



For Immediate Release September 29, 2014	Contact: John Donovan Phone: 503-517-3742 Email: jdonovan@metgroup.com
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Oregon Solutions Columbia River Levee Repair and Accreditation Project hears engineering assessment findings

More than twenty jurisdictions and other regional partners are working together through a Governor-designated Oregon Solutions process convened by Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and Multnomah County Commissioner Jules Bailey, to ensure that the Columbia Corridor levee system protects lives and property and meets all federal safety standards.

The first step in that process is a collaboratively-sponsored engineering assessment of the current condition of the levee systems, which was presented at the Oregon Solutions meeting on September 26, 2014. The report addresses areas of potential concern for the minimum standard of flood protection, the 1% Annual Chance Event (100 year flood).

The Oregon Solutions team learned that Levee Engineering Assessments conducted by Cornforth Associates indicated the levees in PEN 1 and PEN 2 were found to meet FEMA standards in all but four areas.

- West side of PEN 1: Railroad embankment - due to access limitations it was not possible to perform soil tests on the embankment. Historical data indicates loose soil covers a train trestle structure to form the embankment. The railroad embankment is one of the locations where the levee breached in 1948, resulting in the Vanport flood and subsequent flooding of PEN 2.
- Northeast Corner of PEN 1: Marine Drive - I-5 Interchange - : existing cross-levee is not high enough
- Northeast corner of PEN 2 : Columbia River levee - the existing levee is not high enough
- East side of PEN 2: Peninsula Drainage Canal Cross-Levee - the structure is narrow in width with steep banks/sides, and in the event of higher water levels on one side, instability in the levee could result in a failure.

Background

Based in part on the aftermath of several major storms around the country, the United States Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) revised the frequency and methods of assessing the risk associated with levee systems. In 2013, Multnomah County Drainage District (MCDD), the agency responsible for managing the Columbia Corridor levee system, received notification that parts of the levee system were no longer meeting federal safety standards. Portions of the levee system in Peninsula Drainage District 1 (PEN 1) and Peninsula Drainage District 2 (PEN

2) are not adequate to protect against the 1% ACE and, as a result, are threatening the economic and social resiliency of the region.

About Levee Accreditation

A large portion of North and Northeast Portland are natural floodplains. Beginning in 1917, a system of levees and pump stations was constructed to provide critical flood protection and stormwater management functions for the Columbia Corridor. This system is a valuable asset that is the product of local, state, and federal investment, protecting thousands of lives, 10% of all jobs in Multnomah County, and billions of dollars in investment.

Responsibility for flood risk reduction is shared among many parties. FEMA and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) set standards and act as catalysts to ensure that local communities understand their level of risk and their role in reducing risk. Local agencies inspect, maintain, and, if necessary, reinvest in their levee systems.

In order to qualify as a risk reduction system in the National Flood Insurance Program, local agencies must ensure that the levees protect property owners from, at minimum, the 1% ACE. MCDD (as well as PEN 1, PEN 2 and SDIC) also maintains the levees based on an agreement with the USACE. Sauvie Island has a levee system that is maintained independently. As such, it must also ensure that the levees meet USACE standards.

Remaining in good standing with FEMA and the USACE ensures:

- Public safety in areas protected by levees
- The levees are being maintained to modern safety standards
- Property owners are not required to buy flood insurance
- Property owners can acquire federally backed (and lower cost) flood insurance
- In the event of a high water event, the USACE will assist in flood fighting and levee repairs.

About the Process

Governor Kitzhaber designated the Columbia River Levee Repair and Accreditation an Oregon Solutions project to identify collaborative solutions to ensure that the levees remain safe and effective. The Oregon Solutions team has helped to secure resources to complete engineering assessments of the levees in PEN 1 and PEN 2 districts as a first step in this process. Oregon Solutions recognizes the historical significance of the levee system and will work to engage all communities with current or historical ties to the system in a collaborative discussion about how to address the technical and community based implications of levee maintenance and improvements.

Timeline

- 2014: Investigate and report on the current conditions of the PEN 1 and PEN 2 levee systems.
- 2015:
 - Begin investigating the current condition of MCDD and SDIC levee systems.
 - Discuss options for maintaining and/or improving the community's flood protection and develop alternatives /cost estimates for improving identified areas of interest.
- 2016 and beyond: Identify specific actions for future flood protection and sources of funding to pay for desired projects.

To learn more please visit www.orsolutions.org/osproject/MCDD

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