Riverside

Winter 2011
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Finish strong!

Meeting our goal of 1 June 2011 requires a strong final push

Teammates,

It would be an understatement to say that what you have accomplished since Hurricane Katrina is nothing short of incredible – you have done what many thought to be the impossible. You've done it by working long hours, by sacrificing yourselves, sacrificing your free time, and stretching yourselves professionally. The Nation owes you a debt of gratitude that will be difficult to repay.

When we started building this system, many felt that 1 June 2011 was a date far in the distance, but not you. You kept your focus on your mission and your dedication got us to where we are today. Nevertheless, we're not past the finish line yet. In order for us to deliver on our commitment, we need to focus our efforts, renew our dedication, and apply all of our talents and energies into completing our work. In this case, the end goal is more important than any long standing processes, outdated policy, and risk averse actions. Cost and quality will always be factors, but teams must focus on finding a way to bring projects to the 100-year level of risk reduction by 1 June. In 2005 and 2006, many believed Task Force Guardian (TFG) couldn't complete their mission – but they did. We need to continue to break through the red tape, solve problems close to the project, accept some managed risk, and use all the resources we have to meet the Nations commitment as the TFG team did.

My vision is that the President of the United States is standing on a levee on 1 June attesting to the 100-year level of risk reduction made available to the over 800,000 people of greater New Orleans provided to them by the dedication of the Team made up of Corps employees, contractors, and local and state officials.

I am personally and professionally committed to this vision. As such, I am holding a "Finish Strong" meeting every Tuesday 9:00 a.m. These updates include a review of the status of critical projects and project progress schedules to assess critical items requiring additional attention as well as overall contract progress toward our goals. I lead these meetings and the Protection and Restoration Office is the staff proponent. Each meeting lasts for two hours and attendance is limited to senior project managers (possibly some project managers to cover specific issues) and technical and support division chiefs to convey critical information and assessments on projects.

I am also conducting site visits to a project (or projects) that afternoon. The specific site visited is based on the results of the morning's "Finish Strong" meeting. Division chiefs, SPMs, PMs, and the entire project development team join me on these visits. Contracting, Environmental, Real Estate, and Office of Counsel will join us when necessary. These visits help improve situational awareness, team commitment and responsibility. Problem solving requires boots on the ground and field interaction with the team, including the contractors. Additionally, a byproduct of these visits is greater team building and a deeper sense of purpose.

Only I will authorize time extensions to schedules for 100-year level projects. This includes schedule impacts due to time extensions for weather delays and modifications. While maintaining our contractual obligations, PDTs will work with our construction contractors in formulating and submitting schedule recovery plans through senior PMs for my approval.

Expect me and division chiefs to be more involved with the contractors. Current procedures limit discussions with the contractor to the KO, COR, Resident Engineer, and Construction management team. Gaining commitment from individual contractors to support the goal of 1 June doesn't have to be a contract management or contract administration responsibility. These discussions can be led by others and it may be best that such discussions are led by me or other high level district staff for projects that are not currently on schedule to meet the 1 June date. Of course, official contract changes and direction will be handled by the KO, and within their authority, the COR and Resident Engineer. It is imperative that these discussions start immediately.

I have told you what I will do differently, now I need to express my expectations of you.

We will maintain the highest quality and we will not compromise our safety, the contractors' safety, or the safety of the general public. We have worked too hard for too long to challenge our quality and safety record now.

We must aggressively manage cost and schedule.

Communications will be highly effective and expedient and will occur as close to the project as possible. Decisions need to be made quicker and again, as close to the project as possible. Project team efficiencies need to be at the highest level. The focus needs to be on the success of the Team in meeting the 1 June goal rather than on individual offices. Rapid and effective communications, situational awareness of critical needs, and issue understanding and resolution are key to keeping and advancing schedules. Processing information, then creating and implementing solutions in a rapid manner are vital to moving projects forward. Submittals, RFI's, and issues should be addressed on the job to greatest extent possible.

We will take input from all of our teammates and they will participate in developing courses of action. That includes contractors, our state and local partners, and all organizations in the Corps of Engineers.

Senior project managers own project schedule and costs, and are responsible for capturing status, reporting critical issues and developing courses of action. If self-imposed policies, processes and preferences are inhibiting delivery, I expect the PM to lead the team to offer means for accomplishing the mission. All alternatives for moving schedules within 1 June 2011 will be presented by the PMs.

