



Transitional Recovery Office
New Orleans, LA

FEMA

May 28, 2009

DR-1786-LA NR134

MEDIA CONTACTS:

FEMA News Desk: 504-762-2477

Christina Stephens, Louisiana Recovery Authority
(225) 342-1790; christina.stephens@la.gov

Veronica Mosgrove, GOHSEP

225.358.5667; vmosgrove@ohsep.louisiana.gov

Recovery News

FEMA FUNDS EMERGENCY REPAIRS TO PLAQUEMINES' LEVEE

NEW ORLEANS – The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently announced that it will provide Plaquemines Parish millions in public assistance funding as reimbursement for repair work done to one of its non-federal levees – the Citrus Lands Levee, which helps protect property owners from flooding in the Plaquemines' communities of Ironton and Pointe Celeste.

“Louisiana’s levees, both federal and non-federal, play a crucial role in impeding flooding throughout their surrounding communities,” said FEMA’s Louisiana Transitional Recovery Office acting director Tony Russell. “FEMA has worked with Plaquemines Parish officials and state officials to provide all eligible funding for repair work to the recently Gustav-damaged Citrus Lands Levee so that the public’s safety and properties are protected against preventable flooding.”

“Plaquemines Parish government was right to take swift action in repairing the levee breach after Hurricane Gustav, and FEMA made the right decision to reimburse those funds,” said Paul Rainwater, executive director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority. “It sends a good signal to local communities to be measured but quick in their spending on critical recovery needs.”

During Hurricane Gustav, storm surge and heavy rains caused substantial overtopping of the Citrus Lands Levee, which is a 4-5 foot high, non-federal earthen levee located on the West Bank of Plaquemines Parish. The storm’s impact resulted in a 200 foot levee breach between the Pointe Celeste Pumping Station and the Lake Hermitage Road.

The levee breach posed an immediate threat to the lives, public health and safety of the surrounding communities, as well as the threat of significant damage to public and private property. Reacting to this immediate threat, the Plaquemines Parish Government issued a State of Emergency and advertised an emergency request for proposal for work to repair the levee.

Shortly thereafter, on September 9, 2008, bids were received from five bidders, and the contract for the emergency temporary repair to the Citrus Lands Levee was awarded to the Barriere Construction Company.

“We’re very glad to see that FEMA and the state saw the need to help Plaquemines Parish fund repair work on the Citrus Lands Levee,” said Plaquemines Parish President Billy Nungesser. “We now have better levees than we’ve ever had parish-wide thanks to the hard work of the state and FEMA.”

(MORE)

FEMA FUNDS EMERGENCY REPAIRS TO PLAQUEMINES' LEVEE - Page 2

FEMA's recent funding for the Gustav-related repair work to the levee totals **\$3.5 million**.

When FEMA approved projects through its supplemental Public Assistance grant, the funds are transferred to a federal Smartlink account. Once the funds have reached this account, the applicant can request reimbursement from GOHSEP for eligible work completed. Obligated funds may change over time as the project worksheet is a living grant that is often adjusted as bids come in and scope of work is aligned.

The Public Assistance program works with state and local officials to fund recovery measures and the rebuilding of government and certain private nonprofit organizations' buildings, as well as roads, bridges and water and sewer plants. In order for the process to be successful, federal, state and local partners coordinate to draw up project plans, fund these projects and oversee their completion.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated South Louisiana, claiming 1,464 lives, destroying more than 200,000 homes and 18,000 businesses. The Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) is the planning and coordinating body that was created in the aftermath of these storms to lead one of the most extensive rebuilding efforts in the world. The LRA is a 33-member body which is coordinating across jurisdictions, supporting community recovery and resurgence, ensuring integrity and effectiveness, and planning for the recovery and rebuilding of Louisiana.

FEMA leads and supports the nation in a risk-based, comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation, to reduce the loss of life and property and protect the nation from all hazards including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.

###

Editors: For more information on Louisiana disaster recovery, visit www.fema.gov/gulfcoastrecovery.