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Building Strong

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District breaks ground during Natick Family
Housing ceremony
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Yankee Voices

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Stay safe and awake at the wheel

A nap can be pleasant and relaxing—unless you're at the wheel of a car when it happens. The U.S. Department of Transportation estimates that sleep-related driving accidents cause 40,000 injuries and 150 deaths every year. Don't be one of them. Follow these tips for staying awake and alert on the road:

- Get enough sleep. If you know you'll be driving a long distance, plan to get the sleep you need ahead of time.

- Take breaks. Don't try to drive for hours at a time. Stop about every two hours for 10-15 minutes of rest, brisk exercise, and stretching.

- Get proper nutrition. Stay hydrated—drink lots of water.

- Don't get too comfortable. Open the window to keep cold air blowing on your face, or adjust your seat just enough to be noticeable as you drive (but not enough to distract you).

- Pull over. If all else fails, find a safe spot to pull over and take a nap. Fifteen or 20 minutes may be enough to get you through the rest of your trip safely.

(First Draft Magazine)

Popular Pie Day held at District Headquarters

The New England District held its annual Pie Day event in the Concord Park cafeteria, Nov. 6. New England District team members donated a total of 62 pies with both sweet and savory varieties for team members to choose from.

This year, the WE Committee held a contest for the best homemade pies. More than 60 people dug into the homemade treats and voted for their favorite. The four top bakers received WE Committee store gift certificates for their culinary masterpieces. Charlotte Skolnick took first place with her spanakopita pie and Dot Lundberg took second with her apple cranberry pie. There was a tie for third place: Anastasia Papadopoulos won for her apricot tart and Helen Madhi tied Papadopoulos with her Reese's pie.

The WE Committee was also able to collect over \$100 in donations that will go into the WE Committee fund. That fund supports District activities such as lowering the costs of Founder's Day. Leanna Martin ran this year's event for the WE Committee.

Canal hosts race to benefit the troops

The Cape Cod Canal team hosted the Cape Cod Cares for the Troops Foundation's walking/running fund raising event, Oct. 5.

The event started at 10 a.m. and ended at 1 p.m. Approximately 350 people participated. The race began at the Buzzard's Bay Recreation Area with participants heading east along the North Service Road to the Herring Run Recreation Area and back.

Cape Cod Cares for Our Troops is a non-profit 501(c)(3) all volunteer organization started in 2005 by 12 year old Dylan DeSilva. DeSilva wanted to find a way to honor U.S. troops for their service, dedication and sacrifices to the country. With the help of his family and friends he sends care packages to U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan on a weekly basis. In 2008, the organization added their "Rocky's Warriors" program that sends canine care packages to U.S. military dogs. In 2015, the organization added their "Talking to the Moon" a program to support caregivers of wounded warriors.

The Cape Cod Canal's service roads, measuring seven miles each, offer spectacular views of the Canal and ship traffic, which make it a popular location for fund-raising walks/runs. The canal hosted approximately 30 similar fund-raising events in 2019.





Photos by Brian Murphy

Hard hats and shovels stand at the ready for the Natick Family Housing ground breaking ceremony.

District, partners, break ground on Natick Family Housing

Col. William Conde, New England District Commander, traveled to Natick, Massachusetts, Nov. 14, to break ground on a project that will provide 22 new homes for service members. The Commander joined Brig. Gen. Vincent Malone, Natick Soldier Systems Center Senior Commander and other partners for the ground-breaking ceremony. "The Housing initiative provides safe and healthy homes to the Soldiers and families that choose to work here," said Brig. Gen. Malone.

Col. Conde remarked that it was a great day to break some ground for the project. "We're here today to mark the start of construction of the \$20.6 million Army family housing project and I know it's been a while coming to this point," he said. "The project consists of 22 replacement family housing quarters, as well as utilities and associated supply infrastructure."

The New England District team awarded the contract on May 9 to Tocci Building Corporation of Woburn, Massachusetts. According to Col. Conde, the project will also include neighborhood amenities such as walkways and roads. "The new housing will be designed for a 50-year life and complies with standards in unified facilities criteria and Army Sustainable Design and Development policy," he said.

