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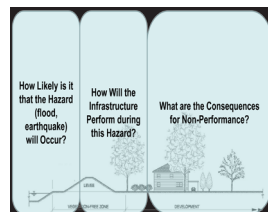
Riverside



Team New Orleans



Repairing the Mississippi River & Tributaries system



www.mvn.usace.army.mil **Riverside** Team New Orleans

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Submissions

Articles and story ideas are welcome: publication depends on the general interest as judged by the editor.

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Preserving Louisiana's traditions

Living, working and playing in South Louisiana



"...an American has not seen the United States until he has seen Mardi Gras in New Orleans."

Mark Twain, 1859

This year, I am enjoying my second Carnival season as the New Orleans District Commander. One thing I have learned is that in South Louisiana the New Year *really* doesn't begin on January 1. Down here, the New Year begins on Ash Wednesday and New Year's Eve doesn't hold a candle to Fat Tuesday. For me, the celebration begins when I get to toast (with the finest grape juice available, of course) the King and Queen of our District's very own Krewe de Castle Kids

Mardi Gras parade.

Historically, Mardi Gras is a time of celebration and revelry before the start of Lent (I am not sure where the beads come in but often wonder if I would get bigger crowds to my Town Hall meetings if I tossed some out at the beginning). For our teammates, I am excited that we are able to participate in this time of celebration. It is a reminder that our jobs do make a difference.

I often say that our mission is critical in protecting and preserving the area, the

people and a way of life that is uniquely Louisiana. From the parades and balls of New Orleans and Houma to the Courir de Mardi Gras of Mamou and Church Point, Mardi Gras is a perfect example

of one of these cultural traditions that we are working to preserve.

Throughout the year, you put your heart and soul into achieving our mission, a mission that can be as challenging as it is important. It is great that we have an opportunity such as Mardi Gras to shed some of the stress that has accumulated over the year and to rejuvenate your commitment and determination.

As you celebrate, I ask that each of you maintain your safety awareness. The driving force behind our mission is safety: safety for the men and women that live behind our risk reduction measures, safety for those that work along our navigable waterways, and safety for those that use our recreational areas.

My top priority as District Commander is the safety of my teammates. Each of you is a vital part of our team. As such, we strive to maintain a safety-first mentality while at work. I urge you to carry this mentality forward to your personal time as well.

I also ask that you remember those teammates that have volunteered to serve our country overseas. From my experience serving overseas in Afghanistan, Iraq, Germany, Korea and Kosovo, being remembered during the holidays and big events can make the days a little easier.

And finally, to those team members that ride in some of the great Carnival parades, I ask you to... *"Throw me something, mister."*

Essayons!

Col. Ed Fleming



Left: An illustration depicting Mardi Gras in New Orleans included in the first edition of Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*. (James R. Osgood and Company, Boston, Mass. 1883).

2012 election year reminder

Political activities and federal employees

In the earliest days of our Nation, founding fathers like Thomas Jefferson expressed concern over the political activity of government employees. However, it was not until 1939 that Congress approved legislation known as the Hatch Act to limit the political activities of federal employees, employees of the District of Columbia and certain employees of state and local governments. In 1993, this legislation was significantly amended to allow most federal employees to take an active part in partisan political management and partisan political campaigns. Below is a list of the common do's and don'ts of the Hatch Act.

Permitted Activities

A government employee *may*:

- Be candidates for public office in nonpartisan elections
- Register and vote as they choose
- Assist in voter registration drives
- Express opinions about candidates and issues
- Contribute money to political organizations
- Attend political fundraising functions
- Attend and be an active member of a political party or club
- Sign nominating petitions
- Campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, and municipal ordinances
- Campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections
- Make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections
- Distribute campaign literature in partisan elections
- Hold office in political clubs or parties, including serving as a delegate to a convention

