



Arctic Engineer

"Building and Preserving Alaska's Future"



*Ports
that prosper*

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A container ship (foreground) and freight vessel dock at the Port of Anchorage. The port serves 90 percent of the population of Alaska, with 75 percent of the goods that arrive in Alaska coming through the port. (Photo courtesy of the Port of Anchorage)

Building, preserving Alaska's future

Our district motto is "Building and Preserving Alaska's Future." It's not only communicated on the cover of this magazine but in everything we do.

The motto is evident in our large military construction program and our civil works program.

Alaska District's military construction program is one of the top three placements worldwide in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In FY07, the district awarded 26 military projects for the Army and Air Force totaling \$527 million. The military construction forecast for FY08 is 23 projects at \$377.2 million, including \$124 million for Grow the Army projects that were moved from outyears to FY08. Grow the Army is an initiative to increase the number of soldiers serving in today's force.

In this issue, you will read about how the district met the challenges of constructing an unplanned project. Hangar 6 at Fort Wainwright was used by a helicopter unit responsible for medical evacuations at Fort Wainwright, Fort Greely, the greater Fairbanks area and interior Alaska villages. After fire destroyed it, the pressure was on to replace the World War II-era structure as quickly as possible.

The contractor continued construction through the winter and made up time lost during a temporary summer work stoppage to successfully turn over a new hangar to the unit.

It's one example of how we build and preserve. Although funding for our civil works program falls short of what we'd like to have, the program is at the heart of building and preserving Alaska's future.

I'm impressed with the momentum beginning to build after our two-day Alaska Regional Ports and Harbors Conference in January. Those discussions are the basis for this issue's cover story, and a topic that I hope to continue to energize.

This conference presented the district's vision of what Alaska's ports and harbors might look like in future decades, how we might get there and what that means to the State of Alaska.

The conference was the easy part. What has to happen now will take a lot of time and energy. We have a good dialogue with many of the directors of the key Alaska state agencies involved, and we're actively involved in the Intermediate Action Workgroup of Alaska's Climate Change Strategy, so I think we can get traction to move forward.

We also need to start teaming with the Alaska Municipal League, harbor masters and other stakeholders to figure out how to apply the data presented by panel members and others

in attendance.

I'm optimistic about this vision and appreciate the efforts of everyone who showed up at the event. It was good to see how in two days the group transitioned from being very parochial to understanding that we must make a collaborative effort, to look at this issue holistically and form a state master plan.

A lot of information was presented, and at times, it felt like drinking from a fire hose with so many different views and opinions being presented, but it was well worth it. Now we need to continue moving forward.

All attendees were given a point of contact with the district. The success of this massive project hinges on it being an interagency, interstate, intergovernmental and intertribal process.

As we work through that undertaking and execute the rest of our mission, it's important to recognize that we're good at what we do. Our employees live up to that motto every day and are recognized for their hard work.

We see that at the individual level, such as with Maj. Bryan Erickson, a project manager for Air Force military construction, who is featured in this

issue. He was named the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Federal Engineer of the Year in the military category. Meanwhile, as a whole, the district earned the Air Force Construction Agent of the Year Award for 2008.

With dedicated individuals and teams, we are contributing to the development of Alaska now and into the future.

I've focused on the "building" part of the motto, but I don't want to forget about "preserving." Environmental stewardship is always an essential and necessary component of what we do. The Regulatory Division here is the second largest in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and that's because we have so many resources to protect. People live and vacation here to experience the great outdoors, and we want to protect the environment while contributing to the growth and sustainability of the state.

In a greater sense, we are building and preserving not only Alaska's future, but the nation's future. It's a mission we don't take lightly and are proud to be part of.



Col. Kevin Wilson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Wilson".



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers disaster response experts from across the country view an Emergency Response Vehicle on display at Fort Richardson from Alaska's Defense Coordinating Officer and Element. The team stayed a day after the cold weather response workshop to train on cold weather safety and try out their cold weather clothing.

Trembling times

Workshop reviews winter earthquake disaster response plan

By Curt Biberdorf
Editor

Forty-four years have passed since the most powerful earthquake ever recorded in North America shook southern Alaska. Though extreme weather conditions, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, avalanches, mudslides and wildfires are all potential threats to Alaskans, the greatest danger is another major earthquake.

Geologists from the U.S. Geologic Survey have determined that shallow faults in the Anchorage area could produce much stronger shaking than occurred during the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake in Southcentral Alaska.

