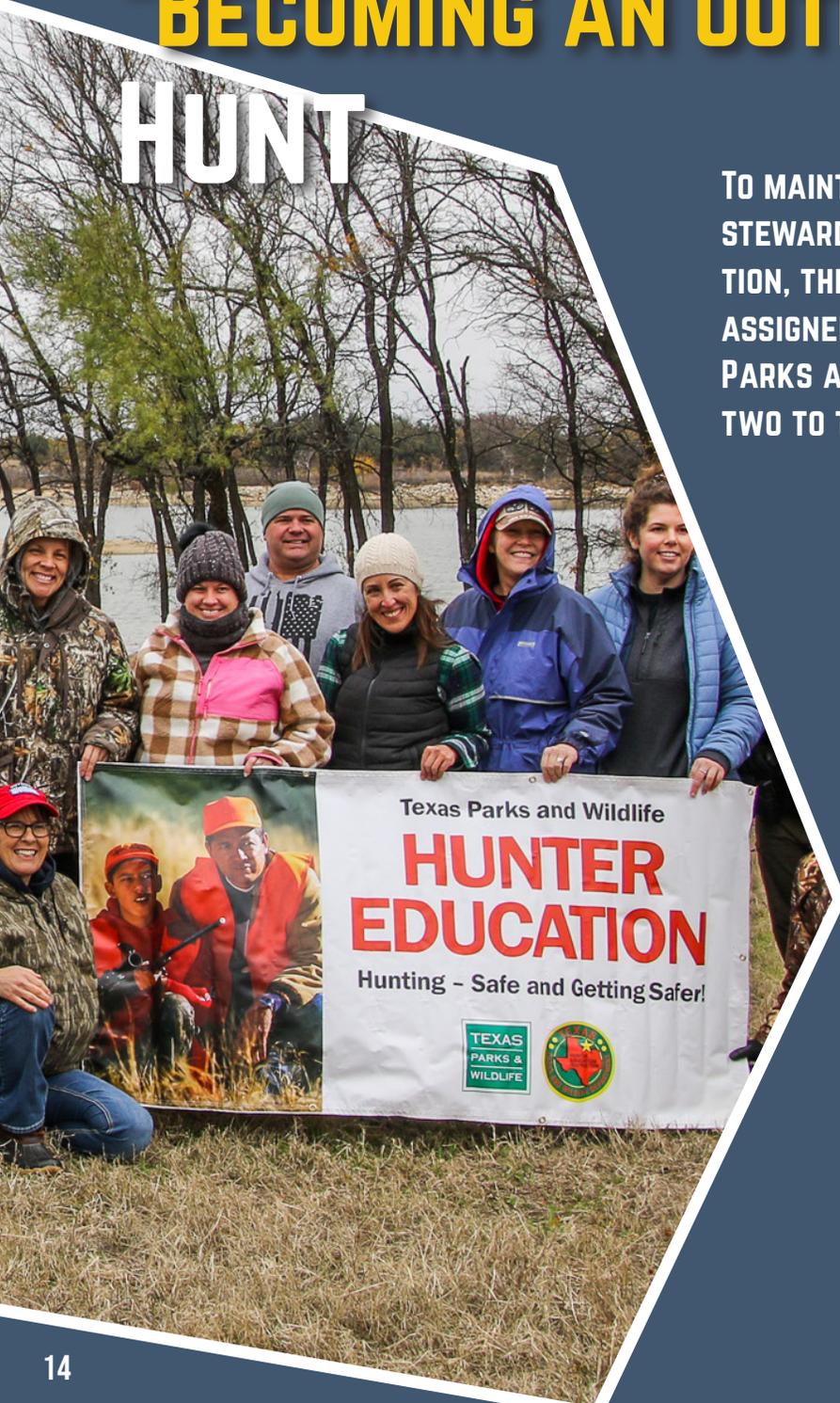




# LAKE WACO

## “BECOMING AN OUTDOOR WOMAN”

### HUNT



TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY BALANCE BETWEEN STEWARDSHIP OF LAND AND ANIMAL CONSERVATION, THE FORT WORTH DISTRICT PARK RANGERS ASSIGNED TO WACO LAKE, PARTNER WITH TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DIVISION (TPWD) TO HOST TWO TO THREE HUNTS, ANNUALLY.

