

NOV 01 2007



**Office of the Federal Coordinator
for Gulf Coast Rebuilding**

The Honorable Rocky Pullman
President, Hancock County Board of Supervisors
3068 Longfellow Drive, Building 3
Bay St. Louis, MS 39520

The Honorable Edward Favre
Mayor, City of Bay St. Louis
P.O. Box 2250
Bay St. Louis, MS 39521

The Honorable Tommy Longo
Mayor, City of Waveland
P.O. Box 539
Waveland, MS 39576

Dear Rocky, Eddie and Tommy:

I hope this letter finds you all well. As you recall, I recently sent each of you a letter inquiring about your five highest priority Public Assistance (PA) projects. In that letter, I expressed my commitment to ensuring that the Federal Government meets its responsibilities in our ongoing drive to see that PA projects come to completion. Understanding the need to move forward in a timely manner and sharing your sense of urgency, I also committed to responding to you within 30 days of receiving your outlined priorities. Our goal is to identify the barriers that prevent us from reaching a decision and seek resolution to continue moving forward on high priority projects.

The information provided in this response is a product of thorough examination on behalf of FEMA officials at the state, regional and headquarters level. I am very pleased with the degree of coordination that has occurred among you and your staff together with FEMA and my office. I want to ensure you that your top priorities have also been treated as our top priorities and have received the highest level of attention. The following information regarding PA project status has been forwarded to me directly from FEMA Administrator David Paulison.

The following priorities we have addressed are those identified in the letter I received from Hancock County on October 9th as well as those brought forward by you all in a subsequent meeting organized by Gil Jamieson and FEMA on October 16th.

TOP FIVE PA PRIORITIES FOR HANCOCK COUNTY

Countywide Jail Facility

FEMA wrote a comprehensive project worksheet (PW) for the jail for \$751,974, as well as an additional \$98,312 for hazard mitigation. However, **because the actual insurance amount for the jail is greater than the amount of estimated damages, eligible reimbursement from FEMA is limited to the \$98,312 Hazard Mitigation Project (HMP)**. The HMP funding is available to Hancock County if it decides to repair the jail at the existing site. If the county decides to relocate the jail to a new site, the HMP funds will not be available.

FEMA has funded temporary inmate costs in Pearl River County for Hancock County while it decides how and where to repair or replace its jail. The deadline for temporary inmate costs expires in March 2008. FEMA has notified Hancock County that it must make a decision about how they plan to proceed with the jail, and begin repairs by January 1, 2008. If Hancock County does not make a decision and start repairs by the end of the year, FEMA will not consider an extension to continue funding temporary inmate housing beyond March 2008. At a meeting on October 16th, FEMA and the Hancock County Board President agreed to this plan.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

While FEMA cannot replace Hancock County's EOC, the county can apply its remaining repair funds (\$1.4 million) towards a new EOC. The county is currently conducting emergency operations from a leased school facility, funded by FEMA Public Assistance. FEMA has written and funded 13 project worksheets, totaling \$1.4 million, to repair the existing EOC and justice court building. The county has already spent some of its \$1.4 million on repairs. Hancock County must decide whether they will repair the existing facility or build a new facility. If the county chooses to build a new facility, an improved project request must be submitted by the State to FEMA, so that the remaining repair funds can be applied towards the new EOC.

We recognize that the county will likely still need other sources of funding if they choose to construct a new EOC. Although DHS and FEMA do not have grant programs to support EOC construction, other federal programs may be available. My office has been working to facilitate the exploration of funding possibilities within the USDA Rural Development Program. Gil Gonzalez with **my office has organized a meeting with USDA and Hancock County on November 2nd to discuss the proposed EOC in greater detail and to determine project eligibility under USDA's Community Facility Program.**

Bay St. Louis City Hall Complex

Bay St. Louis is seeking federal funds to reimburse them for the costs they incurred when it purchased a complex to house police services, zoning, building department, utility department, and city hall. FEMA is working with the City to identify which project worksheets may be applied toward the cost of their new city hall complex. FEMA has written and obligated project worksheets for Bay St. Louis City Hall Annex (\$272,669) and Bay St. Louis Old City Hall (\$213,681). We understand that the City wants to use these funds to repair the Annex and Old City Hall rather than dedicated towards the new city hall complex. **FEMA is working with the City to identify other projects where repair or replacement funds could be applied towards the city hall complex. FEMA is committed to continuing to work with the City to help them maximize their PA funds and apply funds to other projects.**

Countywide Human Resources Facility

FEMA has written and obligated \$2,547,510 (PW #8331) for the replacement of Hancock County's human resources facility. The applicant may use these funds for the replacement, including relocation, of its human resources facility.

