Commander's Desk

An unprecedented five years

Many challenges still remain ahead

The eyes of the nation and the world returned to New Orleans with the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. During the weeks prior, many local, national and international media visited Corps construction sites throughout the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System. They toured the GIWW West Closure Complex and filmed atop the IHNC Lake Borgne Surge Barrier. What these reporters saw during these tours was an unprecedented accomplishment in flood risk reduction.

For the last five years, Team New Orleans has undertaken an unparalleled engineering feat, combining innovation, hard work and strong partnerships to create a comprehensive, resilient and redundant storm surge risk reduction system in greater New Orleans. The mission, more often than not, required our team members to put the needs of the mission above their own. Every day, they willingly made personal sacrifices to provide a greater level of risk reduction for their families, friends, neighbors and even their critics. This talent, ability and determination demonstrated by the Team New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina have become known throughout the Corps and among our stakeholders and partners. As Kevin Wagner, project manager for the WCC and I told Fox News: This mission is not just professional; it is personal.

This task was accomplished while continuing to maintain the other aspects of the Corps' mission, including ensuring safe and reliable navigation on some of the nation's most important waterways and paving the path forward in the coastal protection and ecosystem restoration efforts that are critical to South Louisiana's future.

Yet, as we acknowledge how far we have come, we must also continue to look to the future. As President Obama stated while here in New Orleans, "The largest civil works project in American history is underway to build a fortified levee system. As I pledged as a candidate, we're going to finish this system by next year, so that this city is protected against a 100-year storm – because we should not be playing with Russian roulette every hurricane season."

Many challenges still lay ahead before we achieve our task of providing a 100-year level of storm surge risk reduction by June 2011. As we push forward, the New Orleans team will maintain the same levels of intensity, perseverance, resolve and desire that got us this far. For in the words of Benjamin Franklin, "Energy and persistence conquers all."

Building Strong

Col. Ed Fleming

HSDRRS

First pumps installed at West Closure Complex

Each pump has a capacity of 1,740 cubic feet per second

This Labor Day weekend, the New Orleans District West Closure Complex team installed three of the 11 direct-drive, "flower pot" pumps for the complex's massive pumping station. Each pump has a capacity of 1,740 cubic feet per second and weighs approximately 70 tons. When all 11 pumps are installed, the pump station will have a capacity of 19,140 cubic feet per second, making it the largest pump station of its kind in the world. When fully operational, the pump station could fill an olympic-sized swimming pool in less than five seconds.

A massive 600-ton crane, especially provided by B&G Crane Services, lifted each pump individually and positioned it over the concrete bay recently constructed to hold the pump. It was then lowered slowly into place with a large team overseeing the process. The installation of these pumps is a significant milestone in construction. Nine pumps will be installed by hurricane season 2011, and the remaining two will be in place by 2012.

In the event of a storm, the 225-foot sector gate located on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway will be closed against surge. The massive pump station will be used to evacuate rain water from the ten interior drainage pump stations along the Harvey and Algiers canals. Currently, the West Closure Complex is approximately 40 percent complete with all features of the complex under construction. When completed, the structure will defend against surge associated with a storm that has a 1 percent chance of occurring each year.

US Army Corps of Engineers
Team New Orleans

Stakeholder Update
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Coastal protection and ecosystem restoration

Civil Works Review Board approves six LCA projects

A critical milestone toward reaching final approval

Last week, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers headquarters' Civil Works Review Board in Washington, D.C. approved six Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) feasibility studies for state and agency review, a critical milestone in reaching final approval by Dec. 31, 2010.

As outlined in the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 – Section 7006(e)(3)(A), the Corps must provide one overall report on all six studies to the chief of engineers by Dec. 31, 2010 to maintain contingent authorization for construction, which sets the stage for approximately $1.4 billion in construction of coastal restoration features.

These six studies...will utilize the three important aspects of coastal restoration - barrier island restoration, marsh creation, and freshwater and sediment diversions

The Corps of Engineers, in partnership with members of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the state of Louisiana, traveled to Washington, D.C. to present the six feasibility studies to USACE senior level advisors. These six studies were all approved and will utilize the three important aspects of coastal restoration - barrier island restoration, marsh creation, and freshwater and sediment diversions.

The six projects are the Medium Diversion at White Ditch, Terrebonne Basin Barrier Shoreline Restoration, Convey Atchafalaya River Water to Northern Terrebonne Marshes, Multipurpose Operation of the Houma Navigation Canal Lock, Medium Diversion at Convent/Blind River, and Modification to the Amite River Diversion Canal projects.

In addition, the President's Fiscal 2011 Budget included $35 million for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District's LCA program, which has been highlighted as a high priority project. A portion of this budget will be used to initiate engineering and design for these six projects.

The overall LCA program has identified 15 projects as critical, near-term features that will use a variety of restoration techniques to slow the current trend of degradation in these areas. The LCA program also has a beneficial use of dredged material program aimed at using material dredged from authorized navigation channels, as well as a science and technology program, demonstration projects, and long-term restoration planning efforts. More information on the LCA program is available at: www.lca.gov.

RECOVERY.GOV

Groundbreaking held in Iberia

Facility to help economic growth in the area

On August 31, 2010, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in partnership with the Iberia Parish government, held a groundbreaking ceremony for the Acadiana Regional Airport Wastewater Treatment Facility. This facility is designed to alleviate current demands on New Iberia's drainage infrastructure and allow for future economic development in a large commercial area adjacent to the airport.

Earlier this year, the Corps and the Iberia Parish government signed a 75/25 percent cost-sharing partnership for the construction of phase I of the wastewater treatment facility. The federal portion of this agreement is fully funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Last June, a $3.2 million contract was awarded to Integrated Pro Services, a service disabled veteran-owned small business from New Orleans, La. Construction of the project's phase I is expected to begin next month and take approximately one year to complete.

The groundbreaking took place at the Sugarena, adjacent to the future site of the wastewater treatment facility. Iberia Parish president, Ernest Freyou (top), State Representative Taylor Barras (center) and Col. Ed Fleming (bottom left), as well as Cong. Charlie Melancon's representative Luke Theriot and Iberia Parish Council Chairman Jerome Fitch discussed the project and its benefits to Iberia Parish