

TOWER TIMES

August/September 2025



Lake Red Rock Gains
Permanent Fish Cover,
Ecosystem Support



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Rock Island District



Mission

The Rock Island District's mission is to deliver vital engineering and water resource solutions in collaboration with our partners to secure our Nation, reduce disaster risk and enhance quality of life, providing value to the region and Nation.

Vision

A premier public service, engineering organization of trusted, talented professionals delivering innovative and sustainable solutions to the region and Nation.

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On the Cover

Josh Ellis, a Pella Middle School science teacher and summer extern with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, at Lake Red Rock places a 'safe haven' artificial fish structure in Lake Red Rock. *Photo by Frances Candelaria*

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Camaraderie and Cohesion: Building a Stronger Team

Rock Island Team,
Another few exciting months have passed. As I have previously mentioned, prior to assuming command of the Rock Island District, I had a general understanding of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' diverse missions. It was not until several months into the role that I truly began to grasp the full scope—and complexity—of our organization. Now, after nearly a year and a half in command, it is very clear we are far more than a collection of specialized teams working in parallel.



Col. Aaron M. Williams
District Commander

Cohesion. From lock and dam operations along the Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway to environmental restoration, flood risk management, and emergency response, each mission may appear distinct at first glance. But beneath the surface lies a deeper truth: every mission we undertake is interconnected. What we do in one area often shapes the success of another—and that is why cohesion matters. Unity, transparent communication, relationships, and a shared understanding of purpose are essential across the entire District.

We are engineers, technicians, project managers, biologists, administrators, regulators, real estate specialists and more—but more importantly, we are people who care. We take the time to know one another beyond job titles. We share stories over coffee, collaborate to solve problems, and support each other through challenges. This culture of connection builds mutual trust—and mutual trust builds teams capable of accomplishing anything.

Organizational events like Corps Day help foster this camaraderie and strengthen our cohesion. They remind us that mission readiness is not just about equipment or technical skill—it is about relationships. When we know each other, we communicate better, anticipate needs faster, and approach challenges with resilience and mutual respect.

When your mission touches everything from barge traffic to bald eagles, and flood fighting to forest management, every voice matters—and every hand must work together.

As we face new challenges and chart new paths, let us carry this with us: the strength of our District is not just in what we do—it is in how we do it, together.

Let's continue showing up for one another. Let's continue building mutual trust. And let's continue moving forward, united in purpose, and stronger with every step.

Appreciate you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely of Col. Aaron M. Williams.

Col. Aaron M. Williams
Rock Island District Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

GUARDING THE GREAT LAKES: ASA(CW) VISITS BRANDON ROAD INTERBASIN PROJECT

By Jim Finn, Public Affairs Specialist


Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Mr. Lee Forsgren, recently visited Brandon Road Lock and Dam near Joliet, Illinois, to gain firsthand insight into construction progress of the Brandon Road Interbasin Project (BRIP). The visit, conducted alongside senior leadership from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, as well as representatives from Illinois and Michigan, underscores the critical importance of the project to the health of the Great Lakes ecosystem.

The Great Lakes hold 20% of the world's freshwater, making them an essential natural resource. BRIP is a key component in safeguarding this vital ecosystem by preventing the spread of invasive carp and other aquatic nuisance species that could disrupt the delicate balance of the lakes' food chain and threaten native populations.

"Senior leader visits such as this are tremendously important to the District's execution of the Brandon Road Interbasin Project because it assures those leaders are getting accurate information and seeing the important and unique features of the project for themselves," said Jason Smith, BRIP Project Manager.

BRIP employs a multi-layered approach to deter invasive species, building upon the success of an existing electric barrier system already in operation at a USACE facility in Romeoville, Illinois. The project combines physical barriers with preventative strategies implemented at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam on the Illinois Waterway.

Forsgren's visit aimed to provide him with a strategic understanding of the project's schedule, construction progress, site conditions, and challenges. This understanding will be crucial in informing briefings to the President of the United States, the Secretary of the Army and other key decision-makers.

