



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Mississippi Valley Division



## Corps Hurricane Response

### Task Force Hope Status Report

August 29, 2007

# 17th Street Canal Pumps Exceed Expectations

*Corps of Engineers set goal of attaining at least 7,600 cfs by mid-August, and reached 8,800 - 9,200 cfs during August 20 test*

By Susan Spaht

**W**e told you we'd be here on the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal today pumping this much water, and here we are," said Col. Jeffrey Bedey, Commander of the Corps' Hurricane Protection Office (HPO). "These pumps are rockin'!"

The colonel was addressing the media that had gathered at the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Outfall Canal on August 20 to witness the Corps' technical crews performing the final tests of the 11 new direct drive pumps and the 18 new 60-inch temporary pumps. Several months back, the Corps set a pumping goal of attaining 7,600 cfs (cubic feet per second) at the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal by mid to late August.

The 11 new direct drive pumps can push about 4,000 cfs of water out of the canal and into Lake Pontchartrain. Working in tandem with the 34 previously installed hydraulic pumps, the capacity is increased to about 7,600 cfs. When the 14 new port-



**August 20, 2007 9:00 p.m. 17th Street Outfall Canal**  
New direct drive pumps pushing 4,000 cfs of water into Lake Pontchartrain  
(USACE Photo by Paul Floro)

able pumps are added to the mix, the increased capacity can reach between 8,800 – 9,200 cfs. This exceeds the Corps' pumping capacity goal, a fact that makes many people very happy.

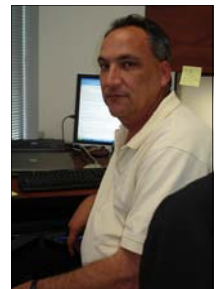
"This is an awesome flow of water," said Lt. Col. Murray Starkel, Deputy Commander of the New Orleans District, who witnessed the testing. "I am very confident that we can take out of this canal everything that Pump Station 6 can put into it."



Lt. Col. Starkel

Jim St. Germain, Senior Project Manager for the Corps, said, "We are much better off today than we were a year ago. Bringing these new pumps online gives the city better protection."

The pumps at the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal,



Jim St. Germain

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## August 18, 2007 17th Street Outfall Canal

New portable pumps pushing 1,000+ cfs of water into Lake Pontchartrain

(USACE Photo by Paul Floro)



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and the ones at the London Avenue and Orleans Canals, will be used to pump water from their respective canals only in the event that the outfall canal gates are closed to prevent a storm's surge from entering the canals. If the structure gates are closed, the natural flow of inland water is prevented from entering Lake Pontchartrain. To prevent backup of canal water, the pumps would be turned on to push canal water into Lake Pontchartrain.

These pumps – the last to be installed and tested at the city's three outfall canals – mark the completion of a massive building project the

Corps began in February 2006. The Corps and its contract partners have been working seven days a week to meet their goal of increased pumping capacity by late August - and have achieved it.

*Pumping capacity at the other two outfall canals :*

**London Avenue: 5,200 cfs**

8 direct drive pumps, 2,800 cfs  
12 temporary hydraulic pumps,  
2,400 cfs

**Orleans Avenue: 2,200 cfs**

10 temporary hydraulic pumps,  
2,200 cfs



**R**eaching this level of pumping capacity - over and above our goal - is the result of a lot of hard work and dedication by many people. I want to commend all the Corps employees and our contractor partners for a job well done. I am proud to work along side these dedicated professionals.

-Col. Jeffrey Bedey

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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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[www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps](http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps)

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#### Status Report Newsletter

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### CORPS' ORLEANS DEBRIS MISSION ENDS AUGUST 29

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has set September 29 as the last day of operations for the Corps of Engineers' Louisiana Recovery Field Office (LaRFO). Debris removal operations will transfer to the City of New Orleans on August 29.

For additional information, go to the LaRFO

Web site: <http://www.mvm.usace.army.mil/RFO/index.html>



## Corps of Engineers Releases 100-Year Risk Maps for New Orleans Area Chairman Powell Releases New Costs for 100-Year Protection

*Administration to work with Congress for additional drainage measures beyond 100-year commitment*

**F**ederal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding Donald E. Powell and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Director of Civil Works Maj. General Don T. Riley detailed the improved hurricane protection that will be provided to New Orleans area residents once the city's levees are built to the 100-year level.

In addition, Powell announced \$6.3 billion of further funding needed for improved protection for the New Orleans area and the Administration's plan to secure necessary funds to complete the work by 2011.

Powell also announced the Administration will work with Congress to fund a \$1.3 billion network of interior drainage projects (SELA). The 100-year level of protection, in addition to the drainage component, ensures the greater New Orleans area has a hurricane and flood protection system that far exceeds what existed before Hurricane Katrina.

