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@CharlestonCorps www.sac.usace.army.mil

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Back Cover

On March 31, Glenn Jeffries retired as Corporate Communications Chief after 12 years with the Charleston District and 30 years of distinguished federal service. As the driving force behind this very magazine, The Palmetto Castle, Glenn's vision and leadership shaped each issue into what it is today. In recognition of her remarkable career, unwavering dedication, and lasting impact, we proudly dedicate this issue to Glenn Jeffries.

Greetings Palmetto Castle Readers,

Spring is in the air! Often associated with warmer temperatures, longer days and an explosion of natural beauty, it's also a time of renewal. As we transition into a new season, I could not be more proud of the incredible work and dedication of my resilient team. There are a lot of changes within the federal government right now and regardless of what comes our way, I know this team will make every effort to minimize any potential impacts to the USACE mission and the citizens we serve. With change comes opportunities that we can embrace and harness together. In this issue, we have several amazing stories that showcase how we are delivering vital engineering solutions to the Nation and the state.

With the weather getting better, it's a great time to visit Fort Sumter, where we partnered with the National Park Service on a reconstruction project (page 6). This is a unique project that is finding solutions to protect the fort from erosion and structural damage while preserving the structure for future generations to come.

With beaches being one of South Carolina's major economic drivers, our important work on area beaches is highlighted in this issue (page 8). The story explains how beaches continue to be challenged by Mother Nature and how the district is at the heart of maintaining vital defenses, including federal beach projects like — Folly Beach, the Grand Strand, Pawleys Island and Edisto Beach, which is currently in the design phase.

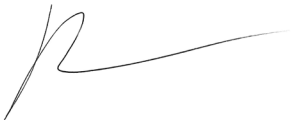
There is a fascinating story about the North Atlantic right whale (page 12) and how our aerial survey teams have become a key tool in monitoring the whales' movements and enhancing efforts to protect them from the many threats they face.

People are one of our greatest assets, and that includes caring for our warfighters—one of the Department of Defense's top priorities. We showcase a supervisor who was nominated and received recognition from DoD's Employee Support of the Guard and Reserve (ENGSR) as a Patriot Employee (page 16), for taking care of the employee during an active-duty deployment overseas.

We love our partners, and we are proud to partner with Fort Jackson and showcase phase one and two of the Reception Battalion projects at the U.S. Army's main production center for Basic Combat Training (page 15). The installation trains roughly 50% of all Soldiers entering the Army each year and our projects continue to support Fort Jackson in their critical mission of training our Soldiers.

Speaking of people, we have added two new important members to our team! You can read about our new operations chief, Scott Hyatt (page 18), who started with the Corps back in 1995 and, we welcome 1st Lt. Edrik Hudson, a native of Dallas, Texas as he joins us as part of the U.S. Army's Technical Engineer Competency Development Program.

As we step into a new season, let's welcome the opportunities for growth, innovation, and progress that come with every challenge. Together, we will continue to build on our successes, stay focused on our mission, and achieve great things. Here's to a season of renewal, resilience, and boundless potential. Thank you for all that you do.



Patrick "Pat" Ripton, PMP
Major, U.S. Army
Acting Commander and District Engineer

USACE PARTNERS WITH NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TO RESTORE FORT SUMTER

Story and Photos by Francisco G. Hamm

The iconic fort known as Fort Sumter is where the American Civil War erupted. Today, it stands tall as a weathered beacon amidst the windswept waters of Charleston Harbor. With its timeworn brick walls bravely bearing the weight of history, even a strong fortress like Fort Sumter is not immune to the relentless forces of nature. Saltwater erosion gnaws at its foundations while merciless tidal fluctuations constantly reshape the landscape. Hurricanes over the years—with their roaring winds and surging tides—continuously threaten to erase the legacy etched into its walls.

As the monumental fort faces these natural challenges, the National Park Service (NPS) has partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Charleston District to protect it from environmental threats and structural fragility.

Members of the Charleston District visited Fort Sumter in December 2024 and January 2025 to discuss a project to construct a new stone breakwater around the fort to reduce the impact of waves on its walls.

"Working with the National Park Service has been a great experience," said Robert Sorenson, Charleston District Interagency and International Support project manager. "We have a long history with this amazing fort and are proud that our bonds are continuing," he said.