"Having an informed senior leader coalition provides greater surety that funding and political support will be provided when needed in order to design, construct, and begin operating the invasive species deterrent system as quickly as possible," Smith said. "This provides greater likelihood that the Great Lakes fishery will remain healthy for future generations to come." 

Jason Smith (left), Project Manager for the Brandon Road Interbasin Project, discusses several aspects of the project with Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Mr. Lee Forsgren (right) during a visit to Brandon Road Lock and Dam near Joliet, Illinois. Photo by Jim Finn



PREPARING FOR FISCAL YEAR-END: GETTING “ANOTHER YEAR IN THE BOOKS”

By Sam Heilig, Public Affairs Specialist

As the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, approaches the end of Fiscal Year 2025, teams across the organization have been working to complete the annual closeout process. Running through September 30, this period demands meticulous preparation and attention to detail in financial recording, reconciliation, and adherence to strict regulations.

The closeout is a phased process spanning the third and fourth quarters of the year, requiring proactive steps to ensure a smooth and accurate final report is produced for USACE Headquarters.

“Proactive financial management is key to mission success,” said Celeste Iversen, chief of Resource Management for the Rock Island District. “We emphasize early action and thorough review, to minimize issues during the final closeout phase and ensure we’re responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars.”

The process requires collaboration across multiple disciplines within the District, including resource management specialists, program/project managers, contracting officers, and procurement personnel. Key areas of focus include obligations,

expenditures, revenue, receivables, and asset management.

All financial obligations must be properly documented and prepared for liquidation. This includes verifying that funds allocated for contracts, interagency agreements, and purchase orders are on track for timely expenditure.

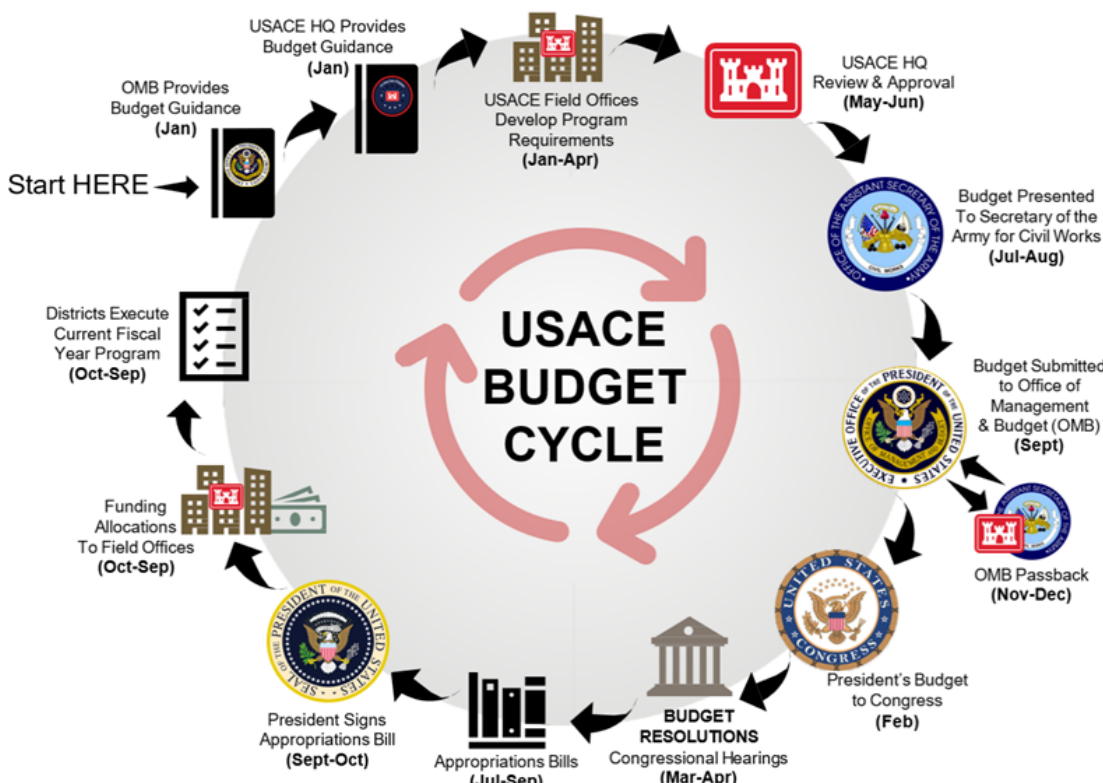
“We urge all program and project managers to review open obligations early on,” explained Heather Schroeder, acting chief of Programs Management Branch. “Identifying potential issues prior to the end of the fiscal year helps us proactively address them and avoid complications during final closeout.”