Construction Division is responsible for contract administration and is responsible to be synchronized with the project and program managers, to deliberately manage the effects of change on mission delivery.

The processing of submittals and contractor requests for information (RFI) for 100-year projects require rapid turnaround. I have asked the deputy chiefs of Engineering Division, Construction Division and Project Restoration Office to manage and track all submittals and RFI's. RFIs must be returned to the contractor in 48 hours and submittals returned to the contractor in 5 days. Management by the three deputies will improve visibility and efficiency of this process. This is not intended to be a PDT meeting. They will identify submittals on critical paths, provide a list to me weekly, and track their progress.

I have asked the same three folks to manage and track modifications. Some of their responsibilities would include compiling a list of pending modifications; tracking timelines; and an overall program roll up of the number of modifications processed and completed. This team has the obligation to apply additional Team New Orleans resources and best practices, as well as regional resources to quickly reduce any backlog and to utilize the Region to the maximum extent possible.

The CCIR process works but is not timely enough to support rapid critical decision making in its current format. PDT's meet, work issues, follow up and implement but the execution needs to be much quicker. The CCIR process needs to document the issue and the recovery action but can't be relied upon to drive schedule at the pace required. I have asked PRO to keep the process but adjust it as needed to expedite decision making and execution. If you need a decision from anyone, including me, pick up the phone and call them; don't wait for slides to be made and an email to be sent.

We are about to enter a phase of our professional lives that will be unlike anything we have ever seen. Over the next six months, we will be working at a tremendous pace. Government employees, contractors and sub-contractors will stand shoulder to shoulder as we work towards fulfilling our commitment to deliver a risk reduction system that is ready to go on 1 June 2011. Let's Finish Strong together.

Building Strong
Essayons,
Colonel Ed Fleming

Reducing Lake Pontchartrain storm surge risk

Construction of Seabrook floodgate underway

by Nick Silbert

Five years after Hurricane Katrina's storm surge entered the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) and overwhelmed the levees and floodwalls lining the waterway, the Corps is beginning construction on the Seabrook Floodgate Structure to reduce the possibility of a similar situation from ever happening again.

"We're building a massive floodgate complex at the mouth of the IHNC at Lake Pontchartrain to block storm surge from entering into the heart of the city," said Col. Robert Sinkler, commander of the Corps' Hurricane Protection Office. "The levees and floodwalls that previously served as the first line of defense against storm surge in the IHNC will now serve as the second line of defense."

The Seabrook Floodgate Structure will consist of a sector gate and two vertical lift gates located approximately 540 feet south of the Senator Ted Hickey Bridge. Floodwalls on the east and west sides of the structure will tie into the rest of the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS). During the final stage of construction, stone will be placed around the structure to further protect it from water and waves. The 100-year level of risk reduction will be attained in June 2011, though construction of additional features will continue for another six months.

The Seabrook Floodgate Structure will prevent storm surge generated in Lake Pontchartrain from entering the IHNC. Furthermore, it will work in tandem with the IHNC-Lake Borgne Surge Barrier, currently in construction, to reduce the risk from a storm that has a one percent chance of occurring in any given year for some of the region's most vulnerable areas, such as New Orleans East, metro New Orleans, the Ninth Ward, Gentilly and St. Bernard Parish.

To provide 100-year risk reduction, the sector gate and adjacent vertical lift gates will be built to an elevation of 16 feet above the waterline. The sector gate will have a 95-foot-wide opening, the width of the navigational channel at this location, and the two vertical lift gates will have 50-foot-wide openings. The vertical lift gates are being constructed to maintain the existing water flow velocity through the channel since higher velocities would make navigation through the sector gate difficult and potentially unsafe. Navigation through the vertical lift gates will be prohibited.

The $495,000 Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) contract for construction of the Seabrook Floodgate Structure was awarded to Alberici Constructors of St. Louis, Mo., in October 2009. ECI is a project delivery method in which the Corps engages earlier with the general contractor to provide "Preconstruction Services" concurrent with the design effort. As designs progress, the Corps exercises the construction option on the ECI contract. The total scope of construction is expected to cost $155 million.

The approval of "Individual Environmental Report #11, Tier 2: Lake Pontchartrain, Improved Protection on the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal, Orleans Parish, Louisiana" in April 2010 gave environmental clearance for the project. The construction phase officially began in July 2010 when the Corps acquired real estate for the project and exercised the construction option.