If you have ever driven to Speegleville Park, in Waco, Texas, you may have spotted several white-tail deer or an occasional bold buck. While the large number of deer frolicking through the area are beautiful to see, it can be an indication of overpopulation or exceeding the carrying capacity of deer.

“The carrying capacity can be described as the maximum deer population based on available resources such as land, natural food and water sources,” said Waco Lake Manager, Michael Champagne.

To maintain a healthy balance between stewardship of land and animal conservation, the Fort Worth District Park Rangers assigned to Waco Lake, partner with Texas Parks and Wildlife Division (TPWD) to host two to three hunts, annually. One hunt that has gained much recent popularity is a three-day workshop for women, by women called Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) hunt, recently held Dec. 2 to Dec. 4, 2022.

“It seems intimidating at first to go from getting fitted for a shotgun, firearm practice, official hunting times to fully processing a deer, but understanding it is a mentored hunt where you are paired with an experienced hunter throughout the entire weekend,



makes the process enjoyable," said, hunt participant and TPWD Communications Division Director, Mischelle Diaz.

Champagne, along with Park Rangers Taylor Christian, Matthew Dutton, Matthew Hackler, and Cara Niemietz, provided host support while working hand-in-hand with local Game Wardens and TPWD coordinators, Monica Bickerstaff and Cheryl LeJune, to ensure a safe, successful, and smooth event for all participants.

"Seeing the support between the Park Rangers, TPWD coordinators, and Game Wardens reinforces the meaning of agency partnership and building public trust," said Champagne.

One participant said, "The BOW hunt is very organized with food, setup, welcoming, and it was a new experience for me being able to hunt on public land, and hunt with people other than my dad, and family and learn something new!"

Although the BOW hunt focuses on women, this weekend was more of a family affair with moms and wives bringing their daughters, sons, and significant others to watch and probably marvel at how well they handled themselves during the hunt.

Experience levels of participants ranged from first timers to hunting all their life. Park rangers and BOW hunt coordina-

tors took these factors into consideration when pairing participants with a mentor and explaining the hunting process.

"This is one of my favorite hunts to work. It's amazing to see the camaraderie and how the coordinators continue to add different elements, like the onsite chef, to the event," said Christian.

"No two days are alike. We get all kinds of requests that you wouldn't typically think a park ranger does, but we do it all. The BOW hunt is a favorite because they go above and beyond to take care of all the participants," Dutton stated.

"I felt very prepared by the two BOW workshops, Firearms Safety and Intro to Firearms training. I knew I'd be in great hands with Monica and Cheryl," said hunt participant, Meg Botteon. "I didn't know what to expect but was hopeful I'd be able to take a deer and make a clean kill, and now after having the experience would like to do more."

"The commitment to sustainable, ethical, and careful wildlife practice is astonishing. I have met the most diverse, compassionate, smart, engaging women during this program. I'm blessed to have found this program and now I have so many friends. I've learned to camp, fish, forage," said Meg.

"Our parks are an amazing resource for recreation, getting outdoors, and

wildlife management, which includes dealing with anything from drought and hazardous trees to water safety and visitor assistance. It's a lot of work but being able to ensure the safety of our visitors while they are learning to hunt and helping them understand resource management and environmental stewardship means we are doing our job properly," said Hackler.

