



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
San Francisco District

SPN

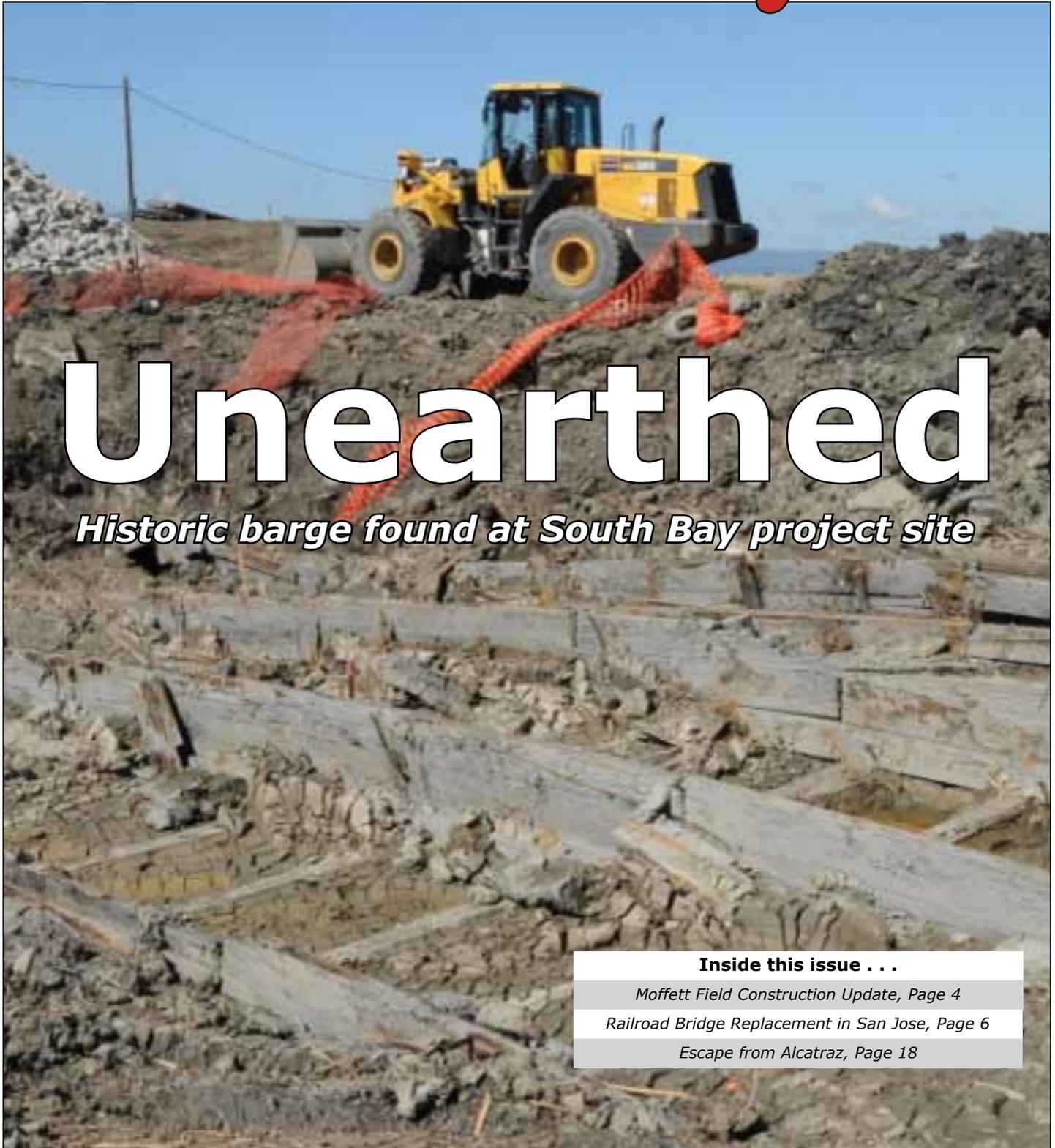
# Surveyor



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Sept/Oct 2010

Vol. 2, Issue 5



# Unearthed

*Historic barge found at South Bay project site*

**Inside this issue . . .**

*Moffett Field Construction Update, Page 4*

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*Escape from Alcatraz, Page 18*

# INTERVIEW

## New commander outlines 90-day assessment

District Public Affairs Office

In July, Lt. Col. Torrey A. DiCiro took command of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District. *SPN Surveyor's* J.D. Hardesty had a chance to sit down with the new commander and talk about how he is preparing for his 90-day assessment, some of his pet peeves, and getting out in the Bay Area.

*Surveyor: Over the next two years, what will be your benchmark for success here at the district?*

DiCiro: That's one of the things the chief [Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp, USACE commanding general] is telling us to get to. He wants us to provide him feedback on our first 90 days of assessment on where we think the command is and what things we're going to look at improving. So I'm looking at having a strategy review with the district's leadership.

Where can we improve? What do we want to focus on? Where do we want to grow? A big part of our benchmark will be our customers. What are they saying about us because they are the ones that ultimately grade us.

*Surveyor: As you look to the future, what can the workforce expect from you?*

DiCiro: After that 90-day assessment, then the division chiefs and myself will do our strategic review. How do we want to improve and hopefully, I can clearly articulate where that is, so we're transparent in what we're doing, and if we're not, I'd like to have an open door policy of 'hey, I don't understand where you're going with this. ...'

*Surveyor: What do you expect from the workforce?*

DiCiro: Coming up with solutions and articulating what needs to implement them, and if it's me or higher, we'd be glad to help. Tell us where we need to engage. From what I see, everybody's doing a great job.

*Surveyor: What would you describe as your pet peeves?*

DiCiro: Well besides a fax machine and a printer that doesn't work, but it kind of leads to that. The answer is broken stuff that nobody takes action on and is waiting for direction from higher. You know my direction from higher is go-

ing to be a big one. It's going to be a congressman, or it's going to be one of our generals calling me saying, 'What are you doing about this?' So my pet peeve would be people knowing there's bad news and sitting on it and not starting to push it up to my level.

*Surveyor: Nobody likes bad news to bite. What do you recommend?*

DiCiro: Right. Holding the bad news and thinking a miracle is going to happen, and it doesn't. Maybe the bad news just needs to be presented as is or maybe there are things we can do to get you the tools you need to go further. Don't wait until the end. Try to bring the commander in a little bit early.

