

Public Meeting Recap



IER 4 Public Meeting
Saturday, November 10, 2007

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Location | Cabrini High School 1400 Moss St. New Orleans, LA 70119 |
| Time | 10:00 a.m. |
| Attendees | approx 60 including 6 staff |
| Format | Presentation then Q & A |
| Handouts | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “No levees across bayou St. John” |
| Facilitator | Kevin Wagner, USACE Laura Lee Wilkinson, USACE Ann Reams, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation |

Overview

Kevin Wagner gave a brief overview of the alternatives the US Army Corps is considering to improve the protection of the Bayou St. John neighborhood. Questions and Answers from community members followed the presentation. Each speaker was allowed three minutes to comment and ask questions about the on the recommendations.

Introduction

Ann Reams introduced Kevin Wagner.

“Before Hurricane Katrina the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, working with a variety of entities including the US Army Corps, Orleans Levee Board, etc. had put together a recommendation on the preservation of the Bayou St. John. Hurricane Katrina altered those plans; we’re here today to discuss a new ball game. The USACE has a mandate to provide flood control. We’re here to hear Corps plan for the Bayou St. John area.”

Presentation by Kevin Wagner

“It’s my responsibility to oversee Army Corps in Orleans Parish. I oversee from 17th St canal to New Orleans East. We want to clear up misconceptions regarding work in Bayou St. John by explain what the alternatives are for this area. It’s important to note that these are recommendation and that none of these projects are is set in stone; we’re here to get input from the community. The more comments we get from locals will help us build the best system possible. We have two alternatives we’re considering in Bayou St. John.

Alternative 1: Follow existing alignment, down near the sector gate to add extra flood protections. I-walls will be made into T-walls. Part of that will require raising the height of the current walls.

Alternative 2: Follow the existing alignment that is north of Lakeshore Drive, going north of the bayou while maintaining the water quality within the bayou.

Most of the concern in this neighborhood is maintaining the water quality within the bayou. The Army Corps is concerned about hurricane protection and maintenance of existing features. We appreciate

Public Meeting Recap

input about alternatives. Please offer questions and we'll work with the levee district and flood control to get best protection. We've heard comments about moving the gate north and maybe incorporating a system that we can open and close that system. But the levee district and new levee authority will maintain those systems.



Laura Lee Wilkinson is the environmental manager of the project. Her responsibility is making sure the Army Corps complies with NEPA. Instead of Environmental Impact Statements the Army Corps is doing Individual Environmental Reports. This project is being done under IER 4 which is New Orleans Lakefront Levee East of the Industrial Canal. You can go to www.nolaenvironmental.com to provide written feedback. We want your input on which alternative you prefer. The way to do that is with written comments. There's an e-mail address to give comments, you want to comment on IER 4. The report is due in spring of 2008.

Questions/comments from community members (citizen comments/questions are in **bold**)

1. No comment
2. No comment
3. No comment

4. What are the alternatives again?

Alternative 1 is to follow existing alignment, and modify or retrofit it so that the I-walls are elevated and modified to where they meet current design. For example could be an L-wall. We'd put concrete behind the I-wall.

What would elevation be when walls are raised?

16 feet. Right now walls are below that and range between 12 and 16 because of settlement.

Alternative 2 is to strengthen the alignment and construct something at the mouth of the bayou to maintain the water quality. That could be gates.

5. No comment

6. You said something about maintenance and upkeep. Who do you see as being responsible for upkeep?

Everything goes back to the Lake Pontchartrain Hurricane Protection Project which makes the New Orleans Levee District responsible.

So does that impact the amount of work that the Corps can or can't do?

Not necessary, they (the Orleans Levee Board) will have buy in on whatever feature we construct.

7. I want the gate at Robert E lee to open and close, other than that I don't think there should be any additional changes.

Public Meeting Recap



8. No comment

9. Orleans Levee Board wanted to close the mouth of the Bayou in the 70s, but only because of public outcry did they not make a levee.

What the Army Corps has on record is the decision on a levee or a gate, the decision is going to be based on cost effectiveness.

What we want is flood control protection, recreational access to Lake Pontchartrain but don't make decision based on most cost effective solution. (clapping)

That's the kind of comments we want, so we can build something you want. Please don't hesitate to make sure your voice is heard.

10. No comment

11. Bayou St. John didn't flood, it's a historic waterway. We hate to see anything natural destroyed, is it correct that you'll fix the gates and open and close them when we need them open or closed?

As we said we will do something to raise the level of protection either Alternative 1 or 2, as far as the operation and maintenance that falls to the levee district to maintain. We know Bayou St. John is historic and has significance, people are fortunate to have not flooded but we are interested in providing the best level of protection.

