

Public Meeting Summary

Individual Environmental Report 4 New Orleans Lakefront Levees and Floodwalls Thursday, November 13, 2008

Location	UNO Lindy C. Boggs Conference Center 2045 Lakeshore Dr., Rm 236 New Orleans, LA 70122
Time	6:00 p.m. Open House 7:00 p.m. Presentation
Attendees	Approx 91
Format	Open house Presentation Q & A
Handouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPT print out • Borrow
Facilitator	Julie Morgan

Welcome

Julie Morgan, public affairs



Good evening, I would like to thank you for coming out tonight and spending time with the Corps. As you know, the Corps has been traveling around the metropolitan area talking about the different features of the Lake Pontchartrain and West Bank hurricane protection projects. We have been doing this for over a year and a half now. If you have been to any of our meetings then you know we start with a presentation and then we open the floor up to questions and answers. My name is Julie Morgan and I will

be your facilitator tonight. I would like to thank UNO for providing us with this venue. I would also like to recognize the only elected official I have been made aware of in the room and that is J.P. Morrell of District 97. I would also like to introduce Steve Spencer with the Orleans Levee District. I also just saw Carlton Dufrechou the executive director of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation.

We are here to give you the status of the Lake Pontchartrain project and get your input on the possible impacts of this project to you. This is part of the environmental compliance opportunity for you to express your concerns. I ask that you wait until the end of the presentation to start asking questions because they may be answered. This allows us to stay on track, but once the presentation completes we will be glad to discuss your concerns. I would like to draw your

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attention to the Corps' new Web site. We think it is easier to navigate. In relation to the meeting tonight there is a link for you to click that will take you to the www.nolaenvironmental.gov web site. The Corps' new web site address is www.mvn.usace.army.mil. Now I would like to turn things over to Kevin Wagner the senior project manager of the Orleans Parish Floodwalls and Levees.

Kevin Wagner, senior project manager



Thank you for coming tonight, the reason we are here tonight is to give you an idea of what projects we are going to cover under Individual Environmental Report 4. This covers the Orleans Lakefront area and all the levees, floodwalls and ramps we have along the eastern alignment of Lakeshore Drive. My name is Kevin Wagner and I am the senior project manager for Orleans Parish. The area I am responsible for is the 17th St. Canal to the

West Bank of the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal which is the Orleans metro area along Lakeshore Drive. Then my projects cover all the New Orleans East area from the Lakefront Airport to the Michoud Canal where we will eventually tie into the IHNC Lake Borgne surge barrier. Tonight we are going to give you an idea of some of the alternatives we have considered at various locations along Lakeshore Drive. We will also give you a preview of what the



recommended proposed action is in IER 4. You'll have the chance comment on the proposed action.

The reason we are taking this action is that we have to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, otherwise known as NEPA. For any federal action we have to examine the potential impacts to the human and natural environment. For the hurricane system projects we're documenting the impacts in Individual Environmental Reports. The key bullet on this slide we want to point out is we want to hear your comments and thoughts on the potential impacts so we can make a more informed decision. The comments can be made by contacting the Corps and visiting the [nolaenvironmental.gov](http://www.nolaenvironmental.gov) Web site. We want to hear from you so we can build a better system.



Now I'll give you an idea of where we are and where we are going. We started this process in 2007 with public scoping meetings and we have been developing alternatives since that time. Early next year we are looking forward to releasing the draft IER and then having it available for public review for 30-days. Then once all the comments are recorded we will make a final decision. After the final decision is made the district

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commander then signs the final IER document and then we can go forward with the designs for construction.



This gives you an idea of the work that has been completed along Lakeshore Drive. We have done many of the levee barges and we have raised all the different levee sections from the West End floodgate to the west bank of the Industrial Canal. All the earthen levees have been raised and comply with the 100-year protection system requirements. The work we have left to accomplish are the harden structures where we have floodgates, floodwalls, and ramps that we will be discussing tonight. We awarded these constructions in 2007 and we are waiting to have turf established before we consider these projects completed.



The type of work we have left to accomplish is modifying or replacing the existing floodwalls and gates. We have already completed all the earthen embankment work. We have about seven ramps that need to be raised and we will talk about some of those tonight. Then we have the rock we have replaced or hard points where we have floodwalls tied into earthen levees. When Gustav hit us, we wanted to harden the transitions because we

realized during Katrina that that's where the floodwall ties into the earthen levees or transitions it helps to prevent any type of erosion that may occur at those transitions. Eventually, when we are constructing the 100-year project we will dress these areas up nicely.



