

A Disney Dream Field Trip: Why I Love My Job

by Terri Sellers, *PassPorter Message Board Guide (Moderator)*

Sometimes I really like my job -- and other times I LOVE my job.

I am a biologist with the US Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District. We are responsible for studying, designing, building, and maintaining federal infrastructure projects in peninsular Florida. What is a "federal infrastructure project?" Good question. In our case it would be a federal navigation harbor, or a shore protection project, or a major flood control and water supply project in South Florida. So how does this all relate to Disney?

Well, one of the projects we are working on is the potential expansion of Port Canaveral, home of the Disney Magic and Disney Dream. The Port is a man-made harbor that was dedicated in 1953. It has been an important commercial fishery port, a military base, a major part of the space program at Cape Canaveral, and since the 1970s, home to the cruise industry, with the first cruise ship "homeporting" at Port Canaveral in 1982.

□ The Disney Magic arrived at her homeport in Port Canaveral in 1989, followed very soon after by her sister ship, the Disney Wonder. In the grand scheme of things, these two lovely ladies of the seas (ships are always considered females) are mid-size vessels and were dwarfed by other ships in the harbor, like the Royal Caribbean's Mariner of the Seas.

□ Beginning around 2007-2008, the port authorities began to realize that larger, wider cruise ships would be coming and that the current channel was not wide enough to accommodate them plus all the other vessels using the harbor at the same time, without causing timing conflicts and decreases in efficiencies. So they began a study with the Corps of Engineers to look at expansion of the harbor. The Disney Dream (and her sister ship, the Disney Fantasy) are in the larger class of cruise ship that the port's expansion study is designed to address.

As part of that effort, I spent two days in April at Port Canaveral, reviewing the final proposed plan with our regional and headquarters leadership, as well as staff from the Canaveral Port Authority and the port's pilots (the guys and gals who help bring the ships in and out of the port). The first part of the conference was a meeting, in a conference room, and then we were divided into two groups. The first group would join two of the port pilots onboard the Disney Dream as

she sailed out of Port Canaveral. The remainder of the group would be on one of the pilot vessels and would cruise around the Dream while waiting for her to sail from the dock, would follow her out of the channel, and document the challenges of limited width and the impacts this has on the other ships in the harbor as she transited past.

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□ Needless to say, I was GREEN with envy for the four folks who were selected to actually be on the bridge of the Dream as she sailed. But, then again, how many people can say they have been on a boat alongside the Dream as she sailed down the channel? I should note here that a) I had just sailed on the Dream in March for my wedding anniversary, and b) we were only allowed to be this close to her because of extensive coordination between the port security folks, Disney Cruise Line staff, and the Coast Guard.

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□ We started out by taking a van from the port headquarters to the pilot dock and met two of the port pilot captains that would be telling us about all we were seeing during our trip. We boarded a pilot vessel and entered the channel. Although I have cruised from this channel on four occasions during my seven Disney cruises, this was a very different view of the port. We motored over to the Dream's berth and ran along her port side and around the stern. At one point, we were directly below the AquaDuck and I looked up and saw a raft in the chute headed down its run. I heard the sail away party going on up on deck and saw lots of folks lining the rail looking out at the harbor, as well as folks in their individual staterooms yelling and waving to us while we motored by.

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□ After motoring to the Dream's stern, we headed up to her bow, directly underneath the bow, and I am so glad my cell phone has a decent camera on it (and I kicked myself for not packing my good camera in my purse). I took lots of photos of the Captain Mickey icon on the bow, and then the Dream's whistle sounded "A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes." Her starboard thrusters fired up and the Dream began to push away from the dock. We were sitting 25 feet in front of her. WOW!! My colleagues all noted that I was entirely too happy to be "working" and getting paid to do this. I have to agree.

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□ Within a few moments the Dream began her turn toward the Atlantic Ocean and began to steam her way down the channel. We raced alongside her for a fair amount of the channel, with the port pilot pointing out that due to the Dream's width ("beam" in ship terms), she sits very wide in the channel and takes up "a lot of water," meaning she displaces (pushes) a lot of water out of her way. When she has passed, the water rushes back into the "hole" that she created. This can cause significant effects on other vessels moored in berths along the channel.

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□ In about 10 minutes, the Dream had steamed her way to the end of the channel, past the jetties, and begun her turn south, heading for Nassau, in the Bahamas. We turned our little boat around and headed back to the pilot boat dock. I was sad to see the Dream leave, but excited that I had been that close to her and had been offered such a unique opportunity. And people wonder why I say I LOVE my job!

About The Author: Terri is a Passporter Message Board Co-Guide for the Globetrotting; Disney Cruise trip report; central Florida and Running at Disney World forums. She and her husband Chris are always planning their next Disney vacation!

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