The District Commander thanked the District's team of partners to include the local Congressional delegation, the U.S. Army Natick Soldiers Systems Center, Tocci Building Corporation, District Project Manager Tim Voruz and Resident Engineer Jim Conway for their work in getting the project to its current stage. The project is scheduled to be completed by October 2021.



Col. William Conde (center) joins Brig. Gen. Vincent Malone (second from right) and other officials in breaking ground for the Natick Family Housing project.



Project Manager Craig Martin explains one of the maps on display during the public meeting.



Photos by Elizabeth Gosselin

Wendy Gendron discusses the Cape Cod Canal Highway Bridges MRER with a meeting attendee.

District holds public meetings on Cape Cod Bridges Study

The New England District team released its Cape Cod Canal Highway Bridges Major Rehabilitation Evaluation Study (MRER) Oct. 3. Shortly after its release, the team held five public information sessions to discuss the study's contents and to take questions from the public. "The purpose of the Major Rehabilitation Evaluation Study is to evaluate the existing conditions and the reliability of each structure and determine if rehabilitation of the Bourne and Sagamore bridges can significantly extend their service life, or replacement of one or both bridges will result in a more cost effective, safe and dependable method of access across the Cape Cod Canal for the traveling public over the next 50 year service horizon," said New England District Project Manager Craig Martin.

About 250 people attended the meetings in Bourne, Plymouth, Boston, Eastham (Nauset) and Hyannis, Massachusetts, to listen to briefings about the study and to ask questions and give input into the process. Col. William Conde, New England District Commander, opened up the first meeting held in Bourne and shared the recommendation outlined in the study. "Our recommendation, documented in the draft Major Rehabilitation Evaluation Report, is to replace the Bourne and Sagamore highway bridges with new structures built to include the four authorized travel lanes and two additional auxiliary lanes designed as acceleration/deceleration lanes built to modern highway standards with appropriate bike/pedestrian access," he said.

According to the report, both bridges, which are nearly 85 years old, are structurally deficient, functionally obsolete and becoming more costly to repair. The average cost to operate and maintain the bridges is \$5 million per year, but can go up to as much as \$17 million when the bridges need to be completely repainted. "New England District anticipates that a major rehabilitation of the bridge decks, steel components, and concrete abutments are needed in 2025 for Sagamore and 2029 for Bourne at a cost of more than

a \$100 million for each bridge," said Martin. "The rehabilitation would require both partial lane and full bridge closures, resulting in substantial traffic delays and impacts to the Cape Cod economy."

Many meeting attendees were in favor of replacing the two bridges with new ones. "A plan needs to be moved forward as soon as possible," said Bill Hackett. "The current bridges cannot handle today's travel. The traffic problems that are caused by bridgework are hurting the Cape Cod economy. I hope the solutions are announced in the next couple of years and the construction RFP is written so that the projects are completed quickly."

Not everyone who attended the meetings wanted the bridges replaced and would like to see them preserved for historical reasons. "I want to see these preserved," said Bill Bearse. "These iconic bridges serve their purpose, and allow the amount of traffic over that the intersecting roads can handle. To replace them with bigger bridges, it will take away from what we pay dearly for and cherish here on Cape."

Questions and comments from the public varied from wanting to know about building a third bridge to filling in the Canal. Martin reiterated that the Corps and its partners are reviewing all comments and suggestions as the New England District works to come to its final decision. "The Corps is continuing to work with its strategic partners, MassDOT and FHWA, and the public in the development of a solution that works for the long term future Cape access," said Martin.

The New England District team accepted comments on the project until Nov. 15. The team is currently reviewing comments submitted by federal, state, and local agencies, and the public, and is revising the document into its final form. The District is on schedule to submit the final MRER to headquarters in Washington, D.C. for a final decision in the spring of 2020. For more information about the study and the bridges, go to www.capecodcanalbridgesstudy.com

Park Rangers participate in Westfield Career Fair

Three Park Rangers attended a local career fair in search of young people enthusiastic in the Natural Resources field that could potentially join them as part of the Corps of Engineers team.