Such an earthquake would leave communities without heat, which could result in extensive loss of life during the winter.

In the continuing objective of preparedness, representatives from the

Pacific Ocean Division, Alaska District and other organizations within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sponsored a cold weather response workshop Jan. 23-24 at Fort Richardson's Camp Denali to revalidate lessons learned from past cold weather exercises.

The disaster scenario was a Magnitude 7.5 shallow crustal earthquake during a period of extreme cold weather in the Anchorage area causing significant infrastructure damage. The first day of the workshop dealt with the first 24 hours, and the second day covered how to respond in the 48-72 hours after the disaster.

Representatives from the Corps, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Municipality of Anchorage and City of Seward worked together to identify shortfalls and capabilities.

"The Corps is very good at response and recovery activities for Hurricane events," said Dave Spence, chief of Emergency Management for the Alaska District. "Our goal is to be equally prepared for no-notice events like earthquakes."

He added that the Corps uses venues such as cold weather exercises and workshops to test and evaluate their response and recovery requirements under the National Response Framework.

"Rather than do it by ourselves, we try to partner as Alaskans and combine our efforts into one major exercise," Spence said.

The Corps is one of the primary federal agencies that assist state and local governments in saving lives, and protecting critical infrastructure from natural and manmade disasters.

Preparedness is particularly important in Alaska. Brig. Gen. John

Peabody, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Pacific Ocean Division, expressed concern about the state in a disaster.

“The only thing I really worry about is our ability to respond to a disaster and partnering with FEMA because of the character of where we’re located,” Peabody said. “We’re isolated and must deal with extreme climatic changes.”

Supplies and commodities will be either flown into or carried by ship to Alaska. Ships are slow and airplanes cannot bring much, Peabody said. Relief is not truckloads of supplies rolling in from a neighboring state.

“(The situation in Alaska) places a

premium on our preparedness planning to understand our capabilities,” Peabody said. “In this scenario, we’re reacting in two to three days. I think it’s going to be a lot longer than that.”

Spence said that affected Alaskans can expect to be on their own for the first 96 hours, which means emphasizing individual preparedness. For heat, many homes have fireplaces, and motor homes are seen as another resource to tap into during an emergency.

Part of planning is developing or strengthening relationships with counterparts, said Col. Kevin Wilson, district commander. A lesson learned from his experience in disaster response

is that “you don’t exchange business cards at the scene of a disaster. You do it beforehand at meetings and exercises.”

At the scene of a disaster, Wilson said the local or state government is always in charge.

In New York City on Sept. 11, 2001, it was the mayor. In the Florida hurricanes, it was the governor. The federal government will get involved only after the governor requests and is granted a major presidential declaration of emergency.

“We want to figure out what you need and how the federal government can help because you are in charge,” Wilson said, speaking to state and local representatives in attendance.

More than just planning, the plans must be viable, credible and with a reasonable chance of working, Peabody said.

John Madden, director of the Alaska Division of Emergency Services, said it is important to develop a culture of preparedness.

“We do not plan for a scenario. We plan for effects of the disaster,” Madden said. “You need to understand the flow of goods and services going through the state and then analyze what can disrupt the process. What if the disaster affects the Port of Anchorage? Victims will be all around the state.”

Workshops for disaster response are useful to determine priorities, to understand who has authority and avoid redundancy.

“Chaos is part of the disaster,” Madden said. “Our responsibility is to bring order out of chaos, to try to stabilize the situation so we can bring in assets to help people.”

FEMA opened a new office last July in the Anchorage Federal Building Annex. It serves as the initial coordination center for agency disaster preparedness initiatives and could be designated as an initial operating facility for federally-declared disasters.

“We have a great working relationship with everyone in the state,” said Dave Boughton with FEMA. “It is really exciting to be involved in this process.”

After the workshop, Corps of Engineers disaster response experts from across the country stayed an extra day to receive cold weather training and test their cold weather gear during a morning tour of a barracks construction project and demonstration of the Defense Coordinating Office and Element Emergency Response Vehicle. The temperature was 15 degrees.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Maj. David Carter, Geospacial Operations Officer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Engineering Infrastructure Intelligence Reachback Center based in Mobile, Ala., demonstrates the IKE infrastructure assessment tool at Camp Denali.

Course heightens awareness about Alaska Native culture

By Curt Biberdorf
Editor

A mix of presentations from professional trainers, small group exercises and simple advice were all part of the Alaska Native Cultural Communication Course held in Anchorage Jan. 29-31.