Multi-Purpose Records Archive

The County would like to construct a new multi-purpose facility to house computer mainframes, historical documents, and county records. FEMA will continue to work with Hancock County to identify damaged buildings so that the repair and/or replacement costs for the damaged facilities can be applied toward a new facility outside of the hazard area. **FEMA has obligated \$355,136 on (PW #7384) for damages to the Tax Assessor and Reappraisals Building, as well as the Planning, Zoning, Purchasing, Inventory, and Solid Waste building. Funding from this PW, as well as other potential PWs, may be applied toward the new facility.** Joint FEMA/MEMA/County teams will re-inspect all Hancock County buildings to ensure that project worksheets capture all eligible costs, including code and standards upgrades.

OTHER PA PRIORITIES FOR HANCOCK COUNTY

Coordination of Debris Removal from Drainage Areas

Debris and other vegetation continue to clog drainage areas in Hancock County. FEMA formed a team in 2005 to identify problem drainage areas and assign clean up to the appropriate party for clean up. I understand that while many areas have been cleaned, debris remains in some areas and may pose a flooding threat. **FEMA has assigned a team to work with Hancock County to identify and quantify debris in drainage areas.** FEMA will determine which areas are eligible for FEMA assistance, and which areas are the responsibilities of other agencies, including the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). FEMA is working to complete the identification of remaining needs and non-FEMA eligible work by November 1st. To this end, **FEMA recently met on October 30th in Biloxi with representatives from the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), USACE and NRCS. This group will collectively map out what drainage areas have been cleared and are scheduled to be cleared, including those by the U.S. Coast Guard.**

Timelines for Condemnation and Demolition of Properties

While this process is fundamentally a local responsibility, FEMA has committed to providing technical or other assistance to support the County in this effort. The State committed to providing technical expertise as well. FEMA has granted several time extensions to the County for the identification of derelict properties, completion of the condemnation process, and for the demolition process to begin. The current deadline for completion of the condemnation process is November 21, 2007 and the current deadline for demolition to begin is December 31, 2007. **FEMA has notified the County that they are amenable to further extensions if they continue to show progress on the condemnation and demolition process.**

Purchase of Equipment to Clean Culverts

FEMA is reviewing their existing project worksheets to determine the feasibility of applying the funds towards the purchase of equipment instead of leasing or renting the equipment. FEMA has obligated over \$3 million (PW #9604) for the cleaning and replacement of culverts. FEMA cannot purchase, replace, or repair equipment that was not owned prior to the disaster. However, as FEMA works with Hancock County to identify and quantify the extent of

cleaning that is needed, **they will determine whether purchasing the equipment may be more cost effective than renting it.**

County Road Repairs

FEMA has obligated \$7 million for repair of paved roads (PW #10603) and \$144,000 for repairs to unpaved roads (PW #10571). FEMA will continue to work with the County to revise the scope and obligation amounts of these PWs if necessary. In order to assist FEMA with this process, the County needs to identify and assess their road damages, including damages that may have occurred because of debris removal operations. To date, the County has presented damage documentation for only 3 of approximately 500 roads. In a meeting on October 16th, the County reaffirmed that it is moving forward with this effort.

Eligibility for Removal of Dead Trees

During Governor Barbour's recent visit to Hancock County on October 24th, he requested a final decision be made regarding the ability of FEMA and/or other federal agencies to continue to fund the removal of dead and dying trees as a result of the storm. FEMA is currently awaiting a list of identified trees from the City of Waveland and Hancock County. **If the City and County submit their lists to FEMA as soon as possible, FEMA will work to make a determination within two weeks of receiving the lists. In addition, FEMA and my office will work directly with the U.S. Forest Service to identify the extent to which they may be able to assist.**

PA PRIORITIES FOR THE CITY OF BAY ST. LOUIS

East Hancock Fire Department

At the October 16th meeting, Mayor Favre asked FEMA to look into the status of FEMA funding for the repair or replacement of the East Hancock Fire Department station. Following the meeting, FEMA officials reviewed this project. FEMA has determined that the Fire District owns the buildings and the land, but the deed for the land includes a reversion clause returning the land to the County if it is no longer used as a fire station. FEMA erroneously wrote a PW for the replacement of the fire station identifying the county as the applicant. **FEMA will write a new PW for the replacement of the fire station, identifying the Fire District as the applicant.** The current PW, with the county as applicant, will be de-obligated. FEMA will work with the Fire District on the specifics of the replacement, to determine the feasibility of relocating the station, and determine the ultimate disposition of the property.

