

Crosscurrents

Serving the St. Paul District since 1977
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US Army Corps
of Engineers®
St. Paul District



**The Tower of Attorney: Office of
Counsel wins National Engineers
Week competition**

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(cover) Alex Webb (left), deputy district counsel, and Molly Hunt (right), senior assistant district counsel, build a tower for National Engineers Week, Feb. 25. USACE St. Paul District photo by Melanie Peterson

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Articles and photography submissions are welcome. Submissions may be emailed. Submissions should be in Microsoft Word format. Photos should be at least 5 in. x 7 in. at 300 dpi.

The mission of *Crosscurrents* is to support the commander’s internal information program for the St. Paul District and its stakeholders. *Crosscurrents* also serves as the commander’s primary communication tool for accurately transmitting policies and command philosophy to the St. Paul District community and its customers.

District Commander	Col. Matthew Chase
Public Affairs Chief	Shannon Bauer
<i>Crosscurrents</i> editor	Melanie Peterson
Contributing authors	Renwick Martin
	Patrick Moes
	Elizabeth Stoeckmann
	Dean Zwiefel

Address all inquiries to:
 Editor, *Crosscurrents*
 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 332 Minnesota St., Suite E 1500
 St. Paul, MN 55101
 (651) 290-5679 | cemvp-pa@usace.army.mil



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Comments from the top: A message from Col. Matthew Chase

Team MVP,

As we continue our vital work, it's a fitting time to reflect on our purpose and priorities. Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Adam R. Telle recently announced a pivotal initiative for our entire organization: **“Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork.”** This directive sharpens our focus on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' core Civil Works missions, empowering us to deliver on the promises we've made to the nation. Here in the St. Paul District, we are not just embracing this initiative; we are living it.

Our commitment to this mission is evident across the district. A prime example is the recently completed rock weir modification at Lock and Dam 7 in La Crescent, Minnesota. This project directly addresses a dangerous “outdraft” condition, significantly improving navigation safety on the Upper Mississippi River. This is a tangible outcome that makes

a real difference for the navigation industry who depend on our waterways. The critical work at Lock and Dam 7 continued over the winter non-navigation season as we dewatered the lock chamber and performed important infrastructure maintenance.

These operations depend on your unwavering commitment to safety. Through the Corps of Engineers Safety and Occupational Health Management System, or CE-SOHMS, we are embedding safety into every aspect of our work. Our goal is to manage risk effectively, reduce injuries and ensure every member of our team goes home safely. A key part of this effort is our district's first industrial hygienist, 2nd Lt. Shaunna George. She plays an integral role in protecting our employees from workplace hazards.

Of course, our mission success also relies on clear and precise communication. Technical writer-editor Libby Ritz provides that crucial final check, ensuring our documents meet the highest standards. Her keen eye and fresh perspective are invaluable, proving that even a laid-back person can excel in a nitpicky role.

I want to extend a sincere thank you to all of you – our engineers, lockmasters, maintenance crews, natural resources specialists, technical experts, and support staff. Your technical excellence and dedication are the bedrock of our success. You are the ones building infrastructure, not paperwork, and I am proud to serve alongside you.

-Col. Matt Chase



The St. Paul District conducts winter maintenance at Lock and Dam 7

Story by Melanie Peterson

During the 2025 season, St. Paul District staff supported more than 1,700 commercial navigation lockages at Lock and Dam 7, near La Crescent, Minnesota. These lockages supported approximately 8.4 million tons of commodities shipped by the navigation industry up and down the Mississippi River.

“Navigation on the Mississippi River is vital to the nation’s economy,” said Billy Thomson, project manager, “that is why it is so important that we dewater lock chambers routinely.” Locks are traditionally dewatered every 20 years for maintenance. Although Lock 7 was last dewatered 13 years ago, this winter’s dewatering was scheduled to perform a fit check for the new miter gates installed in July 2025.

“A developing USACE best practice on inland waterways is to dewater the lock chamber after new miter gates are installed to confirm the gates are operating most effectively,” Thomson said. “We had the opportunity to do that at Lock 7 during the non-navigation season this winter.”

“When we conduct preventative maintenance during the non-navigation season, it allows commercial and recreational vessels to move up and down the river during the navigation season which is one of the primary missions of the St. Paul District,” Thomson said.

Bryce Kingsley, marine mechanic, added, “Maintenance work this winter was smaller in scope than a traditional dewatering and primarily included proper fit and seal of the miter gates. It also included concrete repairs, making sure damaged chamber wall sections inaccessible in the wet are up to specifications.”

Scheduled maintenance on the lock chamber while it is dewatered was completed by the in-house maintenance and repair team from Fountain City Service Base. Design and oversight were completed by a variety team members from engineering and construction.

Thomson said that it takes months of planning and coordination for a project to make it to the point of execution and many different project delivery team members from different disciplines are involved. “It’s a collaborative effort to have a successful project and deliver for the nation.”

Work taking place during the non-navigation season also means that the crew – maintenance and repair staff and seasonal lock and dam staff – are working throughout the unpredictable Minnesota weather. “It’s highly impressive



Kurt Schroeder (left), maintenance and repair planner, and Billy Thomson (right), project manager, present an overview of the Lock and Dam 7 dewatering to media, near La Crescent, Minnesota, Jan. 22. USACE St. Paul District photo by Melanie Peterson

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to see the maintenance and repair crew working in these harsh conditions during the winter months,” Thomson said.

The St. Paul District navigation program provides a safe, reliable, cost-effective and environmentally sustainable waterborne transportation system on the Upper Mississippi River for the movement of commercial goods and for national security needs. To do this, the district maintains a 9-foot navigation channel and 13 locks and dams from Minneapolis to Guttenberg, Iowa.

Industries making these shipments save approximately \$430 million annually by using the inland waterways instead of overland shipping methods.



