


5-22-2015

# Reducing Coastal Risk – Structural Protection around Greater New Orleans

Rick Luettich  
*University of North Carolina*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/hraforum\\_08](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/hraforum_08)

 Part of the [Civil and Environmental Engineering Commons](#), [Climate Commons](#), [Emergency and Disaster Management Commons](#), and the [Public Policy Commons](#)

---

## Repository Citation

Luettich, Rick, "Reducing Coastal Risk – Structural Protection around Greater New Orleans" (2015). *May 22, 2015: Megaproject Protective Structures for Hampton Roads*. 3.  
[https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/hraforum\\_08/3](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/hraforum_08/3)

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Hampton Roads Sea Level Rise/Flooding Adaptation Forum at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in May 22, 2015: Megaproject Protective Structures for Hampton Roads by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@odu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@odu.edu).

# Reducing Coastal Risk – Structural Protection Around Greater New Orleans

Rick Luettich

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



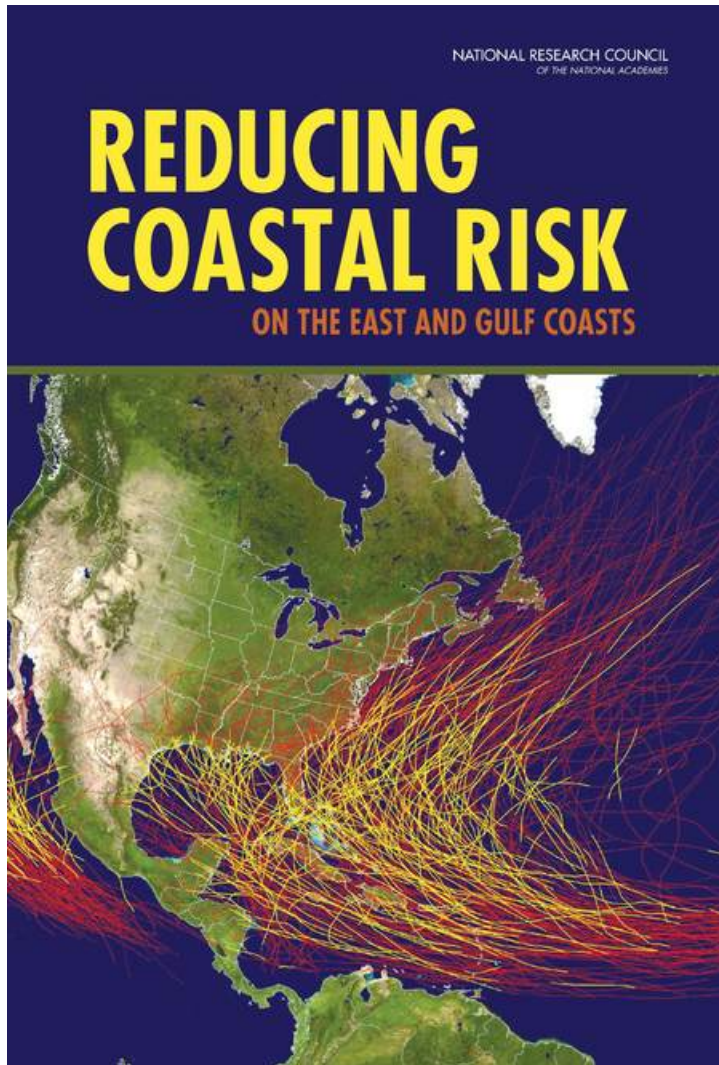
Hampton Roads Sea Level Rise/Flooding Adaptation Forum  
Megaprojects – Protective Structures for Hampton Roads

5/22/2015

# Reducing Coastal Risk

Committee on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Water Resources Science, Engineering, and Planning: Coastal Risk Reduction

**National Research Council**  
Rick Luettich, Committee Chair



Probabilistic Coastal Flood Hazards Mapping Workshop  
5/15/2015

# Committee Membership

- RICHARD LUETTICH, JR., Chair, University of North Carolina
- GREGORY BAECHER, University of Maryland
- SUSAN BELL, University of South Florida
- PHILLIP BERKE, Texas A&M University
- ROSS COROTIS, University of Colorado
- DANIEL COX, Oregon State University
- ROBERT DALRYMPLE, The Johns Hopkins University
- TONY MACDONALD, Monmouth University
- KARL NORDSTROM, Rutgers University
- STEPHEN POLASKY, University of Minnesota
- SEAN POWERS, University of South Alabama
- DON RESIO, University of North Florida
- AP VAN DONGEREN, Deltares, The Netherlands

NRC Staff:

Stephanie Johnson, Deborah Glickson, Anita Hall, Sarah Brennan



# Statement of Task

## Focus on reducing flood risk from storms along the East and Gulf Coasts:

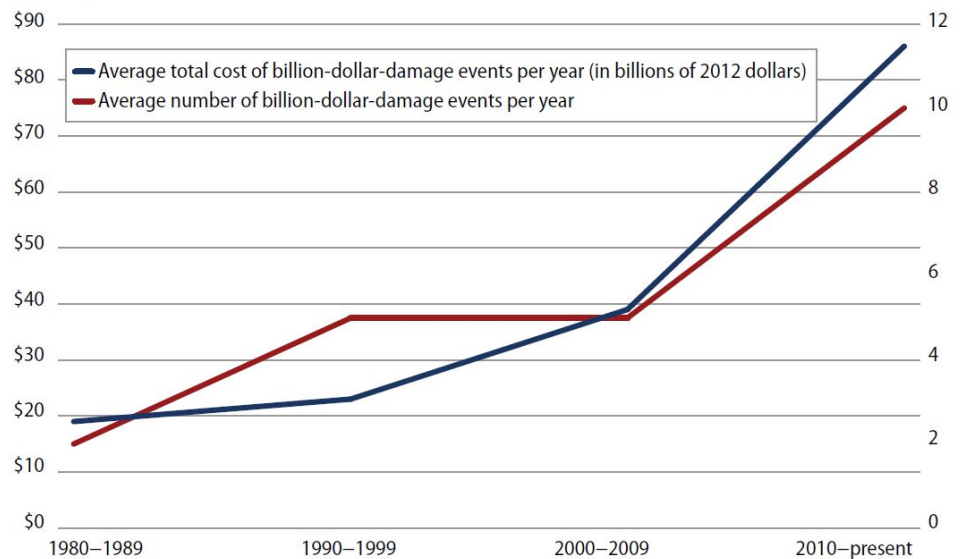
- To what extent have **coastal risk-reduction** strategies proven **effective** (life safety, economic return)?
- What are the **regional and national implications** of expanded coastal risk reduction?
- How might **risk-related principles** contribute to project design standards and increase community preparedness?
- What **general principles** might be used to guide future U.S. **investments** in coastal risk reduction?

