

# United States Army Corps of Engineers

7400 Leake Avenue  
New Orleans, LA, 70118

CONFIDENTIAL

Date of Meeting: September 12, 2009

**[Audio starts and stops with some background speakers and noise then begins meeting at 00:32]**

Nancy Allen: Okay. I think we're ready to get started. I want to welcome you all here today. My name is Nancy Allen I'm a member of the Public Affairs staff with the Corps of Engineers and I will serving as the facilitator for today's meeting.

We just want to thank you for coming here today, we know it's a Saturday afternoon and there's a lot of other things to do. But, your input is very important and your presence today is very important. We want you to do know that the Corps is committed to public safety and we're committed to providing risk reduction to Plaquemines Parish and that's what we're here to talk about today.

Our focus today is the New Orleans to Venice project, those are the levees from St. Jude to Venice on the West Bank. Next weekend we'll be talking about the non-federal levees and we'll show you some more information about that meeting in a couple minutes.

This is a brief overview of our agenda for the team for Saturday. This is a scoping meeting and part of the National Environmental Policy Act scoping process, and we'll explain exactly what that means. But, we're just going to tell you a little bit about the projects, the set goals, and then introduce the scoping process and get you a working plan and feedback.

Giving presentations today will be Paul Ingles who's the Project Manager for the New Orleans to Venice project, and Larry Marcie who is a biologist for the Corps.

Our meeting today has really three purposes, one is we want to tell you about the federal action forming process, we want to explain the scoping process, and then most important we want to solicit information from the public. We are here to listen to *you*, your input is valuable as we begin the scoping process. We'll be keeping our speaker request cards on the table, they're **[Inaudible 2:31 Mumbling]** if you'd like to speak, if you could fill one of those out, we'll be calling people from these cards.

This is a slide that is used as I'm going to start our applications with. It really just talks about the fact that what we're here to talk about today is risk reduction, everyone shares the responsibility in reducing that risk by doing things to your home, bracing your home, nonstructural, building codes, communication, outreach, having an evacuation plan is very important, having flood insurance, and also structural things like levees and flood walls. We all share responsibility; we are still in hurricane season. If local asks people to evacuate you need to heed evacuation orders.

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With that, I'm going to turn it over to Paul Ingles.

Paul Ingles:

Thank you, Nancy. And It's good to be here today. I bet many of you are here...and just briefly about the federal levees project. As you can see on the slide we talked about **[Inaudible 03:42 – 03:45 Speaking too low]** you can see on the East Bank from Venice to Bohemia. On the West Bank from St. Jude to Venice. You can see the East Bank and the West Bank got back levees that are targeted for this project as well as some the **[Inaudible 04:01 Speaking too low]** levees on the West Bank, also. And, the purpose of this project is to create the levees to be all **[Inaudible 04:11 – 04:13 Speaking too low]** we are engaging in that process **[Inaudible 04:16 Speaking too low]** right now. And, we want your input as we go through this process, you know, **[Inaudible 04:23 Speaking too low]** help us in the process. That's especially important as we go through the environmental scoping part of it as well as the impacts we see **[Inaudible 04:35 Speaking too low]** on these projects. So, it's very important that we get your input. We thank you for being here and you're your time **[Inaudible 04:43 – 04:45 Speaking too low]**.

This shows an outline of our schedule we expect to have **[Inaudible 04:52 – 04:53]** environmental impact statement ready by June next year. That will be followed by public meeting, and then you can see the next item is signing the record of public decision and that is an important step in this process because that allows **[Inaudible 05:08 Mumbling]**, to again go ahead and institute a process and get it underway. And that's followed up by advertising contracts and so forth, you can see there's some time there **[Inaudible 05:19 – 05:21 Speaking too low]** acquisition of real estate and so forth **[Inaudible 5:25 – 5:30 Speaking too low]** chose the first contract **[Inaudible 05:33 – 05:37 Speaking too low]** June to September 2013. So, this is kind of a snapshot of where we are now on the schedule and what these things are all about. Then, I'm going to turn it over to Larry Marcie, to talk to you about the actual scoping process. He can give you a little bit of a questionnaire and help give him some feedback. Thank you.

