



Task Force Hope Status Report

August 18, 2006

Corps Begins Structure Removal at 17th Street Canal

Safety Issues During Construction Drive Need to Remove 14 Structures at Site

Questions and Answers

Q: Why is the Corps of Engineers removing homes in the 17th Street Canal area?

A: The Mayor of the City of New Orleans has emergency power to commandeer any private property on behalf of the Corps of Engineers if it is necessary to cope with a disaster or emergency, provided that there is compensation for the real estate interests for which the property is being utilized. The Corps has agreed to acquire the real estate interests in the property, in the name of the local sponsor, for these emergency repairs/rehabilitation projects. This includes all necessary real estate rights, both permanent and temporary for access, construction, etc. in order to perform this vital mission.

In a well-defined area near the 17th Street Canal project, the Corps realized that there was a potential for houses to collapse as a result of its work to install T-walls, a process that requires considerable vibration drilling to drive steel through the soil to the required depth. We also knew we had to take appropriate actions to address the safety concerns in removing the houses and to provide the required construction areas needed to complete the repairs/rehabilitation.



On August 9, Corps of Engineers' contractors began removing structures at 17th Street Canal so levee repairs can proceed. (USACE Photo by Kim Powell)

Q: What area does this project encompass?

A: The affected homes are located adjacent to the breached area on Bellaire Drive, approximately 600 feet south of the Hammond Highway bridge. There are approximately 14 structures included in this area that will be torn down. This is an area that is needed for the construction to repair/rehabilitate the breached area.

Q: Why are only certain homes selected and not others?

A: It is Corps policy to acquire only the minimal amount of real estate interests required for the project. In this case, the construction of the repair/rehabilitation will directly affect these standing structures adjacent to the location of the temporary retaining system required in order to permit removal of the sandbags, stone, and the original floodwall monoliths from the breached area and con-

struction of the new floodwall.

Q: Is there a need for additional property adjacent to the 17th St. Canal and London Avenue Canal?

A: Some additional permanent levee/floodwall rights-of-way, along with some temporary work area easements, are being acquired in the breached areas on the 17th Street Canal and London Avenue Canal. While these permanent and temporary easements are being acquired

Continued on page 2

Also in this issue:

- Katrina Anniversary.....Page 4
Faces of Hope.....Page 6
Corps of Engineers
Contact Numbers.....Page 7

Demolition, continued from page 1

over rear portions of residential lots, none of this acquisition includes areas over which houses are located.

Q: Will other properties, such as those near the IHNC in the Lower Ninth Ward, be acquired?

A: Minimal permanent levee/floodwall easements and temporary work area easements are being acquired in a few areas. None of these permanent and temporary easements are being acquired in areas over which houses are located.

However, in Plaquemines Parish, approximately 300 properties, including approximately 150 houses, are being acquired due to the additional rights-of-way needed to perform the repairs/rehabilitation to the levee/floodwall system.

Q: What are the technical reasons for the removal of houses in the area?

A: The original embankment repair at the 17th Street Canal breach used sandbags and stone. It was an emergency solution that permitted unwatering of the city.

The Corps is putting in a T-wall as a permanent solution. In order to begin this construction, temporary cofferdams will be installed so that sandbags, stone and the original floodwall can be removed. As a result, the Corps requires rights-of-way to access areas needed for the project.

Further, the new T-wall will use longer sheet pile and steel H-piles for support which require substantial pile driving close to the remaining structures within the 17th Street Canal breach area. Many of the struc-

tures have substantial structural damage and the vibration from pile driving could cause their collapse. Therefore, to ensure the safety of homeowners or tenants, the structures are being removed.

In addition, the new stability berm being installed will extend into what was the residential area.

Q: Why has there been a delay in removal? First it was mid-June, now it's August?

A: Initial plans were to remove the houses in June. However, due to approval of the environmental and safety plans required for the demoli-

emergency repairs/rehabilitation projects. This includes all necessary real estate rights, both permanent and temporary for access, construction, etc. in order to perform this vital mission.

The acquisition process includes mapping of the areas over which the real estate interests are being acquired, obtaining title evidence on the property and appraisals of just compensation values, negotiations, and closing procedures. The Corps has awarded a contract to Strategic Planning Associates, Inc., an acquisition company that will be performing the acquisition of real estate inter-

ests along both the 17th Street Canal and London Avenue Canal projects. In addition to just compensation value, landowners may be eligible for relocation assistance benefits, which will assist the landowners in obtaining replacement housing.

Q: Will homeowners get a fair price for their homes and property?

A: Payment for property used for federal projects such as the U.S.