Sponsored by USACE, as the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of a 5-year study to provide advice on a range of scientific, engineering, and water resources planning issues

# Concern – Coastal Risk is Increasing

- Population in southeastern and southern US coastal areas increasing 2x national average
- Warming climate / sea level rise are increasing hazards
- Tropical storms and floods ~ 50% of all natural disaster losses
- Federal Gov't payout for recovery increased from ~6% in 1950s to ~75% for Sandy

Billions of dollars in damages from extreme weather events increasing in frequency, cost from 1980–2012



# Landscape for Coastal Risk Management

- **No central leadership or unified vision:** Responsibilities spread over multiple levels of government
  - FEMA, USACE, HUD, NOAA, USGS; state, local governments
  - Each driven by different objectives, authorities
  - No coordinating body with singular focus on coastal risk
  - No national priorities (even though the federal government is now paying ~75% of recovery costs)



- **Vast majority of funding for coastal risk-related issues is provided only after a disaster occurs**
  - Mostly for response & recovery
  - Small fraction for mitigation

# Landscape for Coastal Risk Management

- **Few comprehensive regional evaluations of coastal risk have been performed**
  - Risk reduction efforts tend to be local, not regional (even though storm response and critical resources, e.g. sand, are often regional)
  - USACE is not authorized to address coastal risk at a national scale.
- **Lack of alignment of risk, reward, resources, and responsibility**
  - Resulted in significant **inefficiencies** and **inappropriate incentives** that ***increase*** the nation's exposure to risk



Image source: NOAA

# Risk Reduction Strategies

$$\text{RISK} = \text{HAZARD} \times \text{CONSEQUENCE}$$



- **Reduce the hazard (flooding, wave attack)**
  - Hard structures (seawalls, surge barriers)
  - Nature-based strategies
    - Beach nourishment and dune building
    - Saltmarsh, seagrass, reefs
- **Reduce the consequences**
  - Building elevation and flood proofing
  - Non-structural (e.g., Land-use planning, preparedness, buyouts)

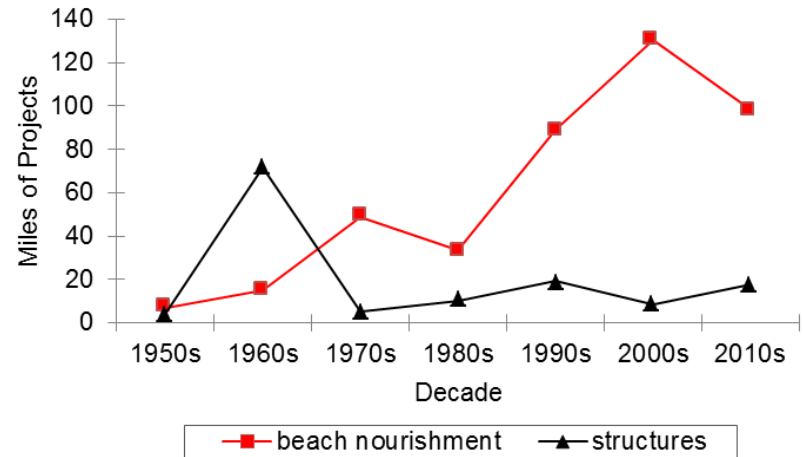
***Optimal approaches will be site-specific, may involve multiple strategies***

Image sources: N. Aquino, FEMA, committee



# Strategies to Reduce the Hazard: Beach Nourishment and Dune Building

- Short term environmental impacts significant; long-term impacts unknown



Data source: USACE



Image source: NOAA

- Can be designed to reduce short-term impacts and increase ecological value

# Strategies to Reduce the Hazard: Other Nature-Based “Green”

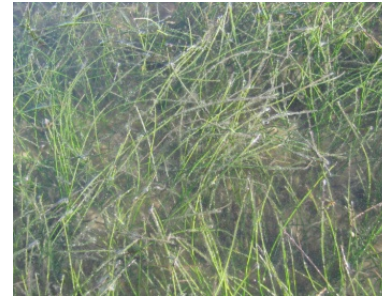
## Approaches

Saltmarsh, seagrass, mangroves, coral or oyster reefs, etc.

