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New England District

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Great Salt Pond in Rhode Island.

Photo provided by Mike Walsh

Corps proposes maintenance dredging of portions of the Block Island Great Salt Pond Federal Navigation Project

by **Timothy Dugan**
Public Affairs

At the request of the town of New Shoreham, the New England District is proposing to perform maintenance dredging of portions of the Great Salt Pond Federal Navigation Project on Block Island, Rhode Island.

The proposed work involves maintenance dredging of portions of the 18-foot-deep Mean Lower Low Water

(MLLW) entrance channel to the Great Salt Pond Federal Navigation Project.

“Natural shoaling processes have reduced available depths to as little as 3.5 feet Mean Lower Low Water in the entrance channel,” said Project Manager Michael Walsh. “There is a particularly hazardous shoal at the eastern, or inner, end of the entrance channel, which is making navigation to and from the pond hazardous at all stages of the tide.”

The Corps is pursuing the option of an expedited dredging effort focused on removing that shoal down to approximately 12.0 feet below MLLW using the Corps’ special purpose dredge CURRITUCK. Maintenance dredging of up to approximately 29,000 cubic yards of sand from the most hazardous shoal within the authorized project area will restore the project to reasonably safe conditions. The work is expected

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Yankee Voices

Bill Scully, Programs/Project Management
and retiree Richard Santino



Congratulations

...to **Brian Waz** of Engineering/Planning and his wife, **Tracy**, on the birth of their son, **Reed Anthony**, on Dec 29. He joins brothers **Cole** and **Hart** in the family circle.

Sympathy

... to **Bill McIntyre**, Construction/Operations, on the passing of his mother, **Theodora G. McIntyre**, Dec. 6.

...to **Santos Lara, Sr.**, Construction/Operations, and his wife, **Lesley**, on the passing of her father, **Robert Stevens**, Dec. 22.

Words worth repeating

Keep your heart open for as long as you can, as wide as you can, for others and especially for yourself.

- *Morrie Schwartz*

Foods and Meds that don't mix

Rozelle Dingle, a clinical pharmacist and the Henry Ford Hospital, says that many foods interact negatively with prescription medications and can cause serious complications. Here are some general guidelines, but it's still a good idea to talk to your doctor or pharmacist for more information:

Combination: diuretics and salt

Problem: Can cause the body to lose potassium and magnesium and can lead to dangerous heart rhythms.

Combination: Blood thinners and foods rich in Vitamin K, such as asparagus and spinach

Problem: Can inhibit the blood thinner, leading to blood clotting and raising the risk of heart attack or stroke.

Combination: Blood thinners and onions or garlic

Problem: Can increase the effect of blood thinners, causing excessive bleeding.

Combination: Antibiotics and caffeine, tomatoes, or fruit juices

Problem: Can increase acid in the stomach and decrease effectiveness of the drug.

Combination: Antidepressants and monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitors and aged cheese, wine, or sour cream

Problem: Can cause headaches, vomiting, and potentially lethal rise in blood pressure. (*Ideas Unlimited*)

Warning signs of hypothermia

During cold weather, it's important to watch out for the signs of hypothermia, a dangerous condition that occurs when the body temperature falls so low that it impairs physical and mental functioning. Some symptoms are what you might expect—complaints about being cold or uncontrolled shivering—but others are not so obvious. The Mayo Clinic advises watching for impaired or slurred speech, blurry vision, and clumsy movements. In severe cases, hypothermia can cause stiff muscles, dark and puffy skin, irregular heart rate and breathing, and unconsciousness. If you think someone might be suffering from hypothermia, take him or her to a warm, dry place and call for medical attention immediately. (*Ideas Unlimited*)

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Commander's Corner:

Resolve to stay safe in the new year

by Col. Philip T. Feir
District Commander



Now that the New Year has started I want to ensure that we are all putting the requisite emphasis on safety standards in everything we do and in all activities we supervise. Since becoming your District Commander I've witnessed a rash of safety-related incidents at our operations and construction field offices/sites, many of which could have been prevented in my opinion.

This trend has me very concerned. Most of our accidents start with an unsafe act or behavior, and though a good number of them aren't recordable, many of them are – too many. Risk Management needs to be our watchword and the fundamental process we consistently employ when conducting business, especially if we ever plan to evolve from a good to great organization.

