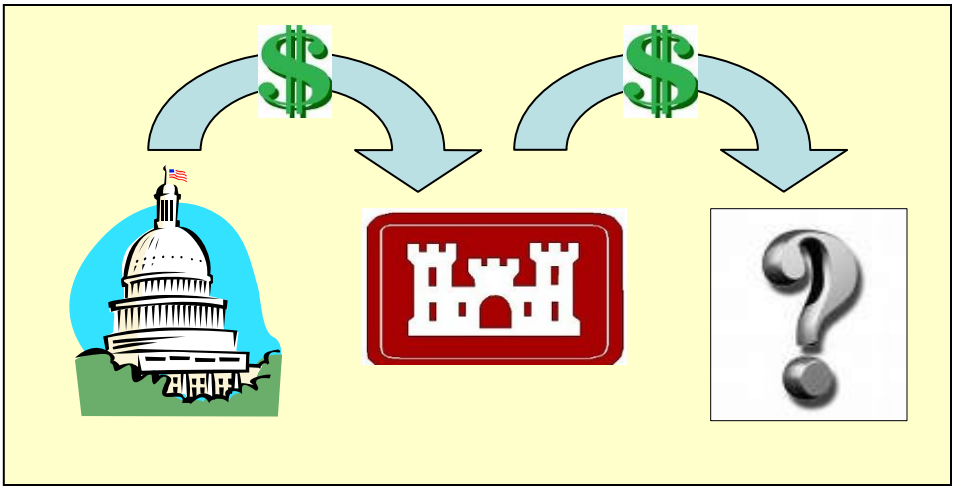
US Army Corps of Engineers
Mississippi Valley Division
Corps Hurricane Response
Task Force Hope Status Report
September 28, 2006

Corps of Engineers explains "The Process"

How does the Corps of Engineers decide where the money goes?

By Susan Spaht with Nancy Allen



The purpose of the process by which the Corps of Engineers operates is to identify Civil Works projects that are economically justified, technically and environmentally sound, and locally supported. (USACE Illustration by Erich Soraghan)

Introduction

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' **process** for planning, designing and constructing Hurricane Protection Projects is regulated by law and policy developed over many years. Generally, projects must be both authorized and subsequently funded by Congressional action as approved and signed into law by the President of the United States.

"The process by which the Corps of Engineers is bound is a very complicated one," said John Meador, Deputy Director of Task Force Hope. "Most people are unaware of the many steps in the process which frustrates those who would like to see the work accomplished as quickly as possible," he added. "This is especially true when hurricane risks occur annually."

John Meador

The Corps of Engineers generally operates under three different sets of conditions, as we will try to explain below. The first is the "traditional" civil works process. Under normal conditions, a project follows six steps from the request for federal assistance to the actual project implementation. This process can take three to five years or more from the start of a request to until construction begins.

The second process for getting federal assistance occurs because of a man-made or natural disaster (such as a hurricane). These missions, which begin operation immediately after the disaster, are pre-approved by Congress through several federal acts that are already in place.

The third process is the one that follows emergency missions – this is the process that the Gulf Coast communities are working through right now. During this period, federal assistance and funding is provided through supplemental appropriations recommended by the administration and approved by Congress, much the way it is in normal conditions, but the process moves much faster.

The Process

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is the Federal government's largest water resources development and management agency. The Corps began its water resources program in 1824 when Congress

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for the first time appropriated money for improving river navigation.

Since that time, Congress has expanded the Corps' civil works mission to include projects for river and hurricane flood damage reduction, beach erosion control and aquatic ecosystem restoration. Congress has also authorized the Corps to construct projects that generate hydropower; supply water to cities, agriculture and industry; and provide a variety of recreational opportunities. In addition, the Corps regulates development in navigable waters and manages a recreation program.

Most Corps of Engineers' Civil Works projects require Congressional authorization and Congressional funding, and some are delegated by Congress to the Chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The cost of most projects is also shared by non-federal sponsors who contribute funds, real estate, and other services required for implementation.

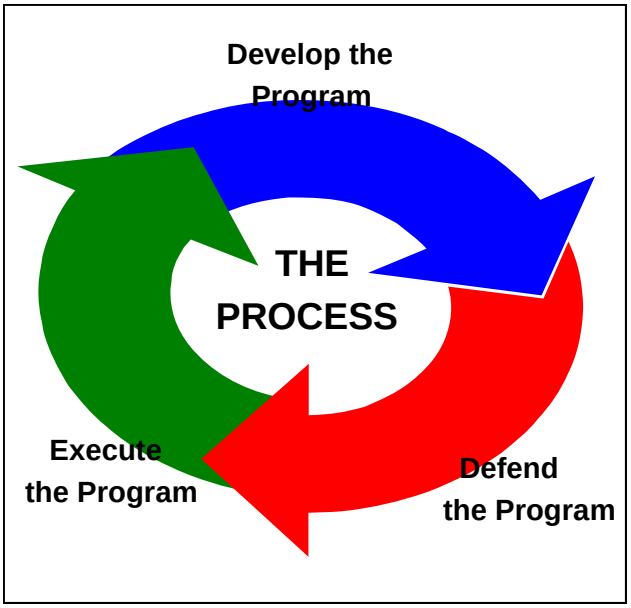
Traditional Civil Works Projects

These are the steps in developing Civil Works projects under normal circumstances:

1. **Problem/Need Perception**: A local community and/or local government would perceive or experience problems or needs that are beyond the local community's/government's jurisdiction, financial resources or technical expertise to alleviate or solve.

2. **Request for Federal Assistance**: Local officials talk to the Corps about available federal programs (some small projects can be accomplished without Congressional authorization). Local officials contact Congressional delegate if a study authorization is required and a member of Congress requests study authorization through Public Works Committees.

3. **Study Problem and Report Preparation**: The study is assigned to a Corps district office and funds to initiate a 12-18 month reconnaissance study are included in the President's budget. District conducts reconnaissance study, leading to reconnaissance report. If a study continues beyond reconnaissance phase, a local sponsor must agree to share cost of a feasibility phase (this study examines multiple solution alternatives for cost-benefit ratio and environmental impact). The study results in a Feasibility Report and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which are submitted to Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C.



4. **Report Review and Approval**: Final EIS is made available to the public. Report of the Chief of Engineers and final EIS is sent to heads of federal agencies and governors of affected states for comment, and comments from public are fully considered. Chief of Engineers report is transmitted to Congress through Assistant Secretary of the Army and the President's Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which offers comments. In most cases, the Corps continues preconstruction engineering and design after the feasibility report is submitted. The Chief of Engineers prepares a report which is referred to Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure in the House, and Committee on Environmental and Public Works in the Senate.

5. **Congressional Authorization**: Civil Works projects are normally authorized by Water Resources Development Act following committee hearings. Occasionally, Corps proposals are authorized by separate legislation or as part of another bill.

6. **Project Implementation**: New projects are included in President's budget based on national priorities and anticipated completion of design and plans and specifications so construction contracts can be awarded. Budget recommendations are based on evidence of support by state and ability and willingness of non-federal sponsors to provide their share of project construction costs. Congress appropriates federal share of funds for new starts – normally, this occurs in annual Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act. Secretary of Army and non-federal sponsor sign formal Project Cooperation Agreement (PAC), once Congress has appropriated project funds, and construction is managed by Corps but done by private contractors.

Emergency Response Missions

Throughout the nation's history, citizens have relied on the Army to respond to

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their needs in disasters. In a typical year, the Corps of Engineers responds to more than 30 Presidential disaster declarations, plus numerous state and local emergencies. Emergency responses usually involve cooperation with other military elements and federal agencies in support of state and local efforts.

Mike Lowe

The Corps conducts its emergency response activities under two basic authorities: the Flood Control and Coastal Emergency Act (FCCE), and the Stafford Disaster and Emergency Assistance Act (SDEAA). Through FCCE, the Corps provides disaster preparedness and advanced planning measures to reduce the amount of damage caused by an impending disaster.

It also authorizes the Corps to provide emergency operations such as unwatering, levee repair, beach nourishment, etc.

Under the Stafford Act, the Corps supports the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency in carrying out the National Response Plan which calls on 30 federal departments and agencies to provide coordinated disaster relief and recovery operations. This includes emergency missions like ice and water, temporary power, temporary housing, temporary roofing, etc.

It is not necessary to obtain additional Congressional authorization to provide emergency support under these acts.

After A Disaster

After the emergency response activities, Congress passes Emergency Supplemental Appropriations to fund federal agencies, including the Corps of Engineers, to repair damages caused by the disaster. In the case of Louisiana, this includes needed repairs to the hurricane protection system caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

"Emergency Supplemental funds are obtained quicker than the normal civil works authorization process," according to Mike Lowe, Emergency Manager for the New Orleans District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**.** "Since an obvious disaster does not require a reconnaissance study or a feasibility study to justify the federal spending, this funding skips over those lengthy steps.

"Emergency Supplemental Appropriations are used for specifically-designated purposes," Lowe explained. "We cannot deviate from Congress' authorization without their approval. The Corps cannot use specifically-designated funds in another parish, for example, or a different type of work, nor can the Corps change the scope of the work without Congressional authorization."

Conclusion

These processes enable the Corps to understand and anticipate the needs of their partners and customers so, when needed, the Corps is ready to provide support and solutions for the nation.