The course was designed to help Department of Defense (DoD) military members and civilian employees better understand and implement the DoD's American Indian and Alaska Native Policy. Specialists in Alaska Native law, history, culture and communication taught the three-day course, as well as DoD lawyers who partner with Native governments to shape DoD American Indian and Alaska Native Policy.

Since 1996, nearly 1,000 people have taken the course, according to David Sanborn, course facilitator and DoD senior tribal liaison, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Installations and Environment. He said the course started after the government discovered that getting a background on American Indians and Alaska Natives was essential before discussing meaningful consultation techniques and concepts.

Alaska Natives stand out from

the rest of the U.S. Native-American population for several reasons.

Of the 562 federally-recognized tribes in the United States, 229 are in Alaska. The three groups of Alaska Natives are Aleuts, Eskimos and Indians. They make up 16 percent of Alaska's population, have 11 distinct cultures and 19 different languages.

Alaska Natives are the largest group of people in the country who live in the same area by subsistence for cultural preference and necessity, said David Case, an attorney and course trainer. During his session, the class was familiarized with the 1971 Alaska Native Settlement Claims Act (ANSCA).

This law made Alaska Natives different from the rest of the nation because it formed Native Corporations and left tribes without reservations except for one.

Much of the military's interaction with the Native population deals with cleanup of formerly used defense sites and currently used sites.

"We saw Alaska as a very big place and that it could take anything we would deal out," said Lt. Gen. Douglas Fraser, commander of the Alaskan Command, who lauded the Native villages for their history of military service. "What I've

found as I've worked through and had dealings with various Native villages is the best thing we can do is work on a transparent basis. We have nothing to hide."

Another difference with Native Americans is that tribes are not considered racial groups by the federal government but are instead political groups. Pat Roth routinely works with Alaska Natives as manager of Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program for the U.S. Army

Alaska Native Figures

3
Populations of Alaska Natives:
Aleuts, Eskimos and Indians

16
Percent of Alaska residents who are
Alaska Natives

11, 19
Distinct cultures, languages

229
Federally-recognized Native entities
in Alaska

44 million
Pounds of subsistence food
harvested annually by rural Alaska
Natives

Source: Alaska Native Cultural Communication Course



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Students participate in a small-group exercise during the Alaska Native Cultural Communication Course in Anchorage.

Corps of Engineers-Alaska District.

"When you're going out and meeting with these governments, it's one more thing to keep in mind that it's just as different as working with another country," Roth said. "These are powerful governments. They have their rights, and we need to respect that."

Course topics covered history of the relationship between the U.S. government and Alaska Natives and how those events may affect DoD today. It provided a summary of the laws and policies requiring consultation with Alaska Natives and American Indians, and the legal basis for the DoD policy. Instructors also introduced Alaska Native cultures and concepts, intercultural communication and then gave the group three practical exercises

to apply the principles covered.

The course was designed for those who have limited experience in knowing when and how to consult with Alaska Native governments, have arranged consultations in the past but desire additional information on working with Alaska Native governments and other Native entities to facilitate future defense-related projects, and those whose mission responsibilities may require future consultations and coordination with Alaska Native governments and other Native entities.

The U.S. Coast Guard, part of the Department of Homeland Security, was invited to attend although the DoD portions of the course did not apply.

"I wish more tribal officials could attend, but the information provided was

very profound," said Arnecia Bradley, civil engineer in the Site Development Branch at the U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center in Huntsville, Ala., who was one of 47 people registered for the course. "It was very valuable."

Participants also gained practical tips, such as the importance of relationship building, being flexible and researching a village before visiting. It's important to pack and bring a carryon in the event of lost baggage and to never turn down a gift. The "bigwigs" also better be prepared to dance at community events.

"The positive consultation experience really is protecting natural and cultural resources, environment and health and safety of the population," Sanborn said.

Corps, tribes team on cleanup projects

The Department of Defense (DoD) consults with Native populations in Alaska for various reasons, among them environmental cleanup from military operations.

The Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program (NALEMP) began in 1996 when the DoD started to focus specifically on environmental mitigation from military operations on Native American lands that did not otherwise qualify for restoration.

Cleanup is accomplished through a cooperative agreement. The government pays for training, supplies and equipment. The tribe hires a contractor or tribal members, who gain training and job experience and are even hired by other firms that need employees with their training and skills.

Although the tribes manage the projects, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers supports them.