Due to ongoing construction, the IHNC near Lake Pontchartrain was closed last fall to all marine traffic, and the channel will remain closed until the fall of 2011. The Corps of Engineers is working as quickly and efficiently as possible to reduce negative impacts to shipping and industry along the canal.

In September, Alberici began constructing a rock dike across the IHNC in the Seabrook area to reduce flow velocities in the channel. The reduced flows have allowed crews to fill the pre-existing scour hole with sand. To place the rock dike and fill the scour hole, approximately 179,000 cubic yards of rock and sand was placed in 30 days at the rate of one truck every three minutes.

A conceptual Seabrook floodgate structure

To achieve the desired compaction and density of the underlying sand, the contractor is utilizing Vibro-Compaction, whereby specially designed, torpedo-shaped probes are inserted into the water and vibrate so that loose sand grains are rearranged into a more compact state. As of mid-December 2010, the northern perimeter of the cellular cofferdam is being installed, with two of seven coffer cells in place. The cofferdam will allow crews to construct the gate system and its foundation in a safe, dewatered environment.

The team is optimizing the construction schedule and seeking efficiencies where possible. For instance, the contractor is installing an efficient dewatering system to remove water from the cofferdam and expedite gate construction in lieu of placing a concrete tremie slab to seal off the bottom of the cofferdam. Approximately 31 Olympic swimming pools of water will need to be removed from the cofferdam at the rate of two pools per hour in order to stay on schedule.

The cofferdam, which will be complete in the spring of 2011, and the floodwall tie-ins on the east and west sides will provide 100-year-level risk reduction for the 2011 hurricane season. The cofferdam at Seabrook will serve as the fourth Interim Closure Structure along the New Orleans lakefront. The Interim Closure Structures at the 17th Street, Orleans Avenue and London Avenue canals were completed prior to the 2006 hurricane season and will be replaced with permanent canal closures and pumps in 2014.

"We are committed to providing the 100-year-level of risk reduction for the people of greater New Orleans in 2011," said Col. Sinkler. "The Seabrook Floodgate Structure will close the one remaining gap along the lakefront."

The contractor recently installed a rock dike across the IHNC in the Seabrook area to slow down flows across the channel. The reduced flow allows for crews to fill the pre-existing scour hole, which must be done before construction can begin on the cofferdam.

An aerial view of the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal where it meets Lake Pontchartrain. The Seabrook Floodgate Structure is currently being built just south of the Senator Ted Hickey Bridge, pictured here. This photograph was taken in August 2010, before construction began.
USACE Photo by Paul Floro

Levees, floodwalls and pump stations

100 year level of risk reduction in Jefferson and St. Charles parishes

by Kristen Kendrick

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, is in the midst of an unprecedented construction effort and is investing approximately $450 million in building strong and reliable earthen levees, concrete floodwalls, steel gates and pumps in Jefferson Parish on the east bank of the Mississippi River.

To date 99 percent of the 9.1 miles of Jefferson Parish's perimeter levees have been raised to the 100-year level of risk reduction elevation using clay from the Bonnet Carre Spillway. This effort is nearly complete and work includes building earthen levees and embankments. The only remaining work at all five lakefront levee reaches is establishing turf on top of the levees.

The final levee construction contract includes improvements to the earthen levee adjacent to the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. This contract was awarded in September 2010 to Progressive Construction for $1.85 million and is scheduled for completion in March 2011.

With six structure contracts currently under construction, the Corps is building hardened structures on the east bank of Jefferson Parish. The breakwaters at the Bonnabel and Duncan pump stations are close to completion and will reduce the intensity in which storm surge waves impact the pump stations. The floodgates and floodwalls at Bonnabel and Williams Boulevard are also substantially complete.

A joint venture company consisting of Odebrecht and Johnson Bros. Construction is building concrete floodwalls on the Lake Pontchartrain side of four Jefferson pump stations. The work amounts to a total investment of $174 million and began in April 2010. Construction of the fronting protection is progressing on schedule.

The contract to build a bridge over a concrete floodwall at the southern entrance to the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway bridge was awarded in August 2010; however construction was temporarily delayed due to a post award protest. This stop-work order was lifted in mid-October and equipment needed to build the floodwall is being moved into place. Traffic re-routing began in early December.

