



Commander's Desk

Building on the successes of 2011

Celebration of the New Year is the oldest recorded holiday, dating back to 4000 B.C. For more than 6,000 years, people all over the world have taken part in the time-honored tradition to reflect on the events of the year past and to consider what is to come during the next 12 months. As a supporter of long-standing traditions, I feel obligated to participate in this one.

This past year was a very important one for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in South Louisiana. Perhaps most notably, we were able to see six years of dedication and hard work come to fruition by having a system in place that can defend Greater New Orleans against a 100-year storm surge event.

However, hurricane and storm damage risk reduction is only one component of a Corps mission that was in full swing in 2011. In addition to the risks posed by tropical events, South Louisiana is also faced with the continued loss of its coastal lands. In 2011, the Corps, along-

side our state and local partners, made significant progress in coastal protection and ecosystem restoration efforts, including important steps forward with the Louisiana Coastal Area Program.

Another major event in 2011 was the historic Mississippi River high water event last spring. For the first time in history, the Corps needed to operate three of the four Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) floodways, including the **Bonnet Carre' Spillway** and Morganza Floodway) simultaneously. The efforts of the Corps, in conjunction with state and local partners and the MR&T system performing as designed, averted **most of the river's potential damage.**

Looking forward, 2012 will bring new challenges. We still have much work remaining to complete the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System. We must continue to take steps toward stemming the loss of our coastal lands. In addition, it is vitally important, not

only to South Louisiana but to the nation, that we repair the damages to the MR&T system.

We must find ways to tackle these issues in a time of national economic difficulty and, more than ever, we are faced with doing less with less. Difficult and tough decisions must be made; prioritization will be essential. Any chance of success will require an unprecedented level of cooperation and communication with our federal, state and local partners.

I am confident that the New Orleans District can meet these challenges. The men and women of the New Orleans District are also men and women of South Louisiana. Our mission goes beyond professional; our mission is personal. As such, we will continue to work with the same determination and resolve that constructed the HSDRRS and fought the flood. Because of this commitment, 2012 will be as, if not more, successful than 2011.

Mississippi River and Tributaries

Corps receives emergency MR&T repair funds

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Mississippi Valley Division (MVD) received much needed repair funds for levees and flood control structures damaged by the spring flood of 2011 with the signing of the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act by President Barack Obama on December 23, 2011. The MVD will receive approximately \$802 million of the \$1.7 billion appropriated to the Corps.

The Corps has identified 137 locations between New Cairo, Ill. and the mouth of the Mississippi River in need of critical post-flood repair, totaling approximately \$2 billion. It is too soon to predict what percentage of the money appropriated in the emergency act will go to repair projects in the New Orleans District and a decision on that will be made later this winter. The Corps will determine the path forward for all repair projects by evaluating them based on current funding.

Meanwhile, the Corps continues to make progress on previously funded repair projects. Work is under way, will

soon be under way or is already completed at several projects in Louisiana, including Third District (downtown New Orleans), Morganza Control Structure, Baton Rouge Front (downtown Baton Rouge), Chalmette and Duncan Point (near Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge), among others, as well as dredging at select points on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and Mississippi River.

In the midst of these **repairs, the Corps' New Orleans District** recently engaged in flood fight inspections for levee sections along the Mississippi River and Atchafalaya River Basin. Unusual for this time of year, the New Orleans District activated the phase I flood fight procedures along the Mississippi River on December 13, 2011 and at the East and West Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levees

near Morgan City on December 22. This round of flood fight inspections ended on January 13, 2012.

Phase I is a proactive measure that consists of increased levee patrols to ensure that the Corps and local levee authorities can respond quickly to any problem areas that may develop along the levee systems due to the elevated water levels. Phase I is activated when the Mississippi River reaches 11 feet and rising at the Carrollton gauge and the Atchafalaya River reaches 5 feet and rising at the Morgan City gauge.

