



Corps Hurricane Response

Task Force Hope Status Report

December 1, 2006

Nov. 30 marked last day of Hurricane Season

Corps of Engineers reflects on past 15 months of hurricane protection system work and looks forward

By Susan Spaht

Official Hurricane Season is June 1 – Nov. 30. Although the Gulf South has just experienced one of the quietest Hurricane Seasons in years, no one could breathe a sign of relief until yesterday, Nov. 30.

Now, thankfully, Hurricane Season is officially over.

Looking back over the past year, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has accomplished a monumental amount of work and noticeable progress toward repairing and building the Hurricane Protection System for New Orleans and vicinity.

To date, the Corps has restored 220 miles of levees and floodwalls in the New Orleans flood and storm damage reduction system to a condition equal to or better than their pre-Katrina condition.



Dan Hitchings

Additionally, the Corps has installed temporary pumps and flood gates at the three major outfall canals (17th Street, London Avenue and Orleans Avenue),



This section of floodwall is part of the repair work done to the Lake Pontchartrain & Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project. The Corps of Engineers repaired 220 miles of levees and floodwalls from September 1, 2005 to June 1, 2006, the start of the 2006 Hurricane Season. (USACE Photo)

and continues to add pumping capacity.

Non-federal pump stations have been repaired and improved by the Corps of Engineers in several parishes and many other Hurricane Protection System improvements have been completed or begun.

“We have compressed about 10 years of planning, design and construction work into a mere 15 months,” said Dan Hitchings, Director of Task Force Hope, Corps of Engineers. “A job of this magnitude in this short amount of time has never been accomplished before, anywhere.”

“And we are continuing to work with that same sense of urgency as we plan for

the 100-year level of hurricane protection.”

Looking to the future, the continuing priority of the Corps of Engineers is to complete all approved flood and storm damage reduction projects in Louisiana while gathering the information needed

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to design the 100-year level of protection for a reduced level of risk to Louisiana population centers and critical facilities by 2010.

“We are using super-computer assets all over the country to produce storm modeling information that will help us design the 100-year levels of protection,” Hitchings said. “We expect to have this information by late winter or early spring.”

In the meantime, the modeling studies for 100-year protection levels will not affect upcoming contract construction awards. “We are focusing on contracts for those areas with the greatest deficiencies,” said Hitchings, “we will build there first.”

The Corps is using conservative elevation estimates for building levees and floodwalls. “Until we get the definitive elevation levels from the on-going study,” said Hitchings, “we are designing higher than we expect the final elevations to be....just to be on the safe side.”

Following are answers to some frequently asked questions regarding on-going hurricane protection issues.

Q. Will the pumping capacity at the outfall canals be increased for the next Hurricane Season?

A. A pump supply contract for 19 additional pumps (11 at 17th Street Canal and 8 at London Avenue Canal) is being solicited right now. They are expected to be installed, tested and commissioned in the summer of 2007. Once commissioned, capacity will exceed 7,000 cfs at 17th Street Canal, and 4,000 cfs at London Avenue (*Orleans is at maximum cfs now*)

Q: Wouldn't it provide better protection to armor all the levees?

A. Congress has not authorized funding to armor all 327 miles of levees and floodwalls in the hurricane protection

The Corps of Engineers, with recent Congressional funding, will be providing improvements and armoring to many of the non-federal pump stations in the Hurricane Protection System. Shown is Pump Station #19 at the IHNC near Danziger Road. (USACE Photo)



Pumps and closure gates were installed by the Corps of Engineers at the three outfall canals at Lake Pontchartrain, and pumping capacity continues to increase. Shown are pumps at 17th Street Canal that are being tested. (USACE Photo)


system. However, the Corps of Engineers is employing the best engineering solutions to maximize risk reduction and wisely utilize the funding that has been authorized. For example, on-going improvements to levees include different, better materials and wider wave berms which result in more substantial and stronger levees.

Q: Is the Corps trying to keep the MRGO open?

A: The Corps of Engineers, on authorization from Congress, is developing a plan to de-authorize deep draft navigation in the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet. The plan will be completed and provided to Congress this month. After Congress reviews the plan, they will decide about

de-authorization and if they want the Corps to close the MRGO.

Q: Is the Corps changing direction regarding flood protection on the West Bank?

