

Yankee Engineer

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New District Commander tours
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Yankee Voices



From the New England District Commander: Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

I want to hear from you! The 2020 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) will run Sept. 15 through Oct. 27 and will be open to all of you.

To achieve the goal of being a responsive survey, OPM revised the survey by streamlining the core FEVS content and adding items to assess the federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The addition of the COVID-19 items will enable us to collect data to inform policy and guidance and assess our mission continuity and delivery of critical services.

I encourage all of you to complete the 2020 FEVS. Your feedback is invaluable and your voices should be heard! Continue to assist us in making improvements by providing your invaluable feedback! If you have any questions, please reach out to Jackie DiDomenico, EEO Officer, Jacqueline.d.didomenico@usace.army.mil.

Col. John Atilano II
New England District Commander



Photos by Jon Belmont

Above: Mrs. Gillman pins on Lt. Col. Gillman's new rank on his jacket. Lt. Col. Gillman's children pin his rank on his shirt.

Gillman promoted to Lieutenant Colonel

Congratulations to New England District's Deputy District Commander, Mark Gillman, who was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel effective Aug. 1.

"Promotion to Lieutenant Colonel is a big deal. It recognizes Lt. Col. Gillman's potential for future service to our Army and our nation," said Col. John Atilano II, District Commander, in his announcement to the District team. "We are lucky to have Lt. Col. Gillman on our team. He is a fantastic officer who leads with toughness, fairness, integrity, and empathy."

The COVID-19 pandemic prevented a traditional promotion ceremony for Lt. Col. Gillman, but that didn't mean it couldn't be special. The event was held virtually on Aug. 14 with family and friends in attendance via electronic devices. During the virtual ceremony, Lt. Col. Gillman's wife and four children placed his new rank on his uniform.

"Thanks to all of you," said the newly minted Lieutenant Colonel. "I couldn't have done it without you inspiring, driving, teaching, supporting, strengthening and looking out for me over these last 16-plus years."





Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Tickner assumes command of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers North Atlantic Division during the change of command ceremony.

U.S. Army Photos by Scott Cowell

North Atlantic region Army engineers receive new commander

By Jennifer Gunn
NAD Public Affairs

Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Tickner became the 58th commanding general and division engineer of the North Atlantic Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, during a change of command ceremony July 15 at the division's Fort Hamilton, New York, headquarters. He assumed leadership from Maj. Gen. Jeffrey L. Milhorn, who commanded the unit since 2018.

"In many ways, this assignment feels like a homecoming," Tickner said. "My ties to this area of the nation run deep."

Tickner, a native of Wayne, Pennsylvania, has family in the area and served as commander of the division's Philadelphia District from 2008-2010. His most recent assignment was as the USACE Pacific Ocean Division commander at Fort Shafter, Hawaii.

"I'm also keenly aware of the unique mission of the division, from the critical work we do with our military and defense agencies in the U.S. and across the Atlantic ... to shoring up the northeast from storms and supporting our nation with critical projects that spur our nation's economic engine," Tickner said.

As the North Atlantic Division commander, Tickner will oversee an annual program of more than \$5 billion to plan, design and construct projects to support the military, protect America's water resources, mitigate risk from disasters, and restore and enhance the environment throughout 14 states in the northeast as well as throughout Europe and Africa.

He is also responsible for a variety of Division engineering and construction activities for international, federal, state and local governments and agencies in more than a dozen Northeastern states as well as overseas.

The North Atlantic Division is one of nine regions providing engineering and construction services to the nation. It is the Corps' headquarters for the Northeastern United States, Europe, and Africa, with offices in Concord, Massachusetts, New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Norfolk, Virginia and Wiesbaden, Germany.

Milhorn has been reassigned to USACE headquarters in Washington as the deputy commanding general for military and international operations.



Lt. Gen. Todd T. Semonite (left), Chief of Engineers and commanding general of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, presents Maj. Gen. Jeffrey L. Milhorn the Legion of Merit prior to the change of command ceremony. Also pictured is Debbie Milhorn.