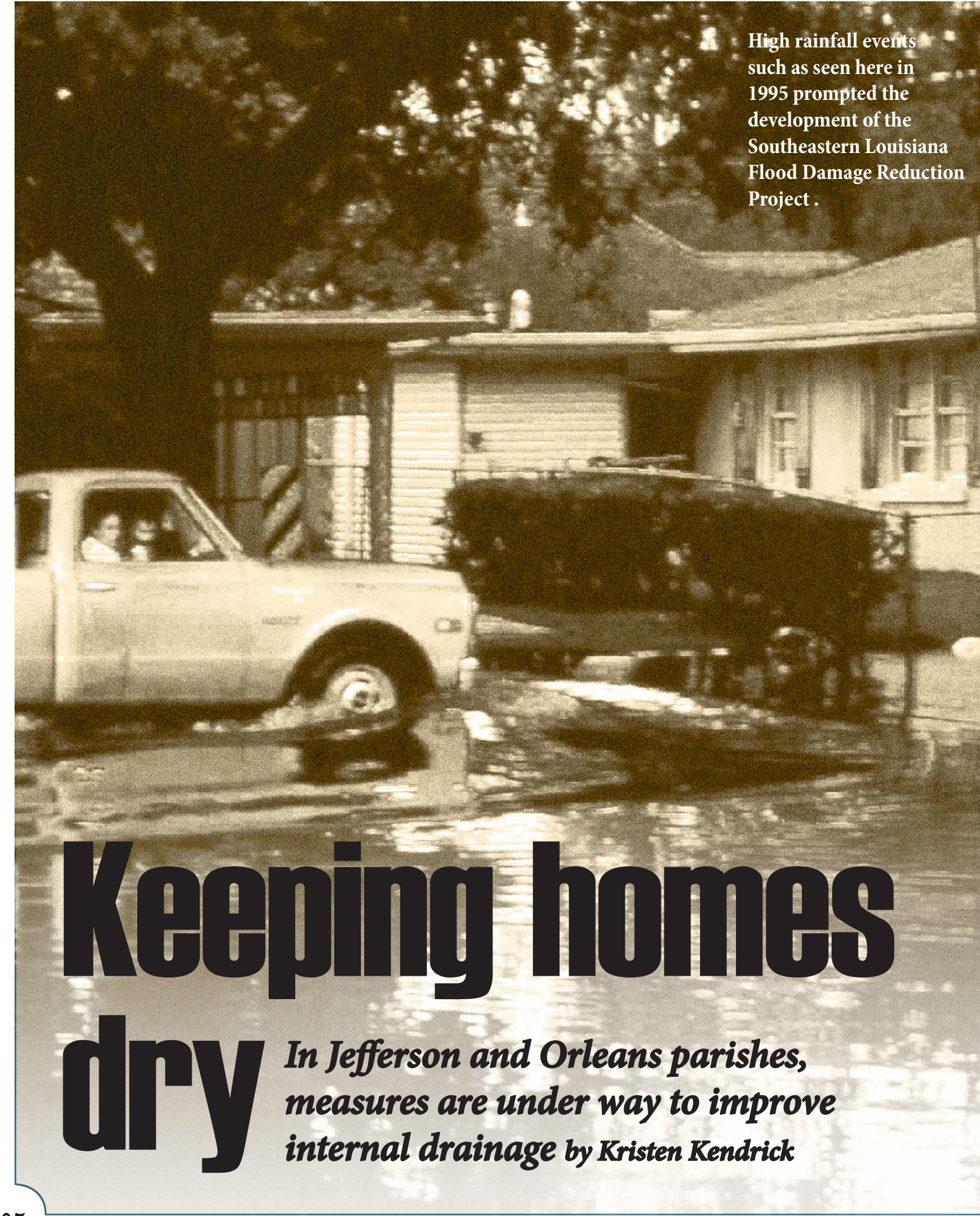
Prohibited Activities

A government employee *may not*:

- Be candidates for public office in partisan elections
- Engage in political activity
 - while on duty
 - in any government office or while using a government vehicle
 - while wearing an official uniform
- Use their official authority or influence to interfere with an election
- Solicit, accept or receive political contributions unless both individuals are members of the same federal labor organization or employee organization and the one solicited is not a subordinate employee
- Knowingly solicit or discourage the political activity of any person who has business before the agency
- Wear political buttons on duty

Additional information and guidance on the Hatch Act and political restrictions for federal employees can be found at the U.S. Office of Special Counsel's website www.osc.gov/hatchact.htm.





High rainfall events such as seen here in 1995 prompted the development of the Southeastern Louisiana Flood Damage Reduction Project .

Keeping homes dry

In Jefferson and Orleans parishes, measures are under way to improve internal drainage by Kristen Kendrick

Interior drainage and flooding are a primary concern for New Orleans residents. Low-lying areas cause a large portion of the city to be susceptible to water inundation. In addition, the majority of storm-water has to be pumped to either Lake Pontchartrain or the Mississippi River through a complex system of underground culverts, open canals and pump stations.

