



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
New Orleans District

News Release

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Corps completes levee to protect La. State Penitentiary *Mississippi River protection will be dedicated at Angola on June 25*

NEW ORLEANS – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has completed raising and strengthening the 12-mile levee protecting the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola.

Mississippi River protection for the prison's up to 5,100 inmates and 1,800 employees, many of whom live on the grounds with their families, was improved after a successful but difficult flood fight in the spring of 1997.

State officials will dedicate the levee improvements in a ceremony, not open to the public, at the prison on Wednesday, June 25. Total cost was \$25 million, shared 75 percent by the federal government and 25 percent by the state.

In the 1997 flood the Mississippi rose to 61.4 feet at Red River Landing, the highest stage on record for that gauge, just across the river. The threat was so great that prison officials temporarily relocated about 3,000 inmates to higher ground.

"The flood dramatized the need for the project," said Col. Peter J. Rowan, district engineer, New Orleans District. "The construction work enjoyed outstanding cooperation from the Louisiana Department of Safety and Corrections.

"Engineer troops of the Louisiana National Guard performed a vital early task, and the contractors finished the job," Rowan said. Contractors were Regency Construction Inc. of Slidell and Merrick Construction Co. of Cottonport.

The most imminent flooding threat was under seepage, water traveling beneath but not through the levee. As a result, 105 sand boils – water bubbling to the surface – were reported on the protected side. The sand boils threatened to cause levee failure.

The Louisiana National Guard provided crucial emergency assistance by constructing berms, low earthen structures that extend landward, to neutralize the sand boils.

Congress appropriated money for design in 1997 and construction in 1998, the Corps and the Department of Corrections signed an agreement and the job was completed. The Corps raised the prison levee by about five feet over the full 12 miles. The Corps used about 4.3 million cubic yards of earth.

“For the Corps of Engineers, James Siffert of the New Orleans District was a valuable advisor during the flood fight. The Vicksburg District handled the design and awarded contracts for the main phase of work. And the New Orleans District supervised the construction, completed in June,” said Robert Campos, the Corps’ senior project manager for the levee project.

The Mississippi River’s east bank surrounds the prison on three sides, immediately south of the state of Mississippi. It forms a “U” with the base to the west and its ends anchored to the surrounding Tunica Hills.

MEDIA: To attend, call Cathy Fontenot, Public Relations at Angola, 225-655-2029.