

**MINUTES OF  
SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY-EAST  
COASTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON JANUARY 17, 2013**

PRESENT: G. Paul Kemp, Chair  
Rick Luetlich, Committee Member  
Carlton Dufrechou, Committee Member  
John Lopez, Committee Member  
Albert Gaude, Committee Member

---

The Coastal Advisory Committee of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East (SLFPA-E or Authority) met on January 17, 2013 in the Second Floor Council Chambers, Joseph Yenni Bldg., 1221 Elmwood Park Blvd., Harahan, Louisiana. Dr. Kemp called the meeting to order at 1:45 p.m.

**Opening Comments:** None.

**Adoption of Agenda:** The agenda was approved.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the September 20, 2012, Coastal Advisory Committee meeting were approved.

**Public Comments:** None.

**New Business:**

**A. Presentation by Bob Jacobsen – Draft recommendations resulting from the Storm Surge Assessment work performed for the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority East.**

---

Dr. Kemp advised that a brief status report was provided at today's Board meeting on the Storm Surge Assessment report. He requested that Robert Jacobsen provide a summation of the discussion that took place at the Board meeting.

Mr. Jacobsen explained that the Board was updated on the status of the multi-part report being provided to the Coastal Advisory Committee on the review of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) approach to the hydrodynamics of surge and the setting of levee heights. Due to time constraints, the next presentation, which deals with how the USACE computed residual risks inside the polders and used this type of information related to overtopping to actually set the levee heights, will be provided at the next Committee meeting. As with the three parts of the report presented to date, there are a number of aspects of the USACE's approach that are rapidly becoming outdated. He recommended that at some point a newer study be done using some of the improved methodologies. An additional part of the study relates to how the USACE is addressing future issues and conditions, such as sea level rise and subsidence. A series of

recommendations is being developed. An attempt will be made to have Walter Baumy, USACE Chief of the Engineering Division, review the status of the recommendations prior to his impending retirement. There is a significant need to update the work so that the residual risks can be understood using the current science and methodologies. He noted that the polders have a lot of residual risks from rainfall events. The residual overtopping risks for the 100-year and 500-year levels need to be understood in the context of significant non-surge related residual risks.

Mr. Jacobsen commented on the improvements that have been made to the science and methodologies since the 2005-2006 timeframe. The remaining residual risks for the polders should be put in perspective with other residual risks, such as Mississippi River and rainfall risks. The residual overtopping risks may be significantly less than some of the other risks; however, there will always be uncertainty. He recommended that the SLFPA-E urge the CPRA to include a permanent program as part of the State Master Plan process and take the onus and responsibility for regularly up-dating the hazard analysis for Southeast Louisiana for surge and specifically for the polders.

#### **B. Update on Mardi Gras Pass.**

Dr. Kemp advised that a distributary of the Mississippi River, referred to as Mardi Gras Pass, opened up on the left descending bank. The SLFPA-E has a great interest in this distributary and has adopted several resolutions in an effort to keep it open.

Dr. Lopez provided a status report on Mardi Gras Pass. The pass is a new cut in the river that is being closely monitored by the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation (LPBF). It is located within the Bohemia Spillway and cuts across a private road running along the spillway. The road has been used in recent years by an oil and gas (O&G) interest located downriver at Potash Oil Field. In 2011 the pass cut across the road making it unusable. The O&G company initially submitted a permit application to repair the road in January, 2012. The USACE issued a general permit; however, the State advised that the permit was not consistent with the State Master Plan, which includes 50,000 cfs diversion just a mile from the pass. Mardi Gras Pass, which is a naturally occurring distributary, could be used in lieu of spending \$220 million on an artificial diversion.

Dr. Lopez explained that the O&G company recently resubmitted the permit application and proposed installing four six-foot diameter culverts and repairing the road. The resubmitted permit application is currently proceeding through the State and USACE permitting processes. Indications are that the State may approve the permit even though the work would severely limit the potential flow. The culverts are estimated to flow in high water about 800 cfs. Mardi Gras Pass in its existing condition without the culverts in high water could flow 5,000 to 6,000 cfs. Installation of the culverts would result in about an 80 percent reduction in the potential flow and would stop any further enlargement of the pass.

Dr. Lopez further explained that the SLFPA-E adopted two resolutions requesting that consideration be given to the larger issues relative to coastal restoration before allowing

a permit to be issued. The LPBF and several other organizations are preparing technical and legal comments to suggest that the permit should not be approved and calling for a public hearing. He commented on the value of scientifically documenting the process by which the pass developed and the value of the pass as a restoration project. He pointed out that the pass is now a navigable waterway and that a legal determination by the USACE was requested on this issue. If the pass is determined by the State to be navigable, it would become State waterbottoms. If the pass is determined by a Federal agency to be navigable, another level of regulations would be involved that would treat the pass like a river. The deadline for comments on the USACE permit is January 22<sup>nd</sup> and for the State permit is February 4<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Dufrechou stressed that if Mardi Gras Pass is allowed to be blocked, it will send a wrong signal with regards to coastal restoration and the effort to reconnect the river to the coast. Dr. Lopez noted that a survey last week revealed that the average width of Mardi Gras Pass is 79-ft. The last survey of the bathymetry indicated a depth of 13-ft. at its deepest point.

Dr. Kemp informed the Committee that he would prepare letters to the State and USACE expressing the SLFPA-E's continued interest in keeping Mardi Gras Pass open and transmitting the resolutions adopted by the Board.

### **C. Consideration/discussion of public comments filed in response to the New Orleans East Land Bridge Study – Ben C. Gerwick Inc.**

Dr. Kemp advised that seven comments were received from the public on the New Orleans East Land Bridge Study prepared by Ben C. Gerwick, Inc. Four comments were positive and three comments were negative. Letters were received from the Hancock County Board of Supervisors and from Congressman Scalise. The comments/letters will be available for viewing at the SLFPA-E office. He pointed out that no decisions are being made and that this item is for information purposes.

Dr. Lopez commented that the technical merits of the study were reviewed and that there is technical value. He reminded everyone that there is a very strong interest in coastal restoration in general, and, in particular, in the New Orleans East Land Bridge. The study contributed to that body of knowledge; however, there is still much work to be done in terms of looking at the land bridge and coastal restoration. Robert Turner, SLFPA-E Regional Director, added that one of the comments that came out of the report was that additional work needs to be done. The study is a very preliminary look at all of the issues. The study shows that a silver bullet does not exist. Risks cannot be reduced just by building a barrier at the land bridge and not have adverse impacts and consequences. Whatever is done must be done in a way to minimize impacts and will require addressing more than just a single feature.

Dr. Luettich commented that the report seemed to cover two different issues [1) stabilization of the existing land, and 2) risk reduction inside of Lake Pontchartrain by use of some type of structural means], and that the most effective way to make

progress is to separate the two issues. One issue seems to have a more straight forward set of solutions than the other issue.

It was noted that the President requested that the Operations Committee look into any potential additional work that could be done relative to the study.

There was no further business; therefore, meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.