



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Mississippi Valley Division



Corps Hurricane Response

Task Force Hope Status Report

February 20, 2009

CORPS OFFERING 3 ALTERNATIVES FOR Seabrook Floodgate project

*Navigable barrier
will reduce risk of
storm surge flooding
in IHNC*

By Susan Spaht

The Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) is one of the most vulnerable areas within the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS). When tropical events occur, it is open to surge water entering from Lake Pontchartrain to the north, and from Lake Borgne, through the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW), to the south. This is what occurred during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, and Gustav in 2008.

To reduce the risk of surge entering the IHNC from the south during future hurricanes, the Corps of Engineers is building the IHNC Surge Barrier – Lake Borgne, the largest design/build civil works project in the history of the Corps, at the confluence of the GIWW and the Missis-



This aerial view of the IHNC at the Seabrook Bridge was taken from the Corps' website animation that illustrates the three Seabrook Floodgate alternatives. To view the animation, go to: http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/pao/videos/pao_videos.asp

issippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO). This project is scheduled for completion in 2011.

The Corps' concept for reducing the risk of surge from the north, i.e. from Lake Pontchartrain, is the **Seabrook Floodgate**. The purpose of this navigable floodgate is to provide a barrier in the IHNC near the shore of Lake Pontchartrain that can be

closed during storm events to keep surges from entering the IHNC and potentially overtopping the existing levees and floodwalls along the ca-

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Corps offering 3 alternatives for location of Seabrook Floodgate

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nal. The Corps of Engineers is offering three canal site alternatives for this project. These alternatives are outlined in *IER 11 Tier 2 – Pontchartrain* found on the website: www.nolaenvironmental.gov

The Seabrook Floodgate project is a candidate for Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) Procurement. This arrangement between the Corps of Engineers and the construction contractor is used to help obtain the best design and construction methods for a project. ECI Procurement allows the Corps the opportunity to receive valuable constructability insight from the construction contractor during design to help determine how to effectively build the project.

In May, the Seabrook Floodgate alternatives will be put out for public review and comment as a requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In July, the Corps anticipates satisfying NEPA compliance for the project.

Authorization to begin construction is expected to be given in April 2010, with construction completion expected in May of 2011. The Seabrook Floodgate project is part the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System.



Corps and EPA host joint Public Hearing

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' proposed action to keep storm surge from entering the Harvey and Algiers Canals would cause impacts to the Bayou aux Carpes area, a 3,200-acre wetlands of national significance established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the authority granted in the Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404(c).

The Corps has requested a modification of the 1985 EPA Final Determination

be made for the actions proposed as a part of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway West Closure Complex project.

The Corps request asserts that completion of the Greater New Orleans Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System would provide substantial benefits to several hundred thousand people living in the New Orleans area. The EPA is considering the Corps' request.

As part of that effort, the New Orleans District and the EPA hosted a joint public hearing at the New Orleans District Headquarters on Feb. 11 to serve two purposes. The first purpose was to collect public comments on the Corps' Individual Environmental Report 12, an environmental document that details the potential impacts the GIWW West Closure Complex would have on the proposed project area. A concurrent purpose of the hearing was to allow

the EPA to accept comments on the Corps' request to modify the Clean Water Act 404(c) determination.

"We've worked very closely with the EPA, navigation industry, local government and non-governmental organizations to develop a cohesive plan that would most effectively reduce the risk of storm surge inundation for people living on the West-



USACE Photo by Lee Mueller

bank," said Col. Alvin Lee, New Orleans District Commander.

"We recognize the importance of Bayou aux Carpes and would use innovative construction techniques to minimize impacts to the site."

"Decades ago, the EPA recognized the ecological value of the Bayou aux Carpes wetlands," said Miguel Flores, Director of the EPA Region 6 Water Quality Protection Division, "and, in 1985, we applied our authority under Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act to protect it.

"The Corps now requests that we modify that decision to accommodate increased hurricane protection. EPA is considering the Corps' request but will make no determination until the public has an opportunity to comment."



For more information on IER 12, go to: www.nolaenvironmental.gov

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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 Corps' hurricane recovery work to stakeholders.

This is an online publication that is open to public distribution.

