

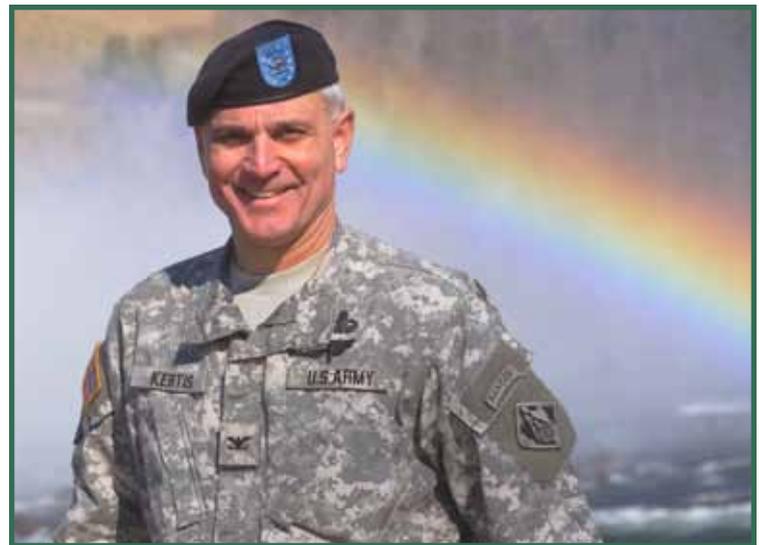
From where I sit

Change your environmental culture

We all have a lot of “ah-ha” moments in life, that time when something just hits our consciousness so hard we wonder how we ever missed it. I was out walking with my mom one day when I was four years old and I threw a candy wrapper on the ground. My parents certainly couldn’t be called “environmentalists,” but my mother used that teaching moment to explain to me that we shouldn’t pollute the earth that way; we were to keep our trash until we could dispose of it properly. I trace my respect for the environment to that very moment, and I remember it as if it were yesterday. That moment changed my internal “culture.”

Years later, when I returned from a trip to Europe, the land of \$7/gallon gasoline, I couldn’t help but notice that most of the vehicles in the hotel parking lot were trucks or SUV’s. In Europe, a truck or SUV is a rarity driven by only the wealthiest. Most people own small cars that get 45 mpg. I was discussing the future with a very educated Corps employee and mentioned that our children would drive cars much different than ours. She didn’t understand that oil was a finite resource that would run out some day; she thought it would last forever. That “ah-ha” moment changed her culture.

As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, April 22, we need to ask ourselves what it would take for



USACE photo by Billy Birdwell

us to have an “ah-ha” moment and change our internal culture. Whether it’s conserving energy, recycling finite resources, or simply working to keep the earth healthy for our descendents, there will come a time when that moment will hit us. Let’s hope it does, before it’s too late. 

*By COL Ed Kertis
District Commander*

Old Christmas trees make new homes for fish

Jereme Degarlais (left) former ranger at Thurmond Lake (currently with the District’s Real Estate Division) and Jeff Brooks (right), district wildlife biologist, place discarded Christmas trees into Lake Thurmond.

Every year after the holidays, the Corps’ dam and lake projects at Hartwell, Russell and Thurmond collect the trees from surrounding communities to use as reef habitat for aquatic life. Small trees and brush provide cover for fish, particularly as nursery areas for juvenile fish. They also provide habitat for aquatic insects.

Together, the lakes collect an average of 3,000 trees each year, with Thurmond leading the way with an annual average of 1,500 to 2,000 trees.

“The trees are anchored into position to prevent them from posing a navigational hazard to recreational boaters and fisherman,” said Ken Boyd, wildlife conservation biologist, J. Strom Thurmond Project. “They are also used in wildlife food plots to provide cover for smaller species, such as turkey, northern bob white quail and rabbits, who reside around the plots.”

By Rashida Banks, USACE photo by Jonas Jordan.

