

Nelson  
Promotion  
Page 4



Holiday  
Party  
Page 10



Commander's Column.....	3
From the Field.....	6
EEO Observance.....	7
Wind Farm Web Closed.....	8
Water Control Branch Lunch.....	9
Aberjona River Widening.....	11
Dredging up the Past.....	12



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
New England District

Volume 42, No. 3

# Yankee Engineer

January 2008

## Cape Wind Associates submits revised permit application to Corps for wind turbine proposal

By Timothy Dugan  
Public Affairs Office

Cape Wind Associates, LLC has submitted a revised permit application to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for work in waters of the United States in conjunction with a wind farm proposal in Nantucket Sound, Mass.

A public notice and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) were issued by the Corps of Engineers in 2004. Since that time, the Department of Interior, Minerals Management Ser-

vice (MMS) has become the lead federal agency on the review and has recently issued a new Draft EIS (see <http://www.mms.gov/offshore/RenewableEnergy/CapeWind.htm>). Check that site for MMS public hearing dates and locations scheduled in March 2008.

The applicant has provided a revised application to the Corps to show the minor revisions to the proposed project. The Corps is soliciting public comments on the project revisions.

Public comments and inquiries specific to the MMS Draft EIS should be

submitted directly to MMS.

The proposed project is the installation of 130 wind turbine generators, an electric service platform and associated submarine cables. This work is proposed in Nantucket Sound with cable landfall at New Hampshire Avenue in Yarmouth, Mass. The project includes work in navigable waters including the discharge of dredged or fill material for the proposed Wind Park located on Horseshoe Shoal in Nantucket Sound between Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

*Continued on page 8*



### Lending a hand

*The ship, PRETTY JEWELRY, makes an oil delivery at the Sandwich, Mass., power plant on Dec. 14, 2007. The Cape Cod Canal tug, DELUGE, helps push the vessel to its destination. (Photo by Kevin Burke)*

# Yankee Voices

Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite  
and Jim Morocco



## Quitting Cold Turkey is best

If one of your New Year's resolutions was to quit smoking, the researchers at the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Ohio State University say it's better to quit cold turkey rather than gradually reducing the number of cigarettes you smoke.

According to a study, when smokers cut back, they alter their smoking habits by taking longer drags and smoking more of the cigarette before putting it out. Ironically, this can lead them to consume more smoke, carbon monoxide, nicotine, and other cancer-causing ingredients.

"Millions of people want to quit and they often see cutting back as the first step in a long-term strategy," said Karen Ahijevych, an associate professor of nursing. "Unfortunately, our research suggests that this may be giving them a false sense of security."

*(Ideas Unlimited)*

## Congratulations

...to **Roger Mathurin**, Marine Operations Section at the Cape Cod Canal Field Office, who was named as the WE Committee's employee of the month for January. Mathurin received the honor for being an outstanding supervisor and a fantastic role model and mentor to all of his subordinates. He goes to great lengths to ensure that his staff has the resources that they need to perform their jobs safely, efficiently and effectively.

...to **Deb Acone, Gary Cooper and Jim Morocco** for being selected as the WE Committee's "District Team of the Quarter." The team received the award for their outstanding performance during the DeCA Meat Department Renovation. These folks were instrumental in bringing in a new customer during lean times and delivered their project ahead of schedule and way under budget, to the point that the customer was able to put 36 percent of their project budget to other improvements in the facility.

...to **Robert Essex**, formerly of Engineering/Planning, currently, of CENWW, and his wife, **Catherine**, on the birth of their twin sons, **Robert Francis Essex, Jr., and Henry Xavier Essex**, on Dec. 21, 2007.

## Sympathy

...to **Pattie Price**, Information Management, on the passing of her father, **William Price**, Dec. 3.

...to **Pam Bradstreet**, Real Estate, on the passing of her mother, **Ruth Slingerland**, Dec. 16.

to **Duban Montoya**, PPMD-Navigation, on the passing of his father, **Dario Montoya**, January 8.

