

Clay shortage hampers levee rebuilding

by UPI

NEW ORLEANS -- One big problem in repairing the levees in the New Orleans area is a shortage of clay, officials say. Soheila Holley, a program manager with the Army Corps of Engineers, said the agency has obtained only 20 million cubic yards of clay for the rebuilding, with another 50 million cubic yards being tested, USA Today reports. At best, that is less than half of the 145 million cubic yards engineers believe will be needed. "This is one of the most complex issues of the hurricane protection system," Holley said. Robert Bea, an engineering professor at the University of California who has studied New Orleans levees, said that soon after Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, some entrepreneurs saw an opportunity. They became brokers, buying property to be mined for clay and sold to the Corps. The Corps was doing its own clay acquisition. But the brokers mean that it must now pay a higher price.

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