



## Commander's Desk

### Building strong communication channels is key to success in 2011

The future of South Louisiana is an issue of national importance. Whether it is the area's \$67 billion annual production of oil and natural gas, its approximately 25 percent of our nation's fisheries, or the nearly 500 million tons of global commerce that annually traverses the area's waterways; families throughout our nation are directly impacted by the overall health of Coastal Louisiana.

Many challenges must be overcome to provide a healthy future for this vital area. 2011 will be a pivotal year in laying the foundation necessary for overcoming obstacles. For several years, we have all worked to put the pieces in place. Now, we must begin fusing these pieces in a comprehensive effort that encompasses all of our missions.

In 2011, every facet of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District's civil works mission will be operating in high gear. This year, we will be able to defend against a 100-year storm surge event. We have also begun the extensive process for mitigating any environmental impacts created by the construction of this system. Your expertise and input is a vital component of this process.

Another top priority is our numerous coastal protection and ecosystem restoration projects and studies, such as the \$1.4 billion Louisiana Coastal Area-6 (LCA) and the approximately \$2.9 billion Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) Eco-

system Restoration plan, underway throughout Coastal Louisiana. And of course, we will continue to use all of our available resources to provide safe and reliable navigation for an area of responsibility that encompasses 2,800 miles of navigable waterways and includes five of the nation's 14 busiest ports. Finally, our emergency management team is prepared and stands ready to respond if needed.

To accomplish our mission, we will need to overcome numerous and complex challenges. You have my assurance that the men and women of Team New Orleans are professionally and personally committed to meeting any and all of these challenges head on. But, the complexity and scope of the challenges facing South Louisiana are far too great for the Corps to overcome alone. As such, any foundation on which Coastal Louisiana will flourish must be built with a combination of communication, cooperation and construction. Ideas and knowledge should flow freely among us all, federal, state and local partners. In short, if any of us expect to make great strides in our respective missions, 2011 must be a year of unprecedented communication.

**Building Strong,  
Col. Edward Fleming**

## Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction

### GIWW West Closure Complex rewatered



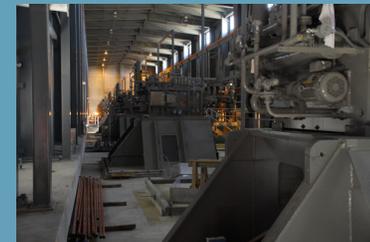
Friday, January 14, marked an important day for the GIWW West Closure Complex as the re-watering process began, allowing the project to move forward to the next stage of construction.

Keeping in tradition with many of the Hurricane Storm and Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS) projects, the event occurred earlier than originally scheduled. Several media outlets were on-site to capture the action.

A total of four pumps, located along the coffer dam, were activated during the event. Over the course of four days, water levels surrounding the pump station rose

roughly ten feet, bringing the final elevation to approximately negative eight feet. In addition to the four pumps, the existing levee was cut on the third day to allow for the flow of additional water.

This event was a major milestone for the West Closure Complex because it signified a new phase of construction. Now that the re-watering is complete, the Corps will be able to both place the sector gate leaves and test the pump station pumps later this spring. Once completed, the project will be a major component of West Bank 100-year risk reduction.





## Coastal Protection and Ecosystem Restoration

# Corps lays out plan to restore areas affected by the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet

In collaboration with the deauthorization and closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) ship channel, the Corps of Engineers has prepared a draft MRGO Ecosystem Restoration plan that lays out features to restore over 58,000 acres of marsh, cypress swamp, and critical landscape features identified under the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration (LACPR) report as features that reduce storm surge for the greater New Orleans area.

The study was authorized under the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, which called for the Corps to develop a restoration plan that would address the damages caused by the construction and operation of the MRGO channel.

Over the course of three years, the New Orleans District team has compiled a comprehensive ecosystem restoration plan that studied over 3.86 million acres

of land and open water in the Pontchartrain basin, which is comprised of the Lake Borgne, Lake Pontchartrain and Mississippi Sound ecosystems. The goal of the draft plan is to restore these areas to a more natural, self-sustaining coastal system through the introduction of fresh water and placement of dredge material, reflecting what the ecosystem looked like prior to the construction of the MRGO channel.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Feasibility Study report describing the MRGO Ecosystem Restoration plan is currently available for 60-day public review, ending on Monday, Feb. 14, 2011. During this time, the Corps welcomes public comments on the report, such as features they like in the plan, features they do not like, and alternative suggestions regarding the plan's components.

To help facilitate the public com-

ment period, the team has hosted two public meetings and has a third scheduled. The first meeting was held on Thursday, Jan. 20, 2011 in St. Bernard Parish, LA, where over 250 members of the public came out to review the plan and submit their comments. Many of the residents of St. Bernard Parish are opposed to the tentatively selected location for the freshwater diversion, Alternative #1, while others are opposed to the introduction of freshwater into the system overall. Attendees expressed support of most other features in the plan that would nourish and restore cypress swamp and tidal marshes.

The second meeting was held Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2011 in Waveland, Miss., where approximately 100 people came out to learn about the project and the anticipated impacts it may have on waters in Mississippi Sound.

On Thursday, Feb. 3, 2011, the

Corps will host our third meeting in the Lower Ninth Ward at the Light City Church, 6117 St. Claude Ave., New Orleans, LA. All comments that are received during the public comment period will be evaluated and considered by the Corps team, as well as incorporated into the official record for the study.

Members of the public do not need to attend a public meeting to submit a comment on the draft plan. Comments can be submitted by mail, email or phone to Tammy Gilmore, the Environmental Manager for this project. Her contact information is:

Tammy Gilmore  
CEMVN-PDR-RS  
P.O. Box 60267  
New Orleans, LA 70160  
(504)-862-1002  
Tammy.H.Gilmore@usace.army.mil

