

**Delaware Estuary Levee Organization (DELO)  
Minutes  
June 14, 2006**

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Welcome and Introductions

Meeting began at 10:00 a.m. Ken Taaffe, Coordinator, South Jersey RC&D Council, welcomed attendees and asked each of them to introduce themselves and their affiliation.

Levee Inventory

The bulk of the meeting revolved around the who, what, when, where and why an inventory of the levees is necessary.

Ken DiMuzio referred to the new information on the FEMA website regarding the Flood Map Modernization Program which requires that maps meet new standards. He noted that there are several reasons for getting an inventory completed including the FEMA Map Modernization Program as well as ultimately the Corps doing a National Levee Inventory. He noted that there are two goals of the National Flood Insurance Program for participating municipalities. One is that the municipality must adopt a flood damage prevention ordinance and the other is that flood insurance is made available to its residents when the ordinance is adopted. Ken noted that the focus of the Map Modernization Program will be on a census block basis rather than counties for those

populations at greatest risk. Kathy Stuart and Joe Ruggeri noted that the focus of the dam safety program is on areas that are very populated.

Kathy Stuart noted that one of the larger dikes is the Mason Point dike in Elsinboro Township, Salem County, on which the State is currently in litigation. Sam Reynolds noted that USFWS and DEP DFW will be interested in needs for mitigation and what if we take down the peripheral dike (due port development and other large scale River projects) and do upland ring levees to protect properties. We may see “strategic breaching.”

Kathy Stuart asked whether there had been outreach to the communities regarding the National Flood Insurance Program. She noted the importance of getting someone to take responsibility for operation and maintenance of levees. She also stated that there is a concurrent resolution for maintenance of dams in State Parks.

Ken DiMuzio asked Sam Reynolds about redevelopment projects in the Delaware River corridor. Sam noted that Paulsboro is having redevelopment. It was noted that there is often a need for wetland mitigation for these types of projects and that “strategic breaching” in other areas of the River corridor and Bayshore might provide opportunities to do this. There was considerable discussion regarding the need for redevelopment initiatives to be included in any rules for creation of wetland mitigation sites.

Micky Mulvenna noted that there is nothing new on the inventory. She stated that the focus has been on Federally-constructed I – walls. Projects that had I – walls in New Orleans failed. The recommendation is that these I – walls be replaced with T – walls. She noted that we need to identify where the levees are in South Jersey. She stated that the project purpose of identified levees must be flood control and that there must be a public sponsor. Several in the group noted that many of these levees/dikes are privately owned and not publicly sponsored and that their original intended purpose may have been for agricultural development but as non-agricultural development has occurred these levees have now taken on a flood control purpose by default.

There was considerable discussion about who should be contacted to do an adequate inventory. Micky noted that the Corps has previously reached out to County and municipal emergency management coordinators but there may be other sources of information on the location, ownership, etc. regarding levees. Kathy Stuart suggested that contacts be made with County Boards of Agriculture. Kathy mentioned that the Pine Mount dike in Greenwich in Cumberland County was one which involved flood control. It was noted by Bob Brewer that the County is installing a tidegate water control structure upstream of Pine Mount dike. Further, it was noted that the Pine Mount dike re-building project was currently stalled due to the lack of a necessary easement from one property owner.

Micky suggested that this group identify the necessary process for levee identification in terms of location, extent and ownership. She noted that Pennsylvania has a good program for flood control project identification and maintenance with some Federally-built projects and other State-built projects.

Greg Westfall stated that the six PL83-566 projects in South Jersey, built with technical and financial assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, would not require PL-99 funding as the NRCS has the Emergency Watershed Program which provides funding and technical assistance on those PL83-566 projects where adequate operation and maintenance activities (similar to the Corps requirement for PL-99 assistance) are taking place.

Bob Brewer noted that Cumberland County had done a quick look at this by using aerial photos and overlaying these with the county tax parcel records. Joe Ruggeri noted that Monmouth and Morris Counties have agreements with FEMA for good imagery. Rick Westergaard suggested that information on plans submitted by redevelopment groups to NJDEP (probably Land Use Regulation) would provide very useful information on the levee location, height, length and other features and asked for NJDEP assistance on this. Joe Ruggeri will follow-up with Land Use Regulation on obtaining this information for the group.

Ken DiMuzio stated that the purpose of this group should be to identify a methodology to identify these levee sites. There was consensus that there should be a combined meeting of the County Boards of Agriculture, County planners, County and municipal emergency management coordinators, PSEG, NJDEP Division of Fish and Wildlife and NRCS to obtain the necessary information on the levees. Ken asked Chuck Romick to write a paragraph on the method that Gloucester County uses.