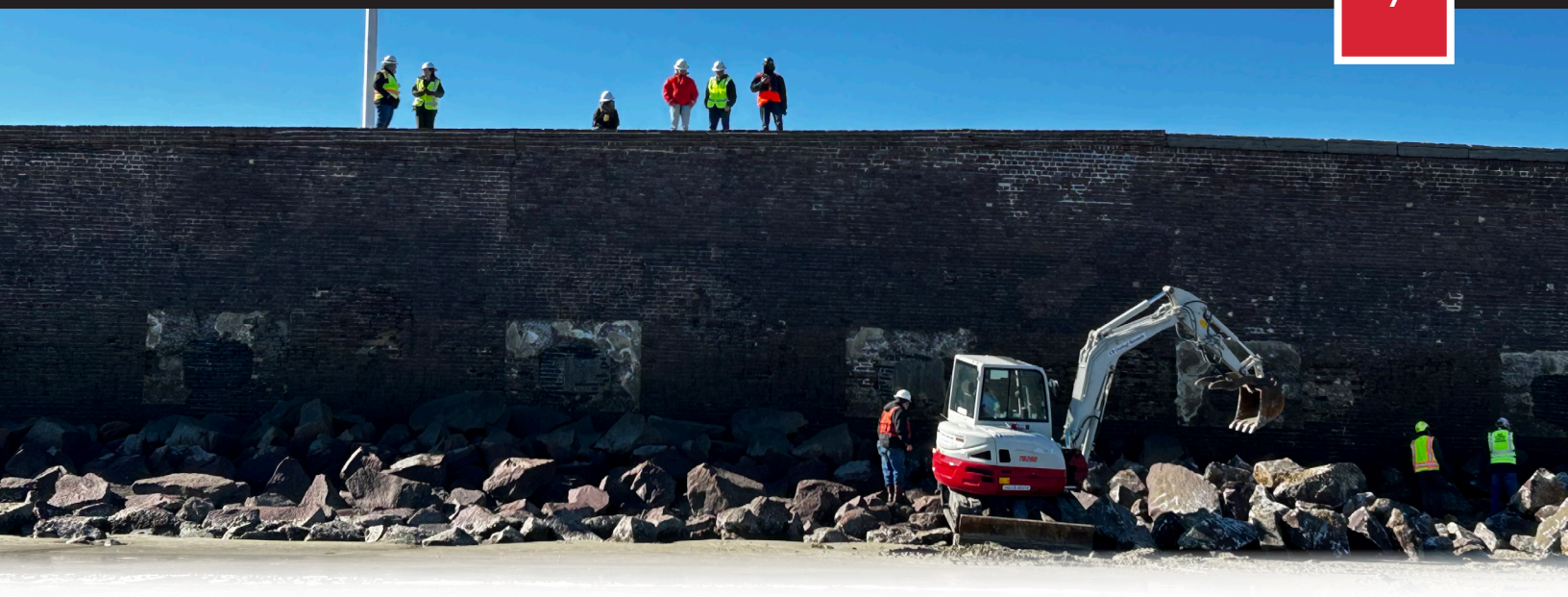
Although the project involves removing existing stone and assessing damage, Sorenson explained that they discovered during the initial process, "we could do more."

The purpose of this project is to preserve Fort Sumter and further protect it from erosion and structural damage.

Repairing the rock around Fort Sumter is part of the broader preservation and maintenance efforts to protect the historic structure and surrounding environment. The fort itself is built on an artificial island and has been subject to erosion, weathering and the impact of natural disasters over the years.

Efforts to repair the rock around the fort involve reinforcing the surrounding seawalls,

Photo Courtesy of Gary Wilder



managing erosion and possibly restoring the integrity of the island's shoreline. This is important for maintaining the structural stability of the fort and preserving the site for future generations.

Conservation efforts might include adding more durable materials such as reinforced concrete or riprap (large stones) to help buffer the structure against tidal forces, storms and other environmental factors.

Before conducting any major repairs or construction, the Corps typically performs thorough environmental assessments. This ensures that any work done at Fort Sumter does not disturb the ecosystem of Charleston Harbor and complies with historical preservation standards. Due to its location in a tidal zone, the fort requires constant monitoring.

USACE has experience managing flood risks and works to ensure that any new systems, such as drainage or flood barriers, function effectively to protect the fort from water damage. This is especially important during hurricanes or storms that can lead to storm surges.

“Given our expertise in engineering, water management and infrastructure,” said Sorenson, “we have played a critical role along with NPS in ensuring that the site is protected from the natural forces that threaten it.”

USACE typically coordinates with NPS and other entities when planning these kinds of projects and, according to Sorenson, “may also conduct periodic inspections and assessments to ensure that repairs are holding up and that any new threats are mitigated.”

