Trestle Bay Ecosystem Restoration Project
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January - February 2016
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Cover photo: by Jeff Henon, Public Affairs Specialist, Trestle Bay Ecosystem Restoration Project.
Portland District,

I had the privilege to join our Leadership Development Program cohort when they visited Washington, D.C. in January. We had a tremendous week interacting with Congress, many Administration officials and federal partners, the media and industry partners. We were afforded a rare treat on our first day with an initial engagement with Maj. Gen. Ed Jackson, deputy commanding general for civil works. The week culminated with an address on leadership by our Chief of Engineers, Lt. Gen. Tom Bostick. We also had the opportunity to hear from alumni of our great District: Director of Civil Works Steve Stockton, Mindy Simons and many others. Our reputation is strong in D.C. because we deliver on our commitments and produce leaders of character for the future of our nation.

The following week, we conducted a quarterly Operations Project Review in the Willamette Valley. The close timing of these two events resonated with me. Our local challenges are not unique. Headquarters hears from all the Districts about the challenges we face regarding policy, funding and competing priorities. And, the partnerships we foster here help us work through those issues and our partners let headquarters and our Congressional delegation know the great work we are accomplishing here. It is only through Portland District’s workforce – people tremendous of character, superb competence and tremendous commitment – that we are able to work these tough challenges.

The future of the District looks great. The president released his FY17 budget to Congress and the FY16 work plan (how we will execute our FY16 funding) on Feb. 9. While we did very well in both, we must continue to focus on execution to maintain the trust of the American people.

Change is all around us. At the national level, the Chief of Engineers is scheduled to transition on May 19, and Maj. Gen. Todd Semonite has been named as his successor. At the regional level, Lt. Col. Tim Vail and Col. Andy Sexton, our Walla Walla and Kansas City district commanders, respectively, will change command this summer. Our U.S. Coast Guard partners also have two significant transitions with Capt. Dan Travers, Columbia River Sector commander, and Capt. Patt Ropp, Marine Safety Unit Portland commander, transitioning this summer. At the District level we have multiple changes this year. I ask for your continued patience and dedication as we bring so many of our teammates and partners up to speed; these relationships are great investments.

Finally, our deputy commander, Lt. Col. Shawn Patrick, will assume command of the 14th Brigade Engineer Battalion at Joint Base Lewis McCord in July. We will bid farewell to him and his family later this spring and will welcome Lt. Col. Cullen Jones and his family later this summer. In the interim, Capt. Dan Robledo will assume the duties of our deputy. Dan was recently approved for promotion to major, so please congratulate him.

Please take the time to scan the articles in the issue. Many hit on our OPLAN focus: People, Process, Programs/Projects. As a reminder, the six focus items are Workforce/Workload, Knowledge Management, Asset Management and Future Investments, STEM, Cyber Security, and Acquisition. Although Headquarters and Northwestern Division are drafting up adjustments to the current campaign plan and implementation plans, I am confident that we have properly evaluated the operational environment and have dedicated energy on the highest payoff initiatives. I would like to highlight “Water Matters” as our theme for the year. We rolled out the theme and video at the New Year’s reception with all of our senior District leaders and their guests, and the January Town Hall. The article on page 7 does a great job of explaining the theme. Please take the five minutes to watch it and even better, use it educate your friends, neighbors and members of the Great American public.

It should be pretty clear to you through Water Matters, that it is our People of character, competence and commitment with disciplined and ever improving Processes who deliver on our Programs/Projects that makes us a great organization. And, our reputation of mission accomplishment is our capital. Thank you for all you do to continue to add to the tremendous reputation of our District team and team of teams across the Corps of Engineers.

Competence follows Character.

Col. Jose Aguilar

61st Colonel of the District
The Military Decision-Making Process

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CCIR: commander’s critical information requirement  
COA: course of action  
EEFI: essential element of friendly information  
IPB: intelligence preparation of the battlefield


These methods help the District define the problem and the steps necessary to support the best decision before using our resources and spending our limited funding. This includes conducting deliberate and in-depth analysis of the operational environment, extracting important facts and assumptions from the analysis, establishing well-thought out criteria and developing alternatives.

