



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, CHARLESTON DISTRICT

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US Army Corps of Engineers®

Charleston District

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Special thanks to Ronnie June, Cooper River Rediversion Project's natural resources manager, for hosting the 10th annual Wounded Warrior Fishing Day in St. Stephen, SC. (Photo by Dennis Franklin)

— INSIDE THIS ISSUE —

05 | Commander's Corner by Lt. Col. Robert Nahabedian



06 | District Awarded Army Safety and Occupational Health Star



08 | Introduce a Girl to STEM Day Event Returns to Ashley Hall



12 | Clean Water Comes to Rural SC as Counties Look to the Future



The Orangeburg-Berkeley Reach Water Line project will connect a new water line on Highway 453 near the Town of Holly Hill.

14 | Fort Jackson Dining Facility Redefines the Meaning of "An Army Marches on its Stomach"



Victory Fresh, a new restaurant promoting healthy, affordable eating has opened its doors at Fort Jackson.

16 | Regulator works with DOC to permit major auto operations in SC



Shawn Boone recently worked with the South Carolina Commerce Department on their application to develop the Scout Motors electric vehicle plant in Blythewood, SC.

18 | Charleston District Welcomes New Regulatory Chief, Mindy Hogan- Charles



Hogan-Charles brings more than 32 years of experience with USACE into her new position as Regulatory Chief.

Front Cover

Dredge crews placed 40,000 cubic yards, equivalent of 4,000 dump trucks, of sand on Bird Key this March restoring the sanctuary's natural habitat for seabirds. (Photo by Dylan Burnell)

Back Cover

Shawn Boone, Regulatory project manager, was selected as the Employee of the Quarter for Q1 2024 by his peers for his work with the South Carolina Department of Commerce. (Photo illustration by Dennis Franklin)



South Carolina
Beach Advocates
Est. 2014

(Photo by Nathan Wilkes)

Greetings Palmetto Castle Readers,

Everyone told me my time in Charleston would go by quickly and it certainly is I am sad to say. As I approach my first year with the district, I continue to be amazed at the scope of our impact on the nation. Our team of professionals never fails to impress.

Whether working on a regulatory permit, managing the construction of a new lunch spot on Fort Jackson, or constructing a coastal storm risk management project along one of our beaches, Charleston District's employees are dedicated to our missions and love improving the community we live in. It is amazing to be part of such a fantastic organization.

The district has been doing a lot since the last issue of our magazine and we're excited to share that with you. We just started the renourishment of Folly Beach due to the damages Hurricane Ian caused.

An exciting piece of news from the Folly Beach project is we can beneficially use the dredged material from Folly River, not only for the renourishment of the beach, but to renourish Bird Key Stono Seabird Sanctuary (page 10), providing our shore birds with a better nesting site.

After renourishing Bird Key in time for the nesting season, we began construction on Folly Beach. Since the project just began, more

information and photos will be in our summer edition. We recognize this comes in the middle of summer vacations, but it is critical to renourish the beach before peak hurricane season so the people and property behind the dunes are protected. We ask that you bear with us during this short-term inconvenience so we can properly mitigate the risk of a major hurricane striking our coast.

We do have a project tracker on our website that let's you know where the construction is currently active. It is a great tool to use before you head to the beach. Check it out on our website: <https://www.sac.usace.army.mil/>

In this issue, you'll also read about Victory Fresh, a new healthy food option on Fort Jackson (page 14), see photos from this year's Introduce-a-Girl-to-STEM day (page 8), learn about the prestigious award we recently received, the Army Safety and Occupational Health Star (page 6), and meet our new Regulatory Chief (page 18). Also in this issue, you will learn about how we're working with local government leaders to bring reliable, clean water to a rural area in South Carolina. We were honored to have Rep. Jim Clyburn help us break ground on this project (page 12).

I'd like to wrap up reminding everyone to practice safe habits as you spend more time outdoors in the beautiful Charleston spring weather. Enjoy!



Robert W. Nahabedian, P.E., ENV SP
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army
Commander and District Engineer

Charleston District Awarded Army Safety and Occupational Health Star

Story and photos by Dylan Burnell

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District was awarded the prestigious Army Safety and Occupational Health Star at a ceremony in Charleston Feb. 21 for their commitment to ensuring a safe work environment. Safety is at the forefront of everything the District does and protecting their most valuable asset, their people, is a top priority.

