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Building Strong®

Ribbon Cutting Marks Phase 1 Completion of Muddy River Project

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Yankee Voices

Col. Christopher Barron and Gov. Charlie Baker

Corps of Engineers recreation areas open in May

Most recreation areas at the 31 federal flood risk management reservoirs in New England operated by the New England District will open to the public in mid-to-late May 2017. Some recreation areas in Connecticut opened in late April.

Most areas offer a wide-range of recreational opportunities, including picnicking, swimming, boating, fishing and hunting, while a few also provide facilities for overnight camping, according to officials with the New England District.

For a free brochure about 2017 Corps recreational opportunities in New England, including directions to each site, write to the New England District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ATTN: Public Affairs Office, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751. For more information about Corps of Engineers recreation and activities in New England visit the website at: www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation.aspx.

(New England District press release)

Unmanned Aircraft, Drones Prohibited on Corps of Engineers Federal Lands

by Timothy Dugan, Public Affairs Office

The use of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), such as drones, are prohibited on or above federal lands and waters managed by the New England District. This prohibition applies regardless of the location of the operator.

Federal Aviation Administration definitions: An unmanned aircraft is a component of a UAS. It is defined by statute as an aircraft that is operated without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft (Public Law 112-95, Section 331(8)). U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulations 36 CFR 327.4b states: "operation of aircraft on project lands at other than those designated by the District Commander is prohibited." Persons found in violation of these regulations may be subject to criminal or civil penalties pursuant to 36 C.F.R 327.25.

No areas within the New England District's jurisdiction, including recreation sites, dams, reservoirs and the Cape Cod Canal, have been designated for drone use by the District Commander. This also includes lands under lease agreements with third parties, such as camp grounds and certain recreation areas. Any other UASs that are operating within New England District's jurisdiction have been specifically approved by the District Commander.

Why are there no designated areas for drone operation within the New England District's jurisdiction?

Safety – Drones pose a potential hazard to visitors due to malfunction or negligent operation.

Security – Drones could be used criminally against visitors or critical infrastructure.

Visitor experience – Drone noise and movements could pose a nuisance or privacy concern, and negatively impact the experience of other visitors.

There are many other opportunities to enjoy recreation at federal reservoirs and the Cape Cod Canal in New England. Most areas feature small lakes with facilities designed for day use such as picnicking, swimming, boating, fishing and hunting. A few facilities have overnight camping.

Most Army Corps-managed recreation areas are open from Memorial Day weekend through mid-September. Beaches and boat ramps are available at many reservoirs in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont. For details visit the District website at www.nae.usace.army.mil/ and select "recreation" and then your state and nearest location on the map.

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Artist's rendition of the Hanscom Primary School.

Drawing provided by J&J Contractors, Inc.

Corps of Engineers awards contract to build new Primary School on Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford

by Timothy Dugan
Public Affairs Office

A new primary school will be constructed at the Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford, Massachusetts under the terms of a $36,957,000 contract issued recently by the New England District. Work will be accomplished by J&J Contractors, Inc. of Billerica, Massachusetts. Preliminary site work is scheduled to begin in May 2017. The project will take approximately 30 months to complete. The contract was awarded on March 16.

"This project will consist of demolition of the existing primary school, the construction of a new primary school, and associated site work," said Project Manager Robert Leitch. The new primary school building will be constructed as an addition to the recently constructed Middle School building. The size of this multi-story structure will be approximately 80,000 square feet. The project will use clear span or similar construction methods to allow easier reconfiguration to meet future educational needs. Near term flexibility and adaptability will be accommodated through the use of fully integrated acoustical-rated, operable wall partitions which contribute to the engineered acoustical performance of the building.

The project will include 21st Century school concepts such as learning neighborhoods, central hubs surrounded by learning studios, flex labs, information center annex, food service area, supply areas, specialist rooms, art room, music room, commons area for dining and social networking, therapy rooms, teacher work areas, counseling areas, storage, administrative offices and other required areas for a fully functioning facility.