Post Katrina, Congress recognized the need to regulate water by authorizing and fully funding the Corps of Engineers to construct a system of levees, floodwalls and other structures to reduce the risk of storm surge flooding, the Greater New Orleans Hurricane & Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS). Congress also understood the importance of improving the interior drainage system to properly evacuate rainwater from the city and provided additional funding to complete approved components of the Southeast Louisiana Urban Flood Damage Reduction Project (SELA).

SELA is authorized to provide improvements to the storm water drainage systems in Jefferson, Orleans and St. Tammany parishes. These improvements generally provide flood damage risk reduction on a level associated with a ten-year rainfall event, a storm that has a ten percent chance of occurring any given day (equivalent to

approximately nine inches of rain over a 24-hour period).

In Orleans Parish, plans involve upgrading sixteen major drainage lines, adding pumping capacity to two pump stations and constructing two new pump stations for a total cost of more than \$1 billion. In Jefferson Parish, plans include enhancing to about twenty-four drainage canals, adding pumping capacity for four pump stations and constructing two new pump stations for a total cost of almost \$1 billion. Planned work in St. Tammany Parish includes channel enlargements, a bridge replacement, a pump station, detention ponds, levees, floodwalls and elevation of flood-prone structures. The St. Tammany projects are still in the study phase and the cost estimate for this work will be defined through the planning process.

The largest SELA project currently under construction in New Orleans East is the Dwyer Pump Station Intake Canal. Like most SELA projects, this \$58 million project has multiple challenges associated with performing heavy construction within highly trafficked residential and commercial areas. Innovative techniques such as the GIKEN hammer, a silent pile driver, have minimized the risk of heavy construction impacts under railroad and highway bridges, near homes, businesses and commuter streets. Challenges with

other SELA projects include constructing canal improvements while simultaneously allowing the canal to function during a rain event. A strong partnership with the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana, Jefferson Parish and Orleans Parish governments and the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans has allowed design and construction issues to be as minimal as possible.

Currently, SELA is approximately sixty-five percent complete, with sixty-three contracts awarded and fifty-three completed; only sixteen remain to be awarded. The majority of remaining SELA contracts will be awarded by the end of 2012 and the final few contracts by the end of 2013. All of these fully funded projects will be completed in 2017.




Above: Rainfall flows will be collected in the drainage canals and pumped from the Dwyer Pump Station into the Industrial Canal. The open evacuation and the required temporary retaining structure is shown in the foreground with the completed Dwyer Pump Station in the background.



Left: Inspector Robert Martin stands in the 11ft x 14ft box culvert prior to placing the top slab at the Dwyer Pump Station Intake Canal construction project.

Far Left: Challenges at the Dwyer Pump Station Intake Canal included open excavation, installing a required temporary retaining structure, and completing canal construction in a very confined urban location. Residences are located along the southern side of construction, electrical distribution poles on the southern side of construction and high-powered transmission lines and a roadway just north of the construction area.



After the flood

Ensuring that the Mississippi River and Tributaries will once again perform as designed is a national priority

by Nick Silbert

Smaking its way through the heart of the country, the Mississippi River is a valuable asset to the United States. The river serves as a gateway for much of the nation's commerce, including a large portion of the U.S. gasoline supply. In addition, it provides water for the cities and industries located along its banks, as well as a source of unrivaled natural beauty.

Many early inhabitants settled along the river because of these benefits; however, those settlers learned that there were consequences associated with living so close to the Mississippi River and its damaging flood potential.

"The Mississippi is a true American treasure," said Col. Edward R. Fleming, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' New Orleans District. "But left unchecked it can cause much damage to neighboring communities and industry."

