

28AUG13, Cairo, IL, Public Meeting on draft Environmental Impact Statement for the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway Project Transcript of Public Statements

1st Speaker, Cairo Mayor Tyrone Coleman: I'd like to first start off by saying good evening to everyone, and also welcome to the City of Cairo for those of you who come in for this particular meeting. To Col. Anderson, whom I've just had the recent pleasure to meet, to those of the reception desk, Mr. Ward. I've already submitted a written statement to the Commission, and I've already spoken publicly at another public meeting. And since that time of the submission of the written statement and the public meeting where I spoke at, I've done what I've considered to be more study and information that I've come across. And I still don't yet see anything would cause me to change my stance in opposition to the New Madrid Floodway Plain plan project. As I stated earlier, or before, I don't have a problem with the, with the Bayou Basin project. And as I said, everything that I've come across hasn't made me change my thought about this New Madrid project. I did come across something and it more or less said something that speaks to my thought process, this is something that was said back in 1927 by then Maj. General Edgar Jadwin. And his quote was this: "Man must not try to restrict the Mississippi River too much in extreme floods. The river will break any plan which does this. It must have the room it needs." And to me that says everything in regards to this particular situation. I'm still one who believes in placing human life and even fish and wildlife over agricultural benefits. So as I said, I just want to get up and just restate what I said and what's been submitted to the commission for record. And I'll continue to do some research and study, to see whether or not I come across something that'll change my mind. But to this point I still haven't come across anything. And I've also been privy to information tonight regarding the meeting that was held in East Prairie, and I was told that Miss Dunn that you were at the East Prairie last night. And I am appreciative for your expression at that meeting to represent Illinois. Thanks.

2nd Speaker No Name Given (Alexander Cairo Port Authority): I don't really have anything to say, and I'm not going to come up there. The main concern for the people and residents around here is the New Madrid Floodway and the operation of that Floodway. There is a big concern that if you spend \$165 million on this project, will you be willing to go ahead and flood that in the time of need? And that's basically all I wanted to say.

3rd Speaker Ken Goodbread: I'm sorry; I was under the wrong impression here of what, well, all you were saying tonight was that you're trying to protect the farmers and the heck with the people on the side of, you know, on the, you know, Illinois side of the river that live there. That's all I'm seeing out of everything you've said tonight. You aren't saying nothing about what this water, you said it don't, you said that it doesn't push water on the other side. Were you here during that flood of 2011? I wish you had been at my campground. Okay. That's all I've got to say about it.

4th Speaker, Bruce Morrison: Thank you Mr. Ward, and thank you community for hosting. My name is Bruce Morrison, and I am a lawyer from St. Louis at Great Rivers Environmental Law Center, and what I have to say to you tonight is really largely the opinion of not just the opinion of the environmental community, but also some conservative taxpayer organizations that work with us, as well as conservationists, hunters, fishers. We oppose that part of the project that is the New Madrid Levee project. We don't oppose the St. John's Bayou Basin project. These are two separate projects that the Corps has lumped into one. St. John's Bayou Basin by itself as an