Peter Burke, head operator, works on the bulkhead placement at Lock and Dam 7, near La Crescent, Minnesota, Dec. 7, 2025. USACE St. Paul District photo by Ren Martin



Work continues in the dewatered chamber at Lock and Dam 7, near La Crescent, Minnesota, Dec. 18, 2025. USACE St. Paul District photo by Liz Stoeckmann



Bryce Kingsley (left), marine mechanic, and Jason Robinson (right), site safety and health officer, give a safety briefing, Jan. 22. USACE St. Paul District photo by Melanie Peterson



The maintenance and repair crew installs bulkheads at Lock and Dam 7, near La Crescent, Minnesota, to dewater the lock chamber, Dec. 7, 2025. USACE St. Paul District photo by Ren Martin

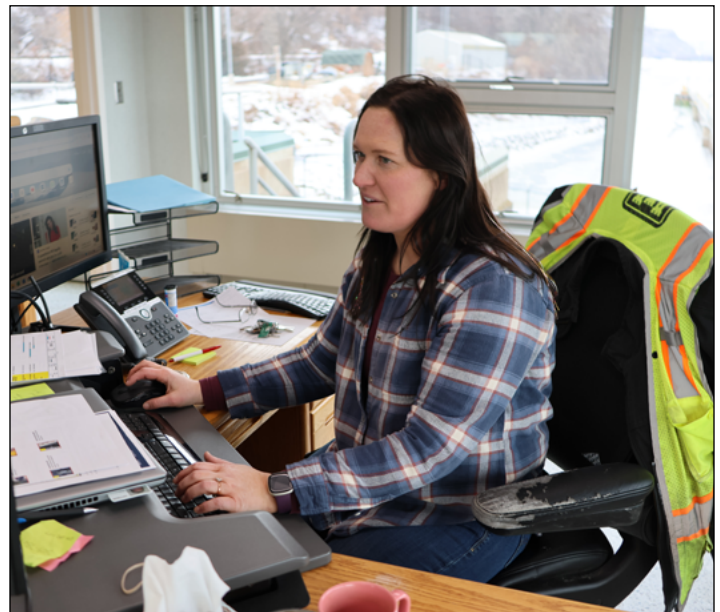
The St. Paul District conducts winter maintenance at Lock and Dam 7

USACE St. Paul District photos by Liz Stoeckmann

Samantha Fink is the acting lockmaster at Lock and Dam 7. She started at the lock right at the start of the dewater project. Fink has been with the St. Paul district since 2019. “One of the best parts of my jobs is telling people what I do, explaining that these sites have been here since the 1930s and they’re still operating 24/7.”



Samantha Fink (left), acting Lock and Dam 7 lockmaster, and Jason Robinson (right), site safety and health officer, at the Tainter valve inspection, Dec. 18, 2025



Samantha Fink, acting Lock and Dam 7 lockmaster, works at her desk near La Crescent, Minnesota, Dec. 18, 2025

A rare glimpse of the Tainter gate inside the tunnel as engineers prepare to conduct a comprehensive Hydraulic Steel Structure inspection of the Tainter valves at Lock and Dam 7. This unique view is only possible during a dewater.



The inside of a Tainter gate, Dec. 18, 2025



Joe Hemmer, structural engineer, inspects the Tainter valves at Lock and Dam 7, near La Crescent, Minnesota, Dec. 18, 2025

Scanning the future

Story by Liz Stoeckmann

Have you ever wondered how we maintain our critical infrastructure? Our technical services section is creating a digital blueprint of lock chambers using 3D scanners. The technology lets our teams plan future maintenance and repairs from the office, which saves time and money.

“We are adapting this innovation into our work practices to deliver a faster and smarter tomorrow,” said Paul Johnson, an engineering technician from our technical services section.

Our team obtained the equipment through USACE Headquarters a year ago, and this is only the second site where we have attempted a complete scan of the chamber, the intermediate wall, the river wall, and the land wall.

During the Lock and Dam 7 dewatering, the survey team scanned the chamber while it was dewatered to get a good scan of the interior, which they normally can’t access since dewatering occurs only every 20 years or so.

The 3D scanner uses light beams that rotate horizontally and vertically to obtain tens of thousands of data points from a reflector. The machine stores this data, and then we move the equipment about 50 feet away to repeat the process. The software then registers the two scans together, so they are on the same horizontal data.

“This type of technology has been around for 15 or more years,” he said. “The amount of data we can collect relative to the hours we spend is just amazing.”



Paul Johnson, engineering technician, stands next to the 3D scanner at Lock and Dam 7, near La Crescent, Minnesota, Dec. 18, 2025. USACE St. Paul District photo by Liz Stoeckmann

Lock and Dam 7 project addresses navigation hazard

Story by Liz Stoeckmann

A recently completed rock weir modification at Lock and Dam 7, located in La Crescent, Minnesota, on the Upper Mississippi River aims to improve navigation safety by addressing a dangerous “outdraft” condition.

The project, awarded in July 2025, involved reconfiguring and elevating an existing rock weir in a continued effort to reduce the outdraft to make navigation safer and more efficient.

An outdraft, in the context of the river, is a strong current that pulls vessels away from a lock and towards a dam, creating a hazardous situation for navigation.

“This location was identified in February 2023 by the commercial navigation industry as one of the most dangerous on the Mississippi River,” said Billy Thomson, project manager. “The strong current makes it difficult for vessels to maneuver safely into and out of the lock, significantly increasing the risk of accidents, increased overall time spent on site and increased cost.”

The modification project, which began in September 2025 and was completed by the end of the year, created three elevated rock structures one foot above the normal water level and reconfigured to a “dog-leg” shaped weir with three gaps for flow to pass through during typical, non-flood conditions. The design was the result of extensive planning, including the use of a digital ship simulation study to test various design configurations and ensure optimal results.

“The uniqueness of the Lock and Dam 7 project is to create a structure that redirects water and allows sediment to pass through the gaps, to reduce the outdraft and improve navigation safety,” said Tony Horacek, civil engineer. “The project utilizes a rock weir, which is a porous, dam-like structure made of large rocks that slows water flow and releases it in a controlled manner.”

The dog-leg rock structure stretches about 1,000 feet from the upstream auxiliary chamber wall to the upper pool. The design is wider at the bottom, like a trapezoid, which is the simplest stable shape for rock placed in the water, Thomson explained. The rocks rise about 15 feet from the river bottom and are visible above the water depending on river conditions.

“The project is considered a short-term solution to the outdraft problem,” Thomson added.