Members from the U.S. Army Safety Office and Corps of Engineers Headquarters Safety Office were in attendance to present the award to the District.

"As demonstrated in their work in achieving the Army Star, the South Atlantic Division and the Charleston District are leading the charge," said Amy Borman, deputy assistant secretary of the Army for Environment, Safety and Occupational Health. "It is imperative that we continue to work as one Army, with

a common purpose, to continually anticipate, identify, control and eliminate hazards to provide the safest and healthiest living and working conditions."

The Army Safety and Occupational Health Management System provides a framework for United States Army organizations to systematically manage their safety and occupational health programs, protect soldiers, civilians, and property from workplace risks and hazards, and ultimately achieve an organization's goal of mission readiness.

"This is not something that happens everyday and in fact it takes years of very focused attention to detail at all echelons of your team to receive this award," said Brig. Gen. Jonathan Byrom, director of Army Safety and commanding general of the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center. "You all have demonstrated





yourselves as professional members of the Army team and show that a culture of safety is alive and well in the Charleston District."

Commands and organizations incrementally implement the program and achieve increasingly positive results. Successfully completing a comprehensive third-party final assessment results in the award of an Army SOH Star.

To date, only five Districts/centers of the fifty-two within USACE have achieved this prestigious award since the program's inception in 2018. This honor recognizes the hard work and dedication of district employees in adhering to the best safety practices.

"Today, as we accept the Army SOH Star award, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of our district employees," said Lt. Col. Robert Nahabedian, district commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District. "Your dedication to safety, day in and day out, is truly commendable. Safety isn't just a protocol for us; it's a way of life. From our QA personnel to our EM team, your commitment to prioritizing safety in every task is evident."

The ceremony was officiated by Brig. Gen. Daniel Hibner, commanding general, South Atlantic Division, USACE

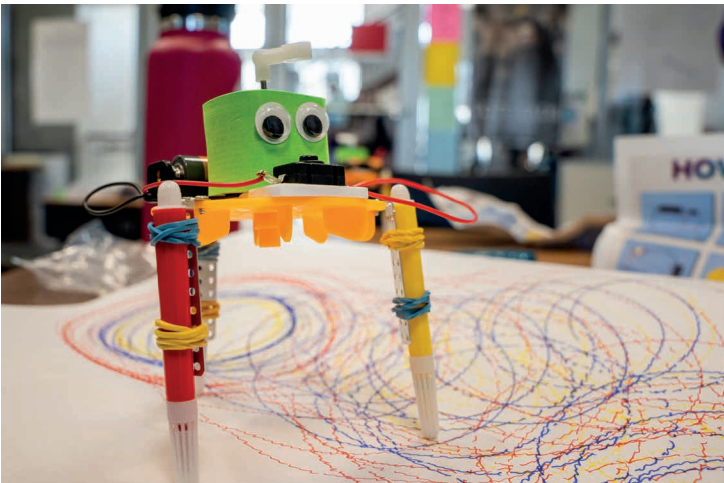
"This is not just a recognition of your collective efforts, it's a testament to your dedication, vigilance and unwavering commitment to safety," said Hibner. "Safety, as you all know, has to be at the very heart of every project and everything that we do on a daily basis."

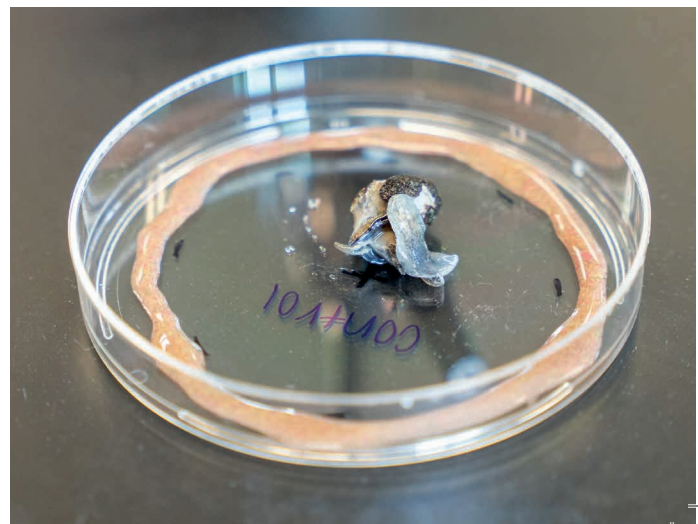
In 2018, the District implemented the program in stages with plans to have it fully operational in 2023. Throughout the process, the District was able to protect USACE employees and equipment assets; transform the compliance-based program to a performance management system; and establish a world-class safety culture across the District focused on continuous improvement.

