

**MINUTES OF  
SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY-EAST  
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON FEBRUARY 4, 2010**

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

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The Operations Committee met on February 4, 2010 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 9:45 a.m.

**Opening Comments:** None.

**Adoption of Agenda:** The agenda was adopted as presented.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the December 10, 2009 Operations Committee meeting were approved.

**Public Comments:** None.

**A. Status of Mississippi River Levee seepage issue (EJLD).**

The subject section of the Mississippi River levee is located on River Road at Powerline Boulevard. The issue of standing water along this section of levee embankment is still under investigation. It was pointed out that the area may be holding water that is not draining. Fran Campbell, East Jefferson Levee District (ELJD) Executive Director, advised that the EJLD has been in communications with LA DOTD, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Robert Turner, SLFPA-E Regional Director, and Stevan Spencer, SLFPA-E Regional Chief Engineer, concerning the problem.

Conditions contributing to the problem were described. Sand from trucks traveling from the borrow pit located in this area is spilling onto the roadway. Contractors are using both wet and dry sweepers which are pushing the sand from the roadway and entrapping the sand against the levee toe. Rain water is then trapped against the levee toe. Drains are located only on the opposite side of the roadway. Trucks pulling away from warehouses located across River Road are driving onto the berm damaging the grass cover.

Mr. Turner advised that the area located between the two ramps in this levee section will be surveyed by Orleans Levee District (O.L.D.) staff. He indicated that the roadway slope may be parabolic, as opposed to being a single slope to the drain. Cross sections and profiles will be done of the roadway towards the levee. A comparison will also be made of the water on the other side of the roadway. He discussed the possibility of re-grading the levee toe embankment with sand or some other type of material so that water drains off the embankment towards the roadway. Information from the survey

may potentially be taken to Jefferson Parish, which is responsible for this section of River Road, for action regarding drainage. He explained that there is a potential for seepage because of near surface point bar deposits (sand layer) in the batture; however, the USACE indicates that there is no real connection to that sand layer from the river. In addition, there did not seem to be movement of the water on the levee toe or anything that would indicate the development of any type of piping. Along with the actions being taken, the area will be monitored to attempt to correlate this situation with the varying river levels.

Jerry Colletti with the USACE added that the borrow pit owner has been pumping down the water that is ponding on the riverside batture to keep the water off of the levee.

#### **B. Discussion of use of Switchgrass.**

A presentation was provided at the January 21<sup>st</sup> Board meeting relative to incorporating switchgrass as a biofuel source in the final USACE flood protection project designs.

Mr. Doody commented on the possible difficulty in inspecting levees four times a year should switchgrass be used for biofuel purposes. Mr. Wittie stated that he understood that the grass needs to be about six feet tall in order to harvest for ethanol production. Therefore, growing switchgrass for biofuel may not be possible under the districts' levee maintenance programs.

Mark Schexnayder with the LSU AgCenter offered to obtain an official opinion from the AgCenter on the use of switchgrass.

#### **C. Discussion of Levee Information System.**

Mr. Turner explained that the Dutch have been working with the SLFPA-E on a demonstration Levee Information System Project. The project is being funded by a grant through the Dutch government. A small section of levee along parts of the IHNC and GIWW is being used in the demonstration project. In a meeting held several months ago, SLFPA-E staff advised the Dutch representatives about the information that it would like to see included in the program. Another meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 24<sup>th</sup> to review details of the demonstration project.

Mr. Turner advised that a seminar is being held by the Dutch on February 25, 2010 from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Management of Large-scale Flood Defense Systems at the Windsor Court Hotel in New Orleans. Speakers will include Tim Doody, who will provide the Authority's perspective, Garrett Graves, the Governor's Executive Assistant for Coastal Activities, and USACE representatives. The SLFPA-E will interact with several Dutch water board dignitaries in New Orleans during the week of the seminar.

Mr. Turner explained that the information system is GIS based and can potentially be used for tracking rights-of-way, levee geometry, soils information, the status of open and closed floodgates during an emergency, water surface elevations and other information. The demonstration project will use existing sensors. The installation of instrumentation throughout the system will be very costly. Larry Ardoin with the Office

of Coastal Protection and Restoration (OCPR) advised that the State has contracted with a consultant to look at installing instrumentation on the levees for early warning systems. The State has also contracted with another consultant to determine how the inspection program could be made easier and to look into the modification of the USACE's inspection tool. Mr. Turner explained that the Dutch demonstration project will show how things could be set up to track information, retrieve stored information and potentially interface with a future national levee data base. He further advised that he is working with Brian Baker with the USACE Engineering Research and Development Center (ERDC) on the levee inspection tool and the national levee data base. He added that there will be costs associated with maintaining these systems.

Mr. Turner advised that staff members of the East and West Flood Protection Authorities will be meeting concerning the annual inspection process.

