

The Netherlands and the U.S. : A friendship forged by water

“The Netherlands and the United States are each other’s best ally in times of flood or water-related disasters,” said Ambassador Renée Jones-Bos. “The United States helped the Dutch during our 1953 flood, and Dutch help was on its way to the Gulf Coast within hours of Katrina's landfall in 2005”.

And our relationship grows deeper each day. Whether it is the Dutch learning from the U.S. approach to emergency management, or the U.S. learning how the Dutch live with water.

U.S. Aid to the 1953 floods in the Netherlands



A loaded amphibian DUKW tows a broken down lorry, also loaded with refugees, during rescue operations on the devastated Zuid Beveland, Zeeland, Feb. 6, 1953. Photo: AP

During the 1953 floods in Zeeland, the United States provided 300,000 sandbags, 20,000 spades, drinking water purification tablets, 6.5 tons of blankets and clothing items. Nearly 2,000 United States soldiers, that were stationed in Germany, participated in the rescue work.

914 people were rescued by air (including 893 with helicopters). The American DUKWs provided an important role during the rescue operations: 758 persons and 659 animals were rescued. They transported 17,725 laborers and soldiers.

Dutch Aid after Hurricane Katrina, August 2005

Within hours of the hurricane's landfall, the Netherlands dispatched a Dutch Royal Navy frigate with search and rescue helicopters on board and provided mobile pumps and other critical supplies to Louisiana. Dutch companies and government agencies assisted in dewatering New Orleans, led inspections of levees, provided guidance on emergency repairs to levees and flood control structures, and conducted geotechnical analysis of soils impacted by flooding.



The Netherlands sent experts on the subject of water containment and dikes, identification teams and pumps to deliver clean drinking water, F-16s with sophisticated infra red or thermography camera pods (to look for weaknesses in the levees, corpses and hidden survivors) and divers from the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps

Dutch Navy helps victims of Hurricane Katrina Photo: Dutch Ministry of Defense

Today, the Netherlands continues to cooperate with U.S., Louisiana and New Orleans officials on water management issues, helping restore a great American city and making sure it has the defenses to endure future challenges.

On January 28, 2013, the Dutch Postal Services issued a postal stamp depicting the largest pump station in the world, now part of the New Orleans storm barrier.

It is an example of U.S. - Dutch cooperation in the field of water management and one of the prestigious design projects of ARCADIS, a Dutch engineering firm that celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2013.