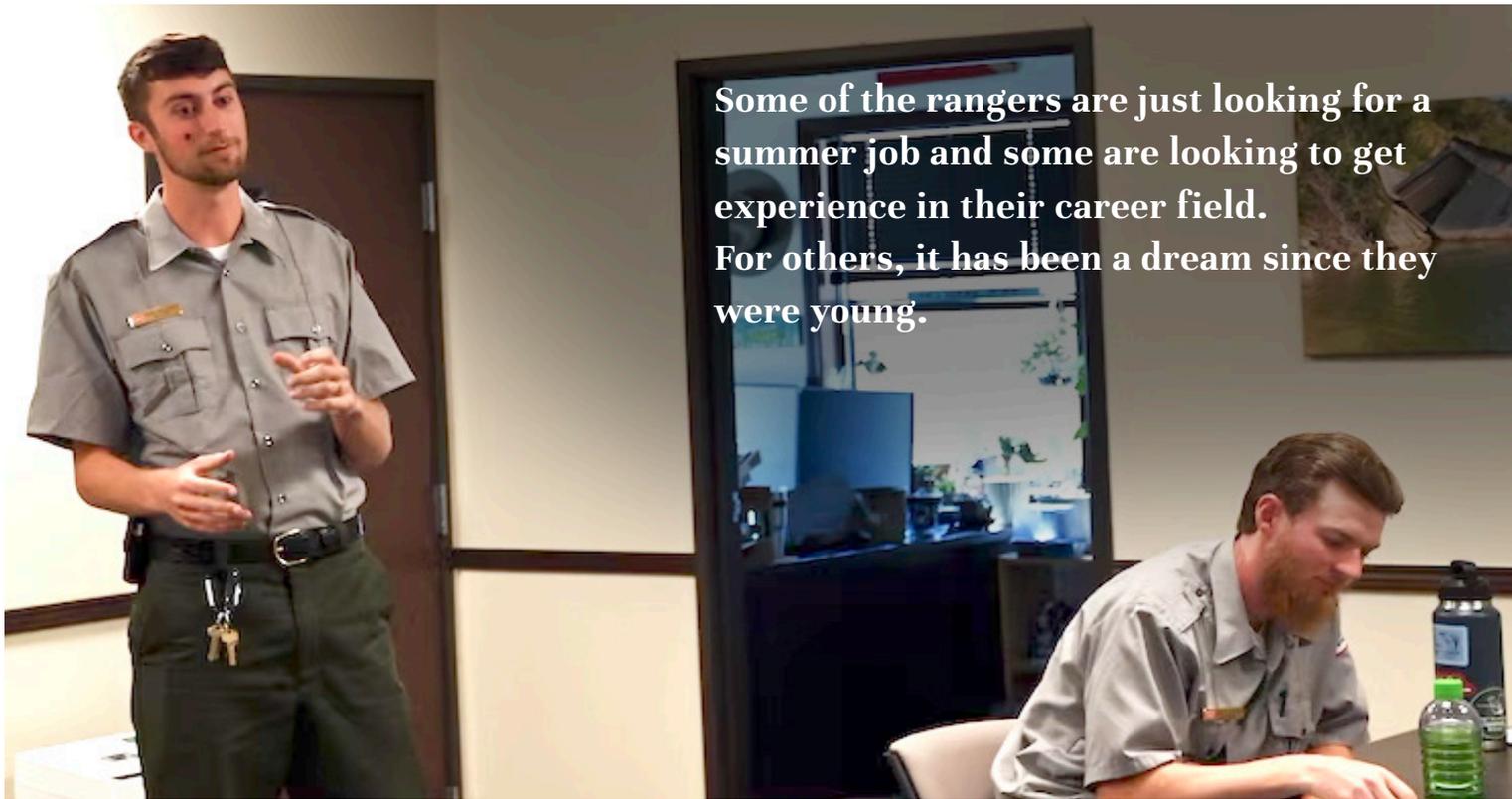
"This is one of the most effective and ethical ways to control the population for the deer that live here. This area is not open to public hunting, which makes these special hunts crucial for herd management," said Niemietz.

With another safe and successful hunt in the books, the weekend's theme was labeled 'camaraderie and waiting games, over many cups of cowboy coffee' by rangers and participants.

The BOW hunt concluded with participants ethically and humanely harvesting a total of nine deer. Ultimately, participants walked away with a newfound sense on the importance of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District's mission, the necessity of park rangers, and the confidence to take on the world; or at least a deer. ■

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT**

**[WWW.TPWD.STATE.TX.US/LEARNING/BOW](http://WWW.TPWD.STATE.TX.US/LEARNING/BOW)**



Some of the rangers are just looking for a summer job and some are looking to get experience in their career field. For others, it has been a dream since they were young.

