

Yankee Engineer

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Building Strong



**New England District team,
volunteers celebrate Earth Day at projects**

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Yankee Voices

Paul Young, Engineering/Planning



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West Hill Dam Park Rangers spread word on water safety

Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, Chief of Engineers, has made it no secret that one of his priorities is Water Safety. Just last March, the Corps of Engineers launched a new water safety campaign titled, "Life Jackets Worn, Nobody Mourns," citing the extreme dangers of not wearing a life jacket in or on the water.

In New England, the District's recreational facilities hold many water safety programs for the public throughout the year and Park Rangers will often take the Corps water safety message to schools and other events. Such was a case when West Hill Dam Park Rangers Viola Bramel and Ronald Woodall represented the District at the Annual Kids Family Resource Fair in Whitinsville, Massachusetts, on March 19. Over 1,300 people attended the event. West Hill Dam brought on the Water Safety message full force with a self-standing selfie water safety cut out display, kayaks and life jackets. Many of the attendees stopped by the Corps' Water Safety exhibit to take pictures, sit in the kayaks and to get information about water safety. Bramel and Woodall also touched upon the "Every Kid in a Park" program as well as an introduction to the Corps and the Junior Ranger Program. Both Park Rangers were available to answer questions.

The Park Ranger's commitment to Water Safety doesn't stay at work. Woodall's two children, son Tristyn 4, and daughter Rowan 2, were at the Fair and modeled life jackets and sat in kayaks to demonstrate proper water safety techniques. "Tristyn has been a big water safety advocate for years now," said Woodall. "He will actively engage strangers and their kids at the beach and ask why they aren't wearing life jackets!"

For more information on the Corps of Engineers' Water Safety Program, go to <http://watersafety.usace.army.mil>.



Tristyn and Rowan Woodall demonstrate proper water safety techniques.





Conservation and restoration activities are the focus of the volunteers at West Thompson Dam during the project's Earth Day event.

District team, volunteers celebrate Earth Day at projects

Team members at West Thompson Dam in Connecticut, West Hill Dam and the Cape Cod Canal, both in Massachusetts, all held project clean up events in honor of Earth Day during the month of April.

Park Ranger Viola Bramel teamed with the Bay State Trail Riders and 28 volunteers for the West Hill Dam event on April 9. "The projects included clearing storm and flood vegetative debris from the five-mile woodland trail," said Bramel. "We cleared all the water bars to prevent erosion and trail damage."

Bramel said that the trail was cleared to Appalachian Mountain Club standards to allow safe passage for intended trail users.

Park Rangers Michelle Cucchi and Cathy St. Andre teamed with two Connecticut Boy Scout Troops, one Connecticut Girl Scout Troop and other volunteers to get a lot accomplished at West Thompson on April 23. Despite the pouring rain, 61 people came out to help. "They really helped us out getting two large projects done and a lot of trash cleaned up – things that we would have to do ourselves," said Cucchi. "With the start of the recreation season and the opening of the campground coming up, I don't know how we would have found the time."

According to Cucchi, the volunteers spread six yards of mulch, picked up trash all around the recreational areas and did a lot of work in the apple orchard. "They edged a circle around the drip line of the trees, discarded the sod, pounded in fertilizer stakes, and then covered the orchard

in mulch," she said.

The Connecticut Outboard Association attended the event and brought a boat and picked up debris and trash along the shoreline, according to Cucchi. The Yankee Flyers of Connecticut also lent a hand the following weekend, splitting firewood for the campground.

The Cape Cod Canal held their annual "Canal Clean Up Day," on April 23. Rainy weather did not deter the record-breaking 221 volunteers from coming out, rolling up their sleeves and getting to work. "We installed new fencing at the Tidal Flat Recreational Area, expanded an already existing pollinator garden in Buzzards Bay Recreation Area and removed invasives and improved landscaping at the Herring Run Recreation Area," said Park Ranger Elisa Carey.

Other work included constructing pollinator boxes to be put out at various locations along the Canal and trash clean up along the entire seven miles of the Canal's northern shoreline.

Carey credits the Canal's partner AmeriCorps with the large turnout and success of the event. "They help with every aspect of the event from volunteer recruitment to face painting," she said.

Every year, hundreds of volunteers turn out to New England District projects and act as environmental stewards by beautifying and improving the locations and saving the U.S. Government thousands in labor costs. The District-hosted events are in keeping with the Corps' commitment to sustainability and the environment.



Penny Reddy (right) assists Olivia with her spaghetti and marshmallow tower.

Photo by Brian Murphy

Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work STEM Event a Hit

Constructing bridges with spaghetti and marshmallows? Making bird feeders out of pine cones? Performing archaeological digs using cookies? Not a typical day at the New England District headquarters, but it is a typically fun and educational agenda for the annual Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day event. This year 26 children came to enjoy a day of discovery with hands on activities focused on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) on April 22.