12. Bayou St. John Improvement Association. I can see that levee across bayou is out, this is not a threat. We took the levee board and Corps to court and won. We want to keep the bayou how it is, that seems to be a possibility but we want to keep the bayou as it is. We would entertain anything that maintains the bayou as a natural and historic waterway. A gate at mouth would be okay but no agency seems to adhere to their own laws or requirements. A permit said the gate should be open but it's never been open. We want the gate open. (clapping)

13. No comment

14. No comment

15. No comment

16. No comment

17. What is the timeline involved in this decision? Who makes the final decision? Is it the Army Corps or does the public get a say? We have a gate built in 1982ish and it's been closed but at the time the bayou didn't flood. The London Ave canal is what flooded us. Who makes the final decision and what's the timeline?

We will work with our partners such as the Levee Authority and Levee District to make decisions regarding construction. We take into consideration public input so we know what the

Public Meeting Recap



public wants. Cost effectiveness may be involved in making the decision because we have a 4 parish area to protect, from St.

Charles to St. Bernard. That's several hundred miles of levees, all

that has to be modified to provide protection for the region. We will not make the decision in isolation. The more comments we get the better system we get to satisfy all needs. Timing is to get protection in place by 2011 so we have to expedite all this work. To modify we want a contract awarded by 2009, we're trying to expedite that work so we can get everything in place by 2011.

Laura Lee Wilkinson: The IER 4 report will come out in spring of 2008 so from the release date there will be 30 days to comment. We can start construction after that day. That's why we're stressing that we want your input. If you don't like the alternative, you should provide input early. The decision maker is Col Lee.

18. She lives off Bayou. **You don't have any handouts, you're not explaining logistics. Will roads be cut off for four years? Will there be construction around your homes? What is the project timeline? How long does it take, how many contractors? We need to know that so we can follow along. You're underestimating the brain power of this room. What difference will these measures make? Bayou St. John protected us.**

We normally do a PPT and we can come back to do that. We want your input because we're trying to do design. We can only give general ideas of timeline details about access and contracts. There will be only 1 contract to do all this work, the goal is to have that contract awarded in 2009. If we can expedite that process the contract may be awarded in 2008. We don't anticipate a lot of impact. People who live near the bayou will be the most impacted. We won't go further than the sector gate it won't go further south. Most access will be via Lakeshore Drive so there aren't trucks going through neighborhoods. The improvements are necessary because of the Lake.

Laura Lee: IER 4 will address all these issues like noise and dust. I'll e-mail or mail slides to everyone that signed in today.

19. No comment

20. No comment

21. **Is the red line on the bayou a levee or a flood gate, what do you anticipate for the red line along the levee?**

The current idea is to construct a levee across the mouth of the bayou it would be a levee and a gate. In other parts along Bayou Savage we have to maintain water quality we incorporate things to maintain water quality.

That's what we don't want (referring to the levee)

22. No comment

Public Meeting Recap



23. I agree with the comments made by speakers 9 and 12. The only time the house I'm living in flooded is when the gates didn't open at the lake. That's the only problem I see, we need to control the opening of the gates to keep water back. It was only from a flood just from rain water.

24. No comment

25. Will the one contractor please be Dutch? I'm echoing speakers 7, 9, 21 and Mr. Shaw. A levee isn't something that we want. Why don't we create an angled system like the delta dike system which has worked for the Netherlands? That would preserve our water quality and provide a continual flow.

We're looking at a comprehensive system that is similar to the Dutch system. We have guys from the Netherlands on the hydraulic team to develop solutions. When you talk about long term planning, we are using the 500 year event protection which could be a barrier. That's still being studied. Our immediate goal is to restore the original levels of protection. As far as maintaining please comment and make sure your voice is heard so levee authority knows your position.

26. No comment

27. Why would you consider putting a levee in there when we already have the flood control measure? Why spend money on something we apparently don't need?

We have to consider these features because of the environmental process. We have to look at all alternatives. This is just an alternative. The idea of a levee could be thrown out because of public comments and engineering. We get accused of building things randomly, that's not the case and we're trying to improve this system. We have orders from congress. Restore, enhance and protect so that we can participate in national flood insurance measure.

28. No comment

29. I've lived along the bayou for 25 years. We have had the return of pelicans and osprey in that time. We should be stewards of the plan. Flood protection is your priority 1 but the environment is really number 1. Keeping natural water flow must be preserved (clapping)

30. Do both of these alternatives ensure that the water quality of the bayou will be maintained? I know the Corps is focused on flood control but to ensure is protecting water quality a concern?