"We help as much as the tribe needs us to help, and we stay out of the way the rest of the time because time after time, the tribes have proven they can get the job done," said Pat Roth, NALEMP manager for the Alaska District.

Roth's job regularly involves consultation with Alaska Native villages that need cleanup. Tribal members accept him as a representative of the DoD as much as the district commander or somebody higher in the chain of command.

He skips the suit and tie for more

casual clothing when meeting with tribal leaders. An attempt to appear respectable will look foolish while walking in the mud.

"You're going to be looked at with suspicion as to your level of competence and preparation," Roth said. "You may think you're just going out there on a friendly visit but memories run long and deep."

Besides employment, Alaska Natives also experience the pride of being able to take care of their own property, according to Roth, which is particularly important to the Native culture so strongly connected to the land.

One successful cooperative agreement is with the Native village of Eklutna.

Hundreds of thousands of pounds of building debris were removed along with other military remnants of World War II, such as barbed wire and collapsed drums that created tripping hazards. Tribal members have worked more than 2,000 hours on the cleanup.

Occasionally conflicts arise over the definition of "clean." Then there is the issue of tribal sovereignty.

For instance, the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration is not allowed to investigate an accident in a village.

Cooperative agreements are similar to contracts but don't come with performance bonds. Sites are selected for this program based on risk, and once that risk is minimized, funding is often stopped.

Cooperative agreements start

with a memorandum of agreement that outlines some of the rules on funding and accounting standards, guidance on initial dispute resolution and acknowledgement of tribal sovereignty.

"So there is a partnership and a trust that you have to walk in there with that says we're going to be fair about this from both sides," Roth said.

He said overall it's been a successful program that can provide life-changing opportunities.—CB



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Pat Roth, NALEMP manager for the Alaska District, discusses cooperative agreements during the Alaska Native Cultural Communication Course in Anchorage Jan. 29-31.

Prosperous ports

Corps integral to Alaska's future transportation infrastructure

By Curt Biberdorf
Editor

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District is looking to advance development of the state's water resources into the next 50 years and beyond.

The district conducted the Alaska Regional Ports and Harbors Conference Jan. 10-11 in Anchorage to launch discussions on what needs are anticipated across identifiable regions along the state's coastline for transportation, navigation, fishing and two-way shipping.

This regional perspective is significantly different from the past approach of examining requirements for individual communities. It emphasizes the need to develop partnerships and open communication to explore avenues for meeting the region's needs more effectively.

The regional approach is consistent with current Civil Works initiatives that evolved from lessons learned after Hurricane Katrina. The conference was attended and endorsed by Gary Loew, chief of Operations and Budget for

the Civil Works Programs Integration Division, Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Rich Schiavoni, chief of the Civil Works Programs Integration Division, Pacific Ocean Division.

Alaska Congressman Don Young was the keynote speaker, while 26 leaders from local, state and federal

government agencies, transportation businesses and Alaska Native entities participated in four panel discussions.

The Alaska Regional Ports Study is a significant district Civil Works program initiative that includes evaluating existing harbor use and developing a framework for integrating these harbors into a statewide network



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Photo

Vessels dock at Akutan (above). A new harbor built by the Alaska District will provide protected moorage. The Port of Anchorage (below) serves 90 percent of the population of Alaska and is being expanded.



Photo courtesy of the Port of Anchorage

for improvement and maintenance.

It also involves maritime shipping, identifying potential vessel traffic on a future northern sea route and evaluating the economic potential of a rail link to the Lower 48 for cargo shipped through the Port of Anchorage.

Sustainment and growth of Alaska's fishing, petroleum, mining, forestry and tourism industries, and in turn the well-being of Alaskans, depend on a comprehensive transportation plan.

"We have the potential of being the provider for the necessary minerals, fossil fuels and foods to the rest of this world if we have the infrastructure put in place," Young said.

Harbors have been called the "lifeline" of coastal Alaska. At the heart of them is the Port of Anchorage. It serves 90 percent of the population of Alaska, and 75 percent of the goods that arrive in Alaska come through that port, said former Alaska Gov. Bill Sheffield, Port of Anchorage director.

"It serves everything except for Southeast Alaska," Sheffield said. "We're never going to be able to develop and provide jobs for our people and get our resources to the market without infrastructure, without transportation."

"The Last Frontier" state is full of opportunity, but preserving it for future generations is also a priority in planning.

