

December 14, 2012

Ms. Lisa Jackson
Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Mr. Daniel M. Ashe
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 330
Arlington, VA 22203

Dear Administrator Jackson and Director Ashe,

For decades, the Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), United States Department of Agriculture, and Environmental Protection Agency have been working on issues related to the management of the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway in the Bootheel of Missouri. As you know, there is a 1,500 foot gap in the levee protecting this region that results in frequent flooding of surrounding farmland by the Mississippi River. In addition, rainwater also regularly floods the towns of Charleston, East Prairie and parts of Sikeston, Missouri due to inadequate drainage.

The residents of this area deserve the same level of flood control provided all others along the Mississippi River. As you can imagine, the stops and starts in Federal efforts to improve flood control in this region over the last few decades have been frustrating for my constituents, who remain anxious for the multiple federal agencies involved to better coordinate their efforts, reach final agreement on a solution and take definitive action to resolve the matter. While a major flood control project to close the gap was once approved, funded and under construction, the permit was challenged, and in 2007 a federal judge ruled that the project couldn't move forward due to technical concerns within the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that authorized the permitting.

Following the ruling, the Corps tore down what had been built, and since 2007 the Corps has been dealing with inter-agency regulatory matters in order to complete a supplemental EIS that will address the concerns contained in the court ruling. An EIS, as well as four additional Supplemental EIS, have been conducted on this project since the 1990s. However, presentation to the public of the most recently completed Supplemental EIS, scheduled for September 14, 2012, was delayed when your agencies failed to reach consensus on the final report.

My constituents deserve to have a final answer regarding this project. The ongoing uncertainty and delays in reaching a final resolution to improving flood control along the St. Johns Bayou and in the New Madrid Floodway are unacceptable. I urge your agencies to reach resolution with the Corps within the next 30 days and for the newest Supplemental EIS to be presented to the public within the next 60 days. If this is not possible, please send me a written response explaining in detail the cause for the delay and the plan for reaching a timely resolution, including a clear timeline and a detailed description of the responsibilities for each agency involved in reaching a decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Claire McCaskill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Claire" written in a large, circular loop.

Claire McCaskill
United States Senator

Cc: Assistant Secretary Jo-Ellen Darcy