



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Mississippi Valley Division



## Corps Hurricane Response

*Task Force Hope Status Report*

*May 29, 2008*

# Corps prepared for Hurricane Season

*Local partners  
and stakeholders  
important part  
of emergency  
response effort*

*By Susan Spaht*

**J**une 1 is the beginning of Hurricane Season. As Gulf Coast communities brace for the third Hurricane Season since Katrina, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been running through its emergency preparedness exercises, testing its new equipment, honing its response timing and coordinating all activities with its local partners and stakeholders.

“We’re ready,” said Karen Durham-Aguilera, Director of Task Force Hope. “Everything is in place to respond should a storm threaten the Gulf Coast this hurricane season.”

The Corps’ most recent hurricane preparedness exercise, held earlier this month, involved testing the gates and pumps at London Ave. Canal,



**On May 13, the Corps of Engineers conducted a hurricane preparation exercise with its local partners to rehearse the Corps’ response plan and improve coordination. The Harvey Canal Gates and Pumps (above) were successfully activated as part of that demonstration and practice.** (USACE Photo by Scott Riecke)

Orleans Ave. Canal, 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal and Harvey Canal; and operating the new electronic monitoring system and communications equipment at all stations. In addition, the Corps deployed its local government liaisons to 13 coastal parishes, and sent small teams to their alternate command post and reserve emergency operations center in Vicksburg, Miss. and Port Allen, La., respectively.

To see what the Corps of Engineers

has accomplished over the past three years and how it is preparing for the 2008 Hurricane Season, the public is invited to attend the Corps’ upcoming **Emergency Preparedness Day** event on June 14 at Audubon Park. (see page 4 for details)

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**Where have we been?**

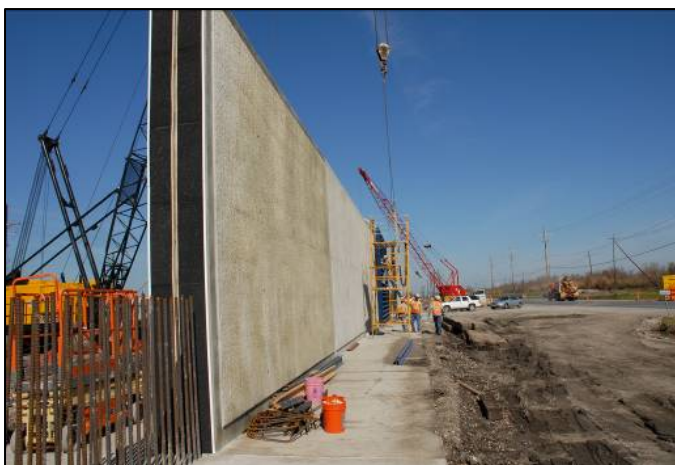
The Corps of Engineers has accomplished an amazing amount of work on the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS) over the past three years toward reaching the goal of 100-year level of protection by 2011.

Immediately after Hurricane Katrina, the Corps repaired and restored 220 miles of levees and floodwalls in time for the 2006 Hurricane Season.

The Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force (IPET) was formed to study the pre-Katrina hurricane system's performance and deficiencies, and to recommend specific ways to improve it and make it stronger. The IPET team was composed of 150 experts from private industry, academia, governmental agencies, construction and design. And the findings were independently peer reviewed.

Following the IPET recommendations, and other lessons learned, the Corps:

- Reinforced floodwalls at numerous locations
- Replaced I-walls with stronger



Harvey Canal Floodwall



Lake Cataouatche Pump Station Safe House

T-walls at breach sites

- Armored floodwalls and transitions points between floodwalls and levees
- Repaired and improved interior pump stations
- Completed construction of temporary pumps and flood gates at three outfall canals, thereby raising pumping capacity to 16,000 cfs overall; and raising the safe water elevation at London Ave. Canal to 5 feet, increasing carrying capacity by 30%
- Made significant progress toward raising levees to 100-year levels

Recently released IPET risk maps indicate that the amount of risk today in the greater New Orleans area is significantly less than pre-Katrina. The modeling for the maps took into account improved levees and

floodwalls, the new gates and pumps, and improved interior pumping. And the Corps' work continues to press forward.

**Where are we going?**

There are 47 construction contracts ongoing, 24 contracts will soon be awarded, and another 25 will be advertised over the next six months. To date, \$7.1 billion has been appropriated, and the President's 2009 budget has requested another \$5.7 billion, for a total federal commitment of \$12.8 billion.

The Corps has participated in numerous independent peer reviews, and will have more in the future. According to Corps leaders, these reviews make the process longer, but provide better solutions.

In April, the Corps awarded the largest design/build civil works construction contract in its history, a \$695 million contract to Shaw Environmental and Infrastructure Inc. of New Orleans, to reduce the risk of hurri-

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cane surge at the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC).

This project, planned for completion in 2011, will meet the 100-year level of protection and reduce risk for the communities at the confluence of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, all the way to the IHNC. A special "Advance Measures" requirement in the contract will provide a certain amount of risk reduction in 2009, i.e., in advance of the 2011 completion date. The environmental compliance process is ongoing for this project and construction is expected to begin later this summer.

"Our number one goal is public safety," said Karen Durham-Aguilera. "A tremendous amount of hard work by a dedicated team of professionals has resulted in reduced risk today for the people of the greater New Orleans area, but we still have a ways to go.

"There will always be a certain amount of risk for those of us who live in this area," she added, "even after completion of the 100-year level of protection."

If this area experiences a major storm event this summer, there will be some flooding, and some areas are more vulnerable than others, such as the Lower Ninth Ward, Gentilly, St. Bernard, New Orleans East, and western and eastern parts of the West Bank.