*Surveyor: What changes do you foresee as value-added to our workforce?*

DiCiro: That's one of the things Sam [Maj. Sam Volkman, district deputy commander], MWR [Morale, Welfare and Recreation] and myself are trying to implement. You know my dad was here in 1954. He

Continued next page



Beach

### District Commander

Lt. Col. Torrey A. DiCiro

### Chief, Public Affairs

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## SPN Surveyor

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## SPN leadership changes hands

By J.D. Hardesty  
District Public Affairs Office

**L**t. Col. Torrey A. DiCiro assumed command of the San Francisco District from Lt. Col. Laurence M. Farrell in a ceremony July 13 at the Bay Model Visitor Center in Sausalito, Calif.

South Pacific Division Commander Brig. Gen. Scott F. "Rock" Donahue served as reviewing officer for the event attended by business and civic leaders from across the district.

"The San Francisco District is the command I wanted to command. This is the leadership role I wanted to lead," said Lt. Col. DiCiro. "I am proud to serve with you as we continue to solve the challenges that lay ahead as we balance economic development with environmental stewardship, and community outreach resources continue to help improve the quality of life for more than seven million people living within the district."

Before assuming command of SPN, Lt. Col. DiCiro served the past two years as Assistant Corps Engineer for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Rapid Deployment Corps in Milan, Italy, during which he deployed as the Chief of Infrastructure and Resources for NATO's International Security Assistance Force Headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan.

He has supported Overseas Contingency Operations in Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq and Pakistan and has served in various staff and command positions during his 17-year career.

Lt. Col. Farrell served as district commander since 2008. His new assignment is in USACE Headquarters as executive director for Military and International Operations.

Interview continued ...

did his residency at the Presidio for dental school. He was just here last month, and he was reliving all the great things he saw in San Francisco. That's all he talked about the whole month. So something we can do to get the workforce out and create memories.

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## On the cover

*A backhoe stands above the uncovered timbers of a late 19th century barge found in April at the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project near Alviso, Calif. The discovery by construction workers at the project site prompted a three-day excavation by archaeologists from Pacific Legacy, a historic preservation firm based in Berkeley, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District. (Photo courtesy of Pacific Legacy.)*

# Nearly done



**Story & photos by Brandon Beach**  
*District Public Affairs Office*

**C**onstruction is nearly complete at the Armed Forces Reserve Center at Moffett Field. The 103,500-square-foot facility in Mountain View, Calif., is scheduled to open in October and will be home to the 63rd Regional Support Command.

“We’ll do our pre-final [construction] checklist next week,” said Stuart Fermahin, a project engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District, which is overseeing the \$80 million project. “Then, we’ll need eight to nine weeks to get in the furniture.”

When opened, the facility will feature a 220-seat auditorium, mess hall, fitness center, numerous offices and an indoor virtual weapons range.

The site will also include two additional buildings — a motor-pool maintenance shop and an unheated storage facility.



