

TOWER TIMES

April/May 2026



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**[®]
Rock Island District

TOWER TIMES

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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.

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

Deputy Commander
Lt. Col. Matthew Fletcher

Chief, Corporate Communications
Allen Marshall

Editor
Jordan Raiff

Editorial Contributors
Frances Candelaria
Jim Finn
Sam Heilig

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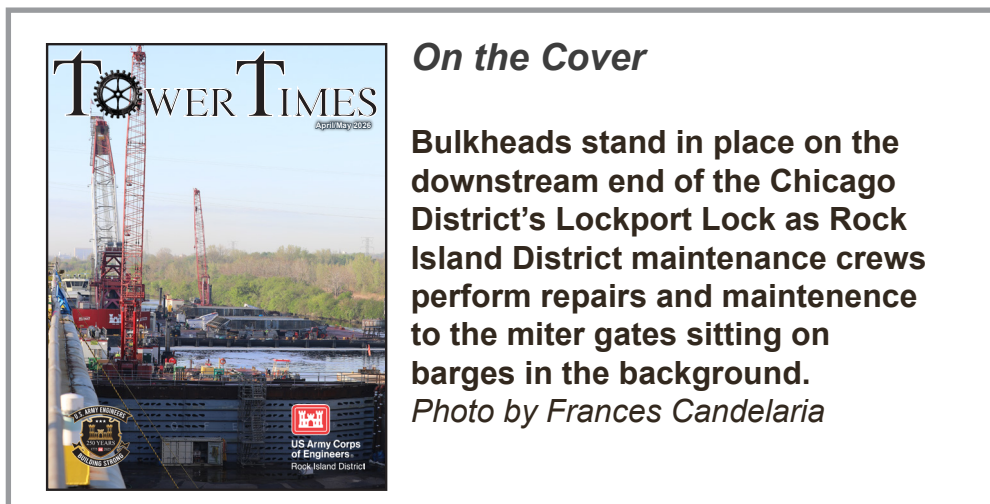
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US Army Corps of Engineers

Rock Island District
Clock Tower Building
P.O. Box 2004
Rock Island, IL 61204-2004
Email: cemvr-cc@usace.army.mil
Phone: (309) 794-4200



On the Cover

Bulkheads stand in place on the downstream end of the Chicago District's Lockport Lock as Rock Island District maintenance crews perform repairs and maintenance to the miter gates sitting on barges in the background.

Photo by Frances Candelaria

View on the web: www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Media/Publications/TowerTimes.aspx

Showcasing District Excellence to National Leadership

Rock Island Team,

As we move forward into a busy and productive season, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible work happening across the Rock Island District. Our reputation for excellence and mission delivery extends far beyond our local footprint, and this has been made clear by the recent series of high-level visits we have hosted over the past few weeks. It is always a proud moment as a commander to showcase the dedication, technical expertise, and heavy lifting our personnel perform every day.

In early May, we had the privilege of hosting the USACE Director of Engineering and Construction, Mr. Tom Smith. His visit spanned multiple facets of our operations. During a meeting with members of the Inland Navigation Design Center (INDC) and Rock Island Production Center, Mr. Smith saw firsthand how our specialized teams are doing the heavy lifting upfront. By demanding design maturity before we put a shovel in the ground, we are ensuring that we build our nation's infrastructure faster, smarter, and more efficiently.

Mr. Smith also traveled to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where he viewed construction progress on the Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management Project. During his time on the ground, he reviewed completed portions of the project, discussed ongoing construction timelines, and looked at planned future elements. Once this critical project is completed, it will significantly reduce the risk of both life and property damage, mitigate health impacts, and prevent severe economic losses associated with future flood events in the Cedar Rapids area.

During Maj. Gen. Kimberly Peeples visit in April, she had the opportunity to engage directly with our experts in the INDC. She continues to advocate for us and the INDC leading the entire Inland Navigation portfolio for the Enterprise. As a Mandatory Center of Expertise, the INDC is vital not only to our District but to the entire nation. The center provides the standardized, cutting-edge engineering and design services necessary to maintain and modernize America's lock and dam infrastructure. The rigorous technical support and innovative solutions generated by the INDC ensure the reliability of our inland waterways, directly supporting national economic vitality and supply chain resilience. It was an honor to demonstrate this world-class capability to our Division Commander.

The strategic importance of our lock and dam infrastructure—and our role in protecting the broader ecosystem—was the focal point of recent leadership visits to the Brandon Road facility in Joliet, Illinois.

In late April, the Deputy Commanding General for USACE Civil and Emergency Operations, Maj. Gen. Jason Kelly, toured the lock. During this initial visit, he met with our outstanding lock staff and learned about the facility's immense importance to the Inland Waterway Navigation System and the national economy.

Just one week later, Maj. Gen. Kelly returned for a second visit, this time joined by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Mr. Adam Telle. This joint visit focused heavily on the Brandon Road Interbasin Project, underscoring its status as one of the ASA(CW)'s top priority projects.

Discussions during this critical visit covered a wide range of strategic topics, including the project's overarching significance, financial details, and interagency partnerships. The leaders also focused on the transition of the project from the Rock Island District to the Detroit District, alongside market-based strategies for reducing invasive carp in the Illinois Waterway near Brandon Road.

This visit was a powerful demonstration of enterprise-wide synergy. Our District's Deputy Commander was joined on site by Commanders and Deputy Project Managers from the Detroit and Chicago Districts, highlighting the strong, unified collaboration across divisions and districts required to advance and deliver this monumental project.

