

# Wilmington DISTRICT NEWS

Volume 21, Number 6

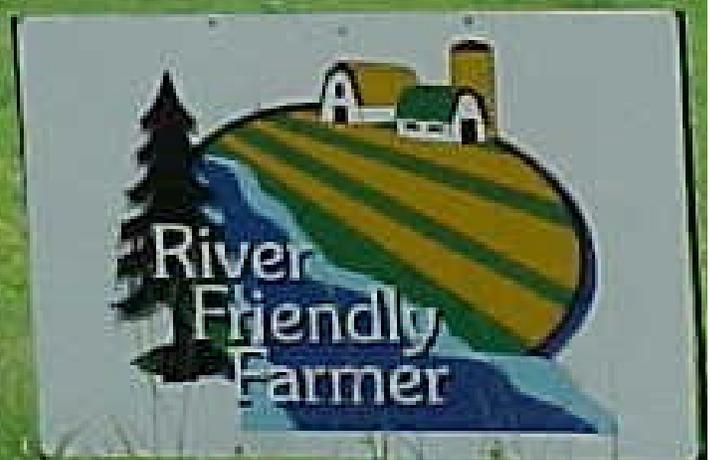
June 2001



*Small farmers  
make big  
contributions to  
North Carolina  
rivers.*



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
Wilmington District



# Wilmington DISTRICT NEWS

**Volume 21, Number 6  
June 2001**

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**Wilmington Harbor  
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# Wilmington Harbor Project Delivery Team marks success in first construction cycle

By Penny Schmitt



**A** year into construction, the Wilmington Harbor Project is ahead of schedule and on budget. The key to success?: A will to create conditions for progress among all who cooperate to accomplish the work effectively and safely.

The Wilmington Harbor Project Delivery Team does more than reflect the Project Management Busi-

ness Process—it *embodies* that process. Responding to a constantly shifting kaleidoscope of project issues and customer or stakeholder concerns is critical to the success of a project this complex. Team members and partners group and re-group to address issues as they arise. The project manager provides the focus, leadership, facilitation, and negotiation skills to navigate issues to a resolution that meets customer needs in accordance with law and policy.



Shipment of goods continues through the harbor deepening project.

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The Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) that governs work on the project is proving spectacularly successful. Its most powerful feature

is a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Agreement between the project sponsor, North Carolina Division of Water Resources, and Wilmington District. The SOP guides the partners through contract solicitations, changes and modifications to contracts, potential claims, and other issues. Its guiding principle is to “discuss issues and concerns well ahead of time and make proactive,

informed decisions.” The Project Cooperation Team (PCT) relies on the SOP both for the issues it was written to address, and other challenges—like changes in funding requirements.

Together, the Project Delivery Team (PDT) and PCT have faced and resolved several issues, including:

- **Safe traffic on the river**—Construction requires work in the single navigation channel. The US Coast Guard, the River Pilots, the Ports Authority, the Contractors, and the PDT ensure both the project and river traffic stay on sched-

ule without hazards to navigation. In a just-in-time world, shippers lose in excess of \$50,000 per day for every day’s delay in bringing one ship to berth. Success is critical to the Port’s economic health.

- **Sand on the beaches**—

- \* **Brunswick County.** A major project challenge has been arriving at an equitable distribution of beach quality sand to Brunswick County communities. Because cost-sharing agreements placed financial obligations on the five benefiting communities, project sponsors and partners worked closely to ensure a fair use of resources. The resulting section 933 project is already providing much needed shore protection at Bald Head Island, and preparations are under way for sand placement at Caswell and Holden Beaches.

- \* **New Hanover County.** The project also placed sand on two long-term Corps shore protection projects at Kure Beach and Carolina Beach. This effort cut both harbor project costs and cyclical nourishment costs. Savings at Kure Beach alone amounted to \$1.5 million.

- **Ahead-of-schedule execution.** Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company took advantage of good work conditions and available equipment to press ahead with the Ocean Bar I contract, driving down costs for out years. However, their achievement challenged the PCT partners to move funding forward

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# Wilmington Harbor Project continued



## Blast testing

(Continued from page 1)

despite tight state and federal budgets. Savings, expeditious construction, and the ability to bring production forward have inspired the State and Congress to push hard for funding and keep execution on or ahead of schedule.

- **Channel clearing.** Immediately following work at Big Island, two channel obstructions occurred. Working with the River Pilots, the US Coast Guard, the State Port, the District's Survey Team, the Harbor Project Resident Office, Construction, and other Project Delivery Team members, project partners quickly set standard procedures for reporting and clearing obstructions.

