



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
Alaska District

# GOLD NUGGETS

*'Building and preserving Alaska's future'*

May 2012

## Japan, Korea representatives to discuss jobs

Part of Operation Crossroads, the district's plan for reshaping to meet the challenges of an evolving mission and workload, is ensuring the work force is aware of the employment opportunities available in Korea and Japan.

Leaders from both the Far East District and Japan District are planning to visit Alaska this month to provide an overview of the mission and life in their districts as well as answer questions.

Attendance is highly encouraged even for employees not considering a job in one of these two locations.

From the Far East District, Allen Chin, chief of Engineering, and Sam Adkins, chief of Construction, are scheduled to visit Alaska May 7-8. In Anchorage, informational meetings are set for 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. each day in the Talley Room.

In Fairbanks, a session slated for May 8 at 10 a.m. in the conference room at the Northern Area Office.

Employees unable to attend one of these meetings but who still want to meet or speak with these leaders may contact Jackie Leseman to make other arrangements.

Representing the Japan District, Cathy Gill, chief of Engineering and Construction, is planning to visit later this month. Details will be announced as soon as available.

Both Japan and Korea have enormous programs. In Korea alone, the Corps is executing 530 projects worth more than \$8.1 billion.

Its construction division has vacancies for more than 30 engineers. In all, Far East District requires more than 100 additional personnel.

Quality of life is high in these nations, and employees qualify for re-employment rights to Alaska.

Information is posted about these opportunities is posted on the Operation Crossroads intranet page.



Photo by Tom Findtner

## Dam safety

**Dave Frenier, Alaska District's Engineering Division chief, explains the design and operation of the Lowell Creek Project after a public meeting in Seward April 25. Representatives from the Alaska District joined city officials to inform community members about risks associated with this aging infrastructure during flood events and efforts under way to improve public safety. Built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and owned by the City of Seward, the flood risk reduction project consists of a 400-foot dam that diverts the stream through a 2,068-foot tunnel and releases the flow into the ocean on the outskirts of town. Since operations began in 1940, it has managed every flood event successfully.**

## Telework offers many advantages

**By Curt Biberdorf**  
Public Affairs Office

Pacific Ocean Division established an active telework program coinciding with National Telework Week March 5-9.

Telework is an arrangement where a civilian employee or military service members regularly or occasionally performs assigned official duties at an alternative worksite.

Advances in technology make productive telework possible, and it is now being encouraged across the Department of Defense, including the

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"It not only enhances employees' quality of life, it also reinforces the division's commitment to work force efficiency, emergency preparedness and greenhouse gas emissions reduction," said Brig. Gen. Richard Stevens, POD commander. "It helps recruit and retain a dedicated team of competent, diverse and fulfilled professionals, and above all, keeps the team mission-ready."

Teleworkers are typically more engaged, less stressed and more productive. When it simultaneously improves morale and productivity,

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# Telework

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eligible employees are encouraged to participate, he said.

Eligibility is determined by position and the nature of the duties. The individual also must be capable of handling extra responsibilities inherent to telework.

Employees recently assigned or newly appointed to trainee or entry-level positions are ineligible to immediately telework, but may be authorized if that job is partly or wholly able to be accomplished off-site without workflow or security concerns.

Additionally, interested employees in qualified positions cannot participate if their job performance rating is less than fully successful or they were disciplined for their conduct within the past 12 months.

District commanders have authority to approve telework requests, but in Alaska, the district plan is to delegate that responsibility to supervisors, particularly in cases of medical, ad hoc and limited recurring telework, said Col. Reinhard

Koenig, district commander.

Although telework is encouraged, it is not a right. Performance standards must be the same for on- and off-site employees.

“Consistency in execution will help to make this program successful and fully achieve the many benefits that are sure to follow,” Stevens said.

POD’s goal is that by next year’s National Telework Week, the division will have a robust and effective program in place.

View POD’s rewritten telework program/QMS process on the USACE Sharepoint site: <https://team.usace.army.mil/sites/POD/QMS/qms%20%20published%20documents/forms/b200%20%20human%20resources.aspx>.