Meeting the District's goal, the Charleston District completed all the necessary steps and evaluations in February of 2023 to be awarded the Army SOH Star.

Introduce a Girl to STEM Day Event Returns to Ashley Hall

Photos by Dylan Burnell and Nathan Wilkes





RENOURISHMENT OF BIRD KEY HAS SHOREBIRDS REJOICING

Story and photos by Dylan Burnell

Shorebirds circled overhead while the dredge pumped sand onto an island off Folly Beach. When the hum of heavy machinery stopped, and they spread their legs for landing, the shorebirds found their nesting grounds had grown, and the Bird Key-Stono seabird sanctuary renourished.

In less than a month, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District renourished Bird Key, placing 40,000 cubic yards, equivalent of 4,000 dump trucks of sand on the weathered island. The project, aimed at

restoring the sanctuary's natural habitat for seabirds, finished in early March right before the start of the nesting season.

Bird Key is part of a broader project to renourish Folly Beach following damages from Hurricane Ian. The sand came from the Folly River Inlet and was a textbook example of beneficially using dredge material to help the environment.

"We are dredging the material out of the Folly River





and putting it on Bird Key because it is an important seabird sanctuary for South Carolina," said Alan Shirey, Charleston District environmental engineer. "Protecting the environment is part of our mission, and we're excited to do that with this project."

The Bird Key Seabird Sanctuary is a vital nesting site for numerous seabird species, including brown pelicans,

black skimmers, and royal terns. Its natural habitat has been washed away by years of beach erosion and storm damage. As a result, the seabird's nesting areas became increasingly vulnerable to predators and high tides.

In a partnership with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, the restored island has already attracted a variety of seabirds who had not nested there for several years.

"Our coastal birds are in trouble; both our colonial seabirds and shorebirds are declining rapidly," said Cami Duquet, a member of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Coastal Bird Program. "For them to be able to contribute to their population, they need to have a suitable nesting habitat to lay their eggs and raise their chicks."

The successful renourishment of the Bird Key is a testament to the importance of protecting and preserving our natural habitats for future generations of birds and the people who enjoy watching them.

With Bird Key complete and the shorebirds rejoicing, the District now sets its sights on protecting the infrastructure behind the dunes on Folly Beach as the renourishment project gets under way.

CLEAN WATER COMES TO RURAL SOUTH CAROLINA AS COUNTIES LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Story and photos by Dylan Burnell

Stakeholders gathered around golden shovels to celebrate breaking ground on the new Orangeburg-Berkeley Reach Water Line Project in Holly Hill, SC this spring.

The project, part of the Lake Marion Regional Water System, is the ninth reach built to provide a reliable and clean water source to the area.

The Orangeburg-Berkeley Reach Water Line project will connect a new 20-inch water transmission line to an existing 24-inch water transmission main on Highway 453 near the Town of Holly Hill. The line will extend the water transmission main approximately 16 miles southeast and connect to a main located at Volvo Cars Drive, northeast of the Town of Ridgeville in Berkeley County.



The additional water line capacity will support future and existing development needs, including more than 200,000 people currently residing in unincorporated Berkeley County and the municipalities of Moncks Corner, Summerville, and Goose Creek. The water transmission line will also serve the 3,000-acre Camp Hall Industrial Park, where Volvo Cars has its manufacturing facility.

The water line will also provide for fire protection and bringing much-needed potable water to areas currently using well water.

"This initiative is a significant step forward in our efforts to provide safe drinking water to families and businesses across South Carolina, including the Volvo Cars manufacturing facility in Berkeley County," said Rep. James E. Clyburn. "Critical efforts such as these not only support existing development but also pave the way for future growth. I'm pleased that the funding I have secured over the years, up through the Fiscal Year 2023 federal government appropriations package, helped to make this project a reality."

