



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Mississippi Valley Division



# Corps Hurricane Response

Task Force Hope Status Report Newsletter

May 1, 2012

## HSDRRS projects garnering international attention

Team New Orleans  
picks up top honors  
at engineering awards  
ceremony

by Susan Spaht

**On** April 17, the Corps of Engineers in New Orleans took home two prestigious awards from the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) Engineering Excellence Awards program held in Washington, D.C. The Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) Lake Borgne Surge Barrier won the highest honor of the evening, the *Grand Conceptor Award* which recognizes the most outstanding engineering achievement. It was chosen from an international group of eight *Grand Award* winners. The Gulf Intra-coastal Waterway (GIWW) West Closure Complex (WCC) received one of 16 *Honor Awards*. Both projects are part of the Greater New Orleans Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System, the 133-mile perimeter system the Corps is con-



**The Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Surge Barrier project won the prestigious *Grand Conceptor Award* at the ACEC engineering excellence awards program in Washington, D.C. in early April.** USACE Photo

structing for the five-parish area of South Louisiana.

“These complex state-of-the-art construction projects are exemplary of the Corps’ overall effort to reduce risk for the people of the Greater New Orleans area,” said Mike Park, Chief of Task Force Hope. “It is a real honor to have our employees and contractors recognized for their achievements by this highly-regarded international organization.”

The ACEC award program, now in its 45th year, annually recognizes the year’s most outstanding engineering accomplishments. A distinguished panel of 25-30 judges representing industry, government, academia and media assembles for three

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days each year to critique and rank the submissions for engineering excellence. Engineering projects from around the world are rated in terms of uniqueness and innovation, future value to the engineering profession, complexity, as well as successful fulfillment of client/owner's need, including schedule and budget. A panel then selects 24 top award winners: 16 Honor Awards and eight Grand Awards. One Grand Conceptor Award winner is chosen from the eight Grand Award winners as the overall best engineering project.

**IHNC Surge Barrier**  
**Winner: Grand Conceptor**

The 1.8-mile-long IHNC Surge Barrier is located at the confluence of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, about 12 miles east of downtown

New Orleans. The project reduces the risk of flooding from storm surge for some of the areas hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina, including New Orleans East, Metro New Orleans, Gentilly, the Ninth Ward and St. Bernard Parish. The total construction value for the IHNC Lake Borgne Surge Barrier is an estimated \$1.1 billion. The lead contractor for the IHNC Surge Barrier is the Shaw Group.

**West Closure Complex**  
**Winner: Honor Award**

The WCC, located approximately one half mile south of the confluence of the Harvey and Algiers canals on the GIWW, significantly reduces the risk of flooding for a large area of the West Bank by removing 26 miles of levees, floodwalls, a gate, and



Col. Ed Fleming, New Orleans District Commander; and Kevin Wagner, Senior Project Manager for the West Closure Complex; accept the Honor Award at the ACEC ceremonies in Washington, D.C. Photo courtesy ACEC

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pumping stations along the Harvey and Algiers canals from the direct impacts of storm surge. The total construction value for the West Closure Complex is an estimated \$1 billion. The contractor for the WCC is Gulf Intracoastal Constructors.

### National & International Recognition

Some of the projects in the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System, and some of the technologies used to construct them, have garnered attention and recognition worldwide. The components, the construction methods, the innovative contracting and financing procedures, as well as the System itself, have captured the interest of engineers and builders, academics and governments, and the news media from all corners of the world.

“Best practices and lessons learned as well as innovation and technology through the delivery of the HSDRRS have been the subject of much interest within the Corps and the international community of flood risk management proponents and agencies,” said Park. “We’ve also done a lot of listening. We’ve listened and learned from academics, practitioners, our contractors, our partners and stakeholders, and the general public.



Mike Park



IHNC Surge Barrier: ACEC Grand Conceptor Award winner



Top: IHNC sector gates and barge gate enter final construction phase.

Bottom: IHNC south wall nears completion.

“Over the past six years, Task Force Hope leaders have participated in scores of international exchange conferences, engineering and technical conferences, focus group presentations, news media interviews and other venues to share strategies, technologies, experiences and results.

“Last year I participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Flood Management in Tokyo, Japan, which had delegates from 40 nations; in April I made a presentation at the New York City Chapter of the Society of American Military Engineers; and this September I am invited to

make a presentation at the Floodplain Management Association annual conference in Sacramento, to name just a few examples.

“There is a growing national and international interest in what we are doing here in New Orleans, in the significance of the things we are accomplishing in the design and construction of flood risk management infrastructure.

“At the Corps of Engineers we like to say we are **Building Strong**, and we are. But we are also **building smart!** And the world is watching.”





## Letter from our Commanding General



**Two** major projects in the Greater New Orleans Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System recently won awards at the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) "Engineering Excellence Awards" ceremonies in Washington, D. C. The West Closure Complex won an *Honor Award*, one of only 16 given by the organization worldwide; and the IHNC Surge Barrier won the *Grand Conceptor Award*, the highest award the ACEC can bestow. It was an international competition. These HSDRRS projects competed with other outstanding engineering projects from across the globe, and the Corps-led team walked away with top honors! My congratulations to all the Corps employees and Corps contractors involved with these projects. Job well done!

These projects demonstrate the effectiveness, ingenuity and skill of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It shows the world that we are among the elite at what we do. In the case of the HSDRRS, Congress and the Administration gave us the authority and the upfront appropriations to design and construct a risk reduction system for the people of the Greater New Orleans area. Congress and the Administration showed great confidence in us, and we accepted that challenge with aplomb because we knew we could do it. We even took it a step further; we set ourselves a very ambitious schedule to complete the vast mission in a mere six years so the people of the Greater New Orleans area

would not have to wait any longer than necessary for their perimeter defense system. We also dedicated ourselves to building the very best product that engineering science could construct. These ACEC awards validate that we accomplished that goal.

These two projects – and all of the projects in the HSDRRS - have earned the acclaim of engineers, academics and practitioners worldwide. People come to New Orleans



Maj. Gen. John Peabody

from around the country and around the world to see the largest surge barrier of its kind in the U.S. (the IHNC Surge Barrier), the largest drainage pump station in the world (the WCC), the nation's largest sector gate (WCC) and the other remarkable accomplishments of the Corps-built system.

I am very proud to be part of Team New Orleans and this

historic mission and to work alongside the dedicated men and women who are part of it. I am quick to point out that this mission and its successes are the result of the hard work of thousands of people from every district in the Mississippi Valley Division and, in fact, from every district in the Corps of Engineers. We are also grateful for the participation and input of our partners and stakeholders who are an important part of Team New Orleans. These awards and accolades are yours too.

**Building Strong!**

*John Peabody*

Maj. Gen. John Peabody, Commander  
Mississippi Valley Division

### Contact Information

#### U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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 Corps' hurricane risk reduction efforts to stakeholders.

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This issue and past issues can be found at:  
<http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps>

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