

NEDU Great Lakes performs annual ice dive

By NDC TROY LAWS
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Members of the Naval Reserve (NR) Naval Experimental Diving Unit (NEDU), Great Lakes held their annual ice dive on Jan. 21 in Silver Lake, Oakwood Hills, Ill.



NDCS(DSW) Kerry Bridges of Bloomington, Ind., gives the OK hand sign before slipping beneath the ice of Silver Lake in Oakwood Hills, Ill. Bridges, a naval reservist and acting unit commanding officer with Naval Reserve (NR) Naval Experimental Diving Unit (NEDU), Great Lakes, made the chilly training dive on Jan. 21. (Photo by Ensign Richard Boettcher, NEDU Great Lakes)

The team of U.S. Navy Divers is based out of Naval Station Great Lakes. Their primary mission is to support testing of military diving equipment and perform experimental dive projects to improve U.S. Navy diving tables. The group also provides military diving services to the Great Lakes region, including pier-based security dives and underwater hull inspections of DoD vessels.

The dives were planned and supervised by NDC Troy W. Laws, NR NEDU operations chief and the command's senior diving supervisor. He serves as a Naval Station Great Lakes Firefighter/EMT in his civilian job. He is also a member of the GLFD's Dive Rescue Team and a member of the Lake/McHenry SRT County Dive Team.

Laws picked Silver Lake because of the close proximity to his residence and the base. He coordinated with the Oakwood Hills Police Chief Lee R. Wollenberg and John Theiss, Jr., president of Oakwood Hills to obtain permission to use the site for their ice dive.

"This is an annual training that we perform," said Laws. "As a reserve diving unit we adhere to all active-duty diving standards and protocols. All the equipment necessary for a military ice dive is extensive."

All gear was hand carried to and from the dive site. They are required to have a minimum of twin 80-cubic-foot scuba bottles and a lifeline attached to all divers along with full-face masks with wireless communications and dry suits. They dove with two divers in the water and one stand-by diver on the surface.

"The purpose of the dive was training, not only for the divers, but also for the diving supervisors," noted Laws.

"I just reported in October and I am already very impressed with this team of highly professional sailors," said acting Commanding Officer, NDCS Kerry Bridges. "As the senior diver, I am ultimately responsible for personal safety and mission success. These guys are seasoned, professional operators, and they really make my job easier."

The entire operation, from the cutting of two ice holes, setting up the dive station, and performing the dives, and equipment breakdown, took well over 65 man hours.

All divers were able to dive and assist in the operation. The team included ET2 Brady Back, Madison, Wis.; Capt. Harry Whelan, Milwaukee, Wis.; NDC Joseph Vandenoever, Mishawaka, Ind.; NDCS(DSW) Kerry Bridges, Bloomington, Ind.; GM1 Chad Ernst, McHenry, Ill.; GM1 John Panek, Oak Park, Ill.; ETC Benjamin Brooks, Chicago; ND1 Paul Ford, South Bend, Ind.; Ensign Richard Boettcher, Woodstock, Ill.; and NDC Troy Laws, Oakwood, Ill.

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