"We (live and visit) here because of what's outside, not because of what's inside," said Col. Kevin Wilson, district commander. "So it behooves us and



U.S. Army Corps of Engineer photo

Nome Harbor was one of the first navigation projects built by the Corps of Engineers in Alaska. Improvements by the Alaska District were completed in 2007.

it behooves future generations that as we do this, we have an eye on how we protect the environment while we make this economically sound."

Maritime shipping has a long history in Alaska, and a steady flow of vessels continue to navigate off Alaska's shores today. With global climate change, that traffic may increase with the sea ice opening up to enable vessels to travel to and from the Arctic Ocean through the Bering Strait.

Wilson said the state needs the capability to deal with the next potential

tragedy at sea, whether it is an oil spill or shipwreck, with northern ports of refuge that would tie into the existing network of small boat harbors along the coastline. These ports also could assist oil and gas drillers off the north and northwest coasts, and help protect at-risk ecosystems.

"Other than a port by Nome, there's not a lot out there," Wilson said. "We can't procrastinate. We have to start looking at how we're going to react to this, how it is going to affect our future."

The final piece of the vision Wilson discussed is establishing a rail link from the Port of Anchorage to the Lower 48. The proposed project would connect Anchorage to Chicago and shorten delivery times by four to fourteen days compared to traveling first by sea from Anchorage to major West Coast ports and then by land, according to Wilson.

"It will happen sooner rather than later because Canada has huge stocks of natural resources that they cannot access until they have rail transportation," Wilson said. "They would very much like to have this connection going back the other direction."

Two-way rail traffic would come from various ports besides Anchorage, such as Port MacKenzie and Seward. Other possible expanded ports would be in Skagway and Haines, according to Wilson.

Until then, the state needs to face the condition of the current transportation infrastructure, which is severely lacking

Continued on Page 10



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo

Little Diomed, located between Russia and mainland Alaska in the Bering Strait, is a candidate for a harbor as it is on the frontline for ships traveling to and from the Arctic Circle.

or non-existent.

John Stone, president of the Alaska Association of Harbormasters and Port Administrators, said many of the harbors in Alaska were built 30 or more years ago, and nearly all need to be replaced.

The state also has room to grow. Alaska is one-fifth the size of the Lower 48, and its coastline stretches 6,640 miles compared with 6,053 in the Lower 48. Much of it is still undeveloped.

Waterways in the Lower 48 were established 100 years before those in Alaska and without the same rules and conditions that now apply in Alaska, said Schiavoni.

“Our nation’s focus is in maintenance because there is no funding for new starts,” Schiavoni said. “If you look at Alaska, Alaska’s basic focus is to provide new basic infrastructure, which doesn’t exist.”

To move ahead, Wilson said the Corps of Engineers must work together with the congressional delegation,

state and federal government agencies, local communities and boroughs, and environmental groups.

Loew said changes in the budgeting process are necessary for Alaska to compete for limited federal dollars.

“The past was very project-oriented and involved cost-sharing and very heavily weighted on economic payoff,” Loew said. “For the future, we need to look regionally, look at watersheds, environmental sustainability on a system basis, not a project basis.”

He added that when funding is determined just on economics, mistakes are made. Tonnage movement is favored in the current budget process with ports moving more than 10 million tons getting a lot of money, those moving between 1 million and 10 million tons getting some, and ports moving less than 1 million tons getting nothing.

An example of where Alaska can get overlooked in the funding process is in the fishing industry.

Cape Cod in Massachusetts has 27

small boat harbors similar to Alaska, but fishing boats drop off their catch in a single economic transaction at one central processing port. In Alaska, tenders meet fishing vessels at sea to transfer the catch. The tenders go to the processor and the fishing vessels go home empty, Wilson said.

“How are you scoring that?” Loew said. “Under our current system, there are a lot of ports in Alaska that don’t fare well.”

Wilson said the other part that needs to be articulated is that fishermen in Southeast Alaska might fish year-round and use six different ports for different purposes, such as safety, resupply or maintenance.

“What we really have is a network,” he said. “It’s not just one individual fishing port supporting a vast fleet of vessels.”

The Corps operates with a cost-share partner, typically a local community. The district has a solid record of cooperation across the state and is ready to participate in the future.

Alaska District is a partner with the Denali Commission—a federal-state partnership designed to provide critical utilities, infrastructure and economic support throughout Alaska—that is getting assistance to fund and develop a system of coastal and riverine barge systems.

