

**MINUTES OF
SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY-EAST
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON OCTOBER 1, 2009**

PRESENT: Louis Wittie, Chair
Timothy Doody, Committee Member
David Barnes, Committee Member
Stephen Estopinal, Committee Member

The Operations Committee met on October 1, 2009 in the Second Floor Hall of the Lake Vista Community Center, 6500 Spanish Fort Blvd., New Orleans, LA. Mr. Wittie called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Opening Comments:

Mr. Wittie commented on a Times Picayune article concerning the permanent pump stations for the outfall canals. The article indicated that the State would not sign a Project Partnership Agreement to clear the way for construction of Option 1 without legal language committing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to eventually build the safest option.

Mr. Doody added that the Landrieu-Vitter amendment to the Energy and Water Appropriations Bill, which would have authorized the USACE's 18 month study and cost comparison of the three options for the outfall canals, was rejected by a House and Senate Conference Committee. The Board adopted several resolutions in support of Option 2 and a resolution to participate with the State, Sewerage and Water Board and Jefferson Parish in a study to develop a cost comparison of the three options (Option 1, 2 and 2a) at an estimated cost of \$300,000 to \$400,000. Dan Bradley with the USACE Permanent Pumps Branch provided a presentation at last month's Board Meeting on the changes that were made by the USACE to accommodate Option 2 while going forward with Option 1. Mr. Doody suggested that the Authority, State, S&WB and Jefferson Parish develop a clear path forward.

Mr. Estopinal commented that Option 1 is a make-shift solution that is maintenance intensive. He stated that he is suspicious of the quality of the engineering that went into the hydraulic study and the motivation behind the choices. He indicated that he was convinced that if the Authority and other entities give in to Option 1, even on a temporary basis, it would be the final option. He stressed that a good understanding is needed of the hydraulic demands and how much the costs of maintenance will exceed the investment. He added that Option 2 would be an effective engineered solution to the problem and that the costs of maintenance would be significantly reduced.

Mr. Doody pointed out that leaving in the temporary pumps is not a solution to the problem. He recommended that the Authority help map a clear path forward, such as moving forward with Option 1 retrofitted to accommodate Option 2 with some hydraulic modeling. Mr. Wittie commented on the need to replace the temporary pumps with permanent pumps.

Adoption of Agenda: The agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the September 3, 2009 Operations Committee meeting were approved.

Public Comments: None.

Mr. Wittie introduced and recognized Anne Rheams, the newly appointed Executive Director of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation (LPBF).

Ms. Rheams advised that she been with the LPBF for 17 years. She stated that Carlton Dufrechou, the former LPBF Executive Director, will act as an advisor to the LPBF in a volunteer capacity. Ms. Rheams commented that the LPBF has had a good relationship with the Authority since its inception and that she would like to continue this good relationship. She offered the LPBF's assistance to the Authority.

Old Business:

A. Discussion of permanent pump stations at outfall canals.

Dan Bradley with the USACE Permanent Pumps Branch explained that a presentation was provided at the last Board meeting which compared the operable features of the authorized pump stations and the features of a possible future scenario with deepened canals, lowered water surface elevations in the canals and the existing drainage pump stations bypassed. He stated that a copy of the 90 day study report was provided to Mr. Jackson. He noted that there was concern about the longevity of the temporary pump stations, which have an estimated service life of five to seven years and are beginning to experience corrosion problems. The cost of maintenance of the temporary pump stations, which is about \$5 million this year, could increase each year. He stressed that moving forward with the authorized pump stations at the outfall canals is imperative.

Mr. Bradley stated that the Board had asked whether there would be any modeling for a future condition of a deepened canal and a lower surface elevation, as well as modeling for the current situation. He explained that the Request for Proposals would describe the future possible conditions and the design-builders would be responsible for modeling both the current and possible future conditions.

Mr. Wittie asked the status of the project schedule. Mr. Bradley responded that the Project Partnering Agreement (PPA) had been projected to be signed in mid-October. However, an amendment to the PPA was sent to the State in February and the USACE is awaiting a response.

Mr. Bradley advised that the life of the pumps for the currently authorized pump stations will have a service life of twenty to thirty years. Each component of the authorized pump stations will have a different life service cycle, which will be outlined in the RFP. The RFP will be open for everyone's review.

Mr. Doody asked what the critical point in time would be for making a decision. Mr. Bradley responded that the Interim Closure Structures (ICS) and pumps were installed

in 2006. The estimated service life is five to seven years. After 2013 maintenance will continue to increase and it will be difficult to maintain the pumps. Five million dollars was spent this year out of project funds to maintain the ICSs and pumps. Therefore, the point of diminishing returns is being reached at this point in time.