Critical steps during the closeout process include final recording of accrued expenditures, reconciliation of purchase card transactions, and timely submission and processing of travel vouchers. A physical inventory of accountable property – including equipment and vehicles – is also part of the process, but it’s conducted earlier in the year to ensure completion before the busy year-end closeout occurs.

Although the year-end process may not seem to directly involve all employees, there are small

things like early timekeeping deadlines that will impact everyone.

“I encourage all personnel to familiarize themselves with the closeout process and to reach out to their supervisor with any questions,” said Iversen. “A collaborative effort will help ensure a successful and compliant year-end closeout.”



DEPLOYMENT SPOTLIGHT: The Data Behind Disaster Recovery with Dan McBride

By Jordan Raiff, Editor

For 20 years Dan McBride has been an instrumental member of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, representing the organization on multiple emergency response deployments.

His most recent response in July supporting recovery efforts for the Southern California wildfires, was similar to his first deployment after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in 2005. Time and technology have changed, but the mission of helping people has remained the same.

"I was a GIS [Geographic Information Systems] specialist supporting the debris mission in California," McBride said. "I was assigned to the Eaton EFO [Emergency Field Office] with the RFO [Recovery Field Office] in Pasadena. I sat next to the RFO GIS specialist and formed more of a team instead of operating independently."

According to McBride, the mission was near completion when he arrived.

"It was down to the difficult locations and projects pushed to the end. The mission does evolve, and so does the GIS support. Early on it's a 'go, go, go' situation—basically making sure there are no roadblocks for the construction crews and action taking place."

To keep things running smoothly, McBride focused on data integrity.

"When I got there, it was more looking backwards—ensuring everything synced up and adding up all the records, so the data makes sense," he said. "If and when they don't, we find out why. You go through the 10,000-plus records and update where needed. But you also have to be really careful because you don't want to falsely count things just to make it add up."

He noted the scale of the response compared to other disasters.

"This was larger than the disaster in Maui in terms of the number of parcels and properties affected, and it was done in half a year compared to several years out there," McBride said. "The nature of that huge amount of work being done in a short amount of time because of the automation we had and the rapid pace—it's a great success story for USACE to scale up and respond to a disaster like this. I don't think people grasp how big it was."

Performing a job like this comes with unique


challenges—mainly having the tools to process all that data accurately and without delays, which means working away from the front lines.

"For me, the field was basically for context, and all my work was done at my desk in an office," McBride said. "I need to be connected to the network. All the databases and systems that we need are not on-site, so you need a strong network and internet connection. That's why I was physically sitting next to the other GIS person. Our jobs make us bandwidth hogs and they had us directly connected to the network switch so we could plug in over a hard line."

Despite the challenges, McBride said deployments remain a welcome opportunity.

"I like the experience. I like getting to unplug from life in general," he said. "Here I always have 20 plates spinning and make progress here and there. There, you just unplug for 30 days and focus on one thing. You're also always helping somebody. You're making a difference because you're there because of a need. You're part of a solution, and that's satisfying—seeing real progress and knowing you're a part of that."

While USACE deployments are currently in a calm status, that can change at any time. For those considering a deployment, McBride offered some advice.