District Commander holds first town meeting



Col. John A. Atilano II
New England District Commander

Col. John Atilano II, New England District Commander, held his first town meeting July 24 at the Concord Park headquarters in Concord, Massachusetts. Col. Atilano held the town meeting virtually to reach as many District team members as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I wish I could hold this in person with all of you, but due to COVID, we have to practice our social distancing," he said. "But know that my heart and my thoughts are with all of you as we get through this together."

Col. Atilano introduced the panel of experts he had with him to answer the team's questions as they came in through a virtual chat room. The panel consisted of Kim Kaminski-Donaher, Human Resources; Terry Negron, Office of Counsel; Dan Finley, CIO-G6; Will Sanders, Logistics; Maj. (P) Mark Gillman, Deputy Commander; Sheila Harvey, Safety; John Keeler, Resource Management; and Dave Schafer, Emergency Management.

Before he began his briefing, he

presented Sally Rigione with a Bunker Hill certificate for her work as Acting Chief of Public Affairs. "Your dedication and positive attitude in support of the District and the Corps mission is irreplaceable," he said.

Col. Atilano thanked everyone for the warm welcome he received from the District team. "We are the best District in the Division," he said. "Being here feels like coming home. My goal is to meet all of you by the end of the year."

The new commander plans to visit all the District's project sites as well. He said he defines winning as getting quality results, on time and on budget. "I want to thank you for all the hard work you have done throughout the history of the District, but definitely in the COVID environment."

pandemic.

The District also lost staff due to retirements during the last five months. Col. Atilano thanked Tim Dugan, Public Affairs; Don Fillman, Cape Cod Canal; Christine Johnson-Battista, Construction; Ann LeBlanc, Engineering; Phil Nimeskern, Regulatory; Helen Newcomb, Operations and Col. (ret) William Conde for their many years of dedicated service.

Col. Atilano recognized all the District team members deployed overseas last year – Drew Clemens, Jason Paolino, Jeff Teller, Steve Tibbetts and Garrison Pollack.

While serving as the North Atlantic Division Deputy Commander, Col. Atilano read all of the District's situation

'COVID is an enduring condition of our operating environment. It's just the way it's going to be. We need to be prepared to do this for quite some time.'

- Col. John Atilano II

Col. Atilano thanked all the construction representatives, survey crews, logistics teams, park rangers, canal workers, the alternate care facility assessment teams and everyone else who refused to let the mission fail and came into work every day. "I appreciate all you've done," he said.

According to Col. Atilano, the New England District has hired 40 people, including four DA interns, since March. He welcomed them all to the District and thanked the trainers, supervisors and G&A staff for figuring out how to bring people onto the team during the

reports and said he was impressed by all the awards and recognitions the District has received over the past year.

Col. Atilano gave the team a little background on himself -- he has spent 26 years in the U.S. Army, he is married with three children and considers himself very family-oriented.

COVID-19 became the focus of Col. Atilano's talk, saying that he has received many questions on the subject. One of his goals for the town meeting was to help alleviate some of the anxiety felt by many team members. He said COVID-19 had changed the way the

District has had to do business and the way the team interacts with each other and those outside the District. "I hope I'm wrong, but this isn't going away anytime soon," he said. "COVID is an enduring condition of our operating environment. It's just the way it's going to be. We need to be prepared to do this for quite some time."

When it comes to COVID-19, Col. Atilano said he was going to protect the District team. The New England District is at Phase II, meaning up to 50% of the workforce can be working in Concord Park. He said he would not be walking around to see who is in the building if the program is delivered. He told his audience that he would keep them updated on the OPM exception to policy regarding telework with children at home that is set to expire on Dec. 31.

Col. Atilano asked the audience several questions – What is the District doing well? Does anyone have suggestions or changes to the current operation? He said he wants to hear from the District team, and any questions after the town meeting could be directed to the Commander's Inbox, located on the District's Intranet page.

