

Milestone ceremony set Friday for St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Flood Project

A ceremony to celebrate the completion of requirements for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway Project is scheduled for 10 a.m. on Friday, October 10, 2003.

Completing the NEPA requirements clears the way for resuming construction of the project.

The ceremony will begin at the St. Johns Bayou Outlet Structure on Highway WW east of New Madrid,

then move to Big Oak Tree State Park for a ceremonial tree (acorn) planting and catfish luncheon with the James Bayou Cookers.

Les Brownlee, Under Secretary of the Army, U.S. Senators Christopher "Kit" Bond, Jim Talent, and Bill Foster, and U.S. Representative Jo Ann Emerson are expected to attend the event.

Other speakers will include Col. Jack V. Scherer, Memphis District Engineer, and Brig. Gen. Don T. Riley,

Division Engineer, Mississippi Valley Division from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Jim Robinson and Lynn Bock will give historical perspectives about the project.

"This is a historic day for folks in southeast Missouri who have waited for generations to be permitted protection from flooding," stated Senator Kit Bond. "I thank the Corps for bringing this process to

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conclusion. I congratulate the citizens of Pinhook, East Prairie, New Madrid and the surrounding area for their perseverance and patience. I congratulate Cong. Emerson for her tireless leadership, and I know that the original champion for these people, Bill Emerson, is high in the heavens celebrating in spirit with his brave constituents."

Representative Jo Ann Emerson also extended her congratulations.

"I join the residents of Scott, New Madrid, and Mississippi Counties when I say we are elated construction will soon be underway," said Representative Emerson. "The St. Johns Bayou - New Madrid Floodway Project is a necessity for flood protection in Southeast Missouri. I am

proud of all the hard work put in to this point, as well as the work yet to come, that will protect people, property and habitat from the devastation of floods."

The overall purpose of the St. Johns flood control project is to protect the region from backwater flooding from the Mississippi River and to reduce headwater flooding in the vicinity of East Prairie.

This project also allows for the management of natural and recreational resources.

More than 8,300 acres of land will be purchased and managed for fish and wildlife. Most of this acreage will be cropland that will be reforested.

Seasonal ponding for waterfowl will occur on up to 6,400 acres and 2,000

acres will be allowed to flood during the spring fish spawning and rearing season.

The St. John's Bayou-New Madrid Floodway Project (SJNM) represents an intense effort by the Corps to address ecological and environmental concerns, while also reducing regional personal and economic suffering caused by frequent agricultural and urban flooding.

The Corps coordinated with the Environmental Protection Agency, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Missouri Department of Conservation and local interests to add innovative measures to address concerns regarding environmental impacts.