



London Ave. Safe Water Elevation Goes To 5 Feet

Corps of Engineers raises Safe Water Elevation at London Ave. from 4 to 5 Feet:

now 30% more water can be allowed into canal

By Susan Spaht

After an elaborate load test and extensive engineering analysis, The Corps of Engineers has determined that it will raise the safe water elevation at London Ave. Canal from four feet to five feet.

Raising the safe water elevation just one foot will allow the city to pump water into the canal at a higher rate and allow the floodgates to remain open longer during a storm event.

“This one-foot increase in the safe water elevation at London Ave. Canal will allow the Sewerage & Water Board about 30% more pumping capacity into the canal,” said Dr. John Grieshaber, Chief of Execution Support in the Corps’ Hurricane Protection Office. “Historically, water levels in the canal have rarely exceeded four feet, but the extra capacity is important to have in a heavy rainfall or tropical event.”



USACE Photo by Paul Floro

The Corps of Engineers built a cofferdam (above) at the London Ave. Outfall Canal and, working night and day, conducted a test to determine if the safe water elevation could be raised from its present level of four feet.

During Hurricane Katrina the water in London Ave. Canal rose to about nine feet due to the surge from Lake Pontchartrain.

The load test involved constructing a cofferdam along a 150-foot section of I-wall on the inside of the east side of the canal. The cofferdam isolated a particular section of the I-wall considered to be the weakest point. The water level was raised incrementally within the cofferdam while a robust instrument package recorded the reaction of the wall and underlying soils.

The preliminary analysis of the data recorded from the test took approximately three weeks to complete.

“We are very pleased to announce to the citizens of greater New Orleans that we can raise the safe water elevation at London Ave. Canal,” said Karen Durham-Aguilera, Director of

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London Ave. Canal 'Load Test' Reaches 7-Foot Mark



USACE Photo by Maj. Nick Nazarko

On August 22, the Corps' safe water elevation test reached the 7-foot mark in the London Ave. Canal cofferdam, at which time the test was stopped.

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Task Force Hope. "This is about reducing the risk of flooding, even during normal rain events, and it is based on sound engineering."

The load test and analysis were conducted with the participation of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East. "This test is an excellent example of a collaborative

effort between the Corps, our partners and stakeholders," said Maj. Nick Nazarko, Officer in Charge of the load test. "The test was done in an open and transparent fashion which included site visits and communication with the local community leadership, as well as external peer review with members of academia throughout the process."



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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.

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Corps Selects Final 4 for IHNC Permanent Protection Contract

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Hurricane Protection Office has completed the Phase One Source Selection Process for design-build construction of the permanent protection of the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Hurricane Protection Project.

The scope of work includes all architectural, engineering, construction, project management, quality control, and other related protection from surges produced by a 100-year hurricane.

The Phase One process selected four firms to continue competition into the Phase Two selection process.

To encourage small business and local participation, the firms have

authorized the Corps to publish their names:

- **Kiewit Federal Group, Inc.** (Arlington, VA)
- **Shaw Environmental & Infrastructure, Inc.** (New Orleans, LA)
- **Tetra Tech EC, Inc.** (Morris Plains, NJ)
- **Washington Group International, Inc./Interbeton, Inc.** – Joint Venture (Boise, ID)



Corps Receives *Crystal Award* for Second Consecutive Year



Lt. Col. Murray Starkel, Deputy Commander of the New Orleans District Corps of Engineers, shows the Crystal Award to John F. Iglehart, left, Regional Director of the Minority Business Development Agency; and Ronald N. Langston, right, National Director of the Minority Business Development Agency, U.S. Department of Commerce. (USACE Photos by Scott Riecke)

For the second consecutive year, the New Orleans District Corps of Engineers has received the Crystal Award for Buyer of the Year from the Small Business Administration. The award honors the leading federal agency in Louisiana in the number of dollars awarded to small businesses, particularly 8(a) contractors.

The New Orleans District so far has awarded \$422 million to small businesses during fiscal year 2007, or 47 percent of all contract dollars awarded. Approximately \$123 million has been awarded to small disadvantaged businesses.

The award was presented on Sept. 20 to Lt. Col. Murray Starkel, Deputy Commander of the New Orleans District, at the Lindy Boggs Convention Center. "This recognition is the result of the Corps of Engineers' and the New Orleans District's firm commit-

ment to the inclusion of small business and small disadvantaged businesses in the performance of our work – both in the normal course of business and in times of a major



Crystal Award for Buyer of the Year

natural disaster," said Lt. Col. Starkel.

This marks the third time the New Orleans District has received this prestigious award – the other time was in 1999.