Federal appropriations allow the Charleston District to fund 75 percent of the project, with the Lake Marion Regional Water Agency and Orangeburg and Berkeley counties picking up the other 25 percent. Santee Cooper owns and manages the system, and the District will construct it.

"This groundbreaking is yet another example of the immense benefits from federal, state, and local governments working side-by-side," said Lt. Col. Robert Nahabedian, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District. "This strong partnership, which we have maintained for many years, continues to strengthen the communities and people we all work so diligently to serve."

The system began in 2008 with the Lake Marion Water Treatment Plant. Upon completion of the new reach, over 90 miles of water pipelines will have been built to support residents and businesses in the area.

The Orangeburg-Berkeley Reach Water Line Project is

a vital step towards providing reliable and clean water to families and businesses in South Carolina. With nine reaches in the system completed, the District looks forward to hitting double digits with reach number ten in the future.



FORT JACKSON DINING FACILITY REDEFINES THE MEANING OF "AN ARMY MARCHES ON ITS STOMACH"

Story and photos by Dylan Burnell

An army operating on an empty stomach is an army operating inefficiently. With the opening of Victory Fresh, soldiers and civilians at Fort Jackson will find their stomachs rumbling no more.

Victory Fresh, a new restaurant promoting healthy, affordable eating has opened its doors at Fort Jackson. The restaurant offers a variety of fresh and nutritious meals for soldiers and civilians on base. With quick grab-and-go options cooked in a newly built kitchen, Victory Fresh is redefining mealtime for Soldiers.

The grand opening took place with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by garrison leadership, community members and local leaders. Also in attendance was a special guest who knows his way around a kitchen, celebrity chef and British Royal Navy veteran, Robert Irvine.

The concept of Victory Fresh is not new. In 2017, Irvine opened the first iteration at the Pentagon, named Fresh Kitchen. Its success drew the eyes of Fort Jackson commanders as they looked for new dining options to improve quality of life for their soldiers.

Motivated by his prior military service and dedication to the men and women who serve every day, Irvine felt a call to this possible life changing mission.

"The men and women of the Department of Defense go above and beyond for the American people every day. It is not a 9-5 kind of job where they get to leave their work at the office and go home; every person involved in our national security has an important job, and I think it weighs on them," said Irvine. "What can a chef do about that? At the very least, I thought it would be nice for those folks to have delicious food to look forward to at their office. Food that is also nutritious and energizing. Food that could give them the energy



to do a difficult, demanding job in a way that fast food never could."

Working closely together, Irvine, Fort Jackson and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District fleshed out the concept for Victory Fresh. He knew that what worked at the Pentagon, where diners grab food and take it to their office to eat, would not work on an active base.

"Take-out needed to be the primary focus for folks who are constantly on the go," Irvine said. "There couldn't be anything on the menu that weighed you down. It had to be very healthy, fresh and true clean-burning fuel."

Opening a restaurant is no easy feat, something Irvine is keenly familiar with. As a successful restaurateur and the host of "Restaurant Impossible," he knows the challenges of opening a restaurant. Opening Victory

Fresh, he had a helping hand from the District.

"I've been doing this long enough to know to expect the unexpected. In the past, I've had some real logistical nightmares while opening restaurants. I'm pleased to say there wasn't anything terribly difficult about opening Victory Fresh because my team and I were well-prepared and of course, because the Corps of Engineers was so helpful," Irvine said.

They transformed a storage area into a state-of-the-art kitchen by designing and awarding a contract, providing quality assurance, and continuing to provide preventative maintenance. With less than a month until the ribbon cutting, the District was asked for a last-minute change, installing a serving window for passing pizzas to hungry soldiers. The team had it done within a week.

"We spent many months trying to get the project off the ground, and it took a lot of work," said Jason Hinton, resident engineer at the Charleston District Fort Jackson Office. "Though it took our field office plenty of long and hard days, we successfully opened Victory Fresh, a victory for all."

Victory Fresh is part of a larger initiative to promote healthy eating on military installations across the country. The Department of Defense has made efforts to improve the nutritional quality of food served on bases, recognizing that good nutrition is essential to maintaining the health and readiness of military personnel.

The opening of Victory Fresh has been met with enthusiasm from the Fort Jackson community. Soldiers and civilians working on the post have praised the healthy options and quickly became regular customers.