Farther west, the Corps will replace the existing West Return Floodwall with a new stronger and more robust concrete T-wall. The new wall is being built about 30 feet east of the existing wall. The construction work was divided into two contracts and both have been awarded. The contracts for both the portion of the wall that goes from Interstate-10 to the Lake Pontchartrain and the southern portion of the West Return Floodwall from I-10 south to the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport are underway.

There are two construction contracts which will provide wave attenuation and foreshore protection for a large portion of the Jefferson Parish levee system on Lake Pontchartrain; both contracts have been awarded.

Suburban Pump Station fronting protection

Bayou Trepagnier pump station

The Corps is also investing in the relationships it has with the community members that live near the Jefferson Parish risk reduction features. In the summer of 2010 project managers serving Jefferson Parish's east bank began speaking at civic and neighborhood association monthly meetings to inform residents about what sorts of work is happening in their community. To date, the Jefferson Parish project team has visited 7 neighborhood and civic groups and local elected officials to provide an update on the status of construction.

Securing St. Charles Parish

Construction of risk reduction measures along the St. Charles Parish lakefront is well underway. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, is spending about $100 million to raise earthen levees to elevations that will defend against a storm surge event that has a one percent chance of occurring each year. Approximately 30 percent of the 9.5 miles of St. Charles Parish's perimeter levees have been raised to the 100-year risk reduction elevations and there is only one remaining contract not currently under construction.

The last contract to be awarded in St. Charles Parish is for construction of the 160 ft. long Shell Pipeline Floodwall. The work is scheduled to begin in December 2010.

Currently, St. Charles residents have an unprecedented level of risk reduction. The new concrete T-walls at the Almedia and Walker Drainage Structures are in place and the Goodhope Floodwall is built to the same system-wide caliber, meaning it is being designed to defend against a surge event that has a one percent chance of occurring each year. The Gulf South Floodwall is nearly complete and work continues at the Bayou Trepagnier Complex, Cross Bayou Drainage Structure, St. Rose Drainage structure, I-310 Floodwall, and the Illinois Central Railroad Gate. For any structures where the existing protection is being degraded for construction purposes, interim risk reduction measures flood protection will be in place by June 2011 to match the pre-Hurricane Katrina design elevations.

All of the St. Charles Parish east bank levee work is expected to be completed in spring 2011 and structures such as floodwalls are scheduled for completion by June 2011.

For more information on construction of risk reduction measures in St. Charles and Jefferson Parishes or to schedule a tour, please call 877-427-0345.

Cross Bayou drainage structure

Building Strong®

Corps using wick drains, sand blanket to increase levee strength along one stretch in N.O. East

by Nick Silbert

An aerial view of the sand blanket taken in August 2010. The sand blanket was placed to improve the levee foundation between Southpoint and the CSX Railroad crossing in New Orleans East. *USACE Photo by Paul Floro*

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Hurricane Protection Office is quickening the pace of construction and combating soft soil conditions by installing wick drains to increase the strength and the rate of consolidation of levee material.

"This is the largest levee project on the East Bank of the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System," said Col. Robert Sinkler, commander of the Hurricane Protection Office. "We are incorporating millions of cubic yards of clay into this 7.5-mile stretch of levee."

To raise the levee from the existing elevations of 14 to 15 feet above sea level to the 18 to 25 feet required for 100-year levels of risk reduction, the Corps and its contractors are installing a 250-foot-wide sand drainage blanket and nine million linear feet of vertical wick drains. The wick drains and sand blanket will work in tandem to remove and deposit the sub-surface water onto the protected side of the levee.

First, crews placed a thin separator geotextile fabric along the entire stretch of levee. A two-foot-thick, 250-foot-wide sand drainage blanket was then placed on top of the fabric. Gravity forces the water to percolate towards the toe of the protected side of the levee because the sand blanket was placed at a slight angle so that the water could flow away from the levee along a slope. Louisiana-based BIS, L.L.C., completed the sand blanket and fabric placement in July 2010.

Following placement of the sand blanket, several rigs began installing the wick drains, which are driven 35 feet into the ground through the sand layer, separator fabric. These "drains," reminiscent of flexible-plastic tubes, are cut at an angle at the tips once they are inserted. The wick drains remove the sub-surface water to allow the soil to consolidate more quickly. When complete, the compacted, strengthened soil column will be able to support the levee raise.

