

27AUG13, East Prairie, MO, Public Meeting on draft Environmental Impact Statement for the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway Project Transcript of Public Statements

1st Speaker (Tom Schulte (SEN Blunt)): I would like to make comment. I think we are all glad that we have finally reached the public comment period. We have real strong Washington Senators fighting along the way real to make this project public to comment on. One of the things is EPA and the other Fish and Wildlife. Hopefully we can bring them to the table and resolve some issues like Furg Hunter pointed out and make this project a solid project for future of the citizens of Missouri and citizens of the whole region is a vital project for this part of America and the assets we have in our nation. Thank you.

2nd Speaker (Darrin Lingle (REP Jason Smith)): This project was first authorized in 1954. It was authorized as a flood control project. As Mr. Hunter stated when he veered off course a little bit, but the folks in this room will have a big impact on what the final project will look like. The folks in this room and the surrounding communities that are directly impacted by the floodwaters, Miss Tarver, who I can see in the back, used to have to come to school on a wagon when the water was up in Pinhook, the city of East Prairie could have numerous problems with backwater, sinkholes, sewage problems, in New Madrid countless, countless communities that are impacted by this and folks on the other side just ignore. So it is incumbent on all of us to take advantage of this comment period, and I agree, I am glad that this project is finally to a comment phase. But it is very important that we are all engaged, Congressman Smith will be submitting his own formal comments on this project, but it is very important for this community, for this area, that we comment and get a workable solution so this long overdue project can be completed. Colonel, members of the Corps, thank you for being here tonight. Thank you everyone else.

3rd Speaker (Mayor Mainord (City of East Prairie)): This afternoon we are gathered here to show public support for completion of St. Johns Flood Control Project. For those that worked so tirelessly to bring this project to fruition, I thank you. As mayor of City of East Prairie I stand in complete support of the proposed project to close the gap, although some of the alternatives I've seen this evening are unacceptable to me and the city, and to finally install a much needed pumping station in the St. Johns Bayou Basin. This project will save the City of East Prairie along with the countless other counties residents, along with vital infrastructure from continual backwater flooding. I am astonished, I have to admit, that this afternoon we are called upon to voice our support for a project that was authorized by Congress over 59 years ago, with an initial cost estimate of \$1,556,000. In 1983, the cost estimate for the project ballooned to \$112,000,000 and it currently proposed in the new EIS the costs have increased to \$164,789,000. Over 2500 acres have been taken off the county property tax rolls for mitigating purposes, to appease environmental concerns, so that this project might go forward. But since the mid-1980's the wording and the mentioning in the EIS of saving the goldentop minnow, mussels, and shorebirds is admirable. Reforestation of the area around Big Oak Creek State Park, which by the way, have you seen it Colonel since the flood of 2011? It was almost completely destroyed by the actions taken place then. The moist soil units and modified borrow pits to benefit floodplain fish. But let's don't forget the appendix in the EIS that goes into great detail about how we will spend millions for waterfowl, fisheries, shorebirds, mussels, terrestrial wildlife, whatever that is, and also the very important Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act report. Can I ask one question?

Where in the mentioning in the EIS are the impact to human beings of the area that have endured year after year of backwater flooding and the economical loss to farmers that have lost crops due to backwater flooding? High value crops cannot be planted in many areas of the floodway or in the St. Johns Basin because of the potential for backwater flooding. Where is the mention of emotional stress to residents that had their homes at risk to flooding? In 2011, as in several other historic flood years, the City of East Prairie was just inches away from going completely underwater because of backwater flooding from St. Johns. And major arteries cut off residents and present hardships to business year after year. Where were they mentioned in the EIS? I understand that in today's political climate, the Corps is forced to consider all aspects of any proposed project. But what the hell happened to flood control being the driving force behind any project? And why can't human beings and the protection of property have as much economic weight and impact toward a project as the goldentop minnow and mussels? I know this is an Environmental Impact Statement, but maybe it should be an Environmental and Economic Impact Statement. Somewhere along the way we lost our sense of priorities. We've let environmental whackos and activists and the judicial system determine what is best for our lives and livelihood, and I for one am tired of it. Let's get this project done for the citizens of the 3-county area and for the economic benefit of the entire Bootheel. Thank you, Colonel.

