



## Local female engineer recognized for outstanding professional contributions to community

**SAVANNAH, Ga.** – Laura E. (Beth) Williams, P.E., a civil engineer with the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District](#), received the 2012 “James Connolly Award” during the [Savannah E-Week Technical Training Conference](#) at Armstrong Atlantic State University, Feb. 22. The conference is held annually in Savannah as part of the [nationally-recognized Engineer Week](#) (E-Week) observance.

The [Connolly Award](#) is presented each year to a civilian or military engineer within the Savannah community for notable contributions in the field of engineering, particularly in design and construction methods. The award is named in honor of James B. Connolly (1868-1957), who was an Olympic gold medalist, Spanish-American War veteran, distinguished author, and a former Corps’ Savannah District employee. Williams is the eighth recipient of the Connolly Award since it was first presented in 2004.

The award was presented by the Savannah Community of Engineer organizations, which includes the Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) Savannah Post and the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Savannah Branch. Williams was recognized for her outstanding accomplishments in the Corps’ Savannah District’s Hydraulics and Hydrology Branch, where she works on engineering studies related to water resources—such as flood risk management, ecosystem restoration, dam rehabilitations, dam inspections and emergency action plans.

“We are proud of Beth’s outstanding accomplishments to the Savannah District and to the local engineering community,” said Col. Jeff Hall, Savannah District Commander and president of the SAME Savannah Post. “This award honors the legacy of a former Savannah District hero; it is a testament to Beth’s professionalism, integrity and selfless service to our military and civilian communities.”

Williams has served the Corps of Engineers for eight years, and for the past 6 years has been a key team member in performing hydraulic modeling for the [Savannah Harbor Expansion Project](#). The hydraulic modeling provided data to quantify potential environmental impacts, which the Corps and natural resources agencies used to develop viable mitigation plans to reduce or limit impacts within the proposed project.

“To be recognized among my peers is such an honor and a testament to those who have taken the time to educate and mentor me along the way,” Williams said. “I am thankful to work with an amazing group of smart, talented, and fun people who care about what they do.”

In addition to her professional duties with the Corps of Engineers, Williams is a volunteer with the Savannah Engineering Academy, a week-long summer camp for high school students interested in learning more about engineering. She oversees activities to include a boat tour of the harbor, where students learn about the river and its dual role as a shipping channel and an estuary with a unique system of tidal creeks, rivers and marshes. Topics discussed include dredging, water quality and the Corps’ harbor deepening project. The Corps helps with the camp annually as part of its community outreach program.

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“Seeing young people get excited about science and engineering makes all the effort worthwhile,” Williams said. “This camp can lead them to the type of rewarding career so vital to our region and the nation.”

“We try to provide an opportunity for the students to learn about what is going on in their community, as well as what engineers actually do every day, which gives them a perspective they might not have had otherwise,” she added. “We try to make the learning experience memorable and more importantly fun!”

Before coming to the Corps, she worked for PBS&J with a focus on FEMA flood insurance studies. She holds a bachelor’s and master’s degree in civil engineering from Auburn University and is a certified floodplain manager and registered professional engineer in the state of Georgia. She is a lifetime member of SAME and a former treasurer of the SAME Savannah Post.

A native of Brandon, Miss., and current resident of Richmond Hill, Ga., Williams enjoys spending her free time with her husband and two children.

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Maj. Gen. Todd Semonite, Commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Atlantic Division, presents Beth Williams with the prestigious Connolly Award at the Savannah E-Week Technical Training Conference, Feb. 22, 2012. Right: Col. Jeff Hall, USACE Savannah District Commander and SAME Savannah Post President. USACE Photo by George Jumara.