The St. Paul District’s project delivery team will continue to monitor the performance of the weir during the 2026 navigation season to assess its effectiveness to improve navigation. Pilot feedback will be a key consideration for determining if the outdraft is improved as expected. Miter gate operability will also be tracked to see if sediment is being redirected through the structure’s gaps toward the dam and away from the lock chamber.

“This ongoing evaluation, which includes collaboration with our commercial navigation industry partners, will inform future efforts to make the site as safe as possible,” Thomson said.



A rock weir modification being constructed at Lock and Dam 7, near La Crescent, Minnesota, Dec. 1, 2025. USACE St. Paul District photo by Liz Stoeckmann

Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works announces 'Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork' initiative for the Army's Civil Works program

Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Adam R. Telle announced a major initiative, "Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork," for the Army's Civil Works program.

"Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork" will provide greater focus on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' core Civil Works missions, while minimizing non-core programs, direct funding to priority water resources projects that will provide the greatest benefits to the nation, shorten permitting timelines, and reduce or eliminate extraneous regulations and paperwork that slow USACE's delivery of Civil Works projects and programs.

"President Trump has empowered his administration to work with lightspeed efficiency to make our government deliver more for all Americans. The Army Civil Works' 'Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork' initiative will enable the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deliver critical projects and programs for the nation more efficiently, sooner, and at less cost than the current ways of doing business," said Telle. "This will eliminate bureaucratic delays and provide fast, clear decisions needed to save lives and empower our economy."

"Continuous Army transformation is about rapidly delivering war winning capabilities to the Army today, not years in the future. But that's not all; we're also transforming at home, too," said Secretary of the Army Daniel P. Driscoll. "I'm incredibly proud of the 'Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork' transformation initiative the Army Civil Works and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers teams recently unveiled. BINP will build and strengthen American infrastructure across our nation, increasing resiliency and providing tangible, long-lasting value for the American people."

"Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork" will enable USACE district commanders around the nation to execute the Civil Works projects and programs that benefit the nation. USACE commanders will be empowered to take informed risks in advancing critical water resources projects and programs to completion faster and at less cost. The policy changes will also bring greater transparency and accountability for the program to the American public, project partners and sponsors, industry, and the elected leaders who make the annual funding decisions for the Civil Works program.

The plan consists of 27 initiatives grouped under five categories:

- Maximizing the Ability to Deliver National Infrastructure
- Cutting Red Tape
- Focus on Efficiency
- Transparency & Accountability
- Prioritization

The initiatives do not affect USACE execution of its emergency response support to natural and man-made disasters.

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“The U.S. Army’s Civil Works program has been an invaluable cornerstone for more than 200 years. ‘Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork’ will return USACE to a focus on its core missions and ensure the enterprise continues to be the most trusted national resource delivering water resources solutions,” added Telle. “This is only possible with President Trump’s leadership that has enabled our team to maximize our ability to deliver national infrastructure and cut red tape for the American people.”

“The Civil Works ‘Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork’ initiative will enhance our ability to deliver results for the communities we serve more efficiently and effectively,” said Col. Matthew Chase, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, commander. “From flood risk management to commercial navigation, aquatic ecosystem restoration, disaster response and more, we recognize the imperative for continuous improvement as we focus on building, operating, and maintaining the infrastructure the nation relies on every day.”

One of the plan’s initiatives will improve commercial navigation by focusing on dredging capacity, contracting approaches, and innovative solutions for dredged material management. The St. Paul District oversees a significant maintenance dredging program designed to keep the waterways across the Upper Midwest viable for safe, efficient navigation. The district is responsible for maintaining the 9-foot navigation channel on 243.6 miles of the Mississippi River from Minneapolis to Guttenberg, Iowa and 40.6 miles along three major tributaries. Keeping this system open for safe and efficient navigation is vital to the nation’s economy.

Another initiative will seek to streamline regulatory permitting, including alterations of federal Civil Works projects (Section 408 permissions). St. Paul District is constructing the nation’s first Civil Works innovative Public-Private Partnership, or P3, project flood risk reduction project in the Fargo, North Dakota–Moorhead, Minnesota, metropolitan area. This initiative is expected to yield tailored application of permission requirements that ensure project alterations would not be injurious to the public or impair the usefulness of the project while minimizing the regulatory burden on the project’s non-federal sponsors and Section 408 applicants.

Also, St. Paul District is home to the Mississippi Valley Division’s Regional Planning and Environmental Division North, responsible for completing planning studies for the St. Paul, Rock Island, and St. Louis districts who collectively serve the five Upper Mississippi states. The Corps of Engineers’ initiative includes a planning framework that will efficiently yield high-quality authorizable projects.



Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Adam R. Telle presents at the South Florida Water Management District. USACE courtesy photo

St. Paul District sets the bar for using artificial intelligence

Story by Melanie Peterson and Dean Zwiefel

The St. Paul District is embracing a path forward to integrate artificial intelligence into everyday processes.

Chris Bowen, chief of construction and leader of the St. Paul District AI working group, shared his thoughts. “AI is poised to become the defining technology of the 21st century, reshaping how we work, learn and interact with the world.”

Bowen has been active in AI discussions at USACE headquarters and is playing a key role in the development of a USACE learning center course on AI literacy. He will serve as an instructor for the Prospect course and share his expertise to empower others with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the world of AI. He said, “This AI prospect course under development targets practical applications intended to help USACE employees apply AI to areas of their own work to increase the quality, efficiency, or both, with respect to their routine work products.”

The course developers come from varied backgrounds in USACE, but all have a genuine interest in helping coworkers become “AI ambassadors” who will be excited to share techniques with others once they return, he added.

In addition to contributing to formal training initiatives, the St. Paul District is fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation through hosting biweekly meeting called “Sips and Scripts” to train people in AI. These informal gatherings provide an opportunity for team members to come together, enjoy a short training session and participate in an open discussion about utilizing AI in their work, Bowen said. “It’s a safe space for sharing ideas, asking questions and exploring the possibilities of AI in a supportive and interactive environment,” he added.

Kevin Denn, project manager and a member of the AI working group, said, “I look forward to ‘Sips and Scripts’ every two weeks. It cuts through the noise around AI and provides practical, time-saving solutions to our everyday work challenges. No matter your experience level with AI, you’ll walk away having learned something new and seeing how others in the district are using this powerful tool.”