### **Environmental enhancements:**

Environmental excellence is a primary project goal. Daily work consistently shows an extraordinary dedication to ensure that the project moves forward without damage to endangered aquatic animals or vegetation. Both the Corps and its contractors have contributed projects to enhance the environment. These include:

- **Island 13 Mitigation Site.** This former dredged material disposal site has been transformed into an estua-

rine habitat and nursery for marine life. The mitigation site, now complete, involved lowering the 30-acre island's profile and planting native vegetation to create marshes where larval fish and other marine animals can thrive. The project replaces more than double the amount of wetland habitat being disturbed during project construction.

- **Ferry Slip Island and South Pelican Island.** These two dredged material disposal sites are important to Royal Terns and other birds that require bare sand for nesting. Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company donated \$6,000 worth of work to prepare the shore area. This June, the Audubon Society the Corps and Great Lakes representatives showed reporters thousands of birds nesting on the shores.
- **Fish passage structure.** Lock and Dam No. 1 on the Cape Fear River marks the first hurdle in upstream passage for the American White Shad. Altered locking procedures have improved passage for breeding shad, but more can be done. As part of the project mitigation, a rock structure will be built downstream of the spillway to provide better fish passage.

### **Products and processes for the future:**

The project offers opportunities to test new processes that will become part of our District's future operations.

- **Blast testing:** During project study and design, blasting effects on marine life became an issue. The PDT worked with a blast consultant to conduct extensive test blasting and monitoring of endangered species. The tests ruled out one proposed mitigation method, a bubble curtain around the blast site, as ineffective. Other techniques, including split-second timing of blasts and stemming the blast holes, were adopted because of their success. The pre-test refined procedures, lowered project costs and prepared the way for successful blasting in the channel.
- **Best Value Contract training:** The District Contracting Office arranged training for the PDT and the Project Partners on Best Value Contracting. Now major contract acquisitions will be based on a number of factors to acquire the best possible execution, for the best

(Continued on page 3)

# Wilmington Harbor continued



**Dredging on the Cape Fear River.**

*(Continued from page 2)*

price and project partners will be fully informed of the process. This knowledge will continue to yield benefits for the District for years to come.

- **Sand monitoring:** With the help of the Duck Research Facility, the PDT conducted baseline studies of sand conditions at several critical locations, particularly off Bald Head Island, where some stakeholders argued that dredging would cause erosion. This baseline study and continued monitoring will provide state-of-the-art information on sand and water movement around barrier islands. The information will be useful for this and for future projects and studies.
- **Survey modernization:** To prepare the Wilmington Harbor Project, the Operations Division completely refitted the Survey vessel GILLETTE, adding side-scan survey equipment and updating other equipment. In addition to greatly

facilitating accurate survey for the project, the new survey equipment has already proven helpful to the US Coast Guard in locating channel obstructions unrelated to the harbor project.

### **Plans for the coming year:**

The height of summer brings something of a lull to the Wilmington Harbor Project, because dredging activities slow down and blasting ceases to protect endangered sea turtles and other marine animals. Beginning in mid-August, activity will pick up again, as work in the Big Island/ Keg Island and Ocean Bar II areas resumes. The next major contract to be let is the Passing Lane / Anchorage Basin Contract, which is scheduled to start early in Fiscal year 2002 (fall of 2001). Even though dredging is slower at this season, there's plenty of activity for members of the Project Delivery Team and Project Cooperation Team, as they prepare for the second big season of the project

## ***It takes a BIG team!***

The \$377 – million Wilmington Harbor Deepening Project is the largest single infrastructure project ever undertaken in the State of North Carolina. The project will deepen 37 miles of the Cape Fear River channel by four feet, move 27 million cubic yards of material, create more than six miles of passing lane for shipping, enlarge turning basins, place more than 6 million cubic yards of beach quality sand on area beaches for shore protection, and complete three significant environmental mitigation projects.

Project construction began in March 2000 and will continue into 2005. All construction must be accomplished while minimizing the impacts to shipping in the Cape Fear River Channel.

***Accomplishing all this takes a big team, working well together!***

Team members who must regularly coordinate financial actions as well as ensure construction progress and safe, on-schedule navigation include:

***Our Project Cooperation Team*** (the NC Ports Authority, the NC Division of Water Resources, and the Corps Project management team), the United States Coast Guard, the Wilmington Harbor Pilots Association, The Architect / Engineer firms and Contractors who have designed and are executing the work, Carolina Power and Light, the Brunswick County Beaches Consortium, The NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the Engineer Research and Development Center laboratory station at Duck, North Carolina.