Photo by: Pat Adelmann



*"I believe the summer ranger program is a great steppingstone," said Karickhoff. "I began as a summer hire because it allowed me to perform a lot of hands-on tasks while learning the basis for several project programs. The latitude allowed summer hires equipped me with the appropriate amount of material-to-time ratio for efficient learning."*

# A STEPPING STONE TO THE TOP

Story by: Pat Adelmann

With their eyes on the future, summer rangers in the Three Rivers Region of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers' Fort Worth District came together at the start of summer for a regional training program. The program is designed to start them on a path that could see them becoming full-fledged rangers or maybe something even greater. From rangers and lake managers to the deputy district engineer for programs and project

management, former summer rangers from the region are filling critical roles within the district and elsewhere.

Some of the rangers are just looking for a summer job and some are looking to get experience in their career field. For others, it has been a dream since they were young.

"When I graduated from high school I kind of had in my mind that I wanted to be a ranger," said Seth Williams,

a senior at Texas A&M University. "I was thinking about being a park ranger at Meridian State Park or something like that. I hardly knew anything about the Corps, but I was looking for summer jobs to apply to and saw the Corps job come up. I really wanted to get some ranger experience because that was what I wanted to do in the beginning. Now I could see myself doing this for the rest of my life."

Madeline Karickhoff was hired as a summer ranger in June 2022 at Whitney Lake. She spent one summer in the program and decided it was the right career for her. Fast forward one year and she is now a natural resource specialist (park ranger) at Georgetown Lake. As a new park ranger, she gives the summer ranger program credit for leading her along her current path.

"I believe the summer ranger program is a great steppingstone," said Karickhoff. "I began as a summer hire because it allowed me to perform a lot of hands-on tasks while learning the basis for several project programs. The latitude allowed summer hires equipped me with the appropriate amount of material-to-time ratio for efficient learning."

For many, the next step in the path is to become a lake manager. Josh Brown, the lake manager at Whitney Lake, started his career as a ranger at Navarro Mills Lake. Planning to follow a family tradition in law enforcement, Josh wanted to become a game warden with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. After one summer in the program and graduating from Tarleton State University with a degree in Criminal Justice with a Wildlife Management minor Josh instead became a park ranger in 2008.

"I considered my career path before choosing to accept the summer ranger program," Josh said. "I chose a career with the Corps because I recognized I would have more potential for advancement than if I went in to law enforcement."

The region's training reinforces what the summer rangers have been taught at the lake level. However, the region's training also provides a broader overview of what or who the Corps of Engineers is and how their position fits in to the big picture and where they could see themselves down the road.

Tim Horn never envisioned himself as the Operations Project Manager for the Three Rivers Region when he served four seasons as a summer ranger from 1987-1990. In fact, after graduating from college he embarked on a teaching career which lasted one year.

"Being a summer ranger introduced me to the Corps of Engineers and the opportunities it provided for a lake-based career in natural resources and recreation management," Horn said. "It was not only a great summer job, but it also provided experience and a launching point for the career that I have enjoyed over the past 30 plus years."

Summer rangers gain knowledge in all business lines of the Corps of Engineers. From boots on the ground at the lakes to writing specifications, project development, budgeting, contracting and administration.

"The summer ranger program is a great way to get an overall understanding of a variety of career paths that are available throughout the Corps," said Kathryn Haferkamp, a Project Coordinator with the district's Programs and Project Management Division. "I believe the summer ranger program is very important. While I was a summer ranger, I worked with rangers who are currently leaders throughout the district and the Southwestern Division."