These are some of the contracts we have left to award that cover the area from 17th St. Canal to the West Bank of the IHNC in the Orleans metro area. We have tentative award dates and most of them are in 2009. Below the award dates are what we anticipate to be the construction duration time for those contracts. The longest one we have is near [pointing] the Orleans Marina because we have construction restraints and issues we have to

work around. The second longest contract is by the Seabrook area because we have a floodwall that parallels the Senator Ted Hickey Bridge and passes under the bridge. There are tight quarters because we have to raise the floodwalls and we have to deal with a rail road gate plus a vehicle access gate.

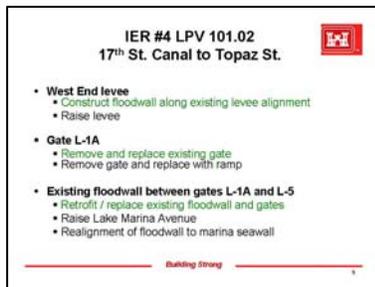


This is the first reach: the Orleans Marina area [pointing], 17th St Canal [pointing], and the West End Floodgate [pointing]. Here at

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Topaz St [pointing] is where we took out the floodgate due to the public comments and replaced it with an earthen levee section. Some of the features we have here: the purple line is where we have existing floodwalls. The yellow spots are the existing floodgates that we have to raise. Then we have small courses of levee on both sides from the West End floodgate to Topaz St.



In green, is the recommended action. We have looked at all the alternatives to decide which alternative was the best solution for the problem. We worked closely with the Coastal Protection and Restoration Association, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, Orleans Levee District and the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority East and we've taken public comments to make sure to come up with a solution to best

fit the community. There are still opportunities to comment if you do not agree with the recommendations. Where we have the West End Levee in the previous slide we need to construct a floodwall along the existing levee alignment. We have taken advance measures by driving sheet piles in that particular location. That small section of levee was probably between elevation 12 or 12 ½ and we want to get those measurements in place before next hurricane season to ensure we have a higher height at that location. These advance measures will be incorporated into the final solution, but we will build a floodwall in that location. Gate L-1 is the gate that crosses Lake Marina Ave and heads toward West End. We have looked at replacing or raising it with a ramp. The best solution, we believe, is to remove and replace the existing gate to raise it up. The remaining portion is where we have floodwalls around the Orleans Marina and we have looked at three options: One is to replace the existing gates and floodwalls that are there, two is to raise Lake Marina Ave. to act as protection, and the third is to create realignment for a new type of floodwall system. Our best solution is to replace the existing floodwalls and gates currently there. There are some construction constraints such as the Orleans Marina parking lot, residents and Coconut Beach. This is the reason there is the longer construction duration.



This is a continuation of the previous construction area. We talk about L-4 and that is an area close to the West End floodgate. It is located a little further west and it leads into an apartment complex on the flood side of the existing floodwall. We would bring that gate closer to Lake Marina Ave. The other two alternatives we looked at were: one to bring the adjacent floodwall close to the marina and the other is to follow the existing alignment. We think

by moving it closer to the marina it is a better situation. The last remaining feature is where we have the remaining levee from West End floodgate toward Topaz St. We have to try to maintain the parking lot of the apartment complex; restaurants that we are hoping to come back and the

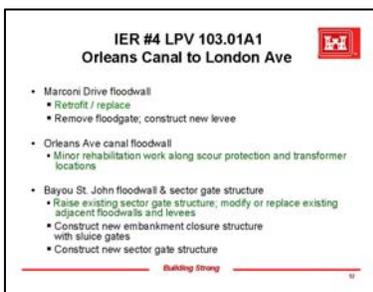
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residents on the protected side of the levee. There are tight construction constraints. The best solution is to construct a floodwall along the existing levee alignment.

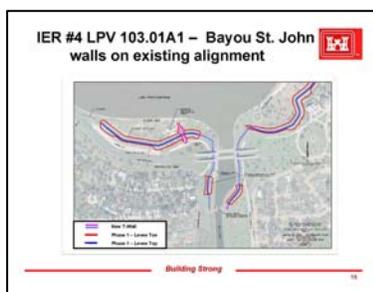


This is the next contract available 103.01A1. This area covers the Orleans Marina Ave. floodwall [pointing], the Marconi Dr. floodwall and floodgate at this particular location and the Bayou St. John area.