For more information about the DoD telework program, visit this site: [http://www.cpms.osd.mil/telework/telework\\_index.aspx](http://www.cpms.osd.mil/telework/telework_index.aspx).



Courtesy photo

## Rescued, recovered

Contractors for the Army Corps of Engineers involved with the floating breakwater project in Douglas Harbor near Juneau return to the small boat harbor after rescuing two people from their capsized sailboat in Gastineau Channel April 12. After shutting down pile driving operations at about 6 p.m. that day, employees of the Trucano Construction Co. heard the boaters’ survival whistle from an estimated 600 yards away. Jeff Trucano and several crew members raced to the scene in a tugboat while a man and woman frantically paddled to stay afloat as their sailboat sank. The crew pulled the couple to safety and recovered their 13-foot craft from the icy depths. Once returned to shore, workers made sure the pair was OK and helped load their boat back onto its trailer.

## GOLD NUGGETS

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# Thrift Savings Plan opens Roth option

**By Curt Biberdorf**  
Public Affairs Office

The Thrift Savings Plan Roth option is scheduled to launch in July for federal employees and in October for soldiers.

Unlike the traditional TSP, wages invested in the Roth TSP are not tax-deductible, but both the contributions and their earnings are free of taxes when withdrawn, as long as savers follow Internal Revenue Service requirements.

It's an important new tool for managing retirement income, said Greg Long, Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board executive director.

He said the board will continue to provide participants and agencies with educational materials to help them understand this option, but as with all tax matters, participants should seek the advice of qualified tax or financial advisers for answers to questions pertaining to their specific tax situation.

The Thrift Savings Plan Enhancement Act of 2009 authorized the Roth TSP, but implementation lagged because payroll agencies needed to determine how to administer this option, said Jim Wolf, financial adviser with First Command Financial, during a lunchtime presentation about the Roth TSP at district headquarters April 10.

Phasing in the Roth TSP will ensure each customer's taxable wages and TSP contributions are computed accurately, according to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service.

"This is absolutely huge to take advantage of," Wolf said.

The No. 1 issue for his older clients with several income sources is avoiding a big tax liability in retirement, and

choosing the Roth TSP will help them to do that.

Participants who expect to earn more as their careers advance and have a higher income in retirement can find this particularly beneficial. Conversely, many participants may find a lower tax bill now to be more advantageous.

More important is to take full advantage of what is considered one of the simpler and better retirement savings plans available from any employer. It's not an all or nothing choice either—participants may contribute to both. Unlike a Roth IRA, participation is not limited by annual income level.

Those choosing the Roth option still receive matching contributions from their agencies, but matching funds will continue to go into a traditional TSP account balance.

Whether Roth, traditional or both, participants can still invest in any of the TSP funds, up to the 2012 Internal Revenue Code limits of \$17,000 plus \$5,500 in catch-up contributions for those 50 and older.

The TSP offers the Government Securities (G) Fund, and the four broadly diversified stock and bond funds – the Fixed Income Index Investment (F) Fund, the Common Stock Index Investment (C) Fund, the Small Capitalization Index Investment (S) Fund, the International Stock Index Investment (I) Fund. It also provides five Lifecycle (L) funds that are a mix of the G, F, C, S and I funds that rebalance to more conservative holdings as they approach a target retirement date.

Look for more specific deployment dates for Roth TSP elections on [www.dfas.mil](http://www.dfas.mil). Learn more about the Roth TSP option at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov).

*DFAS and TSP contributed to this report.*



## Earth Day edibles

Regulatory Division employees celebrate Earth Day April 20 with a baked potato potluck lunch. For dessert, they enjoyed flower pots with crushed chocolate cookie wafers to simulate dirt, gelatin-based candy shaped like worms and an artificial flower inside. Gladiolus bulbs were also available for employees to take home and plant. (Photo by John Budnik)





U.S. Air Force photo/John Pennell

Cathy Brooks competes for the Army Corps of Engineers in the women's 100-yard butterfly event during the first swim meet of 2012 at Buckner Physical Fitness Center April 19.