Rigs install wick drains along the stretch of levee between Southpoint and the CSX Railroad crossing in New Orleans East. USACE Photo by Nick Silbert

The wick drains are wrapped with geotextile filter jackets. These jackets have high water permeability, but retain the finest soil particles. Once the water has passed through the jackets, it is carried vertically to the surface via prefabricated, flexible plastic cores. The sand will then transport the moisture toward the toe of the protected side of the levee.

Archer Western Contractors, Ltd., the primary contractor on the project, sub-contracted this component of the work out to U.S. Wick Drain, a ground improvement firm specializing in the supply and installation of wick drains. Approximately 92 percent of the wick drains have been installed as of early November 2010.

Archer Western is also placing a nine-inch-thick, 398,000-ton layer of gravel-sized stone on top of the sand blanket. The stone will back-up the sand layer, facilitating in transporting the water. The contractor has placed approximately 90 percent of the gravel as of November 2010.

The contractor is adding a high-strength geotextile fabric on top of the stone layer to reinforce the levee foundation and separate the clay from the underlying rock and sand. A portion of high-strength fabric will also be placed within the clay layer to further support the embankment. In total, approximately one million square yards of separator and high-strength geotextile fabric will be placed. About 90 percent of the separator fabric has been placed as of November 2010.

To raise the embankment, Archer Western will provide nearly 3.5 million cubic yards of clay from an off-site borrow supply to raise the embankment. The remaining 185,000 cubic yards of clay will be incorporated from the existing levee along that stretch. Embankment work is well under way and is approximately 20 percent complete as of November 2010.

In addition to the 7.5 miles of levee, this massive risk reduction project, stretching north-to-south from the northeastern corner of New Orleans East (locally known as Southpoint) to the CSX Railroad crossing, also includes replacing the Highway 11 and Highway 90 vehicle gates and elevating the portion of Interstate 10 that crosses the levee. Barriere Construction Company, L.L.C., will complete the Interstate 10 portion of the project.

The entire project, including all associated contracts, is budgeted at more than $200 million. The project, which will reduce the risk in New Orleans East from a storm surge associated with a storm that has a one percent chance of occurring in any given year, will be completed in June 2011.

"It's important for the people of New Orleans East to know that the Corps is working tirelessly and implementing innovative processes to construct this massive levee," said Col. Sinkler. "This raised levee will assist in providing New Orleans East the greatest risk reduction the area has ever seen."

Wick drains help increase the strength of the underlying soil by removing excess sub-surface water. USACE Photo by Nick Silbert

Celebration in the Basin

Series of events draws attention to the nation's largest river swamp

story and photographs by Karen Collins

The Atchafalaya Basin is home to some of the country's most productive fish and wildlife habitat. It's a fertile ground for hunters, fishermen, boaters, nature photographers and outdoor enthusiasts. The Atchafalaya Basin is a major contributing factor to Louisiana being known worldwide as a "Sportsman's Paradise."

Louisianans never need much of an excuse to celebrate, so when Governor Bobby Jindal once again declared October Atchafalaya Month, the Friends of the Atchafalaya and the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area kicked the month off with Experience Atchafalaya Days. Experience Atchafalaya Days activities are intended to increase awareness about the Atchafalaya Basin environment and acquaint participants with the resources, culture and recreational opportunities in the floodway and surrounding parishes.

There were many activities throughout the basin during October, including the opening of the "Cadillac" of boat launches and a little "roadside assistance."

The Myette Point boat launch officially opened at a ribbon cutting ceremony on October 14, 2010. The boat launch was completed through a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and St. Mary Parish Government. Construction began in September 2007 but was delayed several times due to high water within the basin.

Assistant Secretary Louis Buatt of the La. Office of Coastal Management, St. Mary's parish President Paul Naquin, and USACE District Commander Col. Ed Fleming are joined by the KAS Construction contractor representatives at this historic moment.

"This project hit a few delays along the way," said New Orleans District Commander Col. Ed Fleming, "but the commitment to this project from all those involved at the state, local and federal levels remained strong."

This new asset to the local community is considered by many to be the "Cadillac" of all boat launches within the State. It consists of a new concrete boat ramp with five lanes (four lane boat launch and one canoe launch); a new floating courtesy dock adjacent to the ramp; a concrete apron adjacent to the boat ramp; a comfort station (restroom); a crushed stone parking area; and upgrading of existing public access roads.

