

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

COMPLETE STATEMENT OF

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(CIVIL WORKS)**

BEFORE

**THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**

UNITED STATES SENATE

ON

THE FEDERAL ROLE IN DISASTER RECOVERY AND RESPONSE

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INTRODUCTION

Madam Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I am Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works). I am pleased to be here today to testify on the matter of emergency response, requirements, and how agencies work together, particularly cooperation and coordination between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies during the natural disasters and events of 2011. The year 2011 has been extremely challenging for the nation, in terms of tornados, flooding, hurricanes, and tropical storms across multi-state areas. Along with other federal agencies, Tribes, States and numerous local entities, the Corps has a multitude of response activities underway in an effort to mitigate the public risk and recovery from these severe weather events.

The Corps has authority under Public Law (PL) 84-99, Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies (FCCE) (33 U.S.C. § 701n), for emergency management activities in response to natural disasters. Under PL 84-99, the Chief of Engineers, acting for the Secretary of the Army, is authorized to undertake activities including natural disaster preparedness, advanced measures, emergency operations (flood response and post flood response), rehabilitation of eligible flood control works threatened or destroyed by flood, repair of federally authorized shore protective works threatened or damaged by coastal storms, and provision of emergency water assistance due to drought or contaminated source. The Corps also responds to disasters at the direction of FEMA under the Robert T. Stafford Act (42 USC 5121, *et seq.*). Under the National Response Framework, the Corps is assigned as the Coordinator for Emergency Support Function (ESF) #3, "Public Works and Engineering" and, during disasters the Corps is the primary agency for response activities, such as ice, water and temporary power. FEMA is the primary agency for ESF#3 recovery activities and can assign Corps missions to assist in the execution of these and other recovery missions, to include debris management. Disaster response activities authorized by the Stafford Act, and prescribed by Mission Assignments by FEMA, are funded by FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund.

PREPAREDNESS and TRAINING

The Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies appropriation account provides funds for preparedness with regard to emergency response to natural disasters, flood fighting and search-and-rescue operations, and rehabilitation of flood control and hurricane protection structures. Disaster preparedness activities include coordination, planning, training, and conducting response exercises with local, state, and federal agencies. District commanders, Tribal liaisons, and emergency management staff meet with federal, state, and local officials and other interested parties to discuss Corps authorities under PL 84-99, share lessons learned from previous flood events, conduct tabletop exercises, review sandbagging techniques, and strengthen the relationship among the Corps, State and local governments and tribal entities.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Under PL 84-99, Corps emergency assistance prior to and during a flood event is temporary in nature to meet an immediate threat and may only be undertaken to supplement non-federal efforts. The assistance is undertaken to mitigate risk to life and public safety by providing protection to critical public infrastructure against flood waters. Therefore, PL 84-99 is not used to protect private residences or other developments unless such protection is incidental to protect

critical public facilities and infrastructure within the area. Tribes and States must commit all available resources such as supplies, equipment, funds and labor as a general condition to receiving Corps assistance. Furthermore, Corps emergency efforts are not intended to provide permanent solutions to flood risks. Therefore, the removal of all flood fight material at the conclusion of a flood event is the responsibility of the respective Tribe or State.

COORDINATION

The Corps coordinates with all federal, Tribal, and state partners and close coordination occurs with appropriate state emergency management offices. This year, the Corps used a joint information center to coordinate activities among all response agencies and transparently communicate to all affected parties. The Corps has also participated in national and regional exercises held by the Department of Homeland Security/FEMA. These exercises provide federal and non-federal agencies an opportunity to plan for natural disasters, and to learn about partner agency capabilities, resources, and responsibilities. The Corps works closely with other federal emergency response partners to include: the Department of Transportation, the United States Coast Guard, the National Guard Bureau, the Department of Energy, the Department of Agriculture, and state and local agencies. The Corps also works closely with the Interior Department's Bureau of Reclamation, which has been an exceptional partner, providing vital resources to support the Corps' surge requirements for quality assurance personnel.

