

November 25, 2013

Mr. Joshua Koontz  
NEPA Coordinator  
Upper Delta Compliance Branch  
167 North Main, Room 202  
Memphis, Tennessee 38103-1894

Dear Mr. Koontz:

Over the next several months, important decisions will be made on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway Project. Citizens of this region have waited decades for a final decision on the project. No matter the outcome, these individuals deserve adequate flood protection.

I am pleased the EIS has finally been made public for comments; however, many aspects of the plan concern the project's sponsor, the St. Johns Levee and Drainage District. As originally authorized by Congress in 1954, the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway Project's intent was to provide flood protection to the New Madrid Floodway and St. Johns Bayou Basin. Many believe the EIS does not adhere to that authorized purpose.

I remain concerned about the Environmental Protection Agency's definition of "agricultural wetlands" and whether the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) will be the lead agency responsible for identifying wetlands on farmland. Mitigation is another issue in the EIS which I remained concerned about. The question remains whether the EIS will be based on various agencies' opinions or agreed upon facts.

On August 27, 2013, East Prairie Mayor Kevin Mainord testified at the public hearing on the EIS held in East Prairie and noted the most important reason for the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway Project – the impact on human beings. Residents in the St. Johns Bayou Basin and farmers impacted by back water flooding have waited decades for this project to be resolved. Over the course of the next several months, I look forward to the USACE refining the EIS, hopefully resulting in a sound plan which benefits future generations.

Thank you for your time and dedication preparing the EIS. I look forward to further updates from the USACE as the final decision is made.

Sincere regards,

Roy Blunt  
United States Senator

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