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THE CORPS DOES *THAT*?

Sure, it's called the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, but there are lots of *non-engineering* jobs to be had in the Corps, which employs nearly 37,000 civilian and military personnel from archaeologists to social-media experts. **Stephanie Anderson Witmer** takes a look at a handful of the Corps' most unusual jobs — and the compelling people who do them.



Charlie Bryan, supervisor of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nashville District Dive Team, dons his scuba gear at the Tennessee River Operations Center in Colbert County, Ala.

CHARLIE BRYAN

Age: 52

Position: Supervisor, Nashville District dive team; chief, maintenance and fleet section

Location: Nashville

Education: High school

Years in Army Corps: 34

IN 1980, CHARLIE Bryan was 19 and planning to be a farmer. That summer, the self-described "Tennessee country boy" took a part-time maintenance job in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Nashville District and expected to leave come fall. "But I fell in love with what I was doing," he said, "and the next thing I know, it's 34 years later."

Since those early days, Bryan has risen through the ranks to become chief of the district's maintenance and repair section and the leader of its dive team, which performs underwater

maintenance of locks, dams, channels and hydroelectric power plants along the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers.

As in other areas of the Corps, Bryan and his divers have collateral duties, meaning that diving is not their primary job. They do all sorts of maintenance work on dry land, but they have the additional training to also do it underwater.

Working underwater poses a special set of challenges. For starters, visibility is often a

problem, and divers must use their hands to navigate the repairs by feel to ensure the job has been done completely and correctly. "There are some places in the water where you can't see inches in front of you," Bryan said.

Additionally, divers have to be fit enough to carry 60 to 80 pounds of diving equipment on their backs while also lifting, carrying and operating heavy equipment, rigging and concrete blocks.

The more difficult the job, the more Bryan wants to tackle it. "I love a challenge," he said. "The harder it is, the more I want to do it. I don't like to be told that something can't be done."

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— Charlie Bryan, Nashville District dive team supervisor

JACK DOHALLOW

Age: 56

Position: Dam operator

Location: Painted Rock Dam in Gila Bend, Ariz.

Education: Some college and "lots of on-the-job training"

Years in Army Corps: 1



Jack Dohallow shows off his woodworking skills. This jack-of-all-trades, who oversees the Painted Rock Dam in Arizona, lives hours away from the nearest grocery store.

JACK DOHALLOW MAY be one of many dam operators in the Corps — except that the dam he oversees doesn't contain any water. Painted Rock Dam in Arizona is a dam built by the Corps in the late 1950s to control flooding from the nearby Gila River. Dohallow and his sole coworker measure and report any water flow in the dam, maintain its gates and generators, reset culverts and control erosion.

Dohallow began working for the Corps a little more than a year ago, but he's no stranger to public service. In 1994, he and his wife sold their home, packed up an RV and spent the next 15 years traveling the country. They worked temporary and seasonal positions with the federal bureaus of Land Management and Reclamation, the National Park Service and the National Forest Service at Mount St. Helens in Washington, Mojave National Preserve in California, Organ Pipe National Monument in Arizona and other locations.

During their extended road trip, Dohallow and his wife fell in love with the desert. He refers to Painted Rock Dam as their "little oasis" — and it's the epitome of remote. "When we want to go grocery shopping, it's four hours round-trip," he said.

Dohallow has developed an array of maintenance skills, from repairing fences to fixing electrical problems. He and his coworker live on site with their families and perform most maintenance on the dam and their homes themselves. He refers to himself as a literal "jack-of-all-trades."

He's happy to be doing work that allows him to "give back" to the desert and its other residents. "We're protecting the lands and towns downstream from floods," he said. "It's a nice feeling knowing you're serving people, even if they don't realize it."



Angela H. Jones speaks to Brownie Troop 276 of Iolani School in Honolulu about protecting the environment on National Public Lands Day.

ANGELA H. JONES

Age: 55

Position: Lead park ranger, Pacific Regional Visitor Center

Location: Honolulu

Education: B.S., psychology

Years in Army Corps: 33

A S A CHILD in Georgia, Angela H. Jones had no idea that her love of the outdoors, vivacious personality and natural curiosity would one day translate into a job as a park ranger — in Hawaii.

Jones had her heart set on being a school counselor. But shortly after graduation from college, she took a public tour of a new dam being constructed by the Corps in its Savannah District in Georgia, and was impressed by the female park ranger who led it. "I thought, 'What a cool job!'" Jones said. "You get to wear a uniform and talk to people."

A week later, Jones inquired about working for the Corps and was hired as a payroll clerk in Savannah. She befriended the park rangers there, who encouraged her training, and within two years, she was one herself.

By 2008, Jones wanted a change of scenery. She'd recently gotten divorced, and her three children were grown. "I just wanted something totally different," she said.

When a colleague told her about a ranger position available in the Honolulu District, she jumped at the opportunity. She got the job and, in 2009, relocated to the Aloha State. She's now the lead park ranger at the Pacific Regional Visitor Center, situated in an old Army battery in the heart of Waikiki on the island of Oahu.

Jones and the center's other rangers tell their nearly 60,000 annual visitors the story of the Corps in Hawaii and its various projects, including flood and erosion prevention and beach restoration. Additionally, the district leads community-outreach events, including programs with local high schools to foster student interest in science and math careers.