... to **Rose Schmidt**, Engineering/Planning, on the passing of her sister, **Angela "Angie" L. Moore**, Jan. 14.

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# Commander's Corner: Stop talking and start doing

by Col. Curtis L. Thalken  
District Commander



Like many of you, I've spent the past few weekends glued to the TV watching the Patriot's exploits. During the breaks in the action, I became enamored with a new series of IBM commercials. I'm sure you've seen them -- they start with

some set of people absurdly talking about innovation in a way that obviously will never generate results. The commercials end with the tag line "stop talking-start doing."

Given Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp's focus on project delivery and our pending work load, I think this concept rings especially true.

First the good news: as the Total Program chart below shows, we have growth in our total program, for FY08, reversing a multi-year downward trend.

The challenge we face will be executing this increased program. As the Civil Works Program chart shows, our increased Civil Works funds more than offsets reductions in our Military and Inter-agency funding. However, executing Civil Works projects can be challenging, given the increased number of stakeholders, contributed fund sources, and environmental windows we must accommodate. As my

second chart shows, Civil Works execution has been problematic for us over the past few years.

Beginning in FY06 Congress passed new rules limiting USACE's ability to reprogram funds between projects and requiring most contracts to be fully funded, before they could be awarded.

At this point the bars begin to diverge. The new rules I mentioned can account for the divergence between the available and scheduled bars, since not all appropriated funds can be scheduled and under the new rules they cannot be reprogrammed away.

The difference between available and scheduled funds

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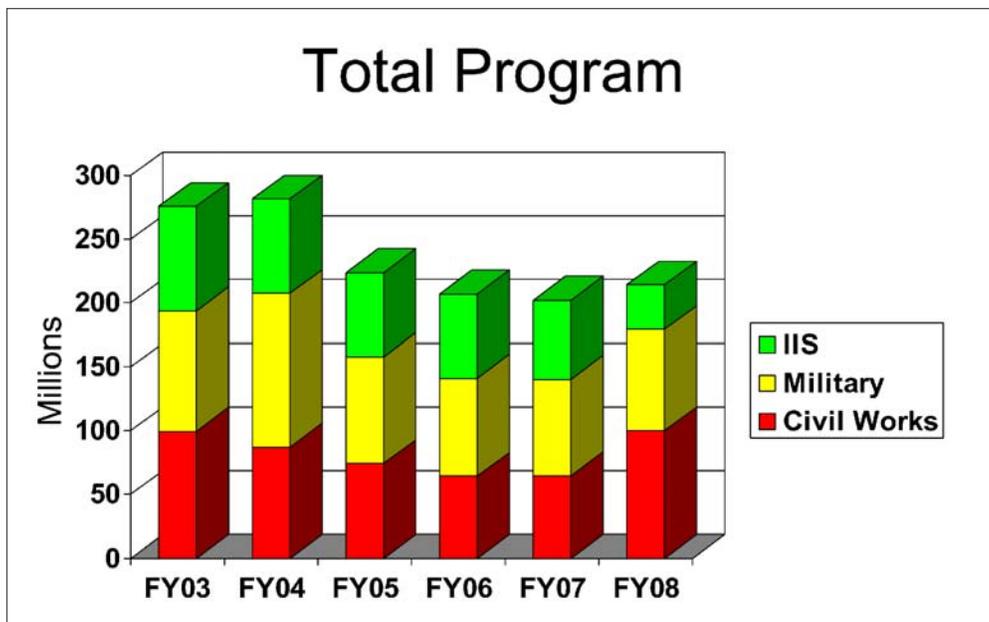
**'We must 'stop talking and start doing' or we risk a return to our past downward trend.'**

- Col. Curtis Thalken, New England District Commander

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also accounts for the discrepancy between the FY08 Civil Works dollars on the first graph (roughly \$110 million) and the \$144 million shown in the other. We will only be able to schedule \$100 million for execution during FY08.