The launch is in the vicinity of Charenton, La., in St. Mary Parish. It provides a point of entry into the Lower Atchafalaya Basin Floodway for recreational fishing vessels, commercial fishing vessels, hunters, crew boats, federal and state government personnel, and others.

Two days after the launch dedication, the Acadiana-based Evangeline Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, with the help of state and federal partners, hosted a community project to help clean-up the Atchafalaya Basin. Troops spent the morning picking up trash and debris throughout the basin. Those troops who traveled by boat to Whiskey Island were the first people to pick up trash there in almost 40 years.

In honor of 100-years of scouting, the council made a commitment to help preserve the Atchafalaya Basin and will devote the next 100 years to this cause. This project is an opportunity for scouts and their families to become more involved in the basin; to remove litter, create recreational opportunities, restore ecosystems damaged by hurricanes, and bring attention to one of Louisiana's greatest natural assets. Lt. Gov. Scott Angelle and other elected officials were on hand to recognize the youth for their work and the importance of community initiatives such as this one.

The first ever boat launches from the new Myette Point boat launch.

"As Louisianans, we are stewards of wonderfully unique landscapes and fertile habitats that make this state an alluring destination for naturalists, hunters, fishermen, campers and birdwatchers," said Lt. Gov. Scott Angelle. "One of our natural gems is the Atchafalaya Basin."

Preparing for the official ribbon cutting that will signify the long anticipated opening of the new and greatly improved Myette Point boat launch.

Troop 174 crosses the river to Whiskey Island to help pick up trash for the first time in almost 40 years.

One scout brings a handful of garbage bags to the rest of his troop.

Some of the older scouts handle the larger debris—here they dig out a washing machine that has been dumped off the I-10 corridor.

Basin Facts:

The basin is a scenic, semi-wilderness area of hardwood forests, cypress stands, marshes and bayous. It is the largest swamp in the United States, encompassing approximately 838,000 acres of forests, bayous, swamp and lakes, and extends south from the Old River Control Structure approximately140 miles to Morgan City.

The floodway is about 15 miles wide and confined by the East and West Atchafalaya Basin Protection levees. It is a principle floodway of the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project. The New Orleans District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, operates four locks to keep the Atchafalaya River and basin channels open for commercial barges and small boats. There are 449 miles of federal levees, 14 pumping stations and 15 drainage structures in the basin to channel and remove flood waters.

Forty-five species of mammals inhabit the basin. The principal big game species is the white-tailed deer. Important small game mammals include the fox squirrel, gray squirrel and swamp rabbit. Wildlife species of commercial importance include raccoon, mink and nutria. The Louisiana black bear, a threatened wildlife species, currently inhabits the basin.

The basin is an important wintering area for waterfowl in the Mississippi Flyway. The forested wetlands and shallow lakes provide excellent feeding and resting areas. Wading birds such as the great blue heron and great egret, and waterfowl such as the mallard and wood duck can be found in abundance. Numerous species of reptiles and amphibians are common, including the American alligator and western cottonmouth.

Historically, a mild climate, abundance of natural resources and unique Spanish and French cultures have attracted economic investment to the area in spite of the risks from periodic spring floods and hurricanes. Important oil and gas fields coexist with farmlands, commercial forests, and a sizable commercial fishing and trapping industry. Sport fishing is extremely important in the basin. Sport fish include yellow, striped and largemouth bass, and white and black crappie. Recreationally and commercially harvested shellfish include red swamp and white river crawfish, river shrimp and blue crab.

Recreation:

The Indian Bayou Area is a 28,000-acre public access area managed by the Corps. The Corps manages the area to promote unique wildlife and habitats of the Atchafalaya Basin. Several threatened and endangered species inhabit the basin. A large portion of the area has been restored from agricultural development into swamp and bottomland hardwood forest habitat.

Indian Bayou contains some of the country's most productive wildlife habitat. It's a paradise for hunters, fishermen, boaters, hikers, nature photographers, and outdoor enthusiasts.