**Kitchen & Assembly Room**

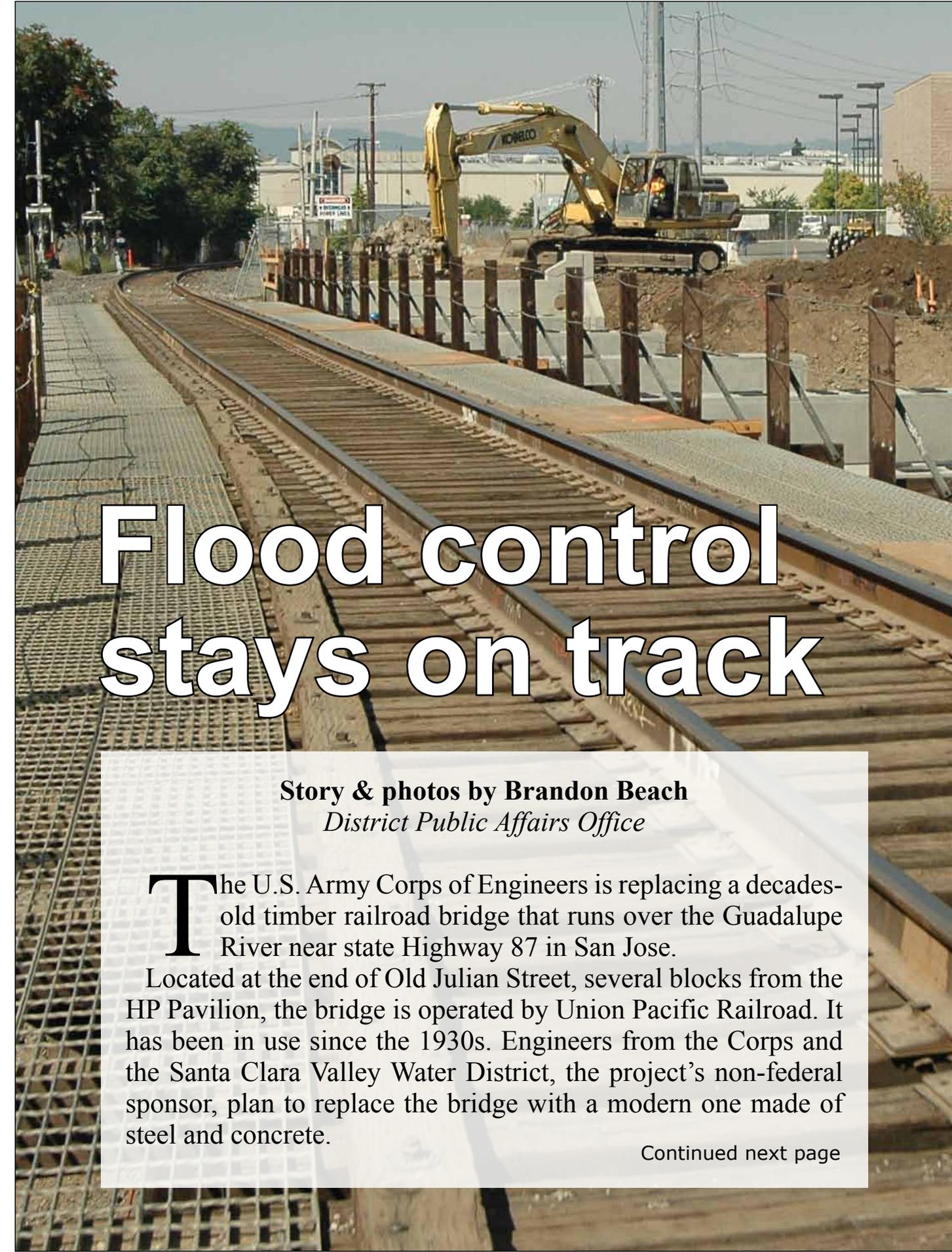
# *at Moffett*



**Lobby Entrance**



**Auditorium**



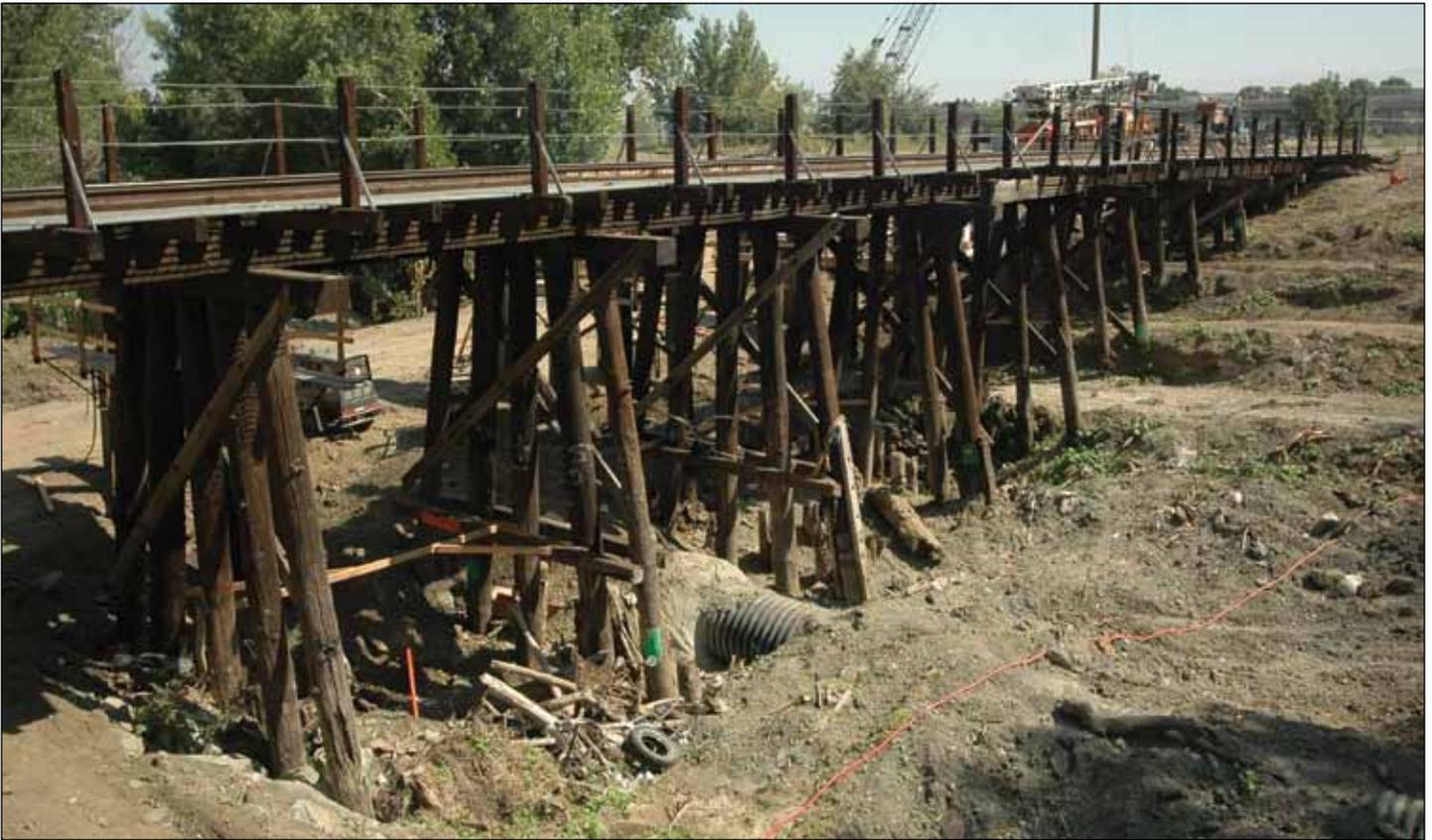
# Flood control stays on track

**Story & photos by Brandon Beach**  
*District Public Affairs Office*

**T**he U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is replacing a decades-old timber railroad bridge that runs over the Guadalupe River near state Highway 87 in San Jose.

Located at the end of Old Julian Street, several blocks from the HP Pavilion, the bridge is operated by Union Pacific Railroad. It has been in use since the 1930s. Engineers from the Corps and the Santa Clara Valley Water District, the project's non-federal sponsor, plan to replace the bridge with a modern one made of steel and concrete.

Continued next page



## *Corps replaces decades-old railroad bridge in San Jose*

Bridge continued ...

The new bridge will be built in two parts, starting with the northern half. During the five and one-half month construction period, water from the Guadalupe River, which normally flows between the bridge trestles, will be diverted around the project site using a pipeline. This has already allowed construction crews to come in with backhoes and a crawler crane to anchor into the dry riverbed the new bridge's structural beams, referred to as h-piles.

"We are only building the approaches to the new bridge at this point," said Robert Kwon, a project engineer for the USACE San Francisco District, who is overseeing the construction.

*[Left] A backhoe clears dirt from a project site in downtown San Jose near state Highway 87 where the Army Corps of Engineers is replacing a Union Pacific Railroad bridge.*

*[Top] This decades-old timber bridge, which runs over the Guadalupe River, will soon be replaced by a steel and concrete bridge.*

*[Right] A construction worker welds together parts of the new bridge's structural beams, referred to as h-piles.*

**Sept/Oct 2010**

"Union Pacific will be responsible for laying the tracks."

In the coming months, rail traffic will be switched over to the new tracks, allowing crews to begin dismantling the old timber bridge. This switch-over will take approximately 48 hours, done most likely over a weekend window, said Kwon, when "there will be no interruptions to train schedules."

Decades of discarded trash in the riverbed such as tires and shopping carts will also be removed as a result of the project, as well as the construction of a pedestrian undercrossing.

Crews have until Oct. 15 to complete the new bridge. That is the date the San Jose Water Resources Control Board has given in order to avoid the start of the rainy season, which is typically the time when fish begin to migrate to the South Bay shores.

This is not the first time the Corps, SCVWD and UPRR have been involved in a large-scale bridge replacement project in downtown San Jose. In 2006, the agencies teamed together to convert a railroad bridge, located between Julian Avenue and Coleman



Avenue, to a two-lane vehicular bridge.

These ongoing bridge replacement projects are part of a larger multi-agency effort to provide 100-year flood protection to the downtown San Jose area, from Interstate Highway 880 to I-280.



photos courtesy of Pacific Legacy

Construction workers at the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project near Alviso, Calif., uncovered timbers of a late 19th century barge April 28 prompting a three-day excavation effort by archaeologists from Pacific Legacy and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District.

## MITIGATING FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES

### 19th century barge uncovered at SF District-permitted project

By Brandon Beach  
District Public Affairs

A late 19th century barge was discovered near Alviso, Calif., when construction workers at the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project uncovered buried timbers of the vessel on April 28.