However, Congressional rule changes do not account for the difference between work we in the District scheduled and our actual execution. The divergence of these two bars creates a problem for us.



USACE's standard for obligation of scheduled funds is 95 percent. Last year we failed to meet this, only obligating 93 percent of our FY07 schedule. We cannot allow this to continue. If we cannot execute the work we say we can, unexecuted funds will rollover

*Continued on page 9*

# Nelson receives rank of Colonel during promotion ceremony

One of New England District's top officers was recognized for outstanding leadership with a promotion to Colonel.

A promotion ceremony for Col. Andrew B. Nelson, New England District's Deputy Commander, took place Jan. 16 in the Concord Park Cafeteria.

Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite, North Atlantic Division Commander, officiated the ceremony. Col. Curtis Thalken, New England District Commander, served as Master of Ceremonies and welcomed the standing-room-only crowd, which included friends, family, New England District team members and U.S. Army Medic Group CBHCO.

After the playing of the National Anthem, Col. Thalken gave a brief history of the rank of Colonel. "A colonel ranks above a Lieutenant Colonel and below a Brigadier General," he said. "The insignia for a Colonel is a silver eagle with a U.S. Shield superimposed on its chest and holding an olive branch and bundle of arrows in its talons. The eagle led to the informal term, "full bird Colonel."

Before promoting Col. Nelson, Brig. Gen. Semonite addressed the audience by saying it is the people behind the officer that defines him as a leader. "All of us who are leaders or supervisors don't get there by ourselves," he said. "We get there because people have set us up – people have coached, mentored and trained us."

The North Atlantic Division Commander thanked the New England Dis-



*Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite and Mrs. Beth Nelson change Col. Nelson's rank on his dress coat. (Inset) Alec and Lauren Nelson change the rank on their father's uniform shirt.*

trict team for continuing to set the conditions for Col. Nelson to be able to serve the nation at a higher responsibility.

Brig. Gen. Semonite thanked Col. Nelson's mother, Mrs. Pauline Nelson, who was listening to the event on the phone, for setting her son up for success by providing Nelson and his brother, Col. Eric Nelson, with an outstanding upbringing. Col. Eric Nelson was watching via videoteleconference. "The fact that you've got two great young men who have gone up the ranks of the officership and are wearing eagles of responsibility is a great accolade to you," he said. "You set the conditions through your coaching, your mentoring, your love and support throughout the years," he said.

The general thanked Col. Eric Nelson for his part in Col. Andrew Nelson's upbringing that led to the promotion. "Because you have been able to challenge him to be here and to

champion him, there is a little bit of this promotion that you have to take credit for," he said.

Next, Brig. Gen. Semonite called Col. Nelson's children, Lauren and Alec, up to the front and talked about the unique challenges of having a parent in the Armed Services. "When your dad is deploying to a lot of places, it's tough," he said. "There are a lot of times when dad's not around because he's doing things for the Corps of Engineers – doing things for the nation. You need to be proud. You need to know that there is a little bit of you in this promotion and that you helped him out."

Mrs. Beth Nelson was the next person Brig. Gen. Semonite brought up to talk about. "There is only one job harder than being a Soldier in the Army, and that's being a spouse of a Soldier in the Army," he said.

Brig. Gen. Semonite talked about the challenges and the stress of having

a loved one deployed and the not so nice conditions that spouses and their children have to sometimes endure as part of Army life. He told the audience that Mrs. Nelson's unwavering support helped Col. Nelson stay focused on his mission. "If a Soldier deploys knowing that his family is taken care of, he will go to great lengths to do his mission," he said. "But if he deploys knowing that there are risks back home and that no one is taking care of his family, then it distracts him."

In appreciation for all that Mrs. Nelson has done during Col. Nelson's career, Brig. Gen. Semonite presented her with one of his coins. "This is presented for excellence," he said. "You've done a great job and you need to know that this promotion is just as much for you as it is for him."