- **Provides substantial ecological benefits and varying levels of coastal risk reduction**

- Low to moderate energy events – can be effective for waves & erosion
- Moderate to high energy events – more effective for damping waves than surge
- May require large expanses of habitat
- Continued research needed to develop design guidance, alone & combined with hard structures

- **May motivate conservation and restoration activities**



*Image sources: NOAA*

# Strategies to Reduce the Hazard: Hard Structure “Grey” Approaches

- **Hard structures are likely to become increasingly important in densely populated urban areas - space is limited for nature-based strategies**
- **Adverse environmental impacts exist, designs can lessen these impacts**

***Look for ways to couple grey and green approaches***





# Strategies to Reduce the Consequences

- Includes hazard zoning, building elevation, land purchase, and setbacks
- **High documented benefit-cost ratios (5:1 to 8:1)**
- Given less attention by the federal government
- Other than building elevation, these are viewed as difficult to implement by states

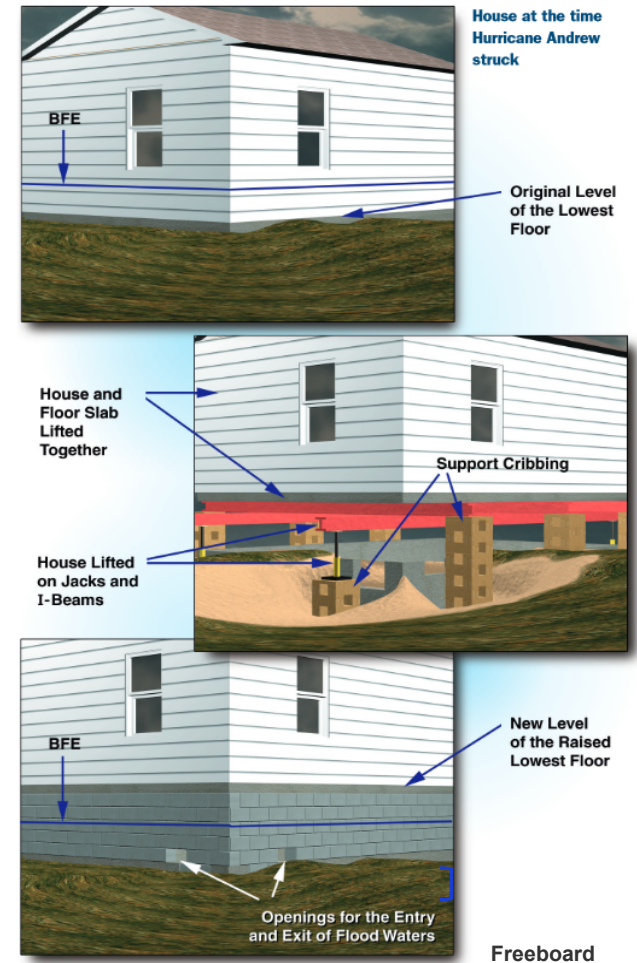


Image source: FEMA

# Guiding Investments in Risk Reduction

Two basic approaches for  
evaluating investments:

- 1) Risk-standard
- 2) Benefit-cost



- There is **no basis to justify a default 1-percent annual chance (100-year) design level** for coastal risk.
- **Benefit-cost analysis constrained by acceptable risk and social and environmental dimensions** provides a reasonable framework
  - Constraints could include mass casualties or individual risk
  - Costs/benefits that are difficult to measure can also be constraints

# Guiding Investments in Risk Reduction

- Capacity to consider different costs and benefits has been limited in USACE decision frameworks
  - National Economic Development (NED) given priority
  - Social / environmental benefits rarely influence decisions
  - Life-safety only recently a consideration for dams & levees.
- ***Principles and Requirements for Federal Investments in Water Resources (CEQ, 2013)***
  - Provides framework for consideration of broad-based costs and benefits

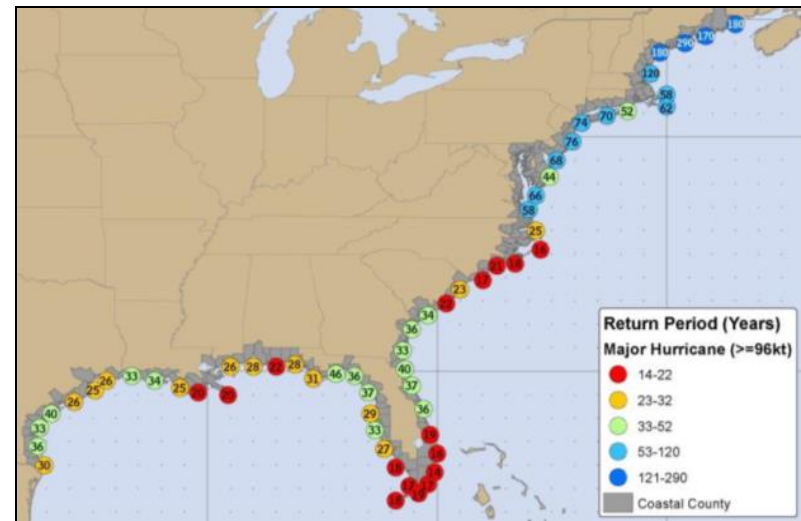


# Guiding Investments in Risk Reduction

- ~~CEQ should expedite efforts to complete accompanying *Guidelines* required to implement the *P&R*.~~
- CEQ released *Guidelines* in 12/2014, enabling implementation of *P&R* which contain explicit instructions to consider
  - Healthy and resilient ecosystems
  - Sustainable economic development
  - Public Safety
  - Environmental Justice
  - Flood Plains
  - Watershed Approach

# Vision Toward Coastal Risk Reduction

- **A National Vision for coastal risk management is needed.**
  - Use federal resources to reduce coastal risk vs enabling it to increase
  - Clarify roles and responsibilities of federal, state and local governments for reducing coastal risk
- The federal government should work with states to develop a **national coastal risk assessment**
  - Use this to assess economic, life-safety, social, and environmental costs and benefits under various risk management scenarios





# Vision Toward Coastal Risk Reduction

- **Stronger incentives are needed** to improve pre-disaster risk mitigation efforts at the local level
  - Better align risk, rewards, responsibilities
- The USACE should **seize opportunities within existing and new authorities** to strengthen coastal risk reduction
  - Evaluate incentives (e.g., cost-share) for sound planning
  - Develop modeling tools, expanded methodologies
  - Re-evaluate 50-yr planning horizon



