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News Release

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Releases Tropical Rainfall Inundation Maps for the Orleans East Bank Area

NEW ORLEANS – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers today released tropical rainfall inundation maps that depict areas of Orleans East Bank and Jefferson Parish that may have short-term accumulations of interior water if the area were to experience 3-, 6- and 9-inch rainfall over a six-hour period with the interim outfall canal gates closed.

“The good news is that our computer modeling shows that by next June the city of New Orleans will be back to pre-Katrina levels of rainfall inundation in the city after a hurricane or tropical storm,” said Dan Hitchings, director of the Corps’ Task Force Hope. “The city will have storm surge protection at the interim gate closures at the 17th, Orleans and London canals with full pumping capacity.”

The maps, based on computer modeling, graphically display inundation areas under several scenarios:

- pre-Katrina and July 2007;
- current (July 2006) interim conditions with available pumps operating and the temporary closure structures (gates) at the mouths of the 17th Street, London Avenue and Orleans Avenue outfall canals closed;
- predicted conditions in September 2006 with the three gates closed and additional pump capacity, and;
- predicted conditions in July 2007 with the three gates closed and additional pump capacity.

The three outfall canal gates are designed to protect Orleans East Bank and the canals from Lake Pontchartrain storm surge. The gates will only be closed when lake stage is predicted to exceed five feet, a condition which has only occurred three times in the past 45 years.

The tropical rainfall inundation maps illustrate *potential* events using averages across a wide area that, in reality, may have considerable variances that impact actual flooding. The maps released today are based upon the most verifiable information currently available.

The Interagency Performance Evaluation Taskforce (IPET) model was used as the basis to generate these maps. The IPET team included more than 150 national and international experts representing 60 different government, university and industry organizations. Some of the nation's leading engineers were on the IPET team.

“When the outfall canal gates are closed during significant rainfall events, there will be areas within the city with an increased risk of standing interior water for short durations,” said Hitchings. “This situation will continue to improve as additional pumping capacity is brought on line.

“We know that the Corps’ work impacts people’s decisions and peace of mind,” stated Hitchings. “These maps, and others that will follow, are designed to ensure residents have a clear picture about where rainfall inundation risks exist under different forecast conditions and have the chance to prepare accordingly.”

The maps are intended only as a flood control planning tool reflecting current interim conditions and do not contain detailed information about potential flood depths in specific neighborhoods. The maps are not intended for and should not be used for insurance or building construction planning. The Corps has provided similar maps in the past to local, state and federal agencies as an aid in making decisions such as determining the best possible evacuation routes.

The tropical rainfall inundation maps are available on the Web at <http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/tfh>"