After his presentation, the District Commander opened the meeting up to questions, most of which concerned COVID-19: face coverings in Concord Park (face coverings are mandatory), telework (team members may continue to do so) and when the District will go to Phase 3 (can't be determined yet). Other questions referred to windows in the new headquarters (windows will not open), will he have an advisory board that will include union representation (there is one currently in place) and the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (opens Sept. 14).

After all the questions he received were answered, Col. Atilano concluded the town meeting by re-emphasizing how excited he is to be a part of the New England District team and looks forward to getting to know everyone.



Photo by Maryellen Iorio

Col. John Atilano II, presents Michael Kulbersh with a Commander's Award for Civilian Service in the Executive Office, Aug. 3.

Geologist Kulbersh receives Commander's Award

Michael Kulbersh, a project geologist for the Geo-Environmental Engineering Branch, Engineering Division, received a Commander's Award for Civilian Service during a visit to the Executive Office, Aug. 3. Col. John Atilano II, New England District Commander, presented the award.

Kulbersh received the commendation for advancing the state of the practice in environmental database management across multiple programs, leading to improved project execution and DoD custodianship of data in the Formerly Used Defense site (FUDS) program and former Fort Devens site. The former Fort Devens Site falls under the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) program.

"Mr. Kulbersh has been instrumental in the rollout of the FUDSchem database, leveraging his experience gained working with a similar database platform on Joint Base Cape Cod to help guide the implementation of FUDSchem," said Maryellen Iorio,

Chief, Geo-Environmental Engineering Branch.

According to Iorio, Kulbersh has played a pivotal role in advising not only New England District staff but national leadership across the Corps. He has held multiple training sessions with New England District team members, so they can use FUDSchem, and has made himself available to assist co-workers with questions about data entry.

"Mr. Kulbersh has been equally instrumental in making the Devens database happen," said Iorio. "He convinced the project team of the criticality of a database on the Former Fort Devens, given the complexity introduced by having multiple contractors involved over time and the need to find and track data efficiently."

Kulbersh's efforts go above and beyond his regular job duties, which will provide benefits far beyond New England District for years to come on key environmental programs.



Photos by Jenifer Thalhauser

Col. John Atilano II, District Commander (center) joins teams from New England District, Massport and Cashman Dredging and Marine Contracting at a meet and greet during his site visit.

District Commander tours Boston Harbor project

Col. John Atilano II and a team of New England District staff met with Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport) officials and members of the District's contractor, Cashman Dredging and Marine Contracting, Co. (Cashman), for a site visit of the Boston Harbor Deep Draft Navigation Project, July 28. The new District Commander's goal is to visit as many projects and New England District Field Team members as he can before the end of the year.

Deepening Boston Harbor will require removing 11.7 million cubic yards (cy) of ordinary material and 200-500 thousand cy of weathered rock. Dredging began on July 9, 2018 and is ongoing. As of July 2020, 10.4 million cy of material has been dredged.

The New England District commander and his team started the site visit with a meet and greet at the District's Project Construction Office. Col. Atilano met with Massport's Lisa Weiland, Chief Executive Officer; Mike Meyran, Port Director and Joseph Morris, Deputy Port Director.

Representatives from Cashman also attended the meeting. They were Dale Pyatt, Chief Executive Officer; Stephen Tobin, Chief Executive Operation Officer and Aaron Barton, Project Manager.

Following the meet and greet, Col. Atilano and his team joined Meyran, Morris and Cashman's representatives

on an hour and a half tour of the project.

Col. Atilano ended his site visit by touring Massport's Conley Terminal. District team members who participated in the visit were Maj. Mark Gillman, Scott Acone, Sean Dolan, Wendy Gendron, Mark Cutter, Jen Thalhauser, Stephen Umbrell, Bob Casoli, Kevin McNally and Michelle O'Donoghue.