*Image source: Wikipedia*

# Summary

- ***Coastal risk is increasing***
- Current framework for addressing coastal risk is ***reactive rather than proactive*** and ***encourages risky development***
- ***Full array of risk reduction strategies*** should be considered
- ***Benefit-cost analysis*** (constrained by ***acceptable risk***, social/environmental considerations) is an appropriate decision framework for investments. *PR&G* provide a framework for this
- A ***national vision*** for coastal risk management is needed
- Federal government, states should develop a ***national coastal risk assessment***
- ***Stronger incentives*** needed to better align risks, rewards, and responsibilities

# Epilogue - New Standards for Flood Protection in the Netherlands

- Announced September 2014
- Revision to flood protection standards dating to 1950s, under development since 2006.
- **Risk-based**, flood protection standards to control the probability of flooding from a **national perspective**
  - **Benefit-Cost analysis** - controls 2/3 of country
  - **Local Individual Risk** – individual probability of death by flooding  $< 10^{-5}$
  - **Catastrophic loss of life or economic loss** - resilience
  - **Protect vital and vulnerable infrastructure** – resilience
- Prioritizes protection system upgrades (completed by 2050)
- Results in varying level of protection nationally



# Epilogue - New Standards for Flood Protection in the Netherlands



# Epilogue - New US Policy

- “*Guidelines*” to accompany *Principles and Requirements for Federal Investments in Water Resources* released 12/2014
- EO 13690 – *Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS)* .....1/30/2015
  - Updates Executive Order 11988 – Floodplain Management
    - i. the **elevation and flood hazard area** that result from using a **climate informed science approach** that uses the best-available, actionable hydrologic and hydraulic data and methods that **integrate current and future changes in flooding based on climate science**;
    - ii. BFE + 2’ non-critical, BFE + 3’ critical
    - iii. area subject to flooding by the 0.2 percent annual chance flood
- North Atlantic Comprehensive Study – step toward National Risk Assessment








# Overview

## BARRIERS OF EARTH AND CONCRETE

Levees and floodwalls that protect against flooding from both the Mississippi River and hurricanes are built by the Army Corps of Engineers and are maintained by local levee districts. The corps and the local districts share the construction cost of hurricane levees, while the Mississippi River levees are a federal project. Local levee districts also build and maintain nonfederal, lower-elevation levees with construction money from each district's share of property taxes and state financing.

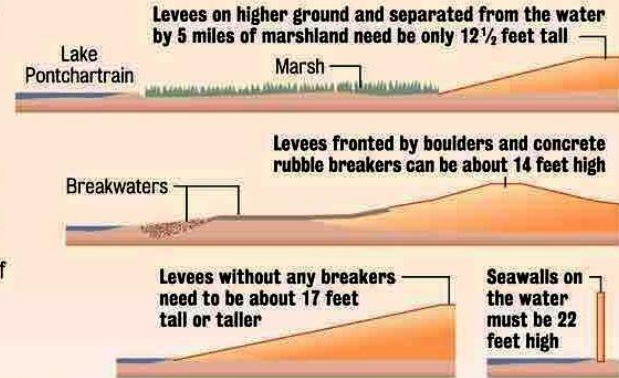
### LEVEES AND FLOODWALLS

-  Mississippi River
-  Hurricane protection
-  Interior parish

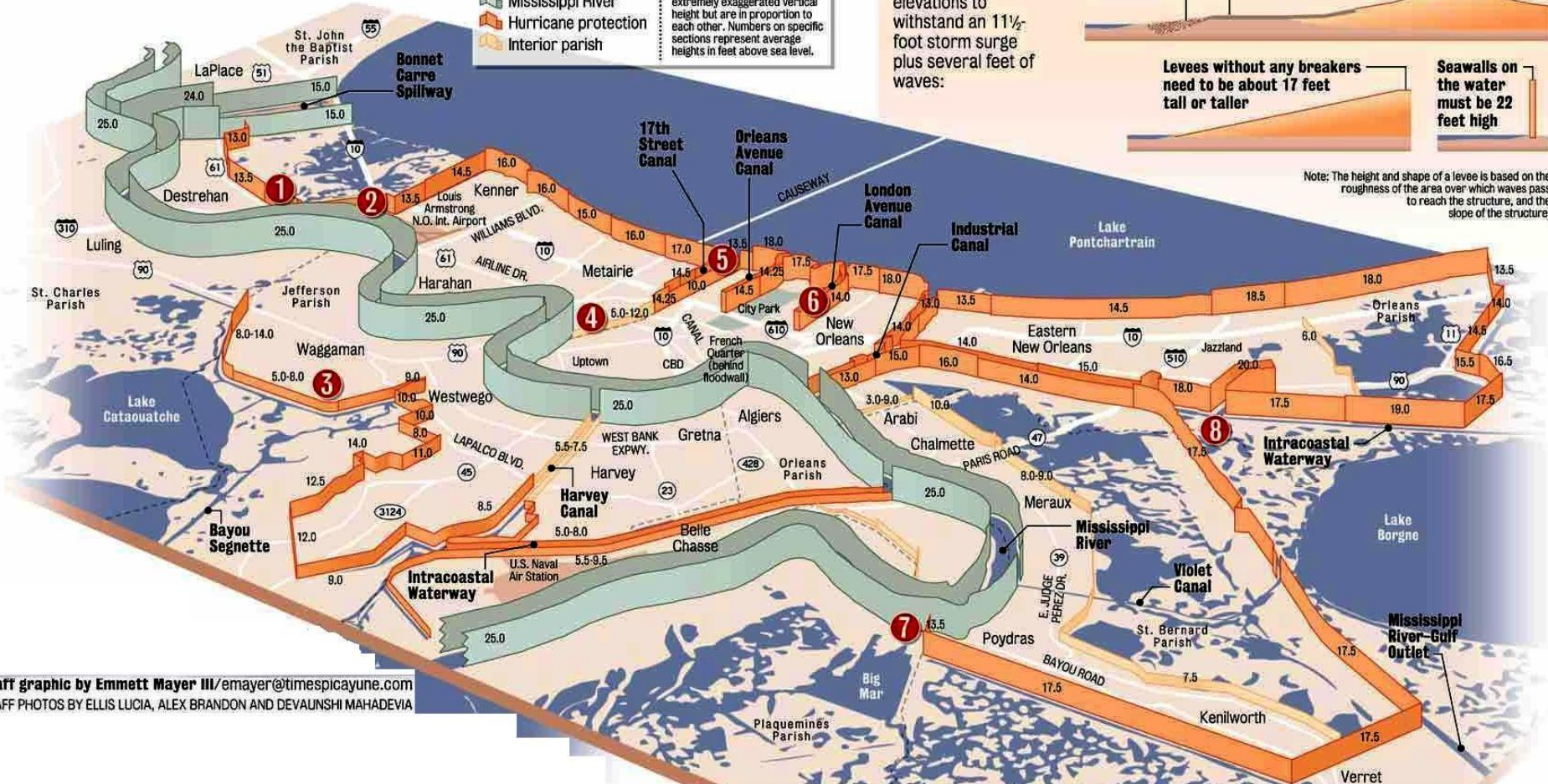
Notes: Levee and floodwall elevations are drawn with an extremely exaggerated vertical height but are in proportion to each other. Numbers on specific sections represent average heights in feet above sea level.

