APPENDIX I

GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE AWARD

GOVERNMENT
EXECUTIVE

February 24, 2000

Lt. Gen. Joe N. Ballard
Army Corp of Engineers
Headquarters
Casimir Pulaski Building
20 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Dear Lt. Gen Ballard,

I am happy to provide you this advance copy of "Measuring Up: The Second Annual Report of the Government Performance Project." This year's report includes grades for five new agencies: The Coast Guard, Veterans Benefits Administration, Army Corps of Engineers, National Park Service and Office of Student Financial Assistance. In addition, we revisited five agencies graded last year: the IRS, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Patent and Trademark Office, Federal Aviation Administration and Immigration and Naturalization Service. The project now has graded two-thirds of the agencies identified by the National Partnership for Reinventing Government as having a high impact on the American public. A composite chart showing grades for the 20 agencies the project examined during the past two years is enclosed.

A team made up of journalists from *Government Executive* and academics from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University did the GPP grading. The project is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

As you'll see, we've found that agencies face significant management challenges that often are exacerbated by Congress and administration budgeters. Many agencies simply are running out of room to do more with less. Huge maintenance backlogs and underinvestment in people and equipment are sapping their ability to deliver. Those problems often stem from Congress' unwillingness to give them relief.

We believe the project offers the most comprehensive and thoughtful journalistic portrayal available of agencies' challenges in meeting their obligations to the public. We thank you and your staff for supporting and participating in the project, and we welcome your comments and questions. Please feel free to contact us at (202) 739-8501 or editor@govexec.com.

Sincerely,

Tim Clark

Timothy B. Clark
Editor
Government Executive

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GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE PROJECT

Agencies graded in 1999
Agencies graded in 2000
★ Agencies Revisited in 2000

Report Card

	Agency Grade	Financial Management	Human Resources	Information Technology	Capital Management	Managing for Results	
Coast Guard	A	B	A	A	A	A	Top-notch planning and performance budgeting overcome short staffing and fraying equipment.
Social Security Administration	A	A	A	A	*	B	Efficient administration, emphasis on service delivery earn top ratings.
Army Corps of Engineers	B	B	A	B	B	B	Management systems are generally strong; where weaknesses exist, leaders are seeking solutions.
Food and Nutrition Service	B	B	B	A	*	B	Making progress toward key objective of controlling fraud.
Food and Drug Administration	B	B	B	B	*	B	Emphasis on speed of industry-funded drug reviews raises concern.
Federal Emergency Management Agency	B	B	B	B	C	B	Has achieved dramatic improvements under recent leadership.
Food Safety and Inspection Service	B	B	C	B	*	B	Labor resistance slows progress toward high-tech meat inspection system.
Veterans Health Administration	B	B	B	B	B	A	Reorganization, fine performance measurement put agency on upswing.
*Occupational Safety and Health Administration	B-	B	C	B	*	C	Achieving correct mix of staff skills poses tough challenge.
*Patent and Trademark Office	B-	B	C	C	*	B	Severe labor-management problems overshadow other gains.
Environmental Protection Agency	B-	B	C	B	B	C	Achieves commendable results despite rigid, stovepiped structure.
Federal Housing Administration	B-	C	B	B	*	C	Delivers on its mission despite staffing, information systems problems.
Veterans Benefits Administration	B-	C	B	C	B	B	Balanced approach to performance is promising, but information systems are antiquated.
*Internal Revenue Service	C	B	C	D	*	B	Inadequate computer systems still impair agency operations.
Customs Service	C	B	C	C	*	C	Problems include ambiguous mission, scope of duties, inadequate systems.
Health Care Financing Administration	C	C	B	D	*	C	Y2K and other technology troubles compound management problems.
*Federal Aviation Administration	C	D	C	C	C	B	Administrator Jane Garvey makes headway against deficient systems in every category.
National Park Service	C	C	B	C	C	C	Poor data hobbles management in every area, but problems are being addressed.
Office of Student Financial Assistance	C	C	C	C	N/A	B	Expectations are high that Greg Woods can change the agency into a superior service organization.
*Immigration and Naturalization Service	C-	D	D	C	C	C	Infusion of resources doesn't solve mission conflicts, systems deficiencies.

