



FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Your Flood Defense System

June 5, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ON BEHALF OF THE FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY – EAST BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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We issue this statement to address recent sensational media coverage about the United States Army Corps of Engineers' inspections of the flood defense system. That coverage, which included seven year-old photos, did nothing to explain the Corps' levee rating terminology, which classifies the area's flood defense system as "minimally acceptable."

Following that media coverage, even a local flood safety advocacy group fell victim to a lack of detailed information and explanation. It issued a statement implying that it submitted "TWO" public record requests to the Flood Protection Authority. That is completely untrue. It did not submit any requests seeking Corps inspection reports. If it had, it would have received whatever information it requested just like any other entity or citizen. And the notion that it did not receive that information because of an effort to keep information "hush-hush" is absolutely false, insulting and defamatory. As one example, on May 1, 2018, Nola.com requested the 2017 Annual Inspection results, and the Flood Protection Authority provided the information less than 24 hours later.

Further, while the advocacy group criticizes the Flood Protection Authority for allegedly poor levee maintenance, it admits that it does not even understand what the Corps' rating language *means*. We understand that, because the rating terminology can create confusion and unwarranted alarm.

To ensure that the public receives accurate and complete information, we provide the following facts:

- The Annual Inspections by the Corps of Engineers, and the Flood Protection Authority's responses, are available to anyone upon request, and are posted to our website, for all to see.
- The Corps made a very poor word choice in its rating system. We say that because the phraseology can be easily misunderstood, at no fault of the reader. For some reason, rather than choose rating language such as "excellent/good/poor," or simply "pass/fail," it chose language that can create unnecessary confusion and alarm. Numerous state and local agencies have voiced their concerns over this confusing and potentially misleading terminology, but for now this is the rating terminology the Corps has

chosen. However, we understand that the Corps may be considering adjusting its terminology to more appropriately reflect the conditions found.

- To the Corps, “minimally acceptable” essentially means that “the inspected item has one or more deficiencies that need to be corrected. The minor deficiency will not seriously impact the functioning of the item as intended during the next flood event.” Thus, even one minor deficiency, a tire rut or small animal burrow for example, will result in the system being rated “minimally acceptable,” notwithstanding the fact that conditions like that are temporary, minor and do not affect levee safety or performance, and notwithstanding the fact that such conditions are routinely remedied on short order.
- “Minimally acceptable” does not mean that the flood defense system is poorly maintained, or that the system will not perform in a storm event. The exact opposite is true. In fact, the Corps’ own definition states that “the minor deficiency will not seriously impact the functioning of the item as intended during the next flood event.”
- The flood defense system consists of over 190 miles (+3,500 acres) of levees and floodwalls, 11 barrier structures, 253 floodgates and 100 valves. They are located in often harsh environmental conditions – salt water, extreme heat and humidity, in marsh areas inhabited by various wildlife, in south-Louisiana where the seal level is rising and the ground is perpetually sinking, et cetera. As such, on any given day, there will be maintenance needs. Thus, the Corps’ annual inspections are just one piece of the overall inspection and maintenance program. In addition to the Corps’ annual inspections, the Flood Protection Authority, in conjunction with the State Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, also conduct quarterly inspections and semi-annual inspections, which are done by both its personnel and third-party unbiased engineering experts. The results of those inspections are submitted to the Corps. Our employees are also out on the system on a daily basis, and are trained to find and correct issues that may impact the system.
- Simply put, we are constantly inspecting and maintaining the system – *every day of the year*. And when the water comes, the system will perform as designed.

For more information contact Derek Boese, Chief Administrative Officer, 504.262.8922.