4th Speaker (John Story): My name is John Story. I am representing Consolidated Drainage District who's in charge of building, maintaining, and operating basically all of the drainage systems in Mississippi County that belong inside the New Madrid Spillway. We cannot support this project as it stands today given this new draft Environmental Impact Statement. We have so many issues with so many points of interest in this thing that I couldn't possibly cover them in 5 minutes. But basically as my friend Kevin just said, it hasn't been a project about flood control for too long. The environmental groups have taken over this deal, it's a sad day years ago when they got control of Corps of Engineers. And we believe that currently the mitigation costs of this project are entirely too high. We believe it will continue to go higher before the project is ever allowed to proceed. And the cost is too great for the economic situation inside the counties. It can't be done. I have two questions I think the final Environmental Impact Statement needs to consider. Number 1 of which, first let me tell you we wholly support the pumping plant for the St. Johns Bayou Basin. We realize that piece of this puzzle is extremely needed and it's almost a shame it's connected to the rest of the project because the environmentalist is trying to take the Spillway away from us in order to help the city pump water off of themselves, which is a pathetic shame. But who's going to pay for the pumping cost for the St. Johns Bayou Basin? I realize you can't answer that question; you've been asking it for a long, long time. Nobody's ever answered that question. Secondly, I believe that it is not Man's charge to provide more water for wildlife. God Himself made over 70% of this entire Earth water for that very reason. And I think somebody's trying to play God and they need to quit it. Thank you.

5th Speaker (Representative Steve Hodges): Thank you so much for coming here tonight. The lady at the desk that I was registering asked if I had any comments. I said don't blow the levee down. I was out there that night. And for several weeks I visited the people, friends of mine like Kyle Jones. I was out at his house the day he was packing up everything in the house he had all his life and says Steve, I'm not coming back. I've lived here for 50 years. I know how important this area for our county is. We have less and less people who are out there because the detonation of the levee. But still it's so important to our state and our region agriculturally. I

think the decisions that the Corps of Engineers makes either be considerate of the economic impact we have on this region. Some day we may not have some the people, we may not be able to pass on to generations like the Suttons here, who have farmed out there for years, because of the things we may or may not do for benefit of the people. But I please ask you that your decision is to proceed positively with this project. Thank you.

6th Speaker (Alan Rowland): I am Alan Rowland, speaking on behalf of the Missouri Farm Bureau Federation. I am a farmer from Stoddard County and represent Farm Bureau members from the southeast part of the state, and am on the organization's Board of Directors. Thank you for the information this evening. We are still gathering feedback from our members regarding the tentatively selected plan, so my comments will be brief. Missouri Farm Bureau will submit written comments before the deadline. For many years our organization has supported and called for completion the St. John's Bayou/New Madrid Floodway project. Some of us in this room remember the construction of the levee closure was authorized by US Congress as part of the Flood Control Act of 1954. It hard to believe decades later we are still asking for flood control projects so the flood control project can be carried out. Last week, a Buchanan County farmer Jason Gregory told members of US House Committee on Small Business that protection of lives and infrastructure should be a high priority in managing the Missouri River. The committee chaired by US Representative Sam Graves of Northwest Missouri held a field hearing on managing the Missouri River in St. Louis city hall. Much of the discussion focused on the environmental restoration projects carried out by the Corps at the insistence or direction of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Millions of dollars are spent annually on experimental methods to improve habitat for the benefit of fish and wildlife all over Missouri River Basin. The same will be done within St John's Bayou Basin and New Madrid Floodway under the Corps preferred alternative or tentatively selected plan. If our calculations are correct, over 67 million dollars will be spent on environmental mitigation and monitoring plus another 5.9 million for adaptive management and monitoring all for the benefit of fish and wildlife species. Actions such as land acquisition take farmland out of production always concern our members. As do habitat experiments with multi-million dollar price tags. Flood control is paramount to our members, and I assure you, Missouri Farm Bureau will emphasize that again when our written comments are submitted. Thank you.

7th Speaker (Bruce Morrison, Great Rivers Law Center): As I offer this prospective, which I tell you is the prospective of not just the environmental community, but also is the prospective of conservative taxpaying organizations and conservative conservationists. I'm on weekly conference calls with these groups and I can speak to what their view is. First, with regards to the St John's Bayou Basin Project, we support fixing the drainage problems that have been plaguing your community for so long. As a problem that affects people, affects roads, affects infrastructure and it needs to be fixed. And personally, as a tax payer I am glad to see my tax dollars going to solve this. But the solution for making that happen is to uncouple two projects. They are two projects. You've got something here to fix the drainage problems in the St John's Bayou Basin. You have a second problem you know is the New Madrid Floodway. And to stop the logjam that you experienced years ago that I see is going to happen again. What you need to be asking the Corps to do is to segregate these two so that each project stands on its own. So summarizing, taxpayers, conservationists, the environmental communities they support fixing the drainage problems within the Basin. So that takes us to the New Madrid Levee project. And