Mr. Estopinal asked whether modeling would occur before or after the design of the pumps and wanted assurance that the design would be to the model and not the modeling to the pump. Mr. Bradley explained that the specifications for the currently authorized pump stations are design-build specifications and that the modeling has not yet been accomplished. The modeling will come first and then pumps will be designed around that model. The design-builder would model the current condition and specify pumps based on that condition. The design-builder would also look at a future condition with a lowered water surface elevation of approximately 14 feet and a much deeper canal to provide drainage to the new pump stations. The design-builder would then look at what it would take to convert those pumps to that condition. The design-builder would provide a proposal for two conditions and the reasons that his designs would be appropriate for both conditions.

Mr. Estopinal inquired about the peer review process. Mr. Bradley stated that a panel of about 25 different groups of engineers from around the country will serve on the evaluation boards. After the design-build is selected, there will be peer review.

Mr. Doody stated that the USACE was requested at the last Board meeting to begin developing information for the public about the impact of each of the options on the surrounding areas. Mr. Bradley advised that information is being developed and is currently going through internal review. He added that the impact for the currently authorized and appropriated option is localized within the areas of the pump stations. However, a potential future condition would impact all but about 2-1/2 miles up and down the canals.

Mr. Doody recommended that a resolution be crafted for the Board's consideration at its next Board meeting that would request the USACE to go forward with the construction of Option 1 adaptable with the changes made by the USACE to allow conversion to Option 2 in the future. He noted that the Authority is not currently included in discussions of the agreement being negotiated with the State. The draft resolution should include input from the Board and language that it determines should be included in the PPA or any other agreement in order to provide a path forward.

B. Discussion of safe water elevations in the outfall canals.

John Greishaber with the USACE Hurricane Protection Office advised that the safe water elevations at the outfall canals have not changed. The safe water elevations are 5-ft. for the London Avenue Canal, 8-ft. for the Orleans Avenue Canal, and 6-ft. for the 17th Street Canal. There are on-going studies for the development of reports. The reports are anticipated to be completed in mid-to-late November for the London Avenue Canal, mid-to-late December for the Orleans Avenue Canal, and mid-to-late January for the 17th Street Canal.

Mr. Greishaber explained that the protocol for operating the gates and the temporary pumping stations has changed. Better information was obtained as a result of a number of rain events for what could be expected in major rain events with pumping. Robert Turner, SLFPA-E Regional Director, added that one reason for the decision may have been the frequency of higher than expected tides in Lake Pontchartrain. The higher tides in summer and winter are due to easterly winds. Mr. Estopinal asked whether the recent high tide events in Lake Pontchartrain were extraordinarily different than the historic precedent. Mr. Turner replied, no. Mr. Greishaber stated that the USACE constantly updates the models that are used with new information. The decision that it would be prudent to change the elevation at which the gates are closed at the Lakefront resulted from the updating of the models due to the March events. This change was the result of the profile of the water in the canal as a result of the pumping and the actual disposal of storm water. Mr. Estopinal clarified that the collection system did not meet the expected profile.

Mr. Doody stated that a newspaper article indicated that the safe water elevations may be raised as a result of the reports to be issued in the near future. Mr. Greishaber advised that there is a possibility that the safe water elevations could be raised as a result of the intensive analysis that is being conducted. The reports are still in draft form and there is a tremendous amount of on-going scrutiny by the reviewers. Mr. Estopinal asked whether there is a possibility that the safe water elevations could be lowered as a result of the study. Mr. Greishaber responded that he did not anticipate the safe water elevations being lowered as a result of the study. He explained that he has knowledge of the status of the reports and of the comments that are being made.

Mr. Doody asked whether there were sections of the canals that the USACE anticipates may need some remedial work to ensure the safe water elevation at that particular stretch of the canal. Mr. Greishaber explained that it is the USACE's intent to look at the canal as a system, and if there are areas in the canal that can be easily remediated so that the safe water can be raised in the canal, the USACE would do the remediation. Mr. Doody asked whether the remediation would be done no matter what stage the decision making process is in on Options 1, 2 and 2a, and Mr. Greishaber replied, yes.

C. Update of Caernarvon Canal (LPV 149) closure structure.

Mr. Turner reported that a decision has not been made on the type of structure that will be utilized in the Caernarvon Canal. The Authority does not support a stop log structure because of operations and maintenance issues. A stop log structure would have to be closed four to five days prior to the arrival of a tropical event. It would be difficult and unsafe to close in high winds and rain and would be a weak link in the system. The Board adopted a resolution at its last meeting in support of a sector gate. He added that the USACE is attempting to transfer savings accumulated in the Chalmette Loop Project to the West Bank & Vicinity (WB&V) Project.