I understand that accidents can happen even when

requisite precautions are taken, but statistically these mishaps comprise but a small percentage of the total number of incidents that occur annually. Approximately 85-percent of all accidents are preventable and result from human error, and it's this "human" aspect about which I want you to focus your attention. It is the one thing we can totally control and will have the greatest impact on reducing our accidents. Both management and employees have roles and responsibilities in accident prevention. Supervisors must ensure that the workforce is properly trained, procedures are in place to safeguard personnel, and that every employee is provided the necessary tools to perform his/her tasks safely. Each supervisor needs to be a leader, assume the role of risk manager for the office, and ensure that established standards are being enforced. Employees must follow the established procedures and regulations, and use required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when completing certain tasks.

In the vast majority of accidents involving government personnel, the person causing the accident could have prevented it from happening. Thus, I beseech you ... before setting out to accomplish any task, slow down, think about what you're doing, and then take action. Prior to the start of

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Remembering the fallen

President-elect Barack Obama and Vice President-elect Joe Biden observe a moment of silence while laying a wreath with the assistance of Sgt. 1st Class Alfred Lanier of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, Jan. 18. President-elect Obama is taking part in inaugural events leading up to his swearing-in ceremony on Jan. 20. (Photo by Sgt. Jeremy Kern, U.S. Army)



Photos by C.J. Allen

Ruth Ann Brien decides which basket looks best during the WE Committee's gift basket auction.



Will Pumyea and Carol Charette get ready to show Charette's "Elf" presentation.

The New England District celebrated the holiday season with food, music, fun and giving.

A nighttime holiday celebration was held Dec. 4 at the Officer's Club, Hanscom Air Force Base. About 50 District team members, family and retirees, and members of the Community Based Health Care Organization (CBHCO) joined Col. Philip T. Feir, New England District Commander, and his family, and Deputy District Commander Lt. Col. Stephen and Mrs. Shelly Lefebvre for an evening of delicious hot appetizers, music and lots and lots of dancing.

The District's daytime holiday party was held on Dec. 17. The Concord Park Cafeteria was transformed into a winter wonderland with seasonal decorations and music. Nearly 150 attendees feasted on a catered Italian buffet lunch and played games and seasonal trivia at their tables as they munched.

For those looking for a unique holiday gift or just something for themselves, the Work Environment Committee auctioned off gift baskets donated by various offices in the District. The proceeds went to the WE Committee to fund the multiple events they hold throughout the year.

One of the highlight of this year's daytime party was a presentation created by Carol Charette specifically for the event. Her "Elf Yourself" dance creations featuring the heads of key senior staff and District team members on dancing elves brought roars of laughter from the audience.

The fun and merrymaking of the holiday season could not hide the cold, harsh fact that the economy was not in good shape. However, harder times did not stop the New England District and CBHCO teams from helping those less fortunate than themselves, especially the children. In the spirit of giving, the teams donated nearly 300 toys – a record breaker for the District – to Toys for Tots. The U.S. Marines, who picked up the toys on Dec. 19, reported to organizers Jerry Nunziato and Janet Brayden that the District's donation was the largest single local donation they received in 2008.

Judy Antonellis, Cathy LeBlanc, Dave Goodrich, Heather Sullivan, Greg Penta and Carol Charette headed the organization of the holiday parties for lead division, Programs/Project Management. Retirees who attended this year's festivities were Joe Bocchino, Fran Donovan, Lynne Bleakney, and Richard Santino.



Photo by Jerry Nunziato

Janet Brayden and Col. Philip T. Feir load up a record number of toy donations for Toys for Tots.

Terry Wong retires with over 31 years of service

Engineering/Planning's Terry Wong has decided to join the retirement community after 31 years of federal service. Following a lunch, over 60 friends, family, co-workers and retirees gathered in the New England District's Concord Park theatre for an awards presentation, Dec. 23, honoring his distinguished career.

Francis Fung served as Master of Ceremonies, and welcomed the audience. Lt. Col. Stephen Lefebvre presented Wong with the Commander's Award for Civilian Service, a Bunker Hill plaque, and his retirement certificate and pin.

Other speakers who presented at Wong's retirement ceremony were Farrell McMillan and Siamac Vaghar. During the awards ceremony, Wong received a GPS navigation system and a leather travel bag as a gift from attendees.