"My deployment advice in general is the same advice I was given the first time I deployed," he said. "I asked the GIS Cadre Team Lead what advice he had for me. I expected something technical, but instead he said, 'Just be flexible. You really don't know what's going to be needed and just expect to do whatever's required.' Come with that attitude, stay flexible, and you'll do great." 



Dan McBride receives the Civilian Service Achievement Medal from Eaton Emergency Field Office Commander Col. Sunny Avichal. Photo by Jeffrey Henon

HANDS-ON TRAINING EXPOSES ROTC CADETS TO USACE ENGINEERING PROJECTS

By Jordan Raiff, Editor

The Rock Island District, a vital component of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, periodically hosts cadets from Reserve Officer Training Corps programs. The District's broad geographic area and diverse mission set provide valuable exposure to cadets exploring potential Army careers.

These cadets, full-time students committed to future service as U.S. Army officers, gain practical experience through internships with commands similar to those they may lead upon commissioning. Despite a relatively small number of active-duty personnel assigned to the District, cadets have opportunities to shadow officers and observe the innovative and essential work conducted here.

From July 22 to August 18, three cadets interned at the District, gaining hands-on engineering experience outside of a traditional academic setting.

Cadet Noah Stern of Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania is a civil engineering major. Cadet Axel Ekberg from Lehigh University is majoring in Industrial Systems Engineering, and Cadet Faith Loyd from Southern Illinois University is majoring in Mechanical Engineering with a specialty in aerospace.

Despite their varied experiences, all three cadets agreed on what made the USACE Rock Island District special: the people.

"I've worked with USACE offices before, and the strong sense of community here is impressive," said Cadet Stern. "Corps Day was a lot of fun and a great way to meet people."


"The diversity of projects we observed was incredible. We had the chance to witness, work on,

or discuss a wide range of projects. Plus, watching concrete being crushed was fun," added Cadet Loyd.

During their short visit, the trio gained a comprehensive understanding of the USACE mission at the Rock Island District. They began with a tour of Lock and Dam 15, then visited Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to see the new floodwall project and learn about the scale of the project and the engineering improvements being made.

They also visited the concrete testing lab for a unique experience. According to Cadet Loyd, they "helped create and cut concrete cylinders." Cadet Stern shared that they also "conducted bridge inspections, visited projects in the Clock Tower, and observed the expansion on the north side of the Annex."

Overall, the cadets were enthusiastic about the experience. "Seeing the inner workings and the administrative side has been great," said Cadet Ekberg. "As my first internship, it's been valuable to gain firsthand experience and understand everyone's contributions to the USACE mission."

For Cadet Loyd, the opportunity provided valuable insights to take back to college. "Talking to the engineers and asking questions was great. I help run a club at school, and one of my goals has been to identify skills not taught in the classroom that are helpful in engineering. Getting their feedback on what they use daily that they didn't learn in college was extremely helpful. I also learned more about certifications and when to take the tests." 

Pictured from left is:

- Cadet Axel Ekberg from Lehigh University

- Cadet Faith Loyd from Southern Illinois University

- Cadet Noah Stern of Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania

Photos by Jordan Raiff



LAKE RED ROCK GAINS PERMANENT FISH COVER, ECOSYSTEM SUPPORT

By Frances Candelaria, Public Affairs Specialist

Lake Red Rock recently received a boost to its fish habitat through a collaborative effort between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Lake Red Rock Association, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and local volunteers. A grant secured by the Association funded the purchase of the structures which are designed to provide much needed cover and create a sustainable ecosystem within the reservoir. The USACE Lake Red Rock office sought out applicants for a summer externship who organized, coordinated, and managed the implementation of nearly 700 artificial fish structures into the reservoir.

Josh Ellis, a science teacher at Pella Middle School, was selected for the externship to spearhead the effort.

"This project was the whole plan for the externship," Ellis said. "So, I knew a bit about the project when I applied."

