A new report by the National Research Council gives “thumbs down” to the Army Corps’ plans for preventing another Katrina disaster. This is the kind of planning that we simply have to learn to do right– not just for the sake of those immediately at risk, but because rising sea level and more extreme weather events due to climate change will require similar planning elsewhere.

The NRC pans the Corps’ plan in no uncertain terms:

> Despite being given authority from the U.S. Congress for this project over three years ago, the LACPR draft final technical report does not offer a comprehensive long-term plan for structural, nonstructural, and restoration measures across coastal Louisiana, nor does it suggest any initial, high-priority steps that might be implemented in the short term. Instead, a variety of different types of structural and nonstructural options are presented, with no priorities for implementation.

In addition, the NRC faults the lack of cooperation between the feds and state authorities:

> Comprehensive and effective hurricane protection and restoration in coastal Louisiana will entail cooperation among several entities, but especially between the Corps of Engineers and the State of Louisiana (as called for in the federal legislation). The Corps and the State of Louisiana have issued separate reports on hurricane protection and coastal restoration with what appears to be only limited efforts to synchronize them. Closer cooperation and collaboration between the Corps and the state will be essential for financing, technical planning and project implementation, monitoring, and adaptation.

In addition, the NRC complains about the failure to consider scientific uncertainty in terms of plans for wetlands restoration and the absence of a quantitative risk analysis for levees.

Some coauthors and I wrote a paper on “reinventing flood control” a couple of

years ago, giving some ideas about how our society could do better in planning for flood control. Unfortunately, those ideas remain as relevant today as they were then.

Our society needs to do better than this.