To find out more about *The Process* and the Corps of Engineers, please visit these websites:

http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/
http://www.usace.army.mil/who/index.html

Contact Information

Topic	Phone	Organization
New Orleans District work	(504) 862-2201	New Orleans District Public Affairs
Task Force Hope - Overall hurricane protection system restoration, repair and improvement	(504) 862-1836	Task Force Hope Public Affairs
Debris Removal in Louisiana	(504) 681-2317	Louisiana Recovery Field Office
Debris Removal in Mississippi	(601) 631-5065	Mississippi Recovery Field Office

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. 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
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Faces of Hope

"My faith and my work are the things that keep me going."

Corps of Engineers' Safety Officer and family lose their homes to Hurricane Katrina

By Susan Solomon

Sherry Scott, a Safety Officer with the New Orleans District Corps of Engineers, pulls reflective vests and hard hats from her supply cabinet for an upcoming Corps event. (USACE Photo by Susan Spaht)

Sherry Scott moved to Chalmette in St. Bernard Parish on June 7, 2005. She did all the things one normally does when moving to a new house and job. Then an unwelcome visitor named Katrina came to call on Aug. 29.

Having unpacked and arranged her belongings, Sherry was finally feeling settled into her new home. Her new furniture was in place and she had put the finishing touches on her decorating. Her fireplace mantle held framed photographs of her three children and three grandchildren that she had lovingly placed there. She now considered this house a home and a safe haven.

Her new home, which is located just a few blocks from the Murphy Oil refinery, is a short drive to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers New Orleans District headquarters where she is a Safety Officer. As a Safety Officer she is responsible for inspecting safety equipment, ensuring safety procedures and maintaining personal protective equipment for Corps personnel.

On Aug. 26, as Hurricane Katrina was bearing down on Louisiana, Scott was in a local hospital recovering from a medical procedure. Being a Safety Officer, Scott was mindful of the dangers posed by such a powerful hurricane. She left the hospital on pain killers so she could help evacuate her family ahead of the storm.

Her evacuating entourage consisted of 12 members of her extended family, ages two to 73 years, plus the collective family's five dogs.

With an elderly neighbor joining Scott's group, they left Chalmette in seven vehicles for the 14-hour drive to Tupelo, Mississippi. The trip, which would normally take five hours, was complicated by highways clogged with other storm evacuees.

A few days later, while watching television coverage of the hurricane, Scott realized the flooding scene she was watching was Chalmette; it was her neighborhood; it was her home. That's how she learned that the dream home she had just lovingly decorated was devastated.

When evacuating, she had filled a plastic container with her most important papers: house deed, birth certificates, and other records. Since she assumed she would be returning in a few days, she did not take any of the photos on the mantle or other cherished family mementos. Those are now gone.

Hurricane Katrina had flooded her house with eight feet of water, just two inches from the ceiling.

She lost everything except for the few clothes she took with her, her important document container, her puppy and, most importantly, her faith and her family members.

In addition to the flooding, Scott's home was inundated with oil when the Murphy Oil Company storage containers came off their foundation spilling thousands of gallons of oil over Scott's neighborhood.

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Pumps at London Ave. Canal perform well during recent testing

The Corps of Engineers conducts regular tests of outfall canal pumps as they are installed and as pumping capacity increases. This test was performed on Sept. 20 at the London Ave. Canal. (USACE Photo by Barry Fletcher)

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Since Scott is on the Corps of Engineers' primary response team, she dutifully called in to the national disaster response manager and told him, "I'm homeless now. So when you're ready to send safety people in, I'm ready to go."

Scott was the first Safety Officer to report for duty at the command center in Port Allen, Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina. That was Sept. 4.

She lived on a quarter boat for the first three weeks and served as a Field Coordinator for Safety at the Regional Field Office until Jan. 4. She worked seven days a week, 12 hours a day, and found that to be a healing process.