Both TLP/MDMP and PMBP provide a process to complete an objective or mission with a desired end state based on the best available information prior to execution. The key to the successful implementation of these methodologies is the rigorous completion and review of the sub-processes in a systematic and iterative fashion. This ensures the best available information is consistently used in the next level of planning or execution.

The two figures briefly show how both processes function. Portland District uses both processes in concert as it tackles challenges, accomplishes its mission or seizes an opportunity in support of our missions.
Describe your job.
Planning, design and construction of a variety of fast track small projects utilizing the small project team approach. Taking projects from cradle to grave. I answer a lot of emails and phone calls.

What inspires you or motivates you as you do your job?
I’m inspired to work like I’m working for something greater than me. We use tax dollars and represent the public and greater good. It’s not about me.

What are your career aspirations and how are you preparing to accomplish them?
I’m actually going on a two year temporary change of station to the Omaha District. I’ll be part of their rapid response/special projects section, potentially working on disaster relief and hazardous waste treatment type projects. This has been a dream of mine for a long time. Being in the Small Projects Team has helped prepare me for fast tracking projects and constantly working on my communication will continue to help me prepare for the move.

What is the one thing you need in order to do your job better?
I constantly need to be reminded that I need help and that I’m not alone. There are so many resources out there and knowledgeable people, I just need to ask. It’s always a team effort to be successful.

Tell us about your first job:
I worked at a Baskin Robbins at the Vancouver Mall. Scooping ice cream was fun; one time, I sold this teenager seven scoops on a waffle cone. He asked how many I could put on there as a joke, and I said seven and his eyes got real wide. I hope he didn’t eat all of it in one sitting.

What is your favorite book and why?
The Bible. Every time I read it, I get something new out of it. It’s always challenging me to be better.

What are your hobbies? Why do you like them?
I love rock climbing, going to concerts, and cooking. I love being outside and being active. Music and cooking help me relax.

Who or what inspires you, and why?
My dad inspires me with how hard he’s worked for everything in his life. Nothing was given to him and he lives the American Dream, emigrating here from Romania. He started as a PDX janitor and now owns his own civil engineering firm. He also reminds me from time to time that everyone poops, which helps me remember that we are all human.

What is the craziest thing you’ve ever done? Would you do it again? Why or why not?
I went bungee jumping this last summer; that was pretty crazy. I’d do that again. I’ve also attempted to eat a 10 pound burger, by myself, within an hour. I definitely would not do that again.

What is your favorite quote? Why?
Proverbs 24:16 “Though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again...” It helps remind me to not give up. And that it’s not about being perfect, but about getting back up when I fall down.

If you could have a super power what would it be? Why?
I’d totally fly. Who wouldn’t want to zip around with the wind in their hair and never have to experience traffic again?
Portland District’s 1200-plus employees know the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is much more than dams, bridges and other building projects. People outside the Corps often don’t realize that we also help minimize flood damage, restore habitat and ecosystems, and keep river channels navigable.

We have produced a video to help tell Portland District’s story. It briefly identifies all the areas where you’re working to serve the needs of the Pacific Northwest and the Nation. Share it with your family, friends and others who, at one point or another, have probably asked you about your job and what the Corps does. This is a great resource to include in your presentations and to share with private organizations, local community groups and schools to educate them about what the Corps is doing to support our way of life.

You can find the Portland District’s story on our website at www.nwp.usace.army.mil or on the District’s YouTube website at https://www.youtube.com/user/PortlandCorps/.

Water matters
Small project, big benefits

by: Michelle Helms, Public Affairs Specialist

The wetlands inside historic Trestle Bay near Warrenton, Oregon, offer ideal habitat for juvenile salmonids. Ideal, but mostly out of reach for more than 125 years due to what makes historic Trestle Bay “historic” – the relic stone and pilings placed there from 1885 to 1895, when the South Jetty was built.