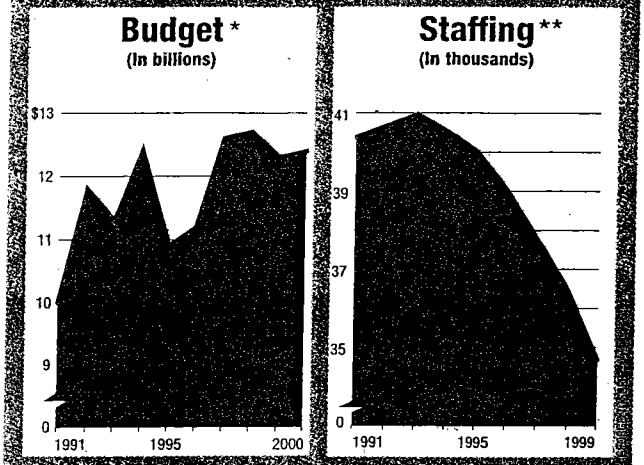
Army Corps of Engineers

Corps Competency

The Army Corps of Engineers has proved adept at navigating tricky waters and variable political winds.

By Katherine McIntire Peters

Army Corps of Engineers
Parent department: Army
Created: 1779
Mission: "As the nation's primary engineering agency, the Corps manages military construction, maintains navigation channels, provides environmental protection, flood protection and disaster response, generates hydropower, and conducts advanced research."
Top official: Lt. Gen. Joe N. Ballard



*Includes appropriated funds and reimbursement funding. **Includes civilian and military personnel.

Dennis Norris knows the lower Mississippi River in a way no chart or graph or book can explain. He knows it in a way that can't be taught, but only learned through years of living with the roiling, headstrong currents that surge and shift through the heart of America. He understands the power of this river that holds sway over the lives of millions of people and billions of dollars worth of commerce and development.

On a cold day in early January, driving north from Vicksburg, Miss., up Interstate 61 through the Mississippi Delta, Norris is worried. The river is at its lowest level in more than a decade. As chief of the river operations branch in the operations division of the Vicksburg District of the Army Corps of Engineers, it's his job to make sure barge traffic doesn't get hung up on the sandbars that inevitably emerge in low water.

On New Year's Day, Norris ordered emergency dredging operations, surprising even the seasoned crew of the *Jadwin*, a vintage 1933 dustpan dredge that vacuums sand and silt off the river floor and dumps it outside the navigation channel. He can't help but recall that 12 years ago, a less-severe drought brought economic disaster, halting for days hundreds of barges carrying tons of commerce on this vital transportation artery. Thus far, the Corps has been able to manage this drought and barge traffic has flowed steadily. Thus far. From his Ford Explorer, Norris calls *Jadwin* captain Sammy Lewis to arrange for a rendezvous.

"This isn't an exact science," Norris says. "It's something you have to learn on the river. The decision to mobilize the dredge is a judgment call." Norris is one in a long line of Corps engineers who have devoted their lives to understanding and shaping the unique and willful Mississippi River system, whose basin occupies more than 40 percent of the United States. Only the Amazon and Congo rivers have larger watersheds.

By law, the Corps must maintain a 9-foot-deep channel in navigable rivers. Should it fail to do so, barge traffic can't run, business comes to a standstill and politicians take an immediate and intense interest in Corps operations—attention river engineers like Norris can live without.

Norris and district commander Col. Robert Crear are soon in a small boat, heading out to visit the crew of the *Jadwin*. Captain Lewis, a longtime veteran of the Corps' Mississippi operations, says he doesn't ever remember being called out so early in the year. As the *Jadwin* sucks its way through the muck at the stately pace of 300 feet an hour, Lewis nods towards a barge coming around a bend in the river: "They sure are glad to see us. I can tell you that."