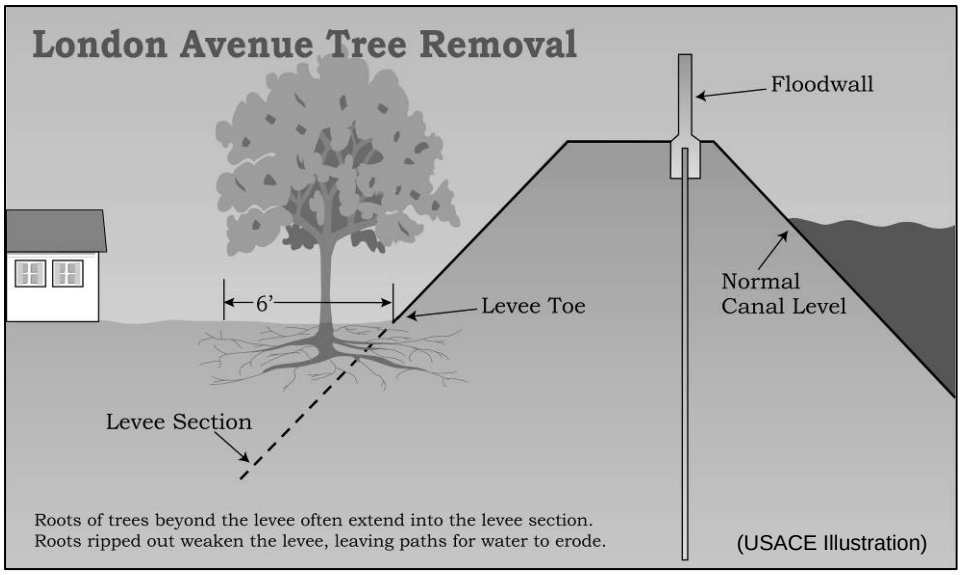
Scott began her career in government 20 years ago as a secretary. At one point she worked for General Tommy Franks, former Commander-in-Chief, United States Central Command, while he was a Colonel at Fort Hood, Texas.

She became interested in being a Safety Officer and entered the Army's Safety Intern Program. After graduating from that program, she was made Safety Manager at the Cold Regions Engineering Lab in New Hampshire, and then the Construction Engineering Research Laboratory in Illinois. Following that tour, she started her job with the Corps of Engineers in New Orleans.

"The two things that got me through this experience are my faith and my work," she said. "I think people who have a strong faith are better able to move on after disasters.

"And I have complete faith in the agency I work for – I think the Corps is doing everything that needs to be done in the Hurricane Protection System."

Sherry Scott inspects her gutted home in Chalmette recently. She had just moved into her home when Katrina flooded it. (USACE Photo by Susan Solomon)



Tree removal to begin on London Ave. Canal

Corps of Engineers work will strengthen hurricane defense for Gentilly neighborhoods

As part of the restoration of hurricane levees and floodwalls in New Orleans, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will begin tree removal in October along the London Avenue Canal.

Right of entry has been requested from the Orleans Levee District and public meetings will be scheduled.

The trees to be cut are rooted within the levee section and within 6 feet of the protected-side levee toe, a critical portion of the levee during a hurricane. Roots of these trees extend down into the levee section, which underlies, at an angle, the area near the levee's toe. Tree roots within the levee section violate Corps guidelines and endanger the integrity of the flood defenses for areas of the city beyond the specific neighborhood affected.

About 350 trees will be removed. Most of them are on the backyard edges of 264 canal-side properties. Trees will be cut at 4½ feet high so storm winds cannot blow them over and rip out roots, grass and soil. After the hurricane season, stumps and roots will be removed and the holes packed with clay. Delaying the stump removal will avoid weakening the levee embankment during the hurricane season.

"It's unfortunate that we must remove these trees after New Orleans has suffered so much loss of its tree canopy. But we have no choice," said Michael Stout, project manager for tree removal.

The reasons for tree removal are based on principles of science and engineering. Trees and other woody vegetation endanger hurricane protection works in several ways.

--Roots in levees open up pathways for seepage, especially after a tree dies.

--Toppled and uprooted trees create instability in the levee by removing grass and soil. This accelerates seepage, promotes erosion and weakens stability.

--Large overturned trees can damage floodwalls, which can also cause a levee breach.

Tree removal is part of the work to strengthen the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project, which involves New Orleans and St. Bernard, Jefferson and St. Charles parishes.

The New Orleans work is being done in coordination with the Orleans Levee District and will be carried out in two phases.

Phase 1. Only those trees within the levee section and within 6 feet of the levee toe are being removed. This is now underway along the lakefront and the Orleans Avenue Canal. Tree removal on the London Avenue Canal is scheduled for October 2006.

Later, trees will be removed along the 17th Street Canal. As with the London Avenue Canal, the pre-existing levees that support the floodwalls extend into backyards of adjacent property owners. The Corps is at work to determine which trees must be removed and will soon schedule public meetings to keep the public informed.

Phase 2. This phase has not yet begun. It will begin with an assessment of the impact of structures near the levees and floodwalls and of trees more than 6 feet beyond the levee toe. Levee safety may require that some of these be removed.

Pump Capacity Report

17th Street Canal……4,000 cfs
London Ave. Canal….2,800 cfs
Orleans Ave. Canal… 2,200 cfs

As of Sept. 25, 2006

Note: The Status Report Newsletter will give weekly reports on the pump capacity of the three outfall canals under construction. For more details, please visit this website:

http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/pumpcomp.htm