The manufactured habitats are made of scuffed PVC trunks with angled slots to hold flexible, textured limbs assembled with a cinder block base to keep it at the bottom of the reservoir. The need for these structures stems directly from the unique characteristics of Lake Red Rock's environment as Ellis explained:

"Essentially because of how the reservoir is, stuff just kind of washes through and there's no real natural cover for these fish," he said. "These provide cover for your smaller fish and your bigger fish and it kind of creates this tiny ecosystem for them."


The project had two types of structures, and both need to be placed near each other to help establish a better aquatic habitat. Josh clarified the names and purpose of each; 'Safe Havens' with 18 flexible limbs meant for smaller fish while 'Trophy Trees' have half the number of limbs to accommodate larger predatory fish.



Assembled artificial fish structures sit in a shed at Lake Red Rock showing the difference between the 'safe havens' and 'trophy trees'. Safe havens are for smaller fish to hide in as well as find food sources and require more limbs inserted into the PVC center as opposed to the trophy trees with half the number of limbs to accommodate for the larger fish to move around. A collaborative effort between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District, Lake Red Rock Association, Iowa Department of Natural Resources and local volunteers placed 700 of these artificial fish structures within Lake Red Rock to begin boosting the ecosystem for wildlife and patrons alike. *Photo by Frances Candelaria*

“These limbs are kind of rough too, so it can gather moss and algae and other things small fish would feed on just creating this artificial ecosystem,” he said. “Sometimes the lakes will encourage people to bring their old Christmas trees, which is nice, but they go away after about two years, these are here forever.”

As Josh Ellis worked with USACE, Lake Red Rock Association, and Iowa DNR staff he also noted the help of the volunteers who came out to assemble and implement the new addition.

As one volunteer joked, they were just local fishermen with an interest in helping the lake and probably selfishly creating better fishing spots, Ellis conveyed his gratitude stating, “Other people are interested too, but you’re here.” 



Disassembled artificial fish structures, staged in two groups, are ready to be loaded onto boats for placement in Lake Red Rock. *Photo by Frances Candelaria*



A local fisherman from Pella, Iowa, volunteers his time to assemble artificial fish structures to be placed in Lake Red Rock. *Photo by Frances Candelaria*



Josh Ellis, lifts the assembled artificial ‘safe haven’ fish structure (above) and tosses it into the lake (below) for placement. *Photo by Frances Candelaria*



Josh Ellis, a Pella Middle School science teacher and summer extern with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, at Lake Red Rock assembles a ‘safe haven’ artificial fish structure in the lake.

Photo by Frances Candelaria



DESIGNING A MODERN, FLEXIBLE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER FOR THE FUTURE

By Sarah Jones, Chief of Emergency Management



Construction is underway on the Rock Island District's new Emergency Operations Center inside the North Annex of the Clocktower Headquarters Complex. Once complete, the remodeled space will provide a flexible environment to support emergency response and host District-wide events. *Photo by Sam Heilig*

Every U.S. Army Corps of Engineers district office in the nation is required by regulation to maintain a dedicated Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to provide command and control during emergency situations. The regulation also outlines minimum standards for infrastructure—including power, HVAC, communications, and access—and calls for dual-use space: areas that can flexibly serve as meeting rooms, classrooms, or operational EOC space depending on the need.

With these requirements in mind and building on the deep experience of our Emergency Management (EM) team at the Rock Island District, we developed a concept for a modern, scalable, and multi-functional EOC tailored to both emergency operations and broader District needs. We worked closely with the Engineering Division, who brought this concept to life through detailed space design and technical planning.

To inform our concept, the EM team reviewed examples of EOCs across USACE and other agencies, while also evaluating lessons learned from past activations and staff augmentation efforts. The

result was a vision for a space that adapts to the scale of the event while addressing gaps in training and meeting space within the district.

