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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 8, 2003

Comprehensive Hurricane Protection

The southeast part of Louisiana has become much more susceptible to hurricanes. Although powerful category 3, 4 and 5 hurricanes are extremely destructive, experiencing the most powerful part of such a storm is a rare occurrence.

Tropical storms, category 1 and 2 hurricanes, and persistent southeast winds are common events and years ago were not a severe problem. With large subsidence rates on our developed lands, wetland loss, reduced barrier islands, and sea level rise, weak weather systems now cause costly life-threatening flooding. These events now cause problems as much as 60 miles inland.

Tropical Storm Isidore and Hurricane Lilli demonstrated that very weak parts of these storms can cause flooding 30 miles inland, with water levels near 7 ft. These water levels overtopped levees including those in the Lake Ponchartrain area. Our barrier islands experienced a great deal of damage, with Grand Isle left defenseless due to storm erosion. Continued delays on projects to build and restore flood protection for South Louisiana will lead to degradation of an important part of Louisiana and the United States.

Therefore, it is urged and requested that a program to provide a consistent flow of Federal, State, and local funds be instituted to construct a comprehensive hurricane system to include the construction and restoration of levees, wetlands, and barrier islands.

To succeed in the needed protection we must first complete the presently authorized projects. All remaining gaps must be placed on an accelerated schedule toward construction.

The following is a list of the Federal levee projects which are part of this comprehensive plan. Incorporation of restoration plans are not included in this list, but are of critical importance for all hurricane plans.

Status of Hurricane Protection Projects in Southeast Louisiana

- Lake Ponchartrain, Louisiana and Vicinity, Hurricane Protection - This project is currently providing protection against storm surges associated with the Standard Project Hurricane for the vast majority of the inhabited areas of St. Bernard Parish, and the east bank portions of Orleans and Jefferson Parishes. The completion of five structures on the east bank of St. Charles Parish by 2004 will provide similar protection there.
- Westbank and Vicinity, New Orleans, Louisiana, Hurricane Protection - This project consists of 3 areas: Westwego to Harvey, Lake Cataouatche, and east of Harvey Canal (both east and west of Algiers Canal). Construction in the Westwego to Harvey Canal area has been ongoing since 1991. Construction was initiated in 2000 for the two adjoining areas (Lake Cataouatche & East of Harvey). The project is approximately 25 percent complete.
- Larose to Golden Meadow, Hurricane Protection - This project is currently providing protection against surges associated with storms that have a 100 year recurrence interval. The work is 95 percent complete with final lifts for various levee reaches remaining to be implemented.
- New Orleans to Venice, Louisiana, Hurricane Protection - This project is currently providing protection against surges associated with storms that have a 100 year recurrence interval. The work is 80 percent complete, with final lifts for various levee reaches remaining to be implemented.
- Grand Isle and Vicinity Project - This project provides hurricane and shore protection to the residents of Grand Isle. It consists of 23 breakwaters, jetties and a sand dune levee. It was completed in 1991 and turned over to the local sponsor for operation and maintenance. The Corps is conducting a reevaluation study to address flood control, beach erosion and environmental restoration for the north side of Grand Isle and its barrier island. A draft report is scheduled for submission in May 2003 with study completion in July 2003.
- Donaldsonville to the Gulf - The study envisions constructing a 57-mile-long hurricane protection levee south of Highway 90, from the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway in Larose to the west guide levee at Davis Pond. The levee, along with a flood-control structure in Bayou Des Allemands, would protect the areas north of Highway 90 and the Lac des Allemands basin from flooding from storm surges. Scoping meetings to hear citizens' concerns are being conducted throughout the study area. Local sponsors are the Lafourche Basin Levee District and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. This project is in the feasibility study phase, scheduled for completion in August 2005.
- Morganza to the Gulf - The plan consists of approximately 72 miles of earthen levee, with 12 environmental flow control structures proposed for the navigable waterways and two floodgates in the Houma Navigation Canal. Construction is

estimated to cost \$680 million. The project is currently in the Pre-construction Engineering and Design (PED) phase. Congressional approval for construction is anticipated in the upcoming WRDA legislation.

- Lake Ponchartrain, Louisiana, West Shore - This project is in the Feasibility Study phase. Currently, alignment issues are being resolved with St. John the Baptist Parish officials. The feasibility report is expected by late 2003.
- Lower Atchafalaya Reevaluation - This is a study within the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T), Atchafalaya Basin, Louisiana, project. Potential features include a "barrier levee" and flood control structures / pumping stations to provide backwater protection from Atchafalaya River floods to the area east of the East Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee to Gibson. Although the barrier levee would be designed to an elevation appropriate for the MR&T, an ancillary benefit would be the protection it would afford against storm surges resulting from hurricanes having 85-year recurrence intervals. The levee could be built to 100-year level of protection with minimal additional cost, paid by the local sponsor, or by the Federal government, if authorized by Congress. The preliminary draft report was completed in November 2002 and is being reviewed by the Mississippi Valley Division Headquarters. The report is expected to be available for public release and comments in March 2003.
- Hurricane Protection, Louisiana - This study will look at the feasibility of providing higher levels of storm surge protection (i.e. against Category 4 or 5 hurricanes) for the existing hurricane protection projects in southeast Louisiana than currently authorized. The full range of enhancement measures will be explored (higher levees, barrier island restoration, closure structures, coastal wetlands restoration, etc.). The reconnaissance phase of this study is complete and the project management plan for the feasibility phase is being prepared. A Feasibility Cost Share Agreement (FCSA) with a local sponsor will be required before the Feasibility Study is initiated.

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