Directions:

Located in St. Landry and St. Martin parishes, the Indian Bayou Area is 40 miles west of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, north of Interstate Hwy 10 and just west of the Atchafalaya River. To access from Interstate 10, take the Butte La Rose exit (exit 121) and follow the levee road north. From U.S. Hwy 190, exit at Krotz Springs and take LA Hwy 105 south. There are several public parking areas along the levee road.

Indian Bayou Area recreational activities:

- biking
- birding
- boating
- canoeing (Indian Bayou)
- cultural or historic sites
- fishing
- hiking (Indian Bayou)
- horseback riding
- hunting
- all terrain vehicles
- pets allowed
- water sports
- wilderness area
- wildlife viewing

2010-11 Hunting information for Indian Bayou Area

- An annual permit is required to hunt on the Indian Bayou Area.
- Permits have changed this year. Permits are now located as a cut-out on the front panel of the 2010-2011 Guide to Hunting on Indian Bayou brochure.
- The brochure will be maintained on all informational bulletin boards throughout the project.
- They may also be downloaded from the New Orleans District Web site at: http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/recreation/rec_atchafalaya.asp or picked up at the project office. The Project office is located at 112 Speck Lane Port Barre, LA 70577. Office hours are Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Phone (337) 585-0853

Defining a lifetime

Construction Inspector John "Al" Mistrot epitomizes Corps dedication and excellence by Jenny Marc

The dictionary describes dredging as the act of "bringing up or clearing something from a river, harbor, or other area of water."

But as far as the New Orleans District's Lafayette Area Office is concerned, that's just one definition of the word. To QA Dredge Chief Kinney Benoit, dredging is synonymous with Al Mistrot, and to Mistrot, the word is more than just an occupation—it's a way of life. That's why, with his eligible retirement date just days away, leaving his job is the last thing that Mistrot plans to do.

John Allen Mistrot has spent more than four decades in the dredging industry, mainly as a construction inspector at the Corps of Engineers. After joining the Lafayette Area Office in 1973, he has become a vital team member. His experience and expertise makes it hard to imagine an office without him – but if Mistrot had followed through with his original plans—his colleagues might have had to.

Defining life Goals

After graduating from Leonville High School in 1966, the Arnaudville native enrolled in the University of Southwestern Louisiana at Lafayette.

"I was studying for a degree in wildlife management," Mistrot explains. "My original goal was to become a biologist."

But instead of completing his degree, he left after just two years to join the U.S. Air Force. Upon returning home from his four years of service, which included a 1971 tour of Vietnam, Mistrot began looking for work with the Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries (LWF). Because he couldn't find a position immediately, he took his first dredging job with Bauer Dredging, but vowed to keep looking.

His search, however, didn't last long. Several months later Mistrot traveled to Morgan City and learned that the New Orleans District's Lafayette Area Office was hiring Vietnam Veterans. By August, 1973 Mistrot was employed as a construction inspector in maintenance dredging program.

Re-writing definitions

Throughout his 37-year career with the Corps, Mistrot worked all along the Louisiana Gulf Coast, from Southwest Pass to Cameron, and he gained intimate knowledge of the navigation and flood control projects on both the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers.

During that time, he supervised hundreds of dredging operations, but when asked what his most memorable project was, he answers easily—the Morgan City Harbor. This answer should come as no surprise, given that he has completed the job on 76 occasions.

"Even though I've done it so many times, I still enjoy it," he says. "Whether there's an issue with the traffic or a problem with the dredging process, there's always a new challenge."

It's the fact that Mistrot not only likes these challenges, but has seen so many of them that makes him invaluable. As his supervisor Kinney Benoit explains, his unparalleled experience gives Kinney the utmost confidence in Mistrot, regardless of the task at hand.

"Al falls into the category of great senior inspectors," he says. "He has such a wealth of knowledge that we can put him on any job and not have to worry about it getting done, because we know it will."

Coming Full Circle

Although Mistrot never got that first LWF job, little did he know that his dredging work would lead him back to that very same agency years down the road.

Over the course of his career, Al developed a reputation for successfully completing projects where both wetland development and restoration were crucial—a feat he considers his greatest accomplishment. Because of his expertise on the subject, the Louisiana State Department of Wildlife & Fisheries often requested Mistrot to supervise environmentally sensitive projects.

In addition to earning the respect of multiple state and federal agencies, Mistrot's restoration work also earned him an array of honors over the years. From the traditional to the one-of-a-kind, he has received a variety of awards, including two at the division level for both safety and inspector of the year. Most recently, however, he literally became part of the local land, as one of the islands that he helped create was named after him.