### HEIGHT ISN'T EVERYTHING

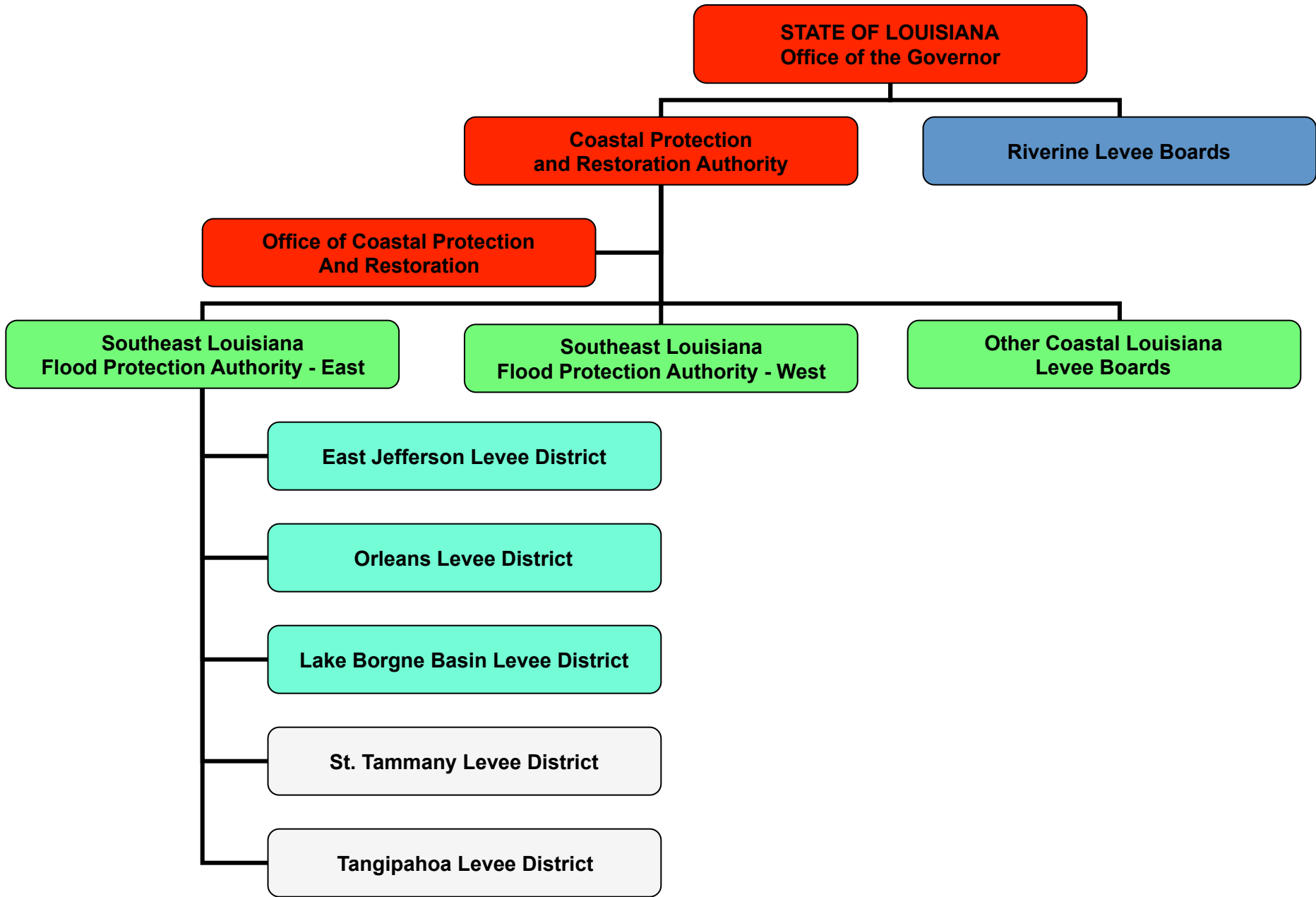
Different factors permit Lake Pontchartrain levees of varying elevations to withstand an 11½-foot storm surge plus several feet of waves:



Note: The height and shape of a levee is based on the roughness of the area over which waves pass to reach the structure, and the slope of the structure.



