

Interagency Levee Task Force



RAISING THE STANDARD

December 2008/January 2009

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Raising the Standard

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Interagency Levee Task Force Work Continues

Silver Jackets, Buying Down Risk, Missouri Long-Range Plan for Flood Recovery, the Upper Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri Rivers Association, Smart Planning: Maximizing Values and Economic Benefits, along with a brief look into the crystal ball to see what the future might bring – just a few of the topics that the Interagency Levee Task Force had on its plate at its pre-Thanksgiving meeting Nov. 25 in Jefferson City, Mo.



Interagency Levee Task Force partners at the Nov. 25, 2008 meeting in Jefferson City, Missouri. (photo by Karen Buehler)

The group's focus continued to be on collaboration and seeing how the various state and federal agencies making up the task force could continue to keep the lines of communication open and keep building on the momentum that its work groups have initiated at the state levels.

While working at the state level is good, some members are discussing the need to take the focus to the local level and educate people about the risks and opportunities.

"There has to be some responsibility at the local level for prevention instead of trying to remediate," said Maj. Gen. King E. Sidwell, Adjutant General of the Missouri National Guard. "The problem is that our system is set up such that the local level can be reimbursed to remediate but are not necessarily given the money up front to ward off the ravages of a flood.

"So at the local level, there is a tendency not to take action which will avoid the flooding," he said.

"There's a tendency to remediate damage after the flood has already occurred.

"And it is only through a planning body such as this that maybe we can change that dynamic of taking action before the flood instead of waiting until the flood occurs," Sidwell told the task force.

Col. George Shepard, deputy commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division, who was chairing the meeting due to the absence of the task force chairman Brig. Gen. Michael Walsh, echoed Sidwell's words, saying that a "collaborative effort is essential to making things happen." He predicted that the members of the task force, the areas impacted by the Midwest floods and the nation would ultimately see a lot of progress as a result of the task force's work. He praised the work groups for their work in generating the project information reports and the white papers that are addressing several projects with potential non-structural alternatives.

Interagency Levee Task Force Work Continues

“There are a lot of good things going on,” said Bruce Munholand, the task force program manager. “This task force is being used as a tool to help shape the future of how we all do business when it comes to emergency response.”

Pete Rabbon, head of the USACE national flood risk management program, spoke about the concept of buying down risk and said that he’s impressed with the work the task force has accomplished so far. He encouraged the members to stay the course while looking to the future. “You have admitted that you need to be ready for the next flood season,” Rabbon said. “At the same time you’re looking for a more durable, sustainable program that will be better long term, so when the next flood comes, you’re not doing the exact same thing that you have been doing after every flood.”

A presentation on the Silver Jackets program included remarks from Jeff Jensen of Corps Headquarters, Corps members from Huntington and Louisville Districts working with the



Members of the Silver Jackets program include (l-r): Jeff Jensen, HQUSACE; Brandon Brunnett, USACE Louisville District; Dan Bailey, USACE Huntington District; Chad Berginnis, Michael Baker Corp.; Joe Trimboli, USACE Huntington District. (photo by Karen Buehler)

programs in Ohio and Indiana, Norb Schwartz of FEMA Region V who has been a Silver Jackets proponent, and Chad Berginnis, formerly of the State of Ohio. All agreed that the concept has potential for the task force as it looks to continue the work initiated by the work groups.

“Ultimately what we don’t want to do is to try and duplicate or



ILTF members (l-r): Bruce Munholand, USACE St. Louis District; Charles Barton and Bob Petersen, USACE Mississippi Valley Division; and Hank DeHaan, USACE Rock Island District. (photo by Karen Buehler)

replace existing efforts, collaborative efforts that are ongoing,” Jensen said. “Our objective is to supplement the success of those existing teams, to strengthen existing relationships, and then to establish relationships where they didn’t exist before.

“And that’s why we see the work that the ILWGs are doing in Iowa, Missouri and Illinois as target-rich environments for establishing a way to continue the kind of collaboration and flood-risk management that is occurring now with relation to the recovery effort of occurring now with relation to the recovery effort of our flood damage reduction systems,” he said.

Randy Scrivner, logistics, resources, mitigation and floodplain management branch chief for the State Emergency Management Agency for Missouri, discussed the Missouri Long-Range Plan for Flood Recovery, noting that more flood fight tabletop exercises that are conducted prior to the beginning of flood season can pay great dividends and encouraged that such exercises continue to be scheduled.

Dave McMurray, chairman of the Upper Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri Rivers Association, urged the task force to take a comprehensive watershed approach to addressing flood risk management in the five-state area.