alternative that is not the tentatively selected plan, but is a viable plan. St. John's Bayou Basin project exists to protect infrastructure, buildings, people; money should be spent for that. But the New Madrid Levee project is, is the New Madrid, the floodway there that would be closed off by the New Madrid Levee, that floodway is to protect Illinois' infrastructure, buildings, people. That needs to stay a floodway. And to see that the levee doesn't happen, we need you. We, we need your voice. We are safe, but I'm 140 miles away; you are at ground zero, you bear the flood risk. We need the Illinois communities to make their voices speak out to the Corps, and we're here to help see that happen. We've got literally in our law center alone, about a thousand attorney hours that are already funded to devote to this project which can include helping you make comments. And that's without expense to you. There are other thousands of hours that are available out of D.C. lawyers as well. Why is this well funded? Why is this so important? Well, the Corps' own independent peer review panel characterizes the New Madrid Levee project as, if it goes forward, the straw that broke the camel's back. That's how detrimental it can be. EPA, regional administrator, "the largest negative impact on wetlands and streams of any project ever proposed in Region 7." US Fish and Wildlife Service, "substantial irretrievable losses of national significant resources." For the environmental community, there is not a higher priority than stopping the New Madrid Levee project. And, it's not just the environmental community. Conservationists, I've heard this term last week, this is a circle of insanity as one said to me. We build levees at taxpayer's expense, hundreds of millions of dollars. We blow them up and rebuild them at millions more, and we spend millions more paying for the damage. Country can't afford it, you and I as taxpayers cannot afford it. And the lesson from the flood of 2011 is that more connections are needed between the river and the floodplain and not less. So why, why are we talking about a project that's going to sever yet another connection? This is undeveloped land in a designated floodway; it's not a question of protecting people's lives, buildings, and roads. So, the benefit, you've heard the benefit? The benefit goes to about 100 farm families who now profit if the levee is built, so there will be more profit. The discussion of protecting infrastructure, the discussion about isolation, community isolation, St. John's Bayou Basin, by all means, that's a drainage issue that needs to be fixed, but the New Madrid Levee, that's something different. There's the benefits. The cost goes to you and I taxpayers, \$107 million dollars to build that levee, several million more every year to maintain it. So we oppose it. And we oppose it for those reasons; we need you alongside us. I'd appreciate it if you'd stop by before you leave; I'd like to give you my contact information, share a flyer with you, and happy to be talking with you and getting your voice heard. Thank you very much.

5th Speaker, Barbara McKassen, Sierra Club: Well, I'm going to probably be echoing a lot of what Bruce Morrison just said, but I am here to represent Shawnee Group Sierra Club, Sierra Club in general policies. First of all, we also advocate that the Corps of Engineers separate these two very different projects. The New Madrid Floodway has a connection to the Mississippi River with flooding, in large part caused by rising waters of the river. And that's had a much more dynamic and higher quality wetland. The St. John's Basin has lost its connection to the river, so most of that basin's flooding problems are caused by rain events and not by the flooding from the river. The two areas call for two very different solutions and that should be considered separately, which is how we will also address these two projects. They were originally two separate projects. We strongly oppose the proposed New Madrid Levee that would close the one-fourth of a mile opening, which is the last connection between the Mississippi River and the backwaters in the whole state of Missouri. And one of only a handful of such connections left in

the whole lower Mississippi River. This is a nationally significant resource. As such, maintaining this connection should be given top priority, top Priority. Not just one of a list. It is so rare; only a handful. So that's why it should be given top priority in balancing the conflicting interests in the New Madrid Floodway. We agree with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in their statement on the New Madrid Floodway that, and I quote, "When the connection is closed, there's no way to replace or compensate for the multiple and permanent losses. This resource cannot be replicated elsewhere." Thus the proposed wetland mitigation proposed by the Corps in their preferred alternative cannot possibly replace what would be lost if a levee is built across this last remaining connection in Missouri between the floodway, the floodplain of the Mississippi River and the river itself. What would be lost with the loss of the present dynamic connection would be spawning and nursery area for fish in the Mississippi River, with a large negative impact on fish populations, which could cause collapse of fish populations in the middle Mississippi River, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service and other scientists who study this. The loss of the connection would also have an enormous effect on the wetlands in the floodway and an enormous negative effect on the shorebirds, waterfowl, and other wildlife that depend on the area. The lesson we all need to learn from the 2011 flood is that we need more connections between the Mississippi River and its natural floodplain, and not less. The floodplain provides ecosystem services that are difficult and costly to reproduce. The natural floodplain has the capacity to manage highly variable levels of water by absorbing and holding back water and letting it drain gradually, which is useful in both a flood, such as we had in 2011 and the drought such as we had in 2012. We do support a modified St. John's Basin project. We would oppose the enormous pumps to dewater water areas and support common sense and less costly measures such as sewer repairs, an appropriate drainage plan, and other protections for the City of East Prairie and other communities in the Basin. We strongly disagree with the Corps statement that their proposed project would not harm Illinois communities. In 2011, the Corps was prevented from blasting open the Birds Point Levee and downstream levees, and held just in time to prevent massive flooding in Cairo, Metropolis, Mounds, Mound City, Paducah, and points in between. It was not in time to prevent significant flooding in Metropolis and Olive Branch. Since the Corps built the levee across the southern end of the floodway, landowners in the floodway would be given a false sense of security, and would likely invest in increased development in the floodway. This would make it harder politically for the Corps to blow open the levee, and maybe in the legal system too. And probably delay the relief of floodwaters in Illinois and Kentucky even longer. With global climate change, extreme droughts, and floods are predicted to increase in number, we should not assume that it will be a long time before another big flood. This gives us another reason to adapt now to these changing conditions by mitigating floods with more backwaters and wetlands open to the Mississippi River. If we do not adapt, we could easily have more drastic consequences than we experienced in 2011, with increased damaged and harming more people than Illinois and Missouri and Kentucky. Thank you.

