



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, Volume 53, No. 6 May-June 2020



# Chief of Engineers signs report for the New Haven Harbor Navigation Improvement Project

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# Yankee Voices

Hayden Page, Boy Scout Troop 131



## Congratulations

... to **Christine Johnson-Battista**, Construction, on her retirement, June 30. Johnson-Battista began as an intern at the New England District and dedicated her entire 33-year career to the organization. A celebration to honor her years of service will take place when it is safe to do so.

## Sitting down to dinner together— it's healthy

Harvard researchers have found that children who sit down and eat dinner with their families are more likely to eat vegetables and fruits than their peers. Eating dinner at home means kids are less likely to consume junk foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar. Eating a family dinner might improve diets because that kind of dinner tends to be healthier than grabbing something on the run. The study included more than 16,000 children between the ages of nine and 14.

(First Draft Magazine)

## Boy Scout completes Eagle Scout project focusing on water safety at West Hill Dam

This past fall, Boy Scout Hayden Page from Troop #131 in Sutton, Massachusetts completed his Eagle Scout project at the West Hill Dam in Uxbridge, Massachusetts. The project focused on several themes to include water safety and aiding species of concern. Page's project was the 49<sup>th</sup> Eagle Scout project completed at the dam. Park Ranger Viola Bramel served as Page's mentor for the project.

Page constructed a life jacket loan station, complete with peg heights that not only accommodate adults, but also small children and people in wheelchairs. He also constructed a corn hole game with bean bags and a storage bag.

"He was so professional, well prepared. He had great sketches, and he is a problem solver," said Bramel. "He had a friend with a computer sign business take the USACE water safety logos (Corps Foundation produced) for the corn hole game and finished them with high gloss onto the playing boards! He made well-built bean bags and provided a nice draw-string mesh bag so when it is safe after the COVID-19 pandemic, visitors, Junior Rangers and families will be able to take this game to any of the Dam's shelters."

Page also wanted to include a wildlife element into his project. "He built a bat house for large brown bats, paying close attention to requirements for rough-cut lumber, and six eastern bluebird cavity dwellings to help combat habitat loss."

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts from all over New England choose to partner with New England District's recreational facilities teams to work on their projects that improve visitors' experiences at the parks.



Photo by Viola Bramel

New Life Jacket Loan Station at West Hill Dam.





New Haven Harbor in New Haven Connecticut

Photo courtesy of Geoffrey Steadman

## Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite signs Chief's Report for the New Haven Harbor Navigation Improvement Project

by **Timothy J. Dugan**  
**Public Affairs Office**

Lt. Gen. Todd T. Semonite, USACE Commanding General and 54th U.S. Army Chief of Engineers, signed the New Haven Harbor Navigation Improvement Project Chief's Report, May 7.

The existing New Haven Harbor deep draft ship channel, turning basin, and maneuvering area are currently authorized at a depth of -35 feet at mean lower low water (MLLW). Deeper and wider channels, maneuvering area, and turning basin are needed to increase the navigation efficiency and safety of New Haven Harbor.

To reach the terminals, larger ships must lighter outside the breakwaters and/or experience delays while waiting for favorable tide conditions, or both.

The recommended project includes deepening the main ship channel, maneuvering area, and turning basin from -35 to -40 feet MLLW, extending the entrance channel seaward to allow for the deepening, widening the turning basin to the north 200 feet, widening the inner channel from 400 to 500 feet; widening the entrance channel from 500 to 600 feet; and widening the channel bend near the East Breakwater to 800 feet.

Dredged material from the project will be placed at several open water sites within the harbor and Long Island

Sound. These open water disposal sites include: Morris Cove borrow pit, an oyster habitat creation site near the East Breakwater, West River Borrow pit, rock placement north of the West Breakwater (rock reef habitat creation); and the Central Long Island Sound Disposal Site (CLDS).