Sorenson also noted that the Corps has been actively involved in several preservation and repair projects at Fort Sumter, especially when it comes to addressing erosion and reinforcing the structure of the fort and its surrounding area.

“We recognize the value of working with partners like USACE who provide expertise in helping us protect and preserve America's treasures for future generations,” said Bill Reilly, Chief of Facility Management and Preservation, Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie National Historical Park.

“The project has exceeded expectations, and the park is looking forward to continued collaborations with USACE in the future,” Reilly said.

With these restoration and maintenance upgrades, the sea fort—named after American Revolutionary War General Thomas Sumter and built on an artificial island to defend the region from a naval invasion—will continue to serve the public for years to come.

FEDERAL PROJECTS HELP PROTECT SOUTH CAROLINA'S COASTLINE

Story and Photos by Dylan Burnell

Beaches, one of South Carolina's major economic drivers, are on the frontline in the battle against Mother Nature. When beaches erode, so do our last line of defenses against the ocean. At the heart of maintaining these vital defenses is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Charleston District.

South Carolina currently has three active Coastal Storm Risk Management (CSRM) projects—commonly referred to as federal beach projects—located at Folly Beach, the Grand Strand, and Pawleys Island, with a fourth project at Edisto Beach in the design phase. As a federal beach (CSRM) project, it is the Charleston District's responsibility to reduce the risk to life and infrastructure behind the dunes. In practice, this means renourishing beaches that have eroded to the point where they can no longer provide all of their intended benefits.

Renourishments can be periodic or emergency repair. Periodic renourishments occur at set intervals determined in the original design, with costs shared by the project sponsor. Emergency renourishments are triggered by significant storm erosion and a federal disaster declaration. These are fully funded by the federal government, with no cost to the sponsor.

The importance of the state's beaches and their health is often a topic of discussion in

coastal communities, reinforcing the need for close coordination and planning. A key venue for such discussions is the South Carolina Beach Advocates meeting, held in January of this year on Isle of Palms.

The Beach Advocates meeting brings together local, state and federal officials to discuss threats to the state's beaches and develop future protection plans.

"A lot of the ways we analyze our projects and whether they're worth the federal investment is by looking at how we are protecting infrastructure," said Jeff Livasy, chief of civil works for the Charleston District, at the 2025 Beach Advocates meeting. "Our beaches, while a great place to recreate, protect our infrastructure and have a significant economic impact. If a storm devastates an area, dollars are lost, and tourists don't come."

One of South Carolina's most popular waterfront locations, Folly Beach, suffers significant erosion from both tides and storms.

Folly became a federal beach project in 1993. Since then, six renourishments have placed a total of 8.7 million cubic yards of sand on the beach—enough to cover approximately 4,080 football fields one foot deep.

In March 2024, the Charleston District initiated the latest renourishment of Folly Beach to address damage caused by Hurricane Ian. The project served three purposes – to renourish Folly Beach for coastal storm damage reduction, dredge the Folly River federal navigation channel and place material on Bird Key to help reduce erosion on the critical bird habitat.

By October 2024, the renourishment was complete, with 1.7 million cubic yards of sand placed — the equivalent of 170,000 dump trucks. Contractors worked through the summer and into the fall, persevering through multiple storms, including a hurricane.

"We had two tropical events occur during and after the renourishment, Tropical Storm Debby and Hurricane Helene," said Wes Wilson, project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District. "Although the storms caused minimal damage to the beach, we demonstrated the importance of the renourishment. Without that sand in place, we would have had much more significant impacts."

In Fall 2024, the City of Folly Beach and the Charleston District solidified their partnership for another 50 years by signing a new agreement tied to the completion of the next beach renourishment project. This updated design plan features taller dunes, an extended beach footprint and a new engineering template that accounts for the increasing intensity of future storms.

The state's largest federal beach project is the 26-mile-long Grand Strand, encompassing Surfside Beach/Garden City, Myrtle Beach and North Myrtle Beach. In December 2024, the Charleston District awarded a contract to Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company to place two million cubic yards of material — the equivalent of 200,000 dump trucks — along the Grand Strand. The renourishment is fully funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and will cost $72 million.

Contractors are finalizing their work plan and expect to begin pumping sand in the spring. Once work begins, the 26-mile-long renourishment will take approximately 17 months to complete.

South Carolina's third federal beach project, Pawleys Island, is undergoing an emergency renourishment following significant erosion caused by Hurricane Ian. The project sponsor is working to obtain real estate easements before moving forward with the renourishment.