6th Speaker, Corinna Lang: Hello. I'm glad I was able to speak here tonight. I'm a long-time resident of southern Illinois, and I admit that I just recently became acquainted with this issue. But I'm hearing people speak tonight and I'm really, I thought Barb was very eloquent and made so many good points that I think everyone should take to heart. And the previous speaker before her, I'm sorry I don't remember your name, the lawyer from St. Louis, had a lot of great things to say. I want to say that the mayor from Cairo, I really felt that the quote he used about trying to

control the river was very profound. And all these things I'm hearing tonight, I feel like it's, excuse my simplicity in describing this, but I feel like it's when you're trying to cut your hair; and you're cutting one side and you realize you've got it uneven with the other side, and then you cut this side and oh, it's a little shorter, and you cut this side. And eventually you end up with this, who knows, you know. And so that's all I really want to say; just trying to point out the folly of this, it seems like a bureaucratic mess. And I agree that we should not be trying to control a force of nature, and we should preserve whatever little parts we have left. And let it regain the natural integrity, integrity it once had before we started interfering. Thank you.

7th Speaker, John Swegman: Thank you. I put down the Sierra Club because that's just the organization I am with. I'm from Metropolis, and several people have mentioned the fact that we were kind of in no man's land back in 2011. And over there on the Lower Ohio River we have lots of bottomlands and they're not levee'd off. The government doesn't protect those lands for everybody. We have the Black bottoms opposite Paducah, 20 square miles of floodplain. Good farmland. The farmers have enough sense to live on the high terrace back from that and farm it from there. There are no homes, nobody living there, nobody there, so you don't have to worry about people getting from community to community out there. There are no communities out there. That's a nice way of thinking what the floodway should be, it could be good farmland most of the time, but there should not be the political people who will, people who built things out there and you worry about their roads getting flooded so they can get to their house. Even if they put them up on stilts, and I know that's one way they can live out there now, I think, and still get flood insurance from the government, they're living up in the air, but they still can't get from house to house. It's just, in my opinion, there just should not be people living in the floodplain, in the floodway. And it should be, and it definitely shouldn't be encouraging people to move in there by building this New Madrid Levee because also even more people will get in there. We were in Metropolis, my son told me it was a mile and a half back from the river, somewhere around the high ground that Metropolis was built on. And we were amazed when that last weekend of heavy rains, the prediction was up 3 or more feet and we were going to get 2 1/2 feet of floodwater in my son's home, and it never flooded before. And it was built in 1955. And as we were sitting there eating breakfast and we heard that the crest had been raised 3 feet, we just wondered why the Corps wasn't doing something about this. Why, why the levee wasn't, you know, we had a floodway and we were all about to get flooded, and it wasn't being activated. So we called Senator Durbin's office in Washington right after breakfast. The people that answered the phone there didn't even know what the issue was about. And we called our congressman, and the same thing. Somehow the Illinois representatives weren't on the ball, and they didn't know what was going on. So anyway, we had everybody call that could call. And then we started moving furniture out of my son's house, and setting a few things up on the cabinets and moving them all out to our garage. And we got done about 10 o'clock that night, and we set down to rest. We just got all the stuff moved into our garage and we heard the boom and we felt the shake. And we knew, blew the levee, and you, I thank you right now, you saved, you saved tens of thousands of dollars in our family. But we know another close friend and family that lost \$30,000 because you didn't blow it a day earlier. So it's just, it's not all a matter of wildlife habitat, of course I'm very concerned with that too. And we operate in the black bottom areas of Massac County, where my wife and I are part of a non-profit corporation that manages to save historic Indian mounds sites there. And we know we can't build a building down there. We have, everything we have is flood proof; it gets inundated. And I think people

can learn to live with, in a floodplain like that. You just have to make that case. I don't know what it would cost to buy out the housing rights of the people who are in there, but that would be my suggestion.