Jackie DiDomenico, Equal Employment Opportunity Office, and Denise Kammerer-Cody, Federal Women's Program Manager, sponsored the event. DiDomenico was on hand to answer questions and assist with the children.

Capt. Daniel Brady, Project Engineer, Construction Division, greeted the potential future engineers and scientists with opening remarks

and words of encouragement.

A fun and unique ice breaker helped the children introduce themselves and get to know a little bit about each other before splitting into three groups. Every year the Federal Women's Program and the Equal Employment Opportunity Office come up with fun team names. This year the kids were broken up into candy bar teams: Snickers, Baby Ruth and Reese's. Each group rotated between three 45-minute sessions in the morning and another three 45-minute sessions in the afternoon.

In the morning Penny Reddy and Capt. Brady hosted the spaghetti bridge activity in the New England Conference Room. The activity started off with a presentation that included videos and photos of many types of bridges. After viewing the presentation material, the children designed and constructed a bridge out of uncooked spaghetti and marshmallows.

Paul Young and Jessica Rudd held a geology presentation in the cafeteria. "We are surrounded by rocks, minerals and fossils," said Young.

During the presentation, the children learned how such minerals formed. The children got the chance to hold samples of different types of minerals to include gold, silver, copper and diamonds. They also were able to handle fossils such as clams, whalebone, wood, dinosaur and footprints and much more. Most of the items that the children got to handle were found in New England. "The geology was my favorite," said Tristan. "The rocks are rare and the fossils too. They were very cool."

Drake agreed with Tristan. "There were tons of really cool ones," he said.

Jessica Schanz took a green approach to teaching the children how to love and appreciate their planet in the Massachusetts/Connecticut

Conference Rooms. During the session titled, "Earth Day," the children learned about environmental changes and why it's important to protect the earth and recycle. After a brief presentation, the children made pine cone bird feeders that they could take home and hang to feed the birds in their yards. "My favorite activity was making the bird feeders," said Amelie. "I've never made one, and I like to do things that I've never done before."

After the morning sessions, the children met their sponsors in the cafeteria for a pizza lunch before heading into the afternoon activities.

Marc Paiva took the children on an Archaeological Cookie Dig in the Cafeteria.

"This is a simple and fun exercise to try with the kids," said Paiva. "It simulates the delicate work of an archaeologist, and is likely to stir an interest in archaeology and fossils."

Christine Renzoni and Natalie McCormick hosted an endangered species presentation.

During this activity, the children learned how human activities can change a sea turtle's and other endangers species' environment. "This one was my favorite," explained Anna. "You got to run around and play the sensory game."

Park Ranger Ronald Woodall gave a para-cord survival Key Fob presentation in the Massachusetts/Connecticut Conference Rooms. Using a 550 foot para-cord that was created by Army scientists during World War II for parachutes, the children learned about the multiples uses of the cord. After the presentation, the children made their own survival key fobs. "This looked really interesting," said Luc of his favorite activity. "I really wanted to do it."

District team members who assisted the main presenters throughout the day were Tina Chaisson, Ann Marie Harvie, Valerie Cappola, Karen Baumert and Grace Moses.



Maj. Daniel Herlihy and the Ranger Color Guard cross the Old North Bridge during the parade.

Photos by Brian Murphy



The New England District Color Guard just before stepping off.

New England District participates in Patriot's Day celebration

Marchers from all over the Commonwealth, to include Minutemen dressed in traditional, Colonial garb and current military and local participants in modern day attire, participated in the annual Patriot's Day parade in Concord, Massachusetts, April 18. The parade was one of many observances held to mark the anniversary of the beginning of the Revolutionary War in 1775.

Maj. Daniel Herlihy, Deputy District Commander, and the New England District Ranger Color Guard represented the District in the parade.

The Corps' ties to the town go back to the Revolutionary War. Sometimes called, "the birthplace of the Corps," the New England District traces its history back to April 26, 1775, only seven days after the first shots were fired in Concord and surrounding towns, signifying the start of the American Revolution.

The three-mile parade started off on Everett Street and proceeded to the historical Old North Bridge, the site, according to Ralph Waldo Emerson, of the "shot heard round the world."

After a brief wreath-laying ceremony, the parade commenced through Monument Square and through Concord Center before ending on Stow Street. Along the parade route, thousands of bystanders from near and far, young and old, stood and watched the parade participants go by. Other activities that commemorated the pivotal moment in American History were a dawn salute and a reenactment of the battle.

The New England District Ranger Color Guard that accompanied Maj. Herlihy were Jason Robinson, Bradley Clark, Natalie McCormack and Matthew Coleman.



Dredging Milford Pond was key to restoration efforts.

Photo by Adam Burnett

New England District restores Milford Pond

Members of the New England District Team have recently transformed an environmentally-degraded body of water and surrounding property into a rich, vibrant ecosystem so that birds and fish will return to the area and thrive.

