

**MINUTES OF
SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY-EAST
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON NOVEMBER 5, 2009**

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

The Operations Committee met on November 5, 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 9:35 a.m.

Opening Comments: Mr. Wittie stated that the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) discussed the outfall canal pump stations at its last meeting and agreed to go forward with an Option Neutral solution. Mr. Doody reported that the CPRA adopted a resolution that would allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to proceed with an Option Neutral solution. Representatives of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East (SLFPA-E), Sewerage & Water Board, Jefferson Parish, State (CPRA) and Orleans Levee District discussed the Option Neutral solution and the language contained in the SLFPA-E's resolution, and each entity provided specific language that it determined should be included in the Option Neutral definition. The entities also wanted to assure that nothing was included in the Option Neutral definition that would not allow a path forward. The list is being refined to provide the local partners' definition of an Option Neutral path forward. This definition will be included in the Project Partnership Agreement (PPA) submitted to the USACE.

Adoption of Agenda: The agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the October 1, 2009 Operations Committee meeting were approved.

Public Comments: None.

A. Presentation USACE - LSU AgCenter – grass growth issues.

Steve Finnegan, USACE New Orleans District Turf Manager, introduced Jeff Beasley, Professor of turf issues at LSU and a key member of the USACE turf team, and Mike Stout, a former 30-year USACE employee and currently working for MHW, a USACE contractor.

Mr. Finnegan explained that the turf team started with the USACE's old specifications, which were prescriptive. In the old specifications, the contractor was told what to do and the contractor then walked away. The problems and success rates were reviewed. A turf team was developed to review the specifications and resolve the issues. The team gutted the old specifications. The agronomy test was retained in the new specifications and a turf establishment plan was added. The turf contractor will take soil

tests and submit a written report to the USACE on the management of the existing conditions. The USACE will approve, reject or modify the report and the turf contractor will then move forward.

Mr. Finnegan explained that the old turf specifications provided for transitional grasses. In the winter a combination of rye and Bermuda grasses was applied; however, this was found to be problematic. The provision for transitional grasses was removed from the new specifications. The new specifications provide a two step process for jobs that are planted during the fall and winter: (1) the contractor will plant rye grass in the fall and winter (September 1 to March 1), and (2) in the spring (March 1 to September 1) the contractor will cut the rye grass, lightly disc the ground, apply seeding for Bermuda grass, Bermuda grass/seashore paspalum mix or Bermuda grass/bahiagrass mix and maintain the grass through the establishment period. The USACE will accept the project at a 75 percent coverage rate.

Mr. Finnegan advised that the new turf specifications were completed in July, 2009, and have been included in all of the USACE's new jobs. Since early 2008, various iterations of the specifications while under development were included in the USACE's job specifications. He pointed out that one of the fixes is the use of strippings, which is included in the embankment plan and USACE Levee Construction Manual. The use of strippings was discussed. Mr. Doody offered the SLFPA-E's assistance should a contractor have a problem finding space to store the material.

Mike Stout explained that the USACE is currently dealing with turf repair on completed projects that have not been accepted by the levee districts, which were let prior to the inclusion of the new turf specifications. He anticipated that even with the inclusion of the new specifications and procedures, the USACE will continue to have a turf repair function into the next several years because of potential unanticipated problems. The USACE is standing up an ID-IQ contract for a turf contractor to perform these repairs on an as needed basis. The USACE also recognized that revisions were needed in the excavation specifications in order to deal with issues concerning the origin of the soils.

Mr. Finnegan described the grass toughness and overtopping studies that are being conducted by the USACE Armoring Team. He pointed out that the team is using the same types of grasses that are included in the new turf specifications.

Mr. Witte recommended the use of bahiagrass because of its toughness. The benefits of bahiagrass and maintenance issues were discussed.

Mr. Finnegan advised that studies on salinity issues were performed by the AgCenter. The studies included the use of capping with 12-inch clay, capping with a mix of top soil and a control. It was found that capping with new clay was the best solution. He also commented on a new product which will be tested by the AgCenter at various salt levels that is alleged to remediate the salt and allow grass to grow in a salty environment. Mr. Stout advised that one of the USACE's current efforts is the salinity testing of both government and contractor furnished borrow pits. He pointed out that salinity is not a concern for the levee core; however, it is a concern for the final lift (6-inches to one foot) of the levee. The USACE is presently establishing the upper salinity

limits for the final levee lift. The new product, if successful, may preclude the need to use a different borrow pit for the final levee lift and potentially save additional transportation costs. Professor Beasley commented that the new product has gone through the EPA process and the EPA has advised that it does not represent an environmental threat.

Mr. Stout explained that the turf team did not focus on the long term issue of turf management practices for erosion control. The Armoring Team is studying this issue to some extent. The USACE's ICW program provides a Levee Owner's Manual on levee maintenance and monitors maintenance.

B. Status of levee district safe houses.

Gerry Gillen, Orleans Levee District (O.L.D.) Executive Director, advised that the O.L.D. safe house build out was advised and bids are due on November 25th. The bid results will be brought to the Committee next month and a recommendation for contract award will be brought to the Board in December. Construction is expected to begin in January and will last eight months.

Fran Campbell, East Jefferson Levee District (EJLD) Executive Director, advised that the report was received on the EJLD's existing conditions. The EJLD will meet with the consultant next week to review the district's needs, which will be further studied by the consultant.

Tim Jarquin, Lake Borgne Basin Levee District (LBBLD) Executive Director, advised that the final report was received from Digital Engineering for the build out of safe rooms in two existing pump station structures and one stand alone safe house. The LBBLD, however, does not have funding for the construction of the pump station safe rooms and safe house.