A: No. The Corps is studying alternatives that may be more effective in flood damage reduction, that are more cost effective, and that minimize disruption to homes and businesses nearby. A critical feature of this alternative plan is that it would still provide floodwalls along Harvey Canal to the authorized level of protection by June 2008. The alternative - the addition of a flood gate located at the junction of the Algiers and Harvey Canals - would enhance protection and could be completed by 2012. 

**Coastal & Estuarine
Habitat Restoration
Conference**
*set for Dec. 9 - 13
in New Orleans*




By the year 2075, 75 percent of our nation's population will live within 50 miles of a coast.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is a participating sponsor in the 3rd National Conference on "Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration: Forging the National Imperative".

The conference will feature field sessions on Dec. 9 and 10; then move to the Hilton Riverside Hotel for the plenary sessions, Dec. 11-13. (Attendance is still open for on-site registration only.)

According to the official program, "the Conference will bring timely national attention to the challenges and opportunities to comprehensive costal ecosystem restoration throughout the U.S. and especially in Coastal Louisiana and the northern Gulf Coast."

Leading experts in coastal restoration from around the world will explore the latest advances in all aspects of habitat restoration. The presentations are meant to address the relevance of restoration and document the importance of our coasts to our national heritage and to people's lives. 

For more information, visit www.estuaries.org/conference

**Communications improvements top priority
with Corps of Engineers**

By Susan Spaht

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast with a vengeance in 2005, the New Orleans District Corps of Engineers, like other local emergency operations service providers, found its communications systems were not as reliable as it thought. After the storm, the Corps of Engineers made it a top priority to correct the inadequacies in their system.

"Prior to Hurricane Katrina we had redundancies (back-ups) set up in our emergency operations," said Mike Lowe, the Corps' Emergency Manager, "but each system had its limitations." Although the Corps is using many of the same systems to communicate, "we've added more reliability to them."

During the emergency period after the storm, Lowe said he noticed that people who had out-of-area cell phones continued to have service while 504 area code subscribers lost their connections. "All of our emergency personnel now have out-of-area cell phones."

More Corps workers are equipped with Blackberrys now too. And they are practicing with the new Pin-to-Pin communication process which doesn't rely on a local server. Additionally, the Blackberrys are equipped with SMS text messaging to communicate with non-Blackberry cell phones.

The Corps of Engineers has reconfigured its generators to power certain areas of its buildings. So if power is lost, the Corps' strategic areas will retain power and AC as well as computers and communication.

The Corps is also in the process of installing VoIP telephones which work through the internet in a seamless manner. This is another major improvement.



Mike Lowe

**CORPS OF ENGINEERS'
COMMUNICATIONS IMPROVEMENTS**

	Pre-Katrina	Post-Katrina
Land lines	limited	limited
Cell phones	local area code	out-of-area code
Blackberry	limited number in use	more in use plus Pin-to-Pin capability, and SMS text messaging added
Internet	Single points of failure	Re-designed network for redundant paths, added COOP*
Radio	limited 700 MHz	700-800 MHz, now at multiple locations throughout the District
Satellite phones	very limited quantity	many more in use throughout the District

**duplicates all server data at off-site location*

Faces of Hope

By Susan Spaht

Michelle Marceaux has been with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for 26 years, 16 of those in New Orleans. Even though Marceaux had worked her way up the ladder of government service for 10 years in Washington, D.C. – including one year with an Assistant Secretary of the Army at the Pentagon - “I had to start over at the bottom when I moved to New Orleans,” she said.

She started as Division Secretary in the Real Estate Division of the New Orleans District and worked her way up to Realty Specialist in the Appraisal and Planning Branch. For 12 years Marceaux worked in Planning...until Hurricane Katrina struck.

Editor's Note: These days, most people on the Gulf Coast, when discussing their lives and their work, use the terms “Pre-Katrina” and “Post-Katrina” because everything was changed in some way by the gigantic storm.

When asked to describe her work with the Corps of Engineers, Marceaux explained, “Pre-Katrina, I prepared real estate planning reports to accompany feasibility study reports.” Then she added, “Post-Katrina my job evolved into something very different.”

Pre-Katrina: Working directly with project managers, Marceaux was responsible for researching and compiling information and preparing the real estate planning documents required for the Corps of Engineers to lease or buy land for planned Corps projects.

