US Army Corps of Engineers
Mississippi Valley Division
Corps Hurricane Response

Task Force Hope Status Report

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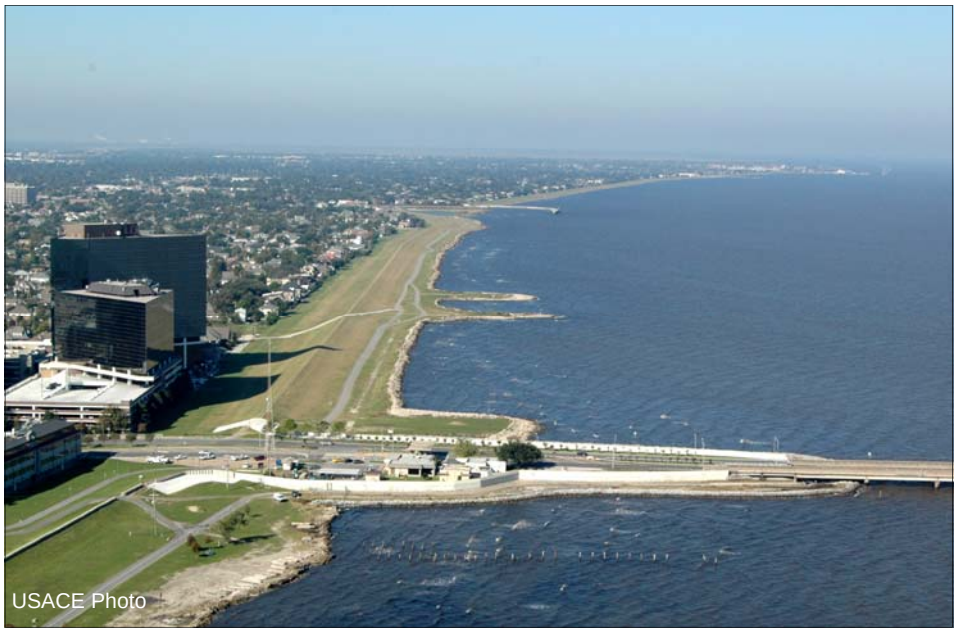
SPECIAL ISSUE

East Jeff and St. Charles levees stronger than before Katrina

and on the path to 100-year protection

Public safety is the Corps' top priority


USACE Photo

This is an aerial view of East Jefferson levees looking west from the Causeway.

The Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS) is stronger today than before Hurricane Katrina due to the completed interim improvements as well as on-going work. After the storm, although there were sections of the system that were undamaged, such as East Jefferson and St. Charles Parish levees, the Corps looked at the entire system to evaluate vulnerabilities and improvements needed.

To provide interim protection prior to completion of the 100-year level system, the Corps engaged a "brain bank" of engineers and scientists to include the entire Corps, the Engineering Research and Development Center, Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force (IPET), and external peer review to establish interim design criteria. Additionally, field investigations were conducted and were very thorough, extensive and complied with standards of the American Society of Testing Materials.

Since Katrina, geotechnical data were obtained at over 600 locations in East Jefferson and St. Charles Parishes. Interim improvements made to the East Jefferson and St. Charles Parish levees included hardening transition points, reducing I-wall stick-up heights, adding levee berms, and raising levees. In so doing, the Corps stabilized the system and made it stronger and more resilient than prior to Katrina.

As a result of system interim improvements, the IPET Risk Depth Maps for the current condition show a reduction in the projected depth of flooding from the levels prior to Katrina. Work is on-going to bring the system up to the 100-year level of protection.

Congress has appropriated substan-

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Goodhope floodwall (Norco in background), St. Charles Parish, looking west.

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tial funding, and the President has committed to provide additional funding to complete the 100-year level system. Even upon completion of the 100-year level system, residual risk of flooding remains from overtopping, depending upon the size and track of the storm.

Spencer's Method is the established criteria for designing the 100-year level system. The Corps' engineers use the Method of Planes criteria to further check the results of the Spencer's Method. Engineering judgment is then applied.

According to Walter Baumy, Chief of the Engineering Division for the New Orleans District, "I fully expected that more stringent design criteria would result in larger and bulkier levees."

Karen Durham-Aguilera, Director of Task Force Hope, further explained that the Corps' design analysis for these sections of the HSDRRS continues. "We take all these technical analyses, results of peer reviews, apply judgment and make the best engineering decisions." Analysis is on-going, but upon completion of design and construction, the HSDRRS will meet all design criteria and provide a 100-year level system.

St. Rose, St.Charles Parish

Additionally, external peer reviews will be conducted in accordance with the Water Resources Development Act to ensure that the Corps is properly implementing the established and reviewed design criteria. These reviews will continue through the entire HSDRRS program from design to construction completion.

The Corps continues to collaborate with the State of Louisiana and its partners – including parishes, industry, academia, environmental groups, and federal agencies - to seek solutions for complex engineering issues. Local sponsors will participate in the process and have input.

As the Corps pushes toward the completion of the 100-year level of protection for the entire HSDRRS for 2011, Durham-Aguilera emphasized, "Public safety has been and continues to be our number one priority."

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This issue and past issues can be found at:
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Comments and questions may be sent to the Status Report Newsletter editor at:
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US Army Corps of Engineers

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