Phillip Oates, city administrator for Seward, said he has seen significant improvement to the city’s small boat harbor in the 15 years since he first visited Seward. The Corps locally and nationally was “certainly a key to that. I think they really are doing a lot of things for Alaska.”

Although the mining industry has already provided for itself in ports, according to Steven Borell, executive director of the Alaska Miners Association, the district has been important in the process.

“The Corps of Engineers has done an excellent job in evaluating what it would require to dredge a channel and allow expansion of the (Red Dog) port facility,” Borell said.

Given the chance to improve and grow, the state may offer more than anyone can imagine. The territory that would become the State of Alaska 50 years ago was purchased in 1867 from Russia for \$7.2 million. The purchase was sharply criticized. Then in 1890, major veins of gold were discovered.

“All of a sudden, this was not such a bad deal,” said Wilson. “The moral of the story is never underestimate the value of Alaska.”



A cruise ship is docked at Seward (above) while a commercial fishing ship passes by Dutch Harbor on the Aleutian Islands (below). More ships navigating in the Arctic are creating a need for a network of ports and harbors to provide support. (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photos)



Hangar replaced after fire loss

By Curt Biberdorf
Editor

Cold weather may have slowed construction but didn't stop it.

After fire destroyed Hangar 6 on Fort Wainwright Aug. 13, 2004, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District responded by planning its replacement in the weeks afterward.

A \$28 million project was awarded on Sept. 28, 2005 to replace the 52,540 square-foot World War II-era aircraft storage and maintenance building that previously housed the 68th Medical Company.

The unit has since been redesignated Company C (Air Ambulance), 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment, and is charged with providing medical and casualty evacuation support to 1st Bn., 52nd Avn. Reg. and Task Force 49, as well as Military Support to Safety and Traffic.

"The project went very smoothly from development of the (request for proposal) through construction, under tight time constraints," said John Jordan, Fort Wainwright program manager. "We had all the right people on the project at the right time. It was a great team effort."

Without its hangar, the unit parked its Blackhawk helicopters inside neighboring hangars, maximizing their use, or parked them outside. Without warm storage, mission capability is significantly reduced because of increased maintenance associated with the extremely cold climate. Warm storage is also essential to being able to launch helicopters quickly on evacuation missions.

During the winter of 2005-2006, the contractor, Bristol Environmental and Engineering Services Corp. of Anchorage, designed the building. By April 2006, Bristol started excavating and laying the foundation. After a delay during the summer caused by an excavation incident, construction resumed in October 2006 despite the onset of cold weather. At that time, the foundation had been laid, but no steel had been erected.

"Normally, you don't do exterior construction up here in the winter, but the contractor was eager to get back to work and knew that the Army needed a hangar for its helicopters," Jordan said. "(The contractor) could have easily

decided to wait until spring, which would likely have resulted in additional costs to the government."

Bristol brought in canopy-covered shelters to establish an environment with temperatures high enough for workers to weld together sections of the structural steel frame. Then crane operators raised the steel trusses and columns into place to assemble the frame.

"So (the contractor) actually erected the structure in winter, which is pretty unusual in the Fairbanks area," Jordan said. "The work progressed steadily, although slower, because of increased safety concerns and the need to ensure the workers are not out in the cold too long."

With the frame in place and exterior wall panels installed to enclose the building, the inside was able to be heated to allow the other trades to work on the interior.

Jordan said the customer was involved from the beginning to ensure that all requirements in the bay and administrative areas were identified during the design phase and provided during construction.

Traditional sliding doors were replaced with a fold-up Megadoor composed of three sections, allowing any single door or combination of doors to be opened or closed for flexibility in moving rotary or even fixed wing aircraft into and out of the hangar. When those doors are opened in frigid temperatures, a quick recovery heating system restores the bay to an acceptable temperature in minutes instead of hours.

Sound-absorbing panels line the inside walls of the hangar bay for

a quieter environment. High light-reflective flooring maximizes visibility, particularly helpful when working underneath the helicopters, and also is easier to clean and maintain.

Because medical evacuation crews are on-call all the time, sleeping quarters were designed and built along with an improved office space configuration.

Fire should not take down the new hangar.

Now made of steel rather than wood, the new hangar has improved fire protection, including a back-up diesel generator to power the fire suppression water sprinkler system in the event that the main electrical system fails.

By Nov. 30, 2007, Alaska District turned over the new hangar to Company C. The new structure serves as the unit's headquarters facility and houses all of its medical evacuation aircraft. The wait was over, and the effort paid off with a highly satisfied customer.

