The greatest natural threat posed to the New Orleans area is from hurricane-induced storm surges, waves, and rainfall. To protect the area from this threat, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) was authorized by Congress in 1965 to design and construct a system of levees as part of the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity, Louisiana Hurricane Protection Project. Although federally authorized, the project was a joint federal, state, and local effort. For the levees in the project, the Corps was responsible for design and construction, with the federal government paying 70 percent of the costs and state and local interests paying 30 percent.

As requested, GAO is providing information on the (1) level of protection authorized by Congress for the Lake Pontchartrain project; (2) authorities, roles, and responsibilities of the Corps and local sponsors with respect to the operation, maintenance, repair, replacement, and rehabilitation of the levees; (3) procedures in place to ensure that responsible parties maintain the levees in accordance with the authorized protection level; (4) authorities, roles, and responsibilities of the Corps and local parties when levees fail or are damaged; and (5) plans, capabilities, and activities that have been developed by the Corps to ensure an adequate emergency response when levees fail.

GAO is not making any recommendations at this time.


To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Anu K. Mittal at (202) 512-3841 or mittala@gao.gov.