Staff graphic by Emmett Mayer III/emayer@timespicayune.com  
STAFF PHOTOS BY ELLIS LUCIA, ALEX BRANDON AND DEVAUNSHI MAHADEVIA









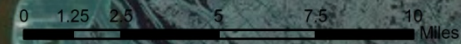
# East Bank System

Lake Pontchartrain

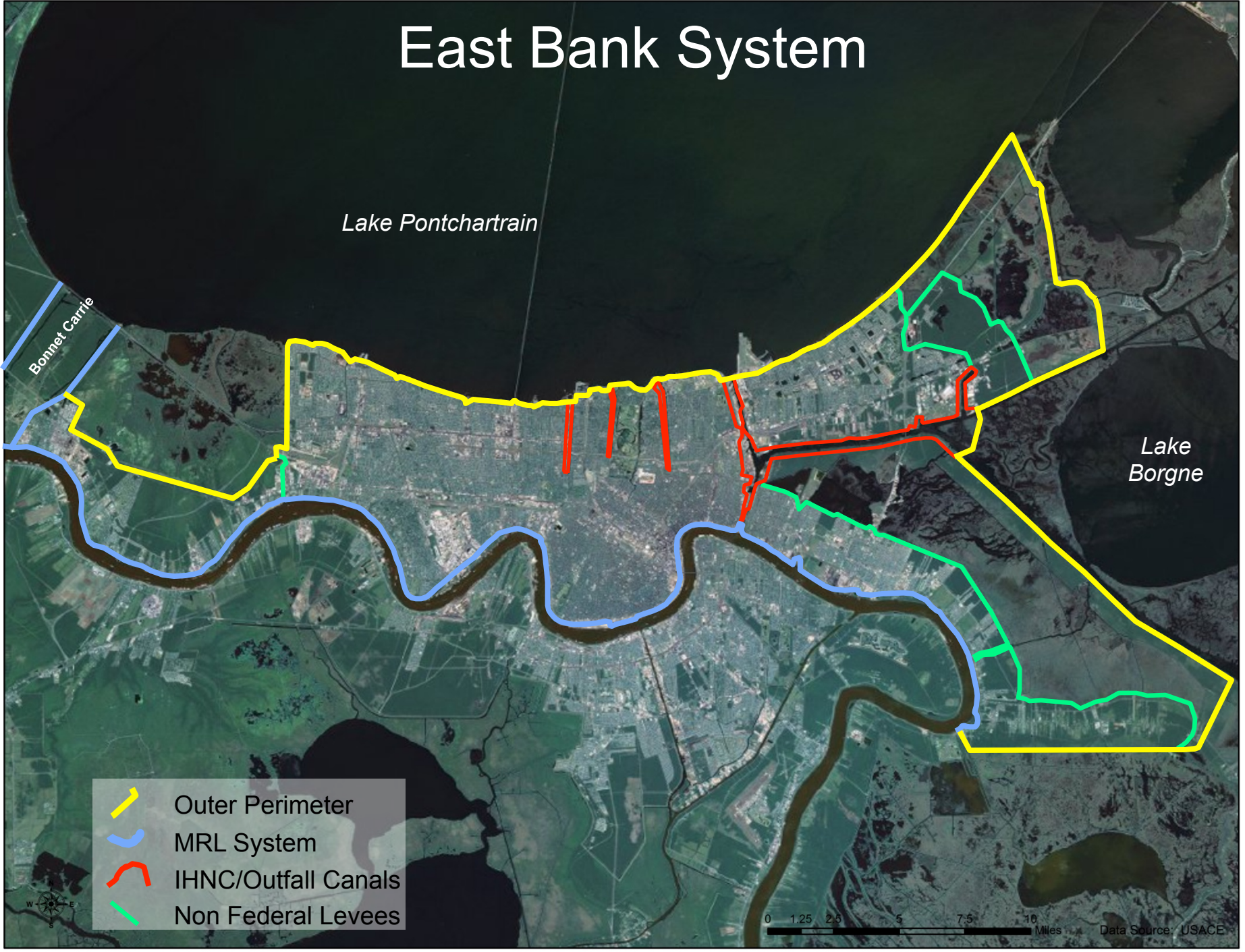
Bonnet Carré

Lake Borgne

- Outer Perimeter
- MRL System
- IHNC/Outfall Canals
- Non Federal Levees



Data Source: USACE



# Flood Protection Structures within SLFPA-East

187 Total miles of levee

3,500+ Acres of levee maintenance

8 Navigational structures

259 Land based floodgates

100 Valve gates

56 Total miles of canals

5.4 Miles of seawall

8 Pump stations





# Navigational Flood Gates

Lake Pontchartrain

Seabrook Complex Structure

GIWW East Closure By-Pass Gate

GIWW East Closure Sector Gate

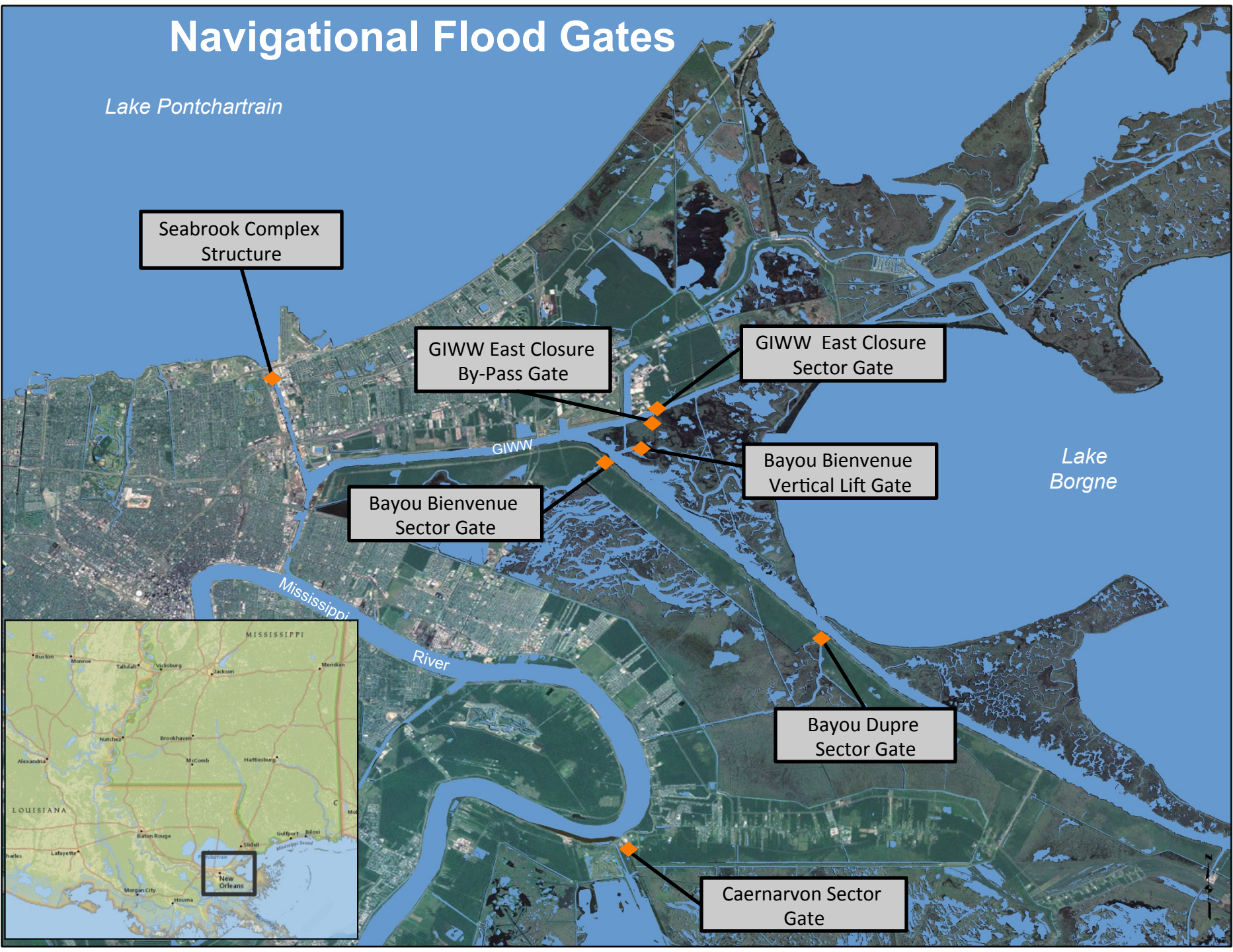
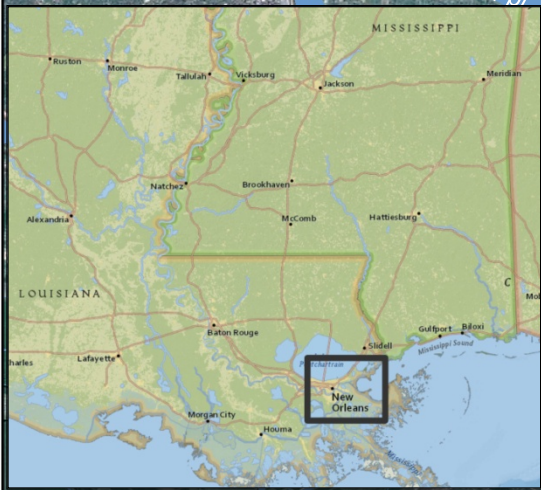
Bayou Bienvenue Vertical Lift Gate

Bayou Bienvenue Sector Gate

Lake Borgne

Bayou Dupre Sector Gate

Caernarvon Sector Gate







# Bayou Bienvenue Vertical Lift C









# Seabrook Complex Structure









# Swing Gate





# Roller Floodgate

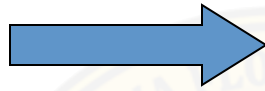




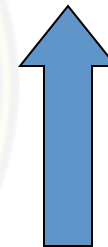
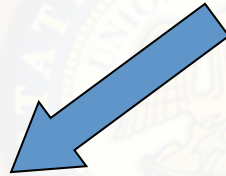
# Funding

(Planning, Design and Construction)

- US Congress
  - Authorization
  - Appropriation (Fed Share)



- US Army Corps of Engineers
  - Design and Construct



Project Partnering Agreement