C. Update on Bayou St. John water management plan.

Mr. Gillen advised that a draft Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) was received two weeks ago from Facility Planning and Control, which administers Capital Outlay Funding. The draft CEA was returned to Facility Planning with the information that was required. In addition, the O.L.D. received a Scope of Work for the management project through the Bayou St. John Conservation Alliance. He requested that the Committee review the Scope of Work and provide input. Information was obtained on the types of projects that have been worked on by the two SLFPA-E ID-IQ hydraulic contractors. He stated that he would like to have a selection made shortly and begin negotiating a fee based on the scope of work, so that the final CEA can be executed when it is received. The consultant's fee and contract must be approved by Facility Planning and Control.

LEVEE DISTRICT REPORTS:

East Jefferson Levee District:

Ms. Campbell reviewed the EJLD monthly status report (copy appended to minutes).

Larry Ardoin, OCPR Operations Administrator, briefed the Committee concerning the flood fighting efforts that are currently taking place in northern Louisiana. The Ouachita and Red Rivers are above flood stage and cresting at this time. Mr. Doody requested that Mr. Ardoin extend the SLFPA-E's offer of emergency assistance to the north Louisiana levee districts.

Jerry Colletti with the USACE advised that once the Mississippi River stage reached and was projected to remain at 11 ft. on the Carrollton Gage for a period of time, the USACE advised the levee districts that a waiver had to be approved in order for any permit holder to continue operations along the River. Requests for waivers are considered on a case-by-case basis and waivers may vary based on specific actions and criteria. The prolonged high water is projected to continue at least through the month of November. The appropriate procedures have been put in place by the USACE.

Orleans Levee Districts:

Mr. Gillen reviewed the monthly status report (copy appended to minutes). He advised that the Bayou Bienvenue Control Structure was closed a total of 227 hours or approximately 15 days in October. A problem has developed with the water draining from inside the structure after the gate is reopened. A significant amount of the O.L.D.'s man power is being used in the operation of the structure gate. The problem of subsidence and the hydrological and environmental changes that have taken place in the area, along with the potential need to revise the current structure gate operating procedures, were discussed.

Lake Borgne Basin Levee District:

Mr. Jarquin reviewed the monthly status report (copy appended to minutes). He reported that the USACE has not changed its intention to build a temporary bridge in the LPV 145 project. The plans and specifications for all levee reaches in St. Bernard, with exception of LPV 148 (Verret to Caernarvon), will be completed by mid-December. He advised that Colonel Sinkler completed his decision brief and the construction of a sector gate was chosen for the Caernarvon Canal (LPV 149). However, Col. Sinkler has reserved the right to revisit this decision at a later date, if needed.

Mr. Jarquin brought up the issue of the engineering cutbacks that are being made by the USACE in St. Bernard projects. He advised that one such cutback is the use of uncoated H-piles or uncoated sheet piles to support the future T-wall. A USACE white paper evaluates corrosion protection alternates for steel piles and sheet piles. The USACE's intention is to take the coating out of the project and increase the section of H-pile and sheet pile to take the amount of anticipated corrosion over a period of period of time in order to adhere to the schedule. He stated he was advised at the USACE PDT meeting yesterday that the use of the uncoated H-piles and sheet piles has already gone to the USACE's headquarters for signature. He expressed his frustration and concern about the recent changes that impact the public's safety and are being

implemented simply to save dollars. He recommended that this issue be taken to a higher level at the USACE.

Mr. Doody explained there was a recent reprogramming of funds by the USACE from the Lake Pontchartrain & Vicinity (LPV) Project to the West Bank and Vicinity (WBV) Project. The USACE discovered internally that it could not reprogram funds without the approval of the Energy and Water Committee, which would ask for the comment of the local sponsor. The USACE undid the reprogramming and then quickly went to the CPRA. The USACE advised the CPRA that there was a shortfall on the WBV Project and requested the CPRA's approval for the reprogramming of the funds. The Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration (OCPR) presented the request to the SLFPA-E asked whether it had any concerns. Mr. Doody advised that OCPR was informed that the SLFPA-E had significant concerns about cut backs, such as the substitution of a stop log structure where the USACE had originally planned a sector gate, and the substitution of a temporary construction bridge where permanent access in the form of a bridge or swing barge had been planned.

Mr. Doody stated that this discussion then led to the discussion of the issue of having two different offices in two different sections of the USACE building the perimeter protection for the region. One office is doing everything possible to bring the total job in under budget and on time and is using the chrome standard, and the other office is doing projects using the gold standard. There seems to be inconsistencies between the two offices, which are demonstrated in instances such as the change to uncoated H-piles and sheet piles for building the T-wall.

Mr. Estopinal asked what action could the Board take to rectify this situation and recommended that an item be placed on the Board agenda. Mr. Doody stated that the SLFPA-E should first engage the State in the discussion of this issue and then get with the USACE after the State is engaged.

Mr. Doody commented that the USACE has placed the SLFPA-E in a difficult position because it is supposed to be acting regionally, while trying to protect the citizens under its jurisdiction. He suggested that representatives of the East and West Authorities, the State and the USACE meet and discuss the reprogramming request.

Mr. Doody pointed out that that the SLFPA-E made a strong request through the State for strong consideration of a sector gate, which was subsequently approved, and for access to the levee reach between the Bayou Dupre and Bayou Bienvenue Control Structures. As an example of the inconsistencies, he commented on the T-wall that is being built at great expense which will serve a secondary roll behind the frontal protection on the West Bank.

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