A fourth federal beach project on Edisto Beach is currently in the design stages. The project includes the construction of a 15-foot-

wide dune extending from the southern end of the state park southward for over 16,000 feet past the southern point of the island. The dune will be fronted by a berm of varying widths. The project also includes lengthening select groins along the beach front.

The project sponsor is currently working to secure all necessary easements to begin construction while the design is finalized. Once constructed, Edisto will become the state's fourth federal beach project.

South Carolina's beaches are on the frontlines of the battle against Mother Nature, and renourishment projects are one of our best defenses. By continuing these efforts, we're not only protecting the coastline but also securing the future of our communities and economy. As storms keep testing our shores, these ongoing projects will ensure that our beaches stay strong and ready for whatever comes next.

RIGHT WHALES SURVIVE AGAINST ALL ODDS

Story by Emily Stark

Beneath the ocean's surface, a gentle giant cruises through the ocean with purpose. The North Atlantic right whale, one of the most endangered marine mammals, is on a journey toward survival in the face of formidable odds.

For centuries, these majestic creatures were hunted for their oil-rich blubber. Since they are slow swimmers and typically stay close to the shore, they earned the grim title of the "right" whale to hunt. By the 20th century, relentless hunting had pushed their numbers to the brink of extinction. Today, despite being protected from hunting since 1935, about 370 North Atlantic right whales remain. Each one plays a critical role in balancing the ocean ecosystem.

Right whales have faced immense challenges, and the fact they are still in our oceans is just as impressive as the creatures themselves. Human-caused factors are still the main reason for their mortality rate, including vessel strikes and entanglement in fishing gear. In 2010 these factors led to an uptick in North Atlantic right whale morality, which highlighted the ongoing threats to the species survival.

As the species continue to face significant difficulties, the push for more protection became a central focus. These efforts include restrictions for vessels in right whale habitats, improved fishing gear modifications, and better management of human activities in the whales' range to help mitigate these threats.

To assist in these efforts, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2020 began funding for daily (weather permitting) NARW aerial surveys in North and South Carolina during calving season which lasts mid-November until mid-April. These surveys have become a key tool in monitoring the whales' movements and enhancing efforts to protect them from the many threats they face. The surveyors can track and identify injured and entangled whales and reduce vessel strike risk by alerting mariners about right whale presence to help prevent any tragedies. Each whale's unique callosity pattern allows surveyors to maintain an ongoing catalog of individual sightings, contributing valuable data to conservation efforts.

Off the coastline, a heart wrenching story of a mother, Juno, and her calf unfolded. Juno was first sighted by the North Carolina aerial survey team on November 24, 2023, off Ocracoke, NC. Unbeknownst to the survey team, Juno was pregnant at the time of this

sighting. Just days later, on November 28, 2023, Juno was spotted again this time off Cane Island, SC, accompanied by her newborn calf. In the weeks following, Juno and her calf were seen several times in the coastal waters of both Florida and Georgia. Their presence brought hope to those protecting the critically endangered species.

However, their story took a tragic turn on January 3, 2024, when a boater near Edisto Island, SC, reported spotting Juno and her calf. But this sighting was different from the others, it was evident that the calf had sustained severe injuries to its head, mouth, and lip from a vessel strike. Despite the severity of the injuries, Juno and her injured calf were sighted several times over the next couple months while researchers monitored the pair. Although the prognosis was not good, the fact the calf had survived for several weeks gave hope that maybe the injuries would heal. Tragically this hope was shattered on March 3, 2024, when Juno's calf was found dead on Cumberland Island, GA. The last time Juno was sighted was on March 17, 2024, off Currituck Banks, NC, presumably heading back north to her feeding ground off New England and the Atlantic provinces of Canada.

This tragic tale illustrates one of the immense challenges the whales endure. USACE plans to continue funding and overseeing daily NARW aerial survey teams during calving season. With the ability to identify and track injured or entangled right whales, we aim to work towards a future where stories like Juno and her calf are not tales of tragedy but of resilience and recovery. Educating the public is a huge aspect of these efforts. There are several outreach efforts in place to assist with educating those who are unaware of these issues. USACE will continue to do our part to help protect the NARW population. With these efforts in place, we hope to see these species thrive in the generations to come. Follow USACE on all Social Media platforms @CharlestonCorps to get up to date information on the whales and their sightings!

