



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

# **FACT SHEET**

## **National Levee Safety Program**

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### **Background**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood damage reduction mission began with the 1917 Flood Control Act. The act gave the Corps a significant role in flood activities nationwide, to include the protection of life and property behind federal program levee systems. Hurricane Katrina's and Rita's devastation in 2005 brought levee safety to the forefront of public awareness. The findings of subsequent investigations into the flood damage reduction system's performance in New Orleans clearly point to the need for a comprehensive and risk-informed approach to national levee safety, including periodic reassessments.

The Corps' Levee Safety Program emphasizes the role of levees in flood damage reduction to avoid loss of life and property damage. The program will help achieve three goals:

- 1) Reduce risk and increase public safety through an informed public, empowered to take responsibility for its safety;
- 2) Develop a clear national levee safety policy and standards; and
- 3) Maintain a sustainable flood damage reduction system that meets public safety needs.

*Please note: This is one of many programs to meet the three goals.*

To fully understand the scope of this critical part of our nation's flood damage reduction system, Congress appropriated funds for the Corps to initiate a national levee inventory and assessment program to determine the status and condition of the federal program levee systems in the nation. The data gathered from this and future inventories will help identify public safety risks associated with levee systems across the nation.

### **National Levee Safety Program**

The program is divided into three areas:

- 1) Levee Inventory
- 2) Technical Risk Assessments
- 3) Revised Inspection of Completed Works Procedures

#### **Levee Inventory**

The Corps completed an initial survey of federal program levee systems in July of 2006 and developed a national database to capture information about each levee, including the location and last recorded inspection rating. The levees included in this initial survey are: (1) federally owned and maintained; (2) federally built and locally maintained; and (3) locally built and maintained and meet specified Corps standards.

The initial Corps survey included approximately 2,000 levees, encompassing approximately 13,000 miles, in the Corps Inspection of Completed Works (ICW) and Rehabilitation and Inspection (RIP) programs. Many of these projects were authorized by Congress for federal construction and later turned over to state and local sponsors to operate and maintain. These projects are inspected on a bi-annual schedule.

## Commonly Used Terms Associated with the Levee Inventory

**Federal Levees**—Are Flood Control Works (Levees/Flood Protection Projects) built by and maintained by the Corps of Engineers.

**Federally Built and Locally Maintained Levees**—Federal projects built by the Corps or congressionally authorized into the Corps program and turned over to a local sponsor to maintain. These projects are included in the Inspection of Completed Works (ICW) program, and are automatically incorporated into the Rehabilitation and Inspection Program (RIP). These projects, if properly maintained and operated by the community, may stay in the program.

**Locally Built and Locally Maintained Levees**—Non-Federal projects built by a local community. These projects can be incorporated into the RIP at the request of a local community and if properly maintained and operated by a local community, may stay in the program.

**Inspection of Completed Works (ICW)**—A Corps of Engineers program that includes periodic inspection of projects. These projects fall under ER1110-2-530.

**Rehabilitation and Inspection Program (RIP)**—A Corps of Engineers program to perform inspections of non-federal projects under ER500-1 and the provisions of Public Law 84-99, if so requested by the local sponsor. An initial eligibility inspection must be performed by the Corps of Engineers and subsequent maintenance inspections are required.

## Technical Risk Assessment

The Corps will be assessing all of the levees in the inventory. The assessment is expected to take five years to complete and will begin in 2008 if funds are appropriated. The Corps is currently developing an analytical methodology to evaluate the risk associated with levees in the national database. Once the methodology is completed, it will be tested for accuracy and effectiveness. The Corps expects this process to be complete by early Fall 2007.

## Revised Inspection of Completed Works Procedures

The Corps is in the process of consolidating guidance and will incorporate risk assessments into the current Inspection of Completed Works program. The information from the technical risk assessments will clearly identify reporting requirements to local communities, states, and other federal agencies. This phase is ongoing.



## What's Happening Now

The Corps has completed its inspections scheduled for 2006 and has notified levee project owners/sponsors and the appropriate local, state and federal agencies of a project with unacceptable inspection rating. The Corps is currently working to ensure maintenance requirements are being met and has agreed to a one-year maintenance deficiency grace period to allow for corrections before a levee is removed from the Rehabilitation and Inspection Program (PL84-99).

On a national and regional level, we are coordinating these findings with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for their use in making decisions in the National Flood Insurance Program. Although separate programs, data from the levee inventory will be available to support levee certification as part of FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program.

We are working to ensure Corps federal program levees are appropriately operated and maintained by project owners/sponsors as designed and constructed. The Corps is committed to working closely with federal, state and local partners toward improving the safety and reliability of our national levee systems. For additional information, please visit the Corps web-site: [www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil), or contact Pete Pierce at (202) 761-1809.