

The Corps hosted a public meeting on Tuesday, Jun. 16, 2009 at the Northshore Harbor Center to provide an update on the status of risk reduction measures benefiting St. Tammany Parish. The questions and responses below address issues raised and related to the Southeast Louisiana Urban Drainage Flood Control Project which is also known as SELA.

## General questions/comments

### **1. How can the Southeast Louisiana Urban Drainage Flood Control Project, from proposal-to-construction, be expedited?**

In general, the only means to expedite a project is for Congress to direct the Corps to construct the project in the absence of the traditional study requirements. The Schneider Canal project is being handled under the Southeast Louisiana Urban Flood Control Project (SELA). Because SELA projects do not require traditional feasibility studies, SELA actually represents an expedited means of moving projects to construction, and many SELA projects were able to move relatively quickly into the construction phase. For years, there was no progress on the Schneider project because there was no local sponsor (a sponsor is required by law). The Parish has announced its intent to sponsor the work, but the Corps is working to resolve an issue concerning project authority.

### **2. We have never flooded, will SELA projects induce flooding?**

The project is intended to reduce flood damages in some of the most flood-prone areas of Slidell. Many of the homes in the project area are subject to repetitive flooding. At the same time, some homes in the area have not experienced any flooding.

### **3. We need parish drainage problems fixed as soon as possible, especially near French Branch.**

French Branch is part of the Slidell Area Plan that has been authorized by Congress under the Southeast Louisiana Urban Flood Control Project (SELA). The authorized plan includes enlarging Poor Boy Canal to a 25-foot bottom width channel and diverts all flood flows from the W-15 Canal. Bridge improvements will be required for 3 existing highways; State Highways 1090 and 1091, and Interstate Highway 59.

Work on this project is contingent upon Congress providing funding and the Parish's participation as local sponsor.

## Schneider Canal

### **4. The Schneider Canal Hurricane Protection Plan would help me. Is this plan being seriously considered? It would give us immediate protection.**

The plan is being considered as part of the Southeast Louisiana Urban Flood Control Project. The Corps is working to resolve an issue concerning the agency's authority to investigate a proposed alternative that lies outside the original project area. The Corps hopes to resolve the issue by the end of August 2009. The project team has prepared a project management plan for conducting the study that would be required prior to project construction. If the Corps receives a favorable resolution of the authorization issue and obtains funding, we can begin the study next fiscal year, which begins on Oct. 1, 2009. The study would probably take about three years to complete.

## **5. With the building of the Schneider Canal Levee, what are you going to do for Eden Isles?**

Protection for Eden Isles is not authorized in the current Southeast Louisiana Urban Flood Control Project (SELA).

SELA was authorized by Congress after the May 1995 floods in Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Tammany parishes. The work authorized for St. Tammany Parish includes the following seven projects:

- Schneider Canal Hurricane Protection
- Mandeville Hurricane Protection
- Lacombe Area Plan
- Abita Springs Plan
- Mile Branch Plan
- Bayou Chinchuba Plan
- Slidell Area Plan (W-13, W-14 and W-15 Canals)

For risk reduction to be provided to the Eden Isles area under the SELA project, Congress would have to authorize the project. Once a project is authorized, a reconnaissance study would need to be performed to determine if there is a viable project. If the reconnaissance study has favorable results, a 533d study (feasibility study) would be performed. A reconnaissance study duration is 1 year. A 533d study has a 3 year duration. All of this is contingent upon authorization and funding from Congress.

## **6. What is the current scope (proposed height) of the Schneider Canal Project?**

The height of the proposed levee would be developed during the course of the required study.

## **7. How will the W-14 Canal be widened? How will it impact resident's property?**

There will be designated access sites along the 4.1 mile W-14 Canal improvement project. Excavators and other types of earth moving equipment will be used along with pile driving equipment and concrete trucks. As material is excavated, it will be hauled off by dump trucks to a designated stockpile area. The present plan for widening the canal does not require taking a portion of any residents backyard.

The W-14 Drainage Canal improvements project may require the relocation of a small number of homes for one of the retention ponds; however, the project team hopes to redesign the pond during the next phase to obviate the need for any such relocations. If the government requires the taking of property for public projects, owners would be protected by the Congressionally enacted Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (URA). Benefits may include: moving costs, replacement housing payments, rental assistance, services from a real estate advisor, reimbursement for new service deposits, etc.

**8. What protection can be expected for the homeowners, who work and pay taxes and live on the Northshore off Hwy 11? Louisiana asked us to stay and rebuild, we did -- now where is our protection? I would like more information on the Schneider Canal Project along Hwy 11.**

The Corps is working with the City of Slidell and St. Tammany Parish to develop an implementable Schneider Canal project. The Corps is attempting to resolve an authorization issue that could affect its ability to investigate the levee alignment proposed by the Parish. The project team hopes to resolve the issue by the end of August 2009. The Corps has prepared a project management plan for conducting the study that would be required prior to project construction. If we can get favorable resolution of the authorization issue and obtain funding, the Corps can begin the study next fiscal year, which begins on Oct. 1, 2009. The study would probably take about three years to complete.