Following the Flood of 1927, a

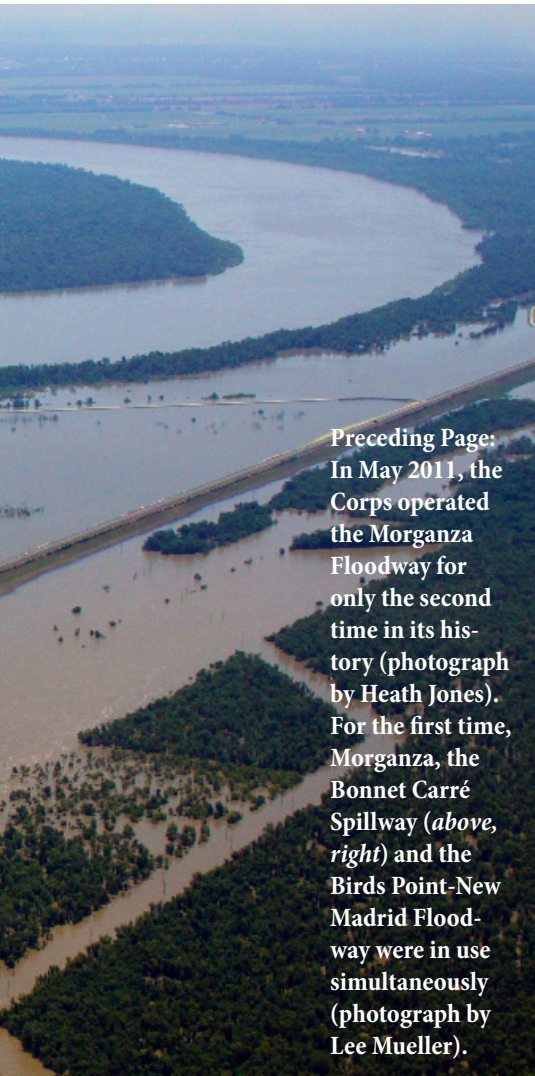
natural disaster of great proportions, the U.S. Congress passed the Flood Control Act of 1928, authorizing the design and construction of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project. The MR&T provides flood damage risk management for the alluvial valley between Cape Girardeau, Mo., and the Gulf of Mexico. The MR&T includes levees to contain flood flows, floodways such as the Bonnet Carré Spillway and Morganza Floodway to redirect excess flows from the Mississippi River, as well as features such as channel improvement and stabilization for efficient navigation and risk reduction of the levee system. The project also includes reservoirs and pumping plants for flood drainage.

Additionally, one 15-mile section of west bank Mississippi River levee between Oakville and English Turn simultaneously functions as a Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System levee.

This stretch of levee not only reduces flooding risk associated with Mississippi River high water levels, but also from a hurricane storm surge event that has a one percent chance of occurring in any given year, or a 100-year storm surge event.

Though the MR&T has successfully contained floodwaters since its design and construction, like any system it needs continual maintenance in order to operate effectively. This is especially true following the record-setting 2011 spring flood, the largest recorded high water event in the river's history.

The flood of 2011, which required the first-ever simultaneous operation of three floodways to reduce stress on the Mississippi River mainline levees, did not cause cataclysmic damage to the nation's infrastructure. Additionally, it did not significantly impact the major population centers along the Lower Mississippi River,



Preceding Page:
In May 2011, the Corps operated the Morganza Floodway for only the second time in its history (photograph by Heath Jones). For the first time, Morganza, the Bonnet Carré Spillway (above, right) and the Birds Point-New Madrid Floodway were in use simultaneously (photograph by Lee Mueller).



Left: Crews are constructing a seepage berm adjacent to the Mississippi River levee at Duncan Point in Baton Rouge, La. This project was ranked as the highest MR&T priority area in the New Orleans District's area of responsibility (photograph by Lee Mueller).

due in large part to the success of the MR&T in passing the floodwater. But the stress of the high water did damage some portions of the system.

To date, the Mississippi Valley Division (MVD) has identified 137 spots in need of critical post flood repair, including several in south Louisiana. In total, the MR&T repair cost across the alluvial valley is estimated to be about \$2 billion.

That cost, though, pales in comparison to the amount of money saved as a result of the successful operation of the MR&T system. It is estimated that the MR&T prevented more than \$120 billion in damages during last year's flood.

"It's not a stretch to say that the MR&T is the most valuable flood risk reduction system in our nation, and perhaps the world," said Col. Fleming. "Prior to the 2011 flood event, \$13.6 billion had been invested in the compre-

hensive flood risk management system, with the system preventing nearly 35 times that amount in damages (approximately \$473.3 billion)."

In December 2011, President Barack Obama signed the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, which furnished \$802 million to the MVD to make levee repairs and dredging improvements as a result of the 2011 flood. This appropriation is in addition to the approximately \$75 million that the Corps reprogrammed from other projects. The Corps will determine the path forward for all repair projects by evaluating them based on current funding levels.

Work is under way at several projects in south Louisiana. At Duncan Point (near the Louisiana State University campus in Baton Rouge), the Corps is currently constructing a seepage berm. The Corps found this area to have a high potential for loss of life and catastrophic economic consequences if not repaired, and so the New Orleans District made the

project one of the top MR&T priorities.

