



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
New Orleans District

# News Release

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Hurricane protection: Lakefront trees will be cut**

*East Jefferson project will protect levee's first line of defense: berm*

NEW ORLEANS – Lessons learned during Hurricane Katrina have led the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to determine that trees must be cut along Lake Pontchartrain in suburban Jefferson Parish to protect the hurricane-protection levee's first line of defense—a low, earthen structure that extends 130 feet toward the water.

The structure is known as a wave berm, which protects the levee's ability to protect the cities of Metairie and Kenner. The berm's low-angle slope slows down a hurricane storm surge and thus reduces its destructive energy.

Three hundred sixty trees are rooted in the berm near water's edge in East Jefferson. Another eight are located along floodwalls flanking East Jefferson.

"A hurricane's power could uproot these trees. The roots would rip away the grass and pull up the soil. This would expose a hole that could be enlarged by the waves," said Col. Richard Wagenaar, commander of the New Orleans District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The trees will be cut off at about 4½ feet. That will eliminate the trees' vulnerability to blowing over from wind and wave. After the hurricane season, the Corps will remove the stumps and backfill the hole with soil. Removal before that time would expose fresh fill material to the danger of wave erosion.

The Corps awarded two contracts Friday to cut the Jefferson Parish trees under the government's 8(a) program for small and disadvantaged businesses.

Creek Services LLC of Harvey, La., was awarded a \$103,760 contract to cut 185 trees from the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal floodwall to Causeway Boulevard, and three trees along the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal floodwall.

Resource One of Lettsworth, La., was awarded a \$113,585 contract to cut 175 trees from Causeway Boulevard to the Kenner return floodwall and five along the Kenner return floodwall.

All of the trees are located within the levee right of way. The lakefront trees are on the lake side of the levee. All of the floodwall trees are on the protected side of the floodwalls.

Next the Corps plans to cut trees along the lakefront and canal levees in New Orleans. It is expected that a contract will be awarded in the next few weeks for about 25 trees along the New Orleans lakefront. Contracts to remove the trees along the canal levees will be awarded later this summer.

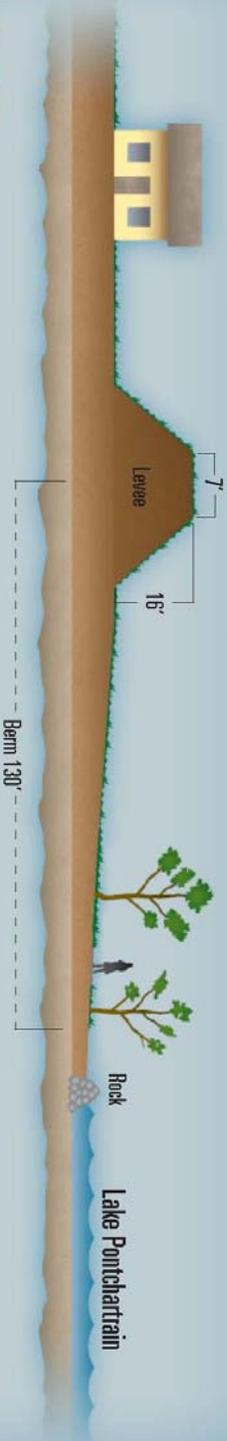
“Science and engineering tell us that trees should be kept off levees in order to protect the levees’ integrity,” said Michael Stout, project manager for tree removal. “The berm is an integral part of a levee, so the berm must remain intact.”

Katrina uprooted 20 to 30 trees last year in East Jefferson, according to Stephen Finnegan, a landscape architect who is the assistant tree-project manager.

“More than two thirds of the trees to be cut are hackberries,” Finnegan said. “The wood of this species (*Celtis laevigata*) is heavy but weak, making it relatively likely to fail in a storm. Cutting the trees on the berm now prevents that from happening in a future storm.”

**Tree graphic:** Levee cross-section and Jefferson lakefront map, page 3.

# Tree cutting necessary to protect lakefront levee



**WHY CUT:** A hurricane could uproot the trees, allowing the storm surge to erode the wave berm that protects the levee. The berm's job is to reduce and slow the energy of the waves. Stumps will be re-moved after hurricane season.

## FACTS:

- **Trees to be cut:** 360 on lakefront, 8 along floodwalls
- **Location:** Jefferson Parish: Lakefront, 17th Street Canal floodwall, and Kenner return floodwall
- **Distance:** About 11 miles across Pontchartrain lakefront
- **Contract awards:** Early July
- **Estimated completion:** Early August.