"It has been very well received," said Post Command Sergeant Major Erik Ochs. "I have about 4,000 soldiers here on the installation as a permanent party, but we also have around 10,000 civilian employees who are looking for healthy meal options."

With its focus on healthy eating and fresh ingredients, Victory Fresh is poised to become a popular destination for military personnel and their families. Their commitment to providing quality food will have a positive impact on the wellbeing of the Fort Jackson community.



REGULATOR WORKS WITH DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE TO PERMIT MAJOR AUTO OPERATIONS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Story by Glenn Jeffries

It's not every day you get to walk in the woods, stop to smell the flowers and dig in the dirt, but with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, that's exactly what regulators get to do and for Shawn Boone, a Charleston District regulatory project manager, it's his favorite part of his job.

"I really love the variety of projects that USACE has to offer," Boone said. "I have permitted everything from car manufacturing facilities to gold mines to neighborhoods. Each project is unique."

Boone recently worked on a large-scale unique project with the South Carolina Commerce Department in 2023, on their application to develop a site that will support \$2 billion operations associated with the Scout Motors electric vehicle plant in Blythewood, SC, north of Columbia.

This massive investment could bring upwards of 8,000 jobs to the area. The company promised a cutting-edge plant with three key components: an assembly shop, a paint shop, and a body shop.

"The plant will produce 200,000 vehicles yearly at peak capacity," said Dr. Jan Spies, Scout's chief production officer. "That's an average of 40 cars an hour each workday."

"South Carolina is the new home of innovation in America," said South Carolina Secretary of Commerce Harry Lightsey. "South Carolina is ready for the new economy, and our people are ready to be part of it." (Tony Santaella/WLTX-TV Columbia)

The Blythewood site is located off I-77 and spans roughly 1,600 acres, with the facility taking up 1,100 acres.



(Photo by Nathan Wilkes)

This initial project raised concerns from public groups, citizens and other agencies and Boone worked diligently to address those concerns while working with the applicant.

This process started in the spring of 2023 and went on public notice in June, signifying the official start of the process. The public notice is part of the permitting process which advertises the application to the general public, according to Boone. This notice provides the parameters of the permit including how it impacts the waters of the US, endangered species, and cultural resources.

Working through USACE's regulatory process allowed Boone to accomplish the applicant's goals within the regulatory framework and regulations. Making sure he clearly understood the impacts to our natural resources while also allowing our economy to grow was the balance he had to strike so the district could make the permit decision.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is held accountable to Congress, the public and to our own agency for our permit decisions and that is done through compliance with federal laws, regulations and policy and making sure we deliver quality and timely permit decisions.

The permit was issued in mid-January with a compliance aspect to the permit issued. With the permit now approved, the request is projected to fill or impact 74 acres of wetlands, 38 acres of points and 7 miles of creek.

"Normally permits have general or specific conditions that must be followed," said Boone, who has worked in the Charleston District for 22 years and "compliance is part of our process."