Stradford

Construction on the site was halted for several days as archaeologists from Pacific Legacy, a historic preservation firm based in Berkeley, Calif., and the U.S. Army Corps of

Engineers San Francisco District were called in to investigate the find in accordance with the National Historic

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You think of this type of preservation as adding to the historical record.

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**Richard Stradford**  
**SPN Cultural Resource Manager**

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Preservation Act.

“Section 106 of the Act requires federal agencies to take into account project impacts to any cultural resource found to be significant,” said Richard Stradford, a cultural resource manager for the San Francisco District. “We first evalu-

ate the significance by asking whether the resource has potential to yield information important to history. If yes, then it is considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Here, we had an accidental discovery on one of our permitted projects — authorized by our district’s Regulatory Division — but still subject to cultural resources laws and regulations.”

In this case, the discovery occurred midway through a 15,000-acre tidal wetland restoration project, the largest of its kind on the West Coast.

Evaluating the vessel’s significance meant carefully removing with backhoes the layers of mud and silt that had built up over decades in order for archaeologists to get a closer look. The

Continued next page

Barge continued ...

three-day excavation effort exposed enough of the surviving timbers to obtain vessel dimensions and feature details. The types of material, including redwood timbers and iron fasteners, led archaeologists to believe that the barge was most likely built in the late 19th century. The team's initial theory suggested that the ship was a flat-bottom hopper barge with a long platform,

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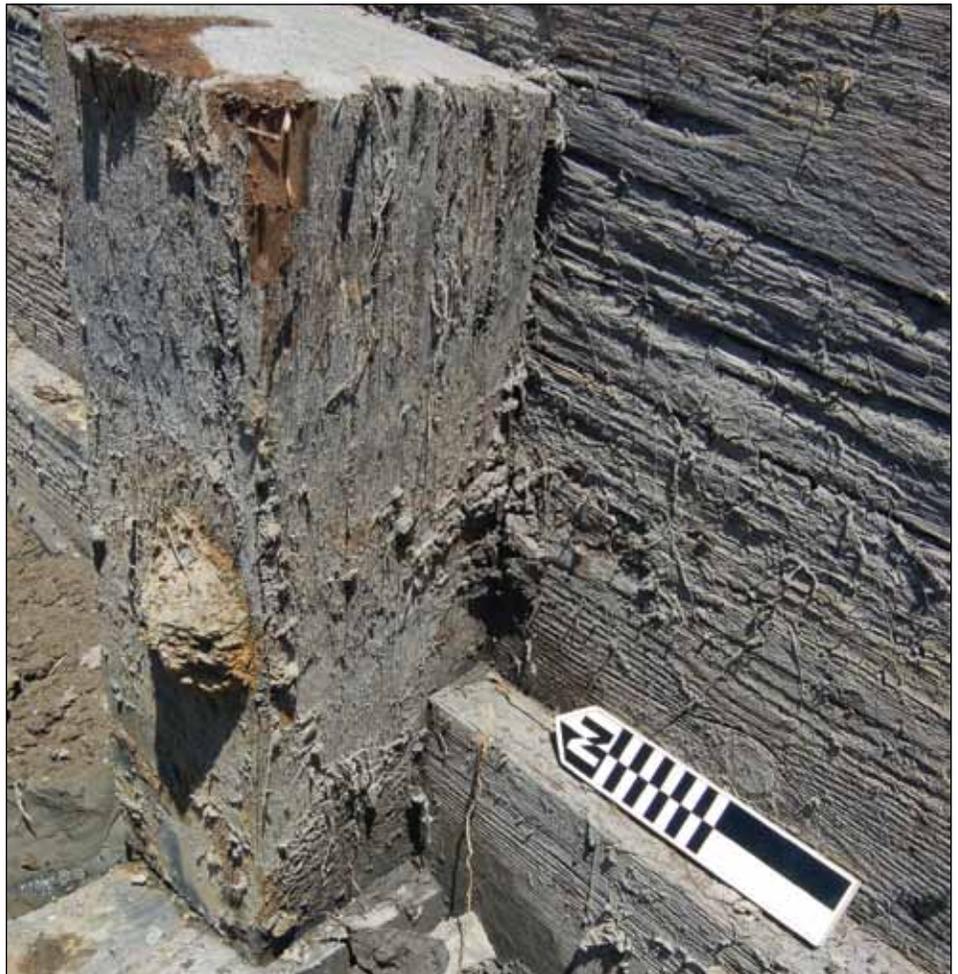
Just as agencies must mitigate for adverse impacts to the environment, so is it with cultural resources.

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used to transport products to and from the Port of Alviso. Archival research has now indicated the barge may have had a hopper, possibly loaded with processed salt for Bay Area markets. The question remained if the vessel remnants warranted preservation and how.

“It was heavily damaged. Nothing above deck had survived, making the interpretation difficult,” said Stradford. “If it were a very significant vessel, then



*Archaeologists photograph specific timbers of the vessel using directional markers.*

you'd explore ways to relocate it to another site where it could be displayed, but that can be extremely expensive.”

Because the project could not be redesigned to avoid the barge, the decision

was to remove the timbers from the project site for demolition and to document the vessel — before its removal — according to the standards of the Historic American Engineering Record.

“Though you're not preserving the physical evidence, you are preserving the information that would have been lost,” said Stradford. “You think of this type of preservation as adding to the historical record.”

Just as agencies must mitigate for adverse impacts to the environment, so is it with cultural resources. In this case, Santa Clara Valley Water District, the project's non-federal sponsor, was required to mitigate for the destruction of the barge.

“It's the same situation,” explained Stradford. “It [the vessel] yields information about local maritime history. Therefore, we concluded it eligible for the National Register.”

The final technical report, drafted by Pacific Legacy with final approval by the Army Corps of Engineers, will later be cataloged in the Library of Congress and made available to the public.



*The vessel's features, including redwood timbers and iron fasteners, led archaeologists to believe that the barge was most likely built in the late 19th century.*



photos by Beach



*[Above] ARRA funds allowed the district to complete a harbor deepening project at the Port of Oakland last year.*

*[Far Left] In July, the district awarded a contract for \$871,162 to upgrade a settling pond at the Coyote Fish Facility.*

*[Left] The Pomo Tribe Center at Lake Mendocino is undergoing a \$245,650 renovation as a result of ARRA monies.*

# District ARRA awards surpass \$50 million

*Small businesses receive 61 of 80 contracts awarded*

**By Joe Barison**  
*District Public Affairs*

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers San Francisco District, has awarded over \$50 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment (ARRA) “stimulus” contracts to small and large businesses for projects that support the district’s mission.

The projects include harbor and channel dredging, construction and upgrading of major recreation areas, endangered-species preservation, vital fish-hatchery operations, and water recycling.