- Local Sponsor
  - Matching Funds
  - LERRDS



# Operations and Maintenance Activities



## – Levee Maintenance

- Vegetation Management
- Embankment Repairs
- Floodwall Maintenance
- Floodgate Operation and Maintenance

- Drainage Pump Station Operation and Maintenance
- Drainage Canal Maintenance
- Fleet Maintenance
- Permitting
- Inspection and Monitoring
- Emergency Response and Recovery

# Operations and Maintenance



- Surge Barrier and Seabrook Complex
  - Acquiring Expertise
  - Coordinating with Maritime Interests
  - Funding

# EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

- Floodfight Activities (Response)
  - Monitor Conditions
  - Advise Officials
  - Close Gaps in system
    - Floodgates and Valves
    - Control Structures
    - Sandbagging
  - Initiate Pumping Operations
  - Provide safe havens for employees
- Recover
- After Action Review



Thinking and acting regionally



# Funding Challenges



**Water respects no political boundaries – but money does!**

**Thinking and acting regionally, then there's a taxation**

# Annual Operations and Maintenance

## 2016 Projected Annual O&M Revenue / Expenditures:

East Jefferson	\$ 10 M / \$ 10 M
----------------	-------------------

# Annual Operations and Maintenance

## 2016 Projected Annual O&M Revenue / Expenditures:

East Jefferson	\$ 10 M / \$ 10 M
Orleans - general	\$ 20 M / \$ 17 M
Orleans – special	\$ 18 M / \$ 30 M