With a new spring flood season just around the corner, the Corps is already preparing for what could be another year of above average river levels. Just this winter, the Corps had to activate its phase one flood fight inspections for the Mississippi River levees and the East and West Atchafalaya Basin Protection levees. Those inspections, which were triggered when the river reached 11 feet and rising at the Carrollton gauge on December 13, consisted of increased levee patrols that enabled team members to respond quickly to any potential problem areas. Flood fight inspections ended on January 13 when the river level dropped below 11 feet at the Carrollton gauge.

"The system performed as it was designed during this recent high water event," said Col. Fleming. "Though this round of flood fighting is over, the Corps will continue to keep a watchful eye on water levels, especially as the spring flood season approaches."

Restoring native habitat

Bottomland hardwood restoration effort set to begin in New Orleans East by Sarah McLaughlin

Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers established Task Force Guardian (TFG), an organization responsible for spearheading repairs to the existing Greater New Orleans hurricane system. A fundamental part of that work was acquiring enough clay material, known as borrow, to repair the earthen levees and restore them to pre-storm conditions.

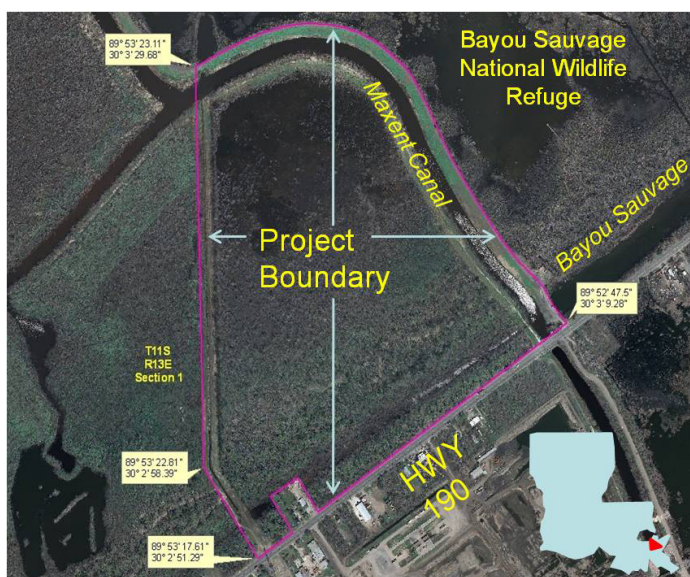
Although a concerted effort was made to avoid and minimize the adverse effects associated with obtaining borrow material for TFG work, there were some unavoidable impacts. The New Orleans District evaluated those impacts and, in

cooperation with an interagency team including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, developed a mitigation plan to compensate for those that were unavoidable.

The Bayou Sauvage mitigation project is adjacent to the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge and will address the environmental mitigation requirements resulting from impacts caused by use of the New Orleans East borrow pits. Borrow from these pits was used to repair the Lake Pontchartrain & Vicinity risk reduction features in New Orleans East. Use of the borrow pits impacted approximately 57.5 acres of forested wetlands, requiring 146-acres of mitigation.

“The Bayou Sauvage mitigation project will greatly improve the wildlife habitat as we are replacing a non-beneficial invasive tree species with a variety of native trees and shrubs that together will provide shelter and food for wildlife,” said Bill Foret, project manager in the New Orleans District Protection and Restoration Office.

A large portion of the Bayou Sauvage project area is infested with the Chinese tallow-trees; an aggressive species that was initially introduced into the United States because of the aesthetic value it lends to landscaping. The plan for the Bayou Sauvage project divides the site into three sub-areas, each with its own



Above left: To mitigate for impacts associated with nearby borrow pits, the Corps is undertaking a plan that will improve wildlife habitat near the Bayou Sauvage NWR. The existing area (right) will be restored with native vegetation (photograph by Bill Foret, USACE).

mitigation design.

In the first sub-area, the Chinese tallow-trees will be controlled with backpack, hand or All Terrain Vehicle application of herbicides. This method of application will ensure that the residual standing live hardwoods in the area are avoided and subsequently unaffected by the herbicide. In the second and third sub-areas, the Chinese tallow-trees will be removed with aerial spraying of herbicides. Both of these processes - controlling and removing with herbicides - will ultimately have a positive effect on the wildlife habitat in that area, as other plant species will have an opportunity to flourish. The herbicide is also non-toxic to animals, so the only impact to wildlife

will be a temporary loss of vegetation.

Following the spraying phase, planting on the project will consist of hand placing a variety of one-year-old saplings including pecan, hickory, oak, maple, ash and elm. There will be a total of 76,600 seedlings placed across the three sub-areas. Additionally, an average of 109 shrubs per acre within the sub-areas 1 and 2 will be placed, for a total of 8,750 seedlings.