Each of these leaders walked away with a profound appreciation for the Rock Island District and the professionals who make our missions possible. Thank you for your continued commitment to safety, hard work, and dedication to delivering vital engineering solutions for our Nation.

Building Strong!

Appreciate you,



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



Col. Aaron M. Williams
District Commander

Gearing Up for a Safe Summer in the Rock Island District

By Sam Heilig, Public Affairs Specialist

As the weather warms and the days grow longer, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, is preparing to welcome visitors back for the kickoff of the summer recreation season. Spanning the District's three reservoirs and the banks of the Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway, the vast network of parks, campgrounds, and boat ramps are officially open and ready for guests.

Whether visitors are avid boaters, weekend campers, or families looking to enjoy a sunny afternoon at the beach, the Rock Island District offers many opportunities for outdoor recreation. However, as the District gears up for a busy summer, officials want to remind all visitors that safety remains the top priority. Water-related accidents can happen in a split second, which is why USACE is dedicated to implementing safety measures and educating the public on responsible recreation.

"We are excited to welcome visitors back to our recreation areas for what we hope will be a fantastic summer," said Deputy Chief of Operations Dave Reynolds. "But we need the public's help to make it a safe one. Using the resources provided, respecting the physical boundaries around our dams, and always wearing a life jacket are simple steps that can prevent tragedies and ensure a great day on the water."

Here are some key ways the District is working to keep visitors safe this season:

The simplest and most effective way to prevent drowning is to wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket. To help ensure everyone has access to this vital piece of equipment, the Rock Island District maintains Life Jacket Loaner Stations at many boat ramps and designated swimming beaches.

If visitors forget a life jacket or have a guest who doesn't have one that fits properly, they can simply borrow one from the station for the day and return it when finished. Remember: a life jacket only works if it is worn. USACE strongly encourages all boaters, and

anyone near the water, to wear their life jackets at all times.

For those navigating the Mississippi River or Illinois Waterway, locks and dams are a common sight. While these structures are engineering marvels, the water surrounding them is incredibly powerful and dangerous.

To protect boaters from

getting caught in the hazardous currents near the dams, "last chance lines" (or warning cables) are installed upstream of the dam gates. As the name implies, these lines serve as the absolute final physical warning and grab-point for vessels that have lost power or navigated too close to the dam. Boaters seeing these lines or the warning signs leading up to them have gone too far. Maintaining a safe distance and being aware of a vessel's location on the river is essential.



Life jacket loaner stations like this one at Lake Red Rock's North Overlook Beach provide essential safety gear for visitors. By offering various sizes, the program aims to save lives and prevent water-related accidents.

Photo by Sam Heilig

In addition to the navigational rivers, the Rock Island District manages several lakes and reservoirs, each with its own dam structure. Whether on a lake or a river, the areas immediately upstream and downstream of a dam are strictly restricted areas.

The water in these zones is subject to extreme turbulence, powerful undertows, and sudden changes in flow that can quickly capsize a boat or pull a swimmer under, regardless of their experience level. These restricted areas are clearly marked with buoys, signs, and physical barriers. For the safety of the public and emergency responders, it is critical that visitors respect these boundaries. Fishing, boating, or swimming inside a restricted zone is strictly prohibited.

“The Rock Island District is proud to offer some of the best outdoor recreation opportunities in the Midwest,” said Reynolds. “By taking advantage of resources like life jacket loaner stations and respecting safety boundaries and restricted areas, visitors can help ensure this summer is memorable for all the right reasons.”

Let’s work together to make this summer safe, fun, and incident-free. 🚒

Below the Lake Red Rock dam, large-scale signage marks the boundary of the restricted zone. Though the turbulent water is a prime spot for fishing, it poses a significant risk to boaters and the water’s intensity can change in an instant, creating hazardous conditions for those too close.

Photo by Sam Heilig



At Locks and Dam 15 in Rock Island, Illinois, “last chance lines” hang below the Government Bridge. These critical lifelines allow distressed boaters in the restricted upstream area to anchor themselves and avoid being swept into the dam while awaiting rescue. At other lock and dam sites, similar lines hang directly from the dam structure.

Photo by Jim Finn


Office Remodel Enhances Workspace Environment

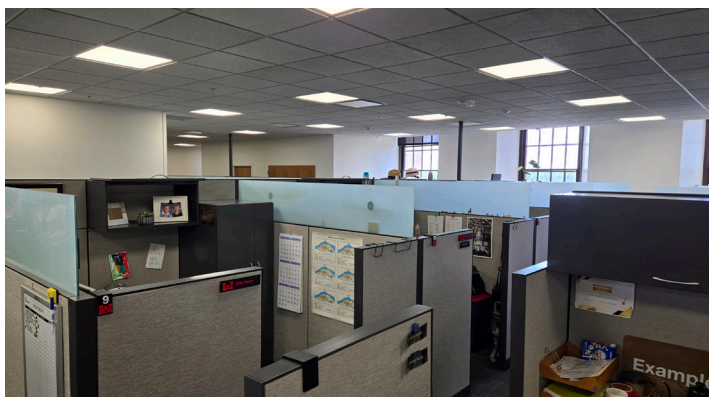
By Jordan Raiff, Editor

On May 13, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers held an official open house for the newly remodeled third floor of the Clocktower on Rock Island Arsenal. The redesigned area is a welcome addition for many across the district. Thanks to a thoughtful open-concept design, employees from the Operations Division and the Regional Planning & Environmental Division are now able to collaborate more easily than before.