8th Speaker, Jeff Denny Alexander County: I'm Jeff Denny, Alexander County engineer. I'm opposed to the alternative selected in the draft environmental impact statement for the St. John's Basin/New Madrid Floodway project. I want to clarify my opposition. I'm only opposed to the New Madrid portion of the project and want to go on record as supporting the St. John's Basin portion of the project. The drainage and levee improvements and the pump station in the St. John's Basin, I believe, are excellent, long-overdue projects. My opposition to the New Madrid portion of the project is strictly over concerns with the operation of the floodway. The State of Missouri has sued the Corps of Engineers every time the Corps has made either a physical change or a change to the operational plan of the floodway. Building this project would result, I believe, in several additional rounds of legal challenges, possibly resulting in the Corps losing the legal authorization to operate the floodway. And this is not just a Cairo Levee issue, as the media like to portray. The levees in western Kentucky and Missouri, including the Commerce to Bird's Point Levee, are all designed, are not designed to withstand any flood event. They were all designed with the New Madrid Floodway being operated in extreme flooding events to provide the required level of protection. Giving the vehement opposition from the State of Missouri and the hesitation on the part of the president of the Mississippi River Commission to operate the floodway in 2011 when 90,000 acres were already flooded, what would happen if the floodway essentially dried? I understand the Corps of Engineers' official position, is that this project will not affect the operation of the floodway. But given the fact that in 2011, the Corps did not operate the floodway within their own guidelines of their operational plan, which resulted in millions of dollars of damage to Olive Branch and others areas in Alexander County that were totally preventable. I'm deeply concerned that if this gap in the levee is closed, the Floodway would never be operated again, which would essentially wipe large areas of Alexander County off the map in the next major flood. Thank you.

9th Speaker, Lee Warren: I would just like to say a few things. I have respect for the Corps of Engineers, but to be perfectly honest, I do not want to insult anyone, I don't believe a damn thing they say. I bought home that was going to be protected by a levee being blown at Bird's Point if the water got to a certain level at Cairo. When that happened, they went forward with that, and they did not blow the levee, I was in my home for almost three weeks fighting the water every day by myself. I had five pumps running; I had sandbags, what I could get around my property trying to save it. But I couldn't get enough sandbags to sandbag it well enough that to prevent the water from coming in. We got a storm; we had waves 20, 24 inches deep coming across a field knock all my sandbags down. I retreated to the porch. I closed up all the windows and stuff, made it as tight as I could, and the water come in over the foundation and into the basement of the house. I set up two pumps, and I had them pumping. Maintaining the water in my basement at a level of about four feet, because I'm not stupid, I'm a contractor. I know a hell of a lot about hydraulics and stuff too. I thought that be enough to keep that pressure from blowing my basement floor out or the walls. But I was wrong. I fought it every day and every night, 24 hours a day. I heard that the levee was gonna be blown, and then somebody got some kind of court order and stopped it. I continued to fight the damn flood. Pumping the river back into the river. I'm angry. I have a hard time just not cussing and telling you people what I really

