

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are leading a national discussion to develop an integrated framework for managing reliable levee systems to minimize risk to people and reduce property damage from floods in order to reduce disaster suffering and improve community resiliency in areas behind levees.

There are four major components that are intended to work together to accomplish the goals of the program:

- *National Levee Safety Guidelines*
- *Integrated Levee Management*
- *National Levee Database and Data Collection*
- *Implementation Support*

National Levee Safety Program *Purpose and Scope Overview*

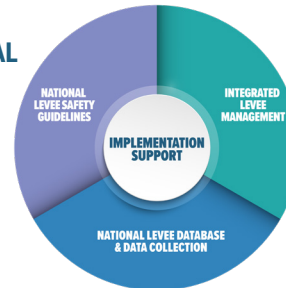
WHY DO WE NEED A NATIONAL LEVEE SAFETY PROGRAM?¹

Responsibility for levee safety is currently distributed across all levels of government. Although levee owners and operators work diligently every year to maintain levees with limited resources, we know that:

- » Much of the levee infrastructure throughout the country is decades old and was built without the benefit of modern engineering practices.
- » Levees are designed, constructed, and managed by various entities, using different processes and standards.
- » Development continues to intensify behind levees, putting more reliance on the levees' ability to perform and the need to consider evacuation and land-use planning for managing flood risk.
- » Much of the public continues to remain unaware of their flood risks or actions they can take to reduce those risks.

WHAT WILL THE NATIONAL LEVEE SAFETY PROGRAM ACCOMPLISH?

The National Levee Safety Program aims to fundamentally improve the way levees are managed in the Nation. Through meaningful stakeholder engagement and dialogue with tribes and all levels of government, the Program intends to develop an integrated, mutually-supportive set of activities, products, and tools including: developing a consistent set of national best practices, standing up state/tribal/federal programs to ensure effective oversight and capacity building, and more efficiently aligning federal programs to reduce conflicts and advance levee safety at the state and local



levels. The goals of these mutually-supportive activities include:

1. Levee owners and all levels of government understand their roles and responsibilities in managing flood risk and creating resilient communities;
2. Levee owners have knowledge and tools to manage levee performance;
3. Communities have access to clear and actionable information regarding the benefits and risks of living with levees;
4. Levee owners and governmental agencies manage levees in a manner to reduce environmental impacts; and
5. Federal agencies will align their programs to support levee-related flood risk management and community resiliency, starting with USACE and FEMA.

MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE NATIONAL LEVEE SAFETY PROGRAM

The National Levee Safety Program has the following integrated components that will work together to improve levee risk management, including:

National Levee Safety Guidelines – The goal of the National Levee Safety Guidelines is to serve as a national resource of voluntary, best practices to help achieve nationwide consistency in improving the reliability of levees and resiliency of communities behind levees throughout the United States.

The guidelines are intended to be used by a variety of audiences such as levee owners/operators, local officials and communities, the private sector, federal, state, regional, and tribal organizations. Primary topics in the National

¹ The National Levee Safety Program is being implemented pursuant to the requirements of Title IX, entitled the National Levee Safety Program, of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2007, as amended (and codified in 33 U.S.C. Chapter 46).

NATIONAL LEVEE SAFETY PROGRAM

Levee Safety Guidelines are anticipated to range from basic concepts and terminology to consistent approaches for the life cycle of a levee. Strategies to reduce flooding impacts to people, property, and the environment such as risk management and risk communication are intended to also be included.

National Levee Database & Data Collection – The goal of the National Levee Database and Data Collection is to be the national resource of the most complete data record for all levees in the Nation to improve flood risk management by:

1. identifying the most critical levee safety issues;
2. understanding the true cost of maintaining levees;
3. quantifying the Nation’s flood risk exposure; and
4. focusing priorities for future funding.

The National Levee Database, found at <https://levees.sec.usace.army.mil>, is intended to serve as a dynamic, searchable inventory of information about all known levee systems in the Nation and be a key resource for supporting decisions and actions affecting levees.

USACE will work to improve the information in the National Levee Database by fulfilling a Congressional requirement to “carry out a one-time inventory and review of all levees in the National Levee Database.” This will help achieve the National Levee Database goals above as well as establish a baseline understanding of the condition and risk of levees in the Nation.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

WINTER
2021

PHASE 1: GATHERING INITIAL INPUT ON PURPOSE & SCOPE

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU ON the purpose and scope of the National Levee Safety Program to include:

- Best practices for levees (design, management, community resiliency, etc.)
- The different roles and responsibilities related to levees
- What data and resources are needed to build a common understanding of levee benefits and risks

BEFORE WE MEET WITH YOU DURING PHASE 2, we will engage experts to:

- Collect and analyze all feedback received during initial scoping (Phase 1)
- Develop additional options and approaches for each of the program’s key components (National Levee Safety Guidelines, National Levee Database & Data Collection and Integrated Levee Management)

FALL
2022

PHASE 2: SOLICIT FEEDBACK ON PRIORITIES & OPTIONS

LET’S DISCUSS WHAT WE LEARNED during initial scoping (Phase 1) and consider some additional options:

- Sample Guidelines chapter/content, emerging issues, and cross-cutting themes
- Options and incentives to promote improved oversight and coordination
- Levee data collection strategy

BEFORE WE MEET WITH YOU DURING PHASE 3, we will engage experts to:

- Collect and analyze feedback received during Phase 2
- Develop draft products

FALL
2023

PHASE 3: SOLICIT FEEDBACK ON DRAFT PRODUCTS

WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO REVIEW our draft products for key elements of the program:

- National Levee Safety Guidelines
- Model Levee Safety Program Guide
- 5-year Implementation Plan

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- In-person stakeholder meetings across the U.S. and territories, leveraging locations with disadvantaged communities
- Virtual webinars
- Announcements in the Federal Register

Integrated Levee Management – The goal of Integrated Levee Management is to align and coordinate levee safety programs across the country to ensure that all levees in the Nation have adequate, consistent oversight regardless of levee ownership. This integration is necessary because agencies at all levels of government contribute to floodplain and levee management, but roles and responsibilities vary and sometimes are not well defined or coordinated. Integrated management of levees will achieve the goal by:

1. clarifying roles and responsibilities to improve coordination and implementation in order to be more complimentary, streamlined, and effective in managing all levees in the Nation; and
2. promoting and encouraging formal levee safety programs at the state level to serve as key integrators with other entities that have levee responsibilities.

Implementation Support – The goal of Implementation Support is to identify and provide various types of assistance, such

as financial, technical, or streamlined processes, to motivate and support participation in the National Levee Safety Program. As the program continues to evolve, there is an intent to put in place processes to continuously review the effectiveness of the program and assess the needs of users. This information will then be used to either improve existing program components or develop new materials or tools to help make further progress in achieving the program objectives.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Robust stakeholder engagement to inform all components of the National Levee Safety Program will occur through a series of in-person regional meetings and webinars over the next 2-3 years. The approach includes an emphasis on understanding specific needs of disadvantaged communities as well as tribes.