



Expiration of the California Central Valley Flood System Improvement Framework

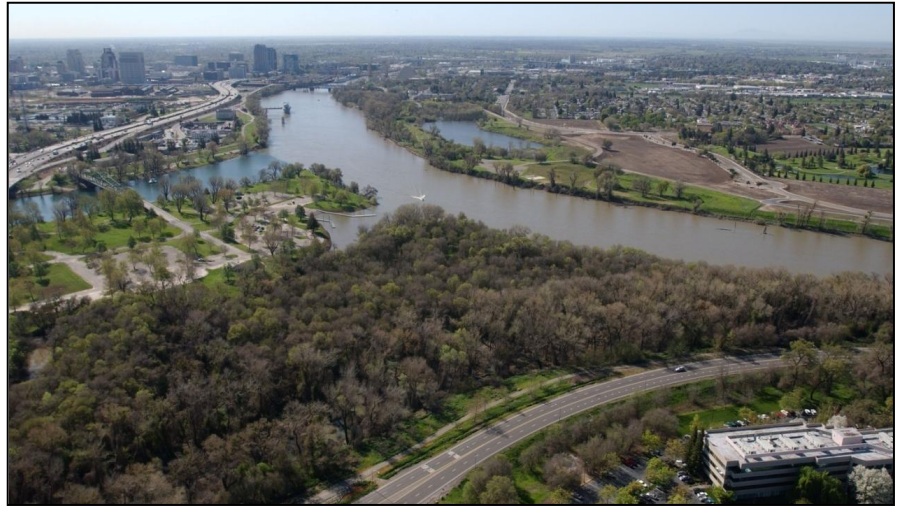
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Background

Aug. 23, 2012

Recognizing the significant challenge of addressing the many, widespread deficiencies throughout Central Valley levee systems, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers worked with the California Central Valley Flood Protection Board, as well as other federal, state and local agencies, through the California Levees Roundtable to develop the [Central Valley Flood System Improvement Framework](#) in 2009. The Framework provided interim guidance for levee maintenance while California's Central Valley Flood Protection Plan was developed, temporarily affording continued federal rehabilitation assistance eligibility for levee systems sponsored by the board with five categories of deficiencies: channel capacity, seepage, erosion and bank caving, encroachments, and vegetation. The purpose of the framework was to allow time for developing a long-term strategy for bringing board-sponsored levees into compliance with Corps levee maintenance standards, a strategy that was intended to be described in the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan. It was further understood that with the adoption of the plan, which became official June 29, 2012, the framework would expire.



17 Central Valley levee systems are now ineligible for federal rehabilitation assistance

Levee safety is a shared responsibility at all levels of government. The Corps sets standards for levee safety, providing rehabilitation assistance to levee maintaining agencies that maintain active status in our Rehabilitation and Inspection Program (RIP), and offering flood fighting assistance in cases of emergency. All Central Valley levees in the Corps' program are operated and maintained by local agencies or the state of California.

During the past four years, the Corps has completed inspections of 32 of the 118 levee systems sponsored by the board while the framework was in effect. Of these, the Corps allowed 17 levee systems to remain active in the RIP that were rated unacceptable according to our maintenance standards. For all 17 systems, the unacceptable rating was due to encroachments and/or erosion and bank caving – their most prevalent and potentially hazardous maintenance deficiencies. While non-compliant vegetation was also found, in none of these 17 systems would it have led to an overall unacceptable system rating, with or without the framework. The Corps previously sent inspection letters to the board providing the details of the deficiencies that caused each system's unacceptable rating. With the adoption of the plan and expiration of the framework, these 17 systems are now inactive in the RIP.

What happens now?

All future levee system inspections conducted by the Corps will use standard inspection procedures using the inspection checklist and the levee operation and maintenance manuals. Regardless of RIP status, the board is still obligated to ensure that levee systems it sponsors are maintained in accordance with their Corps operation and maintenance manuals. The Corps strongly encourages the board to develop system-wide improvement frameworks (SWIFs). This will allow Central Valley levee systems to retain RIP eligibility while system-wide improvements are made in a "worst-first" approach to transition them to Corps standards over time. Regardless of RIP status, the Corps will always provide flood fighting assistance in an emergency, and will continue to work with the state of California and local agencies on existing and future projects to achieve sustainable, long-term flood risk reduction in the Central Valley.

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