Aboard the dredge, Norris and Crear join a unique and oddly timeless world—the world of the Mississippi and the river-hands whose livelihood has depended upon it for centuries.

Captive of the Past

While the Corps traces its roots to the Revolutionary War, it came into its own on the Mississippi 130 years ago, when Army engineers seriously began charting and analyzing and theorizing about the river in an attempt to do nothing less than tame it and turn it into a tool of U.S. expansion and progress. Since that time, the river has been a proving ground for both some of the most brilliant and most catastrophic engineering feats in history.

CORPS REPORT CARD

Financial Management	B	Cost accounting and financial reporting are robust, but other weaknesses preclude a clean audit.
Human Resources	A	Centralization of personnel centers has hurt management, but employee development programs are superior.
Information Technology	B	Project management reporting system is a major headache for managers.
Capital Management	B	Older assets pose a major maintenance challenge, but effective planning has cut the backlog and prioritized funding.
Managing for Results	B	Strategic planning is comprehensive.
AGENCY GRADE	B	

The Corps' attempts to harness the Mississippi following the Civil War contributed to the single greatest natural disaster the United States has ever known, the great flood of 1927. To concentrate the flow of the Mississippi and increase the velocity of the current, which would in turn carve and maintain a channel deep enough for barge traffic, engineers dammed nearly every natural outlet for the river and built thousands of miles of levees to keep the meandering Mississippi within its banks. The system worked just long enough to provide a false sense of security to those who lived and toiled along its banks. River communities flourished, development expanded and the population grew.

But the newfound sense of security was washed away in 1927. A massive flood killed hundreds of people in several states, destroyed millions of acres of farmland and development, and overnight turned hundreds of thousands of Americans into refugees. Following the flood, Congress passed the 1928 Flood Control Act, which essentially charged the Corps with preventing another such calamity. The result was the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project, which continues today. The Corps abandoned what had been a controversial levees-only approach to river management and began to create a massive system of spillways, jetties, locks and dams, reservoirs, revetments, channels and levees, in the hopes of mitigating the effects of future river rampages. To date, the Corps has spent more than $10 billion on the project, an investment Corps officials calculate has saved more than $235 billion in avoided flood damages. At the current rate of funding, the project will be completed in 2031, more than 100 years after it began.

Historically, the Corps' primary civil works missions have been to ensure navigation and prevent flooding, roles that have given the agency visibility in just about every community in the country. But engineering feats that looked like progress in the 19th and early 20th centuries have lost much of their luster today. And therein lies the Corps' future—righting the wrongs of the past. The draining of wetlands, damming of rivers once rich with salmon, destruction of the Florida Everglades, building of weapons of mass destruction—all government-sponsored activities of an ambitious nation in which the Corps played a significant role—have come to be seen as liabilities at best, and environmental crises at worst.

Environmental concerns have so entered the national psyche that even the most pro-industry conservatives find many past government practices abhorrent by today's standards and acknowledge the need for corrective actions. Much of that task has fallen to the Corps.

This shift in national consciousness toward environmental stewardship, which began in the 1960s, is at the heart of the Corps' strategic planning. In terms of planning and investment, environmental restoration is now on a par with navigation and flood control.

Fighters and Fiefdoms

Organizationally, the Army Corps of Engineers is a peculiar animal. To be sure, it is part of the Army. The Corps' commanding general, the Chief of Engineers, is the Army's top engineer—a soldier. Its eight divisions, 41 districts and network of research and development labs are commanded by Army engineers. But the rank and file of the Corps, 97 percent of the workforce, are civilians. And while they provide support to combat engineers, combat engineering units themselves are not part of the Corps organization, but belong to the Army's fighting forces. Army engineers tend to alternate three-year assignments between the regular Army and the Corps.