Park Rangers Catherine St. Andre, Nicole Giles and Michelle Cucchi attended the Westfield State University's Government, Criminal Justice and Non-Profit career fair at the Woodward Center in Westfield, Massachusetts, on Oct. 10. More than 1,000 students attended the career fair with over two dozen coming to speak with the Corps' Park Rangers. "We had about 25 students in the Natural Resource Field seriously interested in the Summer Park Ranger positions," said St. Andre. "We are getting the word out that USACE has seasonal positions open every year."

St. Andre said that most students were unaware that the Corps of Engineers has recreational facilities and park rangers. The fair came at an opportune time according to St. Andre, because the summer positions are advertised in January.

"This gave the students plenty of time to set up a USA Jobs profile and get their required documents in order to prepare for the application," she said.

The Park Rangers fielded many questions from prospective applicants during the three-hour fair. Some of the questions included what Park Rangers do, where the New England District projects are located, the potential for a full-time position if the Summer Ranger job works well and the all-important steps to apply for a position.

"We loved speaking with students who were just as



Photo courtesy of Catherine St. Andre

Nicole Giles, Michelle Cucchi and Catherine St. Andre wait for visitors at their information booth during the Westfield Career Fair.

interested in the Natural Resource Management field as we are," said St. Andre. "It was nice to see the enthusiasm many of the students expressed."

The Park Rangers are scheduled to attend a career fair at Worcester State University on March 11, 2020. They hope they get as many, if not more, enthusiastic students interested in joining them in their chosen career.



Photo provided by West Hill Dam

West Hill Dam is alive with the sound of music

Tom Ceceyla, Troop 14 from Bellingham, Massachusetts, received his Eagle Scout Award for constructing an outdoor xylophone at West Hill Dam. The newly minted Eagle Scout played in the band for his entire academic career, which gave him the idea of the outdoor instrument. Inspired by the combination of nature and music, Ceceyla worked with Park Ranger Viola Bramel for two years to design a detachable, PVC pipe instrument suitable for everyone who visits West Hill Dam to enjoy. Bramel attended Ceceyla's Eagle Honor Court, Nov. 30 where he received his Eagle Scout medal. Ceceyla's xylophone is the 49th Eagle Scout project completed at West Hill Dam.



Junior Junior Rangers work on a craft with the help of their parents during the October program.



Photos courtesy of the Franklin Falls Dam.

Karen Hoey prepares to read a story to Junior Junior Rangers during the Franklin Falls program.

Franklin Falls Dam holds Junior Junior Ranger program for preschoolers

From the very old to the very young, people of all ages care about the environment. In fact, some are so young, the Park Rangers at Franklin Falls Dam created a special program to introduce them to environmental stewardship -- the Junior Junior Ranger Program.

Held each Tuesday in October from 9-10:30 a.m., about 22 children ages 2-5 traveled with their parents to Franklin Falls in New Hampshire, to meet real Park Rangers and learn about nature.

Park Ranger Karen Hoey took the lead on this special program, specifically tailored for tiny tots with lots of energy and curiosity. "When the Junior Juniors arrived, I had an activity and coloring sheets on the topic we would be covering that day waiting for them," she said. "The kids worked on that while we waited for everyone to get there. Then I read a story about the day's theme."

Hoey said she and the Junior Juniors would either talk about the story she just read or she would have a discussion on a prop she brought in specific to the day's theme. "Afterwards we would do a craft and then conclude the session with another story."

Each week featured a new and exciting theme. The first week covered the different habitats of New Hampshire animals. The second week had the children explore the different shapes, colors and textures of leaves and needles

found in backyards. The third week Hoey and the children talked about the different seasons in New Hampshire and all the fun activities outside each season brings.