Photos Courtesy of NOAA and Clearwater Marine Aquarium

PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF WARFIGHTERS

Story by Emily Stark

You are a new Army recruit, seconds away from stepping off the bus at Fort Jackson to begin Basic Training. As you stare into the night sky your mind starts racing. When do I get my haircut; how short is it really going to be? Where do I get my uniform? When will I get to call home to let them know I arrived safely?

The bus comes to a slow stop. The bus door creaks open, and chaos begins. You instantly hear loud commands penetrating the air. There is no time to think- you follow the orders to line up. This is your first step into military life.

A Drill Sergeant yells for you to start marching towards one of the many large buildings ahead. Unbeknownst to you at the time, these buildings were built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Fort Jackson, the largest U.S. Army basic training center, trains roughly 60% of all soldiers, totaling around 50,000 Soldiers per year. To maintain this vital military installation, USACE helps construct and maintain base facilities.

USACE has helped with Fort Jackson's infrastructure for decades. In the 1960s, the Savannah District built the initial Reception Battalion training complex, where Army recruits spend their first week completing in-processing. After overseeing the installation for many years, the Savannah District transferred responsibility for Fort Jackson over to the Charleston District in 2008. Shortly after, Fort Jackson was assessed, and it was determined that these existing buildings were in desperate need of repair. Renovations on the Reception Battalions six barracks started in 2012.

After completing renovations on all six barracks, the Charleson District was awarded Phase One of the Reception Battalion in 2021. This phase includes the Clothing Initial Issue Point (CIIP) Warehouse, where recruits get issued their first set of Army gear, and the Dining Facility (DFAC), where they eat all their meals in the first week. Both critical buildings recruits often visit during in-processing.

In 2024, the Charleston District was awarded $159.6 million for Reception Battalion Phase Two. This was a huge accomplishment not only because of the project size, but also since it was the largest Army Military Contract awarded in 2024. This phase includes a building where in-processing and medical functions take place, an optical fabrication lab, and a new barracks building. Currently in the design process, phase two is projected to begin in 2025 and will take roughly 5 years to construct. Once complete, the Reception Battalion Complex at Fort Jackson will be up to date for the 21st century.

"These are all impressive buildings, all within budget- we should be proud" Nancy Jenkins Design Branch Chief Engineering with the Charleston District said.

Each element of these projects plays a vital role in shaping the future of our Nation's fighting force. The Reception Battalion is the starting point for nearly half of all Army recruits, it is where they spend their entire first week. The next generation of America's Warfighters starts at Fort Jackson, where USACE plays a vital role. This training center starts the transformation of ordinary recruits into extraordinary Soldiers. No matter where their enlisted Army career takes them, every recruit deserves to feel a sense of pride in the place where their journey begins.

Fort Jackson plays a key role in developing the next generation of Soldiers, and USACE is helping to transform the base to meet future needs. As Phase One wraps up and Phase Two begins, these improvements will lay the groundwork for the success and readiness of tomorrow's Soldiers.

SUPERVISOR HONORED WITH NATIONAL DOD SPOTLIGHT AS A PATRIOTIC EMPLOYER

Story and Photos by Francisco G. Hamm

Employers and supervisors play a crucial role in fostering a supportive work environment by working together to take care of each other's well-being, ensuring both professional growth and personal balance.

And when the employee is part of the National Guard or Reserve service and deploys for months in support of national defense, it becomes even more critical.

Maurice Williams, St. Stephens Powerhouse Project Manager, was recognized as a Patriotic Employer recently, by the Office of the Secretary of Defense's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) organization.

"This is a great honor to be recognized for taking care of my people," said Williams. "Charleston District is a 'special place' and the care especially continues when our folks are downrange," said Williams.

ESGR, a Department of Defense office, was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component Service members and their civilian employers and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment.

Don Tretola, a ESGR Chair Emitrtus, presented the award to Williams, February 19, 2025 at the St. Stephens Powerhouse.

Williams was nominated by Ed Davis, the St. Stephen Hydro Power Plant senior electrician, who was deployed with the 169th Civil Engineer Squadron as a fire fighter to Saudi Arabia, September 2023 until April 2024.

"My supervisor helped me during the pre-deployment process to ensure all my civilian paperwork was good to go and he routinely checked in with my family," said Davis.

Serving the country for more than 50 years, ESGR is supported by a network of nearly 2,300 volunteers in 54 committees located across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam-CNMI (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands), Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Volunteers, hailing from small business and industry, government, education, and prior military service bring a vast wealth of experience to assist in serving employers, Service members, and their families. Together with Headquarters ESGR staff and a small cadre of support staff for each State Committee, volunteers work to promote and enhance employer support for military service in the Guard and Reserve.