Maj. Gen. Phillip Anderson, commander of the Corps' Mississippi Valley Division, believes this unique structure—a cadre of civilian experts with a regularly changing military chain of command—accounts for the Corps' ability to adjust its focus relatively quickly in the wake of changing national priorities. A 1979 study by the Brookings Institution seems to bear this out. In "Can Organizations Change: Environmental Protection, Citizen Participation and the Corps of Engineers," authors Daniel Mazmanian and Jeanne Nienaber explored the ability of federal agencies to react to the far-reaching 1969 National Environmental Policy Act that required all agencies to consider the environmental impact of their activities. The Corps was the only agency the researchers found that was able to change its bureaucracy and be truly responsive to the new demands.

"Contrary to what its critics expected, the agency seemed to be making a conscious and serious effort to accommodate itself to the spirit of the environmental movement as well as to the letter of the law," the authors found.

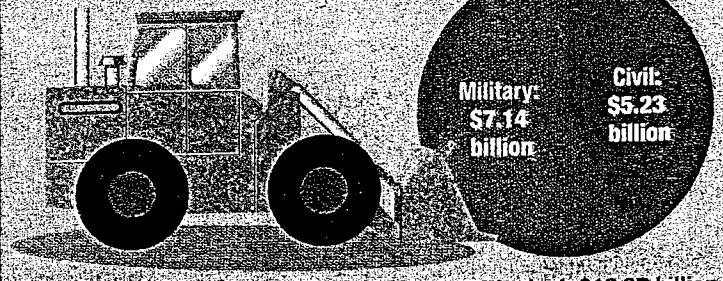
As a result of this shift in focus, Corps employees increasingly think more regionally and more strategically than they did in the past, says Anderson. While the 41 districts used to operate as individual fiefdoms, the problems the Corps faces today could not be solved without breaking that old structure.

That's not to say everyone sees the Corps as an eco-friendly organization. David Adelman, an attorney with the Nat-

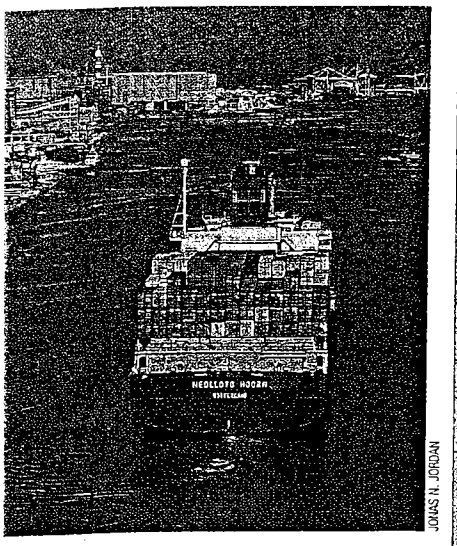
Inside the Corps

2000 Spending

The Corps' budget is divided between civil works and military projects.



Total fiscal 2000 budget: $12.37 billion



Did You Know?

- Civilians make up 97 percent of the Army Corps of Engineers.
- Forty-one states, 16 state capitals and all states east of the Mississippi River are served by commercially navigable waterways maintained by the Corps.
- The Washington Monument and the Library of Congress were Corps projects.
- Manatees hear only at high frequencies. That's what Dena Dickerson, a research biologists with the Corps found after she started administering hearing tests to the sea mammals in an effort to devise a way to prevent them from getting trapped in lock doors.
- The Corps is the fourth largest source of hydroelectric power in the United States.

By the Numbers

Number of flood control dams operated by the Corps	over 500
Millions of cubic yards removed by dredges from Corps-constructed and maintained channels in 1998	239
Number of lock chambers owned and operated by the Corps	276

Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

ural Resources Defense Council, says the Corps has run roughshod over state and local interests in its cleanup of nuclear waste in the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP). The program was created in the mid-1970s to clean up radiological contamination resulting from nuclear weapons development. The Corps, which took over the program from the Energy Department in October 1997, estimated cleanup of the 22 FUSRAP sites would cost as much as $2.25 billion and take until after 2004.