Wong joined the New England Division in 1977 after working four years for the Massachusetts Department of Public Works. With the exception of a brief stint in Regulatory, Wong served all his career with Engineering/Planning. "From the beginning of his career with the Corps, he demonstrated a keen eye and special interest in dams," said Anthony Firicano. "He built upon this foundation by gaining in-depth



Mrs. Wong fastens Terry Wong's retirement pin on his shirt during his retirement ceremony.

knowledge and experience with all the New England District flood control projects over the years. Within the Geotechnical Engineering Section, Terry's expertise and institutional

knowledge of the District dams have been a most valuable and reliable source of reference and information for the Dam Safety Program."

According to Firicano, for the flood control projects' personnel, Wong has often been the first point of contact on geotechnical matters and questions related to their structures and operations. "He has instructed and mentored an entire generation of New England District geotechnical engineers and project personnel in all aspects of dam engineering and monitoring, and his contributions to the District's Dam Safety Program will be an example for other engineers to follow for many years to come," he said.

Wong's wife and daughter attended the event. Retirees that came to the ceremony were Phil Durgin, Yuri Yatsevitch, and Bill Saner. Former District employee Marie Wojtas also traveled to Concord Park to wish Wong well.



Photos by Mark McInerney

Terry Wong joins family and friend Francis Fung in showing off his awards.

Ceremony marks Forbes retirement

Story and photo by Don Wood
Engineering/Planning

Nick Forbes of Engineering/Planning Division retired on Jan. 3, with over 34 years of exceptional service with the New England District Corps of Engineers.

In an informal ceremony held in the Engineering/Planning chief's office on Dec. 23, Forbes was presented with his retirement certificate and the Commanders Award for Civilian Service by Deputy District Commander, Lt. Col. Stephen Lefebvre. Farrell McMillan, Chief, Engineering/Planning, Tony Firicano Branch Chief, and several of his co-workers and friends also attended the ceremony.

Forbes began his career as a hydraulic engineer in the Reservoir Control Center part of the Water Control Branch in May 1974. Following over 17 years of dedicated service managing and orchestrating Reservoir Regulation activities throughout New England, he was selected as project manager and dam safety coordinator in the Engineering Management Branch in 1991.

Responsible for the execution of the District's dam safety programs, Forbes managed as well as supervised

multi-disciplined teams performing dam safety inspections of our dams, coordinated Dam Safety assurance studies leading to the construction of major improvements such as concrete cutoff walls at West Hill Dam and Hodges Village Dam, and various other programs insuring dam safety integrity of our dam infrastructure.

Since that time, his position evolved to the Dam Safety Program Manager in the Engineering/Planning Division where he provided valuable service for both the District and North Atlantic Division.

Forbes has represented the New England District many times at National Dam Safety conferences over the years where he gave presentations associated with his programs to other Corps offices. Nick has served as an officer in the National Federation of Federal Employees while here and also been active in the Boston Society of Civil Engineers.



(from left) Tony Firicano, Lt. Col. Stephen Lefebvre, and Nick Forbes at Forbes' retirement ceremony.

'Jack of all trades' Turner retires with over 32 years of federal service

Friends, coworkers and family members gathered in the Col. Richard Gridley Conference Room, Dec. 19, to honor the career of Frank Turner, Engineering/Planning, who retired from federal service with over 32 years.

About 20 people to include Col. Philip T. Feir, New England District Commander, Lt. Col. Stephen Lefebvre, Deputy District Commander, retiree Bill Holtham and Turner's wife, Pam, attended the low key event.

Col. Feir called Turner a "Jack of all Trades," who went on a number of deployments for hurricane relief over the years. "On behalf of the District, thank you for all that you've done," said Col. Feir. "Everyone in the room will miss you."

Dave Descoteaux, Engineering/Planning, served as Master of Ceremonies for the ceremony. He summarized Turner's career from his work with the Veterans Administration (VA) to his communications work at the District. Descoteaux also mentioned Turner's expertise with fix-it jobs around the house.

"Frank was the go-to guy for home improvement advice," said Descoteaux. "His information was especially helpful after the Dec. 11, 2008 ice storm."



Frank Turner in a 1990's photo.