Larry Marcie:

Good afternoon. I appreciate you taking the time to come out this afternoon; I know you've probably got a lot of things going on, on a Saturday afternoon. **[Inaudible 06:12 – 06:19 Speaking too low]**.

My name is Larry Marcie, I'm a biologist with the Vicksburg District Corps of Engineers. My role today is to explain to you the scoping process. And after, the participants will participate **[Inaudible 06:33 – 06:34 Speaking too low]** to develop alternatives for this project. This is your opportunity to provide input. It's your first opportunity but it's not your last, there will be other work sessions and meetings where you can also tell us what you think. Participating in this meeting makes you one of our partners, you're a valued member of our planning team. So, let's move into scoping. What is scoping? Well, it's just a process, a process where we ask you for information, that's all it is. But, it is mostly three

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things. First one we show up there, it informs public about a project, that's what we're doing today. It also identifies some issues and concerns that you may have about the project, it also solicits ideas from you about how do we modify the project, what other alternatives that you think need to be considered, are there any particular approaches that remain **[Inaudible 07:41 – 07:43 Speaking too low]** or that you want us to look at. And, we're going to accomplish these three items **[Inaudible 07:45 – 07:47 Speaking too low]** meeting. The scoping process is described in the National Environmental Policy Act that was implemented in 1970, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1970. We need procedures to make sure that all the public interests were considered, and also provides a mechanism so we can evaluate environmental impacts, select an alternative. It also makes sure that environment information is provided to all the elected officials and the citizens before any decisions are made or before any action is taken. When the decision is made we prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement **[Inaudible 08:34 – 08:38 Speaking too low]** to initiate public scoping meeting early in the process so we can get your feedback so we can start to look at any information that you have provided, what kind of alternatives we need to consider. We publish a notice of **[Inaudible 08:54 Speaking too low]** August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009, we also publish newspaper notices where we **[Inaudible 09:01 Speaking too low]** about this meeting. The issues and **[Inaudible 09:07 Speaking too low]** that concerns **[Inaudible 09:08 – 09:10 Speaking too low]** important, this is a public meeting **[Inaudible 09:11- 09:13 Speaking too low]** transcript, and that transcript becomes part of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement that shows what you consider important and to show how we considered your input **[Inaudible 09:27 – 09:28 Speaking too low]**. Once the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement is completed, a draft is completed, it will be available for public review for 45 where we will review the received comments and then we will state your comments and incorporate those into the SEIS and we'll prepare a final that will also be **[Inaudible 09:52 Speaking too low]**.

**[Inaudible 09:58 – 10:00 Speaking too low]**. Our purpose today, you can see up here, is not about The Corps of Engineers, it's about you, it's about listening to your input **[Inaudible 10:11 – 10:13 Speaking too low]** developing alternatives. In consideration of your input, your identification of problems and opportunities **[Inaudible 10:23 – 10:24 Speaking too low]** to the scoping process. The last item on that slide talks about participation. Participation is the key, it's like the citizen's responsibility to be involved in your government to go out and vote and **[Inaudible 10:41 Speaking too low]** along in this process. We appreciate your coming today. There are many environmental concerns we can't even consider without the community. This is just a short list, if any of you have other concerns that you want us to take a look at, we may add **[Inaudible 10:59 – 11:03 Speaking too low]** that you want us to look at.

To further that **[Inaudible 11:07 – 11:12 Speaking too low]**. There are a couple questions I'd like you to think about. The first one talks about what are the most

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important resources in the area? What do you want us to consider? **[Inaudible 11:25 – 11:40 Speaking too low]**. Next question, are there any alternatives or modifications to the levee, the existing federal levee **[Inaudible 11:51 – 11:53 Speaking too low]**? Other alignments you want us to consider **[Inaudible 11:55 Speaking too low]**? And, this shows levees versus floodwalls. Those are the two questions you can **[Inaudible 12:05 Speaking too low]**. Take your comments or your thought processes and work around those two questions **[Inaudible 12:15 – 12:17 Speaking too low]**. You've heard from the Corps of Engineers, now we're going to listen to you. So, I'm going to turn it back over **[Inaudible 12:25 – 12:26 Speaking too low]**. I appreciate your input.