"This award shows just how significant a supporter of Small Business

Programs the Army Corps of Engineers has become," said Ned Foley, Procurement Analyst in the district's small business office. "We encourage local small business to continue to work with the local Small Business Administration office; we coordinate directly with them for new contracts. These contractors are critical to our success under Federal contracting law."

For more information on participating in future contracts with the Corps of Engineers, go to this Web site:

http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/hps_contract_info.html



To contact the Corps' Small Business Programs Office, call Ned Foley or Nancy Tullis at 504-862-2627.



Ned Foley

Mission Accomplished

Memphis District Deactivates the Louisiana Recovery Field Office



The Louisiana Recovery Field Office, under the direction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Memphis District, was deactivated Sept. 30 as its FEMA authorities expired, bringing an end to this unparalleled response to two unprecedented disasters: Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

By Tom Clarkson, Public Affairs
Louisiana Recovery Field Office

Col. Tom Smith, Memphis District Commander, accepts the RFO colors from Mike Smith, Director of the LA-RFO, as the mission is deactivated. (USACE Photo by Mike Logue)

Among an array of mind-boggling accomplishments – such as the effective removal of 28 million cubic yards of hurricane-created debris – the Louisiana Recovery Field Office (LA-RFO) of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been deactivated.

In the official commemoration, presided over by Col. Thomas Smith, Memphis District and LA-RFO Commander; and Mike Smith, LA-RFO Director, the termination of work was officially noted, its nearly 3,500 volunteers were acknowledged and thanked, and – in military tradition – the organization's colors were "cased", indicating the deactivation of the organization.

"Once there had been not even a single square foot of an eventual nine miles of temporary roofing installed. And, once there had been not one drop of an eventual 40 million liters of water distributed to storm victims," noted Col. Smith.

"Once there was only chaos."

Smith noted that an important role of the Louisiana Recovery Field Office, raised in the immediate aftermath of the worst disaster in American history, was to create a foothold and provide an opening for the rest of the recovery effort. "Somebody had to start!" he said.

The Louisiana Recovery Field Office opened its doors days after Hurricane Katrina landfall in Baton Rouge, La. Its mission was to prepare to open roads in 40 parishes, save lives, sustain lives, and set the stage for communities to manage their own recovery operations with electrical power, temporary critical public facilities and schools, ice, water, Blue Roof repairs, and debris and demolition removal.

From the outset, the Louisiana Recovery Field Office was temporal, created for only one purpose – to productively help the citizens of Lou-

isiana recover from the devastation and destruction of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the ensuing flood deprivation. Normally, the Corps' hurricane responses last about four months. The Katrina-Rita response lasted 25 months.

The Corps' national response system poured about 3,500 employees from its worldwide workforce into south Louisiana to manage a \$5-billion recovery program. In a matter of days, the Louisiana Recovery Field Office set up the equivalent of a "provisional district office" in Baton Rouge, and later advanced the entire operation forward to New Orleans.

By comparison, the Memphis District, which managed the LA-RFO, normally reports an annual work program of \$90 million.

Pursuant to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) directive, Sept. 29 was the last day in the life of an entity that has positively impacted thousands upon thousands. The organization, the team and the volunteers from around the world will – for the most part - leave Louisiana. Many are natives and victims and will continue the recov-

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ery and their personal recovery.

“Thank you not only for your service,” said FEMA Public Assistance Deputy Eddie Williams, “but also for the lessons you have shared with these communities. They are now better prepared to handle future responses because of those things you have taught them following Katrina and Rita.”

With a backward glance, one may marvel at the enormity of work accomplished by this team, such as the installation of over 81,000 temporary roofs – enough to cover nine square miles; or the fact that during those first frantic days, they hauled in 2,178 truckloads of water at 18,000 liters each, as well as 1,533 truckloads of ice – the equivalent of 62,000 of those commercial ice machines seen at convenience stores.

With an eye to the children, they expeditiously constructed 216 school classrooms and 94 other critical public facilities, such as fire and police stations.

And with sensitivity for the storm’s casualties and their families, team members built an 18,720-square-foot Victim Identification Center and mortuary which now remains ready for further national emergencies.

Concern for the survivors led to the assessment of 1,217 home sites, and the effective monitoring of 65,000 FEMA trailers housing homeless Louisianans.

Literally, in the citizenry’s very backyard, they removed over 58,000 salt water killed trees and demolished over 7,000 storm-destroyed homes.

This work force of volunteers – comprised of full-time Corps employees, rehired annuitants, active duty and Reserve soldiers and contractors – peaked at a total of 1,700.