Lt. Col. Joshua Rud, deputy district commander, largely attributes the success of the group to Bowen. “Chris [Bowen] exemplifies the innovative spirit that drives St. Paul District forward.” Rud’s hope is to prepare the workforce for an AI-enabled future, whether you are a brand-new college graduate or the district commander. “Each of us will leverage it differently and at our own pace – but each of us needs to start now. To that end, we are creating regular, low-pressure



(left) A photo of Chris Bowen, chief of construction. (right) An AI-generated photo of Chris Bowen as a superhero flying over St. Paul.

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opportunities to try AI tools, share ideas and learn from each other like in ‘Sips and Scripts,’” he said. “As our collective comfort with these tools grow, we will be positioned to integrate AI more deeply into our business processes and strengthen how we work and deliver our projects and programs.”

Bowen concluded, “‘Sips and Scripts’ is a low-stakes environment to learn about AI. Come for the training and stay for the conversation and discover how AI can empower you to make an even greater impact. Together, we can lead the way in innovation and deliver the best possible services to the American people.”

“Come [to ‘Sips and Scripts’] for the training and stay for the conversation and discover how AI can empower you to make an even greater impact.”

-Chris Bowen



AI-generated graphic of a Chris Bowen action figure based on the yearbook photo on the previous page.

There is no shortage of articles from the early 1990s, at the advent of the internet, that claimed the World Wide Web was a passing fad. In 1995, scientist Clifford Stoll, an Astronomer for Astrophysics in the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, ([source](#)) said in an interview with Minnesota Public Radio ([source](#)) “I think it’s [the internet is] grossly oversold and within two or three years people will shrug and say, ‘Uh yep, it was a fad of the early ‘90s and now, oh yeah, it still exists but hey, I’ve got a life to lead and work to do. I don’t have time to waste online.’ Or, ‘I’ll collect my email, I’ll read it, why should I bother prowling around the World Wide Web or reading the Usenet’ simply because there’s so little of value there.”

However, as we know, the internet has influenced every aspect of our lives. According to the *World Economic Forum*, “The internet is changing the way we live, work, produce and consume. With such extensive reach, digital technologies cannot help but disrupt many of our existing models of business and government ([source](#)).”

The impact of the internet in 2025 cannot be understated. Even in 2017, the *World Economic Forum* published an article about how people could not imagine life without the internet ([source](#)).

AI is poised to become as transformative as the advent of the internet ([source](#)).

However, like the skepticism for the World Wide Web, some people have skepticism about the use of AI. “There is no denying that AI has changed our lives. However, some argue if it’s for the better,” ([source](#)) said the *Virginia Tech Engineer* in 2023. The popularity of AI has raised questions from environmental implications, energy consumption, over-reliance on technology to the spread of misinformation.



An AI-generated photo of Chris Bowen based on the yearbook photo on the previous page

District's first industrial hygienist takes charge

Story by Renwick Martin

As the district's first industrial hygienist, 2nd Lt. Shaunna George plays an integral role in keeping employees safe from workplace hazards.

Working to identify, assess, and offer controls for these hazards, George uses tests such as air sampling, lead testing, asbestos testing and welding testing to "give recommendations and controls to mitigate employee exposure."

George's recent focus has been protecting the hearing of USACE employees. Using a device called a noise dosimeter, George tracks employees noise exposure based on decibel levels. For there to be a complete assessment, the device must be attached at the beginning of the employee's shift. Working out of the St. Paul District office, with an area of responsibility of 139,000 square miles, this often results in early wake up times and long morning drives for George. Not that she's complaining. "You get accustomed to early mornings in the service," she said. "It becomes your normal routine."

While being knowledgeable about the work environment is an integral part of her job, so is gaining trust. "The most important part of my job is building rapport with the employees," George said, "So that they can trust that they're being protected."

From Grenada, Mississippi, George's military career began in the Mississippi Army National Guard at the 2-114th Field Artillery Battalion, Headquarters Battery, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, in Starkville, Mississippi, where she was enlisted as a combat medic in 2019. After high school, George enrolled in the Reserve Officer Training Program at the University of Mississippi. George began pursuing a master's degree in environmental sciences after graduating with her bachelor's degree in biological sciences.

George's hobbies include cooking, roller skating and indoor gardening. As for the cold, she is "adjusting well." She said her biggest piece of advice being "to layer up and you'll be just fine."



2nd Lt. Shaunna George, industrial hygienist, observes the installation of the bulkheads at Lock and Dam 7, near La Crescent, Minnesota, Dec. 7, 2025. USACE St. Paul District photo by Ren Martin

Putting on the Ritz: Technical writer-editor provides a fresh perspective

Story by Ren Martin

As the district's technical writer-editor, Libby Ritz considers herself a fresh set of eyes and the final check before a document is published.

Through proofreading internal and external documents while ensuring compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, Ritz has been able to put her stamp on the St. Paul District. "Sometimes I feel like an oxymoron because I'm a laid-back person with a nitpicky role," she said.

When she graduated with a PhD in structural geology and geomechanics, Ritz hadn't given much thought to technical writing and editing and initially worked as a geoscientist in the oil industry. However, she soon realized she wanted to help the scientific community in a "more personal way." On the advice of a friend, Ritz transitioned to academic editing about 8 years ago. She joined the St. Paul District in January 2025.