This issue and past issues can be found at: <http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps>

Comments and questions may be sent to the

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Status Report Newsletter

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Corps repairs 8 Pump Stations in St. Bernard - all at full federal expense-



AFTER

Pump Station #2

On February 9, the Corps of Engineers, the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority – East, and St. Bernard Parish hosted formal ceremonies to turn over control of three repaired pump stations to the Lake Borgne Basin Levee District.

The pump stations transferred were #2 - Guichard, #3 - Bayou Villere,

and #5 – E.J. Gore, all in St. Bernard Parish. All three pump stations sustained severe damage during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Stations #2 and #3 were essentially destroyed.

The Corps has now completed repairs on all eight St. Bernard pump stations, bringing the Parish back to full, pre-Katrina pumping capacity.

All eight pump stations were repaired

at a total construction cost of \$22.3 million, all of which was 100% federally funded.

Repairs to the pump stations consisted of replacing pumps, diesel engines, lighting, generators and security fencing, as well as elevating stations, engines and electrical com-

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AFTER

Diesel Engine

St. Bernard Parish
Pump Stations repaired



AFTER



Hydraulic Pumps

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ponents. Additional storm proofing measures included adding butterfly valves at each station which can be closed to prevent water from back-flowing to the protected side.

“Communication and cooperation

among federal, state and local partners is paramount to achieving the goal of completing the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System in 2011,” said Karen Durham-Aguilera, Director of Task Force Hope.

“The Corps looks forward to contin-

ued successful partnerships with our state and local partners on future projects that will reduce risk for St. Bernard residents,” added Col. Michael McCormick, Commander of the Hurricane Protection Office.



Milestones of 2008



(Photo courtesy of Shaw)

Construction on the IHNC Surge Barrier- Lake Borgne was started in 2008.

By Susan Spaht

In September of 2008, the burgeoning Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS) was put to the test when Hurricanes Gustav and Ike roared across South Louisiana. According to Task Force Hope Director Karen Durham-Aguilera, "The gates worked, the pumps pumped, and the levee system held."

Even though the HSDRRS is only about one-third through construction, it is already stronger and more resilient than ever. Credit the hard work and determination of the Corps of Engineers, other Federal agencies, state and local agencies, as well as the Corps' partners and contractors.

Milestones reached in 2008:

- Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Surge Barrier construction was started;
- Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) was officially de-authorized and closure structure began;
- MRGO Ecosystem Restoration Study began;
- Army and State signed West Bank & Vicinity Project Partnership Agreement worth \$2.16 billion; and the Lake Pontchartrain & Vicinity Project Partnership Agreement worth \$3.85 billion;
- Many existing levees were strengthened and raised;
- Through re-design and engineer-
- ing, reduced amount of borrow (clay material) needed for building levees, from 100 million cubic yards to approximately 75 million cubic yards;
- Constructed five new safe rooms, and added storm-proofing measures at existing pump stations in Jefferson Parish;
- 32 Pump Station repairs completed in Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes for a total expenditure of \$35.2 million, all 100% federally funded,
- Contracts awarded for 13 Pump Station repairs in Plaquemines Parish for a total of \$14.3 million, 100% federally funded. All will be completed in 2009;
- Completed Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Draft Final Technical Report; about to undergo external peer review by the National Academy of Sciences;
- SELA contract for \$58.8 million awarded for construction of Dwyer Rd. Intake Canal in New Orleans East;
- All five Harvey Canal floodwall contracts awarded, totaling approximately \$340 million;
- Corps hosted over 100 public meetings in five parishes to obtain public comment into development of HSDRRS.



Showtime!

Videos illustrate and explain the important work of the Corps of Engineers as they build the HSDRRS

By Susan Spaht

The Corps of Engineers is designing and constructing myriad surge and flood defenses to provide the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS) for the people of south Louisiana.

These projects consist, generally, of basic earthen levees, armored levees and resilient floodwalls. But several of the HSDRRS projects are nothing less than engineering marvels, colossal giants that were developed using sophisticated design methods and highly innovative processes. A few of these projects will rate among the largest and most complicated construction projects in Corps civil works history.

