



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, CHARLESTON DISTRICT

PALMETTO CASTLE





US Army Corps of Engineers®

Charleston District

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News Magazine of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District

Circulation: 1,200

The Palmetto Castle is a quarterly unofficial publication authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1 under supervision of the Corporate Communications Office. Editorial views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Corps of Engineers or the Department of Defense. Inquiries, comments and requests for electronic copies can be forwarded to the editor of the Palmetto Castle by e-mail to: PalmettoCastle@usace.army.mil.



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Join us in welcoming Maj. Jermaine Anderson to the Charleston District! Anderson, a Marine Corps veteran and South Atlantic Division operations and training officer (G3), is joining the District for a 120 day detail to serve as the Deputy Commander.

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Steven Bath, Citadel alumnus and U.S. Coast Guard veteran, begins his tenure as Charleston's Engineering Division Chief.



We're also welcoming 1st Lt. Edrick Hudson to the Charleston District family! A native of Dallas, Texas, Hudson is joining our team as part of the U.S. Army's Technical Engineer Competency Development Program. For the next 18 months, he will learn how USACE plays a crucial role in safeguarding our Lowcountry communities.

Front & Back Cover

Members of our construction and survey teams conducted man overboard and water rescue drills in the Cooper River July 23. While being on the water is a TON of fun, staying safe is the #1 priority. This training helped us gain valuable experience in responding swiftly in case of an emergency. Remember, while you're on or near the water, always wear a life jacket. (Photos by Nathan Wilkes)



Greetings Palmetto Castle Readers,

Happy Summer!

South Carolina in the summer means a lot of things; school is out, the pace of life seems a little slower, hot, humid weather is here, and we spend more time on or near water. I hope you and your family have been able to enjoy a little downtime.

Perhaps you have visited Folly Beach, one of our coastal storm risk management projects. We are currently placing sand on the beach to reduce the risk to the infrastructure behind the dunes. I know it has been a short-term inconvenience for beachgoers, but the long-term benefit of having this protection in place before peak hurricane season is invaluable (page 10).

While we are talking about beaches, please read our article on Mayor Phillip Pounds of Isle of Palms (page 6). He is our honorary commander and has a very interesting story about his call to public service.

Boating is a popular activity this time of year and I cannot stress enough the importance of expecting the unexpected. One simple thing could save your life or the life of someone you love, wearing a life jacket (page 12). Whether paddling, fishing, swimming, or boating no one ever expects an accident to happen, but they do. Please don't become part of the USCG's 2024 drowning statistics.

This time of year, storms are also on everyone's mind and the District is no different. We have participated in training internally, with our Division as well as with the state. We stand ready to assist South Carolina

and the U.S. Virgin Islands if the need arises. If you don't have a family plan developed in case of a storm event, now is the time to do that and gather the things you would need to execute that plan.

Summer also puts the District in the last quarter of our fiscal year so our team of professionals is incredibly busy delivering quality services to our customers and partners. Between now and the end of September we are negotiating and awarding contracts and pushing hard towards the finish line. I am extremely proud of this team who continually performs for our customers, and I thank you for the trust and confidence you place in them.

This year we have added many new employees to this team (page 14). I hope you have already had a chance to work with some of them. Our new engineering chief, Steven Bath (page 18), and our new regulatory supervisor in Conway, Erica Stone (page 16), are highlighted in this edition.

Lastly, please help me welcome our new deputy commander, Maj. Jermaine Anderson (pictured on page 2) as he takes over my role while I step in for Lt. Col. Nahabedian who is away until November. This seamless transition will not affect any of our customers. Our senior civilian, Lisa Metheney, and I are honored to be able to serve the people of South Carolina and are always only a phone call away.

As the fireworks fade, enjoy these last days of summer before fall brings the return of busy schedules, but remember to always be safe.



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

A portrait of Mayor Phillip Pounds, a middle-aged man with glasses, smiling. He is wearing a blue checkered shirt under a dark jacket. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with tall grass and a body of water under a soft sky.

Protecting Paradise with Mayor Phillip Pounds

Story by Glenn Jeffries

Photos provided by Mayor Phillip Pounds



In the heart of Isle of Palms, South Carolina, Mayor Phillip Pounds stands as a pillar of leadership. As the mayor of this picturesque coastal community, Pounds' road to public service was a dynamic one. His journey was rooted in a deep love for his community, a vision for a fiscally sound municipality, sustainable development and resilience against the threats of Mother Nature.