The District's ***Wilmington Harbor Project Delivery Team***, according to Project Manager Wayne Bissette, "includes just about everybody in the District with the exception of our Regulatory field offices and lake projects." Team participants represent the District's Navigation and Survey teams, Geotech, Project Management, Planning, Engineering, Design, Safety, Construction, Resources Management, Contracting Office, Office of Counsel, Logistics, Public Affairs, and others.

# Corps partnership revitalizes trout streams

By Penny Schmitt

Seamless partnership is a vital reality for the US Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory Team in Wilmington District, North Carolina. The streambed mitigation program they've built with state and federal partners is being eyed by other states as a model.

A few years ago, the District addressed streambed losses by asking for wetlands mitigation. "We were asking developers to replace apples with oranges. More wetlands are good, but it's bad to lose vital streams," said Dr. Wayne Wright, Wilmington's Regulatory Division Chief.

Now, after working with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, the State Wildlife Commission, and other agencies, the District and its partners are restoring and enhancing trout streams throughout the state.

The effort began in North Carolina's western counties, rich in small mountain streams that make it the nation's second most important trout state. "We originally removed our 12 westernmost counties from the nationwide permit," said Robert Johnson, Chief of the District's Asheville Regulatory Office. "But that would have led to an overwhelming number of individual permit actions. Instead, we worked out a special permit condition for our 25 westernmost counties . . . two linear feet of stream restored or enhanced for every one linear foot consumed. We have a Memorandum of Understanding with the North Carolina



**The I-26 project will move millions of cubic yards of earth and rock, disturbing small streams in the process.**

Wildlife Commission to this effect—it's called the 'trout exclusion.'"

Now, the state Division of Water Quality requires a similar standard throughout the state.

Wilmington District and its state partners have talked to other states about what they're doing. "Colorado, for example, was impressed with the results we got using the streambed geomorphology that Micky Clemmons, of the State Wildlife Commission, learned to upgrade streams," Wright said.

A biologist whose expertise is in fisheries, Clemmons began learning about stream restoration from Luna Leopold, of Trout Unlimited. Since then, he and his partners in the Corps and DOT have been learning by doing.

"We are finding out what works and what doesn't," said Johnson. "The Corps' experience has been more in the hard engineering solutions." Some new techniques are less expensive than rip-rap, gabions (wire caged rock blankets), or other hardening. They include –

- Planting persimmon, ash, river birch, dogwood and other native trees to shade the water and protect oxygen levels.
- Installing rock vanes—a series of large rocks set in the stream—to divert flow toward the center of the channel, create meandering flows, or allow plunge pools to form.
- Stabilizing banks using natural materials like logs.
- Fencing cattle and other farm animals out of the stream channel.

"We are promoting these methods within the Corps," Wright said. "In our own District we have planned projects that can benefit from these methods."

Low costs gain the cooperation of project developers. Work with other agencies, like the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), draws in private landowners, many of them small farmers. "There's virtually no limit to the supply of streams out there that could benefit from this program," Johnson said.

*(Continued on page 5)*

# Corps Partnership continued...



**This 400-foot stretch of Bear Branch, restored by DOT as part of I-26 mitigation recently yielded a count of 200 live trout.**

*(Continued from page 4)*

## ***The program in action: Agricultural restoration***

To demonstrate how their joint program is working, Wright, Johnson and Clemmons led a tour of streambed restorations. Our route snaked up into the hills near Interstate 26, and passed farms hunkered down beside rocky mountain streams. At one modest farm, a rush of shallow water stepped down through willows. Fish leapt from a deep pool. Under a bridge, hundreds

of minnows, hogsuckers, and small-mouth bass hovered in the shade. The stream looked like just what nature made.

In fact, it is what the Corps' Regulatory partnership is restoring to vital life. To create that lively stream, extensive damage had to be turned around. "Damage often starts with channelization," Johnson said. "Landowners straighten and deepen the stream so much that it becomes literally separated from its natural flood plain. Trees are often clearcut or bulldozed, depriving the water of shade. Hot summer sun sucks out the

oxygen, channelization promotes erosion, and the stream begins to die."

Fortunately such damage can be reversed cheaply. "We completed work on this 5,000 foot stretch of farmland for about \$100,000. That's about \$20 a foot," Johnson said.

In a tour of the changes that resulted in a cleaner stream, we stopped first in a steep field to look at a spring-fed cistern.