**9. What is the status of the Schneider Pump station?**

The proposed Schneider Canal levee would provide a measure of protection for a portion of Slidell. The Corps is working to resolve an issue concerning the agency's authority to investigate a proposed alternative that lies outside the original project area.

**10. How will the Schneider levee project in Slidell affect the properties south of the levee (between the lake and the levee) and how many homes would be protected versus homes adversely affected?**

The Corps has not yet conducted the necessary study for the Schneider Canal project. The requested information is therefore not yet available.

**W-14 Canal**

**11. How will the widening of the W-14 Canal impact the residents that live along the canal?**

Construction would occur mainly within existing rights-of-way, or within St. Tammany Parish street or property rights-of-way.

Traffic along streets affected by construction would likely be reduced to one lane, with only private home access, or completely closed to traffic. Normal traffic on the affected streets would be detoured to adjacent streets during the construction period. All street closures would be

coordinated with the City of Slidell, Department of Public Works, to ensure city services and public safety can be maintained at all times. Indirect temporary effects on transportation would include vehicle emissions, decreases in level of service (e.g., longer waits at intersections), and decreases in road surface quality.

Minimum potential exists for vibration damage associated with construction activities for the structures identified within the zone of construction impact (40 to 47 feet in each direction measured from the centerline of the canal or street). There is no specific way of determining how much damage would occur during the construction of the proposed project.

Local residents and businesses would be expected to experience temporary noise effects during construction due to the required use of earth-moving equipment, trucks hauling material to and from the site, cranes for pile driving purposes, and equipment for the demolition and removal of existing bridges.

If at any time you have a concern with any construction activity, you can contact the Corps at 504-862-2201 or AskTheCorps@usace.army.mil.

## **12. How long will it take to widen the W-14 Canal?**

Construction for the Florida Avenue Bridge is expected to take 2 years. Channel improvement along the canal in this area will also take 2 years to construct. Construction duration for the entire W-14 Canal project is 5 to 6 years (not considering delays for bad weather, unexpected conditions in the field, etc.)

## **13. Why not widen the W-14 Canal from Fremaux on, as this will not have a negative impact on people residences?**

The canal is currently being widened from Daney Street to I-10 by the developers of the Summit Fremaux.

## **14. The W-14 Canal drains to the south and there is nothing other than the Schneider Canal pumping station to relieve pressure. The Schneider Canal has oversized pumps – pumping through 6 ft culverts into Hwy 11 marsh. There is flooding west of Pontchartrain Dr., residents had water overtop “3 ft levees.” None of the above is acceptable.**

Through the Slidell W-14 Drainage Canal Improvement project, the Corps, Slidell, and St. Tammany Parish are working to improve the canal’s drainage capacity and reduce flooding in the project area.

## **15. Is the W-14 Canal being widened to accommodate the new development by Fremaux and I-10?**

No. This project was authorized in 1996. Preliminary designs for this project were completed in December 2000. All SELA projects are dependent upon local sponsorship and local assumption

of the non-federal cost share (25%). Due to a lack of a local sponsor and failure to pass a tax referendum that would have been used to fund the non-federal cost share, the project was delayed.

#### **16. What are the exact expropriation intents with expansion of the W-14 retention ponds?**

The Corps, in its project development process, strives to work with landowners who are willing to sell their properties, and generally seeks to design its projects in such a way that parcels of land required for construction are in fact available for acquisition. In the planning phase, it is not always possible to lay out a project in such a fashion, due to the limited resources we devote at that stage of project development and to the uncertainty of what conditions we will find at the time we are actually ready for construction.

The Corps is presently completing a section 533(d) report on the W-14 drainage canal in Slidell (section 533 refers to the portion of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996 that authorized the Southeast Louisiana Urban Flood Control Project, or SELA). The purpose of that report is to document that the proposed project meets three criteria: it must be technically sound, environmentally acceptable, and economically viable. The plan laid out in such a report is rarely identical to the project that is ultimately constructed; many changes are likely to occur as we work through the design phase. It is during that phase that we would develop the details of the project's real estate requirements. Before we commence that phase, we must obtain approval for our section 533(d) report from the Corps' Mississippi Valley Division, and we must receive funding that would allow us to proceed with designing the project. We hope that approval and funding will be obtained by the end of this year and that we will be able to begin design work in 2010. As local sponsor for the project, St. Tammany Parish Government would be responsible for acquiring all real estate rights necessary for construction. If the Parish is unable to negotiate a satisfactory arrangement with you, we would attempt to redesign the project in such a way as to avoid your property. It occasionally happens that such redesign is not feasible, either for technical or economic reasons (a more expensive alternative may drive up the project's cost to a point such that the anticipated benefits no longer support the project). In such a case, we would consult with the Parish to determine whether condemnation is appropriate. If the Parish does not wish the Federal Government to condemn the property, the project would be suspended or terminated. The Corps would not proceed with the project in the absence St. Tammany Parish's support.

### **General Construction**

#### **17. Should residents expect heavy equipment on local streets?**

Yes, material and equipment delivery would be by truck. Multiple construction equipment staging areas along the project route would be utilized, due to the length of the project, which is 4.1 miles.

If at any time you have a concern with any construction activity, you can contact the Corps at 504-862-2201 or [AskTheCorps@usace.army.mil](mailto:AskTheCorps@usace.army.mil).