

Interagency Levee Task Force



RAISING THE STANDARD

September 17, 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| FEMA | 2 |
| Corps | 3 |
| NRCS | 4 |
| SBA | 5 |
| U.S. Fish & Wildlife | 6 |
| ILTF Calendar | 7 |
| News you can use | 8 |

Contact Information

US Army Corps of Engineers
(601) 634-5757

FEMA JFO Iowa
(515) 251-3501

FEMA JFO Indiana
(317) 570-3000

FEMA JFO Illinois
(217) 535-3001

FEMA JFO Missouri
(573) 632-2100

FEMA JFO Wisconsin
(608) 243-0700

Natural Resources Conservation Service
(202) 690-0793

www.iwr.usace.army.mil/ILTF/
www.fema.gov

Raising the Standard
is published electronically by the
Interagency Levee Task Force.

It is a collaborative effort of the
US Army Corps of Engineers
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Small Business Administration
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
and state and local agencies.

Submit articles to:
Karen Buehler, Editor
karen.buehler@usace.army.mil

Task Force established to manage flood waters *Looking for innovative new solutions*

As a result of the 2008 Midwest floods, federal agencies in cooperation with state agencies in the impacted areas of Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri have joined forces to find solutions on how to manage flood waters to reduce risks in the future. The Regional Interagency Levee Task Force approach to manage flood waters will explore both short-and long-term solutions.

Traditionally, structural measures such as levees and dams have successfully been used to control flood waters. Other efforts such as expanding floodways and enlarging natural habitat areas have also worked. Despite these efforts, homes, businesses and infrastructure continue to be impacted by raging floodwaters.

Future actions must deal with flood risk management actions and decisions made by those impacted by flooding (agricultural, commercial, and industrial interests along with the general public), in an integrated manner. No one person, department or agency can make this decision; rather it must be a unified decision based on a unified approach by all parties.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is leading the collaborative regional approach to the long-term restoration of flood management systems damaged by the Midwest Floods of June 2008. The Corps is working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other federal, state and local agencies to provide a uniform approach across the region impacted by the Midwest floods.

The RILTF is an umbrella organization designed to look at floodplain management at a regional level and includes representatives from federal and state agencies. Interagency Levee Work Groups have been established in each affected state to work under the RILTF.

Interagency Levee Work Groups are operating in state Joint Field Offices (JFO) to review assistance requests from local entities, evaluate non-structural alternatives (creation of expanded floodways and ecosystems), and participate in the levee restoration process.

Levee sponsors and owners seeking assistance should follow the interagency process established at the state JFO. The intent is to provide a coordinated "one-stop shopping" process for the applicant seeking federal assistance for levee restoration, repair and other assistance.

Applications for assistance should be filed through a JFO. The Interagency Levee Work Groups will then review each request to determine the agency responsible for handling the request.

Alternatives for reducing vulnerabilities will be considered for all levees to be repaired under the Corps PL 84-99 program, FEMA Public Assistance program and the NRCS program, to include non-structural actions such as permanent evacuation of flood-prone areas, installation of flood warning systems and/or creation of natural and artificial flood water storage basins.

See back page for photos of the RILTF meeting conducted on Sept. 11, 2008.





The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the federal government's primary disaster response agency. FEMA's core mission is to reduce loss of life and property and protect the nation from all hazards, including natural disasters, and by leading and supporting the nation in a comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery and mitigation.

Within FEMA, the Public Assistance program and the Mitigation Division address issues and provide assistance for eligible projects involving levees. FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) program assists eligible applicants such as state and local governments, certain private non-profits (PNPs) and federally recognized Indian Tribes. Applicants receive assistance through two main categories: emergency work and permanent work. Emergency work includes debris removal and those measures taken to save lives, protect public health and safety and work needed on a temporary basis. Permanent work includes repairs to equipment, roads and bridges, water control facilities, utilities and parks and recreation facilities.

In the PA program, FEMA's levee assistance is primarily directed to emergency efforts. FEMA may provide funding assistance to remove debris from damaged levees and for certain emergency work, such as sandbagging the top of a levee or

construction of a temporary levee to protect the public after a major disaster. FEMA funds may also be applied to eligible work for levees not covered under the authority of another federal program and also avoids duplicating benefits available from other federal organizations.

As the Federal agency responsible for administering the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), FEMA's Mitigation Division identifies flood hazards, assesses flood risks, and provides appropriate flood hazard and risk information to communities nationwide. This information is provided to communities in the form of maps, called Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). FEMA has an effort underway, called Flood Map Modernization (Map Mod), to update and modernize existing FIRMs for most of the United States.