“Our district’s ARRA program is about jobs. We know that people have very real concerns about employment and providing for their families, and in quickly awarding contracts to businesses, we are doing our part to help companies stay in business and hire people,” said Lt. Col. Torrey DiCiro, San Francisco District commander. “These projects support our en-

All of our ARRA projects are intended to put as many people in the trades to work as legally possible.

**Mike Dillabough**  
*Chief, Operations and Readiness Division*

vironmental work and enhance economic security for people throughout our district.”

The district awarded its first ARRA contract in May 2009 and has continued regular contract awards up to today’s approximately 80 contracts for district projects. The district ARRA program stands at 46 completed projects with 34 projects underway.

“All of the ARRA projects are intended to repair or increase the life span of old in-

frastructure and put as many people in the trades to work as legally possible,” said Mike Dillabough, district Operations and Readiness Division chief.

The projects are dispersed among the North Bay, with 63 ARRA projects valued at \$14.5 million; the East Bay, with 11 projects valued at \$23 million; the Peninsula, with two projects valued at \$11 million; and the South Bay, with one project valued at \$400K. Some projects within the district are outside of

the Bay Area – ranging from Monterey Bay to Humboldt Bay, with seven projects valued at \$2.8 million.

“Without the ARRA funds, the Oakland Harbor Deepening Project would have had to wait another year to complete, and this would have been disastrous for the Port of Oakland,” said Dave Doak, who managed the district’s project. “The ARRA funds allowed the inner harbor turning basin to be completed, which lets fully loaded container ships to unload all of their cargo at the Port of Oakland.”

Small businesses, many of which are 8(a) category — owned by minorities, women and/or service-disabled veterans — received 61 of the contract awards; large businesses received 18 contract awards.

The San Francisco District is authorized to award an additional \$20 million in ARRA contracts and is moving forward to carry out its part of the nation’s economic stimulus program.

# EMPLOYEE NEWS

## District employees take on running ‘challenge’

Story & photos by **Brandon Beach**  
*District Public Affairs Office*

**T**hirteen San Francisco District employees ran in this year’s J.P. Morgan Corporate Challenge Aug. 4. Held annually in San Francisco, this year’s “challenge” started at Pier 30 and 32 on the Embarcadero. The 3.5-mile looped course led runners past AT&T Park through the China Basin district and back.

This was the 34rd running of the Corporate Challenge Series. Twelve other cities, including Boston, New York, Chicago and Frankfurt, Germany hosted similar events. Winners of each race earn a trip to Johannesburg, South Africa to compete in the series championship. A record 6,732 runners competed in San Francisco. A record 221,139 participants from 7,748 companies took part globally last year, according to the event’s official Web site.

*For more information on this event, visit [www.jpmorganchasecc.com](http://www.jpmorganchasecc.com).*

*[Above] Members of “Team Essayons” are (left to right, back row to front) Steve Yip, Cynthia Fowler, Anthony Galvan, Jamie Yu, Marisela Rocha, Michael Bennon, Eric Berce, Tessa Bernhardt, Sam Volkman, Legese Abebe, Lisa Andes and Carmen Cheung. Not pictured is Brandon Beach.*

*[Far Right] Lisa Andes, right, a district civil engineer, makes her way to the finish line.*

*[Right] Steve Yip, an SPN supervisory budget analyst, finds his stride.*



## *New employees join district team in summer ‘10*



**William Rodman**  
*Accountant*  
Resource Management Branch



**Ryan McClymont**  
*Visual Information Specialist*  
Public Affairs Office



**Joseph Rakstins**  
*Maintenance Worker*  
Navigation Branch



**Justin Kosta**  
*Physical Scientist*  
Planning Branch



**Tricia Yates**  
*Office Automation Clerk*  
Navigation Branch

## Employee Profile

# Hard work meets good luck for SPN chief

By Joe Barison

District Public Affairs

A boy born in Canton, China during an armed revolution grew up to become the San Francisco District's chief of engineering. Herb Cheong's life journey is a story of family loyalty, hard work and good luck.

"My parents were refugees, basically," said Cheong. "I was just one-and-a-half years old when we moved to Hong Kong. My dad was with the Nationalist Army, and we left at the Communist takeover." Eight years later, the Cheong family moved to Honolulu for better job opportunities.

"I did not know English when I went to Hawaii, so they put me in the second grade. But academically, I was at the fourth-grade level," Cheong recalled.

He went to high school in Honolulu, and on to the University of Hawaii, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering. The college major was family-driven. "My parents decided that I would be a civil engineer. And I was the oldest of the children, so I needed to set an example for my brother and cousins. It was cultural," said Cheong. "The engineering curriculum was tough, but I persevered. I tried my best to please my parents. But I also enjoyed it. Math is my forte."

As a University of Hawaii undergraduate, he joined the U.S. Army Reserve, knowing that either through the draft or enlistment, he would have a military-service obligation. "It was during the Vietnam War, and my unit was activated. I was in the 442nd Infantry, 100th Battalion. We were known as the "Go For Broke" unit, the same unit that U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye was in."

After basic training in California, Cheong's unit was sent back to Hawaii. "Once a week, we were called into formation. They'd announce soldiers who were selected from the unit to send to Vietnam. It was like a lottery. One soldier who was selected was my assistant squad leader during basic training,



courtesy

Among his many hobbies, Herb Cheong is an active golfer.

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This is the  
job I'd like  
to retire in.  
This is my  
dream job.

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**Herb Cheong**  
On working for SPN

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and a few weeks later, he was killed in the war. Even though I wanted to join my comrades, I was lucky that I was not selected to go to Vietnam."

Cheong served 18 months of active duty, all of it, except for basic training and advanced infantry training, in Hawaii, which, by now,

was his family home. He returned to the University of Hawaii, where he completed his Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering with the help of the G.I. Bill.

To increase his career opportunities, he decided to pursue a business degree. However, before entering a business program, Cheong married and tried to use his new civil engineering degree to earn a living.

But engineering jobs in Hawaii were scarce, so he took a job as an estimator with a painting and flooring company. The painting-estimator work was only a job, not a career, and Cheong soon left for an engineer position with the State of Hawaii's Department of Transportation. He worked as a hydrology and hydraulics engineer, a subspecialty of civil engineering.

To make himself more professionally marketable, Cheong took a state Department of Transportation position as a programmer and sys-

tems analyst in computer sciences, overcoming his initial apprehension about working with coding and programming. "My fear subsided, and I enjoyed it thoroughly. I found that programming is not only a science, but an art."

Continuing to advance, Cheong accepted a job with the City and County of Honolulu as a traffic engineer. Soon after beginning the city/county position, family responsibilities motivated Cheong to accept a federal job, which paid more than the city position, as a nuclear engineer for the U.S. Navy.