For Jones, it doesn't get much better. "I get to do exactly what I love doing," she said, "and when you love doing something, it isn't really work."

JON LANE

Age: 49

Position: Chief, Invasive Species Branch

Location: Jacksonville, Fla.

Education: M.A., international development economics

Years in Army Corps: 16

JON LANE'S FIRST foray into working with invasive species began 25 years ago as a Peace Corps volunteer in Africa. But back then, he wasn't trying to control them — he was trying to proliferate them.

In the late '80s and early '90s, he explained, he and the Peace Corps didn't know what they know today: that raising Nile River Basin tilapia in the Congo River Basin and bringing plants from Asia and South America to Africa could be damaging to the ecosystem and the economy.

He certainly understands now, as he works tirelessly to protect the Corps' Jacksonville District and the Everglades from non-native invasive species. Without such oversight, said

Lane, invasives would profoundly affect navigation, flood control and ecosystem restoration, the Corps' three main business lines.

One of his primary tasks is controlling water hyacinth on Lake Okeechobee and surrounding navigation channels. Originally from the Amazon,

fast-growing water hyacinth clogged waterways and obstructed river traffic in Florida and Louisiana so severely in the late 19th century that Congress intervened to pass the River and Harbors Act, Lane said. More than 100 years later, the plant is still a problem. "We're protecting these waterways from the water hyacinth becoming so impacting that it closes boat ramps and the federal navigation channel," Lane said.

Even more challenging is educating the public about invasives. Many people don't understand that emptying a fish tank or releasing a pet snake outdoors can damage an ecosystem, which relies on a delicate balance of interconnected plants, insects and animals in order to function, he explained.

Cooperation with the public and other agencies is vital, he said: "Invasives don't know boundaries. If we don't manage them on our land, we're causing other people problems when they spread."

Jon Lane says emptying a fish tank or releasing a pet snake outdoors threatens the ecosystem.

"We're protecting these waterways from the water hyacinth."

— Jon Lane, chief of the invasive species branch





Archaeologist Sonny Trimble, left, led a team of experts in Iraq in the excavation of mass graves in 2006.

MICHAEL "SONNY" TRIMBLE

Age: 61

Position: Archaeologist; founder, Mandatory Center of Expertise for the Curation and Management of Archaeological Collections

Location: St. Louis

Education: Ph.D., archaeology

Years in Army Corps: 27

MOST PEOPLE DON'T get a front-row seat to history, but for Michael "Sonny" Trimble, it's all in a day's work.

In the late 1980s, fresh from graduate school and newly hired by the Corps, Trimble knew Congress was preparing to pass the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act. The new law would require government agencies to inventory their collections of artifacts, Trimble explained, and return any Native American human remains and materials

found buried with them to the respective tribes.

He immediately recognized how daunting compliance was going to be for the Corps, which had artifacts dating back to the 1940s excavated from thousands of construction sites. In 1988, just a year after he began working for the Corps, Trimble established the Mandatory Center of Expertise for the Curation and Management of Archaeological Collections. Its purpose was to bring together other archaeologists, anthropologists, archivists and similar experts to pool their collective skills and knowledge.

Though the center is based in St. Louis, Trimble and his team travel wherever needed to do archaeological, forensic and archival work for the Corps, the Department of Defense and other federal agencies. They have overseen several high-profile cases, including those of Kennewick Man in the Pacific Northwest, Saddam Hussein's mass graves in Iraq and the African Burial Ground National Monument in New York City. Most recently, Trimble has set his sights on securing something for the National Archives that's a bit smaller: a rare pre-Civil War document signed by Jefferson Davis.

For Trimble, the more challenging a task, the better. "I enjoy the projects that are the most difficult," he said. "It's just the way I'm wired. You're using all your knowledge and training and education to the maximum extent."



Romanda Walker, center, has developed a mobile app on water safety.

ROMANDA WALKER

Age: 34

Position: Public affairs specialist

Location: St. Louis

Education: M.S., bioinformatics

Years in Army Corps: 4

TESTING LIMITATIONS IS nothing new to Romanda Walker.

Diagnosed with muscular dystrophy as a baby, she has used a wheelchair for most of her life. As a college student, she landed an internship with the public affairs office in the Corps' St. Louis District, where she interned every summer as she completed her undergraduate and master's degrees. Despite the fact that she was a biology student, she excelled at writing, social media and graphic design.

Now a full-time employee, Walker manages the district's website, as well as its social media and strategic communication. Her academic background has given her an edge in translating what she calls "engineer-speak" for a wide audience, everyone from farmers to navigation workers, members of Congress to elementary-school students.

"There are so many awesome things that the Corps and our district do," she said, "and I get to be in the middle of it all."

Her hard work has paid off. In 2011, Walker was named the Army Corps' Civilian Journalist of the Year for writing, graphic design and videos she created for her district. Her latest project is developing a mobile app to educate people about water safety and recreational activities at nearby lakes.

A native of St. Louis, Walker recalls U.S. Army recruiters visiting her high school. She'd stop by their tables and help herself to the free pencils, but, with her disability, she never thought she'd be able to actually join the Army.

"Now I'm able to be a part of the Army and of this organization," she said. "Even though I wasn't physically able to serve overseas, I'm able to serve on my home turf."