After their monumental accomplishments, the LA-RFO departs with minimal fanfare. But they do so with the knowledge that, while much remains to be done, they did their part – and more.

“We have completed all the work that FEMA has asked of us. That is our mission,” said LA-RFO director Mike Smith. “We have brought these communities to a level of independence that allows them to finish their long-term recovery using local resources and funding from FEMA.”

Col. Smith said the mission reinforced his faith in the nation to respond to similar challenges.

“I am optimistic about any challenge in this country anywhere in the future. We have an enormous capacity of human spirit, and the Corps and FEMA will be there regardless of the scope or challenge.”



“I commend and thank the LA-RFO team, our Louisiana recovery “Face of the Corps”, for your compassionate, dedicated and professional performance and leadership during the most complex and unprecedented catastrophe in the history of Louisiana and in its greatest time of need.”

- Karen Durham-Aguilera, P.E., SES
Director, Task Force Hope

For more information about the operations of the Corps’ Louisiana Recovery Field Office, visit: www.faceofthecorps.com

LA-RFO At Work



Faces of Hope

By Dave Mack

It's become a cliché because it's so true: Katrina changed everything. That realization struck Linda LaBure while she was still in Vicksburg waiting out the storm. The New Orleans District Real Estate Chief did not yet know the extent of the devastation that had been visited upon Corps facilities, but she did know there would be no more business as usual.

Over the next 24 months, LaBure and her team practically rewrote the real estate rulebook for the District. In recognition of her exemplary performance and innovation, LaBure was recently named 2007 Real Estate Professional of the Year for the Corps of Engineers.

"I look at the award as acknowledgment of the entire New Orleans District Real Estate team's efforts since Katrina," said LaBure. "I'm amazed that with all the personal and professional challenges my staff was facing, we accomplished some pretty extraordinary things." To wit, they:

- Developed creative approaches to several Uniform Relocation assistance issues unique to Hurricane Katrina landowners;
- Pioneered the multi-services contract approach to help manage the heavy acquisition workload as a result of the storm; and
- Established effective working relationships with numerous stakeholders, associations and representatives involved in the hurricane effort.

And that's only a partial list. The overarching post-Katrina mission for LaBure and company, a team of 40+, was – and continues to be – to secure the real estate interests needed for the repair, rehabilitation and completion of the hurricane protection system. If you're going to install pumps and floodgates and build levees, you need land to put them on. If

Real Estate team had to innovate because...

Katrina Changed Everything

you're going to excavate borrow, you need a source.

To accomplish those tasks, LaBure and her team had to innovate. In the area of



Linda LaBure, left, with her secretary Elaine Comeaux.

Uniform Relocation Assistance, owner/occupants are required to reside on the property to be eligible for relocation assistance. The expanded application of "constructive residential occupancy" in the areas needed for repair and rehabilitation of the hurricane protection system allowed relocation assistance benefits for owners who would have been living on their property had the storm not made it uninhabitable. Availability of land for construction was accelerated working with the state, parishes and the City of New Orleans which "commandeered" necessary use of rights-of-way, a term not heard before Katrina.

As for multi-service contracting, rather than issuing separate contracts for various real estate components, such as appraisals, legal descriptions and plats, and title work, LaBure and her team rolled the needed resources into a single contract, giving Real Estate the flexibility required in an environment where it was impossible to pinpoint exactly what was needed.

"The vision I had for Real Estate

changed on August 29th (2005)," LaBure said. "Before, I could look six months to a year ahead and have a pretty good understanding of how I would deploy resources. Now it's at most a month ahead."

LaBure estimates that the workload for the Real Estate Division tripled, if not quadrupled after Katrina. And she sees that level of activity continuing for the next several years. Asked if she misses the pre-Katrina days, she says "sometimes, but we cannot look back, we have to keep moving forward."

According to LaBure, the post-Katrina demands have re-energized her organization and given it a new sense of purpose.

"We recognize we are playing a part in an historic mission in our region," she said. "All the work is important including our regular mission, the work on the hurricane protection system, and future work such as LACPR*."

"We have a motto in Real Estate: Together we succeed. Katrina presented us with a new challenge, caused us to be innovative, and brought us together as a team. Those are the positives.

"We provide a service that's key to getting the job done here in New Orleans. I'm very proud to be the Chief of this organization. My staff members are the real heroes."

On August 6, LaBure received the Real Estate Community of Practice Professional of the Year Award at the Corps Summer Leaders Conference National Awards Dinner and Ceremony in Providence, RI.



*Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration

WHAT IS THE CORPS DOING?

Read the
Task Force Hope NEWSLETTER
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