

Mr. Jim Amoss  
Editor  
The Times-Picayune  
3800 Howard Avenue  
New Orleans, La. 70140

Dear Mr. Amoss:

A published letter ("Buffer of trees could save us," Friday, Sept. 22) should be applauded for extolling the value of trees in New Orleans and Louisiana's coastal environments. However, it equates the trees removed to protect levees and floodwalls with clumps of tropical mangroves.

We would say that this analogy is not appropriate. While the Indonesian mangroves are an effective wave barrier and the Biloxi live oaks did survive their water trials, neither live on or in a levee. The trees that are being removed along the lakefront are only those on the levee or the levee's wave berm, a low-angled structure whose purpose is dissipate storm surge energy to protect the hurricane levee, much as the mangrove tree does. Mangroves, on the other hand, live in the water. No lakefront trees in the water are being removed, nor are any on land beyond the wave berm.

Another point is minor but should be made clear: Contrary to the letter, no trees are to be removed anywhere near the University of New Orleans. A more important point is that the Corps plans to remove 36 trees and woody plants on the New Orleans lakefront. That equates to one tree per 733 feet of lakefront. Earlier, 360 trees were removed on the East Jefferson Parish lakefront or one tree per 161 feet of lakefront. This level of density does not act as a barrier to storm surge. And the fact remains that hurricanes do overturn and uproot trees, creating soil cavities which invite water seepage and erosion, which in turn endanger protective structures such as levees.

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