2nd Street Elementary School and Ingram Administration Building

We understand that the City would like to relocate the school to a new site and convert the current school building into another public facility. **The school is less than 50% damaged, so it is eligible for repair funds but not replacement or relocation funds.** However, FEMA has committed to reviewing the facility again to ensure that all eligible repair costs, including codes and standard upgrades, are identified. To date, FEMA has obligated **\$5.7 million** on 29 project worksheets for the school facilities. FEMA will complete its review for additional eligible costs by November 1st. **If revisions to the existing scope of work are required, FEMA will update the PW with a new version by November 9th.** Because the school is more than 100-years old, there may be historic preservation grant funds available at the state and/or federal level to support additional repairs beyond what is eligible for FEMA funding. **Together with FEMA Long-Term Community Recovery staff in Mississippi, my office will help the City explore other potential funding sources.**

PA PRIORITIES FOR THE CITY OF WAVELAND

Uncompleted Ditch Repairs

FEMA wrote and obligated project worksheets for ditch work in Waveland. The City is now asking FEMA for more than **\$3 million** to complete work that was covered in the original project worksheets. FEMA cannot pay for work to be done twice, or pay for work that was not completed. At this time, much of the work that the City and its contractors are claiming to have completed cannot be verified. FEMA, the Inspector General, and federal law enforcement officials have documentation showing that some of the work was never completed. However, the City's contractors claim to have done the work and have billed for it.

Following the meeting with Mayor Longo on October 16th, the Mayor committed to confer with its contractors to request documentation of work completed or request that they complete the work for which they have billed but not completed. FEMA teams will conduct a full inspection of the ditches to determine which work has been completed. **In order for FEMA to accurately assess any remaining or unmet needs, they need to receive documentation from the City and its contractors to verify where and to what extent work has been completed and paid for.** FEMA can then determine if revised versions need to be written for existing PWs.

The NRCS has been tasked with a portion of the ditch work and has been conducting this work as quickly as possible. However, in order to move forward with this work, **NRCS needs a timely response from the City in granting the required easements.**

Rebuilding of City Facilities

FEMA has written and obligated over **\$2.95 million** for the repair or replacement of Waveland's city buildings, including City Hall and the Police and Fire Departments. Mayor Longo identified City Hall as Waveland's top priority and the Board of Aldermen has voted to approve the rebuilding of City Hall on its existing site. However, the City has not started the repairs or rebuilding of these important facilities. Following its commitment at the October 16th meeting, **FEMA has since assigned a dedicated planner** to help the City with its recovery planning and begin the rebuilding of priority facilities. **FEMA and MEMA have assigned dedicated staff** to work with Waveland to begin the rebuilding of City Hall, followed by other priority facilities as identified by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen. **FEMA will review all PWs to ensure all code and standard upgrades are included to maximize eligible funding.** FEMA will also review projects for any additional mitigation opportunities.

Equipment Replacement

FEMA has written and obligated project worksheets for the replacement of destroyed or damaged equipment. FEMA can fund the replacement of equipment at the Blue Book value. **FEMA cannot fund the replacement of equipment over the Blue Book value** if there are comparable replacements within a reasonable time and travel distance. FEMA has obligated **\$1.1 million** for police vehicles, **\$1.1 million** for fire department vehicles, and **\$100,000** for public works equipment. In addition, **FEMA has agreed to allow the applicant to combine obligated replacement funds in order to purchase the equipment they desire.** The combined funding will be capped at the approved PW amounts.

Downtown Marina

We understand that the City identified the creation of a downtown marina as a high priority project during previous recovery planning charettes. As this is a new project and a marina did not exist prior to Katrina, **FEMA public assistance funds are not available for this initiative. However, as stated above, FEMA is providing a planner to assist Waveland with its rebuilding and redevelopment efforts.**

Waveland Sports Complex

We understand that the City's sports facilities were destroyed and the City's temporary trailer complex sits on the existing sports fields. We also understand that donated land has been offered to Waveland for a sports complex. FEMA has obligated **\$17,000 for the soccer complex (PW #2090) and \$13,000 for baseball fields (PW #4790). FEMA will assist Waveland in developing an Improved Project request to use the obligated funds for the soccer and baseball fields as part of the new sports complex on the donated land.**

FEMA continues to work aggressively and cooperatively with Hancock County, as well as the Cities of Bay St. Louis, and Waveland. FEMA and MEMA have assigned a dedicated team to work in Hancock County so that local officials have continued and immediate access to their state and federal partners in rebuilding. The FEMA/MEMA office trailer was delivered to Hancock County on October 19th and is now fully operational.

Administrator Paulison and I are proud of FEMA's accomplishments and continued support for the recovery and rebuilding efforts in Hancock County, Mississippi. The strong working relationships between FEMA and our State and local partners help to drive the successful rebuilding of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

I trust that this response is helpful to you and has provided valuable information for enabling your priority PA projects to move forward. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Gil Gonzales with my office will continue to work closely with you on the ground and monitor the ongoing progress of these projects.

Thank you all for your dedication and commitment to your communities and to a better future for Mississippi and the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,



Donald E. Powell
Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding

- cc: Governor Barbour, State of Mississippi
- Michael Chertoff, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- Gil Jamieson, Associate Deputy Administrator, Gulf Coast Recovery, DHS FEMA
- Sid Melton, Director, Mississippi Transitional Recovery Office, DHS FEMA
- Carlos Castillo, Associate Administrator, Disaster Assistance Division, DHS FEMA
- Phillip May, Regional Administrator, DHS FEMA Region IV