think. But anyway, I heard after that, that the levee was gonna be blown. And then I heard that they couldn't blow the levee because the water was too rough for the Corps of Engineers to go out there; it would endanger their people. Guess where my son was at when this was going on? He was patrolling the Euphrates River in Iraq, in a god damn boat, with 9 people. And not once did I ever hear him call and tell me, "Dad, the water was too rough, we could not patrol the river today." They patrol it every day, no matter what. I believe you could've blown that levee any time you wanted to. But I continued to fight the water; they'll get it blown sometime. The next thing I heard was why they don't have enough explosives to blow the levee. Well, any damn fool would know, if you blow a small hole in the levee, the water will take care of the rest. If you don't believe it, go down to Miller City and look what's it done down there in '93. I'll have to say, that I have sympathy for the people who live in that bayou down there. And I really believe that they outta get the ditches in that should be there, the pumps and everything. But until the Corps of Engineers and the United States government or whoever the hell it is, says we will absolutely blow Bird Point Levee when it gets to this stage. Until we have that absolutely guaranteed in writing, which we all thought we had before, but I was told yesterday by members of the Corps, that that's not true. It's not mandatory that they blow that levee when it gets to certain level; it doesn't matter. That one person that has the right to say blow the levee, I bet you his name is Mr. Peabody, General Peabody, is that the correct name? But here we are sitting over here in Illinois, with our homes and stuff making it we're being protected by an agreement that the levee is gonna be blown, when the water reaches, I think it was 58 feet, and projected to go to 62 feet in Cairo, that levee was supposed to be blown, and we all thought there was a mandatory thing that was going to be done, there was no decision to be made. If you study the floodplain and everything, the whole damn plan, all way across the country, hinges on that levee. All the other levees up the river are locks and dams, they hold the waters when they can and turn it loose. Well, that's what happened to us; they had to turn loose the water out of Kentucky Lake. And it destroyed a lot of stuff. I lost my home. I lost all the furniture in my home. I lost my business in town. I lost over \$50,000 of materials and stuff at my shop. I was told by the government that somebody was gonna come down and look at that, and probably would help us. No one ever came. It's been 2 1/2 years and nobody still hasn't came and looked at a damn thing down there. And then we're told that we'd have a buyout. Well, I guess it'll come someday. And they say they're gonna pay us fair market value for our home. Well, what about the inconvenience of having to relocate? What about the sentimental values there? In my home, in Miller City, my children had buried 4 dogs in that yard that died over the years we lived there. And their graves are marked. Those things you can't buy with money. I went and bought another home, but there's a lot of people there that didn't have a bank behind them like I had that could buy a home. But I'll tell you right now, I'm 66 years old, I'm supposed to be retired, and I'm struggling and working every day that I can, and doing anything I can possibly do to make a dollar because I'm in jeopardy of losing the home that I bought, because nobody has helped us in any way. FEMA gave us \$940. That was to pay for 2 months rent supplement and a hole that was washed in the ground in my yard when my basement blew out. That's what I got. I lost everything. And I'm opposed to anything that's gonna stop a natural spillway of the water; I don't care where it's at. Until we have it absolutely guaranteed that that levee will be blown when that water reaches a certain level. Because, I was sitting there knowing that I didn't have nothing to worry about because I built a levee around my other home after the '93 flood. It was high enough to protect us water a foot and a half higher than '93. And I also knew that if they blew the levee when it got it to the level it was supposed to, that it would never come over that

levee. Well, me and my son spent all night long, the night before, sandbagging a church next door trying to save it. Then we realized the damn water was gonna come over our levee. Excuse me if I say I don't believe nothing that you people say. And I have a banker that has told me the same thing. He says "Lee, I hope they come through with a buy out, but I don't believe nothing that the government says". And that's what I have to say. And thank you.