The Corps provides the public with information needed to make their best risk-informed decisions, and strongly advises everyone to heed evacuation orders, should they be given.



**Verret to Caernarvon levee work**



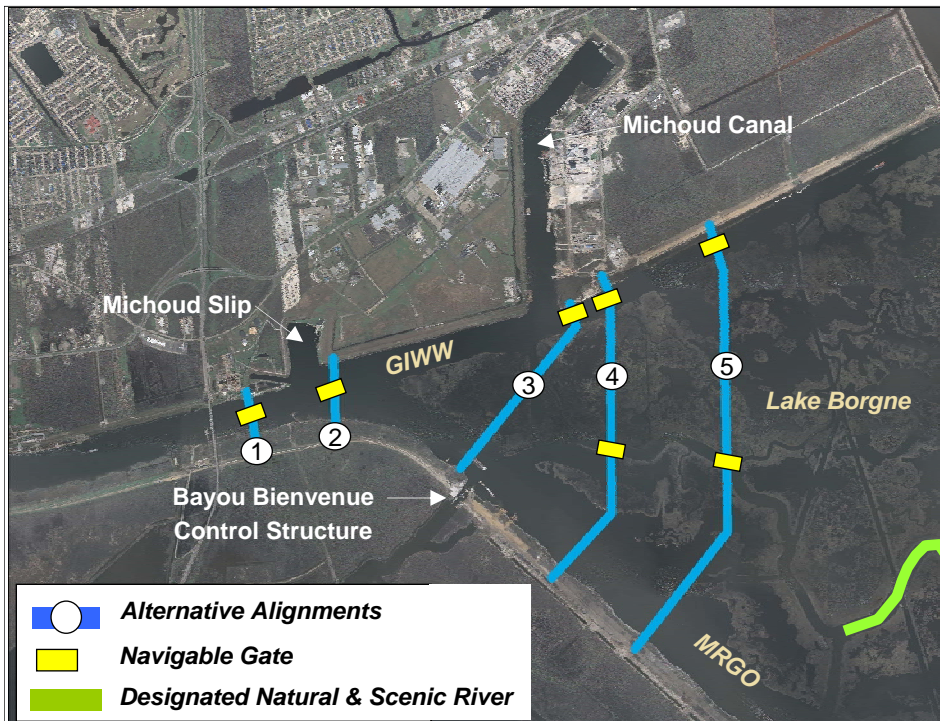
**17th Street Canal pumping demonstration**



**New Orleans Lakefront floodwall stabilization**

USACE Photos





## ***IHNC Surge Barrier project moving forward*** Public asked to comment on alignments

In April, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awarded a contract for the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) Surge Reduction Project, the largest design-build civil works project in the history of the Corps. Upon completion, this project will provide 100-year level risk reduction to the Metro New Orleans area - including St. Bernard, the Lower Ninth Ward and New Orleans East - during a tropical event by reducing surge entering the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) and the IHNC

from Lake Borgne.

Now, in the second stage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance for the project, the Corps has identified and announced five possible locations, i.e., Alternative Alignments, for this project. (see illustration above)

The structure alternatives are all located generally in the area of the GIWW-Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) confluence, and could be a combination of various features. The

barrier might be a traditional earthen levee, a geo-textile levee or a structural wall, and may or may not have flow structures. Navigable gate(s) could be vertical lift gates, sector gates or concrete barge gates. (a barge filled with concrete and sunk to close the gate opening) Some alternatives may require that more levees and floodwalls along the perimeter would need to be raised in order to complete the systematic 100-year level of risk reduction.

The public will have the opportunity to provide input into this decision-making process through upcoming public meetings. After more analysis has been completed on the alternatives, an Individual Environmental Report (IER) will be submitted for public review. The Corps anticipates this will happen in July 2008 with a 30-day comment period on the Tier 2 NEPA document.

The final decision on which option to build will be made by Col. Alvin Lee, Commander of the Corps' New Orleans District, when he signs a Record of Decision after engineering analyses are completed and public comments are reviewed. Construction is expected to begin in August.



To learn more about environmental requirements and upcoming public meetings, go to this site: [www.nolaenvironmental.gov](http://www.nolaenvironmental.gov)

## Corps to host Emergency Preparedness Day

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is hosting a special event at the start of Hurricane Season to demonstrate its commitment to public safety and risk education.

Come learn how the Corps is preparing for a hurricane emergency and building the area's Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System.

Saturday, June 14, 2008

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Audubon River View Park  
(behind Audubon Zoo)

*Displays, children's activities & more*



## *A word from the Chief*



Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp recently visited New Orleans to see the ongoing construction work by the Corps of Engineers.

I am genuinely empathetic for what the people of the greater New Orleans area have been through. I want you to know that rebuilding your trust is incredibly important to me, and enabling Gulf Coast recovery is our #1 domestic priority.

The progress I see each time I visit New Orleans is really remarkable. The region has a better hurricane and storm damage reduction system in place than ever before in its history - and it will continue to get better.

But don't just take my word for it! I encourage you to get out and see for yourselves the gates, the pumps, and all of the work designed to reduce your risk. And remember – that's "reduce risk," not "guarantee safety." It's incredibly important that everyone remember there is no way to eliminate risk altogether.

We know that we lost the trust and confidence of many citizens of southeast Louisiana in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and we fully understand that regaining their trust and confidence will not be the result of anything that we might say, but through the quality of the work we, and our many partners, are doing. Deeds, not words.

*Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp*

Commander and Chief of Engineers

Read more from the Chief at: <https://portal.usace.army.mil/sites/Blog/default.aspx>

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

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