Pounds' connection to the Lowcountry runs deep. He and his family started vacationing on Isle of Palms in the 1990s and quickly fell in love with its natural beauty and relaxed atmosphere. In 2010, he bought property on the island and five years later, after retiring from a high-stress job in the financial services industry in Charlotte, N.C., he traded his business suits in for shorts and flip-flops.

His bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Texas at Arlington prepared him well to serve various clients in large financial firms such as Wachovia, First Union and Wells Fargo for 25 years. There he primarily built, managed and led his firm's relationships teams while helping clients with investment services.

After he and his wife, Laurie, settled into life on this barrier island with its vibrant community he quickly knew he wanted to give back to the island that had given his family so much. He wanted to be instrumental in shaping the island's future.

In 2019, Pounds was elected to the city council, the public works committee, public

safety, recreation committee and his favorite, the chair of the Ways and Means Committee where his financial expertise was able to make a difference. Prior to being elected he served on the Planning Commission.

He was elected mayor in 2022, embracing the role with a vision of transparency and being responsive to those who elected him. His tenure has been marked by efforts to enhance community engagement, innovative recycling programs, a focus on drainage and stormwater projects, expanded public access to green spaces and having the lowest property taxes in the tri-county area.

His community involvement reaches further than his 7-mile-long beach, he became an Honorary Commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District in 2023. This unique program, run by Joint Base Charleston, was developed to exchange ideas, experiences, and friendships between key members of the local civilian community and the Charleston military community.

Pounds quickly embraced this partnership and participated in various District events, including walking in the City of Charleston's Holiday Parade to pass out frisbees with the Corps' water safety messages. This is important to him and his community as well.

As his knowledge about the District's missions grew, he realized there may be an opportunity for his community to become a federal coastal storm risk management project. These projects may receive partial federal funding for periodic sand replacement, reducing the risk to the infrastructure behind the dunes.

Damage from storms and erosion are dramatically reduced when there is a stable, well-maintained beach, berm and dune system in place. Getting federal funds is a huge benefit to small coastal communities that otherwise might not be able to protect these islands with their limited budgets.

Through his strong relationship with the District, he was able to alleviate some concerns the city council and his residents had about partnering with the federal government. Enough so, that the city recently submitted a letter of intent to the District to start the process for help with a coastal defense system. This is the first step on a long road to becoming a federal coastal storm risk management project.

As Isle of Palms continues to navigate the challenges of our changing world, the partnership between Mayor Pounds and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will undoubtedly remain a cornerstone of its success. Together, they are writing a story of hope, resilience and a steadfast commitment to the enduring legacy of this beloved island for generations to come.

"My hope for Isle of Palms is for it to remain a place where future generations can build their own cherished memories, just like my family has," said Pounds. "I want to do everything within my power to protect this coastal gem."

Note: There are currently four authorized federal beach projects in South Carolina: Folly Beach, the Grand Strand (Garden City/ Surfside, Myrtle Beach, North Myrtle Beach), Edisto Beach and Pawleys Island.



RENOURISHMENT SHORES UP COASTAL DEFENSE ON FOLLY BEACH

Story and photos by Dylan Burnell

Material blasts out of a 28-inch steel pipe as bulldozers steadily move and shape it. Surveyors monitor elevation, and a quality assurance specialist scoops sand into a bag for testing. Just a few hundred feet away, families on vacation sit in beach chairs and kids watch the heavy machinery in awe. Renourishment has arrived on Folly Beach.

In late December 2023, the Charleston District awarded a contract to place 1.3 million cubic yards of sand—equivalent to 130,000 dump trucks—on Folly Beach. This emergency renourishment is in response to damages from Hurricane Ian in 2022 and is funded entirely by the Corps of Engineers at a cost of \$18 million.

The project serves three main purposes: reducing the risk to the infrastructure behind the dunes from storms, dredging the Folly River federal navigation channel, and placing material on Bird Key to combat erosion on the critical bird habitat. The renourishment of Bird Key was completed earlier this year.

Instead of sourcing sand from an offshore borrow area, workers dredge the Folly River and deposit the sand along the beach, saving time and money.

