



## **REMARKS: Mayor Tom Leppert**

February 24, 2009

Thank you for joining us.

Following the flooding that occurred during Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005, the Army Corps of Engineers changed its approach to its inspections for levees in the United States.

This new ***Levee Safety Program*** now demands more rigorous application of existing standards.

Since 2006, the Corps has rated about 240 levees across the country as "*Unacceptable*" under the Levee Safety Program.

The 5-year, Periodic Inspection for Dallas is due March 31<sup>st</sup>.

In advance of that report, the Corps has informed the City that under the new program, the Trinity River Levees – designed for an 800-year flood event - will likely be rated as "Unacceptable."

What does that mean?

It means that out of 170 items rated, the City's and Corps' engineers identified 34 as "unacceptable".

But understand these are preliminary ratings. A first look.

So together – the City and the Corps – will take the next steps.

First, our engineers will take a closer look, because much more study is needed.

Some of the items may turn out to be unacceptable, but it's possible, some may not. Some may require simple fixes. Others may take more time and resources.

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What is happening to our levees is not unique. This is something going across the country in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Sacramento, St. Louis, King County, WA, Connecticut . . . hundreds of levees are facing major fixes to comply, and more levees will be added to the list over the next few years.

Dallas is in a much better position than many other cities thanks to the Trinity River Corridor Project. Remember, this project began because the city wanted to boost its level of flood protection. The Lower Chain of Wetlands downstream has already reduced water levels, and the Upper Chain of Wetlands will come online later this year. And we had already planned to raise the height of the levees by two feet, so we're well down the road to improving the level of flood protection on our levees and that will continue.

This will of course raise some serious questions –

### **First - Safety**

You should know the levees today are NOT any different than yesterday. These levees have handled every flood event that has occurred. In fact, in 6 inspections since 2002, inspectors rated the levees from very good to excellent.

But since Katrina, the Corps is looking at all levees with new eyes. The risk is still the same. Now, we just know more about that risk. So we are studying the extent of that risk and what is needed to fix it.

### **Second Issue – Flood insurance**

These studies could cause FEMA to redraw its maps. If so, flood insurance rates could be affected.

If this is the case, we will notify property owners well in advance. But for now, nothing changes.

### **Third Issue - The Trinity River Corridor Project**

Let me make one thing clear. This project is moving forward. Both the City and the Corps are committed to finding solutions that will enhance the overall benefits of the project. If adjustments need to be made to boost flood protection, we will make them.

Again, at its core, the Trinity River Corridor Project was created to improve the level of flood protection for Dallas. We are not stepping back from that commitment.

I'd like to now ask Brigadier General Kendall Cox with the Army Corps of Engineers to say a few words.

We'll also hear from the Councilmember David Neumann, Chair of the Council's Trinity River Corridor Committee.

Then we'll have time for a few questions.

(General Cox Speaks)

(Mr. Neumann Speaks)

Again, I want to reiterate – These ratings are just a first step. We still have a lot of studying to do. But we are committed to making the corrections that need to be made to get our levees to the acceptable level, and also stress again... the Trinity River Corridor Project is moving forward.

Now, we can take a few questions.