"Today's announcement restates President Bush's continued commitment to a Gulf Coast rebuilding effort that prioritizes the safety of the people of this area," said Powell.

"The risk maps released today by



**Taking part in the August 20 news conference are, from left, Chairman Donald Powell, Gulf Coast Recovery; Maj. Gen. Don Riley; Karen Durham-Aguilera, Director of Task Force Hope; and Lt. Col. David Berczek.**

the Corps show exactly how the new 100-year system will provide far superior hurricane protection for greater New Orleans than at any time in the city's history. Safety is the top priority for the Administration and one of the main roles for the Federal government in long-term rebuilding."

The Corps currently has sufficient funding to continue scheduled repairs and improvements until Fiscal Year 2009. The request to Congress to provide funding to complete 100-year protection and additional drainage will be made by the Administration as part of the FY 2009 budget process since the need for this additional funding will not arise until the October 2008 timeframe.

Further, Powell stated that there would be a local sponsor cost share component on the work to ensure that localities have a stake in the decision-making process and incentives to keep costs down. The stan-

dard cost-share for water projects nationally is 65 percent Federal and 35 percent local. Powell indicated the Administration will review the historic cost-share arrangements and expressed a willingness to consider options for the non-federal sponsors to meet their cost-share obligations.

With this announcement of the additional cost estimate of \$7.6 billion, the total levee

repair and enhancement costs for the New Orleans area now totals almost \$15 billion. Based on continued engineering analysis, rigorous hydraulic modeling, design criteria and expected market conditions, additional funds are necessary to complete the system.

***New 100-Year Maps give risk of flooding after Corps completes Hurricane Protection System in 2011.***

**O**n June 20, 2007 the Corps of Engineers presented the initial state-of-the-art products developed from the Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force (IPET) Risk Assessment effort. These products, presented in the form of a set of maps, illustrated the depth of flooding that could be experienced at pre-Katrina hurricane protection system conditions, and

*Continued on page 4*

another set representing the hurricane protection system conditions on June 1, 2007 - after 22 months of Corps work effort in the greater New Orleans area.

On August 22, the Corps of Engineers released the 100-year set of Risk maps. These products represent the depth of flooding (or lack thereof) that could be experienced after the Corps of Engineers completes the 100-year level of protection for the Hurricane Protection System in 2011.

**The 100-year level of protection is designed to prevent overtopping from the water levels (surge and waves) that we have a 1% chance of experiencing each year, produced by a variety of hurricanes.**

The risk assessment involved an extremely complex process that is based on the best science available. It is a first of its kind anywhere and will be used in other areas of the country and the world to help identify and define risk.

"Increased public safety and communication of risk continue to be the Corps' top priorities for the New Orleans metropolitan area," said Maj. Gen. Don T. Riley, the Corps' Director of Civil Works. "The risk maps being released today are another

important piece of information the citizens in the New Orleans area need to help them make well-informed decisions about where and how they choose to live and work.

"The maps clearly show that the New Orleans area will have reduced risk

**With the 100-year level of protection, you have a 1% chance every year of flooding this deep from Hurricanes**



of flooding in the future from major storm events as the comprehensive system is constructed."

It should be noted that interior pumping and drainage is the responsibility of the parishes, not the Corps of Engineers; and the 100-year risk maps do not factor in interior pumping and drainage. Some may question why it was not included.

"The Corps of Engineers is responsible for the Hurricane Protection System," explained Lt. Col. David Berczek, the Corps' expert on Risk & Reliability.

"These maps show the results from repairs and planned improvements to the Hurricane Protection System."

As the lieutenant colonel further explained, "This was the natural first step of the risk analysis. The Corps' technicians and engineers needed to compare, on an apples-to-apples basis, so to speak, what happened during Hurricane Katrina – where

little or no interior drainage was occurring – and what will happen after the Corps' work is complete."

The 100-year maps showing interior pumping and drainage in operation are in the process of being formulated now.