**D. Information on technical support provided by the State.**

Mr. Turner reported that about two weeks ago an inspector (Jim McAlister) was provided by OCPR to the SLFPA-E. Mr. McAlister has been looking at the various projects under construction throughout the system and, in particular, the levee lifts going on in Jefferson Parish. Mr. McAlister is preparing daily and weekly reports. Mr. Turner advised that a second inspector will be provided by OCPR shortly. SLFPA-E inspection needs will have to be continually evaluated, especially during the next three months as construction of the 100 year projects increases, and additional people may need to be added through the State or the SLFPA-E's ID-IQ contracts. The two inspectors being provided by OCPR are being fully funded by the State. He asked the Committee members to advise if they would like to receive copies of inspection reports.

Mr. Wittie asked about the inspectors taking period samples of materials for lab testing to ensure that the specifications are being met. Mr. Turner responded that the SLFPA-E inspector will make sure that the required testing is being done by the USACE and its contractors; however, the SLFPA-E can set up a process for testing.

Mr. Colletti requested that the SLFPA-E inspectors share their information with the USACE project or area engineers so that the USACE can take action if any issues are discovered. Mr. Turner explained that the SLFPA-E inspector interfaces with USACE project managers in the field. Mr. Spencer noted that the SLFPA-E inspector was instructed not to direct contractors in any way, but to deal solely with USACE personnel. Mr. Turner stated that a protocol can be set up to forward daily inspection reports to the appropriate USACE project managers in the field.

Mr. Ardoin informed the Committee that a consultant has been hired by the State to obtain information from the levee districts on their existing operations and maintenance (O&M) costs (by project), current funding for O&M and future O&M costs, and identify funding gaps and potential sources for those gaps. The consultant will also be looking at levee districts nationwide to identify how they fund O&M. Mr. Doody noted that the USACE was requested to provide their best estimates on O&M costs. These estimates will be provided to the levee districts so that they can express their confidence level in

the USACE's numbers based on day-to-day knowledge and experience. He hoped to have some reconciliation between the USACE and the levee districts on these numbers.

**LEEVE DISTRICT REPORTS: (copy of reports appended to minutes)**

**East Jefferson Levee District (EJLD):** Fran Campbell reviewed the EJLD monthly status report. She advised that the bike paths in the construction areas have been closed to the public. The bike paths will be covered by all weather access roads at project completion.

Ms. Campbell advised that the EJLD police have been radioing tug boats to move when they anchor along the tree lines along the Mississippi River bature. Mr. Doody requested that the EJLD contact the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) to set up a protocol for providing notice to the USCG. Mr. Colletti requested that the USACE be included in this protocol for notification and be provided with the name of the tug in order to monitor repeat offenders. Ms. Campbell advised that she would develop a form for reporting purposes and send the finalized form to the levee districts for their use. Mr. Colletti requested that a copy of the finalized form be sent to him so that he could provide it to the Association of Levee Boards for their possible use.

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

**Lake Borgne Basin Levee District (LBBLD):** Peggy Sembera, LBBLD Administrative Assistant, reviewed the monthly status report.

Mr. Colletti advised that there was a USACE meeting relative to conducting levee inspections by polder in order to improve the turnaround time for inspection reports. Mr. Turner noted that a conference was held after the last LBBLD levee inspection so that the information collected could be conveyed in a rough form to the levee district. He requested that the USACE work towards delivery of a preliminary report to the levee districts within 30 days with the final report to come at a later time. Mr. Colletti added that the USACE is making a strong effort to ensure that the final report is accurate in regards to identifying the party responsible for correcting deficiencies.

Mr. Doody advised that he is in the process of setting up a meeting with Plaquemines Parish President William Nungesser and St. Bernard Parish President Craig Taffaro concerning estimates for storm proofing the pump stations in St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes and the effort to obtain appropriations to fund the work.

Mr. Barnes asked whether the 100 year protection projects were on schedule. Mr. Colletti responded that the USACE is pushing to meet the June, 2011 deadline. Mr. Doody added that Colonel Sinkler is working on providing interim measures to provide 100 year protection for projects which may not be completed. Mr. Ardoin commented that issues of the potential delay in projects if the State insists on coated H-piles and sheetpile and whether the locals and levee districts would prefer a delay in projects for coated H-piles and sheetpile were discussed in a meeting with OCPR Executive Director Steve Mathies. Mr. Doody noted that the parameters of any delay need to be

made known. The USACE projects are being designed for 50 year life. Mr. Turner stressed that the H-piles and sheetpile for structures must be designed for a much longer life than 50 years.

Mr. Barnes asked whether there has been any improvement in the procedures for bringing Hesco baskets to breach sites since Hurricane Katrina. Mr. Ardoin explained that he has been actively involved in the past year coordinating with ERDC in the research of a new product, which is essentially a large geo-fabric tube that can be floated in place to close a breach. Mr. Turner reported that full scale testing has been done on a small scale and that the product works fairly well for relatively shallow breaches with depths of 5 to 7 feet. A similar technique is being developed to handle larger breaches. Mr. Colletti added that sandbags and equipment will be in place; therefore, the only question will be the availability of helicopters large enough to transport the materials. Mr. Barnes requested that the USACE provide a briefing to the Board on its emergency procedures. Mr. Ardoin advised that an emergency operations exercise is being planned in May for the levee districts through the State EOC. Mr. Barnes noted that this hurricane season is predicted to be quite a bit more active than last year's hurricane season.

There was no further business; therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.