

# New Levees Committee

**Elena Sossenkina, Chair, USSD Committee on Levees**

Congratulations! Levees have been officially recognized as a technical area by ICOLD. During the 85th Annual Meeting in Prague, the General Assembly, with representation from each of the ICOLD member countries, voted to establish a Technical Committee on Levees. The new committee will address technical, governance and policy issues related to levee systems.

The committee will build upon ongoing collaboration between the USSD Levee Committee and the Working Group on Levees and Flood Defenses (WG LFD) of the European Club of ICOLD, which consists of 12 countries (Czech Republic, England, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland). Many other countries expressed interest in joining the new committee, including Australia, Austria, Cameroon, Canada, China, Iran, Ireland, Korea, Morocco, Mozambique, New Zealand and Russia. The committee will be chaired by Remy Tourment of France, who leads the WG LFD. Elena Sossenkina, Chair of USSD Levee Committee and the U.S. Levee Safety Coalition, will serve as Vice Chair.

Considering levees as part of ICOLD is a major milestone in the development of an international community of practice on levees and the result of years of concerted efforts by several countries led by the U.S., France, the Netherlands and UK. Why ICOLD? After all, it is the International Commission on LARGE dams. The answer is simple. ICOLD has the right experts and the organizational framework to champion these efforts. Dams and levees are similar in many regards, but with distinct differences and unique technical challenges. Examples of common topics include internal erosion, breach analysis, consequences assessment, flood hydrology, concrete aging, public education and awareness, risk analysis, and use of geotextiles. Similar to tailings dams and waste lagoons, it makes sense to draw upon expertise of ICOLD members and focus on unique aspects of levees, floodwalls and other flood control structures. Further, dams and levees often act as a system and should be considered together when developing or evaluating multi-purpose reservoirs and flood risk reduction projects. Finally, levees have a scope and scale similar to dams in many countries and integrating levees provides an opportunity to grow ICOLD membership. This is a natural fit for ICOLD and an opportunity to lead the profession.

ICOLD is a dynamic organization and continues to evolve to meet the needs of its growing and diverse membership. When established in 1928, ICOLD's goal was to encourage advances in the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of large dams and their associated civil works, by sharing relevant information and studying related technical questions. Since the late 1960s, focus was shifted to dam safety, monitoring of performance, effects of aging, and environmental issues. More recently, subjects were added to address new challenges faced by the profession in the 21st century, including building and maintaining capacity, managing international rivers, adapting to climate change, financing, and promoting sustainable development of water resources. USSD applauds ICOLD for raising the visibility of levees and providing an international forum for exchange of knowledge and best practices for design, construction, operation and management of levees.