Cheong did not enjoy the nuclear engineer position and had days of feeling held captive in the compound. He recalls how he was "liberated" with a job offer in Hawaii from the U.S. Army. "I wanted out of that nuclear engineer job so much that I really felt like I was being rescued by the Army!" Cheong accepted a job as a master planner with the Directorate of Engineering and Housing at Hickam Air Force Base.

One year later, he was hired by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Corps' Pacific Ocean Division. Cheong became a scheduler and computer programmer and, once again, achieved career advancement without having to leave his beloved Hawaii.

However, two years later, his wife's job relocated to San Francisco, offering her a pay raise and relocation bonus. The Cheong family moved. "I started looking for a job with the Corps of Engineers in San Francisco. I spoke with Bill Angeloni, who introduced me to John Azeveda. John Azeveda hired me as a project manager responsible for O&M [operations and maintenance] projects. I really enjoyed working in charge of the entire O&M Program," said Cheong.

Six years later, in 1990, he became a Programs and Project Management Division project manager, working for Jack Farless, current PPMD Chief Arijs Rakstins' predecessor. "It was very challenging... involving studies, design...It's cradle to grave management of a project."

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# September is National Preparedness Month

By Darryl J. Madden  
Release

**H**ow often do you think about emergencies or disasters? Probably not very often. Maybe after it happens to someone else. However, taking just a few steps can give you the tools to ensure you and your family's safety in an emergency.

According to the 2009 Citizen Corps National Survey, only 36 percent of individuals believed there was a high likelihood of a natural disaster to ever happen in their community. But disasters happen every day in many different forms – from hurricanes to snowstorms, even localized events such as floods and power outages.

Many people think that it will be easy to grab items from your pantry if disaster strikes. But what if you aren't at home? What if your family is separated? What if you have to leave quickly? What about your elderly neighbor? The Ready Campaign and Citizen Corps encourage you to take a few extra minutes this month to plan for any emergency.

September is National Pre-

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Many people think that it will be easy to grab items from your pantry if disaster strikes.

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paredness Month (NPM) and a good reminder that we all have a responsibility to protect ourselves, our families, and our communities. Emergencies will happen, but taking action now can help us minimize the impact they will have on our lives.

This year, NPM focuses on encouraging you and other Americans to take active steps toward getting involved and becoming prepared. Preparedness is everyone's responsibility. We have to work together, as a team, to ensure that individuals, families, and communities are ready. Make a plan. Put together an emergency supply kit. Stay Informed. Work as a team to keep everyone safe.



Beach

*National Preparedness Month reminds individuals to always be prepared.*

Throughout September, activities and events will take place across this country to highlight the importance of emergency preparedness and promote individual involvement, such as first aid trainings, town hall meetings and much more. Look for opportunities to participate in these events in your community.

*For more information on NPM or for help getting your family, business or community*

*prepared, visit [ready.gov](http://ready.gov), [listo.gov](http://listo.gov) or [citizencorps.gov](http://citizencorps.gov), where you'll find free preparedness resources such as family emergency plan templates, emergency supply kit checklists, and much more. The Ready Web site also has a special section for kids, ages 8-12, (Ready Kids). Emergencies can happen at any time and to anyone. Are you ready?*

*-- Madden is the director of the Ready Campaign.*

[www.usace.army.mil/emergency](http://www.usace.army.mil/emergency)

## Cheong continued ...

"While I was a PM, it paved my way to become chief of engineering. I was PM for the Oakland Deepening Project, San Lorenzo Project, Upper Guadalupe Project, Noyo Breakwater Project, Upper Penitencia Creek Project and Redwood Harbor Deepening Project."

In 2001, he became chief of the district's Engineering Branch, and he has no plans to leave. "This is the job I'd like to retire in. Working as chief of engineering for the Corps of Engineers — this is my dream job."

Asked to list the Corps accomplishments that mean the most to him, Cheong reflected on his 30-plus years of federal service, including almost 26 years with SPN. "I'd have to say it's really three things. Succession planning—I've hired a lot of the interns, and we now have a great group of engineers to take over. The San

Francisco District's future is bright. Second, I'd say creating the GIS Section — I was able to get the Corporate Board to approve the new section, and then I implemented it; I hired my staff. The third and most proud is that I'm the only project manager in the federal government to have successfully orchestrated the authorization of the deepening of the Oakland Project through Section 203 of WRDA 1986. This was unprecedented and still has not been duplicated, although it has been tried many times in other Corps districts. In addition, three other projects were authorized by Congress under my watch as PM, including San Lorenzo River, Rafael Canal and Upper Guadalupe River."

While Cheong leads the district's Engineering Branch, he also finds time for his non-engineering passions. He is an accomplished

cook, having started long ago with preparing Chinese recipes but has since moved on to preparing Italian, French, Korean and Japanese cuisine for family and friends.

Cheong is a martial-arts practitioner, having studied the Wing Chun, crane and tiger styles of gung fu, as well as tai chi.

Last, but not light years from least, Cheong is an avid golfer. "I'm addicted to golf," he said. "My wife calls herself a golf widow." His good fortune has not been limited to career opportunities. "I'm a very lucky golfer. When I started to play, I had a hole in one in my first year."

Some say that luck is preparation meeting opportunity. Whether it is as a soldier, professional engineer, a gourmet cook, a martial artist or a golfer, Herb Cheong has always been prepared when opportunity knocked.

# Notebook from Afghanistan

A travel account by Robin Liffmann

Hello,

My job here as the Capacity Development Director has taken on a life of its own and should really have a large staff to get all the work done, but it isn't meant to be. It keeps me very busy and often quite stressed out. This hasn't been an easy tour of duty for me, but at least it gets broken up with some trips (although often exhausting too — at least it is a change of scenery).



Liffmann

I came back in-country the beginning of March, and three days after my return to Kabul, I left for the northern part of the country — Feyzabad, near the Tajikistan border and fairly close to China — to put on a training conference for about 30 Afghan small construction company contractors.

One of the many projects that I'm working on involves building Afghan capabilities within the engineering and construction sector, which includes working with Afghan construction companies, especially the smaller ones located out in the provinces (away from Kabul) to edu-

cate them in our contracting processes, so they have the opportunity to successfully bid on some of our projects. We want to make sure that the jobs and money stay within Afghanistan (versus foreign firms sending in workers from Pakistan, India and others) and are trying to build-up the smaller companies in outlying areas of the country where a lot of our projects (especially the smaller Afghan police stations and border patrol posts) are located.

