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SABINE PASS TO GALVESTON BAY, TEXAS, COASTAL STORM
RISK MANAGEMENT AND ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION STUDY

Public Comment Meeting

October 8, 2015

Freeport, Texas

1 (Meeting commenced at 7:00 p.m.)

2 COLONEL RICHARD PANNELL: Good evening,
3 everyone. I appreciate y'all coming out
4 tonight for this public meeting. I'm Colonel
5 Richard Pannell, commander of the Galveston
6 District of the United States Army Corps of
7 Engineers; and we welcome you tonight to
8 today's public meeting concerning the Sabine
9 Pass to Galveston Bay, Texas, Coastal Storm
10 Risk Management and Ecosystem Restoration
11 Study.

12 For the record, let me state that this
13 public meeting is being convened at 7:00 p.m.
14 on October 8, 2015, at the Freeport Community
15 House in Freeport, Texas. This evening we're
16 presenting information and accepting public
17 comment on the draft integrated feasibility
18 report and environmental impact statement that
19 was released for public review on
20 September 11, 2015. A court reporter is here
21 to transcribe these proceedings and all public
22 comments.

23 The Corps of Engineers and the General
24 Land Office have been conducting a study
25 analyzing potential coastal storm risk

1 management measures that would reduce the risk
2 of tropical storm surge impacts to lives and
3 property in the Golden Triangle and Freeport
4 areas of the upper Texas Gulf Coast.

5 Seven years ago, the region experienced a
6 near miss from Hurricane Ike that disrupted
7 many lives and resulted in extensive damages in
8 the Sabine and Galveston region. The nation
9 was within a foot of an economic depression
10 when the storm surge nearly overtopped existing
11 hurricane flood protection systems in Port
12 Arthur and Texas City. If the areas protected
13 by these systems had been flooded, the nation
14 would have experienced significant disruptions
15 in gasoline and other petrochemical supplies
16 that we all depend on.

17 For this study, a cost-effective plan has
18 been identified that we believe would
19 significantly reduce the risk of storm surge
20 impacts in the Sabine and Brazoria regions.
21 This plan, which we refer to as the Tentatively
22 Selected Plan or the TSP, will be described
23 later in the meeting.

24 I hope that you've all had an opportunity
25 to read the notice of availability, which we

1 handed out at the table in the back; and you
2 can also get that on our district's website.
3 We have also mailed out announcements to
4 individuals and organizations as well that had
5 a copy of this. It contains a summary of the
6 Tentatively Selected Plan and its environmental
7 impacts.

8 Before we go any further, I'd like to
9 introduce a representative of the Texas General
10 Land office, our study's nonfederal sponsor,
11 Mr. Ray Newby, Coastal Geologist, with GLO's
12 Coastal Resources Program.

13 MR. RAY NEWBY: Thank you, Colonel. Thank
14 you very much. I appreciate you folks coming
15 out tonight. On behalf of Commissioner Bush,
16 I'd just like to say we're very supportive of
17 the Corps' efforts and willingness to partner
18 with the land office on these important
19 projects.

20 The study tonight is just one of many
21 steps that are being taken amongst the General
22 Land Office and the Corps of Engineers to
23 comprehensively address the whole Texas coast
24 to basically look at protecting the economic
25 assets and environmental resources that make

1 the Texas coast what it is. Thank you very
2 much.

3 COLONEL RICHARD PANNELL: Thank you,
4 Mr. Newby.

5 Before we get started here, I do want to
6 recognize the public officials who are
7 attending tonight. We've got Mr. George
8 Tidwell, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors
9 of the Velasco Drainage District. We also have
10 Mr. John Hoss, Commissioner of the Port of
11 Freeport. Good to see you, sir. And we have
12 Jason Hull, Port Engineer, from Port of
13 Freeport; and Colonel Retired, Chris Solis of
14 the Gulf Coast Community Protection and
15 Recovery District. Good to have you here as
16 well. From resource agencies, we have Colleen
17 Roco from Texas Parks and Wildlife. Thank you
18 very much for attending today.

