

components of his plan. The “Transition to Green” report suggests that in the first 100 days the president “issue an executive order on ecosystem restoration, including the creation of the Office of Ecosystem Restoration at the Council on Environmental Quality, and highlight ecosystem restoration funding in the President’s budget proposal.”

Environmental groups say the Obama administration would also need to ensure that the Corps protects natural and manmade waterways like the Inter-Coastal Waterway. For instance, in Texas the USACE routinely dredges just three of the area’s 15 channels due to lack of funding, leaving entire shrimping fleets trapped in their docks. Lack of channel dredging also prevents bay systems from receiving the necessary water exchange between gulf and bay to maintain healthy salinity levels and fresh water flushes from rain events and storms.

By their own admission in a 2006 report, it was failures within the Corps that led to the disastrous 2005 flooding of New Orleans from Hurricane Katrina. Mistakes in engineering and design left gaps throughout the New Orleans levee system, and did not account for the sandy foundation that allowed certain levees to sink. Overall, the levee system was never completed and poorly executed, leaving 169 miles of protective barriers damaged and more than 1,570 residents dead.

And Corps’ shortcomings have affected smaller fishing communities, too. In Port Mansfield, Texas, citizens had to petition the Corps through local senators and Congressional representatives to dredge the Port Mansfield Cut—their access to the Gulf. The fight took more than five years and thousands of signatures to get it done. Port Mansfield relies on recreational fishing to keep the community alive. Long-time resident and fishing guide Captain Teddy Springer says, “If the Corps didn’t dig out the ditch, I wouldn’t have a job. We were seeing a decline in our fishing and our big boats couldn’t get out to the gulf.”

Sorvalis adds that, “restoring coastal and aquatic ecosystems throughout the country should be a fully funded national priority with the Corps.”

The greatest challenge facing the Corps is funding. To complete its reconstruction of the New Orleans levee system, the Corps has already spent over \$4 billion of a total \$14 billion set aside by Congress to fix the city’s hundreds of miles of levees by 2011. Still, the 17th Street Canal, one of the most disastrous losses for the city during Katrina, showed signs last May of leaking again, leaving engineers and scientists scrambling. But with a larger, national financial crisis on its hands, the ability for the Obama administration to breathe life back into the Corps, through both reform and greater monetary support, will be a tall order.

CONTACTS: Corps Reform Network, www.corpsreform.org; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, www.usacearmy.mil. **E**

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Growing the First Garden

Daniel Simon knew he wasn’t speeding when the cop pulled up behind him in rural Virginia. It was impossible to go too fast. Turned out the officer was just curious—he’d never seen an upside-down school bus with a garden on top. “It gets better,” says Simon. “He was more than happy to sign our petition.”

Simon and his partner, Casey Gustowarow, are on a mobile campaign to get the First Family to grow veggies on the White House lawn. Says Gustowarow: “We are calling for our new President to be the healthiest, homegrown, leading-by-example eater he can possibly be!” Their WHOFarm campaign (a.k.a., The White House Organic Farm Project) is calling on President Obama to model organic, sustainable, low-carbon farming for the nation and the world.

Meanwhile, Roger Doiron, founding director of Kitchen Gardeners International, is doing the same thing, but on the information superhighway. His online “Eat the View” campaign is as lean as his frame, costing less than \$5,000 since its kickoff a year ago. “I think it’s important that we walk the talk by showing that social change—and organic gardening and food—doesn’t have to be costly, for us or the planet,” he says. Between them, the two friendly competitors have gathered 10,000 signatures, reaching millions more, potentially, through publicity and online efforts.

Roger says the Obamas would only need to commit one acre of the First Lawn for a viable organic garden. “By our calculations, an acre garden would produce enough delicious, seasonal produce to meet the White House kitchen’s needs and then some,” he says. “Surplus from the new ‘First Garden’ would go to supply local food pantries in the Washington, D.C., area.” WHOFarm would like to see public school kids and people with disabilities working on the farm crew. Eleanor Roosevelt was the last First Lady to grow her own vegetables at the White House—her WWII “victory garden” sparked a national gardening movement.

CONTACTS: Eat the View, www.eattheview.org; Kitchen Gardeners International, www.kitchengardeners.org; TheWhoFarm, www.TheWhoFarm.org. —*Jenifer Joy Madden* **E**

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Daniel Simon, Chef Scott Peacock and Casey Gustowarow of the White House Organic Farm Project.