One of the core features of the new EOC, which is now in construction in the North Annex where Contracting, Construction and the MacKenzie-Wheeler Conference Room was located, is its flexibility. Partitioned walls will allow the space to scale based on the scope of an emergency but also make the area suitable for large trainings and District-wide events. For example, EM has hosted training sessions with over 60 participants—a challenge in our previous setup.

The new space, which is anticipated for completion sometime next spring, will have the ability to be configured as one large operations or training room or divided into two conference rooms for smaller meetings. A third, smaller conference room located within the EM office will provide additional flexibility for EM events or District use, such as breakout meeting space.

Recognizing that successful EOC operations depend on real-time coordination, we included



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT


By Jordan Raiff, Editor

Fresh Perspectives

Due to a federal hiring freeze, growth of the Rock Island District team has been limited the last six months. Fortunately, employees who joined in late 2024 and early 2025 have now had time to settle in, find their footing, and have begun making meaningful contributions to the USACE mission. Some are military family members pursuing new opportunities after a permanent change of station, while others came aboard mid-career, ready for the next step in their professional journey. But no matter the path that led them here, one question stands out: **What made you choose to come work for USACE Rock Island?**

Caitlin Sarabia, Support Services Specialist - “As a military spouse, I’ve always felt a strong desire to support not only my husband’s service, but also to contribute to our country in a meaningful way. When I learned more about USACE Rock Island and its mission, I felt immediately aligned with its values of service, stewardship, and technical excellence. What really confirmed for me that this was the right place was during the interview — when I asked about opportunities for growth, I was impressed by how many different career paths and development programs were available. It showed me that this isn’t just a job; it’s a place where I can build a lifelong career while continuing to serve the nation in my own way.”

Tori Vincent, Administration and Office Support - “I learned about the Corps from a few close friends/family after moving to the QC a couple years ago. I was interested in the student trainee program that allowed me to build my knowledge and skillset while going to school. I liked the idea of jump starting my career while finishing out my degree, which would eventually land me into a permanent position within the district where I could provide value and support in contributing to the mission.”

Christina Smith, Emergency Management Specialist - “Before returning as a rehired annuitant, I worked on the G-6 team supporting the Corps of Engineers, where I gained a strong appreciation for the organization’s mission and impact. When I heard of the opportunity to come back in an Emergency Management role, I was immediately intrigued. The chance to broaden my knowledge in a new capacity—especially one focused on helping communities during disasters—was both compelling and meaningful. Returning to the Rock Island District allows me to serve the public while contributing to critical emergency response efforts with a team I respect and trust.” 

(EOC continued)


design features to support seamless collaboration. A retractable glass wall between the EM office and the main EOC briefing room will allow staff to participate in briefings without relocating. A dynamic glass wall will offer further flexibility—it can be switched to opaque for privacy when non-EM events are underway or left clear to create a sense of unified space during activations.

The updated layout also includes a secure area with expanded storage capacity for deployment items like uniforms, laptops, and cell phones. More electrical outlets are being added to support efficient charging and equipment use. Additionally, a small area we’ve nicknamed the “bullpen” will provide flexible workspace for staging and prepping personnel, particularly ahead of deployments.

Although we appreciated our previous location on the third floor, relocating to the North Annex significantly improves accessibility. The new space

will offer direct access from the parking lot—ideal for quickly onboarding personnel arriving to support the EOC. In large-scale events requiring staff from other Districts, this proximity will save valuable time and improve operational flow.

Beyond the physical facility improvements, a regional contract was also awarded to deliver state-of-the-art audiovisual enhancements. This includes upgrades to video walls, sound systems, and conference room controls—dramatically improving communication and situational awareness during high-tempo operations.

My Emergency Management team and I are eagerly anticipating the completion of the new EOC, which will greatly enhance our ability to support the District and our communities and partners during emergencies. Until then, should an event require activation, the 340 Training Room will serve as our temporary EOC—ensuring we remain ready to respond when called upon. 