"Allowing the Folly River to receive dredging and Folly Beach to receive sand at the same time reduces the time and costs associated with both projects," said Wes Wilson, project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Charleston District. "Rather than dredging the channel first and then returning next year to renourish the beach, we're able to accomplish both tasks simultaneously."

Gator Dredging, the primary contractor, and Marinex Dredging, the subcontractor, split

the beach into two sections to complete the project in time. Gator Dredging began work at the Folly Beach County Park on the island's southern tip, renourishing up to the eighth block area. Marinex Dredging, working simultaneously, began the renourishment at the eighth block area and will continue to the project's northern end.

Folly Beach became one of the Corps' first federal beach projects in 1993, when the initial renourishment was completed. Since then, the district has conducted two periodic renourishments and three emergency renourishments, placing a total of 8.3 million cubic yards of material on Folly Beach.

The Charleston District and the City of Folly Beach have maintained a strong partnership throughout the project's duration. Collaborating annually for more than 21 years has fostered a close relationship that significantly contributes to the project's success.

When a hurricane approaches the South Carolina coast, the city communicates with the district and conducts pre-storm surveys of the beach. After the hurricane, the district conducts post-storm surveys to assess sand loss. In order for an emergency renourishment to be authorized, a federal emergency disaster has to be declared, congress must approve supplemental funding and enough sand has to have eroded.

Following renourishment, the beach expands and the dunes become taller, creating a barrier between the ocean and the community making it more challenging for storm surge to penetrate inland. Historically, renourished beaches have proven more resilient during storms than non-renourished ones.



"Beginning construction now enables the long-term benefit of reducing the risk of damages for residents and businesses before peak hurricane season," Wilson said. "While this project is crucial, there will be inconveniences as the construction is going on for the local residents and visitors during the busy summer period. However, the construction moves quickly and we have a tracker on both our website and the city's that can keep people updated on the project's movement."

To some, the renourishment is seen as providing a wider beach with new sand for more room to enjoy the shore. For the City and the Corps, the renourishment is a vital coastal defense against an ever-relentless mother nature. As Atlantic hurricanes strengthen and swell, Folly Beach stands tall, ready to weather the storm.



SAFE PASSAGE: ENSURING SAFETY ON SOUTH CAROLINA WATERWAYS

Story and illustration by Dylan Burnell

With over 200 rivers, lakes, and waterways, South Carolinians have plenty of opportunities to be on or near the water. There is easy access for boating, swimming and fishing for everyone due to the state's varied landscapes, from Lowcountry marshes to upstate lakes.

Boating, whether sailing, paddling or using a motor, is one of the most popular uses of our waterways. The diversity of the state's vessels and waterways make safety essential to ensuring an enjoyable boating experience for everyone.

The U.S. Coast Guard and South Carolina Department of Natural Resources play a

crucial role in ensuring safety and aiding those on the state's bodies of water. They regularly patrol the waterways, responding to boaters in distress and ensuring compliance with safety regulations.

Coast Guard statistics on vessel accidents demonstrate the importance of being safe on the water. Between 2005 and 2023, South Carolina bodies of water experienced 2,339 accidents, resulting in 1,502 injuries and 357 deaths.

Boaters should always expect the unexpected on the water. Checking weather conditions, having an emergency plan and maintaining awareness are crucial practices.

Incidents On
South Carolina
Waterways

2005-2023



2,339
Accidents



1,502
Injuries



357
Deaths

The causes of many accidents on the water can be easily prevented with a simple solution, wearing a life jacket. According to the Coast Guard, 68% of deaths on South Carolina waterways in the last 20 years were the result of drowning.

Lack of boating experience and education play key roles in many accidents. In South Carolina, vessel operators with no boating education were involved in 1,614 of the 2,339 reported boating accidents. The Coast Guard offers free boating courses to the public, covering safety equipment and boating protocols. Completing these courses may also result in reduced insurance costs for boaters, a win-win for boat owners.

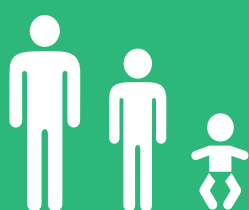
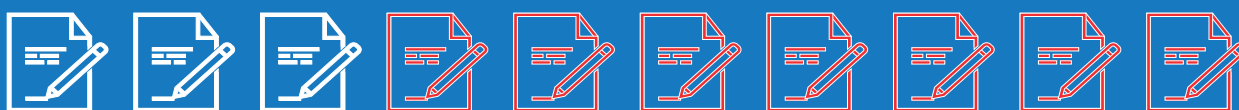
One popular place to boat is the portion of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway maintained by the Charleston District. This section runs approximately 210 miles from the North

Carolina border to the Georgia border along the South Carolina coast. It's part of the larger AIWW system, which extends from Norfolk, Virginia, to Miami, Florida. Like interstate 95, this waterway serves as a coastal highway, with thousands of vessels transiting it daily.