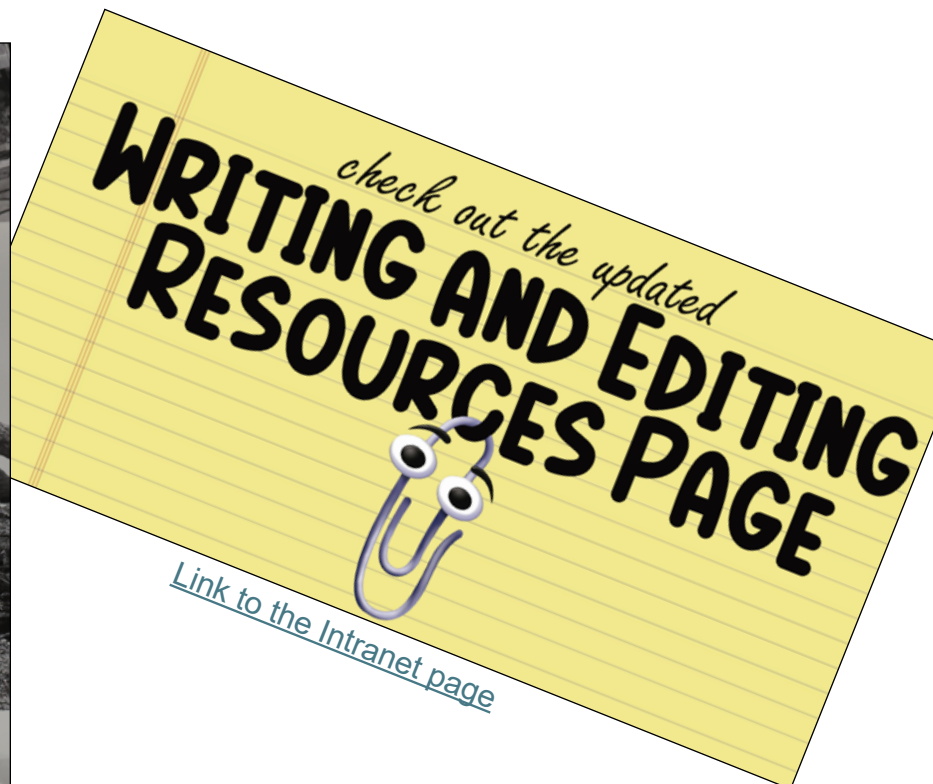
Recently, Ritz has helped polish water control manuals and several studies and reports, including the Big Sandy Lake fish movement study. She's also been updating templates and forms, formatting correspondence and editing story maps.

As the first technical writer-editor in the district since May 2022, Ritz didn't have a ready job structure to follow. "You're welcome to ask me about anything," said Ritz, "There's no official tech writer-editor training, so the more questions I ponder and documents I touch, the more consistent and helpful I can become!"

Ritz and her husband are both from Madison, Wisconsin, and have lived in the Twin Cities since 2017. However, their 7-year-old son is a true Minnesotan.



Libby Ritz, technical writer-editor. USACE St. Paul District photo by Melanie Peterson



St. Paul District collaborates with New Orleans District on risk reduction project

Story by Melanie Peterson

In partnership with the New Orleans District and local New Orleans stakeholders, the St. Paul District has been assisting with the Upper Barataria Basin risk reduction project since 2022.

The overall project is a hurricane and storm damage risk reduction project that would total over 30 miles in length and provide continuous storm protection for the regional south and west of New Orleans. The project includes Ascension, Assumption, Jefferson, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, and St. John the Baptist parishes.

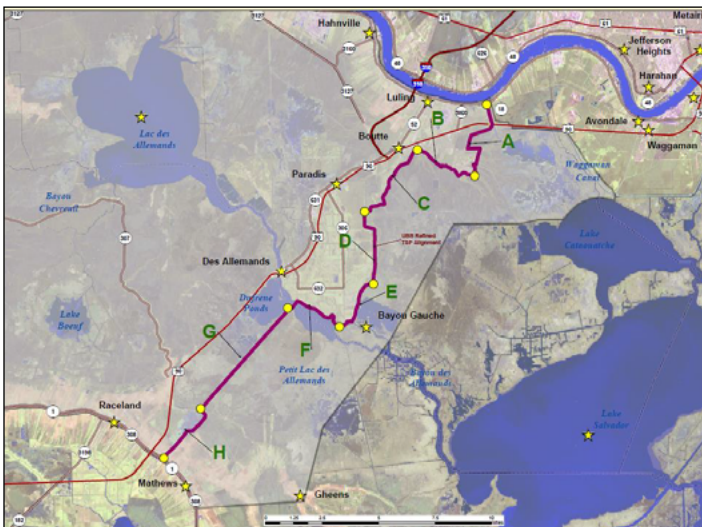
St. Paul District is the lead for hydraulics and hydrology modeling, engineering and design, and the environmental study for Reach G, which is about 5% of the overall project. Specifically, the St. Paul District is designing the first set of plans and specifications for an access road that will complete the pre-construction engineering and design. For USACE Civil Works, finishing this step marks a project's transition from the feasibility phase to implementation and construction.

Jim Cook is the project manager for the St. Paul portion. "This project is important in that it will protect communities and sensitive ecosystems. Because the Upper Barataria Basin is centered between two existing systems that are more developed [New Orleans and Morganza-to-the-Gulf], it also completes a long line of protection for coastal Louisiana," Cook said.

The project delivery team includes members from the St. Paul District as well as the New Orleans District. "It's important to have a multi-district, multidisciplinary team because in the St. Paul District, we don't know some of the local practices and we don't have the relationships with stakeholders," Cook said.

With geographical distance comes additional challenges, but the team is up to the task.

"This team does a good job communicating between disciplines," Cook said. Once the team hands off their hydraulic modeling and access road design to the New Orleans District, the team will continue to be involved in future stages. The New Orleans District anticipates receiving construction funding in fiscal year 2026 and has asked the St. Paul District for help with engineering during construction.



Upper Barataria Basin risk reduction project location.



Jim Cook, project manager, points to Reach G east limits and associated features. USACE St. Paul District photo by Melanie Peterson

Rocking and rolling: Blackhawk Park shoreline stabilization project completed

Story by Melanie Peterson

In Upper Pool 9 of the Mississippi River, just two miles north of DeSoto, Wisconsin, is a scenic recreation area filled with river birch, cottonwood, swamp oaks and willow trees and offering a choice of single, double and pull-through campsites with electrical hookups. Many sites in Blackhawk Park are located along the shoreline and provide a picturesque view of the Mississippi River.

These campsites, said Dan Reburn, project manager, are one of the reasons that it was so important to armor the shoreline with riprap, or rock. The Blackhawk Park bank stabilization project was completed Nov. 13, 2025, after the maintenance and repair section placed 7,150 tons of rock. This rock will prevent erosion that could reduce overall camping spots within the park. "Using our maintenance and repair crew allows us the greatest flexibility," Reburn said.