Army Corps of Engineers work on levees in Orleans and Plaquemines parishes is governed by the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. As a matter of law, we must pay fair market value for the land as of the date the property was given to us for use by the city. This fair market value is called "just compensation." As outlined in federal regulations, just compensation is fixed as the fair market value of the property upon the effective date of taking. In other words, since both the effective date of taking and the start of the repair



This illustration shows the area marked for demolition at the 17th Street Canal. (USACE Illustration by Erich Soraghan)

tion, including a plan to deal with asbestos, demolition was delayed. It is important that these steps be taken in accordance with applicable laws to ensure the work that is done is in full compliance. The Corps and its contractor partners have now reamoved forward with the demolition process.

Q: What process was followed to acquire these properties in the area of the 17th Street Canal?

The Corps agreed to acquire the real estate interests in the property, in the name of the local sponsor, for these

Continued on page 3

Demolition, continued from page 2

projects happened after Katrina, payment is based upon post-Katrina property values; thus payments are fixed by law.

Q: Has that price been determined and have property owners been notified of the assessed value?

A: The contractor has completed appraisals on the affected properties along the 17th Street Canal repair area and has submitted them for our approval. We are awaiting the interim title insurance binders, which we expect by the end of August. We estimate that offers of just compensation will be sent to affected landowners by the end of August 8/ beginning of September, dependent upon approval of the interim title insurance binders. The contractor is in the process of obtaining appraisals along the London Avenue Canal repair areas.

Q: Is there any other assistance available to property owners in this situation?

A: Yes. To ensure the fair and equitable treatment of homeowners/tenants whose homes are taken for public projects, Congress enacted the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (URA). In order to determine the limits of relocation assistance benefits available to the displaced homeowner/tenant, the Corps bases its assessment upon a value averaging three "like" houses in the same type of neighborhood, if possible.

Under URA legislation, these affected homeowners may be entitled to certain remedial benefits over and above the payment they receive as just compensation under the Fifth Amendment. These benefits include a replacement housing payment intended to enable homeowners to buy a home that is comparable to the home that was acquired by the Corps when combined with the money that is received from the Corps as just compensation. The replacement housing payment gen-

"... The Mayor of New Orleans has emergency power to commandeer any private property on behalf of the Corps of Engineers if it is necessary to cope with a disaster or emergency, provided there is compensation for the real estate interests for which the property is being utilized..."



Fourteen properties on the 17th Street Canal are being demolished to allow for new levee and new stability berm construction. (USACE Photo by Kim Powell)

erally is the amount by which the cost of a comparable, decent, safe and sanitary replacement home exceeds the cost of the home acquired. Additionally, the URA can provide additional benefits, such as reasonable out-of-pocket moving expenses or compensation for a reasonable increase in rent and utility expenses. These benefits are determined on a case by case basis, considering the availability of "comparable, decent ..." homes in southeast Louisiana.

Q: Are there any other programs available to Louisiana residents?

A: Yes. Two of these federal programs are:

The HUD Road Home Program: Louisiana residents may receive up

to \$150,000 to rebuild or sell houses severely damaged by the storms, using grants to cover repair costs above what was covered by insurance policies and FEMA grants.

The FEMA Hazard Grant Mitigation Program: Communities may offer homeowners who agree to participate in a buy-out project up to the fair market value of the home before the disaster struck. Communities also pay the costs associated with the real estate transaction. Lands purchased under this program are converted to green space and may not have any structure placed upon them including levees.



Katrina First Anniversary Approaching

Corps of Engineers Reflects on Progress, Successes and Lessons Learned In Past Year

The Corps of Engineers released the following report and its internal anniversary plans:

- . The Chaplain of the Corps will conduct a special service for New Orleans District employees who have lost loved ones, homes and property.
- . On August 29, Corps employees will be allowed to participate in commemorative activities as they feel are appropriate.

Task Force Hope

Debris Removal -- One year later, the Corps has removed 55 million cubic yards of debris in Louisiana and Mississippi, with more work still to come.

Levee Repair and Restoration

The Corps of Engineers repaired and restored 220 miles of floodwalls and levees since September 2005. With a few exceptions, New Orleans had Pre-Katrina flood and storm level protection by the beginning of this hurricane season (June 1, 2006). This system is in equal or better condition than it was when Katrina hit. For example, new levees were constructed with erosion-resistant clay and a more stable construction (T Wall versus I Wall). In addition, new erosion protection has been added at several sites, and a program of tree cutting on existing levees for protection is ongoing. Additional pumping capacity and floodgates have been added at the outfall canals.

This work consisted of 59 separate construction projects, carried out by 26 Corps contractors. 90% of these contractors were local.

Additionally, work is underway to restore



Floodwall at Inner Harbor Navigation Canal was completed on June 1, start of the hurricane season. (USACE photo by Paul Floro)

undamaged levees/floodwalls to originally authorized heights by September 2007.