## Corps teams finish strong at swim meet

By Curt Biberdorf  
Public Affairs Office

Alaska District was again represented at the first of two annual swim meets at Buckner Physical Fitness Center on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson April 19.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers team was one of four female teams and among five male teams competing. The district teams were represented by Forest Brooks, project formulator in the Civil Works Branch, and his wife, Cathy.

Cathy finished first in the 100-yard butterfly and 200-yard individual medley, second in the 50-yard backstroke and fourth in the 100-yard individual medley.

Forest took second place in the 100-yard backstroke, third in the 50-yard backstroke and 500-yard medley, and fifth in the 100-yard freestyle.

Events are scored on a point-based system. The scores are divided by unit and gender. Individual medals are awarded at each meet, and points from both meets are combined for overall team scores and trophy presentation at the second meet, said Comptonne Byers, fitness center lead life guard.

However, people don't have to be after a trophy to compete. Forest was just being a supportive husband until he realized that actually swimming at these practices and meets was more comfortable than watching in the stands.

"I was getting too hot and sweaty at meets," he said.

On the other hand, Cathy has a long history of competitive swimming.

She was an Alaska state champion in high school and for years a state record holder. She continued to swim after high school and achieved her dream of swimming at the national championships in the masters category, where she was won the 400-meter individual medley event in her age group in 1982, Forest said.

Since then, she added to the stack of awards in various events and often makes the Top 10 list in certain events nationally and internationally, he said.

Forest joined the competition at the U.S. Nationals in 1986, and the couple participated in or attended the event 14 times since 1982 and the Canadian nationals five times.

Both entered the 2012 summer nationals set for July 5-8 in Omaha, Neb.

He said other current and former district employees competed in recent masters meets. They also take advantage of access to the base pool to swim during lunch.

"It's the best way to a healthy exercise routine," Forest said. "It will help you get fit and stay fit, if you swim regularly."

Buckner has an excellent program, even if you're not in the Army, said Rebecca Kleinschmidt, 673rd Health and Wellness Center health educator. "I feel so lucky that, as a civilian, I can participate for free."

Less than one third of registered masters swimmers identify themselves as "competitors," and the U.S. program has developed several fitness activities for the membership that do not involve meets while providing resources to educate adults on fitness benefits of swimming, Forest said.

The competition need not even go that far with JBER sponsoring two short course swim meets annually for servicemembers, civilian employees and family members. The second meet is scheduled for October.

*Air Force Staff Sgt. Robert Barnett from JBER Public Affairs contributed to this story.*

## Across the district

### In memoriam



Teresa Rick, office manager at the Southern Alaska Area Office, died April 16 after an extended illness. She worked for the district at SAAO for more than 26 years. She also served in the Army from 1975-1982. She re-enlisted in the Army National Guard in 2002 and was an active member in the Northeast Community Patrol.

### New chief of engineers confirmed

The U.S. Senate confirmed Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick to be chief of engineers and commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers April 26.

### Creek Cleanup event organized

A Corps team is planning to participate in the Anchorage Waterways Council Creek Cleanup May 19. The annual event is organized to remove and dispose of trash from local creeks. Details can be found at [www.anchoragecreeks.org](http://www.anchoragecreeks.org) under the "Creek Cleanup" tab. Family members are welcome. Contact Jessequa Parker to join the team.

### Submit your photos for publication

Photos of employees participating in various recreational activities or hobbies in Alaska are needed to create the "Active in Alaska" photo page for the Arctic Engineer magazine. Send photos to Curt Biberdorf.

### Civil Works branches reorganize

The Civil Project Management Branch and portions of the Engineering Civil Works Branch are merging this month. The Plan Formulation and Economics sections from the existing Engineering Civil Works Branch are joining the Civil Project Management Branch while the residual Environmental Resources, and Hydrology and Hydraulics sections will combine with the existing Engineering Geotechnical and Engineering Services Branch. The reorganization was motivated by the district's reshaping plan, known as Operation Crossroads, in an ongoing effort to reduce costs and improve efficiencies.