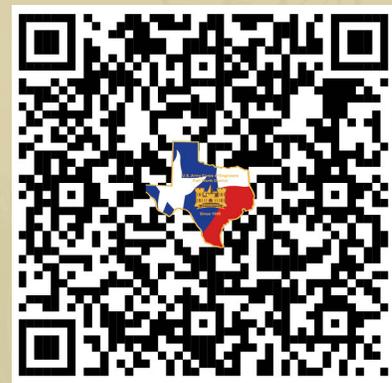
A summer ranger who has reached the pinnacle in upward mobility within the district is Arnold "Rob" Newman. He first donned the green and grey in May of 1994. Since then, he has climbed the proverbial ladder within the district. He's held multiple leadership roles throughout the district and is now the deputy district engineer and senior civilian with the Fort Worth District.

"Being a summer ranger, or park ranger in general, is probably the best job in the Corps," said Newman. "You get to be outside, work on the land to make it more valuable for wildlife,

and you get to interact with all parts of the recreating public. The district offices are probably full of people that used to be park rangers early on in their career."

Starting your career as a summer ranger can be a good summer job for some. But for others, it's just the start of a lifetime journey. How far up the ladder do you want to climb? ■

***For information about Corps of Engineers jobs in the Fort Worth area visit:***



Story and Photos by: Audrey Gossett



## *Dallas Floodway Project:* **MILESTONE REACHED**

In the heart of Dallas, Texas, stands a testament to flood risk management, public safety, partnership, and engineering excellence- the Dallas Floodway project. The Flood Risk Management project recently reached a milestone with the substantial completion of the West Levee 277k crest raise and side slope flattening features of work.

As with any complex, multi-year civil works construction project, partnership plays a pivotal role in project success. For the Dallas Floodway, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has partnered with the City of Dallas as the non-federal sponsor as well as other Federal, State, and Local agencies.

A levee is defined as a man-made structure, usually an earthen embankment, designed and constructed in accordance with sound engineering practices to contain, control, or divert the flow of water to reduce risk from temporary flooding. While levees can

help reduce the risk of flooding, it is important to remember that they do not eliminate the risk. As with any manmade structure, routine and reoccurring maintenance is important. The City of Dallas maintains the responsibility of ensuring the levees retain their effectiveness through compliance with operations and maintenance activities.

The funding for these initiatives was allocated through the Supplemental Appropriation in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018.

"Flood protection is at the heart of this project, aiming to keep the surrounding communities and businesses from flooding. We aim to fulfill the Corps mission of keeping people safe," said Aaron Philips, USACE Construction Project Coordinator at the Dallas Floodways Resident Office.

Spanning along the Trinity River, the project encompasses a substantial

area, reaching from the abandoned Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe trestle to the confluence of the West and Elm Forks, and further upstream along the West Fork for about 2.2 miles, as well as approximately four miles along the Elm Fork.

The construction phase, while in its beginning stages, consists of over seven different features: the AT&SF Bridge Modification (completed in February 2021), 277K Levee Raise and Side Slope Flattening, construction of the Trinity Portland Pump Station, construction of the Charlie Pump Station, replacement of the Delta Pump Station, construction and upgrade to the Hampton Pump Station and improvements to the Nobles Branch Sump.

"Currently, the 277k levee raise, the construction of the Charlie pump station, and the Trinity Portland pump station just scratch the surface of the seven features planned," said Mark Hermann, USACE Program Manager.

Named the "277K levee raise and side



slope flattening”, the \$56 million project’s moniker stems from the levee’s elevation intended to sustain 277,000 cubic feet per second of water flow through the floodway. This amount of flow would be the equivalent of three Olympic sized swimming pools releasing their water in an instant.

The project involves raising the current East and West levees over a 23-mile stretch to the 277k cubic feet per second water surface elevation as well as flattening the riverside slopes. The 277k levee raise involves using earthen material to raise the low areas of the current levees to the height consistent with the 277k flow within the floodway. The side slope flattening consists of flattening the slopes of the levee to make them less steep. This will increase the overall stability of the levees and decrease operations and maintenance costs once completed.

On August 2, 2023, after years of planning and a year and a half of construction, the project reached a milestone by

completing all improvements to the West levee along the Trinity River in Dallas.

A joint inspection of the 277k Levee Raise and Side Slope Flattening for the west levee was conducted by the USACE and the construction contractor, transferring over the responsibility of operation and maintenance to the City of Dallas.