Levee systems have been identified in over one-fourth of the counties that will receive modernized maps—Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs)—as part of Map Mod. Therefore, FEMA has been working, and continues to work with Federal, State, and local professionals and technical partners to determine the flood protection and risk-reduction capabilities of the nation's levee systems and to accurately reflect the flood hazard and risk in levee-impacted areas on the DFIRMs.

The Regional Interagency Levee Task Force (RILTF) and the state Interagency Levee Work Groups (ILWGs) provide forums for all federal partners involved to establish a

streamlined and consistent "one-stop shop" process for addressing levees and flood mitigation efforts.

FEMA's PA field staff brings direct communication with community members and officials to the partnership as well as on-the-ground, first-hand insight of damages incurred and immediate needs. The Mitigation Division identifies opportunities at the local community level to provide longer-term flood mitigation and risk-reduction solutions. Although FEMA does not have the authority to reconstruct levees, it recognizes the value of addressing levee issues to reduce the risk to lives and property throughout the country.

FEMA wants to ensure that the most effective watershed and flood protection measures are developed. FEMA's partnership in the Regional Interagency Levee Task Force provides the agency with an additional resource through which it can pursue its goals of emergency preparedness and response in collaboration with multiple federal and state agencies.





Corps responsible for 2,000 levees across the country *Many of our country's levees are locally owned or privately owned*

The Corps of Engineers serves as one of the nation's largest infrastructure stewards with oversight authority for approximately 2,000 levees across the country.

There exists a perception that the Corps has universal responsibility for all our nation's levees when, in fact, there is no single agency with levee oversight nationwide.

Thousands of miles of levees are owned and controlled by local governments and private landowners, while certification of levees for FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program is the responsibility of the local levee owner or sponsor.

Regardless of levee ownership, the Corps works closely with state and local managers to inspect, advise and assist communities with professional engineering expertise and material during flood fights.

Below is an open letter from Maj. Gen. Don T. Riley, Deputy Commanding General and Deputy Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who reflects on the flood fighting efforts in the Midwest and the Corps' levee responsibilities.

Note: See back page for Corps of Engineers points of contacts for each affected state of the 2008 Floods.

As you know, we are in the middle of several major flood fights in the Midwest and the Corps is bringing its special expertise, professionalism and compassion to assist our fellow citizens throughout the entire Mississippi River Valley.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the people who have suffered both loss of life and property in the valley.

Our planning and response teams are supporting FEMA in these stricken areas with debris removal, provision of emergency drinking water, commodities, temporary housing and emergency power teams. More missions are being assigned as needs are identified and we expect to be engaged for some time.

We have more than 12,000 miles of levees in the federal inventory, but there are many, many thousands more in local and private ownership – of unknown quantity and condition.

Many of these non-federal levees were originally constructed to protect agricultural assets, but subsequent unrestricted community and business development has significantly changed the risk and consequences in "protected" areas.

The majority of the levees above St. Louis are not in the federal program, but when people see Corps personnel flood fighting side-by-side with local, state and federal responders, they draw the conclusion that these are Corps levees.



Maj. Gen. Don Riley

In Cedar Rapids, for example, the flood of record was set in 1851 at a crest of 20 ft. Recently, the Cedar River crested there at 31 ft., 11 ft. above the record. This overtopped two private levees and led to extensive property damage.

There have been 35 total levees overtopped – seven federally authorized, 24 non-federal, and four private. Early indications are that all of the federal levees that were overtopped far exceeded their design conditions and provided adequate time for public evacuation.

In many peoples' eyes, the Corps has become the face of levees for this event and we are thus challenged to ensure that the public and media understand our limited authorities and roles with regard to levees.

We are working diligently to provide simple and accurate information to all media outlets and community leaders.

Lastly, we are emphasizing the risks associated with living and working behind levees and the shared responsibility among federal, state, local agencies and private landowners; and we are working with all these parties to educate them on how they can participate in reducing their total flood risk, of which levees may or may not be a component.

Zoning laws, building codes, insurance and evacuation plans are other important elements of prudent flood risk management.

We have magnificent and selfless public servants working very long hours to assist with the Midwest flood fights; the Chief of Engineers and I are enormously proud of them.

Respectfully,
Don Riley

NRCS Flood Recovery Assistance

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) collaborates with farmers, ranchers, communities, and other individuals and groups to protect natural resources on private lands.