The areas in green, again, are what we are considering the best alternatives at this time. At Marconi Drive we are looking to retrofit the existing gate and not replacing it. On the Orleans Ave. there is minor work that is required to make sure there are not any seepage issues. Two transformers close to the floodwall and embankment section have to be address. It looks like we will take out a portion of the floodwall and construct an L-wall in that location. In Bayou St. John we have considered three alternatives. The third alternative was created by public comments during public meetings. The alternatives we are looking at: one is to replace the existing structures at the floodwalls and a sector gate structure;

the second is to put a new closure structure north of Lakeshore Dr. with some sluice gates to maintain water quality; and the third alternative is a new sector gate north of Lakeshore Dr. that would replace the existing structure. The recommendation we are considering is not different from what is currently there. We are planning to replace the I-walls along the canal and modifying the existing T-wall that crosses the bayou.



This is the sector gate structure and we have T-walls that tie into structures on either side, those will be modified to achieve the 100-year protection. There are a series of I-walls along the canal on the east and west bank. On the east side there are also I-walls. The idea is, we have to provide protection during construction so we will keep the I-walls during construction. Then we will replace the I-walls with T-walls. The T-walls will be constructed

on the protected side of the I-walls, and then once they are complete we will remove the I-walls. There are a number of staging areas because we will be working in residential areas. We plan to use the parking lot along the levee system [pointing], these two areas on the west bank just north and south of the bridge [pointing], this area under the bridge on the east side [pointing], and a small area south of the Bayou St. John structure on the east bank [pointing]. We do not intend to use a staging area located here [pointing] based on the comments that were received.

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IER #4 LPV 103.01A2
Orleans Canal to London Ave

- Rail Street ramp
 - Raise ramp
 - Construct new floodgate
- Lakeshore Drive at London Ave Canal ramp
 - Raise ramp
 - Construct new floodgate

Building Strong

Again, this is the 103.01A2 project; now that we have a decision it will take a little longer to design the new floodgates. It will address Brown St. and the Lake Terrace area. We have ramps at both locations. The alternatives we are looking at are to raise the existing ramps or to construct a new floodgate. If we would have went with ramps there would have been potential impacts at both locations. Four residential houses would have been impacted and we did not want to do that. Again we have worked with the CPRA, the Levee Authority and the Levee District. The best solution is to have a floodgate at both locations so there won't be impacts to residents with the proposed action.

IER #4 LPV 104.01
London Ave Canal to IHNC

Building Strong

This is the 104.01 reach. It covers the east bank of London Ave. to the west bank of the IHNC. There are a number of features along this entire area. There are at least 4 ramps in this location: one ramp on the east and on the west of Lakeshore Dr [pointing], the Franklin Dr. ramp [pointing], and the Leroy Johnson Dr. ramp [pointing]. There are two gates being included in this reach: one is L-10 located behind the Naval Reserve Center and L-11 that comes off the Senator Ted Hickey Bridge that leads toward Lakeshore Drive. Other features are a series of floodwalls located by the New Orleans District storage yard and the UNO Research Park that will be modified.

IER #4 LPV 104.01
London Ave Canal to IHNC

- Canal Blvd ramp
 - Raise ramps
 - Construct new floodgate
- Lakeshore Drive ramps east / west of UNO research facility
 - Raise ramp
 - Construct gated closure
- Pontchartrain Beach
 - Convert I-wall to L-wall on current alignment
 - Remove gates and replace with new floodwall
 - Remove floodwall and gates and replace with levee section

Building Strong

This slide features the alternatives considered in the 104.01 reach. Again, the green represents what we have proposed. The Canal Blvd ramp is similar to Franklin Ave which will be included in this project. We looked at ramps verses floodwalls and have decided we are going with ramps at that location. Also the east and west side of the UNO research facility we are going to raise the ramps. Then at the Pontchartrain Beach area we are going to convert the I-walls to T-walls on the current alignment.

IER #4 LPV 104.01
London Ave Canal to IHNC

- American Standard floodwall
 - Convert I-wall to L-wall, leave T-wall as is
 - Construct new floodwall
 - Remove floodwall and replace with levee section
- Leroy Johnson Drive Ramp / Franklin Ave Ramp
 - Raise ramp
 - Construct gated closure
- Gate L-10
 - Construct new gate
 - Remove gate and replace with levee section
- Gate L-11
 - Modify or replace gate

Building Strong

At the American Standard floodwall by the Orleans Levee District storage yard the recommended plan is to convert the I-wall adjacent to the T-wall to an L-wall and leave the T-wall that is currently there. Then at Leroy Johnson Dr. and Franklin Ave. we will raise the ramp. At Gate L-10 will be the same as we did at the Topaz St. gate. We are going to replace it with earthen levees. Then at L-11, the gate near Lakeshore Drive we are going to

modify it.

