

# Mississippi River Commission

## High Water Inspection

Briefing by Colonel Peter J. Rowan

April 23, 2004

New Orleans, Louisiana

*FinalF*

### SLIDE

### SCRIPT

1. Corps seal

2. Photo: Aerial, New Orleans  
Bullet: MRC High Water Inspection, New Orleans, April 23, 2004

Good morning, Gen. Riley, members of the Mississippi River Commission and distinguished guests. As New Orleans district engineer, it is my pleasure to present the status of the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project and associated programs in the New Orleans District.

3. Graphic: Topics:

- \*River Stages
- \*Funding Program
- \*MR&T Studies
- \*MR&T Projects
- \*Coastal Restoration

These are the topics I'll be covering this morning ...

4. Photo: MV Miss Topics:

- \***River Stages**
- \*Funding Program
- \*MR&T Studies
- \*MR&T Projects
- \*Coastal Restoration

I'll begin my presentation with river stages in the New Orleans District since the low water inspection trip back in August.

5. Graphic: Total Latitude Flows

Since the last crest on March 31, the Mississippi River fell steadily until 6 April when it began a slow rise. It crested on 16 April with a total flow of 857,000 cfs at the latitude of Old River.

6. Graphic: Crest Stages

16 Apr 04 1935-2003  
(last crest) Max. Avg.

RRL	37.7	59.1	41.7
BR	22.7	44.5	27.9
NO	7.5	19.6	11.6
Sim	25.4	56.3	33.0
MC	3.5	8.7	3.3

Shown here are the corresponding April 2004 crest stages at various locations on the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers. Today (23 April 04), the combined discharge of the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers at the latitude of Old River is \_\_\_\_\_ cfs. The average discharge for this date is 1,095,000 cfs. And the stage today at New Orleans is \_\_\_\_\_ ft.

7. Graphic: MV Lee

The Corps lent a hand after the Feb 21 collision of an ocean ship and an offshore oil boat sank the latter in Southwest Pass. In response to a request dated Feb 25 from Louisiana Governor Blanco to assist the Coast Guard recovery operations of the sunken MV Lee III, we allowed a slight deviation of flow at the Old River Complex.

With the river closed, the Corps also helped the recovery on site with hydrographic surveys. Meanwhile, small ships sought alternate access to the river ports. The Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Lock successfully passed nine ships Feb. 22 to 25 -- more than in an ordinary year.

And in response to a second request from Governor Blanco, dated 8 Apr 04, to improve water quality and aquatic resources in the Atchafalaya Basin, we increased the Old River flow by an average of 2 percent beginning on 14 April and continuing through 20 April.

8. Graphic: 70/30

At present, we are maintaining the 70/30-flow distribution between the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers. The cumulative percent into the Atchafalaya Basin since January 1 is a little over 30 (30.129%). The surplus is about 127,000 cfs, and it will be eliminated by year-end.

And now for our FY 04 program...

9. Scenic, coastal

Topics:

- \*River Stages
- \***Funding Program**
- \*MR&T Studies
- \*MR&T Projects
- \*Coastal Restoration

10. Graphic: NOD FY 2004 Program

Bullet:

- \$300 M Program
- \$50 M Coastal Restoration.
- \$2 M IIS
- \$6 M Other Programs
  - PAS, CAP, FCCE
- \$20 M Local Interests

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\$378 M (Total)

The Fiscal Year 2004 program includes \$300 million for the New Orleans District for General Investigations, Construction General, O&M General and Miss. River & Tributaries projects. We anticipate receiving \$50 million for coastal restoration, \$2 million for the Interagency and Intergovernmental Service Program, and \$6 million General Regulatory and Flood Control & Coastal Emergency programs. About \$20 million of non-Federal funds will be expended on district projects.

11. Graphic: Bar chart of N.O. District budget trends

In general, the New Orleans District program funding has seen a downward trend since FY2001. Over the five fiscal years through FY 2005 we have these trends: GI up, Construction General down, O&M mixed, and MR&T down. While the FY 2005 President's Budget of \$330 million is up 10% from the FY2004 President's budget for these appropriations, the district has more capability for 2005.