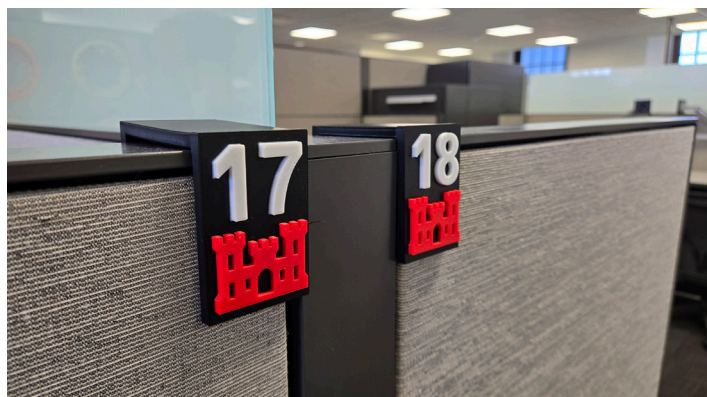
Environmental Planning Branch Chief Bethany Rosenboom said, “Arriving to a bright, clean and modernized office creates a welcoming, motivating atmosphere. After many changes, not having convenient access to a bathroom, and listening to construction overhead for the last year, this feels like a much-needed fresh start and is significantly boosting our team’s morale and optimism.”

The renovations also introduced centralized printing stations, with multiple pieces of equipment located in the center of the floor. Featuring both standard and large-format plotter printers, employees in this section now have the tools needed to complete their work on a single floor. Additionally, newly designed emergency exit rooms along the fire escapes provide a safe location for workers during emergencies.

For those needing to recharge, modern kitchen and break areas were also constructed — something both teams requested during the redesign planning process. These improvements give employees opportunities to strengthen collaborative relationships and, as Rosenboom added, also offer “dedicated space for colleagues to connect and recharge away from their desks.” 



New cubicles for the teams on the third floor increase collaboration. *Photo by Sam Heilig*



Numbered cubicles make it easier to find people from across the floor. *Photo by Sam Heilig*



A modern kitchen and break room provides amenities neither team has had in the past. *Photo by Sam Heilig*



With centralized printing, supplies to print, copy, or scan any project are just steps away from the team. *Photo by Sam Heilig*

Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month Marked With Teal Tuesdays, Denim Day


By Jordan Raiff, Editor



Employees gather for a “Teal Tuesday” photo at Flood Fight Training. Photo by Jordan Raiff

Across the Department of War, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and here in the Rock Island District, Teal Tuesdays and other activities are held annually throughout April for Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. The events are intended to raise awareness of sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape while working to eliminate the stigma survivors are often left with.

While official awareness efforts date to 2001, grassroots movements surrounding sexual assault awareness began in the 1970s. During Teal Tuesdays, employees across the Rock Island District wore teal shirts, pants and hats, and carried teal water bottles in support of survivors. Additionally, a Teal Pancake event was held at the District in observance of the month.

As a Department of War-wide culmination event, Denim Day is observed on the last Wednesday of April. Established in 1999 in response to an Italian court ruling that overturned a rape conviction because the victim was wearing tight jeans, Denim Day has since become an opportunity for employees to make a visible statement supporting survivors and raising awareness. As the campaign slogan states, “Change your point of view. My jeans are not the issue.” 



Denim Day supporters gather outside the Clock Tower on April 29. Photo by Jordan Raiff

USACE and City of Cedar Rapids Break Ground on Next Phase of Flood Control System

By Frances Candelaria, Public Affairs Specialist

Employees of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, along with Cedar Rapids city leaders and community members, gathered in May for the groundbreaking of Reach 4, Phase 1 of the Cedar Rapids Flood Control System. The event, hosted by the USACE Rock Island District and the City of Cedar Rapids, signaled the start of a critical new phase in the flood risk management project.


Andy Leichty, Project Manager for the Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management Project, opened the ceremony, calling it “a significant milestone” and highlighted the steadfast partnership between the City and USACE. Distinguished guests in attendance included Mayor Tiffany O’Donnell, City Manager Jeff Pomeranz, USACE Rock Island District Commander Col. Aaron Williams, and representatives from the offices of Senators Chuck Grassley and Joni Ernst, and Congresswoman Ashley Hinson.

Col. Williams emphasized the scope and impact of the project: “Today we are here to officially put shovels in the ground on the next major phase of this critical flood risk management effort. When the East Side system is fully complete, it will provide continuous protection from McCloud Run Creek, through downtown, all the way to the hills of Van Vechten Park.”

He also underscored the collaborative spirit behind this vital infrastructure project, adding, “The partnership we’ve built with the city over the years has been instrumental in moving this effort forward”

Echoing this sentiment, Mayor O’Donnell stated, “It is exciting to see the Flood Control system continue to take shape. As each new segment comes online, our city becomes even more protected for the future.”

The Reach 4, Phase 1 segment features a 1,900-foot-long, 23-foot-high floodwall fortified by more than 14,000 tons of riprap to protect the riverbank from erosion. Underground, nearly 125,000 feet of steel sheet piling will prevent seepage, and a state-of-the-art pump station will be capable of moving 16,500 gallons of water per minute. The project also includes over 2,700 feet of multi-use trail connecting to the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, a key link in the Great American Rail-Trail.