### Bethel harbor dredge success

The Denali Commission's \$6.7 million Bethel Small Boat Harbor dredging project finished 12 months ahead of

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Photo by Curt Biberdorf

### Intern graduation

The Alaska District honored three employees for finishing the Army Civilian Career Intern Program during a luncheon in the headquarters building April 24. Seated from left are Lance Overstreet, civil engineer in the Hydraulics and Hydrology Section; Orest Harkacz, mechanical engineer in the Engineering Division; and Bo Wycoff, project engineer in the Environmental Engineering Branch. They completed a two-year rotation of assignments in multiple offices to ensure their careers are well-rounded and to provide professional development opportunities. Upon completion, they are placed into a permanent position.

## Upcoming events

- May 1-31** Asian-Pacific American Month
- May 7-8** Far East District Recruitment Visit
- May 21-23** Alaska Cultural Communication Course
- May 25** Peter Topp Conference Room Dedication
- June 28** District Picnic, Length of Service Awards
- July 2** District Change of Command Ceremony

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schedule and \$88,000 under budget. Conducting the work in conjunction with a civil works project provided more efficient and effective services. The district will be closing out the project and returning \$294,000 to the Denali Commission.

## Regulatory offers new Mat-Su service

A Regulatory Division employee will be available at the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's one-stop permit center every Thursday from May 15-Sept. 15. Hours for general questions are 8-10 a.m., and appointments may be scheduled from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Since the Corps closed its Mat-Su office two years ago, the new service will assist people needing regulatory information about wetlands development

## Deployments

**Afghanistan**—Juliet Brown, Annette Crerend, Leanna Dagley, Roger Green, Patricia Lora, John Mitzel, Heather Moncrief, David Purdy, April Shepherd, Sharon Thomas, Jim Wolfe

**Returned**—John Keys



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

## Farewell

Mary Abbott, contract specialist, receives the Army Commander's Award for Civilian Service from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, at district headquarters April 24 for her outstanding service to the district from April 2004 to April 2012. Abbott accepted a new position at U.S. Army Program Executive Office for Simulation, Training and Instrumentation Command in Orlando, Fla.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

## Mongolian meeting

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, hands out commander's coins to Mongolian Army medical officers after a meeting with district leaders at the headquarters building April 9. The officers, in the state for an exercise with the Alaska Army National Guard, took the opportunity to discuss upcoming tuberculosis clinic improvements and renovations planned in their country with Koenig and members of the project delivery team. The projects are part of the district's Humanitarian Assistance Program in Southeast Asia.

## Retirements



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Ted Bales, Technical Integration Section chief, receives the Army Commander's Award for Civilian Service from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, during his retirement ceremony at the headquarters building April 3. Bales served the district for 34 years in the planning, design and construction of military and civil works projects across the state. He is credited with implementing important architectural-engineering contracting processes and geographic information system transformations to the district.



Photo by John Budnik

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents Guy McConnell, supervisory biologist for the Engineering Civil Works Environmental Resources Section, with a certificate of retirement during a ceremony at the district headquarters April 18. McConnell also received the Army Superior Civilian Service Award and the Bronze Order of the de Fleury Medal for his exemplary service and leadership to the Alaska District. McConnell retired with 33 years of federal service.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Joe Locke, construction representative in the Southern Alaska Area Office, receives the Army Commander's Award for Civilian Service from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, during a retirement ceremony at the office April 26. Locke served the Corps for 40 years, the last eight with the Alaska District. Among his contributions to the district were serving as the primary government field representative for Akutan Small Boat Harbor, Nome Navigation, Nome Sheetpile, Seward Breakwater Extension, Shishmaref Erosion, Unalaska Small Boat Harbor and Wrangell Small Boat Harbor projects.



Photo by John Budnik

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents Jerry Zuspan, Survey Section chief, with a certificate of retirement during a ceremony at the headquarters building April 30. Zuspan also received the Bronze Order of de Fleury Medal and Army Commander's Award for Civilian Service for his contributions to the district encompassing the planning, design and construction of military and civil works projects throughout Alaska. Zuspan retired with 31 years of federal service.