The project includes related infrastructure such as parking areas, mechanical rooms, delivery areas, playgrounds, and site improvements such as signage, fencing, paving, landscaping, exterior lighting and utilities. Phased construction will be required to accommodate this project without interrupting school operations. Temporary school facilities will be part of this project, as well as deconstructing and restoring the temporary site after the Primary School construction has been completed.

The Corps will manage the project and all work will be accomplished under the supervision of a Corps' Quality Assurance Representative to assure compliance with contract requirements.

Ribbon cutting marks Phase 1 completion of Muddy River Restoration project

Officials cut the ribbon marking the completion of Phase 1 of the Muddy River Restoration project. Photo by Dialo Ferguson

The simple act of cutting a ribbon marked the completion of the first phase of a significant restoration project in Boston.

Col. Christopher Barron, New England District Commander, traveled to Emmanuel College in Boston, Massachusetts to join state and local officials for a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Justine Mee Liff Park, part of the Phase 1 completion of the Muddy River Flood Risk Management Project, on April 21. The park is dedicated to Justine Mee Liff, Boston's first female (former) Parks Commissioner, who was a strong advocate for the restoration project.

Christopher Cook, Commissioner, Boston Parks and Recreation, served as narrator for the event. He welcomed the audience and introduced the speakers for the event.

In between remarks, Cook revealed a plaque dedicated to the late Mike Keegan, Project Manager of the Muddy River project. The plaque will be placed on a bench in the new park. The significance of the bench and its location is that it was where Keegan used to begin his tours for those who were interested in the progress of the construction project. Keegan's family, including his wife, Donna and two children, Briana and Christopher; his Mom, Barbara; his sisters, Kathy, Barbara, and Jackie; and other family members were at the ceremony celebrating Keegan's achievement.

Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker praised the partnerships of all involved for the successful completion of Phase 1. "This is a real collaboration between local organizations, local municipalities, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the federal government, and a whole series of interested parties," he said.

Col. Barron explained the New England District's role in the project. "As most of you know, the underpinning of this project was in response, at least from the federal perspective, to some pretty severe flooding and damage that occurred in past years along and adjacent to the Muddy River and some of the tributaries of the area," he said. "Our overall project objectives when we started out with this was to reduce the flood risk and enhance the aquatic habitats along the Muddy River. To do that, the team had to engage in some pretty imaginative engineering along the way."

Boston Mayor Martin Walsh said that the timing for the project was just right. "We're in a special time right now where there really is an investment and a feel for open space and parks, not just here in Boston but throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts," he said.

Other speakers included Secretary Matthew Beaton, Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs; Neil Wishinsky, Chairman, Brookline Board of Selectmen; Former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis; Frances Gershwin, Chair of the Muddy River Restoration Project Maintenance and Management Oversight Committee and members of the Liff family.

After the remarks, Col. Barron, Governor Baker, Mayor Walsh and other dignitaries cut the ribbon. A brief reception followed featuring photographs of the project before and after the construction. During the reception, Scott Acone, Deputy District Engineer for Programs and Project Management, presented to the Keegan Family a piece of granite with an engraved plaque, honoring Keegan's long time service to the Corps. The piece of granite came from the granite façade of the new Riverway Culvert headwall.

The Muddy River is a small waterway located in the Boston metropolitan area. Most of the 5.6 square mile watershed is located in the city of Boston and the town of Brookline, with a small portion located in the city of Newton. The 3.5 mile long Muddy River flows through the heart of Frederick Law Olmsted's famed "Emerald Necklace," one of the most carefully crafted park systems in America and the oldest remaining linear urban park system in the United States.

The project will be completed in two phases, with phase one already complete. Phase 1 is located from Riverway to Avenue Louis Pasteur. The work consisted of removal of undersized culverts with new Riverway and Brookline Avenue Culverts, daylighting of the former Sears Parking Lot and area upstream of Avenue Louis Pasteur to construct the FRM channel, removal of 2 feet of accumulated sediment from Upper Fens Pond, and the construction of the Avenue Louis Pasteur culvert extension. Construction of Phase 1 of the Muddy River project began on January 2013 and was completed in June 2016 at a cost of $35.2 million. Phase 2 is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2018 and is expected to take approximately three years to complete.

