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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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For Immediate Release
February 17, 2012

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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS ACCEPTING PUBLIC COMMENTS ON VEGETATION VARIANCE REQUEST PROCESS

WASHINGTON --The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) today announced the start of a 60-day public comment period on the draft [*Process for Requesting a Variance from Vegetation Standards for Levees and Floodwalls.*](#)

USACE began revising its existing vegetation variance request process issued in 2001 to reflect organizational changes and approaches. Main revisions included:

- Variance requests will be considered on an individual levee system basis to account for site-specific levee and natural resource conditions.
- Variance requests must meet specific technical requirements.
- A technical review and final approval by USACE Headquarters are required to ensure national consistency in approaches and decision-making.
- A corresponding vegetation management plan is required to ensure that vegetation retained on a levee will not increase risk over time from lack of attention.
- Environmental compliance responsibilities were clarified to promote effective collaboration with federal and state natural resource agencies.

USACE posted a draft in the Federal Register the first time for public comment in February 2010, with the comment period ending in April 2010. Following comment review, USACE determined a need to clarify additional overlap with existing authorities and further coordinate with resource agencies at the national level, and delayed issuing the current draft pending further review. USACE responses to the initial public comments are available at www.nfrmp.us/guidance.cfm.

The key revisions between the 2010 and current draft include clarification of responsibilities during the request process; clarification of technical requirements so the likelihood of obtaining an approved vegetation variance is identified early in the process; incorporation of language to ensure resource agencies and Tribal Nations are engaged throughout the process; and description of the overlap with the System-Wide Improvement Framework policy.

Comments must be received by April 17, 2012, and may be submitted at www.regulations.gov under docket number COE-2010-0007.

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