

Regional Interagency Task Force Monthly Report, November 2008

Levee Repair and Associated Restoration Projects

Midwest Floods of June 2008

8 Dec 2008

1. REFERENCE:

a. OMB memorandum dated 18 Feb 1997, Subject: Floodplain Management and Procedures for Evaluation and Review of Levee and Associated Restoration Projects.

b. OMB memorandum dated 25 April 1997, Subject: Monthly Agency Reports on the Status of Levee Repair and Associated Restoration.

c. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Engineering Regulation No. 500-1-1, dated 30 September 2001, Subject: Civil Emergency Management Program.

2. PURPOSE: To provide a monthly status report, as required by the above references, on Regional Interagency Levee Task Force (RILTF) activities during the preceding month related to levee repairs and non-structural alternatives (NSA) in Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and Wisconsin. Expanded background and procedural information that is foundational in nature is presented in the September 2008 Monthly Report.

3. BACKGROUND: Soon after the June 2008 floods, the USACE Omaha, Kansas City, Rock Island, St. Louis, St. Paul, and Louisville district commanders issued public notices for levee rehabilitation assistance under the PL 84-99 program. Public notices were issued by FEMA, NRCS, and some states as well. Not long after emergency declarations were posted, the USACE HQ requested that the Mississippi River Division stand-up a Regional Interagency Levee Task Force to include all pertinent federal, state, and local agencies in the 5 states mentioned above. The authority to do so is provided in reference 1a. By mid-July the basic pieces were in place to begin fashioning a regional approach to short and long-term recovery from the floods.

4. INTERAGENCY LEVEE TASK FORCE ACTIVITIES: Ultimately, the ILTF is designed to help move all agencies from an independent short-term recovery perspective to one of collaborated long-term flood risk reduction planning and implementation. Getting there will involve two main efforts: implementing non-structural alternative projects (NSAPs) in lieu of levee rehab as the situation warrants, and identifying potential best-practice policy changes that arise during the evaluation of NSAPs. The Interagency Levee Working Groups (ILWGs) will forward recommended NSAPs and policy revisions via White Papers. The ILTF will endorse recommendations to the appropriate agency for consideration, as the ILTF members collectively decide.

There are 4 NSAP White Papers currently being developed for presentation to the ILTF in the near future. One of the 5 mentioned in the Oct 08 report is no longer being considered, as discussed below in the report on the ILWG activities.

Five to ten Policy Revision White Papers are still being developed, in addition to the NSA White Papers.

There are currently no NSA or Policy White Papers pending action by the ILTF. Decisional briefings will be made to the ILTF in the near future for endorsement of NSAPs and recommended policy revisions.

During the month of Nov 08 the following educational and situational briefings have been provided to the ILTF leadership to broaden its decisional foundation:

- State of Missouri recovery status
- Upper Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers Association Concerns
- USACE Silver Jackets Program for state-level partnership
- Buying-down flood risk
- Flood risk reduction planning at Confluence Point, Missouri

Future educational briefings being considered include: non-federal earthen dam safety, flood-proofing, levee district sponsor concerns/issues, Association of State Floodplain Managers, National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies, Ducks Unlimited, and private insurers.

5. INTERAGENCY LEVEE WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES: The ILWGs are designed to provide a state-based interagency platform for transitioning flood recovery from traditional response to a long-term regional framework. The ILWGs review the project rehab reports posted by each agency to determine which projects have potential for solutions using non-structural risk management methods.

The attached ILWG Project Review Activity table summarizes the ILWG activity through 8 December 2008. As of that date, a total of 212 reports were posted by all agencies, 76 of those have been reviewed by the ILWGs (an increase of 10), with a result of 4 potential NSA projects identified. There are still a considerable number of reports to be prepared; thus there is additional opportunity for identifying potential NSAPs. The 4 potential NSAPs for which White Papers are being developed by the ILWGs are:

- Vandalia Drainage & Levee District (D&LD), Illinois; potential set-back levee, which will increase the size of the available floodplain of the Illinois River. Will be submitted to the ILTF for review in December 2008.
- Henderson D&LD, IL; buy-out/relocate all or a portion of the village of Gulfport, IL to avoid repetitious disaster recovery costs. Will be submitted to the ILTF for review in December 2008.
- Grand Tower D&LD, IL; potential set-back levee or development of flank levees to allow formerly protected USFS lands to return to floodplain status.
- Louisa County, Iowa, D&LD #11; levee was breached in 7 locations; this potential NSA could involve repair of 2 breaches, returning some lands to floodplain status, raising a highway, or other components.