19 Additionally, I'd like to introduce our
20 team from the Corps of Engineers and I'll start
21 with our chief of project management, Mr. Rob
22 Thomas to my left; and we have Ms. Sharon
23 Tirpak, our project manager for this study.
24 Also in the audience, we've got Mr. Tim Nelson,
25 our chief of real estate. We've got

1 Mr. Don Carelock, our chief of construction;
2 and we've got Mr. Joe Hrametz, our chief of
3 operations in the back. We also have
4 Ms. Sheri Willey in the far back, our planner,
5 chief of planning section; Ms. Lauren Kruse
6 from our regional planning center or planning
7 league; and Ms. Janelle Stokes, our
8 environmental lead in the regional planning
9 center.

10 Okay. Let me just talk a little bit about
11 the ground rules here. I'll describe the
12 ground rules and the formats for tonight's
13 meeting. I hope you've had a chance to
14 complete a comment form when you entered the
15 meeting. The comment form is used to provide
16 us your contact information so we can keep you
17 updated on the status of the study. It can
18 also be used to submit a written comment, if
19 you'd like.

20 And if you'd like to make your comment
21 orally, please make sure that you have
22 indicated your intent on the sign-in sheet at
23 the door. Those wishing to make a comment will
24 be given an opportunity to do so after the
25 presentation. If you prefer not to speak

1 tonight, you may submit you comments in writing
2 by dropping them in the box provided or you can
3 send them to us by mail or e-mail and that's
4 all located on the joint notice of
5 availability.

6 Following my remarks, Sharon Tirpak, our
7 Project Manager, was going to present an
8 overview of the feasibility study; and after
9 her presentation, I'll open the floor for
10 public comments. Federal and state officials
11 that have requested to make a statement will be
12 recognized first. Next, representatives from
13 the federal and state resource agencies wishing
14 to make a statement will be called upon; and
15 then I will recognize each individual that has
16 indicated that they wish to make a comment.

17 I think we'll be good on time tonight, so
18 I'm not overly concerned; but if I get a number
19 for how many folks we have -- do you know how
20 many we have so far?

21 MS. JANELLE STOKES: About 20 all
22 together.

23 COLONEL RICHARD PANNELL: 20 comments?

24 MS. JANELLE STOKES: Oh, no, the number of
25 people to comment, three.

1 COLONEL RICHARD PANNELL: Okay. So I
2 think we're good on time. So you can, you
3 know, bend our ear as long as you'd like on
4 that; and the meeting will be adjourned at
5 8:30. So whatever time frame we need between
6 now and 8:30.

7 Also, we'd like to emphasize that this
8 will not be a question-and-answer session. The
9 meeting is to provide you an opportunity to
10 comment on our project.

11 Now, I'd like to turn it over to Ms.
12 Sharon Tirpak to make our presentation.

13 MS. SHARON TIRPAK: Thank you. Good
14 evening. Thank you for joining us. We can go
15 past this title slide.

16 So the purpose of the public meeting this
17 evening, we're here to present the Tentatively
18 Selected Plan or the TSP and to gather your
19 comments on the plan and its environmental
20 impacts. This is a tentatively selected plan,
21 and it's based on preliminary engineering
22 design and tentative alignment.

23 The TSP is being reviewed concurrently by
24 the public, internal Corps of Engineers and
25 independent technical reviewers and Corps

1 headquarters. The plan may change in response
2 to these comments and technical issues
3 identified during the final feasibility
4 analysis.

5 Since 1854, 61 tropical storms have hit
6 the upper Texas coast and some of the more
7 devastating storms are listed here. Certainly,
8 the one most recent is Hurricane Ike.
9 Hurricane Rita also in this area. Houston with
10 tropical storm Allison; and then we also have
11 the most historic storm of all, the 1900 Storm.
12 And you can see some statistics there on these
13 storms.

14 A congressional resolution gives the Corps
15 the authority to study and recommend projects
16 to reduce the risk of surge damages in this
17 region. Our mission and authorities do not
18 allow us to address wind-related impacts. The
19 study is being conducted by the Corps of
20 Engineers in conjunction with our nonfederal
21 study sponsor, the General Land Office. The
22 purpose of the study is to evaluate
23 vulnerabilities to storm surge impacts in the
24 upper six counties on the Texas Gulf Coast and
25 to develop projects that reduce the risk of

1 storm surge impacts to people, infrastructure,
2 the economy and the environment. For this
3 study, the scope was ultimately reduced to
4 focus on CSRM, or Coastal Storm Risk
5 Management, in the Sabine and Brazoria regions.