Stronger Protection for New Orleans

The Corps' work to upgrade the flood and storm protection will continue through 2010. We want to engineer, construct and improve storm and flood protection infrastructure to a 100-year protection level. This work includes stronger levees, floodwalls and interior drainage, including:

- Replacing failed I-Wall design floodwalls with stronger T-wall or L-wall design floodwalls
- Reinforcing the most vulnerable undamaged I-Walls and the surge protection closures.
- L-wall structures are used in areas where sufficient land is not available for T-wall design structures.

To date, the federal government has appropriated almost \$6 billion to complete this work.

Lessons Learned

The Corps commissioned an Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force (IPET) composed of 150 subject matter experts from government, academia and industry to analyze the effects of Hurricane Katrina on the hurricane protection system. IPET developed a list of lessons learned which are leading to state of the art engineering improvements of a comprehensive hurricane protection system.

IPET findings and recommendations were continually provided to Task Force Hope (since November 2005) and used to make their repairs stronger and better. IPET findings helped the Corps in the assessment of weaknesses in the protection system and IPET results will also be used in design guidance to build future protection projects. Specific examples include:

- Use of deeper sheet piles on some repair projects to provide floodwall stability
- Hardening or armoring the backside of floodwalls in many areas to protect against scour and erosion if the floodwall is overtopped

Continued on page 5

Anniversary, continued from page 4

- Strengthening transition zones where earthen levees tie into concrete structures, such as floodwalls and gates. These areas were strengthened and protected with rock to prevent erosion
- IPET analyses on the failure of floodwalls were used in the decision to provide interim closure structures at 17th Street, London Avenue, and Orleans Avenue Canals
- IPET identified the “gap” failure mechanism for the I-Walls in the outfall canals. This information was used in the evaluation of the remainder of the I-Walls and is being used to develop new stability calculations.
- IPET’s wave and surge analysis identified much higher waves than used in the design criteria - Katrina produced 4 ft waves in the canals; the design criteria anticipated 1 ft waves. IPET findings will be used in the new levee design guidance that will address this greater potential for wave run up, overtopping, and scour and erosion

Louisiana Coastal Recovery Plan

Congress has directed the Corps to develop a plan to protect the State of Louisiana from damages caused by a Category 5 hurricane. That effort is underway. We expect that the plan will include a combination of structural features, such as levees or gates; non-structural features (which could include enhanced evacuation planning and protocols for more rigorous building codes); and restoration of coastal features, such as wetlands, that can dampen storm surge. The Corps is required to present the plan to Congress not later than De-



55 million cubic tons of debris have been removed by the Corps of Engineers in Louisiana and Mississippi - and work continues. (USACE Photo)

cember 2007, although some highly promising components of the plan may be recommended in advance of the complete report. Actual construction of the plan components will require authorization and annual funding by Congress.

Preparing for Future Storms


Hurricane and flood protection systems have one purpose – to reduce risk. It is impossible to completely eliminate risk.

We can only engineer Mother Nature so much—there will still be some level of risk. It is impossible to design a system that will eliminate the risk of flooding from every conceivable storm or track of storm.


Even the Dutch, who have built an incredible system of works to protect against flooding from storm events that would occur only once in 10,000 years, have emphasized the importance of a well-planned system that not only includes flood structures, but also emergency preparedness and evacuation plans.

Flood and storm damage will be reduced by these projects, but the possibility of future damages will not be eliminated until all of the work is done.

If another Katrina hit today, we would expect interior drainage flooding due to rainfall and overtopping and wave over wash in some areas. It remains possible that some levees could breach as a result of overtopping. However, there would be no storm surge damage related to the outfall canals as occurred during Katrina.

By 2010, using current best engineering practices and the lessons we’ve learned from Katrina, we will reduce flood and storm damage risk. Levees and floodwalls will be higher and stronger and better protected by armoring in key areas. Deeper sub-surface sheet piles will minimize sub-surface water seepage (piping) and steel H-piles will stabilize the upgraded floodwalls. 

CORPS FACTOID

 At the peak of the hurricane recovery effort, over 10% of the entire Corps of Engineers were engaged in the recovery. People from 41 of 45 districts participated from as far away as Japan, Korea and Germany.

In all, more than 8,000 Corps employees and several hundred from other federal agencies have helped, as well as pump teams from the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg.

Faces of Hope

Corps of Engineers - It's a Family Tradition

Three Generations Have Worked for New Orleans District

By Susan Spaht

Steve Falati is a Construction Representative for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the Bayou Dupre Control Structure floodgates on the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO). He is a 16-year employee of the Corps in New Orleans, and he is proud to tell you that the Corps of Engineers is a family tradition for him.