The ceremony concluded with remarks from local and federal representatives, followed by the official groundbreaking. For more information on the Cedar Rapids Flood Control System, visit www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Missions/Flood-Risk-Management/Cedar-Rapids/ or www.cityofcr.com/floodcontrol. 



Official groundbreaking shovels stand ready near the Cedar River where Reach 4, Phase 1, of the Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management Project is about to start.
Photo by Frances Candelaria



Above: City Manager Jeff Pomeranz delivers closing remarks prior to the official groundbreaking for the newest phase of the Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management Project. *Photo by Frances Candelaria*

Below: With a flip of the shovel, the dirt is turned, and Reach 4, Phase 1 of the Cedar Rapids Flood Control System has officially begun. *Photo by Frances Candelaria*

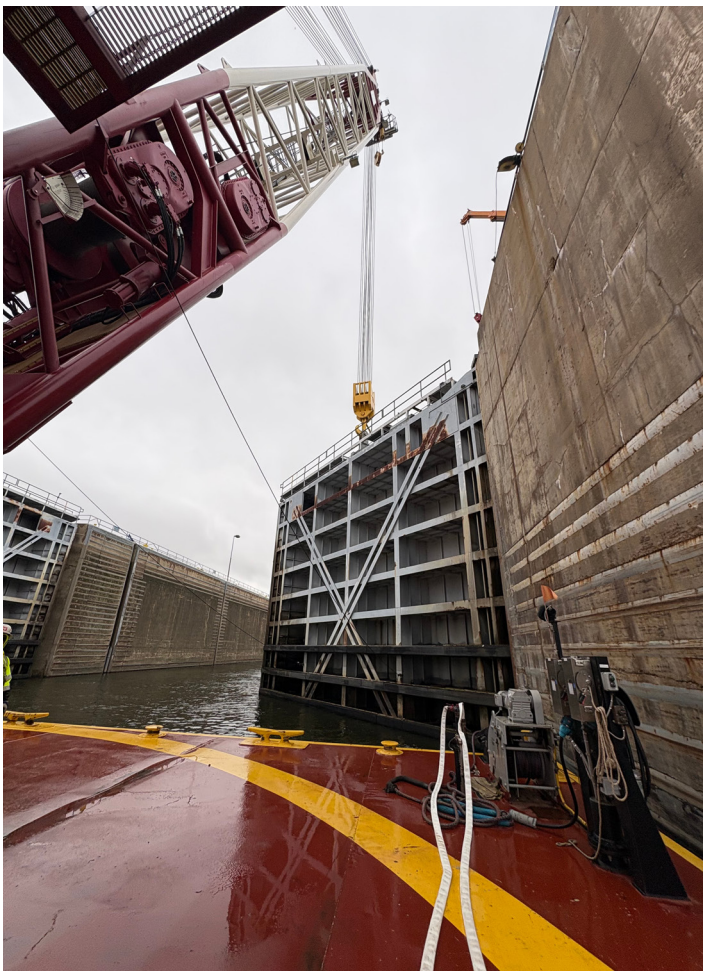


Preserving the Future: Major Maintenance Repairs at Lockport Lock

By Jim Finn, Public Affairs Specialist

For more than 90 years, the Lockport Lock and Dam has served as a critical gateway on the Illinois Waterway, connecting the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River and supporting one of the nation's most important inland navigation systems. Beginning March 31, however, the lock chamber temporarily fell silent as the Rock Island District began a major repair project designed to ensure the lock's continued reliability for decades to come.

The scheduled closure, which ran through May 19, allowed crews to replace cracked pintle sockets on the downstream miter gates. This repair, officials say, was essential to the long-term integrity of the structure.



At the Lockport Lock on the Illinois Waterway, crews use the Quad Cities Heavy Lift Crane to hoist a 550,000-pound miter gate for repairs.

Photo by Cam Klein

“These pintle sockets act as the primary hinges for the lock gates, and at Lockport they support some of the tallest gates on the Illinois Waterway,” said Cam Klein, chief of the Illinois Waterway Maintenance Section for the Rock Island District. “With a maximum lift of 39 feet, the structural forces on these gates are immense, so maintaining those components is absolutely critical.”

The need for the repair was discovered during a planned dewatering in 2025, when crews were installing new upstream gates and identified cracks in the existing pintle socket assemblies. The downstream gates have been in service since 1986 without major rehabilitation.

To keep the lock operating safely while permanent repairs were designed, engineers applied a carbon fiber-reinforced polymer wrap around the damaged hinge assemblies. The temporary reinforcement allowed commercial navigation traffic to continue moving through the lock while replacement components were fabricated.

During the closure, crews fully removed the cracked pintle sockets and installed newly designed replacements intended to simplify future maintenance efforts.

“The original sockets were welded directly onto the gates,” Klein said. “This time we installed a two-inch plate that’s both welded and bolted into place, allowing the new pintle socket to be bolted on instead of welded. If another replacement is ever needed in the future, the process will be much quicker and more efficient.”

Klein says the cracking stemmed largely from deterioration between the wall quoin blocks and the gate quoin blocks, which are the components responsible for transferring water pressure forces from the gates into the concrete lock walls. Over decades of operation, corrosion and water flow gradually increased the gap between the surfaces, forcing the gates to flex beyond their intended tolerances.

“As that gap increases, more stress gets transferred into the pintle assemblies and other structural components,” Klein said. “Those additional stresses are what ultimately led to the cracking we observed.”