6 As originally scoped, the study covered
7 all six counties and recommended projects for
8 the three regions shown here. The Sabine
9 region, which is up here (indicating), the
10 Brazoria region and the Houston-Galveston
11 region. However, the level of effort and
12 associated risk for the large and complex
13 regional study was determined to be too high;
14 and it was agreed that this study would focus
15 on recommending Coastal Storm Risk Management
16 solutions for the Sabine and Brazoria regions
17 only.

18 The CSRM solutions for the large and
19 extremely complex Galveston Bay region and
20 ecosystem restoration opportunities throughout
21 the six-county area are included in the ongoing
22 and separate coastal Texas feasibility studies
23 as well as Jefferson County ecosystem
24 restoration feasibility study.

25 The revised site scope includes a

1 programmatic discussion on the entire
2 six-county area and a focused study effort on
3 the Sabine and Brazoria regions. The cost of
4 the study is \$4.4 million, and it will take 3.9
5 years to complete. The CSRМ problems have been
6 evaluated and a Tentatively Selected Plan
7 developed for the Sabine region, which is
8 Orange and Jefferson Counties and the Brazoria
9 region, which is the Freeport area.

10 Now, after Hurricane Ike, a study was
11 commissioned by Orange County to evaluate
12 potential solutions for storm surge impacts
13 like those caused by Hurricane Ike. This study
14 found that the surge generated by the storm
15 caused widespread flooding in industrial,
16 commercial and residential areas of Orange
17 County. The cities of Orange, Bridge City,
18 West Orange, Pinehurst, Vidor and Rose City, as
19 well as unincorporated areas, suffered extreme
20 damages.

21 Approximately one-third of the city of
22 Orange was flooded, primarily the downtown and
23 commercial districts of the city. Rose City
24 also suffered major damages from the surge that
25 traveled up the Neches River. Virtually 100

1 percent of Bridge City was flooded, including
2 most residential and commercial properties.
3 The "Chemical Row" area of Orange County also
4 received major damage and production stoppage
5 because of Ike's storm surge flooding.
6 Estimates of damages and production losses
7 exceed \$500 million.

8 There were fewer impacts in Jefferson
9 County due in large part to higher base ground
10 elevations. Minor damages occurred to the
11 ExxonMobil refinery on the Neches River just
12 south of the city of Beaumont. The
13 Sabine-Neches Navigation District reported
14 considerable damages along Taylors Bayou.

15 For the existing Port Arthur and vicinity,
16 extensive damages would have occurred to Port
17 Arthur but for the protection provided by the
18 existing Port Arthur and Vicinity Hurricane
19 Flood Protection Project. While the existing
20 system performed well, it came close to being
21 overtopped by the surge.

22 The picture on the right, this one right
23 here (indicating), was taken at Highway 365
24 after the storm when waters were still very
25 close to the top of the flood wall in that

1 area. Areas not protected by the existing
2 project were heavily impacted. The image at
3 the bottom is of a barge lying across Highway
4 73 near Taylors Bayou.

5 In Brazoria County, the Freeport area on
6 the extreme margin of this storm's effects
7 experienced tidal flooding up to 6 to 8 feet in
8 areas not protected by the existing Hurricane
9 Flood Protection Project. If you can't see it,
10 the red is the highest inundation. This color
11 here is 2 to 4 feet, and it goes on up
12 (indicating).

13 The existing Freeport and Vicinity
14 Hurricane Flood Protection Project, Port
15 Arthur, Texas City and Freeport projects were
16 built as a result of storm surge damages from
17 Hurricane Carla in 1961. Although it came
18 ashore near Port O'Connor, dangerous impacts
19 were felt in the Freeport area. Carla was a
20 Category 4 storm with storm surges of up to 22
21 feet. The black and white pictures show
22 post-storm impacts.

23 Several phases of alternative analysis
24 were conducted during the study. Shown here is
25 a final array of alternatives that were

1 evaluated to determine the Tentatively Selected
2 Plan. For the Sabine region, the CSR
3 alternatives developed by the Orange County
4 study were evaluated and plans which would
5 protect nearly all of Orange County and
6 northern Jefferson County were advanced for
7 further screening.

8 Structural alternatives included
9 constructing a new levee system in Orange and
10 northeast Jefferson County and improving the
11 existing Port Arthur Hurricane Flood Protection
12 Project. One alternative included construction
13 of a large surge gate in the Neches River with
14 a levee system connecting to the new levee
15 system in Orange County and the existing Port
16 Arthur Hurricane Flood Protection Project.