New conservation program proposed by state of Maine to protect endangered Atlantic salmon

by Jess Levenson
Public Affairs Office

The Maine Department of Marine Resources is proposing to establish and sponsor a new program mitigating harmful impacts to endangered Atlantic salmon and their habitat.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services listed the Atlantic salmon population in the Gulf of Maine as endangered on Dec. 17, 2000 and further inland on June 19, 2009.

Predation, starvation, disease, environmental degradation, and poaching led to the Fish and Wildlife Service designation. Historic and recent activities such as road and bridge maintenance and construction have further damaged the population.

The proposed Atlantic Salmon Restoration and Conservation Program can protect Maine Atlantic salmon by increasing the flexibility of permit applicants to meet requirements for compensatory mitigation.

Compensatory mitigation is the restoration, creation, enhancement, or preservation of wetlands, streams, and other aquatic resources to offset unavoidable adverse impacts, and its goal under the Endangered Species Act is no net loss of species and their habitats. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers requires mitigation to counter unavoidable adverse impacts under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899.

Section 404 provides three mechanisms for compensatory mitigation: mitigation banks, permittee-responsible mitigation, and in-lieu fee programs. The proposed Atlantic Salmon Program is an in-lieu fee program. Federal regulations recognize in-lieu fee as an option to correct shortcomings in existing mitigation techniques.

Researchers removing very young salmon bound for the Atlantic from water-powered traps in a river. (NOAA)

"It's very hard to mitigate project to project, especially for small projects, because the permittee may have difficulty finding an acceptable mitigation project that is financially feasible considering the amount of impact," said Ruth Ladd, Third-Party Mitigation Program Manager.

In-lieu fee allows permit applicants to pay a governmental or non-profit entity to satisfy compensatory mitigation requirements.

The program's sponsor sells credits to the permit applicant, and the applicant's mitigation obligation is then transferred to the sponsor. In-lieu fee unifies compensatory mitigation projects and resources to target more ecologically significant activities.

"In other words, there will be an opportunity to pool the limited funds together so we can actually do a decent project," Ladd explained.

Ladd and the New England District's Regulatory Division are currently reviewing public comments and ensuring the proposal conforms with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, and Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

"If the program is approved, Regulatory and an interagency review team will approve funding for projects and then review all project documents including deeds and easements, mitigation plans, and monitoring reports, plus make site inspections. "It's absolutely a lot of fun and very rewarding: but it's also a lot of work," added Ladd.

The decision whether to authorize the sponsor to develop a draft in-lieu fee instrument will be based on the District Engineer's determination of the agreement's potential to provide compensatory mitigation for activities authorized by Department of the Army permits and on the Fish and Wildlife Service's determination that impacts to Atlantic salmon can be adequately compensated by the Atlantic Salmon Restoration and Conservation Program.

District Rangers, Public Discuss Master Plan for Charles River Natural Valley Storage Area

Members of the New England District team gathered with the public, April 19, in Millis, Massachusetts to listen to comments on the Charles River Natural Valley Storage Area Master Plan. The Master Plan will provide guidance for future management of the project. The Master Plan was last updated in June 1984.

Photo by Jess Levenson

Joseph Zanca, Project Manager, Charles River Natural Valley Storage Area, takes questions from the audience during the Master Plan public meeting in Millis, April 19.

Approximately 41 people attended the meeting. Larry Rosenberg, Chief, Public Affairs, served as moderator at the meeting. Joseph Zanca, Project Manager, served as the presenter. "The Master Plan covers 3,229 acres of federally-owned land and 4,865 acres of restrictive flow easement throughout the Charles River Natural Valley Storage Area," he said.

During the meeting Zanca discussed project operations, master planning efforts and public involvement. Zanca, Andrew Labonte and Mark Larson took questions and comments from the audience. Thames River Basin Manager Adam Durando also attended the meeting.

