

Longtime Tracy Field Office Employee Nominated for Reclamation's Prestigious Engineer of the Year Award

By Steve Geissinger
Public Affairs Specialist



"In my job, you never know what's going to happen next," says Elizabeth Partridge.

It's that seemingly endless string of unexpected challenges that has helped hold her interest in her work as a Reclamation engineer in the Mid-Pacific Region since the 1970s.

Her mix of enthusiasm, knowledge, and abilities has led to her success in managing numerous developments and ongoing duties. It also earned her the Region's nomination as Reclamation's Engineer of the Year for 2013.

"In a nutshell, she gets things done," says Don Wintch, chief of the Facilities

Engineering Branch at the Tracy Field Office, which is part of the South-Central California Area Office.

The nomination states, in part: "She is considered by many of her colleagues to be the best currently active O&M engineer in Reclamation and one of the best to have ever worked in Reclamation."

Partridge administers key aspects of operations and maintenance on primary features of the Central Valley Project, including the C.W. "Bill" Jones Pumping Plant and three other pumping plants; the Delta Mendota Canal and four other canals; B.F. Sisk Dam and five other dams; and the Tracy Fish Collection Facility.

She says two of the most demanding, unexpected challenges that she and her co-workers have faced, so far, occurred in 2009 and again in 2012.

She was the Reclamation lead on repairing seepage areas on the San Luis Canal, along

Interstate-5, south of Los Banos. She organized and coordinated teams of technical specialists from Reclamation and the California Department of Water Resources, then worked with them to fix the problems.

“We were on pins and needles for several months, until the final fix,” says Partridge.

In both of these incidents, Reclamation and DWR brought in contractors that installed steel sheet-pile cutoff walls that stopped the seepage.

Her day-to-day duties include administering a multimillion-dollar contract between Reclamation and DWR for O&M of joint-use facilities by use of quarterly O&M and finance meetings, on-site visits, inspections, and phone calls and e-mail.

She also oversees the Safety of Dams program for the Tracy Office and is responsible for ensuring inspections, analysis and reports. She is a member of the Technical Review Team and the office point-of-contact on the B.F. Sisk Dam modification project.

“My job has just the right balance of project management, field work, and involvement in finances,” says Partridge.

She began her career with Reclamation in 1976 as a student engineering aide. She graduated from the University of the Pacific with a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering. She is married and has two grown sons.