To inform the public and stakeholders of its work and progress throughout the five-parish HSDRRS, the Corps has produced several videos and animations to explain the exciting work that is ongoing or upcoming. These videos are available on the new Team New Orleans website at:

http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/pao/videos/pao_videos.asp



USACE Illustration by Tom Durel



Inner Harbor Navigation Canal: An overview of the largest design-build civil works construction project in Corps history.

Eastern Tie-In: The project that connects the West Bank & Vicinity portion of the HSDRRS into the Mississippi River levees in Plaquemines Parish.

Western Tie-In: The project that connects the West Bank & Vicinity portion of the System into the Mississippi River levees in St. Charles Parish.

Flyover of HSDRRS: A computer-generated aerial view of the entire HSDRRS that explains and defines numerous System features.

West Closure Complex: Explains the selected construction alternative to reduce risk in the Harvey and Algiers Canals area of the West Bank.

Selective Armoring: The Corps is strengthening ("armoring") the backsides of selected floodwalls and levee transitions in the System to protect them from erosion if overtopped.

Storm Proofing Pump Stations: Dozens of pump stations have been or will be enhanced to provide more reliability in flood events.

Non-Federal Levees: Certain Plaquemines Parish non-Federal levees will be incorporated into the Federal system to protect a vital evacuation route.

Seabrook Floodgate: Navigable surge barrier planned for the IHNC area near the Seabrook Bridge.

HSDRRS: Does a name make a difference?

The following article is re-printed from "Gumbo", the blog of Angelle Bergeron, New Orleans Correspondent, Engineering News-Record. Re-printed in this Newsletter with permission from Ms. Bergeron. - The Editor

Greater New Orleans Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System: A Large Pill to Swallow But Worth the Effort.



The biggest problem with risk communication is, well, communication. When the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers started using the Greater New Orleans Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (as opposed to the former, Hurricane Protection System) writers across the nation collectively groaned. How are we going to fit that mouthful into every story and still remain within our allotted word count?

But the more I heard top brass talk about the new HSDRRS, the more I appreciated the importance of communicating that the system is not a guarantee of protection. Protection cannot be fully guaranteed. Risk can only be reduced. Until people understand personal risk and buy into their

own responsibility to mitigate that risk, people will be at greater risk for hurricanes, other natural disasters, terrorism, and whatever.

I posted the [Status-June 2008 map](#) on the bulletin board over my desk and, after only a few months, HSDRRS began to roll more easily off my tongue, and through my fingers, to the keyboard and into stories.

So Hurricane Katrina made landfall in New Orleans, bringing her surge and causing levees to fail, more than three years ago. The HSDRRS moniker is little more than six months old, and I am already fighting with editors to include it in stories. One editor, after shortening it to flood protection, told me that it is not the journalist's job to use the Corps' marketing terminology, to "sex up" projects. I told the editor that it is the official title for a reason that is not at all sexy, and more accurate than "flood control," especially since all structures can do is mitigate, not control. I argued how shorter is not necessarily better or more accurate, just shorter. The final story ran with "flood protection."

Space restraints are part of the reality of risk communication. And news is when something happens. If the risk remains constant, but people fail to recognize it, what is the news? The news is when that failure of recognition translates into a disaster. Do we really want to wait that long again? But if the communicators among us don't even realize the significance, how will John and Jan

Q. Public understand the nuances between Hurricane Protection System and Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System? If people don't understand the language, are we communicating anything at all?

Some may argue that changing the name from protection to risk reduction is irrelevant. I disagree. Even before Saul got knocked off his horse on the road to Damascus and came up as Paul, humans have understood the transforming power of naming. But if no one uses the new name, if no one recognizes the current system as much improved over the system of the past, if no one understands or embraces the new message, does the name make a difference?

HSDRRS was the Corps' attempt to brand "the system" so that people acknowledge inherent risk. If people refuse to call it what it is, a risk reduction system, won't they simply gravitate back toward the same complacency, false comfort and deferral of personal responsibility that seemed to be almost universal before Hurricane Katrina? Is Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System really too much for people to wrap their brains around? If we can't even take the time to write or say it, how can we take time to learn new ways of mitigating risk?

Angelle Bergeron's blog can be viewed at this address: <http://enr.construction.com/opinions/blogs/bergeron.asp>