



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
New Orleans District

## Project Fact Sheet

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### **Official Project Name**

Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Surge Reduction

### **Location**

A surge barrier, similar to a floodwall but much larger, will be constructed near the confluence of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) and the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO), generally running north-south from a point just east of Michoud Canal on the north bank of the GIWW and just south of the existing Bayou Bienvenue flood control structure. Navigation gate structures will be constructed where the barrier crosses the GIWW and Bayou Bienvenue to prevent the risk of storm surge coming from Lake Borgne and/or the Gulf of Mexico. Another navigation gate will be constructed in the Seabrook vicinity where the IHNC meets Lake Pontchartrain to block storm surge from entering the IHNC from the lake.

### **Purpose**

The Army Corps of Engineers New Orleans District is committed to providing a 100-year level of flood protection for southeast Louisiana by 2011 through its Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS). The system is comprised of several existing flood control projects dating back, in some cases, to the 1950s. The HSDRRS seeks to upgrade existing flood protection features (such as levees and floodwalls) and introduce new features authorized by Congress and deemed necessary to complete the mission. The Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) surge barrier is a new feature, authorized by Congress in 2006, that will reduce the risk of storm damage to some of the region's most vulnerable areas – New Orleans East, metro New Orleans, the 9<sup>th</sup> Ward, and St. Bernard Parish. This project aims to protect these areas from storm surge coming from the Gulf of Mexico and Lake Borgne.

### **Status**

The 2006 Congressional directive to improve hurricane protection at the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal led the Corps to advertise a Request for Qualifications, wherein the Corps issued a public notice in July 2007 asking interested parties for submissions. For this project, the design and construction would be conducted by a single team of contractors. The RFQ process generated a field of four teams who would compete for the contract. All four design-build teams then worked with the Corps to draft a Request for Proposals (RFP), which was issued in October 2007.

In April 2008, the contract was awarded to Shaw Environmental & Infrastructure for more than \$695 million, the largest design-build civil works project in Corps history. It is highly unusual for a civil works project to be designed and constructed simultaneously. The expedited process is necessary, however, given the compressed timeframe to achieve 100-year flood protection by 2011.

Currently, the Corps is preparing an Individual Environmental Report (IER) to present to the public for review and comment. The report consists of two tiers. Tier 1, which identifies a general location range for the project, was completed in March 2008. This document allowed the Corps to sign a Project Partnership Agreement (PPA) with the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. The PPA allows the contractor to begin developing designs within the proposed action location range. The Tier 2 portion of the report will investigate alternative alignments and designs within the location range identified by Tier 1 and explain the impacts of these alignments and footprints, construction materials and methods, and other design details. Corps officials anticipate completing this document during the summer of 2008 which would allow construction to begin. For more information on the environmental review process, visit [www.nolaenvironmental.com](http://www.nolaenvironmental.com).

## **Benefit to the Community & Project Features**

### *Benefit to the Community*

Following Hurricane Katrina, an Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force (IPET) was convened to find scientific and engineering answers to questions regarding the functioning of the New Orleans levee system during the storm. IPET was established by the Chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and includes more than 150 nationally recognized experts from more than 50 different organizations (eight federal, state and local government agencies; 25 universities; and 23 private sector firms). According to the IPET report, Hurricane Katrina caused four levee breaches along the IHNC, three due to overtopping and one due to foundation failure. Read the report here: (<https://ipet.wes.army.mil/>).

The breaches in the IHNC floodwalls caused by Hurricane Katrina have been repaired and the greater New Orleans area flood protection system is now stronger than it has ever been. To meet its commitment to provide an increased level of 100-year flood protection by 2011, further improvements are needed. Recognizing the vulnerability of the areas near the IHNC, the Corps is requiring that this initiative include expedited surge reduction measures that can be in place by the 2009 hurricane season.

In summary, the IHNC surge barrier project allows the Corps to achieve a level of 100-year flood protection by 2011 for some of the region's areas most vulnerable to flooding. In the meantime, it reduces the risk of storm surge in these areas with advance measures that will be in place by the 2009 hurricane season.

### *Features*

- Concrete floodwall with navigation gates at Bayou Bienvenue and the GIWW
- Navigation gate at Seabrook vicinity
- Marsh enhancement with dredged organic material – As organic material is dredged from waterways in preparation for new construction, it will be deposited in nearby wetlands habitat to enhance environmental conditions.
- Advance Measures – The advanced measures include swinging navigation gates on the GIWW that would allow navigation to bypass the construction of the concrete floodwall and at the same time provide protection from surges up to 26 feet. Additionally,

cofferdams (temporary retaining structures) would be built at both the GIWW bypass swing gate and the Bayou Bienvenue gate to block surge up to 20 feet.

**Sponsors**

Construction for this project is 100% federally funded, but the State of Louisiana plays a crucial role in the project's development and completion. The state is providing assistance to the Corps in meeting environmental review requirements and acquiring tracts of real estate necessary for construction to begin. After construction is complete, the State of Louisiana will be fully responsible for operation, maintenance, rehabilitation, replacement and repair of the surge barrier and its components.

**Authority**

Public Law 109-234, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Hurricane Recovery, 2006 (4<sup>th</sup> supplemental)