



New Orleans Following Hurricane Katrina (NOAA)

Roads are Not Rivers

Map-21 Streamlining Would Destroy Essential Checks and Balances on Water Project Planning

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) water projects are fundamentally different than highway projects, including those carried out under MAP-21. Because of these differences, the Senate "streamlining" provisions, which are modeled on MAP-21, would be exponentially more damaging for Corps projects. The Senate provisions will also likely increase, not decrease, the time it takes to complete a Corps study.

Fundamentally Different Projects: Corps water projects affect the health and safety of millions of American, and damage rivers, coasts, and wetlands that provide free and effective flood protection for communities and vital habitat for fish and wildlife. Poorly planned projects can lead to incomprehensible losses like the flooding of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. A well planned highway project can avoid damaging the nation's waters and will not put the public at risk.

Fundamentally Different Procedures: The purpose of a Corps project study is to determine whether a project is in the national interest, and thus appropriate for federal taxpayer investment. Corps studies typically look at just one project at a time, without first developing watershed-wide plans or evaluating system-wide impacts. Highway reviews involve multiple layers of planning, including 20-year long-range plans, short term improvement programs, and project specific planning.

Fundamentally Different Agencies: The Corps has a long and well documented history of flawed analyses revealed by dozens of major reports from the National Academy of Sciences, Army Inspector General, Government Accountability Office, National Academy of Public Administration and others. The Army Inspector General found that the Corps had intentionally manipulated data in an attempt to justify a \$1.2 billion project and that the Corps has an institutional bias for constructing costly, large scale structural projects. (Army Inspector General, Case No. 00-019).

Fundamentally Different Funding Mechanisms: Most Corps projects must be funded through direct appropriations and local contributions to the non-federal cost share. Each Corps project must compete for funding with the thousand other projects that make up the Corps' more than \$60 billion backlog of already authorized but unconstructed projects. In contrast, highway projects are funded through the Highway Trust Fund, which is funded through a gasoline tax.

Full and effective environmental reviews expose the true cost of ill conceived proposals leading to better and far less damaging projects and substantial savings for federal taxpayers. They have:

- ✓ Saved taxpayers more than \$220 million and protected 200,000 acres of wetlands an area the size of all 5 boroughs of New York City when the review led the George W. Bush Administration to stop the Yazoo Backwater Pumping Plant project in Mississippi.
- ✓ Saved taxpayers more than \$133 million and protected a pristine tidal lagoon when the review led to the end of an unnecessary and destructive plan to dredge Bolinas Lagoon in California.
- ✓ Saved taxpayers \$108 million in construction and \$350 million in maintenance when the review led the George W. Bush administration to protect a vital tidal inlet by stopping the Oregon Inlet Jetty Project in North Carolina.
- ✓ Saved more than **4,300** acres of wetlands that would have been destroyed under the Corps' original plan for raising levees along the Mississippi River.

When resource agency concerns are ignored and necessary studies are not done, the results can be devastating. Prior to construction of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) in Louisiana, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service raised serious concerns and recommend additional environmental and hydrologic modeling, but the Corps ignored this advice. During Hurricane Katrina, the MRGO funneled Katrina's storm surge into New Orleans, resulting in devastating flooding in St. Bernard Parish and the lower Ninth Ward. The MRGO has destroyed more than 27,000 acres of coastal wetlands and damaged more than 600,000 acres of coastal ecosystems surrounding the Greater New Orleans area.

The so-called "streamlining" provisions in the Senate Water Resources Development Act of 2013 would strike at the very heart of the environmental review process and will not speed up project planning. These provisions would lead to projects that are unnecessarily costly and destructive without speeding up project planning.