According to the draft plan, the natural resources of the project will continue to be managed to provide the best combination of responses to regional and ecosystem needs, project resources and capabilities. All specific proposals for recreational or other development at the project must comply with this Master Plan, the Charles River Basin flood risk reduction requirements, the National Environmental Policy Act and federal requirements.

The draft document states that the Master Plan prescribes an overall land and water management plan, resource objectives and associated design and management concepts which provide the best possible combination to regional needs, resource capabilities and suitabilities and expressed public interests consistent with the project's authorized flood risk management purposes.

Input to the planning process included surveys and management plans for natural, wetlands and cultural resources and an analysis of recreational use, capability and project needs for project lands, according to the document. Natural and man-made resources were located, identified and analyzed, including wetlands, exemplary natural communities, and cultural resources that require management efforts for their protection.

The Charles River Natural Valley Storage Project lies throughout 16 eastern Massachusetts communities in the middle and upper areas of the Charles River. The creation of the Charles River Natural Storage Project was authorized by Congress in March 1974.

According to the draft Master Plan, federal funds of $8.3 million were used to purchase 3,210 acres of fee land and 4,891 acres of restrictive easement. The area acts as a flood risk reduction project by using the natural flood attenuation characteristics for more than 8,000 acres of protected wetlands purchased to reduce flooding.

The project has prevented approximately $11.9 million in flood damages through September 2016. The project attracts more than 60,000 visitors a year, who bike, boat, fish, hike, hunt, view wildlife and partake in other passive recreational uses.

The Master Plan is available for review at the Millis Public Library and can be accessed on the New England District's website. Comments on the Master Plan will be taken until June 15.

The New England District Ranger Color Guard pass over the Old North Bridge in Concord, Massachusetts during the town's Patriot's Day parade.

Photo by Brian Murphy

Color Guard participates in Concord Patriot's Day Parade

The annual parade to observe the beginning of the American Revolutionary War took place in Concord, Massachusetts, April 17. The celebration is one of many events in the Concord-Lexington area to mark the war that started in 1775. Members of the New England District Color Guard joined re-enactors, military, local law enforcement, bands, wreath-layers and scouts to march in the three-mile parade route that runs through the town and stops at the historic Old North Bridge for a wreath-laying ceremony before returning through town. The New England District Color Guard has been representing the New England District annually since the District moved to Concord in the late 1990's. All of the current Ranger Color Guard have been marching in the parade for many years. Jennifer Samela and Bradley Clark have been part of the Color Guard since 2007. Both feel it is important that the District be a part of the parade because of the agency's and the town's close historical ties. "There is a link due to the creation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Col. Richard Gridley as General George Washington's first Chief Engineer which stemmed from the Revolutionary War, which began in the Battle of Concord and Lexington," said Samela.

Clark agreed. "I feel this particular parade celebrates the direct connection of the beginning of our nation's independence as well as our nation's army," he said. "This parade takes place at the epicenter of this nation's fight for freedom."

Jason Robinson also has been part of the Color Guard since 2007 and took over the lead role in 2014 when Joseph Faloretti retired. He believes that the Concord Patriot's Day parade allows attendees another opportunity to see the District's Park Rangers. "The only time most people see a Corps Ranger is at a park," he said. "This is another event to get exposure for rangers and the Corps of Engineers in a positive way."

Matthew Coleman, a member of the Color Guard since 2011, said the parade is a good way to connect with the Concord community. "I feel it is important for the District, as a locally-based organization, to show support for this important community event," he said.

Samela said that the gathering of people in one place for that special, historical event is her favorite part of the parade. "It still gives me chills to watch people salute or honor the flag as we pass by," she said.