Brig. Gen. Semonite called Col. Nelson a Pentathlete, which is an athlete that excels in five events. The general listed Col. Nelson's events as engineer, expeditionary, leader, manager, and having the ability to balance Army life with that of family.

"When you put all that together, you get a Patriot," said Brig. Gen. Semonite. "You don't need to go to Iraq and get a purple heart and come home after getting shot to be a hero. You're a hero the day you join."

Before the NAD Commander proceeded with the promotion ceremony, Col. Thalken talked about the time when he and Col. Nelson worked together and how Col. Nelson was instrumental in the building of Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo in 90 days.

"Every day while he was down there, he and I would talk on the phone at least once a day about what I could do to make sure he could accomplish his mission," said Col. Thalken. "With all the pressure of NATO on his head, the whole country looking to see if we were going to succeed or not, not once did he waiver. Calm, cool, collected under all the pressure of that every day he fought his way through and in 90 days everyone was in C-Huts."

Col. Thalken said that he was



Photos by C.J. Allen

*Col. Nelson reaffirms his Oath of Office as administered by Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite.*

thrilled to find out that Col. Nelson was going to be his deputy when he took command of the New England District. "I said, 'Yes! I'm all set.' It set me completely at ease," he told the audience. After Col. Thalken's remarks, the audience stood for the posting of the orders. Mrs. Nelson and Brig. Gen. Semonite pinned Col. Nelson's new rank on his uniform jacket, and soon after Col. Nelson's children changed the rank on his uniform shirt. With his new rank in place, Col. Nelson renewed his oath of office that was administered by Brig. Gen. Semonite.

Col. Nelson thanked everyone for coming and said that he was excited that his family could participate, even though they were so far away. He talked about finding out about his promotion on Thanksgiving day. "Beth was high-fiving the kids and I was standing there asking myself, 'what just happened,'" he said. "It just hadn't sunk in."

A month later, the promotion, and all that comes with it, has sunk in and according to Col. Nelson, he is ready to serve. "It's no small measure in my mind of what obligation I have in front of me, and it is a great honor."

Col. Nelson thanked his mother for

his good upbringing and his brother for setting an exemplary example for him to follow. He talked about his career and about some of the people who helped him rise through the ranks by mentoring him and advising him, to include Brig. Gen. Semonite and Col. Thalken. "I wouldn't be here if Col. Thalken and Brig. Gen. Semonite didn't support me in pursuing this opportunity," he said. "I will do my best not to let you down."

The newly promoted Colonel thanked his wife for her support over the years and presented her with roses. His daughter and son came up individually and he talked a little bit about them, especially how Lauren's love of drama and Alec's pursuit of becoming an Eagle Scout, "I got my eagle first," he joked. He thanked his children for supporting him throughout his career and presented them with gifts.

Concluding his remarks, Col. Nelson turned to the audience and thanked the New England District team for their support. "My time with NAE has allowed me to do many things with my family and with my career."

After the official portion of the promotion ceremony, the Nelson family hosted a small reception.

# West Hill Park Ranger and Junior Ranger Graduates see the world

by Viola Bramel  
West Hill Dam

Eric Helfrich and Dan Paine, seasonal park rangers at West Hill Dam and Park, have followed their dreams to reach places such as Svalbard Norway, the Continental Divide in Colorado and worked on organic farms and banded birds in Costa Rica. These future leaders, stewards and caretakers are on the journey of their lives and



*Eric Helfrich (second from right) with friends at Kappe Linne/Isfjord Research/radio station (Svalbad- Norway).*

traveling all over the world.

Helfrich was the first ever Advanced Junior Ranger Graduate (3 years Junior Ranger Level 1, Level 2 and Advanced) at West Hill Dam in 1994. Paine graduated as a Junior Ranger in 1996, returning to West Hill Dam for several years as a volunteer at National Public Lands Day and the Annual Family Fishing Fair. Both have returned as volunteers for numerous events and have returned as seasonal ranger employees, Helfrich in 2005 and Paine in 2007. Currently, they are both regular visitors to the office when they are in visiting their families.

