



Historic Timeline of the Sacramento District (1929-2019)

spk.usace.army.mil/About/History

Now one of the largest engineer districts in the Nation, shouldering our greatest, most diverse workload ever, it's amazing to remember where the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Sacramento District** started. On our birthday, Oct. 7, 1929, we were a modest outpost of the San Francisco District with just one mission: to regulate the waterways of the San Joaquin and Sacramento basins. But we have since been called upon to do much, much more. Through 90 years of enormous economic growth, peace, war and staggering technological change, we have stood up to serve an increasing variety of needs for the communities in our district and the Nation.



Mining (1800s)

In 1852, a method known as hydraulic mining was popularized, making affordable the search for gold beyond simple panning. But the process was devastating to the rivers. To help resolve the issue, the California Debris Commission was formed, with three U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officers as members. The mission of flood control and navigation in the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys was so large that the Sacramento District was formed.



Military Focus (1940s)

The year was 1941, and the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor thrust the district into action. The district changed its focus almost overnight, shifting from civil works to military support. The district grew from around 300 to more than 2,200 staff members, and was responsible for all Army airfield construction. The district boundaries grew as well to include the Great Basin west of the Sierra Nevada. Many projects were authorized as a result of the Flood Control Act of 1944, and were completed in the decade following World War II. These projects included the dams at Lake Isabella, Folsom and Pine Flat.



Environmental Awareness (1970s)

A cultural and generational shift resulted in new laws including the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. This new era of environmentalism changed the focus of the district significantly. One project in particular, the New Melones Dam, drew considerable attention and raised a fierce battle with an organized environmental group. Despite the dispute, the controversial dam was completed in 1979. It was the last major dam project built in California.



Major Flood Threats (1990s)

Unprecedented storms in 1986 and again in 1997, with some of the worst impacts affecting California and Nevada, demonstrated that local infrastructure was grossly unprepared for nature's next generation of storms. The greater Sacramento region would emerge as one of the most at-risk regions in America for catastrophic flooding, relying on an aging system of levees, weirs and bypasses, and Folsom Dam to reduce its flood risk.



National Response (2010s)

Almost a century after its creation, the Sacramento District, and the Nation were facing many similar challenges - an exponential increase in emergency operations missions involving floods, hurricanes, wildfires and others. From 2010-2019 the district would provide support to 17 disasters throughout the Nation and abroad, a 240% increase from any previous decade in the district's recorded history. And all this is in addition to the district's already demanding civil works, military construction and Department of Veterans Affairs projects exceeding \$1.5 billion annually.



A Rocky Start (1930s)

Just a few weeks after the district was founded, the stock market crashed in October 1929 and brought on a financial crisis unlike any the Nation had seen before. The Great Depression caused millions of Americans to lose their jobs and homes. The Great Depression also brought about many federal New Deal projects for the Sacramento District. The Stockton Deep Water Channel, the largest district project at the time, was completed in 1934. The use of concrete high arch dams for the purpose of debris control was authorized in 1936, resulting in the construction of the North Fork Dam on the American River and Englebright Dam on the Yuba River.



Yuba Flood (1950s - 1960s)

Flooding continued to be an issue for California into the 1950s. The Yuba City Flood in December 1955 inundated more than 100,000 acres and killed 38 people. It was rated the worst natural disaster in California since the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. One large project, the New Hogan Dam, and several smaller dam projects, Success Dam, Terminus Dam, Hidden Dam and Buchanan Dam, were completed in the 1960s.



Ecological Restoration (1980s)

Work was steady throughout the decade with many smaller dam projects, such as Fancher and Little Dell dams, completed. Following the passage of the environmental acts, the Corps expanded its mission to include a component of ecological restoration and other water-related missions. Thus was born what we now know as the Regulatory Division of the district. During the 1980s, the district continued to focus on the impacts of military operations within its boundaries. The Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) Program, initiated in 1986, continues to this day, and has mitigated and cleaned over 500 sites across the district's area of responsibility.



Mega Projects (2000s)

The Folsom Dam Auxiliary Spillway project groundbreaking in 2008 marked the start of the district's largest project to date. It also set the stage for larger-scale infrastructure improvements and a system-wide approach to reducing flood risk. Federal, state and local agencies would collaborate on multi-million dollar projects like the American River Common Features, Natomas Levees Improvement and Isabella Dam Safety Modification. The district's military construction mission was also growing, and included projects like the Utah Data Center, and constructing solar, wind and energy projects at Fort Hunter Liggett, Beale Air Force Base, Hill Air Force Base and Tooele Army Depot to help these installations become completely energy independent.