17 In Brazoria County, improvements to the
18 existing Freeport Hurricane Flood Protection
19 Project were advanced for further screening.
20 Nonstructural alternatives were also considered
21 and those which are within the Corps' authority
22 to implement were advanced for further
23 screening.

24 The Neches River gate alternative included
25 three components: New levee/flood wall system

1 along the Sabine River and Sabine Lake. And
2 that would be up in here (indicating); a surge
3 gate in the Neches River with levees connecting
4 to the Orange and Port Arthur systems; and
5 improvements to the Port Arthur Hurricane Flood
6 Protection Project, which is this blue line
7 (indicating).

8 The Neches River surge gate would need to
9 be large enough to accommodate large oceangoing
10 tankers and other vessels which use the river
11 to access numerous petrochemical facilities in
12 the Port of Beaumont. The channel is currently
13 40 feet deep, and deepening of the channel to
14 48 feet is authorized. This alternative was
15 compared to a levee system, which protected the
16 same areas; and no surge gate would be needed
17 in the Neches River. The construction cost of
18 the gate was estimated to be about \$865 million
19 more than the all-levee approach.

20 Again, the gate would need to be very
21 large to cross the Neches River and the deep
22 navigation channel. Large pump stations would
23 also be needed to prevent upstream flooding
24 while the gate is closed. In addition,
25 considerable operations and maintenance costs

1 would be needed to maintain and operate the
2 gate into the foreseeable future. For these
3 reasons, the gate was determined not to be cost
4 effective and was eliminated from further
5 screening.

6 So the final array of alternatives; and
7 what I mean by "final array," these are the
8 alternatives that we looked at to determine
9 what we wanted to be the Tentatively Selected
10 Plan. The No Action Alternative is always an
11 alternative that we look at, and for Brazoria
12 region, we have the Freeport and Vicinity
13 Coastal Storm Risk Management, which includes
14 the improvements to the existing Freeport
15 Hurricane Flood Protection Project; and we will
16 also look at nonstructural alternatives.

17 In the Sabine region, we have new levees
18 and flood walls in Orange and Jefferson
19 Counties, improvements to the existing Port
20 Arthur Flood Protection Project and then again,
21 nonstructural alternatives.

22 So the proposed Tentatively Selected Plan
23 for Freeport and vicinity include -- and let me
24 see if I can step through this because there's
25 a bunch of segments here -- the raising of

1 about two-and-a-half miles of levee along north
2 Oyster Creek by one to 3 feet. So that's up in
3 this area (indicating). Raising two-and-a-half
4 miles of the east storm levee by one foot.
5 Constructing a new surge gate and pump station
6 at the mouth of the DOW Barge Canal.
7 Navigation would be maintained during and after
8 construction. That's down in there
9 (indicating). And raising about a half mile of
10 levee at the DOW Thumb by one foot and
11 installing erosion control and scour protection
12 features on about three miles of levee in this
13 area and that would be down in here
14 (indicating).

15 Reconstruct about 700 feet of the Tide
16 Gate I-Wall, raising it by one foot and raising
17 about four tenths of a mile of adjacent levee
18 by one foot. And I think that's right in here
19 (indicating). And reconstructing about a half
20 a mile of the Freeport Dock Flood Wall and
21 that's at Port of Freeport.

22 Most of the construction activities would
23 occur within the existing project right-of-way.
24 And again, this is a tentative plan; it could
25 change as a result of the ongoing public and

1 technical reviews. However, at this point, the
2 plan does not impact existing structures.

3 For the Orange and Jefferson CSRM
4 alternatives, costs, economic benefits,
5 environmental impacts of the Orange-Jefferson
6 reaches were compared. Orange Reaches 1 and 2
7 and Beaumont Reach B and C were eliminated from
8 the proposed CSRM levee system because costs to
9 protect these areas would exceed the economic
10 benefits. And we're talking about this area
11 Orange 1 and Orange 2 and Beaumont B and C
12 (indicating).

13 Orange Reach 1 had an estimated average
14 annual benefits of \$275,000 and average annual
15 costs of over \$2 million. If it were expressed
16 in a benefit-to-cost ratio, it would be a 0.13.
17 Generally, a BCR of at least one is needed to
18 retain in a plan. Orange Reach 2 had average
19 annual benefits of \$42,000 and an average
20 annual cost of \$1.8 million or BCR of 0.02.