"We foster a culture in which all employers support and value the employment and military service of members of the National Guard and Reserve in the United States," said Don Tretola, ESGR Senior Emeritus. "This is an important national program that allow our civilians who become warfighters to be taken care of by their employers."

"My boss single-handedly made my first active-duty deployment an easy transition," said Davis.

When employers step up to support those who serve, they embody true leadership. That kind of dedication fosters a culture of loyalty and care—something that sets the Charleston District apart.

SAC WELCOMES NEW OPERATIONS CHIEF, SCOTT HYATT

Story by Nathan Wilkes

The Charleston District welcomed its newest Operations Division Chief, Scott Hyatt, this winter. Hyatt took the reigns from his predecessor, Scott Glass, who retired at the end of December 2024.

Hyatt brings a wealth of experience and passion to his new role. With a career spanning over two decades, his journey with the Corps began in 1995, during his sophomore year at North Carolina State University. Since then, he has held numerous key positions across various districts, working on some of the Corps' most complex and impactful projects.

Scott's career took root at the Wilmington District, where he first worked with data-based programming and data collection. After earning his degree in Natural Resources Management from NC State in 1998, Scott moved into more hands-on roles, starting as a park ranger at Lake Lanier. His passion for natural resource management led him to a Natural Resource Specialist role, followed by a position as the Recreation Facilities Program Manager at the Mobile District Office. There, he oversaw operations and maintenance service contracts, gaining valuable experience in contracting and project management.

"I've always had a passion for our USACE missions. Being able to work on these tremendous civil works projects around the water is something that I love," Scott shared.

"I hope to bring that passion to the Charleston District and inspire others. I'm a big innovator and I love to try new things, so I hope to continue that and bring additional positive energy to the organization. From what I've seen so far, there is plenty of that already!"

Scott's leadership journey continued with the Savannah District, where he spent 15 years as the Operations Project Manager for the J. Strom Thurmond Dam and Lake, Richard B. Russell Dam and Lake, and the Savannah River Below Augusta projects.

One of the most challenging periods in his career came during the back-to-back record droughts in the Savannah River Basin, which left lakes at some of their lowest levels in history. Educating the public on the operational and environmental challenges that accompanied these droughts proved to be a rewarding experience for Scott, as he worked tirelessly to help communities understand the complexities of the Corps' water systems.

Reflecting on his experience, Scott said, "I've had the privilege of being able to work on many large projects over the years. Working on the Savannah River Basin, I experienced those extreme droughts, and it was challenging to manage public expectations. It was incredibly rewarding to see our team's technical input help create solutions and engage with the community."

Photos Courtesy of Scott Hyatt

Scott's approach to leadership centers around empowerment and trust in his team. "I believe in putting the right people in the right places and then empowering them with what they need to get the job done," he explained. "If you've got smart people in the right places and everyone knows what their role is in the greater organization, then you're going to get much greater results than if you were to micromanage."

Now, as he transitions into his role at the Charleston District, Scott is excited to return to the region where he grew up. Originally from James Island, South Carolina, Scott is married to Jackie, who he went to high school with, and they have four children: Chelsea, Connor, Kyra, and Milana. Having family still living in the area was a significant factor in his decision to come back home to the Charleston area.

"You couldn't get much closer to home than this," he said, reflecting on the opportunity to return to Charleston.

When he's not overseeing operations for the Corps, Scott indulges in his passion for photography. Inspired by a retired Kodak photographer he met while at Lake Lanier, Scott became a dedicated hobbyist, visiting national parks to capture stunning wildlife shots. "I recently went on a wildlife safari at Grand Teton National Park with the biggest lens Canon makes, and it was incredible to photograph bears, elk, and other wildlife up close," he said.

As Scott steps into his new role, he's not only excited to continue his work in civil engineering but also to inspire the next generation of leaders at the Charleston District. Working alongside Scott Glass, the current Operations Chief, as he prepares for retirement, Scott looks forward to furthering the Corps' mission and continuing its legacy of excellence in water resource management.

"I've learned more and done more than I ever thought could be possible in one career," Scott reflected. "The Corps has given me fantastic opportunities across several disciplines, and I'm excited to bring that diverse experience to the Charleston District."

With his deep roots in the area, vast expertise in operations, and commitment to leadership, Scott Hyatt is poised to make a significant impact on the Charleston District and beyond.

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
CHARLESTON DISTRICT
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
69A HAGOOD AVENUE
CHARLESTON, S.C. 29403