



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

BUILDING STRONG®

For Immediate Release:
31 January 2011
Release No.: 11-01

Contact:
Mary Markos, 314-331-8095 / 314-753-4920

St. Louis Corps of Engineers announces results of area levee inspections

St. Louis, Mo. – 31 January 2011: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers St. Louis District has completed periodic inspections of approximately 120 miles of river levees within its Levee Safety Program.

Inspections are complete on the St. Louis Flood Protection, Wood River, Cape Girardeau, Ste. Genevieve #3, Consolidated North County, Bois Brule, Kaskaskia Island, Prairie du Pont/Fish Lake and Hillview levee systems.

The Corps will complete periodic inspections on the remainder of the Federal levees in the St. Louis District in 2011.

“In addition to our routine inspections, we conduct more comprehensive inspections every five years,” said Colonel Tom O’Hara, Commander of the Corps’ St. Louis District. “We want to make sure our levee systems are reliable and provide the level of risk reduction we expect them to provide,” O’Hara added.

Each levee receives a rating based upon the inspection. Levees are rated as acceptable, minimally acceptable or unacceptable.

If rated unacceptable, the levee system may be categorized as “inactive” and therefore no longer eligible for federal rehabilitation assistance under Public Law 84-99 if it is damaged in a flood or storm event. The levee system can regain its “active” status and eligibility if deficiencies are adequately addressed by the levee district or other organization responsible for it.

The Corps will continue to provide flood fighting assistance for the levee system regardless of the rating received and will re-inspect the levee system when the project sponsor corrects the deficiencies.

If minimally acceptable or acceptable, the system retains eligibility for federal rehabilitation assistance if it is damaged in a flood or storm event.

“The information we collect during these inspections tells us and the levee districts what, if any, work or maintenance is needed on the levees,” said Jamie McVicker, the District’s engineer managing the levee inspection program.

These ratings are independent of inspections done as part of the National Flood Insurance Program's Levee System Evaluation. Evaluation documentation is the responsibility of the local sponsor and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the organization responsible for the National Flood Insurance Program.

The majority of levees in the Corps Levee Safety Program are maintained and operated by local levee districts or other non-federal organizations.

Routine Inspections focus on the operation and maintenance of the levee. These inspections verify that the sponsor operates and maintains the levee to achieve the maximum benefits the levee was designed to provide. Routine inspection items include vegetation, encroachments, closure structures, erosion, animal burrows, pump operation, culverts and relief wells.

The periodic inspection is the next level in the levee safety program and is conducted by a multidisciplinary team, led by a professional engineer. It includes a more detailed, comprehensive and consistent evaluation of the condition of the levee system and is normally conducted every five years. Activity under the periodic inspection includes routine inspection items; verifies proper operation and maintenance; evaluates operational adequacy, structural stability and safety of the system; and compares current design and construction criteria with those in place when the levee was built.

"We are able to conduct detailed inspections on numerous Federal levee systems because of funding we received from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)," O'Hara explained.

With \$4.4 million in ARRA contracts, the Corps will be able to complete inspections on 33 levee systems within the District by the end of 2011, including systems in Missouri and Illinois.

Inspections are being conducted by Reitz & Jens Engineering from St. Louis, MO and Kaskaskia Engineering Group from Belleville, IL.