Colonel Robert Sinkler, USACE Hurricane Protection Office Commander, advised that the decision when the alignment was decided upon for that particular area, which referenced a sector gate, has not been changed. The USACE is continuing with the design effort for a sector gate, which is almost 95% complete. There are some interests that would like to expand the Caernarvon Diversion into a sediment and fresh water

diversion as part of the coastal restoration efforts. The USACE wants to ensure compatibility of the structure with the long term coastal restoration efforts in which several agencies are involved. Colonel Sinkler stated that at this time he did not have enough information to warrant re-opening the issue and making a decision to change the current course; however, there is a potential because of some of the long term ecosystem restoration desires for coastal Louisiana for expanding what the Caernarvon Diversion does in regards to the larger coastal restoration effort. The USACE must make sure before a final decision can be made and a contract awarded that a sector gate structure would not have to be removed because of a different plan. The USACE is in the process of starting the design of a stop log structure. Mr. Turner pointed out that the diversion structure does not discharge into the Caernarvon Canal. Colonel Sinkler indicated that a decision should be made in the next two weeks.

D. Discussion of land access to LPV 145.

Mr. Turner explained that vehicular access is needed for maintenance and inspection and to close the floodgates that will be constructed in the future on the section of levee between the Bayou Bienvenue and Bayou Dupre sector gate closure structures. There is no access across either of the structures except by foot. He described the problems involved in attempting to access this levee section by barge for maintenance purposes and stressed the need for a bridge or ferry system. The original plan included a bridge until the 95 percent submittal. A decision was made to take the bridge out and allow the contractor to build a bridge for the purpose of constructing the Bayou Dupre Project. The bridge would only be permitted by the Coast Guard for temporary use during construction. He stressed the importance of this access being a project feature.

The costs of a temporary bridge with a short life span vs. a permanent bridge and the type of materials that could potentially be used for a temporary bridge were discussed. Mr. Doody pointed out that the USACE is addressing the design and construction of the project, but not the operations and maintenance. He stated that there is a need for future discussions with the USACE to explain the Authority's position and to attempt to reach a workable solution.

Mr. Wittie recommended that a resolution be drafted for the Board's consideration to support the inclusion of a bridge in the LPV 145 Project for the purposes of providing safe and reasonable access for inspections, operations, maintenance and flood fighting.

E. Update on West Return Floodwall.

Rebecca Constance, USACE Project Manager, provided a status report on the West Return Floodwall Project. The project is approximately 3-1/2 miles of floodwall divided into two construction contracts. The southern piece extends from the airport up to and including the piece under I-10. The northern piece starts at that point and extends to the lake. Both the northern and southern floodwalls will be built with approximately a 35-ft. offset on the canal side of the existing floodwalls. A section of the southern floodwall will be built under the I-10 without impacting traffic. The old floodwalls will be demolished after the new floodwalls are constructed. The USACE anticipates awarding the contracts for both the northern and southern pieces in the first quarter of 2010.

Ms. Constance advised that the design plans and specifications have been completed for the northern piece. The USACE is currently working on the right-of-entry; i.e., negotiating with land owners for staging areas, and working with the City of Kenner on a staging area and with the levee district to get the existing right-of-way in place. The goal is to have the new northern floodwall in place for the 2011 hurricane season and then commence the demolition of the old floodwall, which will take about four months.

Ms. Constance explained that the design of the southern piece is almost 95% complete. An Individual Environmental Report (IER), which is a supplement to the original report, is currently out for public review. The major change in the IER pertains to the realignment by the airport for constructability and to allow for future taxiway expansion. About 12 acres of new property will be acquired between the current alignment and the new alignment. A risk letter was sent to the East Jefferson Levee District so that the levee district can begin their analysis on the new area to be acquired. Once the IER is completed and approved, the USACE will work towards acquiring the property, completing the design and awarding the contract. The USACE is working with the airport regarding air traffic restrictions.

Ms. Constance advised that the USACE will allow 24 hour construction operations. Pile driving will be restricted to day time operations (6 a.m. to 9 p.m.) on the northern piece. The USACE may allow pile driving operations at night on the southern piece, since the area is mostly industrial and in order to work around airport operations.

F. Update on seismic testing of levees to be performed by Dr. Juan Lorenzo.

Mr. Turner advised that Dr. Lorenzo has been provided the information necessary to begin his work. The first levee segment selected is located in the East Jefferson Levee District. The next segment selected will be in the Orleans Levee District.

Levee District Reports: (Copies of monthly status reports appended to minutes)

East Jefferson Levee District (EJLD): Fran Campbell, EJLD Executive Director, reviewed the EJLD monthly status report.

The Committee discussed grass growth issues and the incorporation of the new turf specifications into future levee construction contract specifications. Mr. Wittie asked whether the EJLD had performed soil testing in the troubled spots. Ms. Campbell responded that soil testing had not yet been done, but that the levee district would have the testing done this month.

Orleans Levee District (O.L.D.): Gerry Gillen, O.L.D. Executive Director, reviewed the O.L.D. monthly status report.

Lake Borgne Basin Levee District (LBBLD): Tim Jarquin, LBBLD Executive Director, reviewed the LBBLD monthly status report.

There was no further business; therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.