"The users are extremely happy with the facility," said Jordan.



Shelters allowed welders to assemble the steel frame in cold weather (above). A high light-reflective floor is one of the improvements to the new Hangar 6. (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photos)



Project manager takes top award

Story and photo by Curt Biberdorf

His top pick was Alaska. Now he can say that during this time here he has been picked first. Maj. Bryan Erickson, project manager for Air Force military construction in the Programs and Project Management Division at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District, was honored as the 2008 U.S. Army Corps of



Maj. Bryan Erickson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Federal Engineer of the Year (Military Category), stands in front of the Alaska Command headquarters building renovation project.

Engineers Federal Engineer of the Year (Military Category) during a ceremony in Washington D.C. Feb. 21.

Sponsored by the Professional Engineers in Government, the Federal Engineer of the Year is selected by a panel of judges established by the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE)-Professional Engineers in Government. Candidates are evaluated on their engineering achievements, education, continuing education, professional/technical society activities, NSPE membership, awards and honors, and civic and humanitarian activities.

Erickson, from Plano, Texas, was finishing his second master's degree, this time from Texas A&M University in civil engineering, and his next assignment was coming up. Alaska was No. 1 on his list of places to go, and the Army sent him to the Alaska District. So he, along with his wife, Carin, and children Hailey, 10, Jared, 8 and Andrew, 6, were headed north.

"My wife and I figured how many times are we going to get the chance to live in Alaska?" Erickson said. "We take advantage of all Alaska has to offer for recreational opportunities."

In his nearly 11-year Army career, Erickson has served as a platoon leader and staff officer for the 864th Engineer Battalion, and executive officer for Company A for the 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power) at Fort Lewis, Wash., and as company commander in the 577th Engineer Battalion at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. and for the 169th Engineer Battalion at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas.

He was commissioned after earning a bachelor's degree in agricultural engineering at Texas A&M and continued his education by earning his master's degree from University of Missouri-Rolla in engineering management. He received his environmental engineering license in Texas in 2005.

"You always enjoy the command job, but the biggest learning experience has been here," Erickson said. "In the Army, you work with just the Army. Here I'm working with many other agencies."

Once stationed in Alaska, Erickson promptly left after reporting here in January 2006 for a six-month deployment to work for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Afghanistan Engineer District. He served as project engineer for the first permanent barracks and a Special Operations command center at Bagram Air Base. He also supervised construction of the training center on the Krygyzstan Army Base outside the capital of Bishkek.

Since returning, Erickson has served as project engineer for construction of the C-17 dual bay maintenance hangar, project manager for the renovation of the Alaska Command (ALCOM) headquarters building, the professional military education center, and the FY2007 dormitory, all located at Elmendorf Air Force Base.

Away from the office, he stays busy fishing, hiking, downhill skiing, and coaching his son's soccer team, chess club and Elmendorf's Hillberg Youth Ski Team.

Erickson said he is grateful to have the opportunity to contribute to the success of several building projects, particularly the highly visible ALCOM building. By next year Erickson expects to receive orders for his next tour of duty, and he is ready to contribute wherever he goes.

"I plan to make the most of any opportunity the Army sends my way," he said.

ACTIVE IN ALASKA



Michael Insko, ranger at Chena Lakes Flood Control Project, rows along Chena River with his dog, Ruddy, Aug. 17, 2007.



Phil Hunt, deputy for Programs and Project Management, displays a northern pike caught at Redshirt Lake in May 2007.



Mike Suprenant, contracting specialist in Contracting, approaches the official starting line of the 2008 Iditarod Sled Dog Race with one of his volunteer dog handlers, Becky Breeding (right), structural engineer in the Engineering Division.



Mark Solley, supply technician with USACE Logistics Activity, shows a moose he took in an archery bow hunt at Fort Richardson Dec. 23, 2007.



Dave Spence, chief of Emergency Management, holds on to a chinook salmon he caught at Sheep Creek in 2007.



Jeff Abbott, cost estimator in Cost Engineering, stands next to the remains of an Air Force bomber that crashed in the Talkeetna mountains in 1957.



Tim Feavel, senior park ranger at Chena Lakes Flood Control Project, poses next to a Kodiak brown bear he bagged after being selected in a 2007 fall hunting lottery.



Ivonne Drake, deputy for Small Business, cradles a sockeye salmon pulled from the Kenai River in July 2007.



Brrrrr!