In addition to replacing the pintle sockets, crews completed a series of other repairs and upgrades while the chamber was dewatered. Work included adjustments to service and emergency lift gate seals, installation of new concrete pads and ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene blocks, rehabilitation of strut arms on the lower miter gates, and replacement of existing I-bars.

The project highlights the collaborative capabilities of the Rock Island District's maintenance workforce. Personnel and equipment from both the Illinois Waterway and Mississippi River Project Offices supported the effort, along with supplemental maintenance personnel from the St. Paul District.

"Jobs like these truly showcase the Rock Island District's capabilities when both rivers come together," Klein said. "Both maintenance sections bring diverse skill sets to the project, and both teams have learned from each other throughout the process."

Although the Lockport facility falls in the Chicago District's geographic area of responsibility, the Rock Island District retains maintenance responsibilities for the site, adding another layer of coordination.


A nearly 60-foot-tall miter gate removed from Lockport Lock is laid flat on a barge, allowing maintenance crews to safely access areas requiring repair.

Photo by Cam Klein



"It creates challenges from a planning standpoint because we're working with another district that may have different processes and procedures," Klein said.

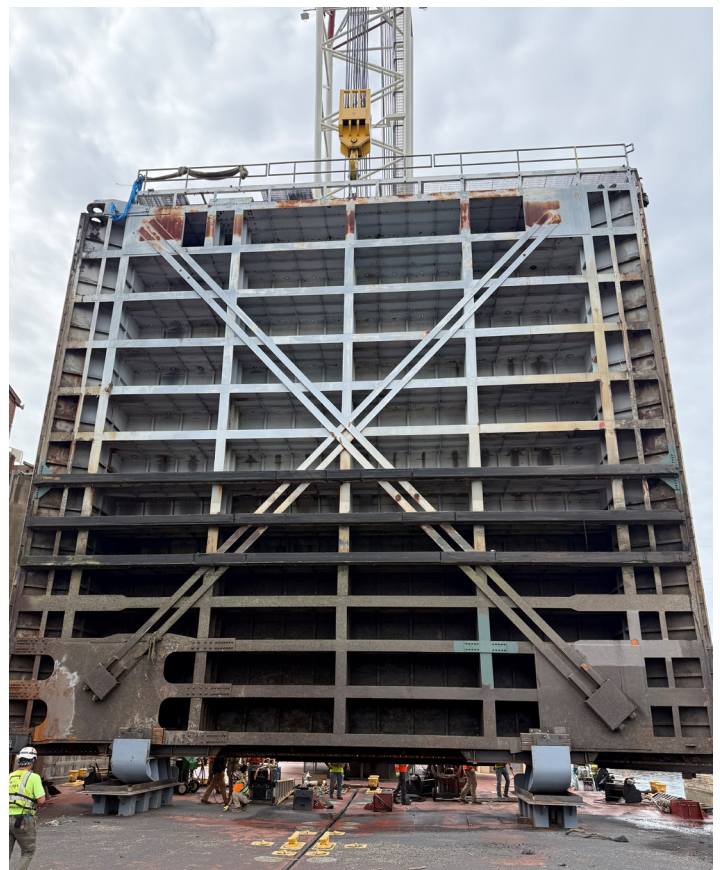
"There's more coordination involved with engineering, operations and safety sections, but everyone involved worked together well to keep the project moving forward," Klein added.

The temporary closure represented a short-term disruption for a waterway system that moves approximately 630 million tons of cargo annually, generates an estimated \$350 billion in economic output and supports nearly 1 million jobs nationwide. The repairs are an investment in preserving the reliability of a system that remains vital to the nation's economy. 

Did You Know:

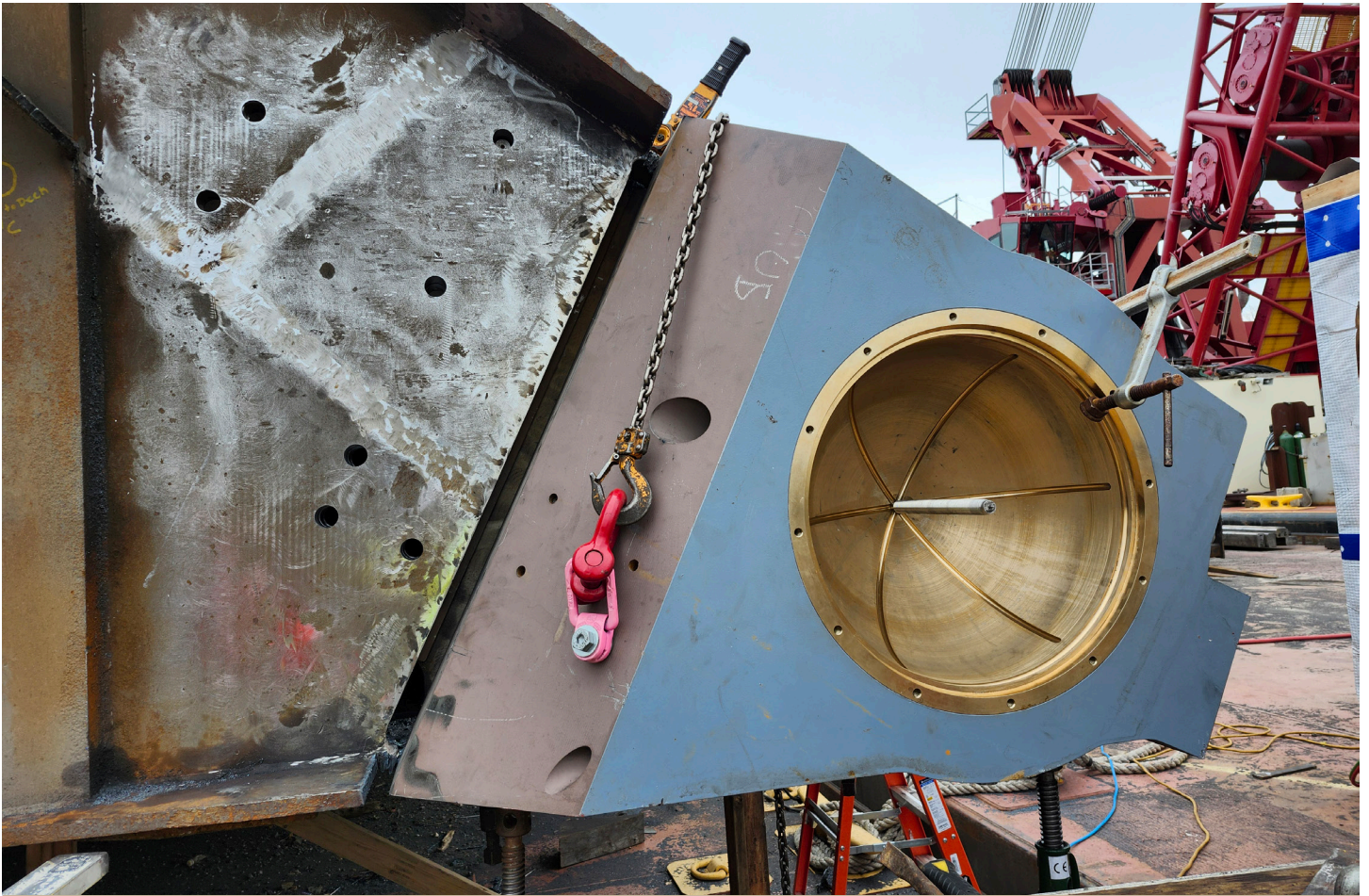
The miter gates at the Lockport Lock are the tallest gates on the Illinois Waterway at approximately 60 ft.

The chamber fills in roughly 22 minutes and is able to empty in just 15 minutes.



Crews from the Illinois and Mississippi River Maintenance Teams work together to reinstall a lower miter gate for testing at Lockport Lock.

Photo by Cam Klein



New pintle socket installed on a lower miter gate at the Lockport Lock in Lockport, Illinois, on the Illinois Waterway. Photo by Cam Klein



Crews from the Illinois Waterway Maintenance Team and Mississippi River Maintenance Team pose in front of the Quad Cities Heavy Lift Crane at the Lockport Lock along the Illinois Waterway. Both crews worked tirelessly to complete major maintenance at the lock in under two months to reopen the waterway to navigation. Photo by Nickalaus Brown

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Nolan Hagge: Geotechnical/Materials Engineer

By Samantha Heilig, Public Affairs Specialist

Nolan Hagge serves as a geotechnical/materials engineer for the Engineering and Construction Division, Geotechnical Branch, Investigations and Materials Section, at the USACE Rock Island District. He joined the team in December 2023 after working for more than 10 years as an engineer in the private sector.

"I came to USACE because I wanted to be a part of something bigger and find my purpose again as an engineer," said Hagge.

In his current role, Hagge provides geotechnical and material design for complex civil works projects and offers technical assistance during the construction phase. His primary areas of expertise include horizontal directional drilling, geotechnical investigations, deep foundations (drilled shafts, micropiles, driven piles), ground improvement, large earthwork, and underwater concrete applications for heavy structures such as locks, dams, and floodwalls.

Hagge also provides quality assurance oversight for some of the District's mega projects. This includes conducting footing and rebar inspections, concrete testing, grout field testing, earthwork inspections, and overseeing sheetpile, micropile, and H-pile installations. Additionally, he develops Drilling Invasive Program Plans to assess geotechnical site conditions and serves as an agency technical reviewer for the USACE Risk Management Center.

Hagge was recently recognized for exceptional work with a Civilian Service Achievement Medal for his support to the USACE Chicago District following his involvement in a challenging underwater concrete project at the Chicago Lock in the dead of winter.


He also received a commander's coin for delivering a high-quality technical solution under a compressed timeline for the design of a connecting levee in the Cedar Rapids Flood Risk Management Project.

"Nolan is highly proficient in the Geotechnical Investigations and Materials specialties from developing scopes of work for field investigations to concrete and soils analysis and designs to laboratory testing and construction observation," said Valerie Chambers, chief of the Geotech Branch, Investigations and Materials Section. "He is a great

team player, reaching out to personnel and coordinating among disciplines to ensure USACE receives a good product whether that be in design or construction work. His efforts have significantly contributed to the positive team atmosphere and cooperation achieved on multiple large-scale projects. He has a can-do attitude and willingness to work through issues that arise in a collaborative manner that is a valued asset to not only the Geotechnical Branch but to the Rock Island District as a whole."

Hagge holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Dordt University and is a licensed Professional Engineer in the state of Illinois. Originally from Princeton, Iowa, he recently returned to the area and currently resides there with his wife and two daughters. Outside of his professional duties, he is an avid hunter and fisherman.

When reflecting on his time at the Rock Island District, Hagge says, "the opportunities are endless and your career at USACE is what you make it."

He also noted that while foundational knowledge is critical, "there is no substitute for experience." 