Her job was to gather information on a piece of property such as: location of land, amount of acreage, number of land owners, cost estimate, description of property, types of easements, environ-

“ Post - Katrina my job evolved into something very different....” - Michelle Marceaux



Michelle Marceaux, who is with the Corps of Engineers' Real Estate Division, measures a house on Mirabeau Ave. near the London Ave. Canal. The house was badly damaged by Hurricane Katrina. (USACE Photo)

mental investigation, oyster leases, facility or utility involved, etc.

“There is a lot of information needed before the Corps can lease or buy a plot of land that is needed for Corps work,” said Marceaux, “a lot of research is involved, and it must be accurate.”

It also takes time....sometimes a long time.

Post-Katrina: “My family was very fortunate....our house had only minor wind damage after the storm, nothing serious. So I was one of the first ones in the Real Estate Division to report back to work after the storm,” she said.

Marceaux was assigned to Task Force Guardian, the Corps' immediate hurricane repair team. Her assigned area: St. Bernard Parish. “We were all answering the phones trying to help hurricane victims, and working with the Project Managers who were running things in the

field” she explained.

“My job had switched from planning to acquisition, and I was getting a lot of on-the-job training. That was the first time I assisted in commandeering a piece of property.”

But it wouldn't be the last time, as Marceaux was to find out.

Immediately following the hurricane, the Corps of Engineers was under emergency conditions. Crews were unwatering the city, bringing ice and water to stranded people and, of course, restoring the levees. “We had to get our equipment on to private property quite often at that time,” Marceaux explained, “and we didn't have time to find evacuated property owners to get permission to use their property. We were in a state of emergency.”

Since Marceaux is the Real Estate repre-

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sentative assigned to St. Bernard Parish, she was – and still is – assisting with commandeering of property in that parish. It is often difficult to locate property documentation in St. Bernard Parish since the courthouse was badly damaged during the hurricane, and many records were damaged or destroyed.

**Michelle Marceaux**

“Verifying property ownership for commandeered properties in St. Bernard Parish can be very difficult,” said Marceaux. “All the property records were damaged prior to 1986. Some are just not available. And this is the main hold-up in getting compensation to landowners in a timely manner, but we are doing everything we can to expedite the process.”

Marceaux is currently working with St. Bernard elected officials and willing property owners to collect borrow material (clay needed for building levees), and also to secure properties to stock pile construction equipment and materials, and to gain access to private property for future levee work.

“The elected officials in St. Bernard have been working very closely with us,” said Marceaux, “because everyone knows the necessity and urgency of getting the levee system re-built as fast as possible.”



Michelle Marceaux discusses property boundaries with two St. Bernard Parish property owners. (USACE Photo)

Corps awards key SELA drainage contract

\$24 million contract “great news” for East Jefferson

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has awarded a \$24.0 million contract to improve rainstorm drainage on a key stretch of the Soniat Canal that parallels David Drive in suburban Metairie.

The contract is part of the SELA, or Southeast Louisiana Urban Flood Control Project, which is designed to reduce rain flooding. SELA is a multi-year project in Jefferson, Orleans and St. Tammany parishes for which Congress has authorized \$1.2 billion.

“This is great news for the people of East Jefferson,” said Stan Green, Senior Project Manager for SELA. “It’s the first contract we’ve awarded on this project in three years, and it will take us closer to completion of the Soniat-Elmwood system.”

The Soniat Canal contract will complete the last major obstacle to more efficient flow in the Soniat-Elmwood system. Such flowage improvements are necessary to capitalize on an increase of 2,400 cubic feet per second (cfs) of capacity in the Elmwood Pump Station that was completed earlier.

A flow of 2,400 cfs works out to a depth of five feet of water over almost 40 acres in one hour’s time.

“We expect this to be the first of many SELA awards in the months ahead,”

Green said.

The contract was awarded Nov. 17 to B&K Construction Co. of Mandeville.

Drainage capacity will be improved along a 1,600-foot stretch of the Soniat Canal from just south of Veterans Boulevard northward to Canal No. 3.

Canal No. 3 runs east-west along Interstate 10 and links the Soniat and Elmwood Canal, which reaches Lake Pontchartrain at the Elmwood Pump Station.

