

2



M. J. "MIKE" FOSTER, JR.
GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Baton Rouge

70804-9004

POST OFFICE BOX 94004
(504) 342-7315

April 21, 1999

Lieutenant General Joe Ballard, Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
20 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20314-1000

Dear General Ballard:

As you are well aware there is a great need for a comprehensive, coordinated system of hurricane protection and evacuation for the coastal areas of Louisiana. The inadequacy of the existing features was highlighted by the recent near miss of New Orleans by Hurricane Georges, and the devastation wrought by Hurricane Mitch in Central America. Predictions of increased hurricane activity over the next decade further emphasize the need for effective protection against major storms. It is my sincere belief that levees and evacuation routes need to be designed for the inevitable category 5 storm event.

In my opinion, expeditious achievement of this goal depends on the federal government, through the Corps of Engineers, taking the lead in developing a comprehensive plan and providing the bulk of the near term funding for implementation. Local entities (levee boards, parish governments and state agencies) need a way to coordinate their disparate interests, resolve conflicts, and represent their needs to the Corps. They also need a feasible means of financing the local share of the plan's cost.

To facilitate the requisite federal involvement, I recommend that the language attached be included in the section of the WRDA entitled, "Project Authorizations Subject to a Final Report". Once this language is included in the WRDA, it would be necessary to get funding in the FY 2000 Appropriations Bill to start the studies; approximately \$2.5 million will be required. The overall cost of implementing a Category 5 capable plan will of course be determined by the results of the studies.

The sooner we can get this thing done, the better off our coast will be. Lives and property are endangered; economic development is stifled, and multi-billion dollar insurance and federal emergency aid payments are risked. We can wait until the potential for catastrophe becomes a reality, or we can act now to prevent it. We need the assistance and cooperation of the federal government if it is to be accomplished in a reasonable time. Your assistance in obtaining it would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

M.J. "Mike" Foster, Jr.

jw

Attachment