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This is our last contract reach and it is one of the longer construction duration jobs on Lakeshore Drive. It's the 104.02 reach and it will address the floodwall that goes parallel to the Senator Ted Hickey Bridge [pointing], then it goes under the bridge to tie into a vehicle access gate to the Seabrook boat launch and then to the railroad gate W-39 [pointing]. Due to the tight area, the floodwall is about 5 feet away from the existing bridge approach and we have to go under the bridge to raise the floodwall and we have to deal with the rail road at this particular location.



As I mentioned before it is important that we get your input. This is one of the ways you can provide your input, it is the www.nolaenvironmental.gov Web site or by contacting Mr. Gib Owen. He would be glad to receive your comments and information you would like to forward to him. This way we can make sure your comments are heard and we can provide the best project.

Discussion

Julie Morgan, public affairs

Kevin mentioned the CPRA and for those of you who do not know what that means it is the state's governing body called the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority for the state of Louisiana. Before we get started with the question and answer period, I would like to introduce the other subject managers here in addition to Kevin and Gib.

We have:

Soheila Holley	Senior project manager of borrow
Joe Kopec	Real estate
Maj. Tim Kurgan	Chief of public affairs
Deanna Walker	Real estate
Laura Lee Wilkinson	Environmental manager for the hurricane protection office

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We have a few ground rules. The project managers I introduced will be available after the public meeting if you do not want to talk during the question and answer period. We do want you to understand the answers, so we will work on it until we both understand. There are evaluation sheets that we handed out and we would appreciate it if you would please fill those out and turn them in before you leave. If you have not signed in, would you please sign in before you leave so we can send you a notice of any upcoming meetings. We would like you to walk to the microphone when you have a question and state your name. There are many people here tonight, so please keep your comments to 3 minutes. We are here for constructive comments because we have heard all the strong feels people have toward the Corps. The constructive comments will help make the project good for you. So, we will start with the first question.

Question 1. Susan Garcia, Lake Vista: In Bayou St. John and have a question about raising the existing structure gate. Bayou St. John is a natural water way and not an outfall canal. It is integrated into the history of New Orleans. If you raise the existing sector gate are you going to allow for inflow so that it remains a viable waterway instead of becoming stagnant lagoon?

Response 1. Kevin Wagner: Right now, the sector gate is closed. There are existing valves to allow water from Lake Pontchartrain into the bayou. The water quality will be no different now than when the construction is complete. When we talk about modifying the existing sector gate, it is raising it about 1 to 1 ½ feet to provide the 100-year level of protection. That might be where we weld and mount the existing gate or we may put an I-beam across the existing gate. The work we are doing at the existing structure is not a lot of work to get the protection needed. The operation and maintenance of the gate will be the responsibility of our local sponsor, the local Levee District. We are concerned with providing the 100-year level of protection and being able to close that gate when needed.

Question 2. Susan Garcia: As long as you maintain the water quality so it does not become stagnant.

Response 2. Kevin Wagner: it will be no different than its current situation. We have valves that refresh the bayou as well as the lagoons in City Park now.

Question 3. Robert Counce, president of Bancroft Park Neighborhood Association: Will someone from the Corps speak on the record tonight that they would provide a demonstration that Bayou St. John sector gate opens and closes regardless who pays for silt removal? Gib, Kevin and Steve Spencer answered my question, but to make sure I am clear: Gib is saying as long as it is operational and it moves then we have satisfied our job to provide 100-year protection. If there is siltation that prevents the gate from opening then the Corps is not going to remove it. Then the Orleans Levee district does not have the instructions from the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East nor the funding to do it. We are going to spend money to raise or repair the sector gate and there is a chance that it will not open or close. When

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the first gate was erected there was a permit issued that the gate remains open except in the event of a storm or tidal surge that says lets close it. The local levee authority has never paid attention to that, now the Corps has a chance to give us a gate that works and the locals can work with the levee authority to keep it working. If we can not have a functioning gate then we should have a levee with the sluice in it because that is more effective than we have now. So, I urge the Corps to go back to the drawing board and work with the Orleans Levee District to find a way to make sure the gates fully open and close. [Clapping] I would also urge everyone in here to write and e-mail the members of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection-East and urge them not to accept IER 4 until we have a sector gate that fully opens and closes.

Response 3a. Kevin Wagner: We understand the concerns of the community. To address that issue from our standpoint we have to make sure the gate is operable. We are working with the Orleans Levee District and the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection-East. We know the gates will work and we know there is siltation. I will turn it to Steve Spencer to see if he would like to address that concern. It does come down to maintenance.