In order to manage the water levels, a control structure, called a weir, will be built at the northwestern corner of the project area. The weir will allow for stage control of water to essentially prevent inundation from heavy rains. The current access road that runs along the Maxent

Canal will also be upgraded for construction equipment access.

"The team is extremely pleased to get this bottomland hardwood mitigation work under way. We will continue to coordinate with the public and our interagency partners throughout the construction process," added Foret.

The Corps has a set of formalized "Environmental Operating Principles" that are consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act and apply to all decision-making in the program and project management processes. Assessing and mitigating any cumulative impacts from Corps projects to the environment will continue to be chief among those operating principles.

Bayou Sauvage Mitigation Project Scheduled Milestones

March 2012: Award Contract

May-August 2012: Spraying

December 2012-February 2013: Planting

August 2013: Inspection (80% survival required)

December 2013-February 2014: Replanting

(if necessary)

One of "America's least wanted"

The Chinese Tallow's aggressive behavior can alter ecosystems

Brought to America in the late 18th century, the Chinese Tallow's colorful autumn foliage and resilience made it a popular ornamental tree while the oil produced by its seeds was useful to the soap industry. Yet the intentional introduction of this species brought some very unintentional consequences.

Below: An example of a tallow infestation. The forest ground is almost completely covered with a mat of tallow seedling (image courtesy of Cheryl McCormick, University of Florida, Bugwood.org).



Above: The ripened fruit has a tallow coating that can be used in the manufacture of soap (photograph courtesy of Cheryl McCormick, University of Florida, Bugwood.org).

Over the last 3 decades, the Tallow has become a common tree in fields and bottomland swamps throughout coastal Louisiana. The tree reproduces very quickly, shades out native grasses and its fallen leaves releases a toxin into the soil that make it difficult for competing vegetation to become established. If unchecked, the invasion will result in an area completely devoid of natural plants.



Method for consistency

*Modified Charleston Method provides
greater consistency in determining wetland
mitigation requirements by Ricky Boyett*

Developing consistency is one of the most important goals for any U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory Branch. When it comes to wetland mitigation assessments in South Louisiana, achieving uniformity is a mission requirement. For the New Orleans District, this consistency is now being achieved through the Modified Charleston Method (MCM).

Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, any project that would impact our Nation's wetlands needs a permit. But before the Corps can issue a permit, every possible step must have been taken to avoid wetland impacts. If impacts cannot be avoided, they must be minimized to the fullest extent and be addressed by a commensurate mitigation plan.

The MCM is the New Orleans District Regulatory Branch's new assessment tool for determining a proposed project's wetland impacts and the required amount of mitigation. In looking for a technique that will ensure greater consistency in determining the necessary mitigation, the New Orleans District sought not to reinvent the wheel. After reviewing several alternatives, it was decided that the approach would be modeled upon a method developed by the Corps' Charleston District in 2002.

However, the conditions of Louisiana are diverse and unique. To better reflect South Louisiana, the Corps worked closely with an Interagency Review Team to "modify" the method. As a result of this collaboration, the Modified Charleston Method maintains the integrity of the original approach while accounting for regional wetland differences, compensatory mitigation regulations, and the New Orleans

District's Mitigation Standard Operating Procedures.

"With minimal training and practice, project managers with varying level of experience and expertise can apply the Modified Charleston Method with greater consistency than with other assessment methods," stated Pete Serio, Chief of the New Orleans District's Regulatory Branch. "As a result, the MCM is a valuable tool in helping ensure that unavoidable impacts to wetland functions are fully compensated by an applicant's mitigation plan."

Prior to the MCM, the New Orleans District's most common approach to determining wetland mitigation needs was Best Professional Judgment. Each project manager used his or her knowledge and experience to determine the amount of required mitigation. The subjective nature of this approach would often result in a greater degree of variation between the district's individual project managers.

Additionally, the Corps is required to consult with resource agencies as to the appropriateness (kind, location and amount) of the applicant's proposed mitigation plan. Consultation with interested resource agencies regarding mitigation requirements often resulted in lengthy delays in reaching a permit decision when using Best Professional Judgment.

The MCM is designed to significantly reduce the variation that results with the Best Professional Judgment approach. For each permit application, a project manager evaluates a suite of factors, selecting an option that best describes the project site conditions for each factor. These responses are then quantified using pre-established values to determine the project's overall impact

and required mitigation. By using this method, mitigation needs for a specific project will be similar regardless of which project manager inputs the information.