there's also consensus, I'm afraid. This is a 107 million dollar taxpayer funded project to prevent flooding in a designated floodway. On a map, you look at a map and this is a floodway. And it's a floodway that exists to protect other people, other roads, other infrastructure, your neighbors up and down stream, your neighbors across river. Costs 107 million dollars to build, costs several million dollars of taxpayer money every year to maintain, and it's something as taxpayers that we don't think we should pay for. So, that's a logjam. This is the view of a cohesive, well organized, well funded group that meets weekly and I'm afraid what I'm see is and what we're seeing in the mid-2000's and another logjam. So two options appear as I see it; combine the projects as they are now, or let each stand on their own merits. And I think if I can offer you these decision points, if it may persuade you to write the Corps to just segregate. If you can believe that this country is any less concerned about our government's debt and burdens on the taxpayer, if we were less concerned about that now then we were in the mid-2000's, if the country is less concerned about communities upstream, downstream, across river being less at risk for flooding, than we were in the mid-2000's, or if you think that river levels are trending down, then by all means stay the course, don't ask the Corps to uncouple these projects. But if you answer no to these, I think what we're looking at unfortunately, is the potential for more delay, as we've all heard about how this has been on the books since the 50's, we want to see the St. Johns Bayou Basin project go forward, in some fashion and we want the drainage problems fixed. And the remedy there is to uncouple the project. So let's get St John's done, and let the New Madrid levee standard fall on its own merit. I thank you for all the courtesy and respect you've shown me tonight, and pretty much appreciate it. Thanks.

8th Speaker (David Wade (St. John's Bayou Basin)): Thank you Colonel, Danny. I'd like to congratulate Danny on getting the Environmental Impact Statement out; that's certainly the first thing we need to do to draw comments from everybody. My name is David Wade and I'm here representing the St. John's Bayou Basin. On the slide in front of you, you can see the Bayou Basin. The part in yellow; it has about 481 square miles, it has, according to the last census, somewhere in the neighborhood of 34,000 residents, 1046 drinking wells that produces almost \$600 million dollars a year income in southeast Missouri. I'm giving you a book, Colonel and gentlemen, that shows a lot of things, but I think most of it shows what Mayor Mainord was talking about. And I hope that the Environmental Impact Statement will look at the declarations contained in this booklet from citizen after citizen after citizen about what's happened to them in flooding. It creates the exact human picture we're talking about. Danny, this human face needs to be part of the Environmental Impact Statement. St. John's Bayou Basin agrees with the drainage ditch proposal and of course, the pump station idea. It is not excited about it and opposes existing farmland being converted into further reserves, but there are hundreds of acres of NRCS dedicated wetlands that need to be preserved, and we fully support that. In this booklet I am giving you, there are professional statements from Waters Engineering, John Chittenden that talks about the damage to the infrastructure, the roads, the villages, all the other things that affect the people that live in this area. There is also Professor Michael Aide's statement, he is Chairman of the Department of Agriculture Southeast Missouri State University. He calculated that in 2011 alone there was \$100 million dollars in crop damage, lost crops, because of no planting, or because they couldn't get crops in on time and diminished yield. What's happened in the Bayou Basin is it's been described is the convergence of the setback levee and the Farenburg Levee has created basically a man-made lake. There's no way for the water to get out. The cost to wildlife because of the man-made lake has been huge over the last 70 or 80

years. The only way to get the water out is to pump it out. That water pooled is not river water, it's rain water. And it has killed animals, it has destroyed habitat, and it's made impossible for the people to live there. These promised pumps have to be installed. You'll find in your book pages of photographs of the damage to the people, to their homes, to their businesses, to their farms. There are additional photographs showing the damage just this year, 2013. It's behind Tab 9 where crops couldn't be planted, some crops couldn't be planted until August. They're running the risk of early frost, and you know it's diminished light units those crops won't yield anything of great value. What's happening to this area because of this water problem is you're destroying the capability of food production. We've got letters in here supporting the project from Senator Blunt, Senator McCaskill, former Congresswoman Joann Emerson, United States Department of Agricultural Secretary Thomas Vilsack, numerous Missouri state officials, representatives, the Lieutenant Governor, the Attorney General, the State Treasurer, the Secretary of State. Virtually uniform support for this project exists throughout this part of the world. And finally at Tab 13, you've got 172 signatures of citizens in the Bayou Basin who are begging you to install this project. Actually, I've got a whole bunch more here that are loose that have come in since this book was prepared. We now got 396 and they're still pouring in from people in this area. This is the human face we're asking you to look at. In closing, I'd like to play out that the National Geographical Society published last year that the world no longer has the capability scientifically to develop enough food for the population that lives here on Earth. And yet in that situation, we're taking these acres and removing them from food production for no reason. These pumps were promised decades ago. And for the people in St. John's Bayou Basin, we are begging that these projects be approved and put in place. Thank you.