The fourth week focused on the difference between apple and pumpkin seeds. The fifth and final week's theme focused on bats. "Junior Juniors explored what makes bats so fascinating and, for some, the myths about what makes them scary."

Throughout the year, Franklin Falls continually hosts programs for children ages 6-18. Another addition to the Project's offerings is a five-week long program for home school families that is curriculum-based. Hoey saw untapped potential in holding programs for younger children, saying October is a good time for the Junior Juniors to have a program at a time all their own. "We targeted this age group because we never had offered them a program before," said Hoey. "One of our interpretive goals was to create programming that involved families and to create a learning community hosted by the Corps of Engineers. I think this program is creating that."

Based on the increasing number of participants that sign up each year, Franklin Falls can expect to run this program for a long time to come. "This session in October was our third session," said Hoey. "Each time we offer the program, it gains more interest."

District's Regulatory Team hosts Wetland Delineation Training

New England District's Regulatory Division held an Interagency Wetlands Delineation Training, Sept. 23 to 27 at the District's Concord Park offices and local outdoor areas for field study training.

The course, which featured instructors from the District, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), was the equivalent to the national and regional wetland delineation classes with added New England specific elements. "It is not an annual requirement, but Regulatory staff are required to have adequate wetland delineation training to accomplish certain tasks and this training is directly involved in that," said Paul Minkin, Lead Instructor for New England District. "Regulatory hosts the class as is typical in many other districts and regions of the country."



Photo by Taylor Bell

The class had 23 students from

New England District, Philadelphia District, NRCS, EPA Enforcement and the state of Connecticut. The purpose of the class was to provide consistent wetland delineation training for all federal agencies working with New England wetlands. The class was also a way to improve working relationships between the New England District and other agencies.

Tammy Turley, Chief of Regulatory, opened the week-long course by discussing course objectives and presented a discussion titled, "Introduction to Wetland Identification and Delineation."

Other course elements presented on the first day included, "Soils," "Vegetation," "What a Hydrophyte is," "Adaptations for Life in Wetlands," "National Wetland Plant List," "How to Select Dominant Species" and "Hydrophytic Vegetation Criteria and Field Indicators."

The first day ended with the two groups going on a four-hour field exercise in the woods and field beside the District office.

The second day focused on topics like "Vegetation,"

"Soil." The second day also ended with four-hour field exercises in the adjacent woods and field. According to Minkin, the field exercises were one of the highlights of the training. "Allowing the students to get their hands dirty -- literally, with the soils section -- and do the field work themselves with help from the instructors was a high point," he said. "It also allowed for a good mixing of our staff and other federal wetlands staff in New England and Corps folks from Philadelphia."

On the third day the students listened to a discussion on NRCS Variances; followed by a presentation on Hydric Soil Criteria and Indicators that focused on the national and regionally specific indicators as well as covering the Field Companion, version four. After a break, the group heard a discussion on reference materials and the use of the Internet; routine methods and preparation and group organization and field preparation. All students went on a four-hour field

exercise on Wetland Delineation in the adjacent woods before ending for the day. Instructors spent the fourth day tackling subjects like "Problem Hydrophytic Vegetation," "Problem Hydric Soils," and "Wetlands that Periodically Lack Indicators of Wetland Hydrology."

The day's field exercises to local Concord sites focused on, "Disturbed and Problem Sites," and signaled the day's conclusion.

After some final questions and answers in the morning of the last day, students took their test, filled out and discussed course evaluations and received their award certificates. "The course went well," said Minkin. "All students improved their pretest scores. Students completed evaluations and the majority were very positive. Regulatory has hosted wetland delineation training every two to four years and we plan to continue."

In addition to Minkin, other presenters from the team were Art Harmon, Cori Rose, Taylor Bell and Alan Anacheka-Nasemann.

Dredging up the past



Photo by Diallo Ferguson

Col. Charles Samaris, then District Commander, (center) stands with Westford, Massachusetts veterans during the town's Veterans Day observance in this November 2013 photo. Col. Samaris marched in the town's parade and spoke during the observance ceremony.

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