

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE February 24, 2009

TO The Honorable Mayor and Members of the Dallas City Council

SUBJECT Draft Periodic Inspection 9 – Dallas Levee System

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 (5 year) which are done along with smaller, less detailed annual inspections. The Dallas Floodway has historically received very good to excellent ratings during the last six inspections. We have a good performance history of the levees in place based on the flooding that has occurred.

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. As always, public safety and the integrity of the levees is a paramount concern of the City of Dallas and the Corps.

The Corps' Levee Safety Program and this new rating system were used to evaluate the Dallas Floodway levees during an 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. What does that mean? It means that some items of our levee system must be fixed and on others we must do further testing and analysis to determine if they need mitigation. 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 levee owners, 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. There are project components underway that address floodway improvements. For example, the Lower Chain of Wetlands is functioning resulting in lower flood elevations in the floodway.

The routine maintenance findings in the Draft Report have been reviewed, and a number of these have already been addressed since the City was informed of the draft findings. The Corps is continuing to compile the Draft Report and we anticipate

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. We are working with all of our 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. These levees have been protecting residents and businesses since the 1920s. What has changed over time has been the understanding of levee and river systems nationwide. It continues to be the City and Corps' intent to strengthen the integrity of the levee system and to help keep Dallas neighborhoods and businesses safe from flooding.

Please contact me if you have questions.

Mary K. Suhm
City Manager

c: Ryan S. Evans, First Assistant City Manager
Jill A. Jordan, P.E., Assistant City Manager
Ramon F. Miguez, P.E., Assistant City Manager
A.C. Gonzalez, Assistant City Manager
Forest E. Turner, Interim Assistant City Manager
Dave K. Cook, Chief Financial Officer
Thomas P. Perkins, Jr., City Attorney
Craig D. Kinton, City Auditor
Judge Victor C. Landers
Helena Stevens-Thompson, Asst. to the City Manager
Frank Libro, Director, Public Information Office