Site visit participants prepare to take a boat tour of the Boston Harbor project.

Operations secretary retires after 33 years of service

Helen Newcomb, long-time secretary for Operations Division, has joined the retirement community after 33 years of federal service.

The Operations team hosted a retirement webinar in Newcomb's honor, June 26. Over 40 people logged in. Eric Pedersen, Chief of Operations, assisted by his deputy, Adam Durando, hosted the event.

Pedersen told the audience that Newcomb's retirement was bittersweet.

"We're here to celebrate her career, but we are also here to wish her well in her retirement and the next stage of her life," he said.

The Operations Chief said he has worked with Newcomb for a little over five years and said the experience had been extremely rewarding and enriching for him.

"Helen has frequently taken on a matriarchal role in the Operations Tech Support Branch which I have greatly appreciated," he said. "She frequently reminds me to keep perspective, keep balance and keep on track."

Pedersen talked about Newcomb's career, saying she started at the District in August 1987. Prior to joining the Corps in New England, Newcomb worked in the private sector and took time to raise her family. Pedersen said her caring and humanity as well as her professionalism would be sorely missed.

"Remember that you are retiring from work. You are not retiring from us," he said.

Durando followed Pedersen and expressed how impressed he was at the number of people who logged in to wish Newcomb well. He said he met Newcomb seven years ago when he first came to the District and remembered how welcoming she was to him when he arrived.

"She was just a wealth of knowledge about the organization which was very



Helen Newcomb

helpful," he said. "You are excellent in your job and always go above and beyond to make sure things get taken care of."

Durando said he enjoyed their daily chats they had the past couple of years. He thanked Newcomb for all her years of service to the office and to the District.

"I wish you the best as you transition into a well-deserved retirement," he said. "I hope to see you at all the future District events."

Pedersen returned to the screen to present Newcomb with the Civilian Service Commendation Medal and her retirement certificate. He told the audience that he would be presenting the awards to Newcomb in person when she came in to process out. Newcomb received the medal for "meritorious service as secretary to the Operations Division Technical Support Branch, New England District from August 1987 to May 2020."

Newcomb thanked Pedersen and Durando for all their support.

"It makes me feel good to know that Operations is going to be in such good hands," she said.

The District's new retiree introduced family members and recognized many of the retirees who virtually came to welcome her into the retirement community.

Newcomb said she enjoyed working with both the Concord Park and the field teams. She talked about all of the nature pictures the field teams would send her. Newcomb thanked many people who had helped her along her professional journey to include Distinguished Civilian Gallery member and Construction retiree Dick Carlson who hired her when she was a single mom so she could have benefits. She also told some amusing and true stories that occurred during her career, most occurred at the Murphy Federal Center. Stories included woodchucks running amuck in the building, Army helicopters landing so close to the facility, the windows shook and the time that the Murphy Federal Center flooded so badly, a makeshift bridge was built so team members could get to the center of the facility known as "Times Square."

Hoping the pandemic will subside enough for in-person visits, Newcomb said she hoped to come into future Corps holiday parties and Founder's Day so that she can physically say goodbye to people as so many were like family.

"Many of my family are scattered all over the country, and it has been hard not having them close by," she said. "But the Corps has been a great family to me. I have really appreciated all your support and friendships. I'm not going to say goodbye. I'm going to say see you later."

Many of the attendees wanted to speak, tell stories and wish Newcomb well. Those included Karl Hakala, Janet Patev, Joan Gardner, Newcomb's sister Margie, Chris Way, Jeff Mangum, Nicole Giles, Barbara Ingalls, Kane Turmelle, Kim Russell, Kris Blanchette and Steve Lehmann.

Newcomb plans on spending her time doing things she likes to do—going to the beach and relaxing by the pool.

Dredging up the past



Photo by Brian Murphy

Lynne McKinney Lydick portrays Clara Barton during her one women re-enactment show in celebration of Women's History Month in the Concord Park Theatre, Aug. 29, 2012.

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