Working side-by-side with these customers, we identify natural resource concerns, such as soil erosion and water quality issues, and develop unique conservation plans for restoring and protecting resources.

NRCS is providing a variety of options for farmers, citizens and communities recovering from flood damages and heavy rains. We can help repair conservation practices and damaged infrastructure, as well as in purchasing floodplain easements on frequently-flooded agricultural land. Following is some brief information on the programs available and some basic eligibility requirements. For more detailed information refer to www.usda.gov or your local service center.

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)

Offered by our partner, the Farm Service Agency (FSA), this program provides assistance to landowners with farmland damaged by heavy rains, flooding and other natural disasters. ECP funds can be used for removing debris, restoring fences and conservation practices and providing water for livestock during drought. Other conservation measures may be included if approved.

- **Eligibility:** For land to be eligible the natural disaster must create new conservation problems that if left untreated would impair the land, materially affect the land's productivity, are extremely costly to repair or represent unusual damage which is not likely to recur in the same area. Preexisting conservation problems are not eligible for ECP.

Financial Assistance: Participants receive financial assistance up to 75 percent of the cost to implement approved emergency practices as determined by county FSA committees.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)

Offered by the NRCS, EWP provides a variety of assistance, from repairing conservation practices and infrastructure to purchasing floodplain easements. This work can include removing debris from stream channels, road culverts and bridges, reshaping and protecting eroded banks and repairing levees and structures. All projects must be sponsored by a state agency or legal subdivision of state government such as cities, counties and conservation districts.

- **Eligibility:** All EWP work must reduce threats to life and property and must make sense economically and environmentally.
- Public and private landowners are eligible for assistance, but must be represented by a project sponsor. EWP funds can't be used to solve problems that existed before the disaster or to

improve the level of protection that existed before the disaster.

- **Financial Assistance:** Participants receive financial assistance up to 75 percent cost share. The remaining percentage must be covered by a local source and may be in the form of cash or in-kind services.
- **Sponsors Role:** Sponsors are responsible for providing land rights to do repair work and securing necessary permits. They must also furnish local cost share and serve as the project coordinators.

Through EWP the federal government may also purchase floodplain easements on frequently-flooded agricultural lands. Please see your local service center office for more information.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

This program is offered by NRCS to provide farmers and landowners financial assistance for repairing conservation practices and structures damaged by flooding and heavy rains. Check with your local NRCS office for available funds.

- **Eligibility:** Producers must meet basic EQIP requirements and the damaged practices must have previously met NRCS standards.
- **Financial Assistance:** Financial assistance is based on the estimated average repair costs. EQIP assistance will cover the majority of a producer's final repair costs.



SBA Disaster Loans and Privately Owned Levees

- Generally, SBA disaster loans are available to homeowners, renters, businesses and private, non-profit organizations whose privately owned levees were damaged or destroyed in a Federally declared disaster.
- Levees owned by governmental entities or that support agricultural purposes are not eligible.
- Damage resulting from the declared disaster, not deferred maintenance, is eligible. The loan may also cover the cost to comply with code requirements, even if the levee was not previously in compliance.
- SBA disaster loans also cover costs to replace plantings and other ground cover necessary to stabilize the ground (though costs to restore ornamental shrubs, trees, etc. may be limited).
- Levees should protect the property of homeowners and renters (whose lease requires they restore the property) following a disaster.
- Levees of businesses and private, non-profit organizations (e.g., charities, churches, homeowners and road associations), should protect the property, fulfill a functional need related to the group's purpose or generate business.
- If a formal (legal) association owned the levee at the time of the disaster, the association should apply using a business application.
- If a formal association did not exist at the time of the disaster, the owners may apply as individuals or they may form an association and apply using a business application. If applying as individuals, SBA may require satisfactory evidence that other owners' shares of the cost of repairs are in place.

Additional information may be obtained by contacting:
U. S. Small Business Administration Customer Service Center
(800) 659-2955
or by visiting SBA's Web site at:

www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is one of seven bureaus within the [Department of the Interior](#). Our mission is to work with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The Service works to help others develop an environmental stewardship ethic for our society, based on ecological principles, scientific knowledge of fish and wildlife, and a sense of moral responsibility. We help guide the conservation, development, and management of the nation's fish and wildlife resources. And we work to provide the public opportunities to understand, appreciate, and wisely use fish and wildlife resources.

The Service Vision:

We will continue to be a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service.