Helfrich's and Paine's pursuits are

the fruits of the labor of their parents, environmentalists and educators.

From near the North Pole -- conducting research on Arctic glaciers provides insight into responses observed in high latitudes due to global-scale climate changes, per Helfrich and his research for his undergraduate thesis 2006, (National Science Foundation and NOAA- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). Imagine two months at the northernmost city on earth, Svalbard, Norway, where

Helfrich worked with a team of scientists and students to gather data to benefit our world's response to climate changes including global warming.

It was here that Helfrich practiced survival training while floating amongst icebergs, which according to him was such a thrill and range practice to protect himself or the team from polar bears.

Helfrich's path has led him on to further his research at Northern Arizona University to pursue his graduate studies of Holocene climate variability based on glacier fluctuations in southwestern Alaska. Graduating seniors from the University of Massachusetts can be nominated for the U-Mass Amherst Alumni Senior Leadership Award and Helfrich was a 2007 recipient. He demonstrated during his undergraduate career outstanding leadership and service to the campus community, including public and community service.

Helfrich's adventure continued with teams funded by Backpacker Maga-



*Dan Paine makes friends with a tarantula in Costa Rica.*

zine to map the Continental Divide Trail and produce a map by 2008, the 13th anniversary of the trail. Helfrich was one of 25 on one Expedition Team, chosen from over 3,000 applicants. One can only imagine how his next adventure will top these escapades!

Moving on from the cold arctic north, Paine broadened his education pursuit with a recent two month volunteer position with WWOOF, Worldwide Workers on Organic Farms, in Costa Rica. He volunteered with this international organization whose goal is teaching and practicing sustainable farming methods world wide. Paine signed on with a wildlife biologist to band birds for two weeks and has now elected to change his major and school he is attending. The former seasonal ranger strives to become some type of educator or environmentalist or perhaps both.

When Paine's mom becomes excited over a resident species such as a Tufted Titmouse, Paine exclaims, "There are no birds that can compare with those in Costa Rica."

When Helfrich and Paine are home from their adventures visiting family, they remember their environmental roots and are regular visitors to the West Hill office.

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## 'I Have A Dream' reenactment highlights King Observance

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*The Equal Employment Opportunity Office and the Black Employment Program hosted a riveting reenactment of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a Dream" speech in honor of the late Civil Rights Leader's observance. This year's Theme was "Remember! Celebrate! Act! A Day On, Not A Day Off!"*

Timothy Martin, Secretary for the 66th Security Forces Squadron Commanders at Hanscom Air Force Base, served as keynote speaker during the Jan. 10 observance held in the Concord Park Theatre.

Col. Curtis Thalken, New England District Commander, said the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday celebrates the life and legacy of a man who brought hope and healing to America.

"We commemorate the timeless values he taught us through his example – the values of truth, justice, compassion, dignity, humility and service that so radiantly defined Dr. King's character and empowered leadership," he said.

As part of his presentation, Mr. Martin delivered Dr. King's world famous, "I Have a Dream" speech in character for the New England District audience. Dr. King originally delivered the speech after he organized a mas-

sive march on Washington, DC, on Aug. 28, 1963. On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, he evoked the name of Lincoln in his "I Have a Dream" speech, which is credited with mobilizing supporters of desegregation and prompted the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The next year, King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Mr. Martin has been reenacting this pivotal moment in the Civil Rights Movement since 1997, when he performed the speech in Germany.

The response to his performance was so profound, Martin realized that performing the speech in character could be his way of keeping alive Dr. King's dream and vision for all Americans.

Since his first presentation, the recent U.S. Army retiree has performed for numerous military installations, colleges, high schools, churches and groups throughout New England.



Photo by Brian Murphy

*Timothy Martin portrays Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. giving his famous, "I have a dream," speech.*

# Cape Wind submits revised permit application to District for wind turbine proposal

*Continued from page 1*

The electricity produced by each turbine will be transmitted via a 33 kilovolt submarine transmission cable system to the Electric Service Platform centrally located within the turbine array. The electricity will then be transmitted to the mainland via two 115 kilovolt alternating current submarine cable circuits, making landfall at New Hampshire Avenue in Yarmouth.

