



200th RED HORSE Squadron Magee Marsh IRT, Ohio 2016

In June 2016, the 200th RED HORSE Squadron (RHS) Squadron, Ohio Air National Guard, completed their second Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) mission of the year, in Ottawa County, Ohio. This IRT mission involved the emergency restoration of a dike, and the replacement of 2 water control valves at Magee Marsh. Magee Marsh is a critical wildlife refuge spanning over 2800 acres.



Magee Marsh is dependent on numerous dikes to keep Lake Erie from encroaching on the marsh wetlands, and to manage wildlife and vegetation within the marsh. The Marsh is one of the most ecologically productive and biologically diverse areas of the Great Lakes, and it is known worldwide for the “Big Week” every spring, when millions of migrating birds move through the wetlands, and has been voted as one of the top destinations in the United States for bird-watching.



On June 27, 2015, the dike separating the Marsh from Lake Erie was heavily damaged by a nor'easter that pushed Lake Erie up and over the dike; damaging more than 5,400 linear feet of the dike, and 1,500 linear feet was severely damaged. The members of the 200 RHS filled in the most severely damaged sections with over 600 tons of type “D” rock to stop the dike erosion.

The project involved operating numerous types of heavy equipment on a narrow dike that required operators to have heightened situational awareness and increased attention to detail; to ensure the equipment did not slide off the dike into the lake or marsh. The can do attitude of the members resulted in the safe repair of all 5,400 linear feet of damaged dike, finishing ahead of schedule.

The 200 RHS was able to move into the next phase of the project, replacing multiple 30 year old water control valves that no longer worked. The water control valves allow the dike operations team to control the water level inside sections of the marsh, thus promoting rich habitat life for the native flora and fauna. The old water control valves had been inoperable do to rust and corrosion of the metal piping and valves.



Replacing the old water control valves on the dikes required the 200 RHS personnel to remove the old rusted system, while the water level was lower than the pipe and valves. The operations staff at Magee Marsh carefully lowered the dike water level to allow the dike to be cut at the pipe and valve location. Once the old valve was removed, a new composite system was installed very carefully to avoid any stress on the box while backfilling and compaction occurred. The new composite system provides a much easier method to control water levels by adding or removing baffle sections.

Members of the 200 RHS gained valuable heavy equipment training, while greatly assisting the Magee Marsh Wildlife Area with an emergency repair on the critical dike system, along Lake Erie. This mutually beneficial relationship, in close proximity to Camp Perry, provided quality real world training that the 200 RHS hopes to build upon into future projects. After completing the dike repair project, members of the 200 RHS learned a great deal about the operation of a wetland, and the great seasonal impact of water levels on the wildlife and vegetation.



(The 200th RED HORSE Squadron, Ohio Air National Guard, is based out of Camp Perry and Mansfield Ohio; story by MSgt Thomas Sturgeon)