10th Speaker: Shirley Dunn: Lee is my brother. You know what, I'm gonna kinda direct this straight to you guys, because what that flood cost Lee was a lot more than his house, a lot more than his business. What that flood cost all of us in Olive Branch was our security. Most of us are retired. We managed to get our homes paid for. We thought we was gonna be able to enjoy a little bit of life. You know, there's a bunch of us who raised our kids and our grandkids, and we looked straight forward to moving, paying off a home, and living there. I checked out details before I bought my home; 57 years, it has never got water. Even my insurance man said "You don't need flood insurance; you'd be wasting your money. Didn't get it in '93, not gonna get it now." I was there 7 months. We gutted our house when we bought it, because it had a mold over it from sitting empty. We gutted it from the carpet, the insulation, the sheetrock. We gutted it all the way, 'cause I have allergies to mold. We put that all work, my husband and I working together, 7 months. We were painting when the flood came in. You know, even the paint turns over and makes a bigger mess. Because we kept, when I was busy saying to all the people, should we be leaving? Are we in danger? Are we fighting and losing battles? Tell me, it's only stuff. If we're losing, I'm not crazy, I won't say somebody still might come if I leave. I will leave. I was patted on the back and I was told, "Any day". Ten o'clock today; 9 o'clock tonight; 2 o'clock tomorrow, the Corps' gonna blow that levee, and when they blow it, the water will suck out. The night that we went under it, ya'll was supposed to be blowing the levee then. But you say this program you're talking about is not gonna affect us. And you say, I was told last night, nothing's gonna change; nothing's gonna change. And I believe whoever I talked to last night, I said then I'm gonna have 3 foot of water in my house next flood if nothing changes. The entire, I moved down here, like I said, 7 months ago before the flood. I didn't know what a bayou was, and I didn't know what a floodway was, and I didn't know what a Bird's Point was. And I've tried to educate myself on that. And the best of my understanding, the entire flood system is based on; people in the news media keep talking about the water in Cairo, the water in Cairo, the water in Cairo. The reason they're saying that is because when it gets to certain heights in Cairo, you're supposed to blow the levee. Well, I was told last night, one person, one person only, can say when it's time to blow the levee. The numbers mean nothing. The whole plan was put together on numbers. And I'll bet you when they explain the plan, back, way back when, I'll bet they said guys you have nothing to worry about 'cause when it gets to 59 foot or 58 foot at Cairo, we're gonna blow the levee. It has good, you refused to blow that levee until levees all up and down the Mississippi River are breaking or breaching because they weren't built to hold that kinda pressure. It didn't say we'll hold 62 foot for 3 days and see if it'll work. It said if it was projected that it would be 62 foot. I don't say, I don't know nothing about this stuff, I knew nothing about it. I got my computer from weeks before the flood, because my grandkids wanted me to have it. And if somebody's been here, it wasn't like it took everybody like by surprise. But it did. Easter Sunday it came across my radio, emergency NOAA radio, whatever you call it, it had been changed from minimum flooding to major, severe. Like a fool. And everybody said now Shirley, you live down here you gotta get used to flood talk. I went in and I typed in the computer, Cairo, flood stage, Mississippi River, Ohio, and I punched go, and

government information flew up saying “widespread, catastrophic, higher levels than ever on the Mississippi and Ohio at Cairo”. Why didn’t anyone else know this? I also called, I went uptown first to ask, I went up first to town Monday morning ‘cause I couldn’t get my family to take me serious. So I went uptown and said “what should we be doing?” And nobody knew. So I went home and I called our congressman, Jerry Costello. They told me I had to call Marty Nicholson, local flood person. So I did. Nobody answered. Well, they did; they took a message. Said I’d be called back. Nobody called me. I called Phelps, I said we got a flood coming, no one’s preparing, what do we do? Call Marty Nicholson. The night of the flood, the day of the flood that we went under that night, our last day in the house is what I should say, our grand governor flew into town. Finally came to town and brought the Corps of Engineers with him. Now, in our days of sandbagging, one of my brothers is a minister; he brought people from churches to come help our neighborhood. Because, I wanted the young ones in the neighborhood. There was an 80 year old lady, 5 year old people, trying to sandbag around our home. The Corps, our governor brought in the Corps of Engineers. Our last day in our home, he sent them to our neighborhood, to help us. We done such a marvelous job holding back 4 foot of water around our entire neighborhood. He sent them out there to help us, to keep the fight going, we’d saved our home. He stayed uptown an hour, maybe 2 hours, with the news media, taking pictures. And as his helicopter flew overhead, he called the National Guard out. Even the National Guard was upset because they was having to leave. While they was sitting there for 3 days waiting for him to tell them where to go. They sat in the ferry. You’ll have to tell me when my time is up because I can’t see the sign over there. I’ll make this real quick. Are you guys aware that we’re on a, if we get 50% damage to our homes, we can’t renew them. So we have more to worry about than just, we might get another flood and have to renew our homes. We may get another flood and not have a home. Like probably 10 people in my neighborhood. They don’t have a home to go back to. Not because it’s not there, but because they’re told you got 50% damage, you can’t go back. The bank still wants their money. They still have family that needs a place to live. If you guys don’t get with the program to blow that levee, and I agree with what my brother said, and I was trying to say it without offending a lot of people. If we don’t know, if we can’t have a guarantee that you was gonna blow that levee, and you can tell me all you want, we can close up this 1,500-foot section and it won’t bother you. I don’t believe that for a minute. Common sense tells you if water’s coming downstream, and it had a place to go over and someone closed up the place, it’s gonna back up. Try flushing the commode that you got half blocked, it backs up. You got it.