12. Aerial of Houma

Topics:

- \*River Stages
- \*Funding Program
- \***MR&T Studies**
- \*MR&T Projects
- \*Coastal Restoration

Moving on to our MR&T study efforts.

13. Graphic: Four areas.

We are managing four MR&T studies in the New Orleans District. They are Alexandria to the Gulf, Lower Atchafalaya Basin Re-evaluation, Morganza to the Gulf, and Donaldsonville to the Gulf. What's in common? All are sub-watershed studies focusing on water resource problems with impacts to ongoing coastal restoration projects.

14. Pointe aux Chenes flooding after Hurricane Lili.

The Chief of Engineers signed the Morganza to the Gulf Report in August 2002. Project design is ongoing on the Houma Navigation Canal Lock. And the local sponsor is authorized to advance toward construction on levee reach J-1.

15. Graphic: Alexandria to the Gulf of Mexico map  
(19 miles of channel;  
2 control structures)

This month, we're scheduled to execute an amendment to the feasibility study agreement for the first phase of Alexandria to the Gulf. The amendment will add the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development as a joint sponsor. LDOTD joins Gravity Drainage District No. 1 of Rapides Parish, with which we executed the original agreement in April 2003.

16. Graphic:  
Donaldsonville to the Gulf of Mexico map  
Photo: aerial, Luling

On Donaldsonville to the Gulf, we have completed survey cross-sections for the hydraulic and hurricane levee analyses. Currently, we are preparing input data for the hydraulic models, and obtaining data for the economic analysis.

17. Graphic: Lower Atchafalaya Basin Study map  
Photo: aerial, Atch levee system

We are coordinating with Division on the preliminary draft report for the fourth study, the Atchafalaya Basin Re-evaluation study.

18. MRL  
Topics:  
\*River Stages  
\*Funding Program  
\*MR&T Studies  
\***MR&T Projects**  
\*Coastal Restoration

And now for construction progress on the Mississippi River levee system in the New Orleans District.

19. Photo: Romeville to Remy  
Bullet: MR levee mileage chart  
Total: 512  
Comp FY00: 495  
Ongoing: 0 (Gap closures only)  
Remaining: 17

We are 97% complete and have only 17 miles of work remaining. Except for a short reach in Baton Rouge, only deficiencies in freeboard remain. Currently, we have one ongoing construction project, the East Bank Gap Closures.

20. Hohen Solms Levee to Modeste Levee

We'll award three contracts by the end of the calendar year to enlarge the Alhambra to Hohen Solms levee, the Hohen Solms to Modeste levee, and the Baton Rouge Front Phase II levee.

21. Photo: WABPL-95  
Bullet: Atch Basin levees (mi)  
Completed: 391  
Under Constr: 10  
Remaining: 48  
Total: 449

These numbers show our levee progress in the Atchafalaya Basin, where we're about 93% physically complete.

22. Graphic: FY04, Atch contracts

**Awarded 5:**  
W-52 Levee; E-69/73 Levee; Wax Lake West Drainage Structure; W85A & B Levee and Wax Lake Outlet West  
**To be awarded 3:**  
Krotz Springs Front  
Melville Front & Ring  
and Wax Lake Outlet East

In the previous fiscal year, we awarded five contracts in the basin and will award three more this September covering about 11 miles. No new contracts are scheduled in the coming fiscal year.

23. Photo (2): Dredging in the Atchafalaya River

The fluff issue continues in the Atchafalaya River bar channel. The Corps' Engineering Research and Development Center has completed its fluff study and reported to the Port of Morgan City and the Atchafalaya Coalition members in June 2003. The final report was released in September 2003. Neither the ERDC study nor the recommendations provided a solution to the fluff.