“The most prominent improvement feature is lining the canal with a concrete ‘U’-frame. This replaces an earthen ‘V’-shape, which eliminates protruding drain pipes and allows water to drain out more efficiently,” said Soheila Holley, SELA Project Manager for Jefferson Parish.

“Though it’s true that other kinds of flooding can be more dangerous than rain flooding, SELA is important because rain floods are far more likely to occur than the others,” Holley said.

The most important construction remaining to be completed on the Soniat-Elmwood system is the replacement of three bridges that impede flow on the Elmwood Canal. One bridge is under construction by Jefferson Parish and the Corps is planning to award contracts on the other two.

Corps of Engineers awards contracts to local businesses

1. Emergency generator installations at Pump Station No. 6, to Reeves Electrical Services, Pierre Part, La. for \$2,594,000.
2. Repairs to five different Pump Stations, to Crown Roofing Services, Kenner, La., for \$84,013.
3. Repairs at Elmwood Pump Station, to Crown Roofing Services, Kenner, La., for \$67,938.
4. Surveys for West Bank and vicinity, Hurricane Protection Project, Westwego to Harvey Canal, Segnette State Park Floodwall, Jefferson Parish, for \$111,064.

ANNOUNCING

The New and Improved Task Force Hope HPS Web Site

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi Valley Division, Task Force Hope has expanded and updated its Hurricane Protection System (HPS) Web site at : www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps

The Web site enables all stakeholders, including residents, elected officials, property owners, and the general public, to get the most up-to-date information on the hurricane protection system's ongoing projects through online access.

Expanded information includes the status for all authorized projects. Projects can be found by clicking on the link for the appropriate parish. Project information includes the number of projects and the design, construction and completion status, along with contract progress and upcoming contract solicitations/awards.

The most recent issue of Task Force Hope's Status Report Newsletter is regularly posted under the "Items of Special Interest." "Items of Special Interest" also includes new project photos and levee assessment height maps, as well as links to the volume summaries of the released findings of the Interagency Evaluation Performance Task Force (IPET). The IPET looked at the performance of the hurricane protection system during Hurricane Katrina and evaluated how the system's components performed as part of an integrated system.

Additionally, a virtual Media Resource Center is now available online especially for media representatives to have quick access to news releases on Hurricane Protection System projects, Corps contact information, and background on projects and Task Force Hope.

Corps-sponsored Industry Forum Postponed

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has announced that an Industry Forum for contractors concerning upcoming hurricane projects has been postponed until late January.

The Corps is re-validating contract award dates and the sequencing of future work as part of its process in order to provide the most effective and comprehensive risk reduction results possible. This effort will help ensure that attendees have the most deliberative planning and execution processes for project timelines.

The forum was originally scheduled for Nov. 29-30 in New Orleans. The date and other details for the rescheduled forum will be announced later. For more information on the Industry Forum, go to this Web site:

http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/Industry_forum.htm

Contact Information

Topic	Phone	Organization
New Orleans District work	(504) 862-2201	New Orleans District Public Affairs
Task Force Hope - Overall hurricane protection system restoration, repair and improvement	(504) 862-1836	Task Force Hope Public Affairs
Debris Removal in Louisiana	(504) 681-2317	Louisiana Recovery Field Office

The *Status Report Newsletter* supports the information program for Task Force Hope and its stakeholders. It also serves as the primary tool for accurately transmitting the hurricane recovery work to stakeholders. This is an online publication and open to public distribution. This issue and past issues can be found at: www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps

Comments and questions may be sent to the Status Report Newsletter editor at: b2fwdpao@usace.army.mil

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The Status Report Newsletter is an unofficial publication authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1. Views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Corps of Engineers or the Department of the Army.

"This Web site enables interested persons to have access to information on subjects ranging from contracting to pumping capacities," said Dan Hitchings, Director, Task Force Hope.

"Visitors to the site will be able to examine several complex projects in detail to get a better understanding of the Corps' ongoing hurricane protection work," he added.



Here is the new Web site:
www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/mediacenter.htm

Pump Capacity Report

17th Street Canal.....4,060 cfs
London Avenue Canal....2,800 cfs
Orleans Avenue Canal... 2,200 cfs

As of Dec. 1, 2006

Note: The Status Report Newsletter will give weekly reports on the pump capacity of the three temporary outfall canals under construction.

For more details, please visit this website:

<http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/pumpcomp.htm>