11th Speaker, Louise Ott: This is going to sound very personal, but I would like to know why the agriculture lands in Missouri is more valuable than that in Illinois? Why the habitat is better in Missouri than it is in Illinois? And is the agriculture lands in the New Madrid Floodway owned outright, or do they use, plant by easement? In 2011, and you didn’t bother to mention that we grow wheat over here; I lost 20 acres of wheat on ground that had never, ever been flooded. Never, ever. Also had 80 acres of land that could not be planted because it was flooded. And then on top of that, I had a foot and a half of water in my house, in a house that I lived in, in 1937. There was water in the basement in ’37 lacked about 2 inches on the floor, but it didn’t get in the house. And when I was told I would have to leave my house, I said there’s no point in leaving my house ‘cause they’re gonna blow the levee. We all feel that the levee was not blown when it should’ve been blown. And as I say, this is just strictly personal. But to think of all the other people who were not as fortunate as I was to have flood insurance. Who didn’t

have any place to go, and still don't have any place to go. And when you mention that blowing the levee protects Cairo, you don't think about Olive Branch, Cape Girardeau, Paducah, Hickman, Metropolis. You don't think about all those other towns that that's gonna help. And you emphasize Cairo. I think that must be because the gauge is at Cairo. I've done research. I know that after the 1927 flood, the property over there in East Prairie down to New Madrid was bought up by the federal government. And when the '37 flood come, the people were fussing 'cause they was run out, because of the flood; those were squatters on that property. That's the reason I'm wondering if the property is owned outright now. There are so many factors in this. I live on the banks of the Cache River, from choice. I've lived in this one house for 82 years. So I know what I'm talking about. After the '37 flood, Corps of Engineers decided that there were more floods on the Ohio than on the Mississippi, so they divert Cache into the Mississippi. So now when we have floods, doesn't make any difference which river it is on; we have floods. Because there's no barrier between. So I agree that there needs to be a point where the Corps of Engineers will blow the New Madrid floodway. Because it is not helping anybody in Illinois if they don't. Thank you.

Danny Ward: That was the last registered speaker; does anyone else from the audience that would like to make a statement?

Shirley Dunn: I have one more statement. So one of the things that was said here tonight, I forget what percentage of the land was going to be turned into wetlands down there. Do you know what percentage? And that was going to be through mitigation, right? 40% of the land would be wetlands vegetated? If I understood those people right last night, Missouri, they're not interested in mitigation. They're interested in, how did the man say it, industry waiting to come in, crops ready to go in. That is being looked at as a real booming place, and we feel very strongly in Illinois. The more booming that is, the less likely you are, and my own personal thought is, probably I'm thinking to Missouri, this part of the country looked like a better floodway than they do. And if they keep getting to build stuff there, I can't even build on to my living room 'cause it's going to be too much, 'cause it's in a floodplain. How in the world can they build all this stuff they're gonna build? I have a modest home. I would love to have my living room about 8 foot farther out. Can't do that though 'cause it would increase the value of my home on the floodway. Floodplain, is that what we call it? How you gonna do all this? They shouldn't be allowed to build it, or do it, or create it, or make it worth something that you're not going to blow the levee. I don't know if you guys know it or not, but I think you're gonna, someone kinda touched on this awhile ago. If they keep building up up there, and they keep closing up another space, eventually you're not gonna blow the levee. And if the plan is that southern Illinois become the new floodplain, tell us that. Give us the money that it takes to really relocate your life. You know, it's more than what my house, fair market value of my home. We're old enough now after the flood, that we're gonna have to hire someone to move us next time. Because that, in 2 1/2 years it's brought probably everyone that was in the flood, as probably did a 5-year increase on our ages at least. There's a lot more involved than just the fair market value for your home. And you tell me how some of these people get a fair market for their home, might be \$25,000; where they gonna go? So if they want the land for the floodplain they might talk to us honestly about flooding us, but giving us enough money to create another life in another place. I just want to re-emphasize that 40% wetland or vegetated or whatever is depending on whether or not those guys that got that land, their eye on the pie for a crop, to make

a fortune. I heard them plainly saying last night, that don't plan on selling it to you. I think they even said we don't wanna talk about mitigation. So before you tell us here that there's gonna be 40% there of wet, of wetland or fresh stuff or whatever you call it these days, I have to do more search, work on the internet to find out what all that stuff means. They're not planning on selling you that land, any more than I'm planning on selling anyone my house. Unless they wanna really pay me for it.

