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UPDATE

Corps of Engineers Lacking Flood Plan?

Thursday, September 7, 2006; Page A25

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lacks a strategic plan to spend more than \$7 billion approved by Congress for levee and flood-control projects in greater New Orleans, risking a repeat of the piecemeal approach that led to catastrophic systemic failures after Hurricane Katrina last year, congressional auditors reported yesterday.

While the Corps has spent more than \$1 billion to repair southeastern Louisiana's broken levee system by this summer -- more than the \$738 million it cost to build over 40 years -- billions more are coming for further work, such as adding pumps and canal gates, raising and reinforcing levees and storm-proofing pumping stations, the Government Accountability Office said in a report.

The money comes before the Corps outlines a long-term strategy to protect the region from the most powerful hurricanes, due to Congress by December 2007, which early estimates said might cost \$10 billion to \$20 billion, or more.

"We are concerned that the Corps has embarked on a multi-billion repair and construction effort in response to the appropriations it

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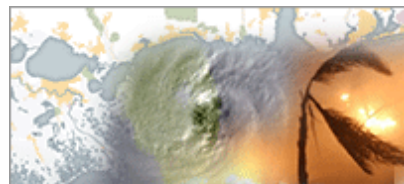
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has already received, without a guiding strategic plan," reported the GAO, Congress's audit arm. The Corps is "once again . . . taking an incremental approach that is based on funding."

U.S. Comptroller General David M. Walker, who heads the GAO, said earmarks by Congress would waste money and time.

"The Corps by itself cannot implement this recommendation," Walker said. "It must achieve cooperation and agreement from Congress."

The Corps concluded that the 350-mile New Orleans flood-control system was "a system in name only" in a 6,000-page report in June, acknowledging major design, construction and maintenance flaws.

-- **Spencer Hsu**

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