For Coleman, Clark and Robinson, marching in a parade where they pass a significant piece of history at every step, particularly going over the historic Old North Bridge, is the highlight of the event. "I have been participating in this parade for almost 10 years now and my favorite parts about the Patriot's Day parade are the spectators and the historical location," said Robinson. "I love seeing the spectators along the parade route clapping for the flag, standing at attention and saluting the flag as it passes. I also love the historical location because of a honor it is to carry the flag of our nation over the Old North Bridge where our fight for freedom began. I love the feeling of pride when we as a unit, representing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, crest the top of the Old North Bridge in step and see the crowd on the other side, all there to commemorate what happened at that place, that lead to the birth of our free nation. It really is one of the greatest parts of our job!"

Employee Spotlight
Natalie McCormack, Operations Division

Natalie McCormack is a Natural Resource Specialist in Operations Technical Support in the Concord Park Headquarters. "I serve as a primary resource and recreational management contact in Operations Division at New England District for the field Project Managers, Basin Managers and the Cape Cod Canal Manager," she said.

According to McCormack, it is her responsibility to provide consistency, clarity and direction for all Corps of Engineers Multiple-Use projects within the District. Multiple-use includes flood risk management, recreation, wildlife and natural resource management, water supply, navigation and more. "Some of what this entails includes interpretation of policy, providing direction in policy implementation, assistance with development of projects and partnerships and general review of actions for consistency with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and federal regulations," she said.

This year marks McCormack's eighth with the District. "I started my career as a seasonal Park Ranger at the Franklin Falls and Blackwater Dams in the Merrimack River Basin in 2008," she said. "I was offered a Student Career Experience Program position the following fall, and became permanent after my graduation in December 2009."

A graduate from the University of New Hampshire, McCormack holds a degree in Recreation Management and Policy Administration with a minor in Environmental Conservation. McCormack said she transitioned into her current position at the District office in the spring of 2015 on a temporary 120-day assignment, which led her to apply for the permanent opening that became available.

In addition to her other work, McCormack is a member

Photos provided by Natalie McCormack

Natalie McCormack prepares to race her vintage snowmobile.

Natalie McCormack, Operations Division.

of the Park Ranger Community of Practice Advisory Board, a national team that provides for a unified and ongoing support platform for the Corps Park Ranger. "I am also part of the local Interpretive Service Outreach Committee," she said. "The goal of this team is to communicate Corps Missions and accomplishments, achieve management objectives and foster environmental stewardship."

When asked what she enjoys most about working for New England District, she said working with her team in the Operations Division. "I am so fortunate to work with such bright, hard-working and enthusiastic people," she said. "They are what makes me excited to come to work each day. I am always impressed by their creativity, resilience and flexibility in these uncertain times."

When she's not working, McCormack trades her cubicle for the great outdoors. "I have a passion for the outdoors," she said. "I enjoy many activities such as hiking the 4,000-footers in the White Mountains of New Hampshire; skiing the many resorts across New England; fishing and boating the lakes near my home in central New Hampshire; four-wheeling and snowmobiling in the Great North Woods and just about any outdoor activity that's available in our magnificent region."

Now that the warmer weather is almost here, McCormack enjoys walking in the woods close to home. "I love searching for deer and moose sheds – antlers that have fallen off – with my two border collies, Roger and Oswald."

McCormack said since starting her career with the Corps, the agency has been required to do more with less. "Yet each day these managers and rangers go out and provide top notch services to our constituents," she said. "I am proud to say I am part of one of the best teams in the District!"

Students from the Shepherd Hill Regional High School install a Wood Duck box at Hodges Village Dam.

Photo by Nicole Giles

Students install Wood Duck boxes at Hodges Village Dam

Students from the Shepherd Hill Regional High School in Dudley, Massachusetts, participated in an environmental education program at Hodges Village Dam, Feb. 24.

Justin Sauvageau, the Environmental Science Professor at the school, reached out to the Park Rangers at Hodges Village Dam in November 2016 looking for some environmental-related projects that he could get his students involved in, according to Nicole Giles, Park Ranger at Buffumville Lake and Hodges Village Dam.

The high school seniors, all environmental science students, helped Park Rangers install five Wood Duck boxes at the dam, during the event. "The students learned about Wood Ducks and their habitat, they identified various animal tracks in the snow and they saw a beaver lodge," said Giles. "We also cleaned out three previously installed boxes at the North End. All we found were squirrel nests – lots of leaves and twigs. Maybe we'll have better luck next year."