Here is how Karen Durham-Aguilera, Director of Task Force Hope, explained

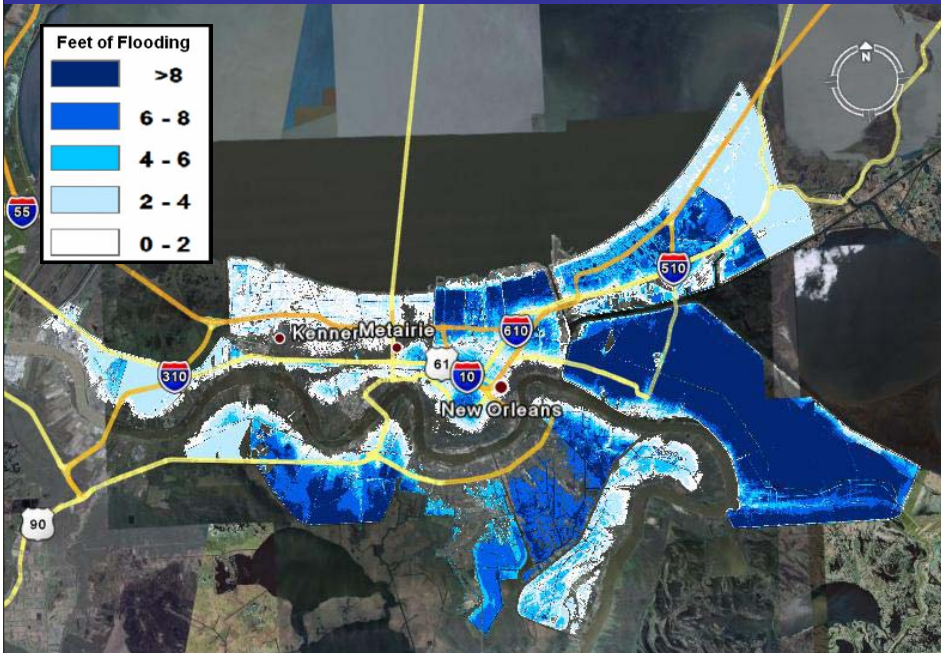
it: "We wanted our first issue of the 100-Year Risk Maps to match Hurricane Katrina conditions exactly - that is, showing little or no interior drainage capacity, at a 'worst case' analysis.

"We now have our team working to complete the next set of 100-year maps which will reflect the parish's interior drainage capacity at 50% level and at 100% level to overall reflect a variety of individual pump conditions.

"As soon as we finish this modeling, probably in four weeks or so, we will publish them so everyone can get this information."



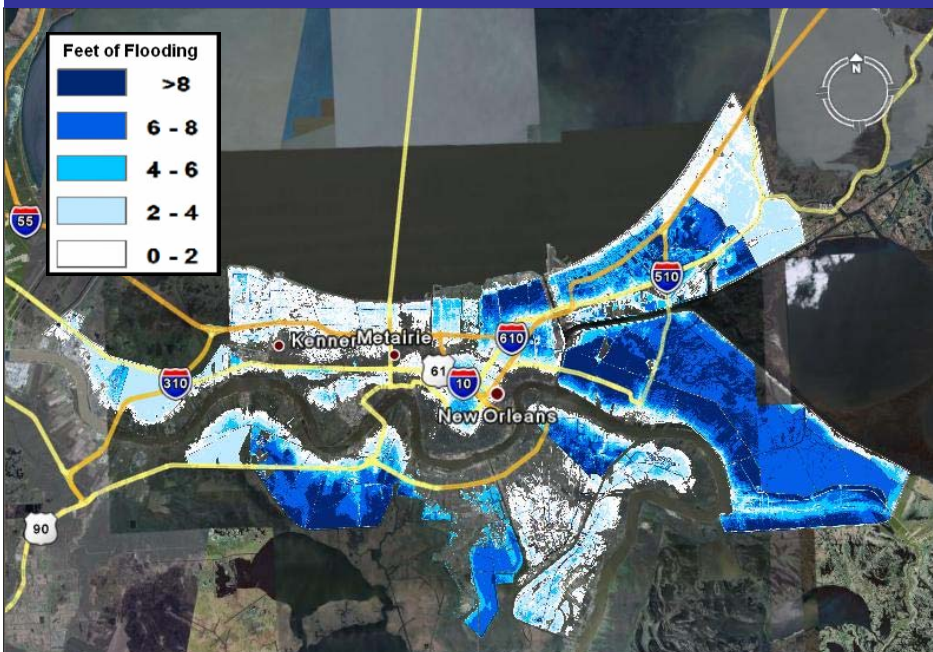
Before Katrina, you had a 1% chance every year of flooding this deep from Hurricanes



- ↑ The map above illustrates a 1% chance of flooding from hurricanes in the New Orleans area **Before Katrina**.
- ↓ The map below illustrates a 1% chance of flooding from hurricanes in the New Orleans area as of **June 1, 2007**.
- ← The map on page 4 illustrates a 1% chance of flooding from hurricanes in the New Orleans area when the Hurricane Protection System is complete **in 2011**.

