

The Sand Castle

October 1999

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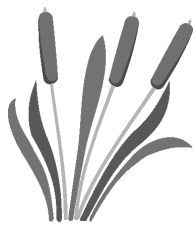
Bad Boy Bret

10-11 -- Turn to the center spread for photos and a summary of damages to Corps facilities in South Texas after Hurricane Bret roared across Padre Island on Aug. 22. Damage was minimal, thanks to the isolated landfall -- this Category 4 storm could have been a real disaster had it targeted a major metropolitan area.

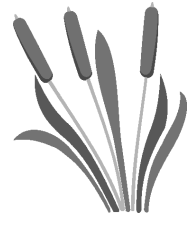
on the cover

Hurricane Bret menaces the South Texas coastline in this National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration satellite photo taken at 4:30 p.m. CDT Aug. 22. Despite the storm's fearsome appearance and 145 mph winds, Texas lucked out on this one, as Bret came ashore in a sparsely-populated stretch of coastline. Story and photos, Pages 10-11.

Wetland or Wet Land?



Course Teaches Regulators How Corps Makes the Call



Is wet land wetland, or just wet land?

It may seem a very fine point, but that little word space — or the lack thereof — can affect projects from a farmer's cornfield to a multimillion-dollar residential subdivision.

The Corps regulates certain uses of wetland — a rigidly-defined biological habitat whose flora and fauna are dependent upon the presence of water either constantly or intermittently — and just how it defines and delineates wetlands is, naturally, of great interest to people planning to farm, build, or otherwise do business in these areas.

It was to that end that some 30 representatives of eight federal and state regulatory agencies gathered here Sept. 13-17 for a course intended to teach them how the Corps differentiates a wetland from a mud puddle.

Led by Dwayne Johnson of the district's Planning, Environmental and Regulatory Division, students in the Interagency Wetland Delineation Training course spent time both in the classroom and in the field,

learning to recognize and map wetland habitats.

The purpose, said Johnson, was to make sure all agencies involved in permitting processes had the same information on how the Corps delineates wetland areas — "to streamline the effort so a farmer only goes to one agency" to determine if his future cornfield falls under wetland regulation.

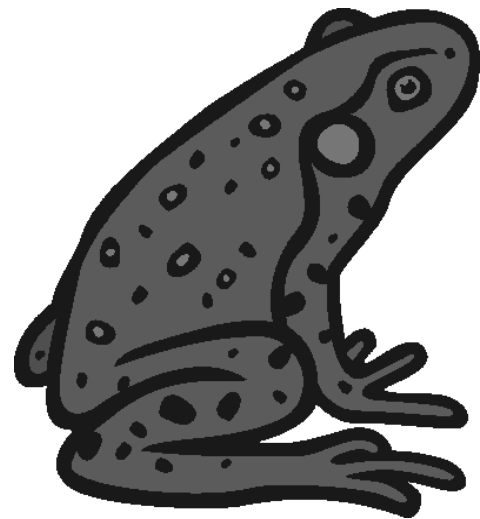
"Before, he had to come to the NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service) and the Corps" for each agency's guidelines. "Now, we've come up with a plan to streamline the process for the agricultural public, so they can get one answer on a wetland determination" from one agency, the NRCS. This determination from the one agency is then valid for both agencies' programs.

Representatives from the Corps, the Natural Resource Conservation Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service, as well as the Texas General Land Office, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Department of Transportation all attended the course, which was set up under the 1994 Federal Agricultural Memorandum of Understanding (AGMOA).

Led by Johnson, the course was taught by the Corps' Casey Cutler, Andrea Albertson, John Davidson and Sam Watson, and NRCS' John Wiedenfeld, Glen Chervenka and Lee Davis.

"Half of the course was lecture," explained Johnson. "We taught the criteria, methods,



and applying the guidance set out in the 1987 Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual.”