Danny Ward: Is there anybody else that wants to make a statement?

Unknown Speaker: Are you going to answer any of these?

Danny Ward: What we've done is we've reported the testimony and we're going to transcribe it. And we're going to answer this testimony in the final EIS.

Unknown male speaker: Then I'd like to make a statement to these gentleman here. 'Cause it's real easy to sit there, and we got all kinds of questions, and you don't have to answer a damn thing. Is that right, is that fair? Is that what this country is about? You know, I've been in the service too. I've been in Vietnam. All them places that we are, all over this world, and you trying to tell me that this government can't answer our questions? You gonna do it hiding behind somebody's skirt? I'm sorry sir. But that's the way it looks to us.

Shirley Dunn: Just like a lot of things that important. And this one I think is really important; I really do. I was told last night, that one person, one person, and I believe his name was Peabody, General Peabody, right? Okay, and what's the title? One person makes the decision whether or not to blow that levee. And if that really is the truth, if he makes the decision of when, if, and how they blow that levee, that needs to be changed. And you know, this might be way off to say this, but when rich people have lots of money, it is way too easy to put money in one person's palm or to give them some kind of grand perk to do it your way. And if there's one person doing that, that needs to be changed. There needs to be some definite numbers that I believe that we already have, when it reaches a certain foot it is nobody's decision, it blows. And it don't have to get there if it's projected. And everybody knew Easter Sunday that this was gonna be higher than it was. They could have blew it Easter Sunday, because they knew that much water was coming. And the news, they didn't say maybe it's gonna, they said it's on its way. So, you know, we need to all look into that. If one person is making that decision, we need to work hard to make that change. Because I believe it's not any surprise to anybody, money talks and poor people walk. Now I'm done.

Barbara McKassen: I have a question. Okay, now tell me again who is this one person that makes this decision?

Col Anderson: President of the Mississippi River Commission. The MRC is a seven person body comprised of civilians and military folks (*inaudible*) that watch over the river from the Minneapolis-St. Paul area all the way down to New Orleans. The MRC is a very important body, presidentially appointed. Every person on the MRC is presidentially appointed.

Barbara McKassen: Okay, I have another question please. And what is the name of the person who is president of the Mississippi River Commission?

Col. Anderson: It is currently Major General John Peabody, president until the 23 of September, then it will be Brigadier General DeLuka.

Barbara McKassen: Okay, I was told that a land owner who owns 5,000 acres in the New Madrid Floodway is on this commission, Mr. RD James. Is that true?

Col. Anderson: He is a member of the commission.

Barbara McKassen: I would say that's a very big conflict of interest and something has to change.

Danny Ward: Is there anyone else? If there is no other speakers, like I said, the public comment period closes November 25th. We definitely want to you to provide additional written comments to us. We will address these in the final EIS. So therefore, I urge you, please provide us comments. With that, I'll turn it back over to Col. Anderson.

Col. Anderson: Okay, first of all, I want to applaud you all for coming out today. Give yourselves a hand for just coming out here. Appreciate it. It's good for, I mean I'd like to see the fact that there are people who are interested and they're going to tell the government, because I am here representing the United States Government, that's what I do, of what they think. I appreciate it. There are too many people who aren't involved in their government, and they don't care. So if you're out here and you care, I appreciate that. And thank you for coming.

Shirley Dunn: The reason I do, is I was told by Corps people, right, one person made the decision. And I couldn't hear what you was saying when you were over there and not up here. Can you repeat that again so I know what you're talking about, 'cause it sounds like you said 13 people? He's over 13 people. What'd you say?

David Slidell: I'm one of these Missouri people come over here 'because they couldn't make East Prairie. And got interested in this as I got pulled down here with some of the clean up, of ditches and things. All the questions haven't been about the New Madrid Floodway or the St. Bayou's, it's been about the 2011 flood. If you want something, some specific detail, there's a book that the Corps put out Divine Providence that goes through case by case, day by day. The thought process that was put in that decision. From the Corps' perspective, it's a historian, so maybe Danny Ward, maybe not, might be something, maybe it's already in public library. That's the only point I want to make. So when you're doing your research, look for that book and that's the Corps' perspective on their decision that was made by Maj. General Mike Walsh. It is a good book.