24. Photos (2):  
Dredging and navigation/barge photo

In November 2003, the district conducted a value-engineering workshop on the fluff. The study has provided a list of conceptual measures to attack fluff. Some require minimal further evaluation, but not more environmental studies or higher approval. A few are being implemented now. We are also using limited Fiscal Year 2004 funds to initiate an evaluation of several more VE concepts for a pilot plan. Funding would be required to complete the evaluation and implement the pilot plan.

25. Graphic: Map of Bayous Chene, Boeuf & Black

We're also addressing the feasibility of providing deeper access channels to facilities on the Lower Atchafalaya River below Morgan City and on Bayous Chene, Boeuf and Black east of Morgan City. The existing waterways provide a 20 by 400-foot channel to major marine fabrication and repair facilities that build offshore oil and gas rigs and platforms.

26. Photo: Morgan City marine facilities; tug pulls an offshore-oil platform jacket.

As offshore oil and gas has moved into deeper water worldwide, drilling rigs and production platforms have grown in size. Fabricators in the Morgan City area say they cannot compete with overseas yards without a 35-foot channel. A feasibility study is under way with Morgan City Harbor and Terminal District. The final report is set for December 2005. Major issues are high maintenance costs, channel reliability and economic justification.

Meanwhile, three modules of the Holstein offshore production platform are to be floated out from Amelia just over two weeks from today. Two will leave together May 9 and the third May 13. Bean's dredge Meridian began the channel's final cleanup April 9.

27. Map: Atch Basin water management units

I'll move on now to present the status of the planning and design of water management units and recreation features in the basin.

We received approval in June 2003 to construct the Buffalo Cove Water Management Unit at 100% federal expenditure. A Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) has been signed and we are currently developing a project cooperation agreement for construction scheduled to begin in late 2004.

28. Graphic/photo: Lake End Park plan

We're also coordinating activities with our local sponsor on the Lake End Parkway project in Morgan City. We are advancing planning, engineering and design in FY 04 for 70 acres of recreational improvements along the Lake Palourde shoreline. Our partners are the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, St. Mary Parish, and Morgan City. And our sponsors are seeking authority for a type-A regional visitor's center adjacent to the park.

29. Photo: generic boating activity in Atch...  
Bullet: Future boat landings and improvements:  
\*Simmesport in Avoyelles Parish (under construction)  
\*Millet Point in St. Mary Parish  
\*Bayou Pigeon in Iberville Parish  
\*Bayou Sorrell in Iberville Parish  
\*Krotz Springs in St. Landry  
\*Butte LaRose in St. Martin Parish

The contract for the Simmesport boat launch was awarded on 18 Dec 03. Construction is underway and scheduled to be completed in Dec 04. A groundbreaking ceremony was held last Friday. Also, we are in the planning phase for boat landings and related improvements at the five sites shown. A contract is to be awarded in FY 2004 for the construction of the Millet (mee yet) Point Boat Launch.

30. Graphic: Pie chart  
50K/338K

This slide reflects the current status of acquisition in the basin. To date, the Corps has purchased more than 47,000 acres and negotiated perpetual rights on about 150,000 acres of the authorized project.

31. Super: Channel Improvement  
Bullet:  
381 authorized  
362 completed  
19 remaining

As for the district's channel improvement program, we've constructed just over 362 miles, making revetment work about 95% complete on the Mississippi River. This year we will place .5 miles of underwater stone at Carrollton Bend (Mile 102-L).

32. Photo: generic revetment work on Atch River.

We'll build a total of .3 miles of revetment on the left descending bank of Courtableau at Mile 48.5.

33. Graphic: Atch Basin Bank Stabilization (Miles)  
Completed: 56.8  
Schl'd this Year: .6  
Remaining: 4.6  
Total: 62

Completion of this work will leave a little more than 4.6 miles of the authorized 62 miles of required Atchafalaya revetment to be constructed.

34. Generic coastal land loss

Topics:

\*River Stages

\*Funding Program

\*MR&T Studies

\*MR&T

Projects

**\*Coastal Restoration**

Now, being in New Orleans, we should discuss coastal land loss. This is at the top of the list of Louisiana's economic and environmental issues.

