US Army Corps of Engineers®
Memphis District

News Release

Release No.	Contact:
PA-02-19	Shawn Phillips
For Release:	Phone:
Immediately	901-544-3321

Corps releases revised floodway Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

MEMPHIS, Tenn., July 10, 2002 – The Memphis District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expects to release the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway Final Revised Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (RSEIS) on July 19th. The report will then undergo a 30-day period for state and agency review. Concurrent with this process, the documents will be sent to the Environmental Protection Agency for comment, and to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources for water quality certification. These actions will complete the Corps' requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act prior to final decision-making.

The recommended plan for flood protection calls for constructing a 1,500-foot closure levee and pumping station at the lower end of the New Madrid Floodway and a pumping station at the southern end of the St. Johns Bayou basin. The pumping stations evacuate interior floodwater during Mississippi River flooding.

– MORE –

Channel improvements are limited to those in the St. Johns Bayou basin required to aid in conveying interior floodwater to the St. Johns Bayou pumping station. The recommended plan also calls for reforestation of 8,375 acres of cropland, more than doubling area bottomland hardwoods. The recommended plan will result in an average annual net benefit to the economy, no net loss of fish and wildlife habitat, and improved habitat quality for fish and wildlife.

The revised plan for the St. John's Bayou-New Madrid Floodway Project is the result of an intense effort by the Corps to address ecological concerns, while also reducing regional economic and cultural suffering caused by frequent agricultural and urban flooding. Working closely with the Environmental Protection Agency, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and Missouri Department of Conservation, the Corps added innovative measures to offset environmental impacts

For example, through a cooperative effort with MDNR and other environmental groups, the plan will preserve the old growth bottomland hardwood forest in the Big Oak Tree State Park. The Corps will purchase adjacent lands to allow MDNR to pump ground and surface water into the park for periodic inundation. This will save the old-growth forest that would otherwise have continued to deteriorate. The revised plan also addresses environmental concerns (raised during project development) by allowing for a connection between the Mississippi River and the New Madrid Floodway during the critical spring fish reproductive period.

Opening flood control gates until mid-May will make the connection possible. The gate management approach will also allow for the inundation of up to 2,000 acres more in the lower Floodway than in previous plans, thereby reducing impacts to wetlands and fish.

Additional fish habitat improvement measures will provide vegetative buffer strips up to 100-feet-wide, along 64 miles of stream and channels in the Floodway. These strips benefit the surface water by providing shade, structure, and filtering of runoff. Constructing in-stream structures for the Floodway's larger channels will also enhance fish habitat. Planting a vegetative corridor between Big Oak Tree State Park to the Ten Mile Pond Wildlife Conservation Area will enhance wildlife habitat in the entire area.

Moreover, the project mitigation plan will reforest 8,375 acres -- more than doubling the bottomland hardwoods in the St. John's Bayou area. These reforested lands will also increase wildlife habitat and provide important wetland functions for the region's overall ecology. The Corps will purchase the mitigation lands from willing sellers in areas suggested by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Missouri Department of Conservation.

In keeping with the Corps' environmental operating principles, the St. John's Bayou – New Madrid Floodway Project seeks a balance and synergy between human development activities and natural systems by offering an environmentally sustainable solution that supports and reinforces the needs of both.

– MORE –

St. Johns 4-4-4-4

Earlier this year the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers developed and implemented a set of Environmental Operating Principles. These principles were applied in the formulation of the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway Final RSEIS. More information on the Environmental Operating Principles can be found on the internet at

www.hq.usace.army.mil/cepa/envprinciples.htm

Additional information on the Final RSEIS will be available beginning July 12 on the internet at

www.mvm.usace.army.mil/sjdefault.asp

- 30 -