That’s changing in 2016, as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers partners with the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce and Bonneville Power Administration to reconnect the bay with the Columbia River.

The Trestle Bay Ecosystem Restoration is a relatively small project: removing wood pilings and moving 900 feet of jetty stone from seven locations along the 8,800 foot structure.

“It’s a small, simple project, but the benefits are enormous,” said Gail Saldana, Corps project manager. “Creating new openings and restoring hydraulic connections from Trestle Bay to the river will go a long way to improving the ecology there.”

The Corps completed a similar project in 1995, breaching a 500-foot section in Trestle Bay. Studies followed, evaluating the impact on migrating fish and other species that rely on the estuary. The studies showed that creating more openings would support efforts to increase survival of salmonids and other endangered species.

“Reconnecting the bay with the Columbia River provides additional access to quality wetland habitat for juvenile salmonids and other fish species,” said Justin Saydell, CREST Habitat Restoration Project manager. “Additional openings will also provide opportunities for an increase in organic inputs into the river, which provide great benefits like food sources and nutrients to species utilizing the river.”

Partnership with the Corps on the Trestle Bay restoration project is an important collaboration of agencies, said
Railroad trestles were used to build the North and South jetties at the mouth of the Columbia River. The piles and relic stone left over from the construction remained in place, hampering the hydraulic connections between the bay and the river. The Trestle Bay Ecosystem Restoration project is designed to reopen those connections and increase survival of salmonids and other endangered species.

LKE Corporation of Washougal, Washington was awarded the $920,471 contract for the Trestle Bay Ecosystem Restoration Project, which will be completed by the end of February.

Saydell. Working together and sharing costs increases opportunities to improve ecosystems beyond the river.

“One of our primary goals at CREST is to work with partners on restoration projects to reconstruct and reactivate habitats for fish and wildlife in the estuary,” said Saydell. “These projects benefit not only fish and habitat, but also the local economy, by hiring contractors to do the work. Improving salmon stocks also benefit the fishing industry.”

The low technical complexity and short schedule of the project sparked the engagement of the Portland District’s Small Projects Team. Under its management, the project now has streamlined processes that allow for a quick turn-around in the design, pre-award and acquisition phases.

“Communication and responsiveness have been critical factors in the success of the project,” said Corina Popescu, project Technical Lead. “I’m proud of the effort the team has put into this, from pre-award to construction. The overall execution would not be possible without everyone’s committed contribution.”

LKE Corporation of Washougal, Washington, was awarded the $920,471 Trestle Bay Ecosystem Restoration Project contract, which will be completed by the end of February.

The company is an 8(a) Small Disadvantaged Business, as well as a Woman-owned and Economically Disadvantaged Woman-Owned small business – all socioeconomic subcategories of the small business program that Congress has identified as critical for contributing to local and regional economic development. The District Small Business Office works with Contracting Division and the project delivery teams to identify projects suitable for award to small businesses. We’ll learn more about the District Small Business Office and its mission in the next issue of the Corps’pondent.
Author Lewis Carroll said, “If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will get you there.” That’s fine if the journey is more important than the results, but for the Hydroelectric Design Center, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Center of Expertise, that’s just not good enough.

For more than 60 years, HDC, as it became known in 1980, has been the Corps’ experts in hydroelectric design. While the engineering basics haven’t changed much since 1938 when the first hydroelectric projects were being designed on the Columbia River, how those basics are used has been constantly evolving. Better building materials, streamlined controls and digital technology are challenging engineers to design and build stronger, faster and smarter components. HDC’s Electrical Branch Chief Steven Ernst, and David Brown, Automated Controls and Cyber Security Branch chief, shared their ideas of what changes HDC may see in the future.

Future watch
HDC is in its third era, according to Ernst. The first era was designing and building large hydropower facilities; the second era began when construction waned and the Corps began adding capacity to existing facilities.

“Now those Corps facilities are nearly 70 years old and their infrastructure needs to be repaired and upgraded to keep them operating efficiently,” Ernst said. “They will need to be upgraded – not just once, but many times to keep them relevant for future hydropower production.”