2011 OPERATIONS

This year, the Corps supplemented state, local and tribal efforts with over 37 million sandbags, 342 pumps, 5,500 rolls of poly sheeting, 275,000 linear feet of HESCO barriers, and 1,280 linear feet of Rapid Deployment Flood Wall and the Corps also issued 176 emergency contracts to protect critical infrastructure from flood threats. The Corps also was engaged with numerous federal agencies and provided technical assistance to state governments and Tribal organizations for flood response. This experience improved multiple partners understanding the Corps' capabilities and PL 84-99 authorities. Some examples follow:

- In March, the winter flooding from rain and snowmelt began with over 120 personnel engaged in the flood response effort from Illinois to Alabama. \$5 million of FCCE funds were allocated for this event, during which Corps projects in the Great Lakes and Ohio River Valley Division reached the 4th highest average flood control reservoir storage level recorded.
- Beginning in April 2011, the Nation witnessed historic flooding along the Mississippi, Missouri, and Souris River basins. During these events, the flood stages exceeded the historical Mississippi River flood stage record set in 1937. The Birds Point-New Madrid Floodway was operated on May 3, 2011 and opening of three additional floodways was synchronized to best manage the flows in the Mississippi River Basin, preventing flooding of over 9.8 million acres and preventing damages in excess of \$60 billion. Over 800 personnel were engaged, with more than \$76 million of FCCE funds allocated and over \$59 million in FEMA mission assignments under the Stafford Act.

- Flooding along the Missouri River approximately doubled the historic record for water flows. The combined May through July runoff of 34.3 million acre-feet made 2011 an historic year of record for reservoir water storage along the Missouri River. Flood response efforts engaged over 400 personnel and \$83 million of FCCE funds were allocated.
- On June 24, 2011 more water passed along the Souris River at the Sherwood gage in one day than had been recorded in entire year for 45 out of 82 years. During the recovery phase for this event, the Corps received seven FEMA mission assignments focusing on debris removal and temporary housing and worked closely with the Department of Agriculture.
- In late April, tornados caused significant destruction in both Alabama and Mississippi. The Corps received 27 FEMA mission assignments focusing on debris removal, power, and critical facilities involving more than 460 personnel, including retired personnel, and activated reserve soldiers for a total of \$262 million.
- On May 22, 2011, an EF5 tornado (worst damage category) devastated Joplin, Missouri, destroying homes, schools, fire stations, and hospitals. Debris and temporary housing teams as well as subject matter experts for debris, infrastructure assessment and critical public facilities required deployment of over 270 Corps personnel for 9 FEMA mission assignments totaling \$239 million.
- The severe weather continued with Hurricane Irene's path from North Carolina to Vermont, compounded by Tropical Storm Lee. Over 260 personnel were engaged in the Corps support to FEMA in 11 states and Puerto Rico with 83 FEMA mission assignments for over \$33 million (technical assistance, dam safety, commodities, water, power, debris, infrastructure assessment, government liaison, ESF#3 support). The Corps worked closely with the U.S. Coast Guard to determine threats to navigation and navigation closures.

DAMAGES TO CORPS OF ENGINEERS PROJECTS FROM RECENT FLOODING

The Corps of Engineers continues to assess the extent of damages to Civil Works projects and non-Federal projects that are eligible for assistance from the Corps under PL 84-99 as a result of the major flood events this past year. The Corps first used \$46.6 million of available funds within the FCCE appropriation account for immediate floodfighting and response to the Spring flooding. As the flood events continued, the Corps was unable to respond to the requirements from available FCCE funds alone. Since May, 2011, I have exercised my emergency authority provided in PL 84-99 to transfer funds from other appropriation accounts to the FCCE appropriation account to respond to the flooding and to begin addressing repairs from the ongoing disasters. To date, I have authorized four transfers totaling \$212 million. The last transfer, \$137 million, allowed the Corps to begin addressing a portion of the highest priority life and safety repair requirements.

In order to develop the best estimates of repair requirements nationwide, local Corps districts, working with non-Federal sponsors, are inspecting damaged projects and preparing assessments reports. The Corps has set up a rigorous process at the Headquarters level for technical experts to examine the requirements and to prioritize those requirements based on risk to life and safety, among other parameters in order to make the best use of available funds.

I may have to authorize the additional transfer of funds from other Corps accounts to the FCCE account to address ongoing emergency needs.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Corps of Engineers stands ready to respond to, and to assist in recovery from, disasters as they occur, both relying on its own authority and funding and under the Stafford Act in support of FEMA as missions are assigned. Madam Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have.