**[Inaudible 12:32 Speaking too low]**

Nancy Allen:

**[Inaudible 12:33 – 12:34 Speaking too low]**. Here are your ground rules for today's comment session. Please **[Inaudible 12:39 – 12:43 Speaking too low]** speaker request card **[Inaudible 12:44 – 12:46 Speaking too low]** we will just call on those folks first, and if there are other people that would like to make a comment, we'll open that up. Please use the microphone which is right here in the center of the room. We are recording this, it will be transcribed, this will be part of the public record, it's very important that you use the microphone, provide your name, your location or your affiliation for **[Inaudible 13:08 – 13:11 Speaking too low]**. We do ask you to limit your comments to three minutes and to help you do that we have a light system up here by the steps. When you're speaking, you'll see a flashing yellow light that means you have 30 seconds left, and then you'll hear a beep. If you don't want to speak we also are accepting written comments and there's a pre-paid postage postcard back in the back for you to make those comments on **[Inaudible 13:35 Speaking too low]**. Additional questions or comments, please direct to Gib Owen whom I'm going to introduce in just a minute **[Inaudible 13:43 Speaking too low]** one of our environmental project managers.

If you are interested in the Eastern Tie-in and Plaquemines Non-Federal Levees, we're having a workshop next Saturday at 9:00 a.m. at Belle Chasse High School.

All right. Before we get started I want to introduce a couple of additional staff members that we have with us in addition to Paul and Larry, we have Julie LeBlanc **[Phonetic 14:09]** who is the **[Inaudible 14:12 Speaking too low]** project manager for Plaquemines, we have Bill Lewas **[Phonetic 14:14]** who is also one of Plaquemines Project Managers and a lot of you probably know Bill. We have Debra Wood **[Phonetic 14:22]** who is the **[Inaudible 14:22 – 14:26 Speaking too low]** environmental project managers.

All right. Now, I'm going to open up for comments, so the first person we're going to hear from is Plaquemines Parish President, Billy Nungesser.

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Billy Nungesser: Thanks. Testing...2...3...Hello?

Nancy Allen: **[Inaudible 15:05 – 15:07 Speaking too low]**

**[Inaudible 15:09 – 15:18 Speaking too low / Faint background noise and speakers]**

Billy Nungesser: I want to **[Inaudible 15:22 – 15:30 Speaking too low]** the Corps. The Corps has done a lot of great things for Plaquemines **[Inaudible 15:35 – 15:47 Speaking too low]**. First off, the **[Inaudible 15:52 Mumbling]** of projects, as I mentioned this morning, is unacceptable for Plaquemines Parish. After Hurricane Ike, Secretary **[Inaudible 16:02 Mumbling]** came down **[Inaudible 16:04 – 16:05 Speaking too low]** by the Corps, we demanded the construction of a non-federal levee to start by February 2010 **[Inaudible 16:16 – 16:22 Speaking too low]** slipped to 2012. Plaquemines Parish employees, staff, and government has done everything in its power to help the Corps along: Acquire levees. Myself, that's something we're **[Inaudible 16:33 – 16:36 Speaking too low]** that could put us in jeopardy **[Inaudible 16:38 – 16:39 Speaking too low]** but I think that the **[Inaudible 16:44 Speaking too low]** to move this project forward to fast track these levees **[Inaudible 16:48 – 16:53 Speaking too low]** private landowners **[Inaudible 16:55 – 16:57 Speaking too low]** that will donate the dirt...contract **[Inaudible 17:02 – 17:04 Speaking too low]**. They pay you to test this land...I'd even reckon on six to eight months we could get all the testing done – at their own expense. We've continue to do everything to fast track these projects. We know how important it is to protect our Parish. We've lost so much wetlands that we hold our breath for a strong wind. The Parish has been putting crushed rock on the back side of the levees, where the water is **[Inaudible 17:34 – 17:38 Speaking too low]** down levees. We don't have until 2012. We will not sit here in 2012 **[Inaudible 17:47 – 17:48 Speaking too low]** if we do not fast track these levees. It is not this government's fault nor the people of Plaquemines that **[Inaudible 17:55 – 17:57 Speaking too low]** the same treatment as Orleans, Saint Bernard and Jefferson that allow them to not have to go through the normal environmental tests. So, therefore, we should not be punished by this long environmental plan before we start construction. **[Inaudible 18:14 Speaking too low]** not acceptable. After the hearing next Saturday, and we get all the **[Inaudible 18:17 – 18:20 Speaking too low]** in Washington to meet with the General and our Senators and do whatever it takes to get this project moved back on the schedule it was before. It is unacceptable, we will not accept it. **[Inaudible 18:34 – 18:36 Speaking too low]** whatever we have to do to **[Inaudible 18:37 Speaking too low]**. **[Inaudible 18:38 – 18:40 Speaking too low]** with the Corps and I think several of you **[Inaudible 18:42 Speaking too low]** on Plaquemines. We have **[Inaudible 18:45 Speaking too low]** four and five feet down that will not **[Inaudible 18:48 Speaking too low]** if it's raining, and the people don't know that. We go out there and **[Inaudible 18:53 Speaking too low]** some of this work. It is unbelievable that anybody would let the environmental groups decide when **[Inaudible 19:00 – 19:04**