In addition to preventing future erosion, the shoreline stabilization will protect culturally sensitive areas. The park is a historic site, and it is located on the same site as the final battle of the Blackhawk War, known as the Battle of Bad Axe, which occurred on Aug. 1-2, 1832. This site was also used as a camping area for Zebulon Pike in September of 1805 during his expedition to find the headwaters of the Mississippi River.

The St. Paul District operates 49 recreation areas throughout the Upper Midwest, ranging from public boat landings along the Mississippi River in Pools 9 and 10 to full-service campgrounds. As a steward of public lands, the St. Paul District has a responsibility to assure accessibility for today and tomorrow while providing high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities for everyone. The St. Paul District manages approximately 28,500 acres of fee title land above the summer water levels and more than 447,000 water surface acres. From fishing to camping, hiking and boating, there is a wide variety of recreational opportunities available for a next adventure.



Jacob Reburn, park maintenance, stands next to the shoreline at Blackhawk Park, near DeSoto, Wisconsin, Oct. 22, 2025. USACE St. Paul District courtesy photo



Blackhawk Park shoreline stabilization near DeSoto, Wisconsin, Oct. 22, 2025. USACE St. Paul District courtesy photo

NATIONAL
ENGINEERS
WEEK

The St. Paul District celebrated National Engineers Week, Feb. 23-27, with a variety of presentations and events like 3-D scanner presentation and demonstration and school spirit day. Employees reached new heights when they participated in the tower building contest using only angel hair pasta noodles and mini marshmallows. For the second year in a row, office of counsel (team name the Tower of Attorney) clinched victory with their 33-inch-tall tower.



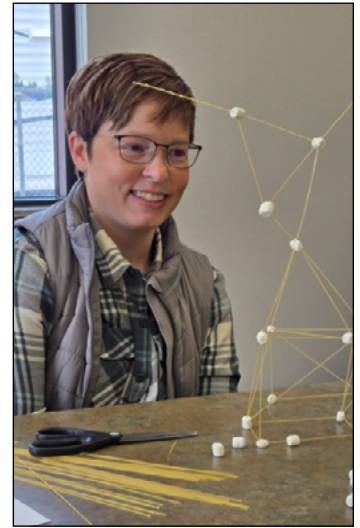
April Erickson, civil engineer - Western Area Office



Master Sgt. Joshua Bement, project engineer - Western Area Office



Bill Odell, civil engineer technician - Hastings Resident Office



Becky Smith, engineering technician - Western Area Office



Helen Walz (bottom left), hydraulic engineer; Bryn Langrehr (top left), cost and specifications engineer; and Joe Hemmer (bottom right), structural engineer - District Office



Maggie O'Neill, project manager - District Office



(left to right) Woody Wodarz, civil engineer; Aaron Mikonowicz, landscape architect; and Jake Moser, civil engineer - District Office

Around THE DISTRICT



Chris Stai (left), maintenance and repair section chief, presents Chad Longmire (right), Lock and Dam 9 operator, with a commander's coin on behalf of the district commander, at Lock and Dam 9, near Eastman, Wisconsin, Feb. 9. USACE St. Paul District courtesy photo



Bill Chelmowski (left), survey technician, and Logan Rivers (right), engineering technician, measure ice at Lake Pepin near Red Wing, Minnesota, Feb. 17. USACE St. Paul District photo by Patrick Moes



Chaplain (Col.) J.R. Lorenzen (left), presents Jake Gosnell (right), engineering technician, with a coin, Feb. 18. USACE St. Paul District photo by Melanie Peterson



Brad LaBadie, natural resources specialist, celebrates winter at Eau Galle Recreation Area, near Spring Valley, Wisconsin, Dec. 4, 2025. USACE St. Paul District photo by Melanie Peterson



Sanjay Bimali, civil engineer, at the Red River Structure near Fargo, North Dakota, Sept. 12, 2025. USACE St. Paul District photo by Joel Zietz

Holiday Awards Ceremony

USACE St. Paul District photos by Melanie Peterson



Brian Yagle (left), ecologist, and Alex Meincke (right), regulatory lead project manager, at the Winter Awards Ceremony, Dec. 11.



Trevor Cyphers, fishery biologist, sports his team spirit at the Winter Awards Ceremony, Dec. 11.



Rachel Gralnek, regulatory project manager, shows off her festive sweater at the Winter Awards Ceremony, Dec. 11.



Michelle Prosser, project manager, at the Winter Awards Ceremony, Dec. 11.



Reid Olson (left), civil engineer, and Elisabeth Post (right), geotechnical engineer, at the Winter Awards Ceremony, Dec. 11.



Samantha Thury (left), budget analyst, and Bryanna Sauer (right), program analyst, at the Winter Awards Ceremony, Dec. 11.

Holiday Awards Ceremony

Engineering and Construction

Design Branch - "Mission Possible" - Jake Moser
Geotechnical and Geology Branch - "Never Take You For Granite" - Taylor Adams
Hydraulics and Hydrology - "Steward of the Waters" - Julia Zumberge
Mood Lifter - Mark Angelo

Operations

Administrative Professional of the Year - Cindy McFarland
Innovator of the Year - Bob Hagberg
Civilian Service Achievement Medal - Daniel Moe

Programs and Project Management

"Ambassador of Awesomeness" - Jim Cook
"Mission Possible" - Ed Frey and Kevin Denn
"Positive Vibes" - Michelle Prosser
Employees of the Year - Billy Thomson and Nick Lorenz

Regional Planning and Environment Division North

St. Paul Employee of the Year - Derek Ingvalson
Rock Island Employee of the Year - Clayton Corken
St. Louis Employee of the Year - Michelle Kniep

Regulatory

Outstanding Contributions Award - Morgan Papenhouse
Peer Support Award - Amy Heffernan
Professional Excellence Award - Ben Lacount
Project Leadership Award - April Marcangeli
Regulator of the Year - Bill Sande

Support Team

Best Supporting Actor - Barb Griffin
"Quick 'Oil' Change Artist" - Sherry Eickstead
Resourcer of the Year - Samantha Thury
Support Staff Rookie of the Year - 2nd Lt. Shaunna George
Unsung Hero - Elizabeth Moriarty