21 These were compared to Orange Reach 3,
22 which have average annual benefits of \$24.7
23 million and average annual costs of \$14.9
24 million or BCR of 1.65. And that's this reach
25 here for Orange Reach 3 (indicating).

1 So the proposed TSP for Orange and
2 Jefferson includes a 27.2-mile-long new levee
3 flood wall system, which would be constructed
4 from Interstate 10 at the Sabine River down the
5 west bank of the river, across the north bank
6 of the Sabine Lake and up the east bank of the
7 Neches River to the vicinity of the junction of
8 Orangefield Road and Highway 1135. So
9 basically, we're talking -- this is the
10 27.2-mile-long levee (indicating).

11 And surge gates on Adams and Cow Bayous
12 would need to be constructed where the levee
13 system crosses these bayous. Existing
14 navigation on the bayous would be maintained
15 during and after construction. So there's two
16 smaller gated structures that are needed on
17 those two bayous. In addition, an 11-mile long
18 flood wall system would be constructed in
19 northern Jefferson County to connect with high
20 ground near the existing Port Arthur Hurricane
21 Flood Protection Project. Protection northwest
22 of this section is not needed because shoreline
23 elevations are sufficiently high.

24 So Jefferson County, you have 11 miles of
25 new levee system here that would tie into the

1 existing Port Arthur hurricane system
2 (indicating).

3 Lastly, one 3.6 mile-long system in the
4 vicinity of the ExxonMobil plant is currently
5 included in the TSP, and we plan to continue to
6 evaluate the facility's existing protection
7 system to determine if additional protection is
8 warranted. The levee/flood wall systems would
9 be constructed to a minimum elevation of
10 11 feet. Elevations during final feasibility
11 analysis may result in higher final elevations.

12 The alignment, as laid out now, is
13 tentative. There is a high likelihood that it
14 will change as a result of public comments and
15 technical reviews. Some residences and
16 structures would likely be impacted by
17 construction of this new system. In the event
18 the project acquires property that displaces
19 residents or business, the property would be
20 purchased at the current fair market value and
21 assistance with moving costs would be provided.
22 Relocations of pipelines and utilities will
23 also probably be required. Relocation costs
24 are a nonfederal responsibility.

25 The proposed TSP improvements for the Port

1 Arthur protection project, replacing and
2 raising a railroad and vehicle closure
3 structures and raising 2.3 miles of levee by
4 one foot at the north end of the Sabine-Neches
5 Canal. Reinforcing the I-Wall and raising
6 about 1.3 miles of adjacent levee by one foot
7 near a tank farm at the south end of the
8 Sabine-Neches Canal. Here's the tank farm and
9 here's the other reach (indicating).

10 Reinforcing the existing I-Wall near
11 Valero and raising about one-half mile of levee
12 by one foot in the Taylor Bayou basin area. We
13 would also reinforce the 8- to ten-foot I-Wall
14 and raising about one-third of a mile of levee
15 by one foot west of the Taylor Bayou basin.
16 Most of the construction activities would occur
17 within the existing project right-of-way.

18 Again, this is a tentative plan; it could
19 change as a result of ongoing public and
20 technical reviews. At this time, we believe
21 the plan may impact some existing structures.

22 The environmental impacts of the
23 Tentatively Selected Plan, Port Arthur and
24 Freeport CSRMs plans have negligible
25 environmental impacts that would require no

1 mitigation. The Orange-Jefferson CSRM plan
2 avoids and minimizes wetland impacts to
3 greatest extent possible and trade-offs have
4 been necessary to balance environmental impacts
5 against impacts to homes and businesses.

6 Construction would directly impact about
7 300 acres of wetlands, including marshes and
8 wetland forests. Indirect fisheries access
9 impacts would occur to about 2200 acres of
10 marsh in Adams and Cow Bayou floodplains with
11 installation of the surge gates at Adams and
12 Cow Bayous. The value of direct and indirect
13 wetland impacts has been determined with the
14 Wetlands Value Assessment Model in coordination
15 with the resource agencies.

16 No known hazardous or toxic waste
17 releases, violations or sites of concern would
18 be affected by construction. No significant
19 impacts to cultural resources are anticipated.
20 No endangered species impacts are expected.