"We built nine cisterns on this farm," Clemmons said. "Here, the cattle can get good fresh water. In

*(Continued on page 6)*

# Enhancing Carolina trout streams continued



**Micky Clemmons (left) of the North Carolina Wildlife Commission and Robert Johnson (right) of the Corps' Asheville Regulatory Office, survey the I-26 road project.**

*(Continued from page 5)*

the past they would have trodden into that little tributary.” He pointed to a stream less than a foot wide separated from the pasture by fencing. “That little trickle is vital for trout and other fish. The fence keeps cattle from tearing down the banks and putting silt in the stream.”

At the top of another hill, we saw a feeding station built using grant monies from the National Resource Conservation Service and the state. “The farmer contributed 25 percent of the cost from his compensation for participating in the program. It got his cows out of the mud and their muck out of the stream.” In some cases, landowners also reap tax benefits.

The farmers are part of a genuine pioneering effort. “This is one of the first such programs in the nation,”

said Dr. Wright. “I’m excited and encouraged to see this kind of citizen participation.”

“The NRCS has been very helpful. They have long-term, excellent working relationships with the farmers. They know where potentially good sites are, and who is most likely to be willing to participate.”

### ***Roadbuilding leads to stream revitalization***

The opportunity to improve trout streams in North Carolina ironically emerged from an activity that disturbs streams—road construction. “By 1988, we knew there would be Environmental Impacts on the nine-mile section of the Interstate 26 corridor now being built,” said Johnson. “As the project approached construction, we worked with DOT and the other agencies to mitigate.”

The Corps and its partners came up with a program and \$1.4 million in funding. Their goal? Restore and enhance 26,000 feet of mountain stream as mitigation for the 13,000 feet of streambed that will be channeled through culverts or otherwise disturbed.

Stan Hyatt, the DOT Resident Engineer for the project, saw the project as an opportunity. “We set out with the idea in mind that this project would become a model for environmental work on future projects.”

“Monitoring the before, during and after conditions on and around the project is one of our biggest initiatives,” Hyatt said. “We hired Wildlife Associates, of Whittier, North Carolina, to inventory vegetation and animal life in the stream areas before the project began. We

*(Continued on page 7)*

# Stream policy continued...



**Rock vanes like the one pictured here, divert flow away from banks to stop erosion.**

*(Continued from page 6)*

are continuing to monitor. I'm happy to say that we still have trout where we had trout and bugs where we had bugs."

"Between ourselves and the Soil Conservation Service, we had funds for two demonstration sites," said Clemmons. "That money lets us make a big difference.

The Bear Branch stream relocation is just one example of what we can do. We worked on just 400 feet of stream at this one site." Formerly channelized into a rock-lined trench, the stream now meanders through a grassy area.

"Our first step was to talk to a bioengineer," Hyatt said. "He estimated \$600,000 to relocate the channel and improve the streambed. Micky and I thought we could do better. Between the knowledge of stream geomorphology he picked up

at courses in Colorado, and my ability to run contract administration, we made a plan that cost \$30,000—five percent of the original estimate."

"We ran a fish count in that 400-foot section recently," Clemmons said. "We counted 200 trout living there."

DOT and the Corps are also coming up with better designs for the culverts that must be used to conduct streams under massive fill areas. "In some places, streams travel up to 1,800 feet through a culvert. We don't know how well fish do in that lightless, low flow environment, but we are trying to improve their potential to move safely through those areas."

New culverts are built with baffles that keep water moving in a meandering pattern. They also feature a stepped level, so that at dry times, the water is diverted into a narrower

space and affords more depth and freedom of movement for fish. "During heavy rains, the higher side of the culvert can easily accommodate the added flow," Johnson explained. DOT has also built tunnels through the big fill areas so that bears and other wildlife can have safe passage under the highway.

Later, on their lunch break near the road construction project, Johnson and Clemmons ran into a colleague from the National Resource Conservation Service, who stopped by their table to tell them about a new piece of land that might become available for stream restoration. Yes, these men are the Corps, the NRCS, the state DOT, the Wildlife Commission. But also—and more important—they are *people*, working seamlessly in partnership, who make the landscape change for the better day after day.

# Stakeholders meet to discuss coastal impacts

By Penny Schmitt



Stakeholders listen to a proposed NC Coastal preservation & restoration bill.

*“To myself I seem to have been only a boy playing on the seashore . . . whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.”*

Sir Isaac Newton

Where sand, weather, people, fish, birds, and people meet at the shoreline the sound you hear is not always the soothing swash of surf—sometimes it’s a many-tongued debate about the best way to manage precious resources.

This May, many of those most passionately engaged in that dialogue met at the US Army Corps of Engineers’ Wilmington District Headquarters. Stakeholders in the

shoreline represented diverse interests, from county and community officials who are sponsoring beach nourishment projects, to state and federal resource agencies concerned for water quality, sand movement, and wildlife habitat, and even the state Department of Transportation.