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**Speaking too low**]. They say it's an 1,000 acre impact – that's far too great. In other areas you all broke it up in sections and put the environments out to bid so it wouldn't be a 1,000 acre impact. You can show small impacts in small projects. But, my personal feeling is that you brought this all together so we could move into the environmental procedure. I remember early hearings we were back-tracking, and if we **[Inaudible 19:34 Speaking too low]** this now, it's unexcusable [sic]. Your own documents have a schedule of 2010. Like I've said, I've **[Inaudible 19:47 – 19:49 Speaking too low]** and I've done everything **[Inaudible 19:50 – 19:53 Speaking too low]** and after my trip to Washington, this parish will take whatever necessary action is and we know we cannot stand for that. We have spent over a million dollars of our own money, spent a lot **[Inaudible 20:03 – 20:04 Speaking too low]** the Corps to develop a coastal plan. We'll return our environmental application next month, we'll hold it for the 90-day review period, we're praying for the 90-day review period **[Inaudible 20:16 – 20:22 Speaking too low]** we don't have a chance. The federal government invested over \$500 million in Plaquemines Parish, not to mention the people that have built their homes and business back. We don't have to 2012, we're not that lucky. We will not see that many hurricane seasons without a hurricane in the **[Inaudible 20:46 Speaking too low]** south end of this parish. It's not going to take a Katrina, so I beg you to consider, and instead of telling you why we can't do something, let's get together and figure out how we can do it. **[Inaudible 21:01 – 21:02 Speaking too low]** small projects. I also would ask you...that I dispute the **[Inaudible 21:10 Speaking too low]** impacts. I agreed to take **[Inaudible 21:12 Speaking too low]** Plaquemines **[Inaudible 21:14 – 21:16 Speaking too low]** a thousand acres on the backside of the levee, but if you can go back there and if I'll **[Inaudible 21:22 – 21:25 Speaking too low]** easy, I'd say 75% to 80% of it this water hits the levee, so that's no impact on the marshlands. So, you're saying that, they're saying there's a 20% factor, and we look mostly...a large portion of that is open water – one of the reasons why we need to move quickly. **[Inaudible 21:47– 21:50 Speaking too low]** whatever this government can do, but we don't have until 2012 to start these project, and I beg you to do whatever you can and build a **[Inaudible 21:59 - 22:00 Speaking too low]** levees **[Inaudible 22:02 – 22:07 Speaking too low]** be ready for the end of 2012. So, instead of everybody just saying why we can't do something, let's figure out a way to start these levees before 2012. Thank you.

Nancy Allen: Thank you President Nungesser

Billy Nungesser: That was a little nice talk.

Nancy Allen: Our next speaker will be Lynda Banta who's the council member from Plaquemines Parish council district 8.