Lake Pontchartrain

Bonnet Carré

Lake Borgne

-  HSDRRS Levees
  -  HSDRRS 1 year from raising
  -  HSDRRS Being Raised
  -  HSDRRS Floodwalls
  -  MRLS
- Dashed lines are outside SLFPA-E jurisdiction

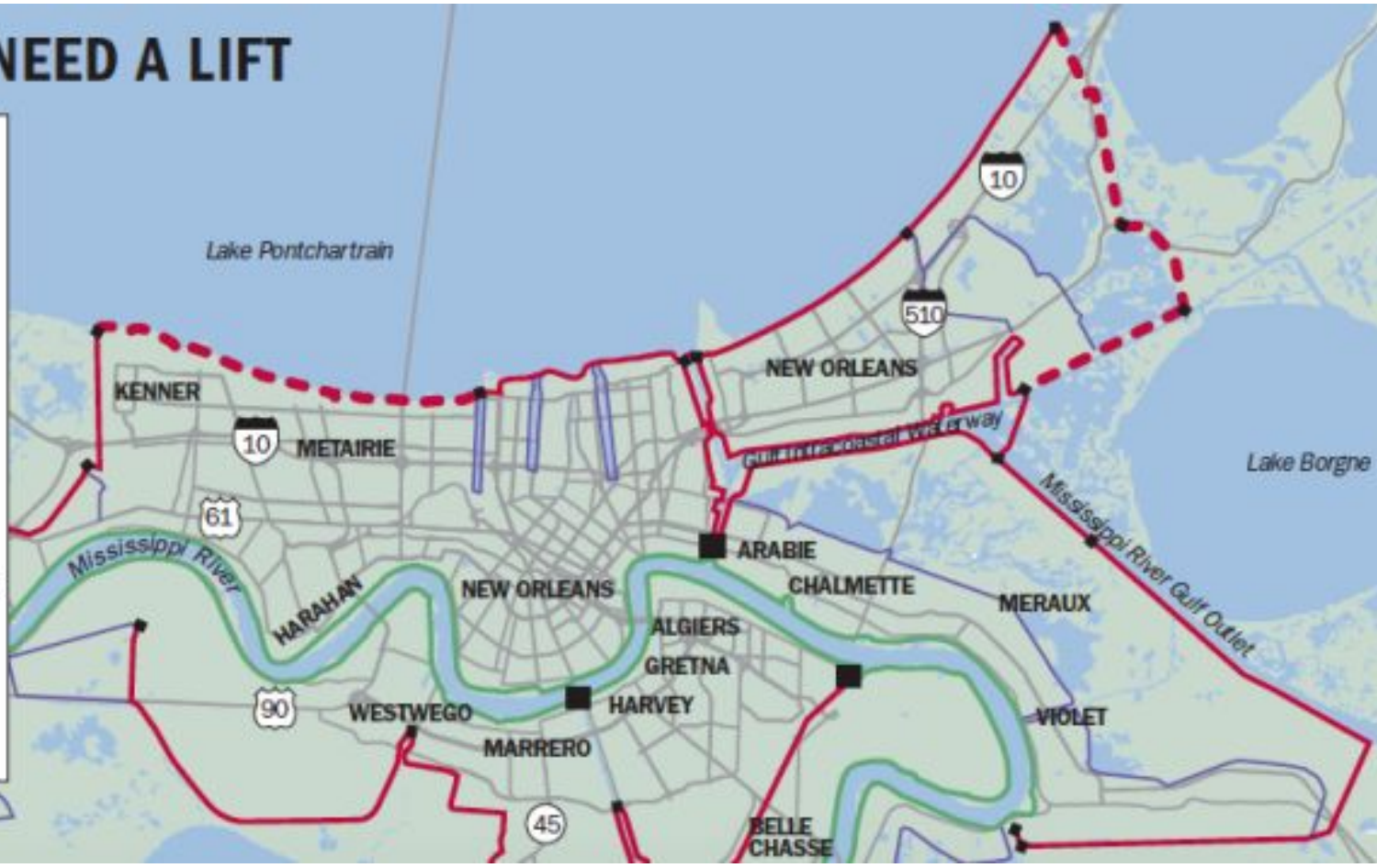




# LEVEES THAT NEED A LIFT

**KEY TO MAP**

- Levee segments to be elevated prior to 'armoring'
- Levees, floodwalls, other structures that are part of the Greater New Orleans Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System
- Non-federal levees
- Mississippi River levees
- Designates different segments of levees or floodwalls
- Locks



Lift project's estimated cost = \$40 - \$50 million.

# Annual Operations and Maintenance

## 2016 Projected Annual O&M Revenue / Expenditures:

East Jefferson	\$ 10 M / \$ 10 M
Orleans - general	\$ 20 M / \$ 17 M
Orleans – special	\$ 18 M / \$ 30 M
Lake Borgne Basin	\$ 3.8 M / \$ 3.8 M

# Annual Operations and Maintenance

## 2016 Projected Annual O&M Revenue / Expenditures:

East Jefferson	\$ 10 M / \$ 10 M
Orleans - general	\$ 20 M / \$ 17 M
Orleans – special	\$ 18 M / \$ 30 M
Lake Borgne Basin	\$ 3.8 M / \$ 3.8 M
Lake Borgne Basin (2015)	\$ 3.7 M / \$ 4.4 M

2014 & 2015 attempted prop tax increase = \$2.5 M /yr → \$6 M total / yr

# A Few Lessons Learned

- FEMA Accreditation (100 – yr protection) does not equal flood safety
- Water respects no political boundaries
- Flood Protection is a shared responsibility
- Flood Protection and Coastal Restoration are not mutually exclusive
- A proactive approach is much less expensive than a reactive approach, (but reaction is often needed to get large \$ moving).
- O&M funding challenges are quite different from construction funding challenges....