Several changes to the project proposal have occurred since the original permit application and the previous public notice. The configuration and location of the turbines have changed slightly and the construction method for landfall transition has been modified to include a temporary cofferdam. In 2004, the state territorial boundary expanded further seaward in this area of Nantucket Sound. Ten of the original turbine locations were within these newly designated state waters. The proposed locations for 20 other turbines have changed to avoid archeologically sensitive areas, potential impacts to commercial fishermen, and to reduce the potential for impacts to commercial marine navigation. Rock armouring is now proposed as an alternative to the scour mats at the base of the turbine monopole foundations, if needed.

The lighting plan has been developed consistent with the Federal Aviation Administration guidance that was issued in November 2005. The landfall transition of the 115 kilovolt submarine transmission lines from water to land at Yarmouth

will be through the use of horizontal directional drilling (HDD) to avoid disturbance of the shoreline. A temporary cofferdam will be installed at the seaward end of the HDD borehole. The steel sheetpile cofferdam will enclose an area of approximately 2,925 square feet with dimensions of 65 feet wide and 45 feet long. It will open at one end to allow the installation of the conduits.

A temporary turbidity curtain may be used to confine sediments within the work area, if needed. Approximately 840 cubic yards of sediments will be temporarily removed, stored on a barge, and backfilled after the installation is completed. Clean sand will be used to supplement the backfill material as needed to restore the seafloor to preconstruction grade.

The application for the federal permit was filed with the Corps of Engineers in compliance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, which regulates the discharge or fill of material in United States waters, including wetlands; and with Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act, which provides for federal regulation of any work in, or affecting navigable waters of the United States. The revised public notice can be reviewed on-line at the Corps web site <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil>. Select Regulatory/Permitting and then weekly public notices.

Public comments referencing this revised permit request were accepted through Feb. 21.

## Corps of Engineers closes web page on its draft EIS, environmental review of Cape Wind proposal

by Timothy Dugan  
Public Affairs Office

As Minerals Management Service (MMS) proceeds with its development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Cape Wind wind farm proposal in Nantucket Sound, Mass., the Corps of Engineers has closed its web page with its own draft EIS and other materials on the wind farm proposal that were developed prior to MMS taking over as lead federal agency of the environmental review.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 provided for Minerals Management Service to develop a program for leasing offshore areas for renewable energy projects. This made MMS the lead federal agency responsible for the environmental review of the Cape Wind proposal.

All Corps of Engineers environmental review materials, including its draft EIS, were provided to MMS for their use in preparation of an EIS of the Cape Wind proposal to place wind turbines in Nantucket Sound.

The Corps of Engineers is a cooperating agency in the environmental

review of the wind farm proposal and will rely on the Minerals Management Service as the lead federal agency to address the comments that were made in the Corps draft EIS as MMS completes the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Corps will still conduct a Section 10 permit review once MMS completes the Final EIS. Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act provides for federal regulation of any work in, or affecting navigable waters of the United States.

# Water Control Branch Lunch -- A Holiday Tradition

By William Mullen  
Engineering/Planning

For the past six or seven years, several civil engineers who were members of what formerly was known as the Water Control Branch of the then New England Division meet annually at the Colonial Inn in Concord, Mass., for a luncheon reunion.

The reunions are held either in the week of Thanksgiving or, as was the case this year, in the week before Christmas, depending on when its organizer, Dick DiBuono, is up from Alexandria, Va., to visit his family. Participants often include Corps retirees - Larry Bergen, Dick DiBuono, Joe Finegan, Bob Mirick, and Chuck Wener, and active employees Townsend Barker and Bill Mullen.

The senior member of the group is Bob Mirick, an octogenarian and veteran of World War II. Former branch secretary-extraordinaire Marge Cotter has graced their reunions on one or two occasions.