Steve's son, Jeffrey Falati, also works for the Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District. Jeff, a civil engineer, is a Project Engineer in the East New Orleans area. Jeff has been with the Corps for four and a half years.

And, Steve's father-in-law, Wallace J. Farge II, is a 35-year veteran of the Corps of Engineers, also in New Orleans. Farge retired 30 years ago as Chief of Personnel after having started in the mail room and working his way up.

Both Steve Falati and Wallace Farge were U.S. Marines. Steve served in Vietnam while Wallace served in the South Pacific during World War II. And Jeff? "Luckily, there was no war when Jeff was in college," Steve said with a smile.

When Hurricane Katrina washed over Louisiana and the Gulf Coast last year, Steve and Jeff Falati, like thousands of other Corps personnel, were called on to help with the vast repairs and improvements needed to the hurricane protection system. When first called, Steve helped with debris clean-up in Jefferson Parish. "Everyone was scrambling just to get the work done," Steve said.



Jeff Falati (left), Wallace Farge (center) and Steve Falati (right) are a Corps of Engineers family. (Photo by Laura Falati)

Shortly afterward, he was assigned to help with the unwatering in St. Bernard Parish. "Katrina sent a 30-foot wave over this whole area," Steve said as he gestured out at the devastated Meraux neighborhood along the Mississippi River. "No levee would have held that much water back!"

Since September, Steve Falati's job has been to oversee the work of Corps contractors who are repairing the damage to the Bayou Dupre Control Structure. These massive floodgates are used to equalize the water in MRGO and the marshy land in St. Bernard Parish where fishing is a hobby and an industry. "When we get an unusually high tide – which can be as many as 20 times a year – the levee district closes the floodgates," Steve explained.

Steve's work at Bayou Dupre is almost complete, and he's waiting to learn what his next assignment will be.

"Jeff has a big job with the Corps," his father said proudly, "he's in charge of five projects." Jeff Falati's Corps projects include levees, floodwalls and a floodgate across a railroad track in New Orleans East that was damaged by the storm.

The Falati and Farge families have had personal experiences with Katrina's fury. All evacuated to Baton Rouge and stayed with extended family for the few days when no one was allowed back into the hurricane-damaged area.

"I had four inches of water in my house," Steve said. "My son Jeff helped me pull out the wet carpet and sheetrock, and my family had to live on the second floor for months while we had the house repaired." But Steve is quick to add that his experience pales when compared to the wreckage he sees every day in

Continued on page 7

The Falati and Farge families have made the Corps of Engineers a family tradition for three generations



Steve Falati, a Construction Representative for the New Orleans District Corps of Engineers, stands atop the Bayou Dupre floodgate structure where he oversees the contractors repairing the structure. (USACE Photo by Barry Fletcher)

Corps of Engineers Demolition Mission Report:

The Corps of Engineers periodically releases updates on its Debris Missions in Louisiana and Mississippi. As of August 8, 2006:

Louisiana

Estimated 6.4 million cubic yards to be removed. Estimated total demolition debris in Orleans Parish = 5.6 million cubic yards. 2,873 of the estimated 18,186 structures identified for demolition in Louisiana have been demolished.

Mississippi

Estimated 811,673 million cubic yards to be removed. 4,715 of the estimated 4,743 structures identified for demolition in Mississippi have been demolished for a total estimated cost of \$40.5 million

Falati, continued from page 6

St. Bernard Parish. "I am lucky compared to these folks," he said.

The Farge and Falati men have served in the military and the Corps of Engineers and shared the experience of making it through our nation's worst disaster. All those experiences can bring a family even closer.

What's it like to have your son-in-law and grandson follow you by working for the Corps of Engineers? "I was really happy to see that," Wallace Farge said, "and I'm always asking them about their work at the Corps...especially since Hurricane Katrina."

And Steve Falati is certainly proud to have his son Jeff follow him and his father-in-law at the Corps of Engineers. "Yes, I'm really proud of that; but I'm most proud when people who've worked with my son tell me what a fine young man he is."



Contact Information		
Topic	Phone	Organization
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Task Force Hope - Overall hurricane protection system restoration, repair and improvement	(504) 862-1836	Task Force Hope Public Affairs
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Debris Removal in Mississippi	(601) 631-5065	Mississippi Recovery Field Office
<p>The <i>Status Report Newsletter</i> 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. This is an online publication and open to public distribution. This issue and past issues can be found at: www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps</p> <p>Comments and questions may be sent to the Status Report Newsletter editor at:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">b2fwdpao@usace.army.mil <i>Status Report Newsletter</i> Task Force Hope Public Affairs Office MVD-FWD 7400 Leake Ave., Room #388 New Orleans, LA 70118 (504) 862-1688</p>		