According to Giles, Wood Ducks live in dead tree crevices, 4-12 feet high in quiet swamps and wetlands. "Chicks do not stay in the nest for very long before they jump into the water and follow the adults," she said. "Last spring I saw Hooded Mergansers on the same pond we installed the boxes. These birds will also use the nesting boxes."

This is the first time students have come to the project specifically to help out with the Wood Duck boxes, according to Giles, and their help was much appreciated. "I am in the process of updating our bird nesting program," she said. "We have a lot of old boxes that need repairs and replacement. The Wood Duck boxes are large and difficult to install, so the more hands the better."

Many of the eight boxes by Stumpy Pond have been destroyed by high water and beavers, according to Giles. She is hoping that the new relationship with Shepherd Hill High School will bring interested students to the dam to help out with the boxes. "I have devised a new installation design and with the help of volunteers and scouts this summer and fall, I hope to get these boxes back in good shape," she said.

The students have other environmental interests and endeavors that could benefit Buffumville Lake. "Mr. Sauvageau has a group of students who participate in the Envirothon, a high school competition where student groups research environmental topics like water quality, invasive species, soil, and present their findings to a judgement panel," said Giles. "The students are planning to do an invasive plant survey this spring on project lands at Buffumville Lake."

Giles said they will present their findings and inform the Park Rangers which areas are in the most need of immediate invasive eradication efforts. "Project staff have a good idea which areas need attention but a good intensive survey is necessary for ongoing monitoring efforts."

The Park Ranger believes students enjoyed the day-long event. "They not only got an education about Wood Ducks but also about ticks," she said. "We identified several animal prints in the snow, saw pine borer beetle holes in dead Scotch pine trees and learned how to identify poison ivy in winter. It was a great experience for the students and a great opportunity for us to get the boxes installed quickly before nesting season," she said.

Rangers from West Hill Dam focus on public and water safety at Massachusetts health fairs

Water Safety is one of the Corps of Engineers' top priorities. New England District team members not only talk about it at their projects, they often travel to other venues to bring the important message to the public.

West Hill Dam team members participated in two safety and health fairs in April to spread the word about the importance of water safety. Park Ranger Viola Bramel operated a water safety exhibit at the Uxbridge High School Safety and Wellness Fair in Uxbridge, Massachusetts, April 7. "This was the first time the high school hosted a fair like this," said Bramel. "The fair was opened to the entire school."

Bramel said about 660 visitors came to her display over the course of five hours. For the West Hill display, Bramel brought a kayak and life jackets to go with the water safety exhibit. "We targeted the display to their age and wanted them to get outdoors, so multi-use trail maps and event calendars were the handouts," she said. "I also used photographs of visitors in kayaks, hiking, mountain biking, swimming, fishing and other recreational opportunities."

Attending the fair was beneficial to both attendees and West Hill Dam. "I gained a new high school intern and an additional volunteer from some of the students who came to look at the exhibit," said Bramel.

Bramel saw many familiar faces at the fair. "I had a blast," said Bramel of the event. "Many Junior Rangers and park visitors are now our high school interns, Eagle Scouts and juniors and seniors. They all stopped by the West Hill Dam display."

Bramel also took the Corps' water safety message to the second annual Kids Safety Fair at the Whitin Community Center, April 8. The Community Center and the Beginning Bridge Program, a non-profit, family support organization that provides free comprehensive services to families with young children, sponsored the fair. Park Ranger Ron Woodall and Eagle Scout Nate Wilson assisted Bramel at the fair.

Photos courtesy of West Hill Dam

West Hill Dam Park Ranger Viola Bramel prepares for the hundreds of visitors expected to visit her booth.

Viola Bramel explains the importance of water safety to a young visitor during the Kids Safety Fair.

West Hill Dam team members had an array of activities for fair attendees to participate in. "We had the 'Wear Your Life Jacket' Photo Opportunity cutout, a kayak with assorted life jackets, a quiz to find a life jacket that fits and a West Hill Dam backdrop with a collage of photos of all you can do at the project."