Descoteaux said that Turner had jumped into work on dam sites, the Stamford Hurricane Barrier, and then on the District's radio network toward the latter part of his career to include the needed communication licenses that the District currently uses. "We're going to miss him sorely," he said.

Col. Feir presented Turner with a Commander's Award for Civilian Service in gratitude for his faithful years of service to the federal government. Col. Feir also presented him with his retirement certificate as Mrs. Turner fastened the retirement pin on her husband's shirt.

Other speakers included Robert Russo, who talked about working with Turner both at the VA and at the New England District. Russo concluded his presentation by wishing Turner luck in his retirement.

Turner said it was nice that so many people attended his ceremony, given the impending snow storm that would start soon after the event's conclusion. "I loved coming to work every day," he said. "I've had a lot of good feelings working here and not just because of the people. I really liked the work."

Turner plans to spend the winter portions of his retirement "up in ski country," and urged his friends and coworkers to keep in touch.

Information you may want when thinking about retiring

If you are preparing to retire, please note the Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C) strongly recommends submitting your retirement application package within 90-120 days of your intended retirement date. Your early submission will help to ensure a timely receipt of your first annuity payment from the OPM. If you submit your retirement package to the ABC-C with less than 60 days notice, you should be financially prepared for a delay in receipt of your first annuity payment. Although there are circumstances which may cause a delay in an application submission, the ABC-C strives to complete all packages expeditiously. However, employees are encouraged to follow the ABC-C's 90-120 day recommendation whenever possible to help achieve a smooth financial transition into retirement. For more information on retirement, visit the ABC-C web site at <https://www.abc.army.mil>.

Are you aware there is a five year rule for continuing health benefits into retirement? To continue healthcare

coverage after retirement, an employee must have been continuously enrolled in a plan for the five years of service immediately preceding retirement. This rule also applies for the coverage of family members and coverage by a plan does not mean the same plan for the duration of the five years. If you want to continue your federal health benefits coverage after you retire, you must remain covered in a plan within the program until you retire. If you are not enrolled in the program currently, consider acquiring coverage now if you are interested in having the coverage after you retire. For more information go to <http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/> (taken from the HR Newsletter)

If you are planning to retire and would like to receive a hard copy edition of the New England District's newsletter, the YANKEE ENGINEER, please contact Ann Marie Harvie at Annmarie.r.harvie@usace.army.mil. The online version of the Yankee Engineer and past issues can be found at <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/news/yankee.htm>.

Massachusetts agency issues ice safety precautions

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) has issued information regarding safety precautions to be taken on our frozen lakes, rivers and ponds.

“Before we experience a tragedy that is unfortunately too common this time of year, it is important that we remind everyone, particularly children, of the dangers of unsafe ice,” said MEMA Director Don Boyce. “Lakes, ponds, streams and rivers throughout the Commonwealth have begun to freeze over, however, the temperature continues to fluctuate above and below freezing, making ice conditions very uncertain. People may be a bit impatient to venture out on the ice for skating, hockey, ice fishing and other winter sports. We highly recommend the use of recreational skating areas provided by your local communities. It is very important to exercise precaution and common sense.”

Always check with your local police, fire or park department to ensure that safe ice conditions exist. However, due to the uncertainty of ice conditions and the dangers presented, many departments will not endorse the safety of lakes, ponds, streams or rivers. The strength and thickness of ice should be known before any activity takes place.

Ice Safety Tips

- Never go onto the ice alone. A friend may be able to rescue you or go for help if you fall through the ice.
- Always keep your pets on a leash. If a pet falls through the ice do not

attempt to rescue your pet, go for help.

- New ice is usually stronger than old ice. As ice ages, the bond between the crystals decays, making it weaker, even if melting has not occurred.

- Beware of ice covered with snow.



Winter in New England can be as dangerous as it is beautiful. Use caution near waterways.

Snow can insulate ice and keep it strong, but can also insulate it to keep it from freezing. Snow can also hide cracks, weak and open ice.

- Slush is a danger sign, indicating that ice is no longer freezing from the bottom and can be weak or deteriorating.

- Ice formed over flowing water (rivers or lakes containing a large number of springs) is generally 15 percent weaker.

- Ice seldom freezes or thaws at a uniform rate. It can be one foot thick in one spot and be only one inch thick 10 feet away.