A February 1999 General Accounting Office review of the Corps' progress in the FUSRAP program (RCED-99-48) concluded that the Corps had accomplished much in the relatively short time it had been responsible for the program. "The Corps reviewed all 22 sites, developed cost and schedule estimates for each, and established site-specific milestones. For most sites, these milestones were achieved or exceeded. The Corps also realized reductions in the costs of disposing of contaminated materials in staffing levels. The transition of the sites from DOE to the Corps was achieved quickly and smoothly," GAO concluded.

But the price of the Corps' efficiency has been a lowering of the threshold for remediation, says Adelman. The law "affords a fair amount of discretion" in determining an acceptable level of contamination, which the Corps has interpreted more liberally than any previous federal agency, including DOE and the Environmental Protection Agency, he says.

The Natural Resources Defense Cou cil also has filed suit against the Corps force it to restore historic water flows to t Florida Everglades. The Corps' system levees, canals and pumps in South Flori has been a boon to development but de astating to the ecosystem, and particular to the Cape Sable seaside sparrow, a son bird recently declared near extinction by t Fish and Wildlife Service. Now the Cor is one of the lead agencies in a federal Eve glades restoration plan.

'Balancing Act'

"How clean is clean enough? That's rea ly the question with some of these treme dously polluted properties we find ou selves charged with cleaning up," says Corps official involved in toxic-was

cleanup. "It is simply not realistic to think the Corps can return every piece of property to some pristine state that existed prior to Columbus—and that's exactly what some of these activists think we should be able to achieve. Even if the money was available—and of course it is not—we would have to raze every square inch and dig down to bedrock at some of these sites to positively eliminate any hazards. Are we going to do that? No. Does the public really want or expect us to do that? I don't think so. Could we do a better job? You can always do a better job."

The Corps increasingly finds itself at the nexus of competing interests. Conservative Republican lawmakers have charged the Corps with being more concerned about aiding salmon than humans on western rivers. Politicians of every stripe routinely pack appropriations bills with pet projects to satisfy local business interests back home, regardless of regional interests. Environmentalists habitually blast the Corps for real and perceived lapses.

Few people appreciate the tension generated by the Corps' many stakeholders as much as Maj. Gen. Anderson. Twice a year, he boards a towboat called the *Mississippi* and travels its namesake, stopping in countless ports, meeting with scores of farmers, business owners, fishermen, environmentalists, barge operators, shippers, sportsmen, levee boards, community activists, politicians and just about anybody who has an interest in the Mississippi—which happens to be just about everybody. In the spring, during high water, Anderson travels from Cairo, Ill., to New Orleans; in the fall, during low water, from St. Paul, Minn., to New Orleans.

It is not a pleasure cruise. Instead, it resembles a marathon floating homeowner's association meeting. Anderson's days begin at 4 a.m. and usually don't end until late, after an evening meeting with the Iowa Corn Growers Association, a levee board or some other group interested in sharing its views with the Corps. Interested parties who want to ride to the next stop are welcome; the Corps provides return transportation at the end of the day. Anderson's tour comes courtesy of his position as president of the Mississippi River Commission, established in 1879 to advise the Chief of Engineers on flood control and navigation issues. The seven-member board is appointed by the President.