We'll design what protects the area from flood control. Water quality maintenance will be the responsibly of the levee district. It comes down to operations and maintenance and that they have resources to do that.

Public Meeting Recap



31. **I've heard maintenance and water quality repeated but I don't think it's unreasonable that protection provides for the visible historic link between the bayou and the lake. We fought for that years ago and we will fight again. (clapping)**

32. No comment

33. **From the Bancroft Civic Association. They bayou has an impact on the entire city but our group is really impacted because we live on the water. We know you have a mandate but we'd like to see the implementation that would maintain the history of the bayou. That's where Bienville camped with the Indians. Is it set in stone that the maintenance has to be turned over? The levee district didn't even come out today. Can you talk about future plans too?**

The length of the levee could vary by 10 or 20 feet but right now there is no significant change. The Army Corps has no responsibility as far as maintenance. It has to go back to local party.

34. No comment

35. No comment

36. **Larry, Truck Real Estate. I'm not in favor of the levee. What you did to 17th Street is pitiful. We enjoyed the lake and levee. When you built that it sunk the real estate. Is there a comprehensive plan, does anyone consider the recreational uses of the lake. Is recreation ever going to be possible with a levee?**

Anywhere south of the gate, the Corps isn't responsible. We'll have access to the lake for recreation but it would be limited to existing alignment. There's no plan to go further south than existing alignment

37. **President of Park St. John Homeowners Association. We are totally opposed to a levee across the bayou. Implications of the water quality and wildlife protection are important. What is the Corps' understating of all the wildlife?**

Laura Lee Wilkinson: As part of NEPA and IER 4, we are looking at all resources including wildlife, water quality, aesthetics, human environment, etc. we're looking at all impacts and addressing them all. We also need your feedback.

38. No comment

39. **We need answers from the Levee Board. Will the board have man power to maintain? The sea walls are see through. The Levee Board should be here. We came back for our bayou, with all we've went through looking at the bayou means a lot, please don't destroy it. (clapping)**

40. No comment

Public Meeting Recap



41. William Burke on Bancroft. **I remember this process 25 years ago. At that time the Levee Board and the Corps tried to convince us that we needed a bayou. In court it was proven that wasn't right. People don't understand the difference between the swing gates vs. slouge gates. We need protection but we need swing gates. What was built was the compromise. It was cost effective for the Levee Board to build. If you propose anything except swing gates, it'll be challenged. Please do research and don't make same mistake over again. We need a solution that has gates that open. (clapping)**

42. You mentioned Bayou Savage where water quality is maintained but I suspect that it's more expensive. Does the government maintain that?

As far as maintenance, that's still the responsibility of Orleans Levee District. They may have a separate agreement with national fish and wildlife but it's the Orleans levee district responsible along the refuge.

43. Debra Langhall, Lake Vista. **On other side of Lake Vista we just did serious outfall canal construction. We have to remember this is a historic site, how is the historic site going to be impacted? I agree with environmental impact, but there is a comprehensive state plan for the long range of the community s we're not just doing little less expensive projects. Can we see how it's linked to larger LA coastal plan and why the larger plan isn't being addressed? If we could build that process up we would have fewer impacts along Lake Vista. (clapping)**

We'll do a better job. If you want presentations on future plans we'll give you presentations.

Laura Lee Wilkinson: as part of the alternative arrangements, we do monthly public meetings in different venues. We agreed to come to you today because we were asked to talk about Bayou St. John. Next meeting is in Lake View at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Go to www.nolaenvironmental.gov web site. Fort St. John is a known historic site, included in IER 4; we're looking at what the impact would be.

Kevin Wagner: if anyone wants a presentation, I'll come out.

44. Adrian Chutner, tree service and termites. **I believe this discussion is moot because the levees are moot. The Formosan termite has mined the base of the levees. The termite colonies lead to breaches in the levee. You should build above the water line.**

45. No comment

46. No comment

47. No comment

48. Senator Ed Murray. **Will you do whatever project the flood authority tells you to do? If not, will you break out costs to maintain and operate?**

Public Meeting Recap



We will present operation and maintenance costs so the local sponsor knows the costs. We will take into consideration what the flood authority decides. We have to weigh in factors. Your input as well as levee authority input will be weighted into the recommendation.

49. **I'm totally opposed to a bayou. What do we have in the event of a levee? What body of water does a bayou become when it's without a levee?**

It would become a lagoon. If the locals in the area want to see the interchange between the lake and the bayou, let the people know. In a previous meeting the public wanted a levee to replace the Topaz St. gates. We take everyone's opinion into consideration.