Very little reminiscing is done, for this group is intent on

dealing with the present - most conversation is focused on each other's active lives and on their families. Good food, good drink and good fellowship are plentiful at these events. DiBuono invites other members of the NED Water Control Branch - active and retired - to contact him if they would like to join in these reunions via e-mail at [rjdibuono@aol.com](mailto:rjdibuono@aol.com).



*l. to r.: Bill Mullen, Joe Finegan, Dick DiBuono, Chuck Wener, Larry Bergen and Bob Mirick.*

## Stop talking and start doing...

*Continued from page 3*

into subsequent years and these funds will accrue.

As our unexecuted backlog of work grows, Congress could move to reduce new project funding and once this trend starts, we will be hard pressed to reverse it.

So back to where I began, declining workload has been a topic of considerable discussion within the District, now the trend is upward.

We must "stop talking and start doing" or we risk a return to our past downward trend. Each of us must ask: what can I do to help improve this year's execution?

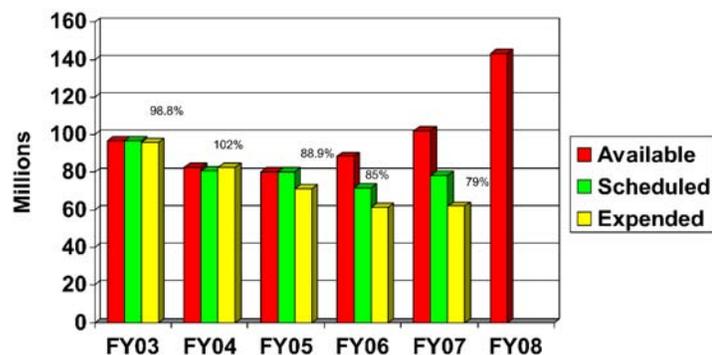
We have an opportunity to show we can handle a larger program, but now we must de-

liver.

Thank you all in advance, for your efforts to achieve improved obligation

rates and project delivery. Essayons!

### Civil Works Program



FY08 amount includes \$22M already obligated  
FY07 expenditure 79% but performance tracked was obligation which was 93%



Dave Goodrich, Greg Penta and Bobby Byrne work on the tabletop holiday quiz.

Holiday baskets were auctioned off at the holiday party.



Photos by C.J. Allen

Above: The holiday limbo was popular among attendees. Right: District employees partake of catered lunch. Holiday party attendees get ready for the hula hoop contest.

## District celebrates the holidays in the tropics

With New England covered in a heavy blanket of snow over the holiday season, the District Holiday Party Committee decided to inspire dreams of a warmer climate with a tropical theme to this year's festivities. Resource Management and Contracting headed this year's event.

The District Tropical Holiday party took place on Dec. 19 in the Concord Park cafeteria. Over 160 District team members, retirees and members of the U.S. Army Medic Unit CBHCO gathered for the event.

Party goers were greeted at the door with leis and enjoyed a catered lunch of Chinese food by the Great Wall Restaurant in Bedford, Mass., amidst palm trees and island music.

Col. Curtis Thalken, New England District Commander, talked about all of the successes the New England District enjoyed throughout 2007, and then went back into the history

of the snowy freezing winters Gen. George Washington and his Colonial Army faced at Valley Forge. "They had the courage and fortitude to withstand those extreme conditions and carry on in their quest for liberty and freedom of a new nation," he said. "We can be proud that the Corps of Engineers has its roots in that Army and continues to do great things for the nation since then and up to the present day."

The Holiday Committee, in keeping with their tropical theme, had many fun activities lined up for attendees to enjoy which included karaoke, a limbo contest, table side holiday quizzes, a hula hoop contest, dessert contest, and holiday basket auction.

Retirees who attended the holiday party included Distinguished Civilian Gallery Member Buzz MacDonald, Marie Pinede, Yuri Yatesvitch, Forrest Knowles, Frank Keefe, Rick Santino, Bob Batt and Joe Bocchino.