Originally, the Corps had brought this group together to help stakeholders better understand the process of project development and delivery.

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# Stakeholders meet continued

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As the diverse group met earlier in the spring, a strong need to expand their interest and attention to the environmental and natural resource issues that influence project development came up.

“Meetings like these are at the heart of the Corps’ Project Management Business Process,” said Deputy District Engineer Eugene Tickner. “Many people think the Corps is still the organization they knew about back in the 1970s and 1980s—you know, the people who came in and told you we were going to fix your problem and here was the way we were going to do it. When we became an organization that shared project costs with sponsors that all changed. Stakeholders are full partners in our business process from the very beginning. They are full members of the decision-making team.”

This meeting’s purpose? The stakeholders had decided that they wanted to discuss desirable and viable ways to gather information about North Carolina’s coast on a regional basis, rather than as part of a specific project study.

Two participating organizations, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Environmental Defense Fund, have written to the Corps formally requesting such a study. But it’s not a question of the Corps “Just doing it,” explained Tickner. “As a project funded organization that receives funding from Congress after a deliberative process, we don’t initiate projects. Project sponsors—state, county or local governments—must do that.”

Thus the Corps, actively involved in many shoreline projects that are already authorized by Congress or under study with Congressional approval, served as facilitator for the meeting, while participants hammered out an approach to the issues.

Speakers at the meeting covered a wide variety of initiatives. Ray

Sturza, Dare County Planner, briefed the group on North Carolina House Bill 418, the North Carolina Beach Preservation and Restoration Act. The proposed legislation, he explained, had little chance of becoming law in this year’s session, but represented an effort by North Carolinians to come to grips with managing coastal issues and providing funds for change.

Spencer Rogers, of North Carolina Sea Grant, explained a North Carolina Coastal Federation initiative to identify the scientific knowledge really needed to approach coastal management intelligently. “If we are spending a lot of money to monitor the wrong things, we are wasting resources,” he said. His group decided that the areas in which information was most needed are:

- *Socioeconomic policy*
- *Biology*
- *Engineering and geology*

They are working to come up with a white paper that will clearly answer three questions about each area: “What do we know? What don’t we know? What do we most need to learn?”

Harry Simmons, Mayor of Caswell Beach and Chairman of the Brunswick County Beaches Consortium, reported out on a recent seminar sponsored by Save our State. “It’s too bad that most media coverage centered on the debate between Mayor Joan Altman of Oak Island and Dr. Orrin Pilkey. That only confirmed that coastal issues are contentious. The real interest for me was the wide variety of other issues this seminar addressed, like storm water management.”

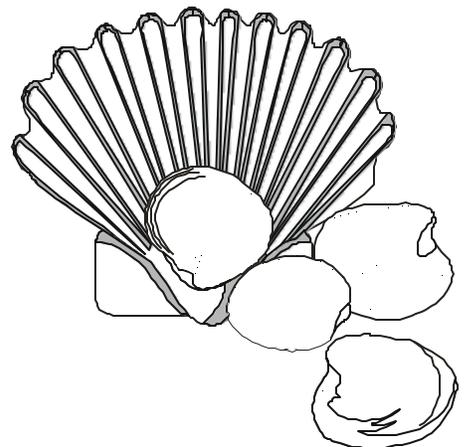
Mike Wutkowski, of Wilmington District, presented information from Jacksonville District about the state of Florida’s attempts in the 1980s and 1990s to carry out a regional coastal management study. What he

highlighted was some formidable obstacles—cost, time, and authority are the chief hurdles facing such an effort. “Currently, there’s no model out there that is going to easily give a depiction of sand movement along a whole coastline,” he pointed out.

Wutkowski’s review of the Florida experience did reveal what only one Coastal Federation Representative had been aware of: Federal Authority for a nationwide shoreline protection study of sorts already exists in the Water Resources Development Act of 1999. However the Act provided no funding for such a study.

After a lunch break, stakeholders spent the afternoon session brainstorming what they would like a coastal study to look like. Should it be a data bank? A management plan? Should it be a State project? A Federal Study under the legislation cited in the morning session? Who—if anyone—would want to sponsor such a study? The group put forward a number of volunteers as a task force to further refine a suitable scope and look further into the question of sponsorship.

In July, as the stakeholders continue their partnership approach to coastal issues, the task force will report out on their work. The stakeholders will then turn their attention to understanding the economics of coastal projects.