Bramel said they allowed children to select a proper life jacket, climb in and out of a kayak and learn to paddle as they pretended what wildlife they would see on the West River or at other Corps projects.

Bramel said many handouts were available to the estimated 1,000 people who stopped by the West Hill display. "We also had assorted turtle shells, snake skins and animal mounts that could be handled by young and old alike," she said.

According to Bramel, Wilson, a college sophomore studying Wildlife Management and Natural Resources, was a valuable asset to the Park Rangers during the fair. "Nate stepped right up to the plate and helped with information about the 'Kids in Park' passes and all the wildlife information," said Bramel. "He also talked about upcoming vernal pool hikes, the natural resources he has witnessed at West Hill Dam over the years when he camped there as a scout, and about Eagle Scout opportunities."

West Hill Dam team members also shared recreational opportunities from other projects. Bramel felt the fairs were successful and that the West Hill Dam team accomplished what they wanted to at the fairs. "Our objectives were to encourage families to get outside, learn the resources in their community, practice safe family recreation, exercise and play together," she said. "I think we met our objectives and were good role models."

New England District holds Women's History observance

Yari Golden-Castano, an engineer at MIT Lincoln Laboratory, served as keynote speaker for the New England District's Women's History Month Program. The event, sponsored by the Federal Women's Program and the Equal Employment Opportunity Office, took place March 22 in the Concord Park Theater.

Golden-Castano creates technology for national defense and space during her day job. On her off hours she has hopes to be selected by Mars One, a private enterprise, to be one of the first humans to settle on the planet Mars.

The keynote speaker focused her presentation, "Women's Journey to Mars," the story of her journey towards selection for the program. She said being raised by eight women created an unconventional but happy childhood. In her younger years, Golden-Castano said family told her stories about her being from another planet, sowing the seeds of her desire for interplanetary exploration.

Golden-Castano moved to California to live with an aunt for her high school years. "She wasn't a storyteller, but she did introduce me to the library," she said. "I discovered that women were really going into space."

It was during her high school years when she first experienced her first roadblock on the road to her dream. "I told my guidance counselors that I wanted to be an astronaut and they laughed at me," she said.

The guidance counselors encouraged Golden-Castano to attend Liberal Arts College for a different career because she said they told her the high school did not train girls to be engineers or astronauts. Despite their advice, Golden-Castano went on to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Engineering Science from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts.

After graduating college, Golden-Castano began working for MIT Lincoln Labs, where she is currently working as a software developer and mechanical unit lead for laser communications systems. While focusing on her career, Golden-Castano continued to pursue her dream of going into space.

After unsuccessfully applying for NASA's Astronaut Selection Program, she said she heard about the Mars One Program. Mars One is a private, Dutch organization with a goal to settle humans on Mars. Golden-Castano joined many thousands of people in applying to be one of 24 people who will earn a one way ticket to Mars and to be one of the first humans to successfully settle there. The keynote speaker described the screening process of the program and said she and her husband, who she met as a result of enrolling in the program, have made it to the last 100 applicants who could potentially go to Mars.

Golden-Castano talked about the Mars One program and the challenges that both the program and the final 24 applicants will face to achieve their goal. As to her reasons why she wants to settle on Mars, the keynote speaker said, "I believe a mission to Mars will unite nations. The development of sustainable technology for Mars will change the way we live on Earth and I want to donate my life to science."

While she waits to hear if she will be one of the final 24, Golden-Castano runs workshops to introduce girls to engineering, she speaks at several schools and universities about the importance of following one's dreams, space exploration and Mars One and she is a strong advocate for girls in the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math career fields.

After Golden-Castano's presentation, Anne Kosel, Acting Deputy District Engineer, presented her with a Bunker Hill plaque.

Dredging up the past

Rich Ring (left) and Bill Hubbard (right) wish Steve Ruben the very best during Ruben's retirement lunch, May 30, 2003.

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