HDC is at the forefront, developing new technologies to improve operations and new processes in order to maintain a high level of optimization, according to Brown. “It’s important to get the most out of a resource without constructing new facilities. Digitalization is one key to operating faster.”

Before digitalization, any change in powerhouse operations meant someone had to physically walk over to a unit and make a change. For example, changes in turbine flows were made manually at a turbine unit’s control system. “Digital technology means the change can occur in a split second; no more waiting for someone to walk through the powerhouse,” Brown said.

Along with speed, digitalization offers a more stable operating system. Before digitalization, each turbine unit needed lots of relays, with each relay doing only one job.
They were reliable because they functioned simply, which minimized wear and tear.

“Digitalization incorporates a variety of jobs into one relay. They can perform more complex tasks and offer greater flexibility,” Brown said. “We will see even greater use of digital technology in the future. The one challenge is that as you ask more of a component, it wears out faster.”

Unlike digitalization, mechanical components, which are limited by the physical properties of their materials, will probably not change much. Brown and Ernst believe innovations are likely in other fields, however, including even more fish-friendly turbine designs and environmentally safe lubricants for dam operations.

“The days of constructing massive hydropower facilities are over,” Brown said. “Small hydro will move us forward.” Small hydro means constructing smaller operating facilities: they are not as expensive and their smaller scale means shorter construction; new materials mean greater efficiency.

“Chief Joseph Dam, one of the Columbia River’s biggest projects, has a capacity of about 2,800 megawatts; a small hydro facility would typically have capacity for between five and 100 kilowatts,” Brown said.

Because of their size and relative affordability, many small hydro facilities are expected to be private-public partnerships, similar to Dorena Dam, where Dorena Hydro, LLC., added a small hydro unit to the existing flood control dam.

“The Corps will not be constructing small hydro facilities any time soon,” Brown said. “Our current focus remains on big hydro projects, but as hydro experts, we need to know about their benefits and challenges so we can advise our customers appropriately.”

Securing the future

No matter what size a facility is, each one will need to protect itself from cyber attacks. Far from the days where someone needed to walk the powerhouse to make a change to a turbine output, nowadays many facilities can be operated remotely.

“Thanks to technology, it’s possible to operate equipment from anywhere – the joke is you could run things from your bed in your jammies,” Brown said.
That reality isn’t quite here yet, but it’s not far in the future.

“Last year a Wired Magazine reporter participated with some hackers who commandeered a Jeep while he was driving it. They got the lights, the radio, wiper blades and even the brakes to ignore the driver’s actions. It was quite a demonstration – one that really brought home how important it is to safeguard our properties from any cyber incursions,” Brown said. “We need to continually decide when the need for efficiency is overtaken by security concerns. It’s something we weigh every day.”

Brown and Ernst are excited about another aspect of digitalization: self-healing computer systems. These computer systems are capable of identifying a problem, isolating it from the rest of the system and determining, through trial and error, what action will solve the problem.

“Anything programmable can be self-healing – control room systems, turbine operations, pretty much any system we operate could use the technology,” Brown said. There are self-healing systems operating in District facilities today. “They go through the whole cycle of identification, isolation and problem solving, but they only provide recommendations. We don’t allow the systems to actually fix a problem themselves … yet.

“I believe within 20 years the Corps could use self-healing systems all across the District – and will allow them to fix problems and give us an account of actions they have taken,” Brown added.

Technology and new materials aside, how will the office change?

In the past, employees sat together in one room, often with only one phone. Now employees have individual spaces and everyone is connected to their own computer.

The future will likely expand virtual teams, with members geographically separated. “We already have virtual teams,” Ernst said. “I see many more teams with engineers who are working in Portland, project managers located in Kansas City and researchers at ERDC in Mississippi working together in real time.” Both Ernst and Brown believe HDC will gain even greater diversity in fields of study, with mathematicians, statisticians, scientists and biologists becoming more important to its day-to-day operations.