# Supreme Court decision on regulation of isolated waters and wetlands

By Wayne Wright

A recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court has changed the way the Corps of Engineers administers Section 404 of the Clean Water Act in certain waters and wetlands of the U.S. The case was Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County, Illinois, (SWANCC) v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and involved statutory and constitutional challenges to Clean Water Act jurisdiction over isolated, non-navigable, intrastate waters and wetlands.

In the SWANCC case, the United States Supreme Court considered the extent of the Corps of Engineers regulatory jurisdiction over isolated waters. Isolated waters are waters, including wetlands, which do not have a surface water connection or are contiguous to other waters. Since 1977, The Corps and EPA have considered that Clean Water Act jurisdiction extends to isolated waters if the degradation or destruction of those waters could affect interstate commerce. Prior to the SWANCC decision, a common means of establishing this interstate commerce connection was to find use of the water by migratory birds.

It was this “migratory bird rule” that was before the Supreme Court in the SWANCC case.

The Court found that the language of the Clean Water Act did not support this administrative interpretation of the Clean Water Act. The Court specifically held that in passing the Clean Water Act, Congress did

not intend for the Corps and EPA to extend jurisdiction over isolated wetlands on the basis of use by migratory birds.

That portion of the opinion is clear, and the Corps is no longer relying on use by migratory birds to support jurisdiction over isolated waters. Corps and EPA headquarters, together with the Department of Justice, are currently reviewing the opinion to issue guidance on whether the case impacts regulation of isolated wetlands based on connections to interstate commerce other than use by migratory birds. Other interstate commerce connections the Corps has relied on include interstate recreational use, such as hunting sand fishing, and use of the water in industries engaged in interstate commerce.

It is significant that at the present time these isolated, non-navigable, intrastate waters and wetlands are the **only** type of wetlands affected by this ruling. It should be clearly understood that the Corps of Engineers continues to regu-



Corps regulatory TEAM members inspect a ditched wetland site.

late all other waters and wetlands in the same manner and under the same regulations and policies as in the past. It is also possible that placing pollutants into isolated, non-navigable, intrastate waters and wetlands which can be shown to affect interstate commerce in other ways may continue to be regulated.

Isolated waters and wetlands constitute only a very small percentage of the total area of waters and wetlands in North Carolina. So the overall impact of non-regulation of some of these isolated waters and wetlands based on total area of waters and wetlands is rather small. However, there are some highly ecologically significant isolated waters and wetlands in the state. Loss of regulation over many of these would be very significant from an ecological viewpoint. Many of these types of waters and wetlands have endangered species and rare species and contribute significantly to maintenance of viable populations of many unique and valuable plant and animal species. Some of these may also serve other very important functions, such as improvement of water quality, protection of drinking water supplies, flood reduction, recreation, etc. Loss of these will significantly affect our ecological heritage and culture.

(Continued on page 11)

# Operations Plan for 2002 takes shape

The Future . . . what's it going to look like? About 50 Wilmington District Team Members met at Wrightsville Beach in Early June to set objectives for the 2002 Operations Plan. Eugene Tickner, the District's Deputy Director for Project and Programs Management, charged the planning team with making decisions that aimed at 2010, as well as at next year. "In February, we prepared for the Division Senior Leader Conference by thinking through where we want to be in 10 years. The objectives we set to day will contribute to getting there!"

Now experienced in envisioning accomplishments—and making them become real—the planning team imagined some goals that point toward the District and the Corps of the future.

Notably, the team decided that bringing together diverse interests and stakeholders to examine water and land resources issues was an important goal, together with building the facilitator skills needed to steer through controversial issues. "North Carolina is already seeing water supply and land use controversies due to rapid growth and urbanization," Tickner said. "Our customers and stakeholders will appreciate our ability to work with them

productively toward solutions that are good for communities, for the region and the nation.

Through several other initiatives, the District plans to further refine its techniques for gathering and responding to customer feedback and concerns. The planning team proposes to move further forward, building on baseline data, seeking more feedback, and holding face-to-face assessments with customers when projects are completed. Monitoring and response will involve assessments of responses from customers who spend a day boating or picnicking or camping at one of our lakes, as well as sponsors of major projects.

Growth in the District itself motivated the team to propose a 'Bridge to Success' program to orient new employees to the District and support them as they develop their career paths. With many potential retirements in the next three to five years, and more than 40 recruitment actions this year, the planning team decided that we must make sure that we blend our new people into the District's professional life in ways that offers the best to them, and inspires the best from them as well. While initially focusing on new TEAM members, the program will also provide men-

toring/career development opportunities for current TEAM members.

Changing work patterns throughout the South Atlantic Region led the group to demand that we deploy a workload management system that includes resource leveling and covers all District project work activities.