In addition to increased consistency, there are additional advantages associated with MCM. These benefits include the ability to provide a quick assessment of impacts and mitigation requirements while requiring minimal field data collection. The method also simplifies mixing of appropriate mitigation location and types.

Developers and planners can also use the MCM. Under Best Professional Judgment, it was difficult for applicants to estimate the mitigation their projects would need. In contrast, the MCM provides a reliable tool for comparing mitigation options.

"The MCM can assist applicants in evaluating the economic impact mitigation would have on a project," said James Barlow, program manager for the MCM. "While the monetary value of a mitigation project is not computed, with a little research, applicants should be able to produce a value for any mitigation alternative."

Louisiana's wetlands are some of our Nation's most important natural resources. They bring in approximately one third of our country's oil and one quarter of its natural gas. The state's bayous, bays and marshes are the top producing commercial fisheries in the contiguous United States and home to a culture that can only be found in Louisiana. Yet, the state is losing nearly a football field of this nonrenewable resource every thirty minutes. The Corps' job is to protect these wetlands and with the Modified Charleston Method, it can now do so with much greater consistency.

Advancing levee safety

National Safety Program is helping reduce risk for approximately 14 million people
by Rachel Rodi

In 2006, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers created the Levee Safety Program to assess the integrity and viability of federal levee systems and recommend courses of action to ensure that these systems do not pose unacceptable risks to the public, property, and environment.

Similar to the Corps' Dam Safety Program, the Levee Safety Program uses a risk-informed approach to determining the best practices for the Corps' portfolio of more than 2,000 levee systems. Several key components of the program help us to understand and communicate risk – including routine and periodic levee inspections, the National Levee Database (NLD) and the Levee Safety Action Classification (LSAC). This program allows the Corps to identify levee safety issues; assess inundation risks for an area; identify risk management options; educate the public and prioritize risk management decisions; and develop appropriate risk reduction measures.

Two of the most recent levee safety milestones include the public release of

the NLD and the initial efforts for completing the LSACs for all federal levee systems.

The Corps began developing a model levee database in 2006, which was formally authorized as the National Levee Database under the 2007 Water Resources Development Act. Since then, the Corps has built and tested the NLD, which entailed the gathering and entering of survey, inspection and other detailed information on the approximately 14,700 miles of levees that comprise the 2,000 levee systems in the USACE portfolio. This effort was also coordinated with other federal, tribal and state agencies.

The database is a dynamic information source that, for the first time, provides visualization and search capabilities on the location and condition of levee systems nationwide. It includes detailed information on levees and floodwalls that is relevant to flood fighting, design, construction, operation, maintenance, repair and inspection. It also serves as the national source of levee

information to facilitate risk communication, linking data from public sources such as weather data from the National Weather Service, physical data from the United States Geological Survey, hazards data from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and critical infrastructure data from the Department of Homeland Security.

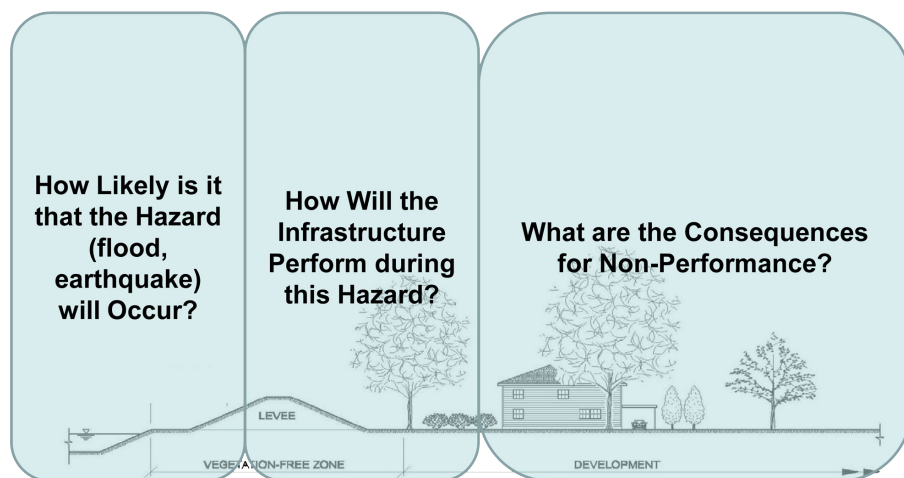
Approximately 14 million people live or work behind federal levee systems. The Corps' goal is for all entities with levee maintenance and development responsibilities to use the NLD to help create a comprehensive inventory of the location and condition of levees nationwide.