Last month we also reported a potential NSAP for Kuhs D&LD, St. Charles County, MO. The sponsor has since decided to perform the structural rehab because a very economical contract was found to perform the work.

The ILWGs are also developing Policy White Papers for submittal to the ILTF. Issues that have surfaced that may be evaluated for policy change recommendations include:

- Levee "unwatering" responsibilities for FEMA and USACE
- Repair of damaged levees in undeclared counties
- Repair of damaged agricultural levees in watersheds greater than 400 sq. mi. (limit of NRCS authority and outside USACE authority)
- Repair of pump stations damaged during flood fighting
- ILTF and ILWG activation procedures
- Flood damage repairs and provisions as provided in PL 84-99 (8-12 policy issues)
- Individual environmental assessments for federal agencies on the same projects

6. OUTREACH: The message being communicated is that flood recovery in the Midwest remains a regional priority and that agencies are working together to ensure that recovery is approached as being a long-term flood risk reduction partnership.

On November 4th Bruce Munholand briefed the Interagency Flood Risk Management Committee regarding the mission, goals, objectives, and status of the ILTF. Emphasis was placed on using experiences to date to help shape the future approach for managing flood recovery in the context of an integral part of flood risk management/reduction.

On November 5th Bruce Munholand provided input to the HQ USACE team developing an FY09 Flood Risk Management campaign plan.

On November 18th Bruce Munholand briefed the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association regarding the current activities of the ILTF, also highlighting the status of levee rehabilitation. Emphasis was placed on the ensuing efforts in the next 6-12 months to create a forum that can assume the mission, goals, and objectives of the ILTF for the long-term.

On November 18th Jeff Jensen briefed the FEMA Region V with much the same briefing as Mr. Munholand provided to UMRBA the same day.

The November 2008 ILTF meeting was held November 25th in Jefferson City, MO, and was attended by 45-50 federal, state, and local agency members, non-governmental organization members, and members of the press. The ILTF meeting was announced in local papers, encouraging attendance by the general public.

December 2-4 2008 USACE and FEMA conducted a joint Remedial Action Program (RAP) Workshop in Orlando, FL to review emergency response for the past year in preparation for the next. The ILTF was asked to play a major role in a Flood Risk Management workshop. During the workshop we identified 3 main issues to overcome for incorporating ILTF processes into a long range strategy of integrating flood risk management into the flood response requirements. There are 7 assigned courses of action to initiate the process (see attached summary slides). The goal is to complete the actions within the next 6-12 months.

7. PERSONNEL: Project delivery teams have been established at 4 Districts to manage the design and construction work necessary to repair the damaged levees. Additionally, Corps of Engineers personnel have been assigned as ILWG leads in the states of IA, IL, IN, MO, and WI to lead the coordination with other state and federal agency partners for short and long-term recovery and flood risk reduction. There is a core group of 3 full-time persons, and 4 part-time persons assigned by the USACE to manage day-to-day activities of the ILTF.

8. SUMMARY: The ILTF continues to provide a sound forum for those agencies motivated to participate in finding NSAs and chart a course for long-term interagency partnership in reduced flood risk. There are 4 potential NSAs being developed at this point, 3 of which are especially promising. Two NSA White Papers will be submitted to the ILTF in December 2008 for review, and Policy White Papers will be submitted to the ILTF for consideration in the very near future. We are reaching out to the local citizens, landowners, and the levee districts in an effort to promote NSAs, but find little short-term interest. NSA projects will be more accepted by the public and gain more wide spread use as a result of increased public knowledge and demonstrated success of implemented NSAs. The ILTF is beginning to tackle the challenge of developing a sustainable long-term working group to continue the ILTF mission in the future.

(Signed)
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