The Geographic Information System database—initiated as an Operations Plan goal two years ago—keeps expanding to cover more territory and do more and new kinds of work for us. We're looking to develop a GIS predictive model, to enhance the database so that we can employ geographic search capabilities, expand of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway to include Wilmington Harbor data, incorporate and develop a Regulatory mitigation bank data base that contains qualitative information about sites statewide, and add several layers of data to information about our John H. Kerr Lake project.

Familiar objectives targeted to Safety and Risk Management, program execution, new project starts, support for others continue in place. We know that some of our most important missions will be the same year after year—we just keep raising the achievement bar a little higher!

## Supreme Court decision continued

*(Continued from page 10)*

It is strongly recommended that before anyone undertakes an activity which would normally be regulated under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act in what appears to be an isolated wetland, they contact the Corps of Engineers office covering the County in which the activity would take place and ask for a determination of (1.) whether the site is indeed

isolated, non-navigable, and intrastate and (2.) whether there is any interstate commerce linkage other than migratory birds on the site. Only if the area is indeed isolated, and there is no interstate commerce connection, may the site be exempt from regulation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Otherwise the proponent may undertake the work and become the focus of an enforce-

ment action by either the Corps or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the work. Information on the counties covered by the various Corps offices in North Carolina and on the Regulatory Program, regulations, policies, and the SWANCC court decision may be found on the homepage web site, [www.saw02.usace.army.mil](http://www.saw02.usace.army.mil).

# HR Corner

## Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Open Season Information

By Jackie Cook

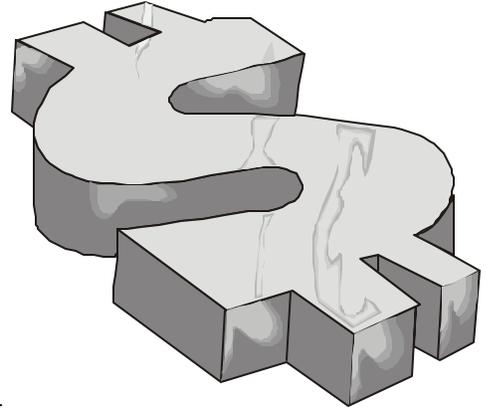
The Thrift Savings Plan Open Season began May 15, 2001 and continues through July 31, 2001. Although all Thrift Savings Plan Open Seasons are important, this particular open season has received high visibility due to the changes cited in Public Law 106-361, enacted October 27, 2000, and the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001, signed on December 21, 2000.

Public Law 106-361 allowed employees to begin contributing to the Thrift Savings Plan immediately upon appointment to a position covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System or the Civil Service Retirement System. The Consolidated Appropriations Act brought more changes that raised the employee contribution limits. Other changes for this open season include two new investment funds, ability to roll over funds from qualified retirement and 401(k) plans from previous employers and changing fund allocations directly with the Thrift Savings Plan. The numerous changes placed a significant responsibility on the Thrift Investment Board, Department of Defense and electronic systems contractors to update regulations and make changes to computer data base systems. Unfortunately, detailed procedures necessary to provide guidance for modification of internal

systems codes were not released in time to ensure full testing of these changes to the Department of Defense and Army Benefits Center-Civilian automated systems prior to the start of Thrift Savings Open Season.

**As of May 30, 2001, employees have been able to make an automated open season election by calling the toll free number (1-877-276-9287).** The Army Benefits Center – Civilian Thrift Savings Plan web site system has not yet been fixed. Until the web based application, Employee Benefits Information Systems Thrift Savings Plan module software is found to be error-free and is able to accurately process employees Thrift Savings Plan elections, the system will not be made available for any Thrift Savings Plan web transactions. The first possible effective date of an election made on or before June 30, 2001, is July 1, 2001. Elections made after the above date will be effective at the beginning of the next pay period following date of election. **To ensure that all employees will have adequate time to submit their elections and to allow for manual processing, a completed TSP-1 form may be submitted to the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC).**

Initial distribution of Form TSP-1 was made to Civilian Personnel Ad-



visory Centers in early May; however, employees may also download the TSP-1 Election Form from the Thrift Savings Plan web site at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov), by clicking on forms and publications, selecting forms and clicking specifically on the TSP-1 Election Form or request the latest form, dated May 2001, from their servicing Civilian Personnel Advisory Center. Employees will complete the TSP-1 Election Form to start or change contribution percentages or dollar amounts. Form TSP-1 may also be used to stop contributions.

As of May 1, 2001, Form TSP-1 is no longer the appropriate form for employees to designate their choice of fund investments. Fund allocations are now made on Form TSP-50, Investment Allocation directly with the Thrift Savings Plan via the Thrift Savings Plan web site or the ThriftLine. Employees may also mail a hardcopy TSP-50 to the address provided on the form. Form TSP-50 may not be accepted by any personnel office.