RIBBON CUTTING CELEBRATES FLOOD PROTECTION AND RECREATION UPGRADES

By Jim Finn, Public Affairs Specialist



Rock Island District Commander Col. Aaron Williams and Cedar Rapids Mayor Tiffany O'Donnell cut the ribbon to commemorate the completion of the McCloud Run floodwall, trail bridge, fishing trail, and shared use path as part of the Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management project in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Photo by Jim Finn

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, and the city of Cedar Rapids marked a major milestone in long-term flood protection efforts with a ribbon cutting ceremony for the McCloud Run segment of the Cedar Rapids Flood Control System.

The ceremony, held in late August near Iowa's only urban trout stream, celebrated the completion of a floodwall, trail bridge, shared-use path, and enhanced fishing access — infrastructure that provides both critical flood protection and valuable recreational opportunities.

"Protecting the natural McCloud Run waterway was a critical design priority," said Col. Aaron Williams, Commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District. "This segment isn't just about preventing floods; it's about preserving a valuable natural resource within the community while providing robust flood protection."

The newly completed section of the East Side Flood Control System includes a concrete floodwall

standing 8 feet tall and stretching 1,055 feet to protect adjacent businesses along McCloud Run. Built using 2,065 cubic yards of concrete and 150 tons of steel reinforcement, the wall forms a vital component in the city's ongoing effort to mitigate flood risks from both the Cedar River and local watershed runoff.

Alongside the floodwall, a 150-foot-long pre-engineered steel truss trail bridge spans McCloud Run, connecting a new segment of the Cedar Valley Nature Trail. The shared-use amenities also include a 1,400-foot concrete path and a 625-foot granular fishing trail, increasing public access to the stream's unique natural features.

"The trail bridge, fishing path, and shared-use path aren't simply recreational amenities," Col. Williams said during the ceremony. "They're integral to connecting the community with this revitalized area. While these features enhance quality of life, the underlying floodwall directly supports the greater flood risk reduction efforts of the entire East Side protection system."

Andrew Leichty, Program Manager for the Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management (FRM) Project, described the ribbon cutting as a significant moment in a process that's spanned nearly two decades.

"A lot of people have been a part of the Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management Project over the past 17 years," Leichty said. "It takes great perseverance by all involved to overcome obstacles and keep working step by step to bring this project to completion. The McCloud Run celebration was a great opportunity for the team and stakeholders to come together and celebrate this achievement, even as we continue to push forward."

Currently, the overall FRM project is just over 50% complete. According to Leichty, continued progress is made possible by a strong working relationship with local partners.

"We've developed a strong and collaborative working relationship with the city of Cedar Rapids," he said. "That partnership has been critical to the success we've seen so far — and it will be just as important as we complete the rest of the project."

While flood protection is the central focus of the system, public amenities have been intentionally woven into the project's design. The McCloud Run segment is a clear example of blending flood infrastructure with outdoor access and environmental restoration.


"Flood protection and community enrichment can go hand in hand," Leichty said. "For example, part of the levee in Reach 1 will serve as a bike path, connecting with the popular 67-mile Cedar Valley Nature Trail. Downtown, near the Tree of Five Seasons, the floodwall itself will also become a community space — with an overlook that encourages people to reconnect with the river."

The event was attended by local stakeholders and federal partners, including representatives from the offices of Senator Chuck Grassley, Senator Joni Ernst, and Congresswoman Ashley Hinson — all recognized by Col. Williams during his speech.



"Your continued support has been instrumental in bringing this critical project to fruition for the city of Cedar Rapids," he said.

As work continues on other portions of the flood control system, the McCloud Run segment stands as a model of multi-purpose design: flood protection, environmental conservation, and public access — all delivered through strong collaboration.

For more details on the Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management Project, visit: <https://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/missions/flood-risk-management/cedar-rapids/>. 