21 For, at this point in time, our mitigation
22 plan, adverse impacts on ecological resources
23 resulting from the construction of the TSP have
24 been avoided or minimized to the extent
25 practicable. Further refinements to the plan

1 will occur during final feasibility analysis,
2 and efforts will be made to further avoid and
3 reduce impacts.

4 Remaining unavoidable impacts will be
5 fully mitigated, as required by law. The
6 wetlands value assessment modeling will be
7 conducted to quantify the benefits of
8 mitigation measures. Selection of potential
9 mitigation sites and modeling of benefits will
10 be conducted in coordination with resource
11 agencies. We anticipate that the recommended
12 plan will include impacts to Texas Parks and
13 Wildlife property.

14 We plan to work with Texas Parks and
15 Wildlife so that those impacts will be
16 mitigated on Texas Parks and Wildlife property.
17 The final mitigation plan will be developed and
18 presented in the final integrated feasibility
19 report and EIS.

20 We have identified some marsh restoration
21 evaluation areas in the Bessie Heights and Old
22 River Cove areas. Areas targeted for
23 evaluation exclude areas already identified for
24 beneficial use or mitigation in conjunction
25 with other projects. Sediments from regular

1 maintenance dredging of the adjacent
2 Sabine-Neches could be used to restore marsh in
3 areas of open water.

4 For forested wetlands mitigation, areas on
5 the Neches and Sabine Rivers north of
6 Interstate 10 contain large undeveloped tracts
7 of forested wetlands, including cypress-tupelo
8 swamps and bottomland forest. We will evaluate
9 the acquisition and long-term conservation of
10 forested wetland areas to mitigate impacts of
11 this project.

12 Additional benefits could be earned by
13 making improvements to the forested wetland
14 conservation areas such as improving tidal
15 flows in impounded areas or removing and
16 controlling invasive species, such as Chinese
17 tallow.

18 So for preliminary project costs,
19 construction would be cost shared at 65 percent
20 Federal and 35 percent non-Federal. We
21 currently have indications from Orange County
22 and Jefferson County that they would be our
23 non-Federal sponsors for construction of the
24 Orange-Jefferson CSRM plan. Jefferson County
25 Drainage District No. 7 may be the sponsor for

1 the Port Arthur and Vicinity CSRM plan.
2 Velasco Drainage District has indicated an
3 interest in sponsoring improvements to the
4 Freeport and Vicinity CSRM plan.

5 The next steps are the final feasibility
6 analysis, and that would include the items
7 listed here. There's potential changes in the
8 levee alignment location based on the comments
9 that we served during the public and technical
10 reviews. So we will go ahead and develop the
11 final feasibility level of engineering. Also,
12 we will do an analysis of effects of relative
13 sea level rise that could result in increases
14 to the recommended height and width of the new
15 Orange and Jefferson plan and the Port Arthur
16 and Freeport plans. Analysis of potential
17 changes and environmental impacts will occur
18 and development of environmental mitigation and
19 monitoring plan.

20 We did want to cover relative sea level
21 change, and this table presents a range of
22 estimated increases in sea level by the year
23 2080 in the Sabine and Brazoria regions. The
24 low, intermediate and high estimates are based
25 on a landmark National Research Council study

1 from 1987. The high rate is within the range
2 predicted by the current studies.

3 In the Sabine region, relative sea level
4 rise could range from about one- to about
5 three-and-a-quarter feet. In the Brazoria
6 region, it could range from about
7 three-quarters of a foot to about 3 feet by
8 2080. These future projections will be taken
9 into account in developing the levee flood wall
10 heights for the final recommended plan.

11 So the schedule for the study
12 completion, we anticipate releasing the Final
13 Integrated Feasibility Report and EIS for state
14 and agency review in August of next year. You
15 can see the concurrent review is ongoing
16 through September, October and November. We
17 should have our recommended plan by
18 January 2016 and the final Chief's report in
19 September of 2016.

20 If the public and technical reviews result
21 in significant changes to the TSP, another
22 public comment period may be warranted; and the
23 potential additional comment period is not
24 included in this schedule you see here. It
25 would delay completion of the report.

1 When final feasibility report is
2 completed, notices will be mailed to everyone
3 who has expressed an interest or is an affected
4 landowner; and copies of the final report will
5 be available on the Galveston district website.