District level awards

New Employee of the Year - Sydney Case
Administrative Professional of the Year - Andrea Sterling
Innovator of the Year - Lauren Allin
Safety Sentinel - Joel Zietz
Public Affairs Supporter - Jinah Lockwood

Mississippi Valley Division Awards

Flag presentation - Dave Potter and Sierra Keenan

Civilian Award for Humanitarian Service Medal

Shannon Bauer, Christine Davis, Paul Fleming, Curt Larsen, Jeff McCullick, Patrick Moes, William Nissalke, Susan Taylor, Anne Wurtenberger



Col. Matthew Chase presents Dave Potter, biologist, with a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol in recognition for his work on the Upper St. Anthony Falls disposition study. USACE St. Paul District photo by Patrick Moes



(left to right) Kevin Bokay, librarian; 2nd Lt. Shaunna George, industrial hygienist; and Lt. Col. Timothy Shebesta, assistant to the district commander, sit in the audience at the holiday awards ceremony. USACE St. Paul District photo by Patrick Moes



Col. Matthew Chase presents Paul Fleming, senior engineering technician, with the Civilian Award for Humanitarian Service Medal. USACE St. Paul District photo by Patrick Moes

LENGTH OF SERVICE AWARDS

USACE St. Paul District photos by Patrick Moes

10 years

Zachary Day, Catherine Herman, Andrew Meier, Jonathan Nygaard, Matthew Rolbiecki, Nicholas Castellane, Lane Richter, Elizabeth Chapes

15 years

Robert Edstrom, Daniel Fasching, Derek Ingvalson, Megan McGuire, Daniel Mock, Brandon Sexton, Richard Weitzel Sr.

20 years

John Bostrack, Michael Christianson, Heather Henneman, Susan Malin-Boyce, Jon Miller

25 years

Jason Bellerive, Steven Clark, Gary Wolf

30 years

Bart Spriggle

35 years

Sheldon Edd, Amy Rothstein



20 years - Heather Henneman



25 years - Gary Wolf



25 years - Steven Clark



35 years - Amy Rothstein

Recognizing our Employees of the Month: The MVPs of MVP



October
Natalia Ramirez-Irizarry
Regional Planning and Environment
Division North



November
Lindsey Kieffaber
Programs and Project Management



December
Jake Moser
Engineering and Construction



January
Sara Rother
Operations

2025 BY THE NUMBERS

NAVIGATION

1.1M cubic yards
river sand dredged

639 surveys
covering **67,000** acres

10.5M tons of goods
passed through Lock 10

- **1,700** commercial vessels passed through Lock 10
- **28,500** total lockages at St. Paul District locks



RECREATION

777K day-use visitors

to St. Paul District recreation areas



- **152,000** overnight visitors/campers to St. Paul District recreation areas
- Over **\$1.1M** in fees collected

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

122 people deployed

CONTRACTING

717 contracting actions



\$96M

in awarded contracts

REGULATORY

5.7K regulatory actions

99% of permit requests
were streamlined general permits and

99%
were processed in
less than
60 days



OFFICE OF COUNSEL

54 FOIA requests

ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION

\$166M

in installed infrastructure

HUMAN RESOURCES

29 new hires



SAFETY

47%

decrease in recordable injuries

0 cases of days away from work





New hires

Michael Christianson, lock and dam operator, operations, Trempealeau, Wisconsin
Keith Gades, lock and dam operator, operations, Hastings, Minnesota
Samuel Kingsley, lock and dam operator, operations, Red Wing, Minnesota
Fabienne Placide, civil engineer, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota
Brandon Snell, natural resources specialist, operations, McGregor, Minnesota

Promotions

Steve Acuff, biologist, regional planning and environment division north, Illinois City, Illinois
Marianna Aho, project scheduler, programs and project management, St. Paul, Minnesota
Stephen Anderson, civil engineer, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota
Wendi Baker, program analyst, operations, La Crosse, Wisconsin
Mariah Berg, lock and dam operator, operations, Trempealeau, Wisconsin

Steven Bodovinitz, lock and dam operator, operations, La Crescent, Minnesota
Matthew Breza, lock and dam equipment repairer supervisor, operations, Winona, Minnesota
Daniel Burger, lockmaster, operations, La Crescent, Minnesota
Cheyenne Carlin, hydrologic technician, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota
Samantha Carlstrom, civil engineer, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota

Sydney Case, geographer, regional planning and environment division north, St. Paul, Minnesota
Hannah Caudill, geographer, regional planning and environment division north, St. Louis, Missouri
Jeremy Caya, lock and dam operator, operations, Eastman, Wisconsin
James Ennis, mechanical engineer, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota
Edward Frey, program analyst, programs and project management, St. Paul, Minnesota

Samuel Helgeson, civil engineer, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota
Connor Jacobs, lock and dam operator, operations, Minnesota City, Minnesota
Paul Johnson, engineering technician, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota
Karl Just, contract specialist, contracting, St. Paul, Minnesota
Lindsey Kieffaber, project manager, programs and project management, St. Paul, Minnesota

Anthony Kitchen, regulatory branch chief, Brookfield, Wisconsin
Brent Lenke, lock and dam operator, operations, Welch, Minnesota
Jeff Mccullick, emergency management specialist, emergency management, La Crosse, Wisconsin
Cynthia Mcfarland, administrative officer, operations, Fountain City, Wisconsin
Nora Meyer, lock and dam operator, operations, Welch, Minnesota

Tristan Meyers, lock and dam operator, operations, Guttenberg, Iowa
Abigail Moore, civil engineer, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota
Joel Moser, lock and dam operator, operations, Guttenberg, Iowa
Tyler Oldenburg, marine machinery mechanic, operations, Fountain City, Wisconsin
Gavin Olson, civil engineer, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota



Promotions, cont.