The students learned that although a tract of land need not be knee-deep in mud to qualify as wetland, the manual lays out three parameters which define wetlands: “hydrophytic,” or water-loving, vegetation; “hydrology,” the presence of water whether at the surface or in an underground water table; and “hydric soils,” found in habitats dependent on water

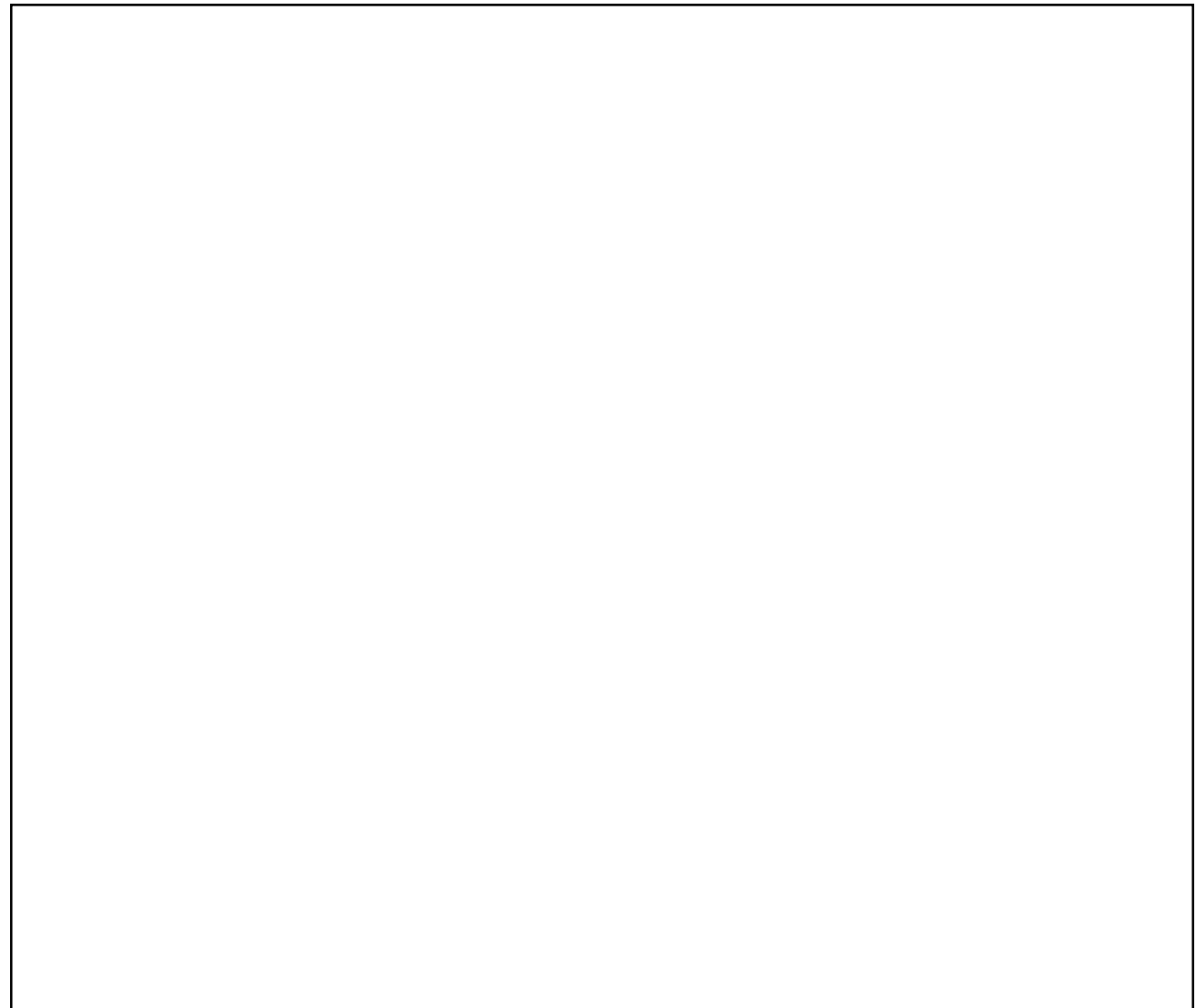
either all year or seasonally. “We have to meet all three parameters to make a wetland determination,” Johnson said.