One thing won’t change for HDC: its dedication to customer care. “HDC operates more like a small business than a government agency,” Brown said. “It is agile, with the ability to respond to conditions, or change direction if a situation requires it. That creates a more entrepreneurial environment, which encourages innovation, creativity and specialized knowledge.

“We are hydropower experts, but we work for our customers and what they need. Asset management, optimization and new technologies help us offer the service they need to succeed,” Brown said. “I know that won’t change.”

HDC’s customers have driven the organization to change its practices over the years in order to better support them, and they will continue to do so. Ernst and Brown – and all of HDC’s leaders – believe they know which road to take into the future – it’s the one their customers map for them.
Repairs to Spirit Lake Outlet Tunnel Underway

By Jeffrey Henon, Public Affairs Specialist

The water level at Mount St. Helens’ Spirit Lake has been controlled by a drainage tunnel since 1985. A routine inspection of the tunnel in October 2014 revealed an area where the clay-like rock had bulged upwards on the tunnel floor, reducing its height about 2.5 feet. This reduction decreases the tunnel’s flow capacity, which increases the possibility of flooding in the Toutle River Valley.

The U.S. Forest Service, which owns the tunnel, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, acted quickly to create an interim solution. Catworks Construction, a Battle Ground, Washington, company was awarded the $3 million contract to repair the tunnel and began work in January.

Catworks will grind away the bulging section, about one mile from the tunnel exit, with a remote-controlled mining robot. Steel ribs bolted together will strengthen the tunnel walls in the affected area. The ribs are covered in shotcrete, a concrete mixture applied from a pressurized gun, to add strength and protect the ribs from corrosion.

The Corps expects repairs to be completed by late February. “We are undertaking the repairs to allow the Forest Service and the Corps time to develop a long-term solution for managing the Spirit Lake water level,” said Chris Budai, the Spirit Lake Outlet Tunnel repair project manager. “Mount St. Helens’ 1980 eruption blocked the lake’s natural outlet, which, if left blocked, could increase the flood risk for downstream communities on the Cowlitz River. Protecting the residents, infrastructure, and transportation corridors is our top priority.”
Corps’ rescue-trained engineers are ready to roll

By Amy Echols, Portland District Public Affairs

It takes specialized skills and a good dose of bravery to enter collapsed buildings. The Corps maintains a cadre of these modern heroes: 30 rescue-trained structural engineers who deploy around the world just hours after a natural or man-made disaster to ensure safe passage for disaster survivors and first responders.

Engineers from multiple Divisions, Districts, Laboratories and Headquarters comprise three Urban Search and Rescue Program Strike Teams within the Structures Specialists Cadre, each maintaining on-call readiness to assess, help stabilize and monitor damaged structures at collapse scenes. They recommend actions to minimize risks to search and rescue personnel and use sophisticated equipment and honed, practiced observation skills to shore up and monitor structures.

“Our cadre trains so they can work quickly and efficiently to enable rescuers’ safe entry and assure mobility around a disaster site,” explains Tom Niedernhofer, P.E., the Corps’ Urban Search and Rescue Program Manager. “It’s a job critical to moving forward during a lifesaving disaster response mission.”

The threats posed to responders and survivors from structural collapses after the 1985 Mexico City earthquake and the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake were the “wake up calls” that launched the federal governments’ National US&R Response System and, in turn, the Corps’ US&R Program.

The lessons learned by U.S. assistance teams set the foundation for dozens of missions: Within hours of the 1995 Oklahoma City federal center bombing, Corps Structures
Specialists arrived on scene. A Strike Team arrived in Haiti within days of the devastating earthquake in 2010.

Some missions provide straight-up technical engineering support: A team sent to Christchurch, New Zealand, after the earthquake in 2011 first recommended methods to stabilize high-rise buildings and, where needed, recommended demolition techniques.

Stateside, cadre members provided heavy infrastructure assessments for Vicksburg District after Hurricane Katrina. Supporting their readiness, specialized equipment caches are stored in the eastern, central and western regions of the United States for rapid deployment to a Strike Teams’ response operations.