Lynda Banta: Good afternoon, I'd like to thank everyone. **[Inaudible 22:32 – 22:47 Speaking too low]** in my district, I heard something that was disturbing.....levee but I also

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know that...displacing all my residents; they've just gotten settled – just finding a way home, and I'll find out that some of them will be displaced. I'm in a Catch 22 **[Inaudible 23:02 – 23:06 Speaking too low]**, they just got back; just uh you know, four short years, for us waiting is a lifetime. They have to get back to their home **[Inaudible 23:14 – 23:17 Speaking too low]** people don't want to be displaced again **[Inaudible 23:18 – 23:20 Speaking too low]** so I hope we can work something out **[Inaudible 23:23 – 23:33 Speaking too low]** before I go out, I'm not going to go away, so **[Inaudible 23:35 – 23:46 Speaking too low]**. Thank You.

Nancy Allen: Thank you ma'am. Next we'll have Ms. Marla Cooper who is representing Plaquemines Parish council district 9.

Marla Cooper: Hi, my name is Marla Cooper and I'm a representative of **[Inaudible 24:01 Speaking too low]** Plaquemines Parish and I would like to urge the Corps of Engineers not to wait until 2012. What good is environmental study on **[Inaudible 24:10 – 24:11 Speaking too low]** if we don't have the lower end of the parish to protect? We need hurricane protection on all non-federal and federal levees up to a 100-year storm. **[Inaudible 24:20 – 24:24 Speaking too low]** to repair our levees our destruction moves further north. We are in danger of losing our whole Parish without these levees. And, I would just like to urge you to please, please think of the date 2012 is not going to be another year for us to wait for. So if we have a Katrina **[Inaudible 24:46 – 24:50 Speaking too low]** a big impact like she was, but if we have a big impact – a big hurricane like Katrina before 2012, I don't know if we'll have a Parish to come back to.

[Applause]

Nancy Allen: Thank you **[Inaudible 25:03 Speaking too low]**. Do we have any other speaker request cards? Okay. I will open up the microphone if anybody else would like to make a comment. Again, these are some of the questions **[Inaudible 25:15 – 25:18 Speaking too low]** is there other issues that you feel we need to consider as we progress through the scoping process?

Billy Nungesser: If I could just make a couple... That is the first I've heard of anyone **[Inaudible 25:33 – 25:37 Speaking too low]** Belle Chasse **[Inaudible 25:37 – 25:41 Speaking too low]** those areas, the impacted areas, I would sure like to get that as soon as possible **[Inaudible 25:47 – 26:04 Speaking too low]** I said this earlier this morning **[Inaudible 26:06 – 26:011 Speaking too low]** I strongly urge you to hold these meetings **[Inaudible 26:12 – 26:013 Speaking too low]** I don't know how **[Inaudible 26:15 Mumbling]** but a lot of our parents have kids involved, they have elderly parents they have to care for, and they can't make these meetings. I honestly had about two dozen calls about they couldn't be here, please inform them of what's going on. So, I appreciate you all taking your Saturday to do it, but I really think – especially a Parish where most of our

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people work on Saturday, especially the south end; after work and the evening, just not at night **[Inaudible 26:46 – 26:47 Speaking too low]** works a lot better. **[Inaudible 26:49 – 26:52 Speaking too low]** So I hope in the future you all consider that. Thank you.

Male speaker: **[Inaudible 26:56 – 27:00 Speaking too low]** There's very little room on either side of the levee, and when you've got that situation you've got to make a decision how are you going to **[Inaudible 27:06 – 27:14]** those are the kind of things that are going to show up. We got to work through with you and make a tough decision on it. And I thank y'all, and I guess as far as that goes **[Inaudible 27:25 – 27:45 Speaking too low]**

Nancy Allen: We can certainly review the holding **[Inaudible 27:51 – 27:59 Speaking too low]**. You can also always send in your written comments to **[Inaudible 28:04 – 28:06 Speaking too low]** dot army dot mil. Also, all of our presentations of our public meetings are on nolaenvironmental.gov. We can certainly provide that information for you, for some people who are not here today, this presentation will be available.

Any other questions or issues or comments? All right. Well, thank you for coming. We'll stay around for a while, feel free to come talk to any of us one-on-one **[Inaudible 28:43 – 28:49 Speaking too low]** information at the table. Thank you.

Male speaker: Thank you all.

Nancy Allen: Thank you.

Male speaker: Thank you all for coming.

**[Inaudible 28:54 – 29:48 Background noise / Multiple speakers]**

[End of meeting]