Should you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Jackie Cook (910) 251-4874 or email [Jacqueline.L.Cook@usace.army.mil](mailto:Jacqueline.L.Cook@usace.army.mil).

## New Faces to the District



Welcome to Noel Clay, Lead Planner in the Technical Services Division. Noel comes to the Wilmington District from the U.S. Department of Energy. She had been with the DOE for nine years, serving in various capacities at offices in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Boston, and most recently at the Savannah River Site in Aiken, South Carolina.

## Speaking Out

Bob Sattin, Chief of Navigation Branch, gave a "Port Status Report" to the southeastern North Carolina Hurricane Port Industry Meeting on May 23, 2001.

Penny Schmitt, Chief of Public Affairs, joined Wilmington's Police Chief John Cease and Deputy Sheriff Sid Causey in briefing new members of the Chamber of Commerce on important Wilmington governmental organizations. Penny gave a District Overview Presentation.

Anthony Josey, Student Co-op, Public Affairs Office, gave a District Overview Presentation to the Marine Science Career Quest Program at the UNC-W Marine Science Center.



Chris Wells, son of Rev. A. C. and Mary Wells (Mary is Field Office Assistant at John H. Kerr Powerhouse), received his Doctor of Medicine Degree from the Medical College of Virginia School of Medicine on May 19, 2001. Dr. Wells will be in Birmingham, AL for the next 3 years in the Internal Medicine Residency Program at the University of Alabama Hospital.

Lillette Moore, Student Co-op in the Regulatory Division, recently graduated from UNCW with a BS Degree in Environmental Science with an emphasis on physical science and a minor in Geology. She now joins the District officially as a Regulatory Specialist.

June 5, 2001 was Pizza Day for the Wilmington District Employees. The "Pizza Day Fundraiser" was held to offset some of the costs associated with Corps Day. TEAM Members ordered a record 33 Pizzas. The highlight of the occasion was the awarding of the door prizes. Thanks for all of your support Wilmington District!

Congratulations to David M. Lekson, Chief of Regulatory - Washington, NC. David competed in his first World Championship Duck Decoy Competition held at Ocean City, MD in April.

His handmade decoy of The Lesser Scaup drake took Third place!! His little Green-winged Teal hen took fourth!!



Congratulations to the JH Kerr Lake Power House on their selection as recipient of The State Chairman's Award at the Virginia Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (VaESGR). Richard Carroll represented the District at this momentous occasion.

# RETIREE

## NEWS



There were fourteen attending this month's luncheon. Those attending were Edith and Jim Vithalani, Dan Grimsley, Bettye and Bob Swart, Gloria and Paul Woodbury, Lawrence Crawley, Virginia Uzzell, Augustus B. Moore, David Stillman, Dorothy K. Everette, and Sylvia and Rex Phillips.

Things seem to be moving along rather slow this month. It was good that Paul and Gloria were able to borrow a little time from their busy schedule, maybe I should say from Paul's activities. Since he was last here, he has been to El Salvador, scuba diving in the Bahamas, and doing some consulting in Gaza while Gloria stayed home with the dog. Take note that Gus was with us, but didn't provide us anything about his latest

exploits, and knowing him, it would be reasonable to assume that he had something going. I will have to talk to him about this next month. Sylvia and Rex got away for a pig-pickin' at Snow Hill and a day's visit to Camp Lejuene. Their granddaughter, Lauren, who attended several meetings with us last year, is at Bush Gar-

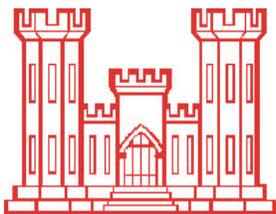
dens with her Dad. For Bettye and Bob, what started out to be the repair of a floor in a bathroom has developed into freshly wallpapered hallway and paint to be applied to various parts of the house, but that's the way of this retired life. Somebody has got to do it.

Jim Vithalani gave us a little rundown on what was happening with his family in India since the January earthquake. Many buildings were damaged but no Vithalanis were lost. They also survived a potential typhoon in the Arabian Sea.

The worst problem for many in our group is a draught, it has not rained much in the state of Gujarat during the previous two years. Water has to be trucked, trained, piped, or channeled in from great distances. Just another way to remind us how fortunate we really are.

All you retirees out there mark your calendars for the first Thursday of every month as the day to gather at Pier 20 for a very pleasant lunch and sharing time.

U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT,  
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**Wilmington  
District News**