A critical element of the Levee Safety Program is making that sure officials, residents and businesses in levee areas are aware of and understand the inundation risks associated with their community so that they can make informed decisions and take appropriate action.

To better understand and quantify risks associated with our levee systems, the Corps developed a screening level assessment called Levee Safety Action Classification. This assessment is comprised of three parts:

1. Evaluation of the probability of a given levee system to be hydraulically loaded at its toe and at the levee crest or crown.
2. Assessment of performance-related items such as seepage, erosion and settlement. This assessment provides an estimate of the likelihood of performance of every feature associated with the levee system for a range of hydraulic events.
3. A consequence analysis (life safety and economic damage) is completed for each scenario.

Together, these factors provide an



The Corps' risk framework

Our professional opinion

New Orleans District Levee Safety Program Manager Rich Varuso discusses the Levee Safety Action Classification and its benefits for South Louisiana



Q. What is the levee screening tool and how is it used to obtain the Levee Safety Action Classification (LSAC)?

Let me start by saying what it's not – it's not a black box that you just insert information into and wait for an answer to come out. It's a tool we use to combine results from a quantitative scientific analysis with a qualitative, reasonable assessment to make informed risk based decisions. The process involves working with our local sponsors to gather and input statistics on the status of the current levee system, its existing elevations and hydraulic load history, its performance (historic and projected) and the population and infrastructure consequences that would be associated with non-performance or potential overtopping of this levee system. From there, we are able to identify relative risk and make an initial classification of the levee system at the District level. But it doesn't stop there. Once we have confi-

dence in our local assessment, our findings are vetted through a series of checks with reviews from the Headquarters Risk Management Center to the Levee Senior Oversight Group (LSOG) who runs our results through a rigorous set of questioning and examination for quality assurance. Once all of the quality assurance checks are met the report goes to the Headquarters Levee Safety Officer for final approval.

Q. Once you get your LSAC – what does that mean?

It's important to note that it's not a rating or a grade. People want to call it a rating – with 1 being the worst and 5 being the best. But it's not; it's a classification the Corps uses to assess the relative risk of any one levee system with respect to the rest of the systems in the federal portfolio. The main purpose of this classification system is to identify the risks in all federal levee systems and use that information to set priorities for national levee safety activities including communicating levee deficiencies to the public, identifying interim risk reduction measures and ultimately prioritizing funding for levee systems.

Q. How many levee systems does the New Orleans District have and how far along are we in classifying our systems?

Of the 2,000 federal levee systems, the New Orleans District has 23 systems, which are subdivided into 42 segments. We currently have six levee segments screened and approved by the LSOG and our goal is to get every New Orleans District system screened and classified within the next two years. It's a really long and arduous process, but it's worth it

to make sure we have the best science and engineering to back up our conclusions.

Q. What's been the most challenging part so far in implementing the LSAC program?

The toughest part is compiling the relevant information and making sure performance factors and consequence input have justifiable back-up data we can use in our reports for the LSOG. I've found that the best way to ensure that we get all of the required information is to first make sure we have the right team in place. To do this, each levee system will likely have different team-members with varying engineering backgrounds as well as intimate knowledge and history about the particular system.

Q. What is the local sponsor's role in LSAC?

The local sponsor is involved from the very beginning of the process from working together with the District team to compile the needed information, to sharing the results with Congress, stakeholders and the public at the end of each screening process.

Q. Looking to the future, what are you most excited about with the LSAC program?

I think it's a great tool. I'd say that the New Orleans District has some of the most important and complex levee systems in the country. If we can use the LSAC assignments to effectively communicate risk to the public and to keep the importance of our levees on the national radar, then the screening tool will have a positive impact on every person living behind those levees.

LSAC for a federal levee system.

The LSAC will provide consistent and systematic guidelines for addressing levee safety issues and deficiencies. Each levee system will be assigned one of five classifications. Class I is assigned to levee systems that pose an extremely high risk to floodplain occupants and Class V for

systems that pose tolerable risks to flood-plain occupants from potential breach or malfunction of levee system components.

To date, approximately 30 levee systems throughout the United States have been assigned an LSAC, with the goal of having all of the systems com-

pleted in the next couple of years. The Corps is working to increase awareness and understanding of how to use this new program among its internal audiences nationwide, as well as with key external stakeholders such as non-federal sponsors, Congressional members and the general public.