Service Priorities:

National Wildlife Refuge

System: Conserving Our Lands and Resources

Landscape Conservation: Working With Others

Migratory Birds: Conservation and Management

Threatened and Endangered

Species: Achieving Recovery and Preventing Extinction

Aquatic Species: National Fish Habitat Action Plan and Trust Species
Connecting People With Nature:
Ensuring the Future of Conservation

Our Conservation Principles:

Science – Our work is grounded in thorough, objective science.

Stewardship – Our ethic is to conserve natural resources for future generations.

Service – It is our privilege to serve the American people.

Professionalism – We hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards, strive for excellence, and respect others.

Partnerships – We emphasize creative, innovative partnerships.

People - Our employees are our most valued asset.

Legacy - We ensure the future of natural resource conservation by connecting people with nature.

We work toward our mission by enforcing federal wildlife laws; protecting endangered species; managing migratory birds; restoring nationally significant fisheries; and helping foreign governments with international conservation efforts.

Through the Service's Federal Aid Program, we distribute hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System that consists of 545 National Wildlife Refuges and thousands of small wetlands and other special

management areas. The Service also carries out its mission through the 81 ecological services field stations, 69 national fish hatcheries, and 63 fish and wildlife management offices located nationwide.

The vast majority of fish and wildlife habitat in the United States is on non-federal lands. The [Partners for Fish and Wildlife](#), Partners in Flight, [Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council](#), and other [partnership activities](#) are the main ways we foster conservation and assist voluntary habitat conservation and restoration.

The Service employs approximately 7,500 people at facilities across the United States. The Service is a decentralized organization with a headquarters office in Washington, D.C., with [regional and field offices](#) across the country.

Our programs are among the oldest in the world dedicated to natural resource conservation. Service history can [traced back to 1871](#) and the U.S. Commission on Fish and Fisheries in the Department of Commerce, and the Division of Economic Ornithology and Mammology in the Department of Agriculture.

Calendar of Events

September 2008

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|---------------------|--------------------------------------|-----|---------------------|-----|-----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 MO ILWG, 1 pm | 16 IN ILWG, 1 pm IL ILWG, 1 pm | 17 | 18 IA ILWG, 2 pm | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 MO ILWG, 1 | 23 IN ILWG, 1 pm IL ILWG, 1 pm | 24 | 25 IA ILWG, 2 pm | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 MO ILWG, 1 pm | 30 IN ILWG, 1 pm IL ILWG, 1 pm | | | | |

Upcoming Events and Points of Contact

Sept 16, 23 & 30—Interagency Levee Work Group meeting

JFO, Springfield, IL, Point of Contact: Hank DeHaan, 309-912-4532

Sept 18 & 25—Interagency Levee Work Group meeting

JFO, Urbandale, IA , Point of Contact: Jerry A. Skalak, 309-912-5153

Sept 15, 22 & 29—Interagency Levee Work Group meeting

JFO, Jefferson City, MO, Point of Contact: Matthew Hunn, 314-346-9563

Sept 16, 23 & 30—Interagency Levee Work Group meeting

JFO, Indianapolis, IN, Point of Contact: Roger Setters, 502-315-6891

Interagency Levee Work Group Team Leads

Iowa

Jerry A. Skalak
(309) 912-5153

jerry.a.skalak@usace.army.mil

Illinois

Hank DeHaan
(309) 794-5853

henry.c.dehaan@usace.army.mil

Indiana

Roger Setters
(502) 315-6891

roger.d.setters@usace.army.mil

Wisconsin

Dick Otto
(507) 895-6341

Richard.j.otto@usace.army.mil

Missouri

Matthew Hunn
(314) 346-9563

matthew.j.hunn@usace.army.mil

Regional Interagency Levee Task Force meeting September 11, 2008 Des Moines, IA



Members of the Regional Interagency Levee Task Force are (l-r) Jeff Jensen, USACE; Norb Schwartz, FEMA Region 5; Brig. Gen. Michael Walsh, USACE RILTF Lead Coordinating Official; Richard Hainje, FEMA Region 7; and Bill Vogel, FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer for Iowa. *Photos by Elizabeth Stands, FEMA.*



(l-r) Norb Schwartz, FEMA Region 5, and Brig. Gen. Michael Walsh, RILTF Lead Coordinating Official.



Bruce Munholand, USACE, member of the RILTF.



Jerry Skalak, USACE Team Lead for the Iowa Interagency Levee Work Group, addresses the group.



Susan Dixon, Rebuild Iowa Office.