A second suggestion centered on the makeup of the task force and its work groups. “You need some of the more local people engaged because they’re the ones who are really involved in the flood fights, whether it’s the drainage district for the counties or the state and local emergency management people, because they have to deal with the same issues and problems,” McMurray said.

He also encouraged the Corps and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to resolve recovery and funding gaps and to speed up the Public Law 84-99 response systems.

The task force’s next meeting is set for Jan. 22, 2009 at the FEMA Region V offices, 536 S. Clark St., Chicago.

Local Hazard Mitigation Plans – A Proactive Stance for FEMA

Throughout its history, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has excelled in the business of disaster recovery. Now the agency is reaching forward in a proactive stance to help communities prevent damages that occur during disasters. This summer, anyone who opened a newspaper or turned on the television was privy to the damages wrought by the flooding events and storms in several Midwestern states. Many of us were actively involved with these recovery efforts.

Interspersed among all of these hard-hitting disaster news stories were a few stories of how communities identified local hazards, such as repetitive flooding, then developed a plan to reduce the risk and damages that could result during a disaster. The cities of Valmeyer, Illinois, and Moorhead, Minnesota, are examples of communities with plans.

The purpose of hazard mitigation plans is for local communities to identify hazards through risk assessments and take proactive measures to break the cycle of disaster damage through mitigation strategies.

Both Grafton and Moorhead applied to their state's emergency management agencies and received FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds for acquisitions of flood-prone land. During the 2008 floods this summer, the land acquired through HMGP funds in Grafton flooded, but the structures that could have been damaged had been removed from the floodway through mitigation planning and implementation.

Hazard mitigation planning has taken root in recent years as a direct result of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, which encourages communities to integrate mitigation with day-to-day governmental decision making. Areas to which mitigation plans can be applied include land-use planning, floodplain management, and site design and development, among others.

FEMA requires local communities and states to have approved mitigation plans in place in order to receive



The town of Grafton was completely under water after inches of rain fell throughout the month of July. Relief efforts included a temporary road/levee so that traffic could get from one side of town to the other. (photo by Liz Roll/FEMA News Photo)

Hazard Mitigation project grant funding.

“We have come a long way in promoting local mitigation planning,” says Norbert Schwartz, Mitigation division director for FEMA Region V in Chicago. “The success of planning necessitates local, state, tribal and federal government collaboration, an honest assessment of natural hazards each community faces and a sound mitigation strategy.”

In the long term, these plans can protect life and property and are more cost effective at all levels of government, according to Schwartz. Developing a sound hazard mitigation plan entails three main elements:

Public Communication: involving the public to assure communitywide support for the plan.

Risk Assessment: identifying vulnerabilities to hazards and the types of structures and critical facilities that would be affected should disaster strike.

Mitigation Strategy: developing goals and objectives that are cost-effective, technically feasible and

environmentally sound, then follow through with implementation.

Government agencies can turn to FEMA for assistance in developing local hazard mitigation plans. The FEMA website (www.fema.gov) offers how-to guides and other online information. CD ROMs are also available. Every state in Region V has FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plans that are reviewed or updated every three years. Many local jurisdictions do not have plans yet, though FEMA is strongly recommending plans be developed and submitted. Once approved, local plans are reviewed by the state and FEMA every five years.

Hazard mitigation plans are meant to preserve life, health and safety in a community. By supporting these efforts through its grant programs, FEMA invests in a safe future. Mitigation efforts speed recovery after a disaster, save community tax dollars and help preserve the unique qualities of communities that otherwise could be destroyed in a disaster.

Remedial Action Program Workshop

Three issues grew into seven recommendations as members of the Interagency Levee Task Force met with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Federal Emergency Management Agency officials during the joint agency Remedial Action Program Workshop Dec. 2 through 4.

The two- and one-half day RAP Workshop, conducted in Orlando, brought together Corps and FEMA leaders to discuss and evaluate intergovernmental planning and preparedness during the 2008 disasters, determine the priorities for intergovernmental remedial actions to enhance existing capabilities to respond to future major disasters, and determine whether policy or doctrinal adjustments are required to improve federal readiness and mission execution.

Maj. Gen. Merdith W.B. (Bo) Temple, deputy commanding general of Civil and Emergency Operations for the Corps of Engineers, told the group that it's imperative for the federal and state families to "execute seamlessly as a total team" and that meetings such as the RAP Workshop are important because they "use the past to form the future."