Training Strengthens District Flood Response Readiness

By Jordan Raiff, Editor

From April 7-9, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District held training for flood area engineers, state liaisons and members of the District's crisis action team. Typically held every two years, the training serves as an opportunity for flood fight cadre members from the Emergency Management Office to train employees from other departments who have volunteered to support communities during flood response operations.

Over the course of the three-day event, attendees received classroom-style training as well as hands-on learning and technical skill building outdoors. The agenda covered everything from preparing to deploy to handling public engagement in the field. Scenarios and case studies were also incorporated to allow participants to gather lessons learned and see how their training applies to real life.

The training ensures volunteers understand how to assess flood fight situations in the field and train local personnel supporting response operations. It also guides volunteers in learning how to help impacted community members respond appropriately and in accordance with regulations during flood emergencies.




Preparing for a hands-on training exercise, Jessica Jenkins-McPeek discusses USACE flood-mapping software with colleague Chris Hawes. Photo by Jordan Raiff



During a hands-on training exercise, flood fight responders practice building a sandbag ring to control a simulated sand boil. This technique is critical for containing under-seepage that can threaten the integrity of a levee during high-water events. Photo by Jordan Raiff

According to National Flood Fight Materiel Center Program Manager Cory Haberman, “We cover different options to reduce impacts in the field because there is always more than one possible way to respond to a problem. Some of these options may not be fully available at the time, may require too much time, or the equipment may not be readily available.”

Although this training focuses on educating volunteers for emergency response, the goal is to train the trainer.

“As members of USACE, we’re not authorized to perform the work ourselves,” said Haberman. “Our job is to provide technical support and train the people who are involved in emergency response in a community. This allows them to accomplish more with the people they have and be better prepared.” 



Top: Nick Bails demonstrates how to connect piping for a self powered water pump.

Left: Students learn how to properly lay and anchor polysheeting.

Bottom: Students learn about proper Gabion basket construction from Maccaferri instructor Kevin Arroyo.

Photos by Jordan Raiff



DEPLOYMENT SPOTLIGHT: Cory Haberman

“The most rewarding part of going to Alaska came from the appreciation of the people for helping them”

By Jordan Raiff, Editor

Responding to a flood fight mission is never an easy task. However, for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District’s National Flood Fight Materiel Center Program Manager Cory Haberman, it is part of the job.

“My day-to-day operation is to provide supplemental flood fight equipment to USACE districts that may be experiencing flood events or have experienced flood events and need to restock or reset those materials,” Haberman said. “We provide assistance during an event, too.”

His latest weeklong deployment to Juneau, Alaska, was a fitting one.

“Juneau, Alaska, has a situation on the Mendenhall River,” he said. “There is a glacier basin called Suicide Basin that fills with water. In late July or early August, the glacial plug releases, and a large volume of water is released at once into Mendenhall Lake. This (surge of) water runs under a small bridge and then floods parts of Juneau.”

The deployment had been in development for some time.

“In the 2024 flood, there was a presidential declaration. After that, the governor requested advance measures of assistance. That means, as part of our flood control and coastal emergency authority, we can build temporary structures for what is known as an imminent flooding situation,” Haberman said. “Since we know this happens annually, it is considered an imminent flooding situation. We were able to do the same locally back in 2010 here in the Rock Island District due to significant snowmelt north of us.”

Part of Haberman’s preparation for the deployment included monitoring conditions from Rock Island, Illinois, and conducting on-site assessments.

“We did a site visit to discuss what we could do to better meet their needs, and walked the riverbanks,” Haberman said. “On-site discussions were held with the contractors building the alignments, as well as with the Alaska and Seattle Districts. We also helped with pumping water away from homes that were inundated with flooding.”



A Gabion basket wall protects homes and infrastructure along the Mendenhall River in Juneau, Alaska. This structure is critical for preventing erosion and diverting floodwaters caused by seasonal glacial outbursts. *Courtesy Image*


Being on the ground provides perspective and reinforces the value of the mission.

“The most rewarding part of going to Alaska came from the appreciation of the people for helping them,” Haberman said. “They ask for what they need, and if we can assist, we assist.”

One of his biggest reach back assets came from Rock Island’s Transportation Assistant, Diane Wilson. According to Haberman she was instrumental in getting equipment and supplies sent up quickly, and her actions have helped reshape how USACE moves equipment for a flood response.

“About three years ago, we requested assistance in getting more people certified in shipments through the DOD shipping system. At that time, we were doing roughly 10 truckloads from Rock Island to Alaska. Now we are averaging about 30 across the nation and Alaska,” explained Haberman.

For employees interested in supporting flood response missions, Haberman offered guidance.

“I would suggest people watch for natural disasters. If they see USACE is going to be involved, talk with emergency management and put your name on the volunteer list,” he said. “The Rock Island District is picking up a debris mission later this year. If we are called upon, we will be asking for volunteers. We have nine debris PRT teams, and we are at the bottom of the rotation list. Teams are rotated as needed. If people want to be involved in flood response, they should let EM know, and we will invite them to the next training session. We also have reach-back options for those who do not want to go into the field.” 