## Corps proposes plan to widen section of Aberjona River to reduce flooding in downtown Winchester

The New England District is proposing a plan that would widen a section of the Aberjona River to reduce flooding in the downtown area of Winchester, Mass.

The Corps has completed the draft decision document and Environmental Assessment of the Aberjona River Flood Control Study. The town of Winchester is the non-federal project sponsor. Major floods have occurred in the Aberjona River basin nine times since 1936. The most recent one was in 2001.

“A particularly severe flood in October 1996 was caused by a large rainfall following a period of wet conditions, and the area received a Presidential Disaster Declaration as a result of the flooding,” said Project Manager Robert Russo, of the Corps’ New England District, Engineering/Planning Division. “Numerous homes, the high school and Winchester’s retail/business downtown area were damaged by flooding from the Aberjona River.”

Although there are many flood problem reaches throughout the town, the downtown Winchester retail/business reach was the only area that the Corps of Engineers could address under its authorities. This reach contains more than 50 commercial, public and residential structures, which together contain about 180 businesses as well as the town hall, the town fire and DPW buildings, a senior center, Winchester High School, and a post office.

To reduce the flood impacts to the community, the Corps is proposing that 1,200 feet of the Aberjona River channel be widened from about 20 feet to 39 feet. “The widening will extend 1,200 feet downstream of Waterfield Road Bridge and terminate just beyond the existing USGS Winchester gage,” Russo said. “The widened reach runs along the Mystic Valley Parkway.”

The channel widening would involve the excavation of approximately 12,000 cubic yards of riverbank material, mostly along the left bank of the Aberjona River. Along both sides of the river an existing granite block retaining wall would be removed and replaced with a bioengineered stabilization slope.

At the location where the Mystic Valley Parkway is closest to the river, a 4-foot high, 850 linear foot modular concrete wall would be constructed adjacent to the parkway to support the embankment. A sidewalk along the Mystic

Valley Parkway would be relocated away from the widened river and be placed along the parkway.

The channel’s existing low (summer) flow depth would be maintained by a 20-foot wide channel which would step up 2 feet into the new flood conveyance widened channel. The channel would be planted with herbaceous species, shrubs, and (at higher elevations) trees.



*Aberjona River raging through a Winchester bridge during April 2006 flood. (Photo by Bill Mullen)*

In addition to flood damage reduction, the recommended plan would increase vegetated riparian habitat, and remove an obstruction (USGS gauging station weir) which causes backwater ponding within a 1,200-foot section of the river. Anticipated long-term adverse impacts include the partial loss of riparian canopy along the river, and partial loss of landscaped parkland and parking spaces along the Mystic Valley Parkway.

The following alternatives were also considered as solutions as part of this study’s alternative analysis process. Nonstructural alternatives included relocating flood prone structures, land treatment, pre-flood measures, and no action. Structural alternatives included flood flow bypass, upstream flood storage potential, channel modifications, and earthen dike and floodwalls. “With the exception of channel modifications, all of the flood reduction alternatives investigated during the study process were either found to be impractical or prohibitively expensive,” Russo said.

No impacts to state or federally threatened or endangered species are expected. Historic and archeological resource surveys will be conducted during the plans and specifications phase of the project. Impacts to significant historic, architectural and archaeological properties, including the Mystic Valley Parkway, will be addressed at that time. “Construction is projected to occur in 2009,” Russo said. “The work is expected to take up to four months to complete.” A private contractor under contract to the Corps of Engineers would perform the work.

Copies of the draft Decision Document and Environmental Assessment and the public notice also are available on the Corps web site at: <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil>. Select “projects” and “Local Flood Protection Project Aberjona River, Winchester, Mass.” Public comments on this proposed flood damage reduction project were accepted through Feb. 19. (*New England District Press Release*)

# Dredging up the past . . .



*The head dam operators of the Merrimack River Basin pose for a photo during the annual Dam Operators Conference in this Nov. 5, 1970 photo.*

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