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers number one priority is public safety, and so with the 277k levee raise and pump station improvements across the Dallas Floodway program, we are delivering that for the City of Dallas,” said Stanley Young, USACE Resident Engineer.

The overall Dallas Floodway project, with its commitment, collaboration, and forward-thinking approach, edges closer to its goal of delivering a strong and capable levee system for the City of Dallas. Its dedication stands as a testament to mitigating flood risks to the community from potential natural disasters while assuring their well-being remains paramount. ■

## About the Dallas Floodway:

Find out what the Corps of Engineers is doing in the Dallas Floodway by visiting our dedicated website here:





# A CAREER WELL DONE

On January 6, 2023, Mr. Kevin Davee celebrated the culmination of a 33-year career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



**"If you're looking for your next career, USACE continues to offer opportunities to work on a variety of small and large-scale projects that are hard to find elsewhere,"**

**★ - Kevin Davee**

focus on personal health goals.

As one retires, new opportunities are created for the next wave of civil servants. "If you're looking for your next career, USACE continues to offer opportunities to work on a variety of small and large-scale projects that are hard to find elsewhere," Davee said in closing.

Start a rewarding career by joining the Fort Worth District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, today! ■

On January 6, 2023, Mr. Kevin Davee celebrated the culmination of a 33-year career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; 14 of those years devoted to the Fort Worth District. Surrounded by over 30 loved ones, peers, mentees, and well-wishers, Davee enjoyed what would be the last ceremony of his career – his retirement ceremony.

During the ceremony, many colleagues spoke about Kevin's ability to see through the noise and clutter while staying focused on the critical mission at hand. To sum up the thoughts of the day, the deputy district engineer, Eric Verwers stated, "Kevin is a great example of being dedicated to the mission and taking care of his people in the process."

With over three decades of experience, Kevin has seen his share of changes, from electric typewriters to carbon paper, and now smartphones; many of those changes for the better stating, "I genuinely believe the increased focus on care of the workforce and making the organization more diverse represents the best changes, while some changes created barriers to efficiency of mission completion."

Despite barriers, Kevin took his own advice to have a good sense of humor and not take himself too seriously. In addition, he created an

enjoyable work environment for those under his purview; evident by several colleagues and employees when speaking of their time working with Kevin.

"It's not every day you find someone that truly enjoys what they do and can find a way to make each day fun in the process," stated Rob Newman, director of regional planning and environmental center and the ceremony host.

Kevin was filled with laughter and joy as he reminisced on his 33-year career; the ups and downs, fun times and times where his passion for mission landed him in hot water. He thanked the numerous leaders and mentors accumulated along the way, and summed up his time stating, "I've enjoyed working with leaders who were consistent, walked the walk and not just talked the talk, and demonstrably were willing to put it all on the line to accomplish the mission."

His biggest takeaway will be his role in furthering numerous colleagues and employees' successes, and the knowledge gained from them.

After retirement, Kevin plans to work part-time as a rehired annuitant and being a supportive husband while his wife pursues a second career in Education. This retirement will also give him the opportunity to spend more time with his four grandchildren and

# The One That Got Away

The line went taut as it was pulled into the boat. There was no telling what laid below the murky water, but they knew a fight was ahead.

Suddenly the water erupted, and the beast burst forth, its mouth wide open, looking for something to bite. After a short fight and several rolls, the estimated 11-foot alligator snapped the line.

For the volunteers with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Piney Woods Service Association, a 501c3 non-profit, this was just like other alligator hunts they have sponsored.

But for four veterans, what lay ahead is unlike anything they have done before.

For Mitchell Holland, president of the PWSA, whose grandfather and brother served in the military, this is a way to give back to our veterans.

"The alligator hunt is quite unique," Holland said. "It seems to get a little bigger every year. But we've partnered with the Corps of Engineers from the very beginning, and they've been a tremendous help in making this happen. From the facilities to providing park space for everyone to stay at, whatever we need, they're ready to help."

The hunt took place on B.A. Steinhagen Lake, September 15-17.