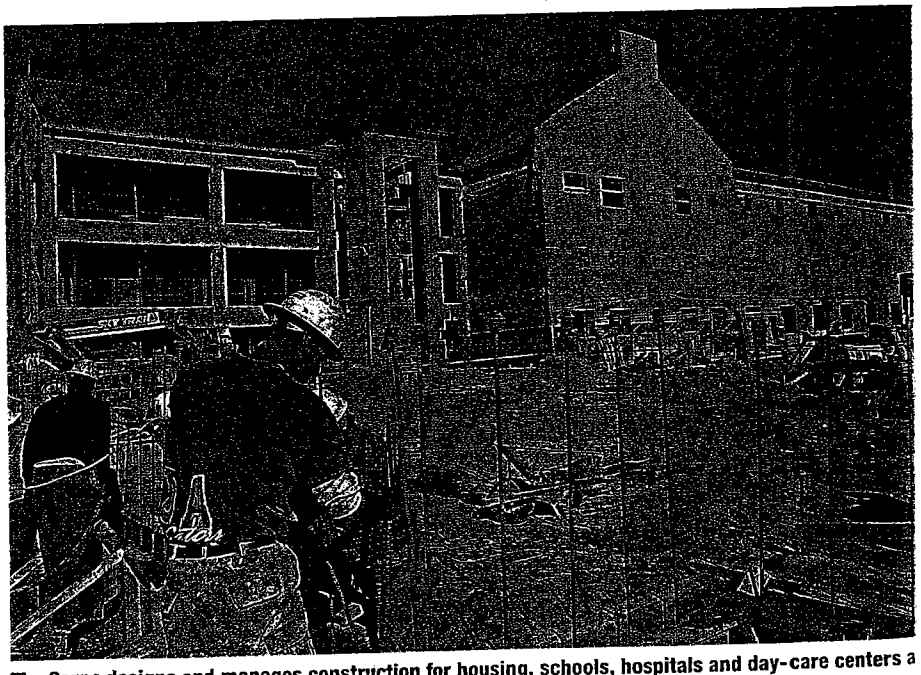
In the lower Mississippi, the interests become even more complicated. The balance between the fresh water pushing downriver and the salt water pushing up from the Gulf of Mexico drives the ecosystem—and can drive the Corps crazy. Crawfishermen want more fresh water diverted from the river to the marshes; shrimpers want less. The salinity that helps the oyster beds hurts the waterfowl. The barge owners want to keep the river running high enough to ease navigation, but not too high. And nobody wants to be flooded out.

"It's a balancing act," says Anderson. "I everyone is equally displeased, you're probably doing the right thing." The commission he heads, and by extension the six districts in the Mississippi Valley Division listens to anyone who wants to voice ar opinion. At the conclusion of the trip, th Corps responds in writing to everyone wh participated in the public meetings.

Management Tools

The range of competing interests the Corp must balance in its programs is perhap matched only by the sheer variety of th programs themselves. In addition to protecting against flooding and guaranteeing navigation for 2.2 billion tons of commerce annually, the Corps is a lead agent in building public schools in Los Angeles County restoring the Pentagon; managing mor than 11 million acres of real estate; cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay and New York Harbor; building chemical weapons disposal facilities in Russia; managing mor than 4,000 public recreation areas; providing one-quarter of the nation's hydropower; and protecting wetlands.

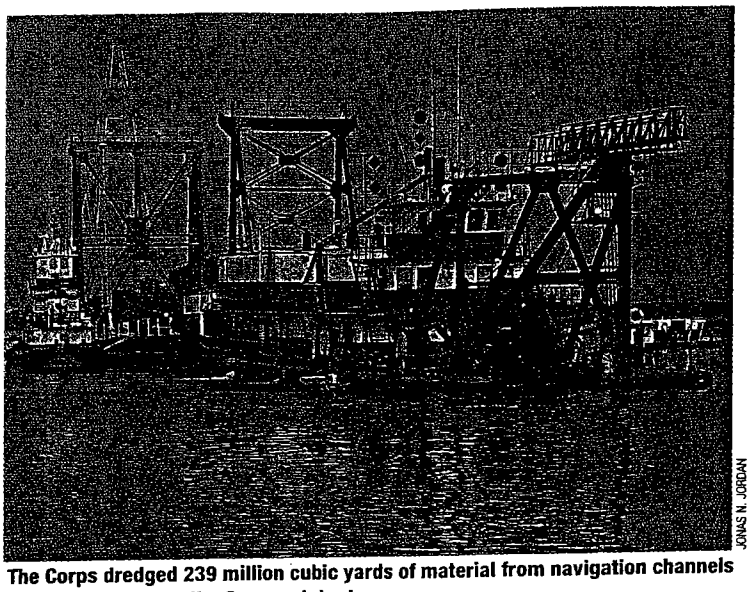
What the Corps brings to these myriad projects is engineering and contract management expertise. In hailing the loca school board's decision to put the Corps in charge of new schools, the *Los Angeles Time* cited the Corps' "reputation for completing projects on time and on budget" an said the Corps' role "promises a level o