6 So for updates on this study, please
7 visit the Galveston district website at the
8 address shown here; and a copy of this
9 presentation and transcript of today's meeting
10 will be posted on our website. Written
11 comments on the Draft Integrated Feasibility
12 Report and the Environmental Impact Statement
13 can be submitted to us here at the meeting or
14 sent to us by mail or e-mail. All comments
15 need to be submitted by October 26th, and
16 that's the end of the presentation.

17 COLONEL RICHARD PANNELL: Okay. We'll go
18 ahead and move into the comment period. What
19 I'd ask is: Please give all speakers the
20 courtesy of being quiet during their
21 presentation.

22 Please turn off your cell phones, hold
23 applause or other reactions so that we can have
24 an orderly meeting; and be respectful of
25 everyone's time. All individuals have an equal

1 right to be heard.

2 What we're going to do is: We'll start
3 off with our elected officials, resource agency
4 representatives who wish to make a statement.
5 I currently have a list, so I'll go down the
6 list here.

7 Our first speaker that I call forward is
8 Mr. George Tidwell from the Velasco Drainage
9 District.

10 MR. GEORGE TIDWELL: The only thing I
11 think that I'd like to do publicly, we have --
12 as you know -- as a local sponsor, have dealt
13 with you for several years concerning this
14 because we're one of the bookends of the
15 feasibility study as Velasco Drainage District
16 being a local sponsor.

17 And as I've commented to almost everybody
18 involved with the Corps in this study, Velasco
19 Drainage District has some concerns about the
20 study; and we would prefer to work with the
21 Corps as we work through those. I will --
22 Velasco Drainage District will make some public
23 comments in writing. The time is sort of
24 short. 18 days, it's not long to get that all
25 together and read that umpteen-page report, but

1 we'll do what we can.

2 But I'd like just to make some general
3 comments that I think y'all can take back.
4 It's nothing that you haven't heard, I think;
5 but our basic primary concern is -- is that the
6 Corps is intransigent in taking the position
7 that a coastal levee be treated like a riverine
8 levee and it just makes common sense to us in
9 the coastal region that as you consider risk
10 analysis, risk assessment, that you treat a
11 coastal levee the same as riverine levee if
12 it's the same. But if the conditions are
13 different, then you treat them different and
14 evaluate it as a coastal.

15 And y'all know the reason is that a
16 coastal levee has a flood condition that's
17 limited by time. We all know the storm comes
18 in and leaves in a short period of time. It
19 doesn't stay. The flood condition doesn't stay
20 up for six weeks or four weeks or something;
21 it's up in hours.

22 And so our concern is that the Corps takes
23 the position that it stays in a steady
24 condition, and we disagree with that. We'll
25 continue to work with you to try to resolve

1 that.

2 The second comment is -- is that in that
3 same light, we would like the Corps to be more
4 amenable to looking at data that we've used to
5 evaluate our levees and give that a fair
6 evaluation and I'm primarily talking about
7 fragility analysis on the flood slopes of the
8 barge canal. I'm talking about groundwater
9 movement on a sand layer underneath the levee
10 for underseepage; and those, we think, have
11 validity. They're used in the community, and
12 we think that the Corps needs to take a serious
13 look at that and help us evaluate because it
14 does go to risk-based analysis.

15 And the other final comment I think I'll
16 make is: I think you need to take a very hard
17 look at how you communicate and advertise your
18 public hearings. For instance, I don't see
19 anybody from our local newspaper here -- there
20 may be one that I don't know about, but I don't
21 think so. And it is important that the local
22 community -- the taxpayers -- get the
23 opportunity to hear all of this because they're
24 the one that's paying the bill.

25 If we end up being a sponsor -- a

1 partnership -- in this endeavor, then they're
2 going to be footing that bill; and they need to
3 be able to have some comments and make some
4 decisions about whether they want to spend the
5 money to do that based on the assumptions you
6 have made in the study on still water
7 elevation, wave runup, all those kind of things
8 that, to me, based on what I've been told, are
9 rather arbitrary.

10 So with that, I'll write some public
11 written comments; but we will continue, as a
12 local sponsor, to work diligently with the
13 Corps in trying to resolve these. We're glad
14 that those are tentative recommendations rather
15 than final recommendations, and we look forward
16 to meeting with you and discussing all these in
17 a more technical-type atmosphere. Thank you.