50. **We live on Park Island. You keep talking about operation and maintenance, what I've observed, no one takes responsibility for maintenance. I called the Levee Board, who referred to someone else, etc. finally they started pointing fingers; everyone said it's not their responsibility. I have concerns about maintenance. We've had droughts, the bayou level went down. Houses began to sink. I'd like those things considered.**

51. No comment

52. Billy Burke, lives on the bayou but is displaced. **When can we see the alternatives that we can analyze? Your definition of maintaining water quality seems to be different than everyone else's. When can we see the information? Is there any way to cooperate with the Corps to explore removing the Robert E Lee dam?**

As details become available to us, we'll come and discuss. We are just working through the details now so we can evaluate the alternatives and those details are being worked out. We can present current info; we can put on web site and come out. Regarding the structure on Robert E Lee, that's not a Corps project or structure.

Laura Lee Wilkinson: As we get info we've committed to sharing it.

53. No comment

54. No comment

55. No comment

56. **Who is responsible for IER 4? Who writes it and why isn't there a normal environmental study? What's the different between normal environmental study and IER? Any report that says build a levee will be fought. (clapping)**

Laura Lee Wilkinson: I'm responsible; I'm coordinating the effort to write it. The normal process is to do an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement, would take 3 to 5 years. We'd have to get every project in line. We have permission to do alternative arrangements so we can separate by sub basin so that as soon as one IER was completed and

Public Meeting Recap

we got sign off by Col Lee, we could start. We realize there's urgency so we can get insurance from FEMA. We're trying to work fast so we can get things back to what they should be.



57. One more vote for the water quality and our family being able to get the boat to the lake from the bayou.

58. No comment

59. I heard 30 day impact study, where are we with that?

Laura Lee Wilkinson: The IER comes out in Spring 08, should be about Feb. Until that report comes out we're accepting comments. If we have your written comments it's better. Once the report is released there are 30 days to comment, then without big comments Col Lee can sign and we can begin construction.

Other comments

Mark Schnecksteiner, LSU Ag Center

If the new structure is built will the old gate be removed?

We don't know yet for certain if a structure is built north of Lakeshore drive, the existing structure would be removed or left open.

You say you're going to stop at Lava dam on Robert E Lee, it needs to be taken out to improve water flow and the levees that go to Robert E Lee, the dirt moved. In this case we don't need that levee anymore.

Laura Lee Wilkinson: so you want the levee removed.

Fort was built before levee. Levees were dumped on top.

As much free water flow as possible would be better to maximize functionality. If a gate is built it needs to be as wide as the bayou because of the first lava dam constrained it. Would you consider bringing back the width so we can bring in our boats?

You are welcome to make that comment.

Heather (LPBF): You'd have to change permits to bring in motorized boats. I encouraged them not to bring a ppt.

Carlton Dufrechou, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation

Thank you for making time to come out. Kevin and I go back 20 years, we've known each other for a long time. The reason I get more emotion is because of pride. This is a time for a positive change buy staying involved. Kevin talked about two alternatives.

Asked a show of hands across levee across: None

Operable flood gate: 100 percent

Mark Schnecksteiner: have you considered putting something in the lake to block water?

Public Meeting Recap



We're looking at trying to incorporate the flood gate into the design. Sometimes there is a flood gate in front and incorporate it into the system. If the sea wall is at an elevation what height of levee do we need to build. We'd need additional authorization to do the off shore protection. During the analysis we take features in place to determine best system

Carlton was asked to explain the difference between the slouge gate and the vertical lift. The lava rocks at Robert E Lee,
Sector gate: the northern gate on Lake Pontchartrain

If there is enough interest in incorporating flood protection, we could do that.

Corps will be publishing when last 30 day comments are and it will be published.

Kevin: Comments from the public will help determine what we do. Don't wait to the drop dead date.

Carlton: we'll get levee board out here.

Would you like to see navigable access from bayou to the lake? Half the people.

Ann: what we've heard today is the maintenance down the line. With levee board or east flood control.

Audience would like the Orleans Flood Control to come.

If the levee board doesn't want to maintain it does it matter?

We have one feature that's a curved wall in Kenner, we've looked at it but it's expensive. That type of wall is an option. When you look at a t wall verses a curbed wall the T-wall becomes a better option.

I'm aware of LPBF study before the storm but what about input from Bancroft Park association. Will you take into consideration the LPBF recommendations?

Ann: yes.

It really saddens me that cost is the big issue in setting up the salvation of our city. What we need should be done at any cost. The difference between the slanted level or straight levee, I hope we remember what it already cost us because we didn't plan ahead last time.