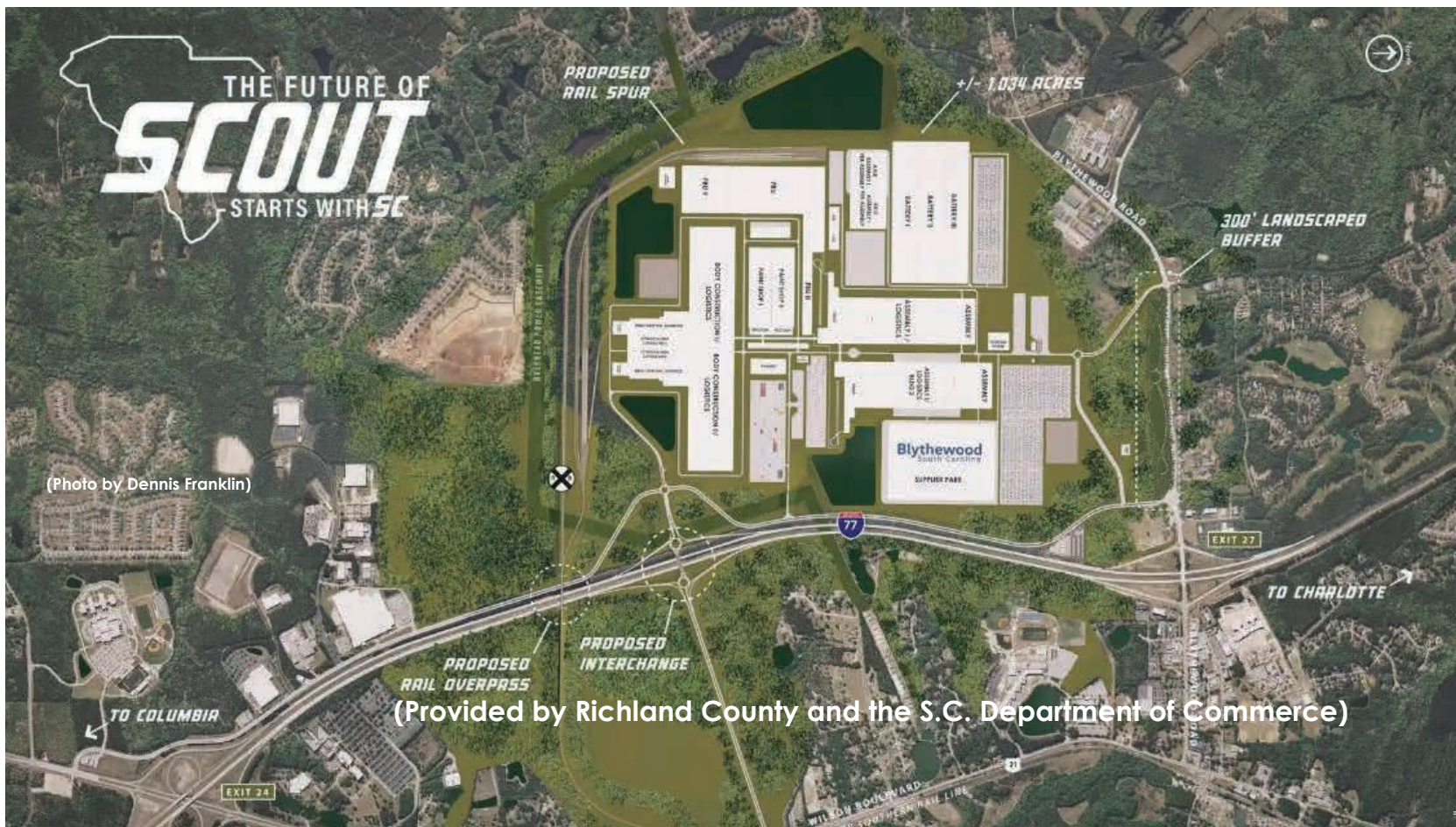
"With this permit now in hand, we are excited to continue moving forward with our plans ... we will continue to provide regular updates and information to our local community in Blythewood as our operations progress," said a Scout spokesperson. (Cassidy Bayer/ WLTX-TV Columbia)

A groundbreaking ceremony was held in February by Scout's CEO, South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster, and other state and local leaders and the plant hopes to have cars in production by 2027.

When asked what he likes the best about his job, it was no surprise coming from a regulator, "I like being outside. As a biologist by training, I got into this field because I like the field work," he said.

For Boone, that's one of the perks of the job.

"You're walking around in the woods, identifying resources that are under the Corps' jurisdiction, so the best part about it is 'taking a walk in the woods,' digging in the dirt, identifying plants and looking at the wildlife and sometimes you even get to help build electric vehicles for the future."



CHARLESTON DISTRICT WELCOMES NEW REGULATORY CHIEF

Story by Francisco G. Hamm

Not everyone gets cool job titles like 'the bug picker,' 'the identifier,' and a ranger but for Charleston District's new Regulatory Division chief, Mindy Hogan-Charles, it's all part of her interesting career and early fascination with water that started in the glorious mountains of her home state of West Virginia.

Hogan-Charles started out as a business major at WVU – Beckley College, but the value and importance of water got her attention early and moved her more in the direction of science and transitioned to an environmental biology major at Marshall University, where she eventually landed a job as a student aide at the Huntington District engineering division's water quality lab in her home state in 1992.