But as far as success goes, Mistrot doesn't define it in terms of certificates or islands. The only thing he cares about is getting the job done. And it's that dedication that won't allow him to leave.

"I've been working on my current job for five months now," he explains. "I can't just start a job without finishing it—I need to see it through."

Employees in Lafayette have no need to worry, however. Even after completing this job, Mistrot might take off a week or two, but he doesn't plan on leaving the business anytime soon. As he says, dredging is simply what he does.

"After living on the road for forty years, you don't just go back to normal life."

Building Strong®

LCA Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove

Scoping meetings kick off project feasibility study

by Lee Mueller

"Focus on sediment placement," "limit the amount of freshwater," and "form a stakeholder group" were just some of the many comments the Corps of Engineers and State of Louisiana project team received during November's Louisiana Coastal Area, Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove scoping meetings. These meetings were held as a kickoff for the Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging project feasibility study. As part of the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) program, this project is focused on large scale coastal and ecosystem restoration within the Barataria Basin. As authorized in the Water Resources and Development Act of 2007, the feasibility study will look at a medium sized freshwater diversion located on the west bank of the Mississippi River near the community of Myrtle Grove in Plaquemines Parish. The project would also include a dedicated effort to place dredged material in the project area to enhance the benefits of the diversion and aid in the creation of marsh.

As part of the National Environmental Policy Act requirements for federal actions having a significant effect on the environment, three scoping meetings were held to provide the public with an opportunity to share ideas, concerns, and insight on the proposed Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove project and the potential area to be influenced by the project. All the comments received from the public during the public comment period will be incorporated into the official record for the project. In addition, the project team will take these comments into consideration as they move forward in the development of this important coastal restoration project.

Saving lives not just for superheroes

Team Essayons continues support of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society by Jenny Marc

When it comes to heroes, most children only believe in the "super" kind, the caped-crusaders who always come to the rescue just in the knick of time. As we grow older, we know that even though Superman might not exist, we still encounter heroes on a daily basis, from the doctors who save the lives of others to the Soldiers who risk their own.

But often overlooked are the everyday ones. They're not faster than speeding bullets and they don't create medical miracles. They're simply doing what they can to change the life of someone else. And at the New Orleans District, there's dozens of them.

In addition to the uniformed personnel who have spent their careers serving our country, there's a group of employees who join forces each year for a common cause. Named after the Corps motto, Team Essayons has been working for more than a decade to raise money for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS), this year surpassing $10,000.

Roughly ten years ago, Project Manager Stan Green had an idea. For years he had been participating in one of the NMSS' largest fundraisers, an annual round-trip bike ride from Hammond, Louisiana to Percy Quin State Park in Mississippi. He started surveying the office for potential participants, and was thrilled by the response. When several co-workers committed to the 150-mile ride, Team Essayons was born.

The ride takes place each year during the first weekend of October. Even though the majority of the event is centered on the bike ride itself, it's not just all work and no play. Upon arriving at the halfway point, participants are greeted by a large party, with more food and festivities than they can imagine—that is, if they can muster the energy. After a well deserved celebration, they turn in for an early night in preparation for the journey back the following day.

Over the years, the number of team members swelled. Pre-Katrina, there were almost 75 riders. Whether they had a personal connection to the cause or they were just looking for exercise, employees joined for a variety of reasons, but their goal was the same: completing the ride to raise money for research.

Being a team member means much more than just showing up on the big day. Group training takes place practically year-round, both after work and on weekends. But for those who aren't used to a rigorous workout schedule, this year's team captain explains that there's no need to worry.

"We start small, and take it from there," says Fishery Biologist Nathan Dayan. "We usually try to work up to 60 miles per week, but we're flexible."

Still unsure? Just talk to first time rider Tammy Gilmore.

"I was a bit nervous at first, but Nathan really helped me through it," she explains. "Once the weekend rolled around, I felt really prepared and I had a great time."

Tammy enjoyed it so much that not even a week after the ride was completed, she had already registered for next year.

To learn more about Team Essayons, or to participate in this District tradition, call Nathan Dayan at 504.862.2530, or email him at Nathan.S.Dayan@usace.army.mil

New Orleans District

Engineering Day Picnic 2010

Image by Patti Geistfeld