Similar to a highway, the AIWW sees vessels passing each other in close proximity necessitating a focus on safety. Between 2005 and 2023 on the AIWW in South Carolina, there were 333 accidents resulting in 268 injuries and 17 deaths.

Much like wearing a seatbelt when driving, wearing a life jacket is essential before boarding any vessel on the water. Safe boating prevents easily avoidable tragedies and will not only save the lives of those on your vessel, but the lives of others.

69% Had No Boating Education



Injuries By Age



#1 Cause of Death:
Drowning



WORLD CLASS WORKPLACE WELCOMES NEW EMPLOYEES

Story by Franciso G. Hamm

Photos by Dennis Franklin and Nathan Wilkes

The Charleston District continues to live up to its reputation as a great place to work. It was once again recognized as a 'World Class Workplace for 2023' as it welcomed more than thirty employees to the organization this year.

"We are excited to welcome these amazing people to our organization," said Lisa Metheney, Charleston District's senior civilian. "Recruiting and retention is extremely important for us," she added, "and we are always looking for ways to attract the best and brightest since people are our biggest asset."

The District was recognized as a 'World Class Workplace' at the recent Executive Governance Meeting hosted by Lt. Gen. Scott A. Spellmon, CG USACE and 55th Chief of Engineers and Command Sgt.Maj. Douglas Galick, 15th USACE CSM.

This year the district was one of only 4 districts to achieve this level, including Vicksburg, Philadelphia, and San Francisco Districts.

The workplace designations are based on responses from employees' perceptions to the Federal Employees Viewpoint Survey that is administered by the Partnership for Public Service every year across the Federal government.

Responses to the questions are reviewed and then scored, with weight given to questions related to recommending the organization

as a good place to work, job satisfaction and organizational satisfaction. To receive a World Class Workplace designation, the organization must score between 80% and 89%.

Being recognized as a World Class Workplace since 2017 is an honor and definitely something nice to refer to when we are recruiting new team members. But the most important thing about the FEVS is the feedback received from our own employees is used to continue to makes us an even better workplace. It is the teamwork, caring for each other, and dedication to the mission our employees exhibit that fuels the scores the District receives.

As part of new efforts in recruiting, the Charleston District is working with other South Atlantic Division districts to create a new recruiting campaign called "Build With Us," which will be unveiled at the 2024 SAD Regional Leadership Development Program graduation as one of the class projects. The class is working with SAD and HQ USACE key talent managers and leaders to launch creative approaches and create unified messaging and branding for districts to use to help recruit professionals in every field.

We are pleased to introduce our new employees and are so glad they decided to "Build with Us" as we continue to solve some of the nation's toughest challenges. Come "Build with Us!" We Build Futures. Check out our careers page at <https://www.sac.usace.army.mil/Careers/>

NEW EMPLOYEES

(Not all pictured)





NEW CHIEF TAKES CHARGE IN CONWAY

Story and photos by Nathan Wilkes

Just northwest of the winding riverbanks of the Waccamaw River and the golden shores of Myrtle Beach, Erica Stone has assumed the role of branch chief at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Regulatory Field Office in Conway, S.C., bringing a unique blend of scientific rigor and community spirit to her new position.

Born and raised in Summerville, near Charleston, Stone's path to leadership was rooted in her early love for the coastal environment.

"I've always been a science nerd and I knew early on that working to protect our environment is something I wanted to do,"

she said, reminiscing about early experiences that would later define her career. After moving to Conway during her formative years and earning a bachelor's degree in marine science from Coastal Carolina University, Stone dove headfirst into the regulatory world as an intern at the Conway Field Office.

"It was meant to be," she recalls. "I learned about the internship just months before graduation and knew it was where I belonged."

Eager for more, her can-do attitude quickly led her to a permanent role, navigating the complexities of environmental policy as a full-time regulator in 2014.