With 32 years of working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, her 'origin story' started much like something out of a Marvel movie. As a student intern, she was a bug picker, where she helped pick bugs out of the water samples collected in the field. She then elevated to a co-op student and was "the identifier" where she would take the bugs from the bug picker and start identifying the bugs.

This early work in the Corps helped seal her fate for choosing her career.

"I have always had a passion for streams and the importance of water quality and ensuring the fishes overall equilibrium of water sources," said Hogan-Charles.

Adding to her many titles, when she wasn't working, she was also former high school cheerleading coach, and loves to cheer for the Mountaineers of West Virginia.

Upon graduation, she started her USACE career as a



federal employee as a Park Ranger from 1995 until 1999 for the Dillon Lake flood control recreation facility in Zanesville, Ohio, part of the Huntington District's operations division.

She later moved to the Jacksonville District's Fort Myers Regulatory office, where she worked as a project manager. In 2003, she relocated to the Tampa Regulatory Office and eventually became the mining subject matter expert.

In August 2019 she started as the Regulatory Section Chief at the Tampa Bay Regulatory Field Office.

"I love the overall mission and although I am not an engineer," she said, "the mission fits into the same values I uphold as a federal employee and in regulatory, there is always something new."

In fact, with Regulatory being such a public facing division with the Corps, USACE recently its new Regulatory Request System (RRS).

This new system was designed to make the review of permit requests a transparent and efficient process for the public, provide general information on the Regulatory Program and will allow the public to submit pre-application meeting requests and jurisdictional determination requests.

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"This will automate our entire process and improve the data entry for project managers," she said, showing her excitement for this much needed tool.

In the spring there was additional capabilities added to the online system to allow users the ability to electronically submit individual and general permit

applications and other necessary information, saving time and reducing the need for paper-based submissions.

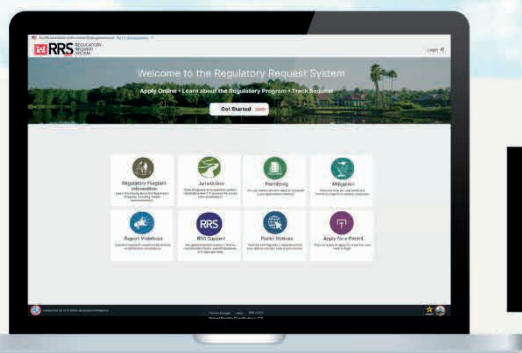
"We are the public face of the Corps," said Hogan-Charles, discussing the importance of permitting and the role of the regulatory office within the Corps. "We start the dialogue and are always educating and informing the public, especially as the laws change. The new platform underscores USACE's commitment to modernizing our application process, meeting user expectations, and providing a transparent, straightforward process for the timely review of permit requests."

One of her career highlights was being assigned to the office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) program in Washington, DC in 2016. "It was a great experience to see the leadership within our agency at such a high level," she said.

The Charleston District was thrilled to have Hogan-Charles join the team in January and help her add to her collection of cool titles.

Hogan-Charles adds another cool title to her name, 'Chief Regulator!' Let the regulators assemble!

For additional information on or to provide feedback on RRS, please contact rrs@usace.army.mil.



RRS

**REGULATORY
REQUEST
SYSTEM**

beta

The **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory Program** announces the launch of the Regulatory Request System (RRS), a new web-based platform that will streamline the submission process for jurisdictional determinations and permit applications.

Online Applications Now Available

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



CONGRATULATIONS!



SHAWN BOONE

Shawn Boone, Regulatory Project Manager (PM), was selected as Employee of the Quarter by his peers. Shawn worked with the South Carolina Department of Commerce on their application to develop a site that will support operations associated with Scout Motors. As the PM, he worked closely with the Department of Commerce and their consultants to ensure the project, as proposed, avoids and minimizes impacts to the maximum extent practicable. This initial project as proposed raised concerns from public interest groups, citizens, and other agencies. Shawn has dedicated much of his time to this project working to address those concerns all while working closely with the applicant. He has shown tremendous patience and customer service all while coming to into the office daily with a smile on his face. His knowledge of the regulations and area have proven invaluable as he has worked diligently with the applicant. He truly is an asset to not only USACE but also to South Carolina as he serves as the PM and liaison to the Department of Commerce.

Congratulations Shawn on A JOB WELL DONE!!!!



Congratulations Shawn!