35. LCA: Impacts

This problem is impacting the state's fisheries, oil and gas infrastructure, hurricane protection and port facilities, signaling dire consequences for the state and nation if not vigorously addressed.

36. Background photo of coast

Bullet: Administration's FY 05 Budget Guidance In 2004:

\*Identify most critical ecological needs

\*Identify scientific uncertainties

\*Propose near-term program of highly cost-effective projects

\*Develop large-scale ecosystem restoration concepts

\*Existing Federal-State Task Force to increase efforts to build and evaluate cost-effective freshwater and sediment diversion projects

Since 2002, the Corps and State have been developing strategies to restore coastal Louisiana. During this study effort, the general public, stakeholder interest groups, and technical experts from academia and federal agencies have been engaged in the scoping, formulation and definition of the final array of restoration alternatives. More recently, the Administration's FY 05 Budget Guidance directs the Corps to refocus on a near-term plan that addresses the urgent needs of the coast.

37. LCA Timeline

We are committed to submitting a programmatic project recommendation to Congress for authorization under WRDA 04. This slide is the schedule for some of the key events must take place before the Chief of Engineers' report is submitted to Congress.



38. Background Photo:  
Meeting  
Bullet: LCA Near Term  
Ecosystem Restoration  
Plan  
Public Scoping Meetings  
April 19 – Houma  
April 20 – Belle Chasse  
April 21 – Morgan City  
April 22 – Lake Charles  
April 23 – Lafayette

This week, the Corps is holding public scoping meetings across coastal Louisiana. Comments received from the public will be incorporated into the near-term plan. This plan will set us on a path to develop and implement the best first-increment of effort to restore critical areas within coastal Louisiana.

39. Dredge building  
West Bay diversion  
channel

This high water, sediment is flowing into West Bay. Just below Venice. Last fall, we dug the diversion channel. It's the first large-scale sediment diversion of Mississippi River water. Will build 10,000 acres over 20 years. As the first of its kind, West Bay will give us lessons valuable for future projects.

40. Video: Multi-beam  
survey/Burrwood Bayou  
scour hole

This video illustrates a problem in Southwest Pass. It's a 3D visualization created by modeling a March 2003 multibeam survey. A scour hole has developed at an outlet named Burrwood Bayou. It's a threat to navigation. At high stages, it was capturing 37 percent of SW Pass flow. The hole has been as deep as 130 feet. Pilots are restricting ship traffic to one way in this reach. Last year, 3.5 mil/yr of dredged material reduced depth to about 60 feet. In March 2004 we awarded a \$2.7 million contract for a rock dike to span the bayou's outflow area. The District's visualization capability made it easier to define the problem and convey the need for immediate action. It's a tool that helps make decisions.

41. Photo: (aerial) New  
Orleans and disappearing  
marshes

That wraps up the current status of projects in the New Orleans District.

42. Graphic:

Deployed: 22 employees participating in Operation Enduring Freedom (9 are activated military)

Locations: Baghdad and Basrah

**Duties:** Supervise reconstruction of humanitarian facilities damaged or destroyed in battle & Military assistance with equipment & supplies (logistics)

**Facilities:** Drinking Water Treatment Plants, Wastewater Treatment Plants, Electrical Power Production, Schools, Hospitals, Communications

Let me say a word on the Corps in another famous delta region – Iraq: Restoring oil. Turning on the lights. Drinking water. Environmental restoration. All reasons that New Orleans District is proud of its people who have deployed to support the post-war restoration. The slide shows the number of those deployed, where they've deployed, and what they're doing. Some have returned stateside, and we look to the day when this country's latest mission is accomplished and all our soldiers and civilians are reunited with families and friends.

43. Photo: West Bay, completed channel

In closing, I'd like to recognize and thank the levee districts, state and local representatives, district employees and the Mississippi River Commissioners, who, working together, ensure the continued safety and economic benefits to the citizens and businesses flourishing alongside the Mighty Mississippi.

44. Photo: West Bay, completed channel, with both sides of the coin.

Thank you.

45. NOD mission map

*Used for reference by the public in the follow-up statements.*