'Hard Corps' fearless at Polar Bear charity event

Story and photos by Curt Biberdorf

On the count of three, Team Hard Corps leaped off the floating dock into the 32-degree water of Resurrection Bay and then hurried back into the 28-degree air to complete the annual Polar Bear Jump Off in Seward Jan. 19.

Dozens of jumpers were "freezin' for a reason" during the Alaska Division of the American Cancer Society fundraiser that began in Seward in 1986. Individuals and teams from the area raise money, assemble in Seward dressed in costumes, and after a parade, get to experience the thrill of the water's big chill.

This year the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District formed Team Hard Corps. Limited to five jumpers, the team consisted of Col. Kevin Wilson, district commander; Phil Hunt, deputy for Programs and Project Management; Mike Rabbe, chief of the Regulatory Division; Chris Tew, chief of the Contracting Division and Ken Holderfield, chief of the Resource Management Office. They collected \$4,200 thanks to the generous support of family, friends and colleagues outside the district.

"The money that you raise is for a good cause," said Wilson. "We all know people who have had cancer in one form or another. In my case, it's my sister-in-law who has been fighting it for nine years now. She's still fighting it."

They assembled at the parade starting point, dressed in a Corps-red cotton union suits, black gloves, black briefs, black Army combat boots, black masks to heighten their mystique and hard hats. They tossed candy, posed for photos and engaged the crowd along the parade route from the American Legion hall to the dock. As the last team to jump, they had sufficient time to "cool down."

Hunt said he and a few other Corps employees had observed the activity in the previous two years and thought it would be fun to form a team. Now that team was waiting

for the defining moment.

Cheering spectators, including several colleagues, jammed into space surrounding the boat dock and along the shore. A film of ice coating the water's surface was broken up and only visible on the outskirts of the harbor. Divers treading water and fire department staff standing nearby were ready to rescue anyone overcome by the frigid water. Team Hard Corps watched and waited.

The anticipation leading to the jump wasn't that bad, according to Hunt. After taking the plunge, he didn't feel rushed and felt no pressure to get out in a hurry.

"Everybody comes back up with a kind of a dazed look on their face," Holderfield said. "And I kept kind of laughing at all these people because they looked lost, but that's exactly how you feel when you come up."

The stream of jumpers at this costume party included





(Top opposite page and above) Team Hard Corps completes its plunge into the 32-degree water of Resurrection Bay in Seward. (Below from left) Mike Rabbe, Col. Kevin Wilson, Ken Holderfield, Chris Tew and Phil Hunt pose before the parade. (Bottom opposite page from left) Phil Hunt, Mike Rabbe and Ken Holderfield toss candy to spectators along the parade route.



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Marilyn Monroes, a leprechaun and a genie. Loose costume pieces lost in the plunge were promptly recovered by an event volunteer as jumpers swam back to the dock.

Jumpers chose different styles to make a splash, from stepping off feet first to flipping into the water. One jumper even swam to the shore and back.

When Team Hard Corps members approached their positions, they made the most of their moment in the spotlight, posing and stretching, before plunging into the water. The required “towel buddy” met each jumper emerging onto the dock with a blanket or towel and footwear.

“It was a lot colder than I anticipated, made for an involuntary gasp when I dove into the water,” Rabbe said. “Not a good idea when you surface with a mouth full of salt water!”

Tew said he had experience with a similar event and advised that less clothing makes it easier.

The Seward Polar Bear Jump Off began as a one-day event and has grown into a weekend winter festival. An array of other activities offers a range of entertainment, such as ice bowling, bachelor and bachelorette auction, cross-country ski races, snowmachine rides, seafood feed, bed-making contest, oyster slurping, dog sled races, karaoke contests and dog weight pull. Proceeds from some of these events also are donated to the American Cancer Society.

Of course, the highlight is watching costumed jumpers do what makes people shiver at just the thought.

“It feels great knowing that you’re doing something for a very worthy cause,” Holderfield said. “It’s also neat raising the camaraderie, and the esprit de corps in the district was very rewarding.”



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers file photo

District flashback

Emergency response workers survey damage on Fourth Avenue between C and D streets in downtown Anchorage after a Magnitude 9.2 earthquake occurred in Alaska March 27, 1964. The earthquake prompted a joint effort by military and civil authorities involving rescue and reconstruction work that is unparalleled in Alaska's history. Army engineers provided emergency relief, cleared debris, restored public facilities, conducted scientific data and interviewed survivors.

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