The recommended plan also includes a beneficial disposal method beyond the least cost method. A portion of the dredged material that would otherwise have been placed at CLDS will be used in the harbor to create a 58-acre salt marsh at Sandy Point in West Haven, Connecticut.

The Connecticut Port Authority is the non-Federal sponsor for the project. The estimated project first cost of the Recommended Plan, which includes beneficial use of dredge material to create the salt marsh, is \$72,311,000. The Connecticut Port Authority would provide \$18,822,000 of that cost plus an additional 10% of the general navigation feature over 30 years.

More information on the New Haven Harbor Navigation Improvement Project is available at the District website at: <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Projects-Topics/New-Haven-Harbor/>. Follow the Corps' New England District at <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil> and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/CorpsNewEngland](http://www.facebook.com/CorpsNewEngland); on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/CorpsNewEngland> and Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/usacenewengland/>.



The New England District team completed Border Patrol facility in Swanton, Vermont, April 9.

Photos courtesy of CCI Facility Support Services, LLC

## District completes Swanton Border Patrol facility expansion in Vermont

The New England District team handed over the keys to a new 5,000 square foot Command and Control Center addition in Swanton, Vermont, to its customer, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, April 9.

The Swanton Border Patrol needed to expand its existing Northern Border Remote Surveillance System (RVSS) capabilities currently displayed in Detroit and Buffalo Sectors to the Swanton Sector. Project Manager Sheila Bergeron said that the existing facility was not configured to accommodate the operational functions and technology necessary to support and operate intel, dispatcher and the RVSS and technology deployment. “The addition was necessary to provide space to utilize the new technology to enhance their mission of securing the nation’s borders.”

The \$5,653,260 contract was awarded to CCI, Facility Support Services, LLC of Anchorage, Alaska on March 29, 2019. Onsite construction began May 28, 2019

and substantially completed with just a few punch list items left, on April 9.

The new facility includes administrative offices and RVSS work stations and other support areas along with the associated infrastructure such as parking, mechanical systems and work stations.

“We were thrilled that the contract was completed on time, in accordance with the initial award.” said Bergeron.

“Typically, completion dates for construction contracts need to be extended due to modifications. However, in this case, the project was executed on time, despite the severe weather conditions in northern Vermont, a contract modification and the COVID-19 pandemic. Very impressive!”

Besides Bergeron, other team members responsible for the successful turnover of this project were Erin Bradley, Ray Goff, Steve Dougherty, Fred Pike, Andy Sinclair, Heather Skorik, and Carl Niemitz.



Photo of the interior of the new facility.

# Corps announces availability of final 2018 National Wetland Plant List providing plant species indicator status ratings

By Timothy J. Dugan  
Public Affairs Office

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as part of an interagency effort with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, announced the availability of the final 2018 National Wetland Plant List (NWPL).

The Federal Register Notice for the 2018 NWPL update was posted on May 18, and can be found at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2020-05-18/pdf/2020-10630.pdf>.

The NWPL provides plant species indicator status ratings, which are used in determining whether the hydrophytic vegetation factor is met when conducting wetland delineations under the Clean Water Act. The list is effective as of May 18, and will be used in any wetland delineations performed

after this date. Delineations completed prior to this date may still use the 2016 NWPL. The final NWPL is available at <http://wetland-plants.usace.army.mil/>. State, regional, and national lists can also be downloaded from this site.

For the 2018 NWPL update, the NWPL National Panel and Regional Panels reviewed proposed wetland rating changes or additions for 20 species and 37 regional ratings (some species were reviewed for multiple regions) submitted by the public. Eight of these species were proposed for addition to the NWPL, and 12 species were submitted for a rating change request in one or more regions.

Three species were removed from this update. *Bassia hyssopifolia* and *Pycnanthemum muticum* were removed because in both cases, the requested indicator for the requested region, FACU in the Arid West and FAC in the Eastern Mountains and Piedmont,

respectively, was already the existing indicator on the 2016 NWPL. *Pleopeltis polypodioides* is an epiphyte and upon additional review of its epiphytic nature and the position of epiphytes on the NWPL, it was determined that it should be removed from the NWPL. More information regarding changes to the 2018 Final NWPL can be found on the chart listed in the public notice on the Corps website at <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/PublicNotices/Article/2198888/update-of-national-wetland-plant-list-2018/> or located at the NWPL website (<http://wetland-plants.usace.army.mil/>).