- Reach-Throw-Go. If a companion falls through the ice and you are unable to reach that person from shore, throw them something (rope, jumper cables, tree branch, etc.). If this does not work, go for help before you also become a victim. Get medical assis-

tance for the victim immediately.

- If you fall in, try not to panic. Turn toward the direction from which you came. Place your hands and arms on the unbroken surface, working forward by kicking your feet. Once out, remain lying on the ice (do not stand) and roll away from the hole. Crawl back to your tracks, keeping your weight distributed until you return to solid ice.

By following safety procedures, you can be safe and enjoy the many winter activities offered by the great outdoors.

(Sources: Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Army Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory, Colorado

State Parks Department, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources)

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is the state agency responsible for coordinating federal, state, local, voluntary and private resources during emergencies and disasters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

MEMA provides leadership to: develop plans for effective response to all hazards, disasters or threats; train emergency personnel to protect the public; provide information to the citizenry; and assist individuals, families, businesses and communities to mitigate against, prepare for, and respond to and recover from emergencies, both natural and man made. For additional information about MEMA and Winter Preparedness, go to the MEMA website at <http://www.mass.gov/mema>.

(MEMA Press Release)

Commander's Column:

Resolve to stay safe in the new year

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an activity, take the time to plan out how you aim to complete each task(s), identify associated hazards, and then implement controls to reduce the risk involved in completing the mission. This could be as simple as stopping one's vehicle at a gated structure, waiting for an exiting vehicle to clear the gate prior to moving forward safely, instead of continuing to move forward in an effort to squeeze by the other vehicle and wind up striking an adjacent post – an immovable object I might add. In this case unnecessary risk was taken; the benefit of reaching one's destination a little sooner clearly failed to outweigh the cost associated with striking the post and damaging the vehicle – let alone taking a chance of inflicting personal injury.

We need to apply the principles of Risk Management to all of our service and construction contracts as well, whether procured via small purchase procedures or credit card – both of which are administered by our local project offices. We need to ensure that a risk assessment for all planned work is completed and that controls are put in place, both individually and by our contractors, to minimize risk. Where applicable, one should plan on attending

weekly contractor safety meetings where work hazards and controls are discussed. It is our responsibility to perform periodic checks on our contractors to ensure they are working safely and remain in compliance with the contract itself.

If a contractor is not working according to established safety standards, it is our responsibility to take action to enforce these safety requirements. This may include requiring the contractor to stop work if the situation is imminently dangerous to life or health. For example, a contractor working on a roof without employing some form of fall protection is in clear violation of our mandated safety standards, and we should take immediate action to remedy the situation.

My objective here is not to assign blame for accidents; rather it is to heighten awareness and keep you and your co-workers safe. Unsafe acts have the tendency to hurt not only the offender, but innocent bystanders as well. How would you feel if your act caused an injury to one of your co-workers? Safety is a team endeavor and we must all look out for one another. However, the person with the greatest ability to prevent accidents is the person

staring back at you in the mirror! If the actions you take cause an accident, are you willing to be held accountable? If the answer is no, then maybe it's time to take a step back and reassess how you plan to go about achieving your objectives. You are not alone; our Safety Office is a valuable resource that can provide you with great guidance and assistance, and will help you get every job done safely. If you need assistance, please don't hesitate to contact them as they work for all of us.

In conclusion, we need to be smart about how we execute our mission in these trying times of reduced budgets and resources, and more importantly we need to be focused on safety at all times in order to get every job done right. Make sure you are well trained in every aspect of your job, know what's required to get the job done, be situationally aware, and always do the right thing.

If you apply Risk Management to everything you do, I can never fault you for any accidents that occur, but fail to apply Risk Management factors properly, and we all suffer the consequences. Take ownership of everything happening within your purview.

BUILDING STRONG!



Going home for the holidays

The MAYFLOWER II under tow by the Tug JAGUAR and escort Canal Patrol Boat CATAUMET (not seen) makes its way through the Cape Cod Canal to New Bedford, Mass., for maintenance after closing to the public for the season on Christmas Eve., Dec. 24. (Photo by Kevin Burke)

Corps proposes maintenance dredging of portions of the Great Salt Pond Federal navigation project

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to take two to three weeks to accomplish in the year or years in which funds become available, contingent upon availability of necessary approvals.