No significant issues developed along any of the levees as a result of the recent high water. Though flood fight inspections are over for now, the Corps will continue to keep a watchful eye on water levels, especially as the spring flood season approaches.



Crews construct a stability berm at Duncan Point.



US Army Corps of Engineers
New Orleans District

Stakeholder Update
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Program and Project Updates

Coastal restoration efforts reach major milestone

As 2011 came to a close, the Louisiana Coastal Area “6” coastal restoration projects met a major milestone, as representatives from the Corps of Engineers and the State of Louisiana signed the LCA 6 Design Agreement. This agreement, signed by Terrence C. “Rock” Salt, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) and Garret Graves, Chairman of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, initiates



Signing of LCA 6 Design Agreement

approximately \$29 million worth of pre-construction engineering and design efforts. The initiation of these design agreements marks the first official move out of the planning phase for the Louisiana Coastal Area program and sets the stage for approximately \$1.4 billion in construction of these important coastal restoration projects if funding is made available.

The projects included in the LCA 6 are Small Diversion at Convent / Blind River, Terrebonne Basin Barrier Shoreline Restoration, Amite River Diversion Canal, Medium Diversion at White Ditch, and Convey Atchafalaya River Marshes / Multipurpose of Houma Navigation Canal Lock.

Causeway construction remains on track

The Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction Causeway abutment and floodwall contract involves construction of a floodwall to elevation 15 feet (or a 10 foot high floodwall) that will tie into the Lake Pontchartrain levees. The nearly \$43 million project requires raising about 700 feet of Causeway Boulevard at the south end of the bridge over this floodwall.

Commuters have experienced some construction-related delays, but not to the extent some initially thought. Close coordination with the Causeway Commission and Jefferson Parish has helped to alleviate congestion on Causeway Boulevard.

The most recent phase of construction occurred in early December,



Construction of a new floodwall at the Causeway bridge is well under way.

when southbound Causeway drivers were routed onto a newly-built elevated bridge section. Northbound traffic is scheduled to be rerouted to the overpass in January.

The Causeway project is currently 70 percent complete and has features in place to defend against a 100-year storm surge event. All construction is scheduled to conclude in December 2012.

Tiger Team’s work on West Bank levee continues

To address debris in a stretch of levee in Westwego, the Corps last fall assigned a Quality Assurance Tiger Team, comprised of members of the nationwide Corps team and non-



The QA team inspects a levee section.

Federal sponsors (in this case, the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-West), to monitor and assess the extent of unsuitable or objectionable material and determine whether the levee meets the contract specification requirements.

To date, the Tiger Team has conducted trenching, coring and geophysical testing in the levee. Materials are being lab tested to determine the impacts to levee stability, performance and any impact on future levee maintenance.

Two separate reports will be prepared – one by the Tiger Team and the other by the New Orleans District Engineering Division. The latter will incorporate the findings of the Tiger Team, as well as reports by SLFPA-West, and include recommendations for corrective actions, if needed. In addition, an Independent External Peer Review will also be conducted.

The Corps will continue to work with its non-federal sponsors to address concerns related to unsuitable materials.

HSDRRS mitigation planning in full swing

The goal of Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System mitigation is to replace the functions and values of habitats that are impacted during construction of Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity (LPV) and West Bank and Vicinity (WBV) HSDRRS projects after all efforts to avoid and minimize these impacts have been exhausted.

As of early January 2012, impacted habitat types have included bottomland hardwood wetland, bottomland hardwood upland, swamp and marsh. The Corps has been able to significantly reduce the estimated impacted acreage from 5,000 acres to approximately 2,200 acres due to a concerted effort to avoid environmental impacts during advanced engineering design.

Below is the status of HSDRRS mitigation, as of January 3, 2012:

Estimated Project Schedule:

Complete Study Phase	Feb. 2012
Complete Design Phase	Feb. 2013
Begin Constr. Contract	Oct. 2013



Julie Vignes, West Bank and Vicinity branch chief, and Soheila Holley, senior project manager, at a HSDRRS mitigation public meeting.