



## Chapter 3

# **DINOSAURS AND COCKROACHES: THE ERA OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

**“Remember the story of the dinosaur and the cockroach?”** asked a long-time observer of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The time was the late 1970s. The speaker was a nationally known television journalist who had reported for years on activities of the Corps. The occasion was a panel discussion about the Corps and the environmental movement.

“In the history of evolution,” the journalist said, “the cockroach is far superior to the dinosaur. The cockroach adapted to changes in its environment; the dinosaur did not. You can see which one survived.

“Look at the Corps: it’s a massive organization with great stability, but changes are difficult if not impossible to effect. The environmental movement poses a life-and-death question for the Engineers: Must the Corps be a dinosaur, or can it adapt like the cockroach?”<sup>1</sup>

The Tulsa District has faced its own challenges in the era of increased environmental concern, as well as its ability to answer the journalist’s question.

***Environmental danger lurks beneath the surface of Pay Mayse Lake, in an innocent-looking water plant, Eurasian Watermilfoil. Its rampant growth can form a solid mat of vegetation that blocks lake use and has caused at least one drowning. These Tulsa District workers are treating the plant to enhance control.***