Maggie O'Neill, project manager, programs and project management, St. Paul, Minnesota

Marcus Patterson, program analyst, operations, St. Paul, Minnesota

Angelo Pedretti, safety and occupational health specialist, operations, Fountain City, Wisconsin

Caitlin Piotrowski, civil engineer, engineering and construction St. Paul, Minnesota

Joel Porterfield, geographer, regional planning and environment division north, St. Paul, Minnesota

Elisabeth Post, civil engineer, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota

Caleb Redick, forester, operations, La Crescent, Minnesota

Jeffery Rindal, 2nd mate pld class I, operations, Fountain City, Wisconsin

Logan Rivers, engineering technician, operations, Fountain City, Wisconsin

Jason Robinson, lock and dam operator, operations, La Crescent, Minnesota

Nicholas Romano, natural resources specialist, operations, De Soto, Wisconsin

Sara Rother, forester, operations, La Crescent, Minnesota

Bobbie Roundy, lock and dam operator supervisor, operations, Alma, Wisconsin

Al-Aa Saleh, civil engineer, engineering and construction, Fargo, North Dakota

Matthew Sayler, engineering technician, engineering and construction, Fargo, North Dakota

Dylan Schuth, lock and dam operator, operations, Alma, Wisconsin

Mitchell Serjogins, lock and dam equipment repairer supervisor, operations, Alma, Wisconsin

Janel Shafer, management and program assistant, operations, St. Paul, Minnesota

Mina Shenouda, engineering technician, engineering and construction, St. Paul, Minnesota

Zachary Sirinek, lock and dam operator, operations, Hastings, Minnesota

Anthony Skemp, lock and dam operator, operations, Eastman, Wisconsin

Rebecca Smith, engineering technician, engineering and construction, Fargo, North Dakota

Joshua Stohr, forester, operations, La Crescent, Minnesota

Clayton Tallman, program manager, programs and project management, St. Paul, Minnesota

Cody Wiig, plant and facilities manager, operations, Fountain City, Wisconsin

Jordan Winter, mechanical engineer, engineering and construction, Fargo, North Dakota

Retirements

Mark Angelo retired as a civil engineer with 14 years of service

Chris Behling retired as the chief of geology and geotechnical branch with 34 years of service

Kevin Casserly retired as an appraiser with 10 years of service

Doug Crum retired as a civil engineer with 35 years of service

Priscilla Dimbo retired as a secretary with 20 years of service

Chris Erickson retired as the deputy chief, programs and project management, with 33 years of service

Michael Farone retired as a lock and dam operator with 20 years of service

Joseph Heffner retired as a lock and dam equipment repairer supervisor with 22 years of service

Marvin Hrdlicka retired as an engineering technician with 51 years of service

David Johnson retired as an engineering equipment operator with 21 years of service



Retirements, cont.

Paul Machajewski retired as the channel maintenance manager with 35 years of service

Cheryl Paulson retired as a staff accountant with 33 years of service

Robert Stanick retired as a supervisory civil engineer with 22 years of service

Alan Vanguilder retired as a supervisory engineering technician with 22 years of service

Congratulations

Professional Engineering License

Lauren Allin, Steve Anderson, Calvin Halverson, Abby Moore, Matt Sindelar, Helen Walz, John Henderson

USACE Level 1 project manager certification

Peter Allen, Kevin Bigalke, Nick Castellane, Jim Cook, Kevin Denn, John Henderson, Lindsey Kieffaber, Zach Kimmel. Ben Nelson, Dan Reburn, Karla Sparks, Cindy Ward

Professional project management certification

Kevin Denn

USACE Level 2 project manager certification

Clay Tallman

USACE Financial Management Certification

Ed Frey, Lindsey Gatzow, Melissa Murray, Carrie Ogborn-Smith, Kelly Tellin, Samantha Thury, Kelsey Voytovich-Berndt

Water resource certified planner certification

Jill Bathke, Megan McGuire, Katie Opsahl, Elliott Stefanik

Ecosystem restoration and environmental compliance certification

Jill Bathke, Justin Garrett, Rachel Perrine

National Environmental Policy Act program certification

LeeAnn Glomski

Sanjay Bimali, engineering and construction, recently completed the Naval Officer Development School in Newport, Rhode Island



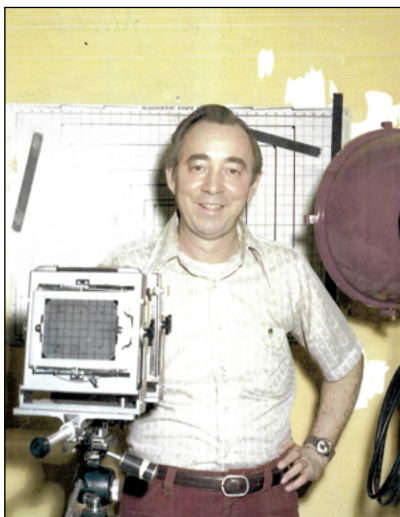
Taps



John O'Leary passed away November 27, 2025. He worked in the Grand Rapids office for recreation and natural resources. He worked the Grand Forks 1997 flood relief and the 2005 Hurricane Katrina relief.



Lyle Nicklay passed away August 14, 2025 at the age of 94. Nicklay was the district photographer from 1968-1990.



Student interns archive Nicklay photos

by Matt Percy

The St. Paul District maintains a large collection of roughly 24,000 photo negatives primarily compiled by Lyle Nicklay, a retired Navy photographer who came to work for the Corps in 1968.

Nicklay took a large majority of these photographs between 1968 and 1987, and they constitute an exceptional record of the district's personnel and their varied activities during that period. Nicklay documented Corps' projects, lock and dam activities, barge traffic and major floods. The photographs also record social events and awards presentations, as well as visits from various dignitaries.

Until recently, the only available reference source for that collection was a nine volume, handwritten

chronological index compiled by Nicklay himself.

Through the efforts of two summer student interns working in the district since 2003, Molly Wezel-Peterson and Scott Graham, the district now has a digital index to the entire collection.

Additionally, Graham is preparing a first-ever report on the nature, the content and the condition of the collection.

Plans are also underway to begin producing archival-quality scans of the Nicklay negatives and to create a linked database for accessing those images through the index. Ultimately, this collection may also serve as an impetus for the district's efforts to create a viable digital image database and to preserve contemporary photos and images.

Reprinted Crosscurrents story from the November/December 2005 issue.