This is the 10th alligator hunt sponsored by the PWSA in coop-

eration with the USACE and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. While the TPWD has been hosting public alligator hunts at the lake since the mid-1990s, it wasn't until 2012 that the veteran hunt began on the lake with TPWD providing the tags for the hunters.

Cody Hammer, a regional geographic information system specialist with the Army Corps of Engineers and a Marine Corps veteran, found out about the hunt when he first started working for the Army Corps of Engineers 11 years ago and has participated in the event ever since.

"Everybody has a good time," Hammer said. "It's probably one of the more entertaining events for everyone involved. There are five or six Army Corps of Engineers employees here in camp this weekend. They're not on duty, they're here as volunteers to help in any way they can."

Hammer's older brother Craig, an Army veteran along with fellow Army alum Tim Hammond and Marine Corps veterans Brian Aft and Aaron Brittain, were chosen by PWSA to take part in this year's hunt.

"I found out about the hunt through my brother," said Craig Hammer. "He's been talking about it for years and told me I should register to see if I get chosen. I knew about the PWSA and what they do for veterans, so I registered. Getting some outdoor therapy is always a good thing."

Friday night gave the lake



## → On the Hunt

Andy Gray, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Fort Worth District volunteer, pilots an airboat to check on the sets put in place by the hunters.



## → On the Line

U.S. Army veteran Tim Hammond, kneeling, begins a fight with an 8-foot alligator during the annual alligator hunt on B.A. Steinhagen Lake.

staff, PWSA members, volunteers, and veterans the chance to get to know one another while sharing a meal.

"PWSA is awesome," said Brittain. "It's just great to come out and get together with other veterans, have a good time and get outdoors while not having to worry about setting up the tents, the gear or anything."

Later in the evening guides and airboat captains scour the lake to find the best places for the veterans to set their lines the next day.

Come Saturday morning, the hunters, guides, and airboat captains travel to the state park for a briefing by a TPWD biologist. The biologist briefs the hunters on the rules and regulations governing the hunt and issues each hunter a license. At exactly noon the 24-hour hunt window opens. The airboats speed across the calm waters to the points scouted the night before.

Each veteran sets their line consisting of a 6-inch stainless-steel hook on 100-feet of nylon rope rated at over 400-lb test. The line is attached to a nearby cypress with a cane pole holding the hook between 10-12 inches above the calm water. Once everything is in place the veteran dons a pair of rubber gloves and opens the container holding the vilest smelling quarter of chicken known to man. The scent is what will attract the alligator. Once all four lines are in place the teams go back to camp with fingers crossed in hopes that their line will be down when they come back to check on them.

Brian Aft appreciates the hunt. This is his second hunt with PWSA.

"I did the crossbow hunt at Lake O' the Pines," Aft said. "The next year I volunteered to support the deer hunt and they asked me to participate in this hunt. I said absolutely."

None of the lines were down Saturday. So, all the veterans went to sleep with dreams of alligators at the end of their lines. For Hammer and Hammond, their dreams came true. The Army veterans were able to harvest two female alligators just over 8- feet long and weighing more than a 100 pounds.

"When I pulled on the rope and it tugged back, I thought it was a 3- or 4-foot gator," said Hammond. "But it turned out to be pretty good."

Although not everybody harvested an alligator, everybody did have a good weekend.

"The program PWSA is offering is fantastic," said Aft. "The best part of it is that the guys running it are just awesome. It's invaluable for the veterans that take part in the hunts."

Texas is one of 10 states that have an alligator population. Floyd Boyett, lake manager at B.A. Steinhagen said the TPWD uses the hunts as a means for population management while also providing the public with a unique and quality outdoor recreational experience to accomplish that goal. ■

For more information, visit [www.thepsa.net](http://www.thepsa.net)



Shane Iverson, a volunteer with the Piney Woods Service Association (PWSA) and Andy Gray, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Fort Worth District volunteer, look on as U.S. Marine Corps veterans Brian Aft, left, and Aaron Brittain attempt to land an estimated 11-foot alligator.



**USACE Fort Worth District Magazine**



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<https://www.swf.usace.army.mil/>