

City of Dallas News Release

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(DALLAS, TX) – The City of Dallas and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) announced today preliminary results of the Draft Dallas Floodway Periodic Inspection Report 9 (Draft Report). Following the flooding that occurred during Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) added a new rating system process for Periodic Inspections which are done every 5 years along with smaller, less detailed annual inspections.

“The Dallas Floodway has historically received very good to excellent ratings during the last six inspections,” said Mayor Tom Leppert. “We have a good performance history of the levees in place based on the flooding that has occurred,” the Mayor added.

As flood episodes, such as the one caused by Hurricane Katrina, have been studied and researched, comprehensive changes to the inspection process have been made to improve levee safety across the country. Through the new levee inspection rating system, the Corps is committed to more detailed communication to the City of Dallas and the public with regard to the review process and the condition of the levee system.

The Corps’ Levee Safety Program and this new rating system were used to evaluate the Dallas Floodway levees during a Periodic Inspection in December 2007. The preliminary results of this evaluation have been summarized in the Draft Dallas Floodway Periodic Inspection Report 9 (Draft Report). This rating system measures criteria for containing an 800-year flood event. Preliminarily, the Corps has rated the Dallas Floodway as “unacceptable” at this level of flood containment. “The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the City of Dallas’ top priority is continued safety for the citizens of Dallas and the flood risk reduction the Dallas Floodway Levee system provides,” said Brigadier General Kendall P. Cox, Commander and Division Engineer U.S. Army Engineer Division, Southwestern.

Dallas is not alone in receiving this “unacceptable” rating. Since 2006, as many as 240 other levee systems across the country have also received the rating including Sacramento, St. Louis, King County, Prince George, and Hartford.

“As always, public safety and the integrity of the levees is a paramount concern of the City of Dallas and the Corps,” said City Manager Mary K. Suhm. “This rating means that the City and the Corps engineers have identified items of our levee system that may need to be fixed and the City is working with the Corps and various agency partners to address the findings.”

“While City leaders are concerned about the rating, we are fortunate because of the planning, design and work that has been done toward improving our floodway system since the late-90s when the City began working on the Trinity River Corridor Project,” said David A. Neumann, Chairman of the Trinity River Corridor Project Committee. “It is important to note that this does not stop work on the Trinity River Corridor Project. In fact, work increases until we meet requirements.”

“The City’s leadership has already taken actions to correct a number of identified maintenance improvements as the Corps continues its further evaluation of the inspection findings,” stated Brigadier General Cox. The Corps is continuing to compile the Draft Report and the City anticipates receiving the final report in April 2009. Additional analyses on the Dallas levee system will continue as part of on-going studies and projects. Any required remediation work resulting from these investigations will be implemented in conjunction with the Trinity River Corridor Project. The City is working with all partners, including the Corps, to explore opportunities for cost sharing and implementation strategies.

“It is important to note, the levees that are in place today are the same levees that were in place yesterday,” said Mayor Leppert. “These levees have been protecting residents and businesses since the 1920’s. What has changed over time has been the understanding of levee and river systems nationwide.”

“Living behind a levee always has a risk”, said Brigadier General Cox. “FEMA recommends anyone living near levees and other creeks should have flood insurance.” The City of Dallas has a comprehensive emergency evacuation plan for the entire City to help notify residents and business owners before a flooding emergency.

It continues to be the City and Corps’ intent to strengthen the integrity of the levee system and to keep the public informed about the associated risks of living near the levees. To that end, the City of Dallas has set-up a micro-site on the City’s Web site – www.dallascityhall.com – where new information will be posted and updated for public viewing.

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