The 2020 NWPL update is currently being developed and recommendations on species and occurrences are being accepted through the NWPL website. For technical questions about the 2018 update, please contact the Interim Director of the NWPL, Paul Minkin, at [NWPL@usace.army.mil](mailto:NWPL@usace.army.mil).

## Red fox makes West Hill Dam home

West Hill Dam volunteer Robyn Goldberg snapped a picture of this red fox while out and about at the project, June 28. According to Park Ranger Viola Bramel, there are several red fox and their dens at West Hill. "She will be out training the kits to hunt as they are old enough now to learn their remaining survival skills," she said.

Bramel noted that the red fox has "black boots" at the base of the paws and a white hair-tipped tail. In contrast, the gray fox has a black hair-tipped tail. The two species leave a stinky mark on the places they visit to let others know they were there. "Both will leave a scent on the ground and you think you smell a skunk when hiking near a fox trail," said Bramel.

When out and about enjoying the outdoors at West Hill Dam, Bramel reminds visitors to admire the wildlife at a distance for everyone's safety. She also advises everyone who comes to West Hill to observe CDC's COVID-19 guidelines and maintain social distancing.



Photo courtesy of Robyn Goldberg

## Deputy Chief of Public Affairs retires after 45 years of service

Timothy Dugan, Deputy Chief, Public Affairs Office and Media Relations Officer for the New England District, retired June 30 after more than 45 years of federal service.

Dugan began his career with the New England District in August 2001. During his many years with the District, he worked with project managers and District leadership to ensure the media, Congressional delegations and the public were provided accurate and detailed information at public hearings and during high-visibility events.

His journalism skills enabled him to excel as a speech writer for commanders during ceremonies for changes of command, ground-breakings and Founder's Day. Dugan's experience and expertise led the District through many communication challenges and successes over the years to include high profile projects such as the Cape Cod Canal Bridge replacement, New Haven Harbor, Mohegan Tribe Aquaculture and Cape Wind.

In addition to his regular duties at the District, Dugan deployed to provide support to the New Orleans District's Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts. When the Chief of Public Affairs was called on to serve in New York during the September 11 recovery efforts, Dugan served as acting chief until his return.

Prior to joining New England District, Dugan served for many years as a Public Affairs Specialist for Mobile District. While serving there, he deployed to provide crisis communication support for multiple contingencies to include Hurricane Fran's recovery in Wilmington, North Carolina in 1996; Hurricane Marilyn's recovery in the U.S. Virgin Islands



Photo by Brian Murphy

Tim Dugan, Deputy Chief, Public Affairs, makes remarks during a recent Founder's Day ceremony at Concord Park.

in 1995 and Tropical Storm Alberto's flood recovery operations in 1994.

Before going to the Mobile District, Dugan worked for the Europe Division as a writer-editor for the division's newspaper. While there, he ensured the people and mission of the Corps were recognized through unique newspaper coverage that included travelling to remote parts of Turkey to report on forward deployed construction engineers and their projects. Dugan's coverage of events and people contributed to the success of the division newspaper's first place award in the USACE headquarters' level Kassner Journalism Competition in 1990.

Dugan was the editor for the Frankfurt Chronicle as part of the U.S. Army Military Community Activity-Frankfurt. During his tenure at the newspaper, the Frankfurt Chronicle received many awards to include being named, "Best Newspaper in the Department of the Army," and placed second for the prestigious Department of Defense Thomas Jefferson Award.

A highlight of Dugan's assignment during this time was the opportunity to cover the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia. His articles and photos were published throughout the Department of the Army.

