

COMPLETE STATEMENT OF
Brigadier General Joseph Schroedel
Commander
South Pacific Division
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Subcommittee on Water and Power

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Introduction

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I am Brigadier General Joseph Schroedel, Commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division. I am honored to be testifying before your Committee today. I am testifying on behalf of Lieutenant General Carl Strock, Chief of Engineers. My testimony today will discuss current infrastructure conditions in the watershed of the Sacramento/San Joaquin River system and the Corps' ongoing efforts to reduce the risk of flood damage to the system.

Background

The impact of Hurricane Katrina in coastal areas along the Gulf of Mexico has focused renewed attention on the potential vulnerability of other regions, such as the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta ("Delta"), if levees were to fail.

The 1997 and 1998 floods forced more than 120,000 people from their homes in the Delta region. An estimated 30,000 residential and 2,000 businesses were damaged or destroyed. Rehabilitation of the Federal levee system cost \$160 million in Federal dollars and funded repairs on approximately 600 sites along the Sacramento and San Joaquin River systems.

The recent levee break on Jones Tract in the south Delta cost nearly \$100 million for emergency response, damage to private property, lost crops, levee repair and pumping water from the island. The State also bore significant costs associated with losses in water supply and conveyance. Delta pumping was curtailed for several days to prevent seawater intrusion and water shipments were possible only through unscheduled releases from other reservoirs, which sent more fresh water to the Delta for salinity control.

System Condition

There are over 6,000 miles of levees in the Central Valley. Of that total, approximately 1,600 miles are authorized as Corps of Engineers Federal flood damage reduction projects. The others are local levees, which were constructed, enlarged and maintained over the last 130 years by local reclamation districts and private entities. In general, the owners of the lands within the levees financed the levee work by these districts. During the last 30 years, the State of California has provided supplemental financing for levee maintenance and emergency response.

Since the mid-1980s, the Corps has evaluated almost 1,100 miles of the Federal levees. For example, the Corps found that within the Sacramento River Flood Control Project, approximately 90 miles of levees needed significant repairs and most of this rehabilitation work is now complete. However, these levee evaluations were performed using criteria which are now outdated, and, therefore, did not identify all potential levee deficiencies. The Corps has recently developed new levee seepage design criteria that will require much more stringent field exploration than was used in earlier levee performance studies. When the new criteria are applied, it is likely that more deficiencies that may require rehabilitation work will be identified.

In major urbanized areas with large population centers, including Sacramento, Stockton, Yuba City, Marysville and Merced, the levees have been extensively evaluated and studies or projects are currently underway to improve levee performance. Much of the new development in these and other parts of the Central Valley is occurring in areas that until recently were agricultural areas. Typically, the levees in these areas were built 60 to 100 years ago with a view toward reducing the risk

of flood damage to crops. Such levees are aging and may not reflect current flood damage reduction objectives.

Future Plans for Protection

In September 2004, Congress passed the CALFED Bay-Delta Authorization Act (PL 108-361, Title I). CALFED is a unified multi-agency approach to management of the Delta region in California.

The Act authorizes up to \$389 million for new and expanded CALFED authorities for 2005 to 2010 including studies, projects, and coordination regarding watershed planning; water conveyance, supply and quality; ecosystem restoration, levee system integrity, and other purposes. This authorization includes up to \$90 million for efforts regarding levee system integrity, which would be headed by the Corps (USACE) as lead Federal agency in partnership with the State of California Departments of Water Resources and Fish and Game (DWR, DFG), local reclamation districts, and other concerned stakeholders. Additionally, the authorized funding includes amounts up to:

- \$184 million for Conveyance Program activities (Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) lead, USACE as cooperating agency)
- \$90 million for implementation of the Environmental Water Account (BOR lead with USFWS & NOAA Fisheries as cooperating Federal agencies)
- \$25 million for oversight and coordination of the Program (BOR lead with USFWS, NOAA Fisheries, EPA, USACE as cooperating Federal agencies)

For the Delta levees, the Corps will be working with the State of California to scope out both near-term and long-term solutions and develop a framework for setting priorities.

If funds are appropriated, the Corps will prepare a report to Congress assessing the scope of the problem and identifying specific priorities for repair within the \$90 million authorized. This study will be a collaborative effort with CALFED partners and sponsors. This report will also provide details on the locations and lengths of those levees that are high priority for repairs.

In the past, some local agencies have expressed concern about their ability to meet the 35% non-federal cost share requirements for Delta levee projects. However, the State of California recently indicated its readiness to work with local partners to provide funds for priority levee repairs. The Corps will work with the local sponsors to clarify the extent of such concerns in the report to Congress.

The Corps is also currently the lead agency for several studies to help ways to reduce the risk of flood damage in the Delta, including water supplies, roads, cities and towns, agricultural lands, and natural habitat. These include the—

- Delta Islands Feasibility study, in partnership with the State of California, which will evaluate the entire Delta Islands and Levee System consistent with the Delta Risk Management Study authorized in the CALFED Act. Estimated cost \$3 million; estimated time, 3 years.
- Lower San Joaquin River Feasibility Study, which will focus on the San Joaquin River in the South Delta—estimated cost \$2 million; estimated time 3 years.
- Development of the Levee System Integrity Program Plan, pursuant to the Record of Decision for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program to the Act, in which the Corps is participating with the State of California – Estimated cost \$8 million; estimated time 4 years.

The Corps participates in the CALFED activities. The Corps is represented at the California Bay-Delta Authority (CBDA), Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee (BDPAC), and subcommittees to support and monitor refinement and execution of levee efforts.

This concludes my statement. Again, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Source: "Flood Warnings: Responding to California's Flood Crisis" Report, State of California, The Resources Agency, Department of Water Resources, January 2005