In addition to teaching the contracting process with a couple of co-workers (which includes presentations on ethics and law, security, safety, and what to expect in the construction process after award), I've worked on revising sections of our solicitations (request for proposals) and contract clauses to include capacity development criteria—then teaching these critical factors to the Afghan companies. We are requiring companies to hire a certain percentage of Afghan skilled labor from the vocational-trade schools around the country — again to support



photos courtesy of Liffmann

[Above] Robin Liffmann, an SPN employee, took this picture in March of her colleagues boarding a plane at a Kabul air-strip. The team flew over the Hindu Kush mountains, pictured top, before landing at their final destination of Feyzabad.

the education and skill development of the population and keep the money and jobs within the local areas.

So, another program that I work on is establishing relationships with the right Afghan agencies/people to help over-see construction standards and develop and maintain vocational-trade schools. We help them with curriculum development and standards, course certification, training-the-trainer programs, and so forth.

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*Again building Afghan capacity (or capabilities) in the private, construction trades sector. We do the same with engineering departments at the universities — working on some of the course development and helping coordinate teaching/training programs. And, this process of training is being extended to many of the Afghan government ministries — mentoring and providing internship and training opportunities for their engineers.*

*Back to the travels, I flew to Feyzabad for three days. Only one day was for the conference, but we had to wait for the plane to come back. We don't travel commercial — don't think that even exists for most of the country. We have our own fixed wing (16 seat prop plane) and a helicopter (helio) to travel around to our area offices and project sites landing on remote air strips or on runways at our military bases. We also travel distances by convoy in MRAPS (armored vehicles — looks rather like a tank with a machine gun turret on top) but mostly by air. I flew in the helio the last trip back in January to several of our area offices at FOBs (forward operating bases) and outposts. This time it was a fixed-wing landing on a remote air strip built out of metal! Sheet metal strips riveted together — built by the Russians when they were in control of Afghanistan back in the '80s. Fascinating landing and taking*



*The Forward Operating Base in Feyzabad hosted a training conference for Afghan contractors.*

*off from this type of runway — very bumpy. It also was an amazing landing, swooping so low over the mountain tops that all of us could swear if we put our arms out of the window or doorway we'd touch the mountain tops or stick our feet out and hit the ground! No kidding, that is how close we came to the ground and hillsides!*

*We only have a 3-person office in Feyzabad located within a German FOB — actually a PRT or Provincial Reconstruction Team who work mostly on building schools, clinics, roads, irrigation projects and other such work for the local populations, rather than the security force work*

*that the Corps mainly builds. It was a rather isolated FOB but nestled in a beautiful valley alongside a river and adjacent to a small village. It was very peaceful here — the local drug lord or warlord made sure everyone in the valley behaved themselves (no Taliban allowed) or else he “took care of them.” Every now and then there was an incident (RPG or IED), but those people responsible didn't survive very long — or so I was told. In turn, he wasn't harmed by the coalition forces — a type of “truce for convenience.” Whether or not this is an accurate account, it was a very pleasant place — calm, clean air, open spaces ... a very nice change from Kabul!*

*We flew over the spine of the Hindu Kush (part of the Himalayas) to get there — again great views of this amazing, jagged mountain range. Hard to believe almost every valley — no matter how narrow or remote — had some village or cluster of mud brick houses clinging to the steep hillside with terraced agricultural fields. These places would take days or longer to reach by foot — only dirt paths lead to them. Really nothing has changed for the last couple thousand plus years. Amazing!*

*Regards,*

*Robin*



*Conference attendees gathered for a photo on the grounds of the Forward Operating Base in Feyzabad.*

# Postcard from Afghanistan



## *Hello from Kabul,*

*As the San Francisco District is a civil works district, I thought I would send a postcard about civil works projects and local sponsors in Afghanistan. One type of project the Corps, in conjunction with USAID [United States Agency for International Development], is involved in is*



*the development of micro-hydropower projects. These involve the development of small hydro-generator projects to electrify rural villages. In order to accomplish this type of project, local “non-Federal” sponsors must agree to de-*

*velop the site. Typically, this involves creating the hydro diversion, laying the foundations and getting the site ready for the Corps’ contractor to deliver the generator, run the wires and hook everything up. As one can imagine, this is a very popular project. Unfortunately, it can also be dangerous.*

*Within the last year, the prime contractor for this initiative was captured by the Taliban. Before they could decide what to do with him, he was rescued by our combined military forces. However during the rescue, two soldiers lost their lives. This has understandably made our prime contractor reluctant to bring power to the people in unsafe areas.*

*With this as background, this postcard note is now ready to describe the dedication of the local sponsor for the village of Hizarak. Hizarak is located very close to the Pakistan border. Before our prime contractor had been captured, it had been agreed that if Hizarak*



courtesy

*Deputy District Counsel Dan Dykstra, far right, deployed to Kabul, Afghanistan in support of Overseas Contingency Operations in April.*

*would construct the foundation infrastructure, the Corps would install a micro-hydro unit there. However, even though the sponsor has completed its part of the bargain, circumstances have changed. The Hizarak area has become “hot”, and I am not referring to the weather. Our prime contractor has decided that there are other, “cooler” villages in which he can fulfill his contractual obligations.*

*Understandably, our local sponsor for the village of Hizarak is unhappy. Like any good sponsor, their remedy was to come to the District to plead for the completion of the project. They were represented by the village elders. During the meeting, which included a discussion of the safety concerns, the Corps was told that there are fifty men in the village. We were assured that before our prime contractor was harmed by the Taliban, that there would be fifty dead men in the village! This has since been confirmed in writing complete with the thumb prints of the still very much alive Hizarak men.*

*The moral of this postcard note is that it is hard to find a more dedicated sponsor than Hizarak.*

*See you all in September!*

**Dan**

Spin B

# USACE civilians deploy in support of OCO

Middle East District Release

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to play a key role in defense operations as well as responding to natural disasters, both at home and abroad. Civilian employees have deployed in support of military operations throughout history. USACE civilians have been used in the past to support military operations, humanitarian relief, peace support operations, conflicts and war. USACE civilians will continue to be needed to support these types of operations in the future and must be prepared to provide support for these endeavors.

The Corps has an ongoing mission, one unprecedented in scope, to assist in rebuilding both Iraq's and Afghanistan's infrastructures in support of the Overseas Contingency Operation (OCO). Civilian employees are vital to the success of

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Civilian employees are vital to the success of this mission.

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this mission. The Corps' objective is to ensure that qualified civilian employees are available in adequate numbers, with the skills to meet worldwide mission requirements during periods of national emergency, mobilization, war, military crisis, or other contingencies.

*If you are interested in deploying with USACE, please visit the Middle East Program Center at [www.tam.usace.army.mil](http://www.tam.usace.army.mil) and search under "Frequently Asked Questions."*



[www.aed.army.mil](http://www.aed.army.mil)

The photos above depict the type of work by the Corps of Engineers in Afghanistan including constructing bridges, barracks and health care facilities.