The dredged material has undergone physical analysis, in coordination with state and federal resource agencies. The dredged material is clean sand, and the Corps has determined that it is suitable for unconfined open-water disposal.

The material will be placed at a near-shore disposal site in sub-tidal water on the west side of the island, either adjacent to Charleston Beach or adjacent to Sachem Pond. Both of these disposal sites provide the benefits of keeping the clean sand material within the beach system as well as accommodating use of the Currituck.

The last complete maintenance dredging was performed in 1982, with previous dredging projects occurring in 1972 and 1963. Emergency dredging efforts were performed in 2000 and 2004, in which 12,250 and 9,970 cubic yards of material respectively were removed from a hazardous shoal area and disposed of at the near-shore disposal site located off Charleston Beach on the west side of the island.

Alternative disposal options that have been considered include open-ocean disposal, beach disposal, and upland disposal. The Corps favors the near-shore disposal option because it keeps the sand dredged from the Great Salt Pond channel within the littoral sediment transport system, and will accommodate the Currituck. The proximity of the proposed near-shore disposal sites to the dredging area renders these alternatives cost-effective.

The project may have a temporary adverse effect on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). The Corps has assessed the effects dredging is likely to have on EFH and has determined that they will be short-term and localized and that there will be no significant impacts on the designated fisheries resources. The Corps will consult with the NOAA Fisheries and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that all impacts will be minimized.

The Environmental Assessment for this work will be available for review. Preliminary indications are that there are no threatened or endangered species in the dredging area. However, several threatened and endangered species have the potential to occur near the proposed disposal areas. The Corps will consult with NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that the proposed activity will not significantly affect any species or critical habitat designated as endangered or threatened.

The proposed work is being coordinated with: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; NOAA Fisheries; Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council; Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management; Rhode Island Historic Preservation & Heritage Commission; and the town of New Shoreham Harbor Master and New Shoreham Town Manager.

The public notice for this proposed work is available for review on the Corps website at <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil>. Select "public services" and then "navigation" and then "public notices." Public comments on this proposal were received through Jan. 22.

Joint public hearings held on Algonquin Gas Transmission plan

by **Timothy Dugan**
Public Affairs

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District conducted joint public hearings on the Algonquin Gas Transmission, LLC proposal on Dec. 10, in Stoughton, Mass., and on Dec. 11 in Norwich, Conn.

Algonquin is seeking a permit from the Corps to place fill material in wetlands and waterways in Massachusetts and Connecticut in conjunction with the expansion of its existing 1,100-mile-long natural gas transmission pipeline system in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and New Jersey. There is no wetland work in the other states; however, the environmental review addresses the entire pipeline expansion.

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the

proposal is being prepared by FERC. The Corps is a cooperating agency. The project, referred to as the Hubline/East to West Project (E2W project), would involve the construction and operation of new and replacement pipeline, one new compressor station, and modifications to three existing compressor stations. The project purpose is to accommodate increased receipts of natural gas from emerging natural gas supplies, including liquefied natural gas, at the east end of the Algonquin system, for redelivery to high growth markets in the Northeast Region. Work is proposed in waterways and wetlands in Bristol and Norfolk counties in Massachusetts and New London County in Connecticut. The project will have temporary impacts to 59.85 acres of wetland, permanent conversion of 4.44 acres of wetlands, and permanent wetland fill of 0.156 acres.

Comments to FERC on the Draft EIS were accepted through Dec. 29.

District Base Development Team provides worldwide support to nation

You don't hear much about them. They don't wear special uniforms or carry any sort of weapons. They do not deploy to far off lands, but the work that they do quietly, almost anonymously, affects our Armed Forces personnel around the world.

They are the New England District's Base Development Team (BDT), one of eight in the Corps, part of the Corps Reach Back System that enables military forces around the globe to access engineering and technical expertise from the world's premier engineering organization.

"The team plays an important part in supporting the Army's engineers, commanders, and units in the field," said Deputy Team Leader and Deputy District Commander Stephen Lefebvre. "They are a great reach back resource."

Established in 2002, the NAE BDT, currently made up of 19 people, is headed by Team Leader Mike Walsh. The team is activated every eight weeks for a seven day period by the Reach Back Center located in Mobile, Ala., that receives requests for information (RFI) from forward operating units all over the world in various theatres of operations.