To give the students practical experience in recognizing these criteria, they headed out into the field for the second half of the course.

They went to the Isle’s west end to study tidal wetlands in Galveston Island State Park, areas such as salt marshes and “ridge-swale” systems. “We had the students delineate a wetland boundary in those systems,”

said Johnson. “And we looked at a brackish water system in the Challenger 7 Park,” on Clear Creek.

“(Agencies) involved in the regulatory process need to have a good understanding of how the Corps makes its wetland decisions,” said Johnson. The course “helps to foster a working relationship with federal and state resource agencies on our wetland determinations — it helps them to know how we make our calls.”



Lee Davis, of NRCS’ Nacogdoches office, describes wetland habitat to students in the field.



Bad Boy Br

Isolated Landfall A

The Galveston District lucked out when Hurricane Bret's 145 mph winds blasted little more than cows and mesquite as the storm roared ashore along a sparsely-populated stretch of Texas coast Aug. 22.

Bret made landfall midway between Corpus Christi and Brownsville, bringing high winds and heavy rains to much of south Texas but causing little damage in major population centers, although some mobile homes in Willacy County were heavily damaged, and about 30 fishermen's shacks were destroyed in Laguna Madre and Baffin Bay.

Storm-driven seas washed across Padre Island in as many as 12 different locations. Several buoys along the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway were displaced, and the 12-foot waterway was shoaled to about 10 feet in several spots, restricting navigation from Corpus Christi to daytime hours until Aug. 27.

The Corps is responsible for maintenance of federal waterways, and immediately sent out survey teams to assess channel conditions.

The hurricane sank or grounded a number of vessels along the GIWW, including one 40-foot boat sunken in the waterway south of the Channel to Harlingen which hampered navigation in the days immediately following Bret's passage. Part of the Colorado River Jetty Walkway, which was only repaired this spring following damage last year from Tropical Storm Frances, was washed out again.

