

JASON SMITH
8TH DISTRICT, MISSOURI

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2508

November 25, 2013

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Mr. Joshua Koontz
NEPA Coordinator
Upper Delta Environmental Compliance Branch
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Joshua.m.koontz@usace.army.mil

Re: Concerns with the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway Project.

Dear Mr. Joshua Koontz:

On behalf of the thousands of constituents from my district who live and work in the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway area, I write urging you to revisit certain decisions made by the US Army Corps of Engineers regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS") for the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway Project ("Project").

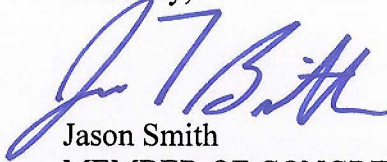
While I am in favor of the Project, I completely oppose attempts to build an environmental project with flood control money. This Project, originally authorized in 1954, has always had a clear and explicit purpose to provide only for flood protection. The locals from my district and the surrounding region are frustrated with the 50 plus year delay of this Project. Flood control is a priority for the region, but instead of tackling the problem head on, the Corps of Engineers has continually delayed the flood control issue and turned it into an environmental development.

This two-part Project was designed to provide flood control for the St. Johns Bayou, which is home to about 34,000 residents, and to protect farmland from backwater flooding in the Birds Point-New Madrid Floodway. As many residents have expressed, the EIS places too much emphasis on habitat mitigation. The Project has increased environmental protections at the expense of flood control and economic concerns. The EIS fails to account for the residents who have experienced the effects of backwater flooding of the Mississippi River for years. It neglects to consider my constituents who have suffered significant economic losses from the detrimental impact floods have on their crops and property. It neglects communities like East Prairie, Missouri, where years of flooding has led to continued damage to roads, drainage, and sewer treatment facilities.

The small towns in Southeast Missouri face many challenges and should not have to suffer more at the hands of an agency whose greatest purpose should be protecting persons and property from flood waters. Many farmers cannot even use arable land for high value crops in most areas of the floodway or the St. Johns Basin because of the potential for backwater flooding. This has a severe impact on their ability to farm and use their property to make a living. Even more appalling to me is the continued efforts to put the interests of environmentalists on the East and West Coasts ahead of the local economies and communities impacted by this project.

In light of these concerns, I urge the Corps of Engineers to revise the EIS to focus primarily on flood control and to take into account the devastating economic impact the backwater flooding has had on the region's farmers and residents. Congress has already approved this Project and it's time we move forward to complete it for the primary purpose for which it was written: flood control. I appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jason Smith
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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