The Corps designs and manages construction for housing, schools, hospitals and day-care centers a military installations worldwide, including these barracks at Fort Bragg, N.C.

expertise, efficiency and oversight" previously missing.

"Contract management is the heart of what we do," says Stephen Coakley, the Corps' deputy chief of staff for resource management. "If we don't do that well, we don't do anything well." The Corps' robust financial management system is what makes successful contract management feasible. In fact, the Corps of Engineers Financial Management System (CEFMS), a proprietary system fielded in 1998, has become the model for DoD's Defense Joint Accounting System now under development.



JONAS N. JORDAN

The Corps dredged 239 million cubic yards of material from navigation channels last year, including the Savannah harbor.

"We believe we own one of the finest cost accounting systems in government," Coakley says. Because a large portion of Corps projects are done on a reimbursable basis for other federal agencies, it is critical that managers be able to justify expenditures and decisions with timely, accurate data. The Corps' $76 million investment in CEFMS is paying off, he says, in providing such data. One area that continues to bedevil the Corps is capital asset documentation and administration. It is a key factor in the Corps' inability thus far to receive a clean audit opinion from its inspector general and the General Accounting Office.

The Corps is home to some of the oldest assets in the government's inventory, as well as some of the newest and most sophisticated. Charles Hess, chief of the operations division, estimates the Corps owns $124 billion worth of infrastructure. Assets range from 276 lock chambers, some of which date to the 1800s; 75 hydropower plants; more than 500 dams; 4,400 recreation sites; a fleet of watercraft dating to the 1930s; and world-class research laboratories that include one of four Defense Department high-performing computing centers and the most powerful centrifuge in the world. Documenting and maintaining all those assets is a major challenge, Hess says. "There is a lot more on our plate than we have the money to take care of."

Hess calculates the agency's backlog of deferred maintenance at $329 million. "It's very hard to say we need money for new things when we can't take care of the things we have," he says. To provide lawmakers with a better appreciation of some of the agency's maintenance challenges, Corps officials have begun to compile photographs documenting the effects of the backlog. "We'll try to make a compelling case for what the backlog means in terms of service to customers."

The Corps is also working to divest itself of some older assets—turning lock projects over to states when there is no longer a national interest in maintaining them, for example. The Corps also is reducing operations where customer expectations will allow it—cutting back 24-hour operations of locks where navigation doesn't require it, for instance. "Our focus has to be justified service at least cost," he says.

Project managers in the field say they have no trouble getting real-time financial data. What they do have trouble with, however, is the agency's online project management information system, known as PROMIS. By all accounts, the software system intended to provide managers with real-time status reports that include information about costs, scheduling and manpower is not living up to its promise.

"It works primarily as an upward reporting tool," says George Flickner, project manager for the McAlpine Lock and Dam project in Louisville, Ky. McAlpine is the site of the only falls on the Ohio River, and its antiquated lock system, which allows barge traffic to circumvent the falls, has become a bottleneck to navigation. Flickner's project involves managing five contracts that eventually will lead to the replacement of two locks—an 1870s-era lock and an auxiliary lock built in 1922—with a new 1,200-foot chamber. "At this point, (PROMIS) is not our best tool. It's not feeding me the kind of information I need." Like other project managers, Flickner tracks the data he needs on his own.