“For many nations around the world, this program fills a gap in response efforts with deployable, technical expertise and the ability to serve in demanding environments and across language and cultural differences,” explains Col. Eric McFadden, deputy commander at the South Pacific Division and a senior leader with oversight of the Corps’ program that is managed out of SPD. Niedernhofer adds that since most disasters don’t differentiate between seasons or infer preferences for rescue-compatible weather conditions, specialists train for responses in extreme cold weather and stand ready to deploy to environments down to -50F.

The program’s mission is about more than just boots-on-the-ground response. Structures Specialists provide expert consultations to FEMA’s US&R Task Force Leaders and their Incident Support Teams, military technical rescue organizations and Incident Command System leadership. The program leverages the Corps’ niche technical and engineering capabilities, supports critical international and interagency partnerships, and, especially important to collaborative disaster response, integrates civilian-military capabilities.
“Integrating civil-military disaster preparedness and response, through planning, training, and all levels of coordination, deepens the Army’s contributions to local, national and global disasters and builds the capacity and capability of Allies and partners,” expounds McFadden.

A key program goal is advising local, state and federal agencies and nations’ governments how to build their own rescue engineering capability. Training and mobilization exercises support this priority, from conference rooms and into the field, locally or internationally, in FEMA’s 28 national US&R Task Forces and in countries including Uzbekistan, Armenia, Indonesia, Nepal and Bangladesh. Experts across the Corps, the Army and other agencies and countries collaborate on policies and standards for responding to structural collapse.

While the program is invaluable before, during and after a disaster, the Corps must expand the program’s visibility to build support for sustained funding and ensure its role as part of the Army’s global mission into the future.

“When we need the program—when our global partners need it—we must be resourced for the mentoring, the responses to unforeseen technical and engineering requests and the subject matter expertise only available through this cadre,” McFadden explains.

“Parallel to this is the need to build and retain the skills and knowledge of the engineers themselves as the cadre’s numbers are declining with retirements,” adds Niedernhofer. “Participation in the cadre, with its training and readiness requirements, are a unique stretch of one’s regular duties, with experiences not found in traditional engineering positions.”

While all support requests come through the Corps, Strike Teams or specialized individuals can participate in responses managed independently of the Corps and deploy as part of Department of Defense or other State, regional or federal missions. The Structures Specialist Cadre fills a gap in peace and secure times by training federal partners and nations to ensure their readiness. They stand as examples of the flexible, trained experts common in the Corps, ready to support a local town or an entire country following a disaster. How cool is that!

Tom Niedernhofer, P.E., the Corps’ Urban Search and Rescue Program Manager, conducts a void search at the collapsed 5-story Hotel Montana in Haiti. Crews used hand-signals to bridge the language gap with excavator operators as together they carefully delayered damaged concrete in the search for victims.

Scott Acone, P.E., a Structures Specialist from New England District, exits a void he has just searched at the collapsed 5-story Hotel Montana in Haiti following the 2010 earthquake.
Take control of your trusty safety cannon and prepare to launch safety gear to unprepared boaters in Lake Guard, a new game app created as part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer’s latest water safety campaign — Life Jackets Worn ... Nobody Mourns.

The free app, available from the Apple App Store or the Google Play App Store, helps inform users about the importance of water safety gear and boating hazards educating them for real life experiences while in or around the water. The game is highly competitive and is designed to test your speed, reflexes and boating safety knowledge. During play, you will be tasked with guarding a lake that has been overrun with unprepared boaters. Your objective: to guard your lake for as long as you can while increasingly hazardous conditions and visitors try to overrun your waters. Share your high score with friends, earn achievements and become the greatest Lake Guard in the world!

The Lake Guard game app was developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers Natural Resources Education Foundation, under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Last September more than 300 firefighters battled the Butte Fire in central California’s Calaveras County while 250 fire fighters fought the Valley Fire in Napa, Lake and Sonoma counties in northern California. Both fires consumed almost 150,000 acres of mountainous terrain, neighborhoods and city blocks, killing ten people and destroying nearly 2,500 homes and other structures.
By early October, the fires were out and clean up started but cumulatively, these fires were the third most costly in California history.