“

Erica brings a lot of experience and positive energy to our field office here in Conway. Her transition to the chief position has been easy for the team and we're happy to have her.”

- Brian Hardee, SCDOT Liaison
Conway Regulatory Office



"I'm proud to have spent my entire professional career with the Charleston District," she said. "I worked my way up from permitting to mitigation to special projects, and now I'm thrilled to be back with the dedicated team in Conway."

Now at the helm of the Conway office during a period of unprecedented growth, Stone faces a dynamic set of challenges. Just 14 miles southeast, Myrtle Beach is ranked as the #1 fastest growing city in America for the third year in a row according to U.S. News & World Report.

"Our region is growing very fast, so it is critical that we find the balance between development and conservation," she notes. "Our office strikes that balance handling a variety of projects, from Section 10 dredging operations along the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, to road widening, urban development permitting, and beach

renourishment aimed at protecting our coastal communities."

For Stone, the heart of her role lies in community engagement. "My favorite part of the job is talking to the public," she shares. "We live here too, so addressing concerns about flooding and ensuring our regulatory efforts align with community needs is crucial."

Beyond the office and field work, Stone is a proud mother of two teenagers and a self-professed karaoke enthusiast. "You can't throw a rock without hitting a good place to sing around here," she jokes.

As Erica Stone continues to navigate her leadership role in Conway, her journey—from science-minded intern to community-focused leader—serves as a testament to passion, perseverance and the power of coastal stewardship.

CHARLESTON DISTRICT WELCOMES NEW ENGINEERING CHIEF

Story by Nathan Wilkes

Photos provided by Steven Bath

On the banks of the Ashley River at The Citadel, Steven Bath, Charleston District's new Engineering Division chief, found more than an education in civil engineering; he discovered a lifelong commitment to service and a passion for solving complex challenges.

"The Citadel instilled in me a sense of service to others and to my country," Bath recalls. "Following that purpose, I started with a summer job before my senior year on a hydrographic survey crew with Charleston District."

A Charleston native, Bath's introduction to the Corps in Charleston set the stage for a remarkable career, spanning nearly four decades.

"As a young engineering student, I was full of questions every time I went to the office," Bath said. "No matter who I talked to, they took the time to explain what they were doing. I knew then that the Corps of Engineers was where I wanted to learn to be an engineer."

Upon graduating from The Citadel in 1986, Bath joined federal service as a civil engineer with the Savannah District's Hydrology and Hydraulics Section.

Steven's dedication to engineering extends beyond technical proficiency; it embodies a deep-seated commitment to making a meaningful impact through his work.

"What I like about engineering is the ability to seek solutions to challenging problems and to see those solutions implemented," Bath said. "The Corps is integral to the defense of our nation both through military and civil works. I am proud to be a part of that team."



Throughout his career, Steven has been involved in projects of profound significance, each leaving an indelible mark on his professional journey.

"I remember going onto Fort Stewart at the start of the Gulf War. The base was deserted and all the lots that had been filled with tanks and tactical vehicles were now empty. All I could think was, I hope that the things we designed and built prepared the soldiers for what they were about to face."

Beyond military projects, Steven has contributed to humanitarian efforts, such as the construction of an alternate care facility in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, and emergency dam evaluations across South Carolina following tropical storm Joaquin. These projects highlight the Corps' responsiveness to national emergencies and its capacity

to provide essential infrastructure during emergencies. "It is easy to see how we impact the nation when you are a part of projects like this," Bath reflects.

Bath's professional journey is intertwined with personal connections that amplify his commitment to service and community. Robert Sorenson, a project manager at Charleston District and Bath's Citadel classmate, offered insights into Bath's time as a cadet.

"Steve was a year behind me but we were in the same company, F-Troop, 2nd Battalion, and we were both civil engineering majors," Sorenson recalls. "He was an extremely outgoing individual, respected by his peers with very good grades in a daunting major. I think he's going to be a great fit in the Engineering Division!"

From inquisitive student to seasoned leader, Bath serves as an inspiration to future generations of engineers and leaders. Rest assured that under Bath's leadership, the legacy of engineering excellence will continue to thrive, shaping a brighter future for our Lowcountry communities.



Bath enlisted in the United States Coast Guard in 1997 and was stationed on Tybee Island, Ga. where he conducted search and rescue, maritime law enforcement and security missions. He served eight years in the Reserves and was called to active duty three times.



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