



Background

- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Levee Safety Program's number one priority is public safety.
- It is the Corps' belief that clear policies and standards, consistently applied and enforced, are critical components of the Corps Levee Safety Program.
- In order to clarify and better communicate vegetation-management standards, the Corps reviewed its national levee policies and standards and developed the Engineering Technical Letter No. 1110-2-571 *Guidelines for Landscape Planting and Vegetation Management at Levees, Floodwalls, Embankment Dams and Appurtenant Structures* (April 2009).
- The ETL letter does **not** establish new standards, but it does clarify, and supersedes, those formerly presented in EM 1110-2-301 (Jan. 1, 2000)
- An independent external peer review and an independent technical review validated the ETL based on existing and available engineering and scientific data.
- The ETL is available on the Corps' publication website: http://140.194.76.129/publications/eng-tech-ltrs/ETL_1110-2-571/toc.htm



Key Points

- Vegetation and other encroachments can harm the structural integrity of levees, obscure visibility, impede access for maintenance and inspection, and/or hinder emergency flood fighting operations.
- Levees must be properly operated and maintained to reduce the flood risk to communities living and working behind these levees. Inspections are conducted to determine whether levees are being properly operated and maintained.
- Fifteen feet is the minimally accepted vegetation free zone and it is widely views as not sufficient for all projects. To date, no research exists to justify a reduction in the current standards.
- If an existing project easement allows for less than 15 feet, the vegetation free zone shall be the maximum attainable within the existing real estate interest.
- The Corps continues to work with local sponsors to determine the best path forward for areas with noncompliant vegetation and endangered species.
- The ETL standards are not new, and the Corps has considered them critical to flood damage reduction project reliability for decades.