Before he became an Army Civilian, Dugan served his country faithfully in the U.S. Army. After completing Army Basic Training at Fort Knox, Kentucky and Advanced Individual Training as an Information Specialist/Journalist at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana later in the year, he was assigned as a journalist at both H.Q. U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army in Frankfurt and Heidelberg, West Germany.

On his last day, Dugan received the Meritorious Civilian Service Award for his nearly two decades of commitment to excellence and exceptional leadership abilities that significantly contributed to the communication mission of the District. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a celebration of Dugan's career will take place when it is safe to do so.

# Engineer uses technology to reach out to students during pandemic

Gary Lacroix, Deputy Chief, Engineering Division, worked with Dimitrios Vazquez, Chief, Internal Review, to virtually reach out to 100 third-grade students at the South Row School in Chelmsford, Massachusetts. Their mission: to describe what it's like to be an engineer during the school's Engineering Day, June 9.

Vasquez had originally volunteered to help organize a traditional Engineering Day for the school earlier in the year. When the pandemic hit Massachusetts and closed the schools, teachers had to get creative with how they were going to continue to educate their students and still have an Engineering Day for them.

"Engineering Day is normally a full day of activities with engineering building skills and lectures by professional engineers from various companies," said Vasquez. "However, due to COVID-19, they changed the requirements of the event to obtaining videos from professional engineers instead."

Vasquez reached out to Lacroix while they collaborated on a work-related project. "I knew he would do a great video knowing how meticulous and detail-oriented he is in his day-to-day activities," he said.

The Deputy Chief of Engineering has done outreach in the past, having visited a dozen schools over his more than 30-year career. Lacroix readily agreed to help Vasquez by recording a video. Lacroix's eldest son assisted him with the editing to make the video a more fine-tuned product.

"I came up with the script trying to put myself in the shoes of third-graders and what they would likely know about engineers," he said. "I used pictures since I know that would be more engaging to a young audience than just looking at a talking head."

Vasquez distributed the video to the school's third-grade teachers who then shared it with their students through their Google classroom. The video was well received by both the teachers and the students.

"We were so grateful for the video that you put together and our teachers also gave out some of the Engineering Day problems to solve so that students could experience these from home," said Dr. Molly McMahon, Ph.D., Principal of the South Row School.

In the seven-minute production, Lacroix explained what an engineer was. "Engineers are problem solvers," he said to the students. "They use math and science and work in teams with other engineers and scientists to improve the world around us."

Lacroix talked about the many different types of engineers



Gary Lacroix gives a virtual briefing on what it is like to work for the Corps of Engineers.

Photo by Ann Marie R. Harvie

there are and described each one. He explained that the Corps of Engineers is made up of many of the engineers he described. "The Corps of Engineers specializes in certain things," said Lacroix. "We are a 37,000-person agency with multiple missions to support the people of the United States."

The engineer told his audience about some of the District's high profile projects such as the Cape Cod Canal Bridge Replacement, Boston Harbor deepening and the recent facility assessments for conversion to alternate care facilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic. He also talked about all the partnerships the District has with local, state and federal agencies.

He concluded by touching on his own, personal connection to the Corps of Engineers and encouraging the students to consider a career with the agency when they are older.

"My favorite things about working for the Corps of Engineers are the work we do -- the different challenges we get to meet every single day," said Lacroix. "And I get to work with a great group of engineers, architects, scientists and other professionals who are equally committed to execute projects that enrich the lives of people in our communities."

Lacroix's video resonated with students. Dr. McMahon was very appreciative of the efforts by Lacroix and Vasquez made to ensure video was a part of the school's event. "Your video explaining the work of the Corps of Engineers was a perfect complement to show how applicable these problem solving skills are to real-life applications," said Dr. McMahon. "Your involvement also reminded us of how supportive the larger community is to our students' educations."

# Dredging up the past



Distinguished Civilian Gallery member Robert "Bobby" Byrne stands by his portrait display during New England District's 239th Founder's Day Celebration at Concord Park Headquarters June 20, 2014.

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