

The History of Seattle District Corps of Engineers

Founded in 1896, Seattle District provides a full range of civil and military services to the Pacific Northwest. Seattle District's civil works boundaries encompass 99,000 square miles and contain 4,700 miles of shoreline. The boundaries include the Columbia River system upstream of the mouth of the Yakima River, much of eastern Washington, northern Idaho and western Montana to the Rocky Mountains. The district shares 600 miles of international border with Canada, and the district engineer sits on two International Joint Commission Boards of Control. Military construction has been a Seattle District mission intermittently since the early 1900s. Work in the early 1900s included constructing defense fortifications in the Puget Sound area and construction of the Lake Washington Ship Canal and the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks. In World War II the district built defense installations in the Northwest and Alaska. The district also assisted in construction of the Alaskan Highway, the Manhattan Project at Hanford, Wash., and missile sites in Montana and Washington. In 1971 the military mission was transferred to Sacramento District; 10 years later it was returned to Seattle District. Boundaries for Seattle District military work encompass the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana.

You may read Volume 1 of the Seattle District History at:

http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/PublicMenu/documents/PUBLICAFFAIRS/Volume_1.pdf

You may read Volume 2 of the Seattle District History at:

http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/PublicMenu/Doc_list.cfm?sitename=PUBLICAFFAIRS&pagename=Historical_documents

Civil Mission

Seattle District's civil works objective is the efficient development, management, and conservation of the region's water resources. Navigation: Federal interest in navigation improvements stems from the commerce clause in the Constitution. Seattle District maintains and improves navigation channels; maintains, improves or builds jetties, breakwaters, and navigation locks; and clears navigation hazards in waterways. The latter mission was assigned in 1880 even before a district office was opened in Seattle. The mission involves removal of snags, deadhead logs and other debris from bays, harbors and waterways of Puget Sound, Lake Washington, and navigable portions of major rivers discharging into the sound. Flood control: Authority for Corps involvement in flood control improvement stems from the Flood Control Act of 1936. As federal engineers, Seattle District plans, designs, constructs, operates, and maintains flood control projects. Other work: Hydropower development began with the 308 Report, a detailed study of multipurpose Columbia River developments completed in 1931. The Seattle District studies, plans designs, constructs, operates, and maintains hydropower projects. The district currently operates three projects that produce hydropower.

Environmental Mission

The Corps helps implement environmental protection statutes, protects wetlands and other natural resources such as fisheries. The Corps supports cleanup of current and formerly used defense sites on military reservations. The permit program regulates the deposit of dredge and fill materials into waters and wetlands. Seattle District's regulatory jurisdiction covers only the state of Washington. (Walla Walla District administers the program in Idaho; Omaha District covers Montana.) Authority for the Corps regulatory authority over navigable waterways dates to the 1899 Rivers and Harbors Act. Subsequent Acts have expanded this authority.

Military Mission

Seattle District's military mission involves design and construction of projects for the Army and Air Force, the Army Reserve, and the National Guard. Installations served include Fort Lewis, Madigan Army Medical Center, McChord Air Force Base, and Fairchild Air Force Base all in Washington; Umatilla Army Depot, Oregon; Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho; and Malmstrom Air Force Base and several air stations in Montana. The Corps also provides real estate services for the Army and Air Force for land where installations are located.

Support for others mission

The Corps does reimbursable work for others such as supervising wastewater treatment plant construction and cleaning up hazardous and toxic wastes. **OTHER MISSIONS** Recreation: The Corps' lake recreation areas afford inexpensive and convenient leisure activity for the public. Disaster relief: Authority for Corps response to natural disasters is found in Public Law 84-99, as amended by Section 206 of the Flood Control Act of 1962. The district provides assistance in flood fighting, rescue work, and rehabilitation of flood control works damaged or destroyed by floods. Also, the district, upon request, provides both technical advice and assistance to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Non-Appropriated Funds: Seattle District was designated as the single Corps design and construction agent for the NAF major construction projects program for the continental United States. Historic preservation: Seattle District became the Corpwide Technical Center of Expertise for Preservation of Structures and Buildings in 1993.

Point of Contact: Patricia Graesser

Phone: 206-764-3760

Email: Patricia.C.Graesser@usace.army.mil