Above: Aerial view of the McCloud Run floodwall, trail bridge, fishing trail, and shared use path as part of the Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management project in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Photo by Jim Finn

Rock Island District Commander Col. Aaron Williams speaks during a ceremony to commemorate the completion of the McCloud Run floodwall, trail bridge, fishing trail, and shared use path as part of the Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management project in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Photo by Jim Finn

• AROUND THE DISTRICT •

Employees of the Year for Fiscal Year 2024



Heather L. Anderson
Supervisor/Manager



Christopher C. Hawes
Professional Occupations



James L. Maher
Technical/Administrative



Lindsay M. Welzenbach
Clerical/Assistant/Technician



Damon K. Gant
Lock Operator



James A. Dean
Wage Grade Supervisor



Tracy J. Spry
Public Contact

Not pictured:
Nathan D. Bowen
Trades/Crafts/Labor Occupations
Gary L. Kilburg
Community Service
Erica L. Stephens
Engineer

Photos by Frances Candelaria



Marisa Lack
Project Manager

Gallery of Distinguished Civilian Employees

Frederick R. Joers became the newest member of the USACE Rock Island District's Gallery of Distinguished Civilian Employees Aug. 1. He began his career with the Rock Island District in 1981 and served in multiple roles throughout the District during his 41 years with the organization. Mr. Joers was instrumental in the Rock Island District's designation as the Inland Navigation Design Center – Mandatory Center of Expertise, and became one of its first permanent employees in 2014. He also served as its second Director from 2016 until his retirement in 2021. Over his 41-year career, he demonstrated an outstanding record of service and leadership, particularly as Chief of the Structural Engineering Section and Director of the Inland Navigation Design Center. *Photo by Frances Candelaria*



Safety Corner


30-HOUR OSHA TRAINING

By Frances Candelaria, Public Affairs Specialist

The Safety Office of the Rock Island District has continually encouraged a culture of safety through many efforts. One of the recurring trainings they facilitate to boost a safe work environment is an Occupational Safety and Health Administration 30-Hour General Industry Course.

The four-day program was recently held in the Building 340 Training Center on the Rock Island Arsenal for District employees who signed up to receive an in-depth understanding of workplace safety. The course is crucial for maintaining a safe work environment and reducing the risk of workplace injuries and illnesses. Participants learned through lectures, interactive discussions, as well as hands-on exercises.

According to Hali Strobel, an Industrial Hygienist with the Rock Island Safety Office, at the successful completion of their training, each class member can understand OSHA regulations and compliance requirements, identify and assess common workplace hazards, implement effective hazard control measures, promote a safe and healthy work environment, effectively communicate safety information to employees. This demonstration of competency in general industry safety standards earns participants an OSHA 30-hour card which can be used anywhere and never expires.

Although the course is designed for supervisors, safety personnel, and anyone who requires extensive safety training, the safety office highly encourages anyone with the desire to learn to sign up for their classes when they are offered. All district employees can learn more through the MVR Safety Office intranet page <https://usace.dps.mil/sites/INTRA-MVR/SitePages/MVR-Safety-and-Occupational-Health.aspx>. 



As part of the Rock Island District Safety Office's General Industry OSHA 30-hour course, students receive instruction on fall protection equipment. Pictured here, students listen to a lecture on fall protection, one of many essential OSHA topics covered during the training.

Photo by Frances Candelaria

Can you name where this photo was taken?



Last Issue's Winner



Answer: Survey marker at Brandon Road Lock and Dam

Winner: Mick Früs

Send guesses to: jordan.n.raiff@usace.army.mil



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, Deputy Commander Major Matthew Fletcher was promoted to lieutenant colonel Aug. 8. He chose to hold his pinning ceremony on the upper I-wall of Locks & Dam 15 on the Mississippi River. He was pinned by his parents, Diana and Mark Fletcher, along with his wife, Rachel, and daughter, Addison.

District Commander Col. Aaron Williams said, “This promotion marks a significant milestone, entry into the ranks of senior field-grade leadership, and Lt. Col. Fletcher is more than ready. His proven record of mission success, strong character, and daily embodiment of Army values stand as a testament to the leader he is.” *Photos by Jim Finn* 