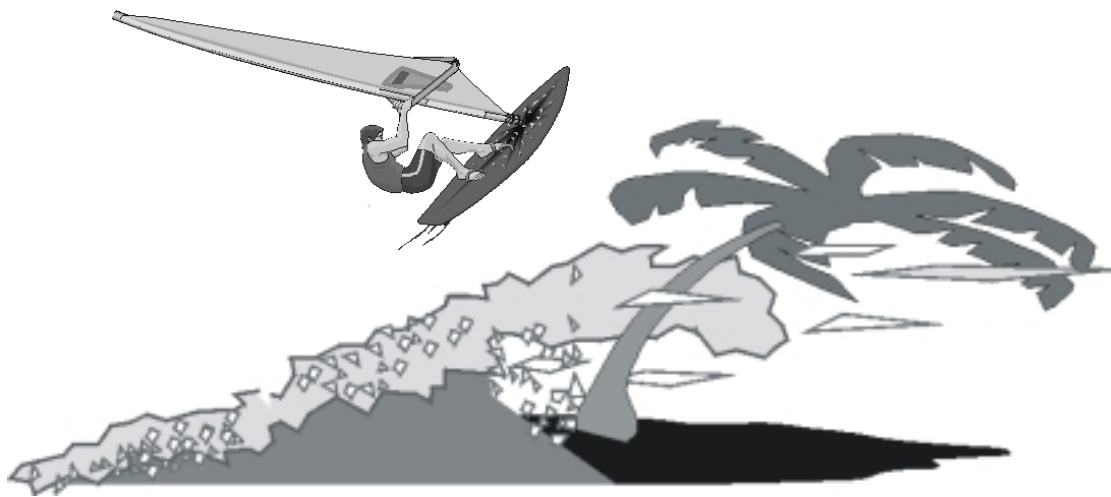


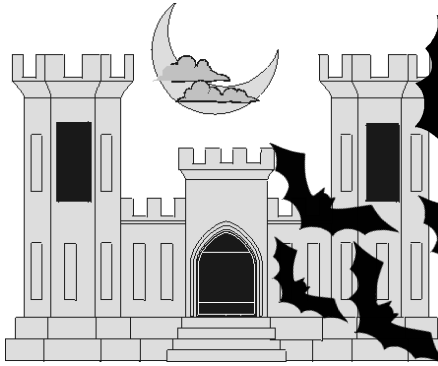
Bret Batters Boonies

Prevents Major Disaster



LEFT: Although Bret left most of Brownsville and South Padre Island relatively undamaged, it flattened at least one structure in Port Isabel. ABOVE: The Colorado River Jetty Walkway, rebuilt only this spring after being heavily damaged by Tropical Storm Frances, was partially washed away again by Bret's heavy seas. OPPOSITE PAGE: Someone is shopping for a new houseboat after Bret thoroughly trashed this one in Laguna Madre. These are just a few photos taken during a flyover of the Texas coastline from Galveston to Brownsville on Aug. 24, to assess the Category 4 storm's impact. The entire collection can be seen on the LAN at: S:\AO-B\Images\Hurricane_Bret_Flight_24_Aug_99 (Photos by Lynwood Weiss).





Castle Comments October

Special Thanks

October Birthdays

- Dusty Tucker** -- Oct. 5
- Tom Patchimrat** -- Oct. 7
- Dan Keys** -- Oct. 13
- Delia Deckard** -- Oct. 17
- Dwayne Johnson** -- Oct. 24
- Joel Arneson** -- Oct. 25
- Janet Thomas** -- Oct. 27
- Mark King** -- Oct. 31

Naime Foster (PE), a native of Turkey, extends her thanks to all the Team Galveston members who have approached her about donating clothes for victims of the earthquake which devastated parts of that country in August.

Ms. Foster reports that the relief agencies are swamped

with clothing; however, Turkey is still in need of monetary donations for the victims. Donations may be made directly to the American Turkish Association in Houston, P.O. Box 61002, Houston, 77208-1002. The association has set up a Turkish Earthquake Relief Fund, and will mail receipts to donors for tax purposes.

For more information, please contact Ms. Foster at ext. 3059.

Congratulations!!

-- To **Tom Moore** (OC) and his wife **Barbara**, who celebrated their 30th anniversary Oct. 10.

-- To **Jim Worthington** (EC-EG) and his wife **Angela** on the birth of their second daughter, **Anesa Sarah Worthington**. She arrived Aug. 30, weighing in at 6 pounds, 14 ounces and 19 1/2 inches long.

-- To **Erik Russek** (AO-B) and his wife **Megan** on the arrival of their new daughter Sept. 14. **Hannah Elizabeth Russek** weighed in at 7 pounds, 8 ounces.

Farewell...

- **Ronn Brock**, Civil Engineer, Operations Division
- **Bryan Herczeg**, Regulatory Specialist, Project Engineering

Corps Kids Take Soccer Gold

A hearty "well done" to these sons and daughters of Corps employees who participated in the 1999 Texas City Tune-Up Soccer Tournament, held over the weekend of Aug. 28-29.

They include:

- Neely Bennett (U-12, Blue), Texas City Xtreme, 1st Place.
- Michael Fullen (U-11, Blue), Galveston Scorpions, 4th Place.
- Jake Johnson (U-9, Red), Santa Fe Raptors, 1st Place.
- Johnathon King (U-8, Red), Texas City Stingers, 2nd Place.
- Hyder King (U-12, Red), Texas City Jets, 3rd Place.

- Brittany Orr (U-8, Red), Texas City Firecrackers, 2nd Place.
- Payge Orr (U-11, Blue), Texas City Jamm, 3rd Place.
- Ryan Orr (U-17, Super Blue), Texas City United, 1st Place.
- Aaron Ruse (U-14, Blue), Dickinson Dragons, 1st Place.
- Mallory Smith (U-9, Red), Texas City Tremors, 4th Place.

In addition, the Friendswood Hot Shots (U-11 boys, Blue), coached by Bob Peel, won first place in its division.

Congratulations to everyone!