Response 3b. Steve Spencer, Orleans Levee District: The structure was not designed to be open 24/7. We have high tides in the lake so it is higher and we are trying to keep the inside level so it will not go into people's yard. You do get rain and the Sewage and Water Board has drains to get the water out that goes into the city lagoon. It is one big coordination effort to keep it open longer. We all have problems with salinity, concerns with algae blooms in the summer and fish kills. We keep it closed for those reasons alone as well as tidal levels. We did open it after Katrina to let water out of the city. We close it to keep water from coming into the bayou and flooding people's yards.

Question 4. Joe Hassinger, Lake Terrace Property Owners President: First I want to say the work on Lakeshore Drive with raising the levees has been done in an excellent manner and with very little disruption. I commend you on that. [Clapping] I will say what I am concerned with is the rail and London Ave, the ramps verses floodgates. I think what you presented tonight is a great example of us talking and you understanding. I want to say thank you for the work you are doing. The only thing I would point out is slide 11 that shows detail of London Ave and I think it shows a ramp instead of a floodwall.

Response 4. Kevin Wagner: That is just to show what it out there currently. We can have future meetings once we have narrowed down the alignment and what these gates are going to look like. The gates will be open unless there is a surge. There will be some disruption along Lakeshore Dr. and we are going to do sections, then ask the Levee District to approve the work. Once the work is approved then that area of Lakeshore Dr. will be open. We do have 5 contracts for this very large area.

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Comment 5. Phil Shall, president Bayou St. John Improvement Association: The highway should not be closed. Funds are a problem with operating this system and this is where we have to get involved with the state and make sure the funds are available for operation. The gate is supposed to operate on a regular basis. Sluice gates are not good for changing out the water. I use to be able to catch green trout but now I catch mullet. If that gate was open on a regular basis then it would keep itself clean. It should be kept open because sluice gates do not do the job. I think we need to get with the government agencies to get funding.

Question 6. Robert Counce: Mr. Spencer mentioned this study written in 1996. The average height of the lake above Bayou St. John is about ½ foot and there are times it could be higher. There has been a grant secured where if we raise \$100,000 we get another \$300,000 and we can remove the waterfall damn on Robert E. Lee Blvd. and the sector gate. Then, according to the Bayou St. John Comprehensive Management Plan, that says that would raise the water quality. If we had gates that would open more and not stay closed then the water will clean it. The issue with the Levee District going out to open and close it then that becomes your job. We will help to get the money. Now on algae blooms, leaving the gate open does not lead to algae bloom. According to science, if we allow the bayou to assume its natural flow then we will have the fish. What is the use of having a sector gate if we are not going to open and close it and have the habitat refresh itself? [Clapping]

Comment 7. Man in blue shirt: I would like to make a comment because I think it is on peoples mind. Over the last 3 years people in this room and many others have worked hard to bring back this area of the city. The central component of that has been the cooperation of our elected officials like Nick Larusso, JP Morrell and Councilman Morrell.

Question 8. Jim Sutterfield, past president Bancroft Park Neighborhood Association: Steve if the water comes up, it is my problem. So as far as I am concerned you can let that water run in and if the water comes into our yards I would not mind it. I can not possibly see it getting that high but if it does then we could build our own bulkheads.

Response 8. Steve Spencer: I know there are some areas of the bayou that have degraded, so some areas are lower. So to get everyone to do the same might be the real challenge.

Comment 9. Henry Artigue: The nutrias are taking over and I am sure you realize that, but something needs to be done because they are digging everywhere. This may not be the forum but we do need to do something about the nutria.

Comment 10. Jim Sutterfield: I would like to mention one thing, during Hurricane Katrina the bayou did not overflow. The water that came in was from the London Ave. and Industrial Canal.

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Question 11. Jay Maddison Green: Has the new testing requirements and boring requirements increased the cost of building the levees?

Response 11. Kevin Wagner: Any time we have to do additional testing to improve the quality of work then it does drive up the cost because it takes a while for someone to go out there. We adhere to the criteria because one thing we learned from Katrina we have made changes to make sure the system we have today is better than the one we had pre-Katrina. No one wants to see what we had during Katrina.

Question 12. Cyril Laan: I would like to know if the new floodgate is raised, will it cross Lakeshore Dr. along the current levee?

Response 12. Kevin Wagner: The whole concept is to make it perpendicular to the highway. Hopefully no one will be riding along Lakeshore Drive when the storm is coming. That would be the last gate closed to keep the integrity of the system. We currently have an existing floodwall on the north side of Lakeshore Dr. and it ties into an earthen embankment on the south side. We will build a gate across Lakeshore Dr. and extend the floodwall on the south side.

Julie Morgan, public affairs

We appreciate you coming out tonight. Thank you.