"I'll get either a phone call or an e-mail from the reach back center telling me there is an RFI on either the secured or non-secured website," said Walsh. "I'll go in, read the request and figure out what disciplines I need and who are going to work on it. Then I get an estimated cost for the reachback center to fund our effort. Sometimes I'll come up with an initial estimate myself to get things going and revise it later as needed."

The RFIs received by the BDT vary greatly in size and time needed to come up with a design product. They could be as small as designing a pipe to larger construction projects. "Some are just four hours of work for one person," said Walsh. "But some are longer. Our last RFI took about 120 work hours to complete."

That last effort was a rehabilitation effort of a bombed out building overseas to be used for office space. "We designed the roof, floor, windows, doors, air conditioning, and power in the building," said Walsh. "It took us about two weeks, a pretty quick turn around, and we sent them everything they needed electronically so they could put it through a contractor and have it built."

The customer, Capt. Cory Hocksema, was pleased with the product he received. "You and your team did an outstanding job and my construction cell and I are very appreciative of the hard work," he wrote in an e-mail, the main

way a requestor communicates with the BDT. "Thanks again for the help; you are a great resource for engineers out in the field."

Hocksema has not been the only BDT happy customer. "The team has done an outstanding job supporting requests from the field and have received positive feedback and praise from those they have supported," said Lefebvre. "The District appreciates the team members' hard work and willingness to support this vital mission."

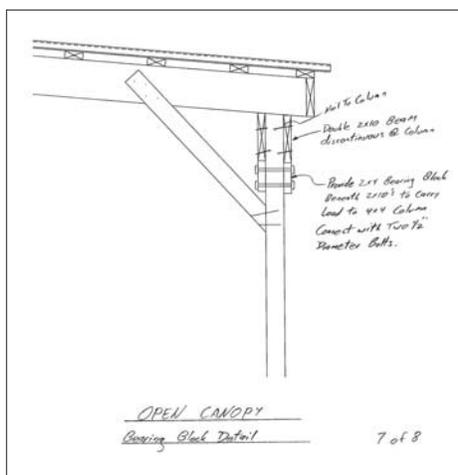
Pulling BDT members from their regular workload to perform tasks for a particular RFI, especially if regular work is time critical and the RFI is lengthy, can be a hardship for some offices. "Everyone tries to be as flexible as they can," said Walsh. "I'm always trying to bump to the head of the line on every project and I'm trying to push everything aside to respond quickly to RFIs. Almost all RFI's need a fast turn-around to adequately meet the requestor's needs. It would not work at all without a firm commitment at the Senior Leaders level to make this work."

If members of the BDT are needed for an RFI, but are not available, Walsh sometimes pulls from the pool of enormous talent of New England District employees. "I can go to anyone in the District, really," he said. "Most people seem to like working these when they can."

Although it's rare, there have been occasions when the BDT has too many RFIs or cannot find the right resources at NAE to complete a job. "Sometimes we'll just give it over to an alternate BDT," says Walsh. "We want to do a good job and we have pride in our District, it's all about serving the customer the best we can. If that means handing off the RFI, then that's what we do."

Being part of the BDT is not glamorous. There are no perks, no special awards, and no elite status. What members do get is a sense of pride and accomplishment by being able to serve their country without deploying overseas. "Right now, I'm not personally in a good position to be deployed," said Walsh. "But when I was asked four years ago to lead the BDT, I saw it as an opportunity that I could help out more than just my regular job. And the work we do really does serve a need."

Members of the BDT are Mike Walsh, Lt. Col. Stephen Lefebvre, Bob Desista, Larry Oliver, Scott Michalak, Paul Young, Mark Desouza, Brian Waz, Bob Leitch, Jack Keenan, Townsend Barker, John Winkelman, Kevin Kotelly, Alex Garneau, John Kederski, Donald Hassett, Chris Lindsay, Paul Battista, and Rachel Fisher.



An example of a drawing provided to a customer from the BDT.

Dredging up the past . . .



New England District's emergency responders help out in the Northridge Earthquake Recovery Response in this 1994 photo. Shown are (from left) Edmills, Stephen Dunbar, Heather Sullivan, Sheila Bergeron, Dan Stenstream and Peter Hugh.

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