## Returning from deployment

Dennis Griffin, right, a San Francisco District construction representative, is presented with various awards for his year-long service in Afghanistan by Col. Thomas Magness, commander of the Afghanistan North District. Among his awards were the Secretary of Defense Medal for Global War on Terrorism, the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization In Service of Peace and Freedom Award, Department of the Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service and the Afghanistan Operating Enduring Freedom Coin.



courtesy



# Escape from Alcatraz

National Geographic TV interviews district Planning Branch chief

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Story & photos by Joe Barison  
*District Public Affairs*

National Geographic Television interviewed San Francisco District Planning Branch Chief Tom Kendall about the real-life water conditions that three Alcatraz prison inmates would have faced during their famous 1962 escape.

The interview's setting was the annual Escape from Alcatraz event, July 18, which started with a large boat taking approximately 100 swimmers from Pier 3 to just off of Alcatraz for their leap into the water

and swim to San Francisco's Crissy Field beach.

Kendall, a coastal engineer and recreational swimmer, has swum the annual Escape From Alcatraz event, as well as doing other swims in San Francisco Bay. As one who has both professional and personal knowledge of the bay's tides, Kendall was the perfect interview subject to give a realistic account of what the prisoners faced on the night they set off from "The Rock" on a makeshift raft.

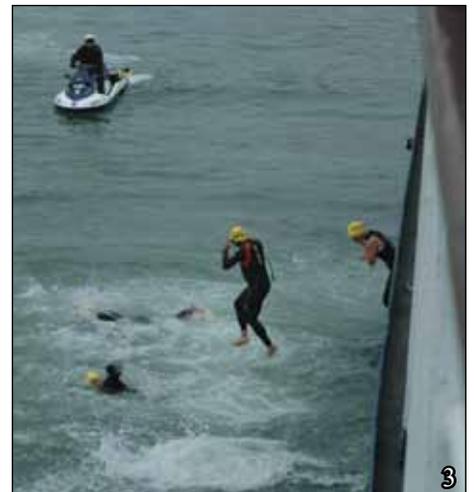
The "Escape from Alcatraz" episode is planned for National Geographic TV's "History Uncovered" series, set to air in 2011.



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[1] This is how Alcatraz, once a notorious federal prison, looked to arriving inmates—and to Escape from Alcatraz swimmers, July 18, aboard the ship "Hornblower." [2] SPN Planning Branch Chief Tom Kendall is interviewed by a National Geographic TV writer-director. [3] Swimmers leap from their boat just off of Alcatraz to start their "escape" to the Crissy Field beach. [4] Competitors go all out in their swim, while a kayak fleet looks out for their safety.

# ENGINEERING CHALLENGE

Take on the engineering challenge in this month's SPN Surveyor. The first to solve this mathematical puzzler will receive a commander's coin, with the results being published in the Nov/Dec 2010 issue.

## The Pirate Puzzle

**Three pirates (A, B, and C) arrive from a lucrative voyage with 100 pieces of gold. They will split up the money according to an ancient code dependent on their leadership rules. The pirates are organized with a strict leadership structure—Pirate A is stronger than Pirate B who is stronger than Pirate C.**

**The voting process is a series of proposals with a lethal twist. Here are the rules:**

- 1. The strongest pirate offers a split of the gold. An example would be: "0 to me, 10 to B, and 90 to C."**
- 2. All of the pirates, including the proposer, vote on whether to accept the split. The proposer holds the casting vote in the case of a tie.**
- 3. If the pirates agree to the split, it happens.**
- 4. Otherwise, the pirate who proposed the plan gets thrown overboard from the ship and perishes.**
- 5. The next strongest pirate takes over and then offers a split of the money. The process is repeated until a proposal is accepted.**

**Pirates care first and foremost about living, then about getting gold.**

**How does the game play out?**

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**Submit your answers via e-mail to John Jacobson at [John.H.Jacobson@usace.army.mil](mailto:John.H.Jacobson@usace.army.mil).**

*(This challenge was submitted by Mark Bierman, chief of the district's Economics Section.)*

**Congratulations to last issue's winner!**



Beach

*San Francisco District Commander Lt. Col. Torrey A. DiCiro, left, presents a commander's coin to Anthony Galvan, a DA intern and winner of the Surveyor's July/Aug Engineering Challenge.*

# HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH



## Facts about the Observance

Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America.

The observation started in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson and was expanded by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 to cover a 30-day period starting on Sept. 15 and ending on Oct. 15. It was enacted into law on August 17, 1988 on the approval of Public Law 100-402.

Sept. 15 is significant because it is the anniversary of independence for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on Sept. 16 and Sept. 18, respectively.

Also, Columbus Day or Día de la Raza, which is Oct. 12, falls within this thirty-day period.

*For more information on Hispanic Heritage Month observances at the San Francisco District, contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Office at 415-503-6706.*

## Hispanic servicemembers decorated with military's highest honor

**F**orty-three men of Hispanic heritage have been awarded the Medal of Honor. Of the forty-three Medals of Honor presented to Hispanics, two were presented to members of the U.S. Navy, 13 to members of the Marine Corps and 28 to members of the Army. Twenty-five Medals of Honor were presented posthumously.

The first recipient was Cpl. Joseph H. De Castro of the Union Army for his actions at Gettysburg, Pa., on July 3, 1863, during the American Civil War, and the most recent recipient was Capt. Humbert Roque Versace who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor on July 8, 2002, by President George W. Bush.

Ten recipients were born outside the U.S. mainland, one in both Chile and Spain, four in Mexico and four in Puerto Rico.

The Medal of Honor is the United States highest military decoration. Sometimes referred to as the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Medal of Honor is bestowed "for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life, above and beyond the call of duty, in actual combat against an armed enemy force." The medal is awarded by the President of the United States on behalf of the Congress. Because of the nature of this medal, it is commonly presented posthumously.

*Excerpt from [www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil).*

## Spotlight: Sgt. Alejandro Ruiz

**S**gt. Alejandro R. Ruiz, who lived in Visalia, Calif., was a U.S. Army soldier who received the Medal of Honor —the highest military decoration — for his actions in the Battle of Okinawa during World War II.

On April 28, 1945, Ruiz's unit was pinned down by machine gun fire coming from a camouflaged Japanese pillbox [i.e., bunker]. Ruiz, on his own initiative, charged the pillbox and single-handedly neutralized the enemy. He was later awarded the Medal of Honor by President Harry S. Truman during a ceremony held at the White House.

Following his death on Nov. 20, 2009, the city of Visalia honored Ruiz by naming a park after him.