Glenn Cannon, FEMA assistant administrator, said it's appropriate for FEMA and the Corps to lead the way when it comes to disaster preparedness and response. "We get things done because the nation depends on us to get things done," he said. "Our mission is to save lives, reduce suffering and protect property and everything we do should forward that goal."

The bulk of the workshop was spent in breakout sessions looking at

specific areas of disaster planning and response, including mission assignment, critical temporary power restoration, commodities and logistics to include ice and water, critical infrastructure assessment and restoration, temporary housing and roofing, and flood risk management, of which the focus was on the ILTF.

It was in that breakout session that ILTF members discussed the task force's success so far and what needs to be done to continue its progress in the future.

Three ILTF issues were identified for discussion:

- successes and lessons learned to date;
- whether the ILTF concept should transition to a long-term forum and if so, in what type of structure; and, identifying agency policy issues that should be reviewed/addressed.

Two recommendations grew out of the discussion on the successes and lessons learned: to use the existing ILTF structure to formalize a standard operating procedure for future task forces; and to increase education and outreach by developing a comprehensive communications plan. Discussion included the need for early implementation and education; the need for high-level commitment from agency leadership; and the need to expand the task force activities to include state and local flood mitigation plans.

The group agreed that there is a need for transitioning the task force concept to a long-term forum, and that one of the first things that should be considered is changing the name of the task force from one with a "levee" focus to something that would foster greater participation by other

federal and state agencies. Other discussion centered on the need for more local involvement in developing the task force from the bottom up; using existing state/regional organizational structures when feasible; and moving from reactive to proactive risk management.

The three recommendations that grew from that discussion were: continue to establish a formal task force structure after major floods to facilitate coordinated recovery of flood damage reduction systems and possible non-structural alternatives; develop a coordinated federal/state concept for long-term state partnerships possibly along the Silver Jackets concept; and develop an appropriate regional framework and partnership to address long-term regional flood risk management issues that would also continue the task force initiatives and possible non-structural alternatives.

The final issue centered on policy concerns and the desire to see an increased focus on evaluating and implementing non-structural alternatives. The two recommendations that grew out of the discussion were to establish a process to identify policy issues and make recommendations to participating agencies, and to ask FEMA and the Corps to revise state and local mitigation guidelines to incorporate levee systems while coordinating with the FEMA Public Assistance officials.

The issues and recommendations discussed at the RAP Workshop will be on the agenda for the ILTF meeting Jan. 22 in Chicago.

Louisa County #11 Levee District Open House—Wapello, Iowa, Dec. 17
Sponsored by the Iowa Interagency Levee Task Force Work Group



Photos by Ken Tow
Rebuild Iowa Office



Calendar of Events

January 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6 Ill. ILWG	7	8	9	10
11	12 Mo. ILWG	13	14	15 Iowa ILWG	16	17
18	19	20 Ill. ILWG	21	22 ILTF Meeting	23	24
25	26	27	28	29 Iowa ILWG	30	31

January Events and Points of Contact

**Jan. 20 at 1 p.m.—Interagency Levee Work Group meeting via conference call. Call-in number: 888-959-1793, Passcode: 541342#
Point of Contact: Hank DeHaan, 309-912-4532**

**Jan. 15 & 29 at 1 p.m.—Interagency Levee Work Group meeting at the JFO, Urbandale, Iowa . Call-in number: 800-320-4330, Passcode: 000156#
Point of Contact: Jerry A. Skalak, 309-912-5153**

Jan. 12 at 1 p.m.—Interagency Levee Work Group meeting at the JFO, Jefferson City, Mo., Point of Contact: Matthew Hunn, 314-346-9563

**Jan. 22 at 8:30 a.m.—Interagency Levee Task Force meeting, Chicago, Ill.,
Point of Contact: Bruce Munholand, 314-331-8480**

*Have an event you would like to see added to the Events Calendar?
Email your information to: karen.buehler@usace.army.mil*

Calendar of Events

February 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3 Ill. ILWG	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13 UMIMRA Meeting	14
15	16	17 Ill. ILWG	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 ILTF Meeting	27	28

February Events and Points of Contact

**Feb. 3 & 17 at 1 p.m.—Ill. Interagency Levee Work Group meeting via conference call. Call-in number: 888-959-1793, Passcode: 541342#
Point of Contact: Hank DeHaan, 309-912-4532**

Feb. 26 at 8:30 a.m.—Interagency Levee Task Force meeting, St. Louis, Mo., (tentative). Point of Contact: Bruce Munholand, 314-331-8480

13 Feb - UMIMRA (Upper Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers Association) Annual Conference, East Peoria, IL. Point of Contact: Kim Robinson (217-522-4109)

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