To view all of the 100-year risk maps, go to this Web site: <http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/100maps.htm>

On June 1, 2007, you had a 1% chance every year of flooding this deep from Hurricanes



## Faces of Hope

By Dave Mack

For more than a couple of years, Russ Wiggs trotted out the old saw about how when he turned 55, he'd be out the door for good. Now, a few years north of 55, "I've quit telling that lie," as he put it.

Dennis McMurdo, meanwhile, has put in 29 years of government service. He served in the Navy, worked for the Air Force and the Veteran's Administration, and – for the last four years - the Army Corps of Engineers.

Most recently the two Coloradans have spent most of their time supervising pump installation on the 17<sup>th</sup> Street and London Avenue Canals. On temporary duty from the Corps' Omaha District, their jobs are to look over the shoulders of the general contractor and its subs to make sure the government is getting what it pays for.



**Dennis McMurdo**

"What we were tasked to do when we came down here was to manage the cost-reimbursable contracts for increasing the pump capacity at 17<sup>th</sup> Street and London Avenue," said Wiggs.

"I had past exposure dealing with and managing large dollar, fast-track projects. It's really no harder than managing smaller projects, so long as you don't let your mindset get carried away with the big numbers."

"We're here to insure that the pumps are being built and tested and operated in accordance with the contract plans and specifications," says McMurdo, a mechanical engineering technician.

As work has progressed, Wiggs and McMurdo have been checking for oil leaks and vibrations, monitoring temperature and pressure levels. They've made sure the catwalks are cleaned up and safety rails are in place. Beyond a couple of bearing problems and a few oil drips, they haven't found much.

Given the size of the project, the work to date has gone "amazingly well," according to Wiggs. "There have been a few glitches, but nothing that didn't get ironed out right away."

It's taken seven-day weeks of 12+ hour days to oversee that work. There have been lots of TV dinners and limited time to sleep. But once a week, Wiggs insists that they go out to a nice restaurant, get a good meal and "act like human beings instead of being hermits who just work and sleep."

"It's not a typical 9 to 5," says McMurdo, who served two tours in Iraq where the work was equally fast-paced. "It's not a normal construction project. It's a lot better than a 9 to 5 rut."

Wiggs is "glad I'm here. I think it's a good thing what we're doing. I have so much respect for the Corps team and what they have accomplished (in installing floodgates and the initial pumps last year). What they were able to do in such a short time – they're achievement is miraculous.

## On loan from Corps' Omaha District, TECHNICIAN DUO MAKING SURE GOVERNMENT GETS WHAT IT PAYS FOR

"You hear all the bad things about New Orleans and the Corps and you come down here and see the other side. It's a whole different perspective."

McMurdo says "it's tough work, but very satisfying." He's met quite a few locals "who thanked me for coming down here."



**Inspecting installation of new pumps at the 17th Street Outfall Canal are Russ Wiggs, left, and Dennis McMurdo.**  
(USACE Photos by Barry Fletcher)

He'll miss it when the project is completed; what he won't miss is the heat.

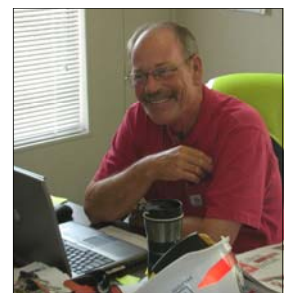
"It's too darned hot down here!," he said.

As their projects get down to the

wire, Wiggs and McMurdo are doing "whatever it takes" to bring things in on schedule. They both hope to leave the same legacy when their jobs in New Orleans are completed.

Wiggs sums it up: "I hope they can say about us: 'When we needed help, we asked those guys and they did a good job.'"

"When we leave here, I hope no one remembers our names because that will mean we did it right."



**Russ Wiggs**



2ND ANNIVERSARY UPDATE: HURRICANE KATRINA

# Chronology Report of Corps Projects

*In the past two years, the Corps of Engineers has accomplished an amazing amount of work on the Hurricane Protection System.*

*Four major projects are highlighted here.*

To see a photo chronology of these projects and a progression of work done by the Corps, click on the link below each photo. You will be amazed.



**17th Street Outfall Canal**

Click here to see a photo chronology:

[http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/chronology\\_17thcanal.htm](http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/chronology_17thcanal.htm)



**Orleans Avenue Outfall Canal**

Click here to see a photo chronology:

[http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/chronology\\_Orleans\\_canal.htm](http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/chronology_Orleans_canal.htm)



**London Avenue Outfall Canal**

Click here to see a photo chronology:

[http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/chronology\\_London\\_canal.htm](http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/chronology_London_canal.htm)



**Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO)  
at Bayou Bienvenue**

Click here to see a photo chronology:

[http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/chronology\\_MRGO.htm](http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/chronology_MRGO.htm)