Human Capital

Personnel management is also a problem throughout the Corps. In 1998, the Army centralized civilian personnel operations at 10 regional centers. That left the districts without in-house personnel experts and forced managers to rely on regional "generalists" for what are often unique local hiring needs. Particularly in river operations, local managers need to be able to hire people quickly, something made all but impossible under the new system, managers say.

"We have a lot of heartburn over this," says one manager in the Vicksburg district, who now has to call a personnel office in Huntsville, Ala., to hire a temporary employee. "We can't quickly hire them and when we do finally get them, they don't get paid on time. We used to be able to just walk down the hall and make it happen." Col. Crear, the Vicksburg district chief, believes the system eventually will work once the regional staff become fluent in Corps personnel requirements, but in the meantime, he says, "We'd be remiss if we didn't tell you this was a major concern." Under the Army's centralized system, managers say they have to allow several months for most hiring transactions.

For personnel already on the rolls, however, the Corps' internal human resources programs are superior to those of many agencies. Managers say they have incentives to reward high performers and the tools to remove those who don't meet their standards. For the ambitious, there are clear paths for advancement, and opportunities for professional development and education are numerous, regardless of an employee's level. In the Vicksburg district, for instance, a persistent assistant cook on a dredge recently worked his way up to an engineer position over the course of several months through an independent study program offered by the

Corps. And for the most part, labor-management relations are very good.

Randi Ciszewski, the government employee representative for both the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots, and the National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, says labor-management relations are "excellent" with Corps headquarters and "excellent" or "very positive" in most of the 30 districts in which union members work. The two unions represent all marine engineers, licensed marine engineer officers and licensed masters and mates.

There are a few exceptions, however. In particular, the unions' relationship with New York District managers is very strained. "The littlest things become major problems," Ciszewski says. The unions have been trying to negotiate a new work schedule—one adopted by other districts—for New York employees for over a year now. "All we're saying is, 'Give this a shot.' If there's a problem, well go back to the old way. We can't even get them to give it a try for one pay period."

Ciszewski attributes the problems to "old-style" attitudes about labor on the part of management in the New York district. In most other districts, the unions are seen as equal partners, she says.

Perhaps one reason Corps managers appear to be generally successful can be found in the way they are selected. For 10 years now, the Corps has had a contract with Gallup Inc. to conduct voluntary leadership interviews with would-be managers. The process is designed to evaluate a candidate's leadership capacity by measuring talent in four broad areas:

- **Management**—the ability to coordinate people and activities; the tendency toward being results-oriented; and discipline.
- **Relationship ability**—the capacity to take responsibility for one's own behavior; the drive to help others grow; and the tendency to extend relationships to a wide circle.
- **Direction**—the capacity to inspire dedication; the ability to set and meet goals; the ability to think creatively and strategically.
- **Drive**—the drive to make things happen; the need to strive for personal definition; the desire to win; and personal ambition.

The Corps became involved in the Gallup program after some senior managers feared the agency was selecting leaders based on their technical ability without regard to their leadership capacity, says Francis Nurthen, chief of the human resources development division and a longtime proponent of the program. The qualities the Gallup interview assesses are difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate in a job interview or by looking at a candidate's application, he says.

When Lt. Gen. Joe Ballard took over command of the Corps, he wanted to get agency leaders to think more broadly about the people they hire and promote, several managers say. After he learned about the Gallup program, he visited Gallup's offices and met with the program's proponents. Last year, Ballard made the interview mandatory for all GS-14 supervisor, GS-15 and senior executive service applicants. "He really got it," says Nurthen.

"It is Gallup's belief that a lot of these qualities are innate. If you don't have some of these competencies, I don't think they can necessarily be taught," Nurthen says. "There are really very few tools that are valid that assess this kind of information."