18 COLONEL RICHARD PANNELL: Thank you,
19 Mr. Tidwell. Next, I call up Mr. Jason Hull
20 from the Port of Freeport.

21 MR. JASON HULL: I'll try to talk a lot
22 slower than I normally do. I know the
23 stenographer is hard at work over there.

24 Again, Jason Hull, H-U-L-L, director of
25 engineering in Port of Freeport. 200 West 2nd

1 Street, 3rd floor, Freeport, Texas 77541.
2 (979)233-2667.

3 As Sharon mentioned, the flood wall was
4 built shortly after Hurricane Ike, which was
5 September 13th, 2008. The Corps' design had
6 built the flood wall design in 2009 and
7 completed it in 2010 at record speed. The
8 Port, then, objected to the 3-foot-high flood
9 wall under the precedence the dock was built in
10 1954, one was built in 1957, in 1986 and a
11 piece in 2001.

12 The section that was built in 2001 is an
13 open-faced-pile-supported dock, and our friends
14 at the Velasco Drainage District commissioned
15 a -- their district engineer did a study that
16 said that the open-faced dock would lift off or
17 in a storm surge, would be raised and come
18 apart, basically.

19 We are supportive of a design that
20 incorporates some sort of closure like sheet
21 pile driven in front of the dock to close that
22 off with some sort of access panels that we
23 could get in and inspect if we need to so that
24 a wave could not lift that off, as made
25 reference to.

1 Also, the 4-foot-high wall that is
2 proposed -- currently at 3-foot-high -- I think
3 the proposal is to go another foot higher.
4 We're asking for more removable sections of
5 wall, something that would not impede the
6 loading and unloading of cargo.

7 Currently, when a linesman has to tie up a
8 ship, he leans over a 3-foot-high wall and has
9 to tie up between eight, 12, ten lines; and
10 it's a whole lot safer on them if there's a
11 removable section that could be quickly, easily
12 deployed in advance of an oncoming storm and
13 then removed when there's no danger of a storm
14 coming, like most of the time.

15 Also, when you do your final feasibility
16 study, incorporate, please, in the design the
17 cost associated with contract working around
18 ships; our schedules cannot be delayed. It's
19 very important that the ship have priority so
20 that the cargo is unloaded timely and when it
21 leaves, then the contractor can come in and --
22 just like the wall in 2010 was built that way.

23 So please consider that in the cost to the
24 contractor premium, standby time. That's all I
25 have. Thank you.

1 COLONEL RICHARD PANNELL: Thank you,
2 Mr. Hull. Okay. At this point in time, I'm
3 going to start calling on members of the
4 general public. I'd ask when you come up to
5 speak into the microphone and make sure that
6 you identify yourself by your full name and the
7 organization that you represent.

8 The first member of the public I'd like to
9 call is Mr. James Saccomanno.

10 MR. JAMES SACCOMANNO: Good evening.
11 Thank you. My name's James Saccomanno. I'm a
12 retired engineer from BASF, and I live in
13 Freeport, 1507 West 10th Street.

14 And my comment is that the proposal or the
15 plan to raise the levees by one foot seems like
16 a nominal, almost token amount. It's not
17 possible to -- I don't think it's possible to
18 accurately project storm surges. It's
19 essentially making a weather forecast and so
20 it'd seem to me more reasonable to mobilize and
21 spend all that much money to raise the levees
22 to raise them two feet or maybe even higher.

23 And I know there's reasons why you
24 referred to the one foot, but that just seems
25 like an awful nominal amount for the amount of

1 investment that's around this area. Anyway,
2 that's my comment. Thank you very much.

3 COLONEL RICHARD PANNELL: Thank you very
4 much, sir. Okay. Is there anyone else who
5 would like to make a comment? Okay. Since we
6 haven't heard any comments from anyone else,
7 we'll go ahead and conclude this meeting.

8 Written comments on the Draft Integrated
9 Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact
10 Statement must be received on or before
11 October 26th, 2015, the conclusion of the
12 45-day comment period that began on
13 September 11th, 2015.

14 I'd like to thank the General Land Office
15 for their efforts and assistance in preparing
16 for and holding this meeting, and I thank you
17 for your attendance this evening and the
18 interest that you've shown in the project
19 tonight.

20 This meeting is adjourned.

21 (Public comment meeting concluded at 7:43 p.m.)

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