Greg asked Micky whether the Corps has a source of funding for doing the inventory. Micky replied that the Corps does not have this funding. Robert Brewer suggested that this type of work could be done in Cumberland County for approximately \$5,000 to \$10,000. Micky noted that most of the Pennsylvania structures do have Corps of Engineers operations and maintenance reviews.

Sam Reynolds asked what applicability the inventory has for PL-99 when there is private ownership. Ken DiMuzio stated that the State-chartered an institution (meadow companies) and that the State of New Jersey (not necessarily the NJDEP) is responsible. Its common sense that the State assume responsibility for the "orphaned" levees. We have two Federal agencies (Corps and FEMA) wanted to carry out two objectives, respectively, levee inventory and regulation, and this requires a responsible state entity. Ken asked whether agriculture should be exempted.

Ken suggested that the levee identification process include the following:

- Aerial photography
- Tax parcels
- Population density

Micky agreed to contact the Corps National Headquarters to get answers on whether levees that are privately owned and/or have purposes other than flood control should be part of the inventory.

Kathy Stuart and Joe Ruggeri stated that where dams are privately owned, the municipality must co-sign for any loan. The loan is to the private owner. Where there is

a lake homeowners association the municipality assures that there is proper assessment of the benefiting property owners. It was suggested that this might be an appropriate approach for meadow companies.

Sam Reynolds noted that Pennsville is currently considering building a new levee system for flood protection. Micky asked Joe whether NJDEP designs or reviews new public works. Joe noted that DEP typically does not do designs or design review.

The group reviewed a GIS-produced map, done by Gloucester County GIS specialist Jeff Taylor, showing an air photo base, the location of the Repaupo Creek dike including many interior dikes as well as the tax parcels that intersect the dike. Jeff stated that when a 5 foot flood was projected approximately 6000 parcels were flooded.

Ken DiMuzio suggested that a letter be sent to the Counties asking them if they have GIS and whether they have the data that would permit them to do what Gloucester County has done. Bob Brewer noted that there is a state-wide GIS User's group. Kathy Stuart suggested that the Group, rather than NJDEP, suggest that this process be completed. Ken Taaffe noted that this group has not yet formalized and who would a proposed letter be written by and come from. Bob Brewer asked who is providing the State with the levee inventory. Ken asked whether this letter was to be sent out by DELO or the South Jersey RC&D. He asked whether DELO wasn't formed to send these type of letters.

Kathy Stuart asked whether any of the Counties have a levee database. None of the attending counties had such a database. She noted that there are no levee classifications (as there are for unsafe dams), rules and regulations at the State level. Sam Reynolds cautioned the group to be careful when dealing with the request to Freeholders for the levee inventory data as the rules and regulations may change which would cause the Freeholders to have to pay for the same effort twice.

Micky asked Joe Ruggeri whether there had been any discussion of the need for a levee inventory at the State level. Joe indicated that there has not been because NJDEP is waiting to get its lead from the Corps on what would be required for a national levee inventory.

#### South Jersey RC&D News Release on Levees

There was considerable discussion regarding the articles that appeared in the local press as a result of a news release on levees. Sam Reynolds was concerned about the ramifications of statement regarding the conditions of the levees and asked to whom this information was attributed. Ken noted that, if this group were formalized, it could be attributed to its chairperson or other officer rather than going back to any individual Federal or State agency. Ken Taaffe replied that the news release that South Jersey RC&D provided had been altered when finally put in print. It was agreed that the group needs to become formalized with vision/mission statement, bylaws and elected officers from its membership.

### Flood Product Demonstration

Micky announced that there will be a flood product demonstration at Fort Mifflin during the week of August 7<sup>th</sup> for three flood control products (which the Corps does not necessarily endorse). These products are: Port-A-Dam, Hesco-Bastion concertainer and Rapid Deployment Floodwall. A study has been done by the Corps comparing these three products with sandbags. These products, unlike sandbags, are re-usable. Micky asked that we let the counties and municipalities know of this demonstration. Micky will provide Greg Westfall with the website information so that it can be included in the minutes. Website is <http://chl.erdc.usace.army.mil/ffs>.

### Next Meeting Agenda Items

Identification of what is available in each of the counties in terms of GIS data  
Review the Vision/Mission Statement for DELO  
Next meeting will be held at the Gloucester County Planning Division location in the auditorium at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, July 12<sup>th</sup>.