Above: Cory Haberman providing instruction on how to prepare, load, and deploy large helicopter-hoisted sandbags for flood response missions. Photo by Jordan Raiff

Below: Troy Barton from the USACE Logistics Activity office moves palletized Gabion baskets at the National Flood Fight Materiel Center in Rock Island, preparing them for transport to Alaska. Photo by Frances Candelaria



USACE volunteers, trained by Cory Haberman, instruct local volunteers on proper sandbag-filling techniques to help shore up the Mendenhall River. Courtesy Image

RIDWA NEWS

By The RIDWA Team

The Rock Island District Welfare Association (RIDWA) continues to support District employees through activities, events, and programs focused on morale, wellness, recreation, and employee engagement. Led by employee volunteers, RIDWA provides opportunities for team building, wellness, and workplace connection throughout the District while helping foster a positive and engaged work environment. RIDWA is also fortunate to receive strong support from District leadership, whose continued encouragement helps make many of these employee activities and morale initiatives possible.

RIDWA is currently seeking new board members interested in supporting employee activities and morale initiatives. Employees interested in becoming involved are encouraged to reach out and join the team.

Throughout the year, RIDWA volunteers organize and support a variety of fundraising and morale events, including pancake breakfasts, barbecues, pizza days, and other employee activities.

This year, RIDWA hosted its first-ever farmers' market fundraiser, which proved to be a tremendous success. The farmers' market featured hundreds of plants, including vegetables, flowers, herbs, raspberries, strawberries, and indoor plants. Employees enjoyed a large assortment of homemade baked goods, including cookies, brownies, cheesecakes, muffins, sourdough bread, and many other treats that sold quickly throughout the event. One of the most popular attractions was the "Build Your Own Flower Bouquet" activity, where employees created custom spring bouquets in mason jars to brighten their desks and workspaces.

RIDWA extends a sincere thank you to everyone who donated baked goods, plants, and their time to support the fundraiser. The generosity and participation of District employees played a major role in the event's success.


"I'm grateful to be part of a RIDWA team filled with passionate volunteers and supportive people," said Lindsay Welzenbach, RIDWA treasurer. "Being part of planning events and helping RIDWA continue to grow is something I genuinely enjoy."

RIDWA fundraising efforts help support a variety of employee programs, shared resources, and morale activities across the District. Proceeds from events throughout the year help fund wellness initiatives, recreational equipment, office event supplies, and other amenities that contribute to a positive workplace environment. The organization is also exploring additional ways to expand future morale and wellness opportunities for employees. Employees are encouraged to share suggestions for future resources, activities, and events that may benefit their offices and coworkers.

RIDWA also helps bring employees and families together through a variety of seasonal and community-focused events held throughout the year. Past activities have included the Corps Day picnic, chili cookoff, BBQ smokeoff, offsite morale events, and District holiday gatherings focused on bringing employees together outside of day-to-day work activities.

RIDWA is also preparing to introduce several new activities this summer and fall. Potential upcoming events include movie night under the glow of the Clock Tower lights, an ice cream social, Clock Tower lawn games, Corps Day Olympics, Brew & Pups, retro bingo, and many other opportunities designed to continue building morale and strengthening workplace connections across the District.

The current RIDWA team includes Lindsay Welzenbach, Heather Bishop, Joie Ponder, Lindsay Scalora, and Abby Steele. Through the dedication of these volunteers, continued command support, and the participation of District employees, RIDWA remains committed to promoting morale, wellness, and employee engagement throughout the Rock Island District.

For more information about RIDWA, upcoming events, or opportunities to get involved, employees may contact any RIDWA team member or email RIDWA@usace.army.mil. 



A RIDWA volunteer prepares teal pancakes to kick off Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. Photo by Jordan Raiff

• AROUND THE DISTRICT •

Can you name where this photo was taken?



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

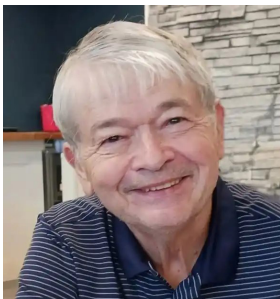
Last Issue's Winner



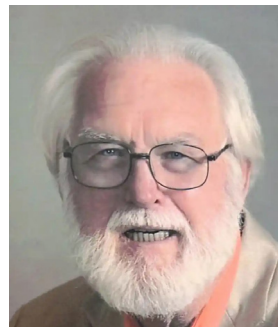
Answer: MRPO at Lock and Dam 14 LeClaire, IA
Winner: Andrew Retherford

USACE Family News

Obituaries



John Patrick Carr, a native of Geneseo, New York, passed away April 6. He earned a master's degree from the State University of New York at Oneonta before joining the U.S. Army. He later returned to federal service with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, where he had a highly decorated career as an economist.



Otto "Bud" Marion passed away April 10. Born and raised in the Quad Cities, he joined Local 537 of the Operating Engineers right out of high school and joined the U.S. Navy in 1963. He served two tours in Vietnam before leaving uniformed service in 1967 and returned to Local 537. He later joined the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, where he served as general maintenance supervisor for 35 years before retiring in 2003.

Births



Henry Arthur Atwell was born to Arthur Tayloran Atwell. He weighed 7 pounds, 3 ounces.



Yasmine Alafif was born to Mahmoud and Wafa Alafif. She weighed 7 pounds, 8 ounces.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, ROCK ISLAND
CLOCK TOWER BLDG. - P.O. BOX 2004
ROCK ISLAND, IL 61204-2004

Wear Your Life Jacket to Work Day



On May 15, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees across the globe participated in “Wear Your Life Jacket to Work Day.” This event also doubles as the official start to National Safe Boating Week. Above (from left) are employees from Coralville, Saylorville, and Lake Red Rock. *Courtesy Images* Below are employees from the Rock Island District Headquarters. *Photo by Jordan Raiff*