Problems at the Milford Pond in Milford, Massachusetts, began as early as the 1970's when town residents began to see the once-deep open water areas becoming much shallower and filling in with aquatic plants and organic sediments. They also discovered the infiltration of an invasive aquatic weed species called milfoil start to take over the pond. The town studied the decline over the 1980's and 1990's, and when the 120-acre pond was choked with milfoil and the depth of the water was less than two feet, the town requested the District's assistance in 2001. "The Corps engaged in the project as part of our Section 206 Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program," said project

manager Adam Burnett.

The restoration has been years in the making. The District completed a detailed project report along with an Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact in July 2005, according to Burnett. In August 2005, the District began preparing plans and specifications. "The Corps of Engineers and the town of Milford as the local sponsor signed a project partnership agreement in 2013," said Burnett. "The designs, along with permitting and all necessary real estate acquisitions, were completed in 2014."

The project benefits are many, including restoring the pond to an open-water habitat to emergent and wooded wetland habitats. The basin is critical habitat for protected species of native birds, including the least bittern, pied-billed grebe, king rail, and common moorhen. The birds need a combination of open water and

emergent wetlands, such as cattail marshes. "Prior to getting artificially impounded a century ago, the Charles River Valley through Milford had a large, complex native Atlantic White Cedar swamp, marshland, and open water bodies," said Burnett. "The restoration work is designed to restore this complex mix of aquatic ecosystems, and enhance the wetland habitats needed for the four protected bird species."

To make that happen, the District hydraulically dredged a thick layer of bottom sediment from a 17-acre corridor in the pond and disposed of the sediment in a 30-acre shallow backwater area. This disposal site had been a cedar swamp prior to being flooded with the impounded water behind the constructed dam. Approximately 168,000 cubic yards of organic-rich sediments were hydraulically dredged and pumped through floating pipes to the disposal area, which was contained

by an innovative design using large stacked coir (coconut fiber) rolls surrounding the containment area. The 17-acre dredged area is now 12 to 13 feet deep and restored to open water and cleared of the choking milfoil. The deeper water discourages milfoil from returning since it normally can't root into deep water areas. This restoration provides open water habitat for fish and waterfowl, including the four protected bird species that live in the basin. "The 30-acre disposal area for the dredged material was designed within the impounded footprint of Milford Pond and will restore emergent and wooded wetlands, including the possibility of restored native Atlantic white cedar community," said Burnett.

The environmentally-friendly design of the disposal area involved the use of 16-inch diameter coconut fiber rolls, stacked on top of each other around the disposal area perimeter within the pond to form biodegradable retaining walls for the sediment. The rolls were installed during the middle of the winter when there was a thick layer of ice on the pond.

"Now that the disposal area is completely filled with sediment, the coir rolls will decompose within a few years, and the entire disposal area including the coir rolls will become densely covered with native emergent wetlands plant species," Burnett explained.

Palmer Federal Constructors, Inc., of Lawrence, Massachusetts, was the contractor on the project. The cost of this \$4 million project was split between the town of Milford (35-percent) and the Corps of Engineers (65-percent).

According to Burnett, the final surface of the filled area will naturally revegetate to support a combination of native emergent, shrub, and forested wetlands habitats.

"We expect the disposal area to settle some, and after a year, we will plant Atlantic white cedar," said Burnett.

The Hatch Act.

The Hatch Act restricts the political activity of individuals principally employed by state or local executive agencies and who work in connection with programs financed in whole or in part by federal loans or grants.

The next general election will be held November 8, and the height of campaign season is upon us. Under the Hatch Act, federal employees need to be mindful of political activities during this time. According to the Office of Special Counsel, federal employees may do the following:

- May be candidates for public office in nonpartisan elections.
- May register and vote as they choose.
- May assist in voter registration drives.
- May contribute money to political campaigns, political parties, or partisan political groups.
- May attend political fundraising functions.
- May attend and be active at political rallies and meetings.
- May join and be an active member of political clubs or parties.
- May hold office in political clubs or parties.
- May sign and circulate nominating petitions.
- May campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, or municipal ordinances.
- May campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections.
- May make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections.
- May distribute campaign literature in partisan elections.
- May volunteer to work on a partisan political campaign.

The Office of Special Counsel states that federal employees may not:

- May not use their official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the result of an election.
- May not solicit, accept or receive a donation or contribution for a partisan political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group.
- May not be candidates for public office in partisan political elections.
- May not knowingly solicit or discourage the participation in any political activity of anyone who has business pending before their employing office.
- May not engage in political activity — i.e., activity directed at the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group — while the employee is on duty, in any federal room or building, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or using any federally owned or leased vehicle.

For more information on the Hatch Act, please go to: <https://osc.gov/pages/hatchact.aspx>.

Dredging up the past



Ralph Gendron and a group of young volunteers get ready to do some digging during the Barre Falls Earth Day event in April 2003.

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