Authorized by a presidential disaster declaration, Portland District assisted the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Corps’ Sacramento District with emergency support services. With this, Rick Benoit, Chief of Dive and ROV Operations, deployed for 35 days to FEMA’s Joint Field Office as an action officer and debris subject matter expert.

Benoit led efforts to estimate the cost to the government to remove destroyed and damaged trees from roads, neighborhoods, parks and campgrounds. He also helped train FEMA personnel to monitor debris removal efforts by contractors.

Benoit returned to Portland in December and is now deployed to Afghanistan.

Lake County (Valley) Facts:
From Sept. 12 thru Oct. 15, nearly 250 firefighters, 10 fire crews, 15 fire engines and two helicopters battled the Valley Fire of 2015. In all, more than 76,000 acres of neighborhoods, woodland, and city blocks were engulfed in flames destroying 1,307 homes and 651 other structures in the central California counties of Lake, Napa and Sonoma. Four firefighters were injured battling the blaze, which is the third most costly in California history, and four civilians died.

Calaveras County (Butte) Facts:
From Sept. 9 thru Oct. 1, more than 300 firefighters battled the Butte Fire of 2015. In all, nearly 71,000 acres of rugged mountainous terrain was engulfed in flames destroying 475 homes and killing two in the central California County of Calaveras (which means “skulls” in Spanish!).
Profile of a Retiree

Michael Roll

Former Position(s) at Portland District: Deputy Director HDC (also VE Officer, Mt. Pinatubo Study Manager, Chief Tech Resources Branch, Reinvention Lab Coordinator...to name a few of the 16 different positions I held).

How Long Retired: 5 Years & 8 months (as of 11/2/2015).


Bucket List items: Golf in Scotland, see the Aurora Borealis, visit Europe, go warm places, assist with the management of a PGA golf tournament, cruise the Panama Canal, visit Colonial Williamsburg, visit Pinehurst Resort, cruise the Rhine River and a bunch more left to do.

What did I learn: There’s so much in the world to see. This history, the architecture, the culture are all so unique. Do it while you’re able.

Volunteer: USAgyencies Credit Union supervisory committee (2012-2015), helped me understand so much more about how the banking systems work, and the challenges for a bank to stay solvent and relevant in today’s economic times. Royal Oaks Country Club Junior Golf (2013-present), since I love the game I enjoy assisting the younger generation in discovering their skills and interests. Plus kids see the world differently, and that helps me appreciate learning on a different level. North Pointe Home Owners Association (2013-present), helping to make the neighborhood a great place to live. SAME 2010-2014 coordinating their golf tournament fund raiser to support engineering education.

Second Career: Worked for two years (2010-2012) with a local A/E firm, Brown and Caldwell, assisting them in understanding the federal processes, Corps of Engineers and where their skill sets would best fit with Corps responsibilities. I enjoyed the time and the learning experience as I’m motivated by seeking the best in people, resolving problems and finding solutions to challenging situations. Presently, I’m not working for anyone (no one’s asking and I’m not looking, and until one of those conditions change I’ll just enjoy being retired)

Follow NWP: I continue to follow Portland District closely through news articles, District activities, the Corps’pondent, SAME meetings, and the occasional informal get-together/chat with former co-workers and various friends I have from the Corps. I feel I’ve always been an ambassador for the Corps by promoting its work and encouraging others to consider working for them. I often still provide a young engineer with District contact information so they may engage with District staff regarding career opportunities.

Know now but didn’t then: The value of having senior leadership involved in the orientation and integration of younger employees into the Corps is very important and critical to organizational and personal success. When I started you didn’t interact much, if at all, with senior leaders. Little if any mentoring, guidance, insight, advice. Wish it had been more like it is today, way back then. Having the District’s senior management involved in leadership development, communications improvement, EIT guidance and timely/effective performance evaluations has made a significant difference for new employees early in their careers.