9th Speaker (Col. David Holland): Thank you for this opportunity. I am Colonel David Holland. I was born and raised in Hickman, Kentucky. And in spite of what, a little correction for Mr. Ward who says the floodway used to be the spillway back in the olden days. It was operated twice, in 1937, damn thing operated itself. In fact it broke right down there in Dorreen. Courtesy of a caption in Cairo. Anyway, I want to go on record I'm for this project. I want the folks, I can see the wisdom on separating the projects; however, because of the greater human impact inside the St. John's area. When I was fresh out of college I worked for Mr. Charlie Glove down in New Madrid as a surveyor and inspector with Raggs' Protection and Construction Company. I was with the Corps when we built those six cubes that we put through the levee for gravity drainage. We thought that was a pretty good project, but it does need a pump, there's doubt about it. And one time, on one of the earlier EIS's, that's a nice project, you know, we get to study and study and study; we never built anything, but we studied hell for months. And I admire the Corps persistence in face of the environmental folks that we're facing. Unfortunately, I was associated with the folks that are so environmental inclined that they're adverse to farming. Nobody really pointed whos problem it is, at least in my mind, the fact we're talking about a burgeoning population in the world and we have to feed them. But we're trying to raise a better crops. First crop I put in, I was 12 years old, with a team of mules I put in 12 acres of wheat. Made 30 bushels an acre. You couldn't pay for the seed nowadays with 30 bushels. There's a lot of people want you to go back to that. We can't have GMO this that and the other. And Japanese pulled a good one on us last year by quitting buying the white winter wheat in a patch no bigger than this room, they cancelled all their contracts, and what did the price of wheat do? Almost \$2 dollars down. We got to sell our red winter wheat for a whole \$6 dollars instead of selling for \$8 dollars. That's the affect of world-wide economy. And the affect of just little

things can shape the whole thing. So I'm definitely adverse to mitigation that has been offered, and with all respect to the young lady who's the manager of the park, I would submit that the park is really not need to get any bigger. It's not accessible, not visited much and to take good farmland to increase the size of the park will be another burden on the state of Missouri to pay for, and we are taxpayers in Missouri, and we're taxpayers in Kentucky also. So we don't want to see land taken out of production; this is one of my concerns about it. We do need protection. So another thing I would like to point out, so if you're going to operate the Floodway again, next time before you shoot Crevasse No 3, be sure the water's higher on the inside than it is outside. And some of us know it never ran out. Never ran out. And we lost crops, Mr. Wallace can talk about that, if he does. There were mistakes made, and sometimes when mistakes are made they're terrible mistakes. The thing I hate to see is Mr. Wendell Shoat's business gone. They employed 300 or 400 people for several months growing sweet corn. And Mr. Wendell Shoat can also tell you the idea in closing General Jadwin hole in the levee, and General Jadwin is dead now, no longer Chief of Engineers. He had that hole in the levee for some reason or another. And back in the 30's Mr. Wendell Shoat, and others started pushing to close that. So it didn't start in 56', folks, it started earlier than that. Thank you, and again congratulations on your command. I enjoyed mine.

10th Speaker (Caroline Pufalt, Sierra Club): Thank you. My name is Caroline Pufalt, here representing the Sierra Club of Missouri. I'm from University City. First off, I want to thank the Corps for having this hearing, and thank the First Church of God for hosting us. As mentioned before, this project is really in two parts. Because these parts have significant differences, we recommend separating the two projects so they can be evaluated separately on their terms. The purpose of the St. John's Bayou project is to reduce flooding and improve drainage problems in East Prairie and surrounding development. Based on the analysis, it appears these issues result primarily from rainfall and less from direct river flooding. Thus, we do support municipal drainage improvements and expansion of storm water systems and related infrastructure needs. We recommend a focused project that would provide the benefits needed for the St. John's Bayou area as a wholly appropriate use of taxpayer funds. The New Madrid Floodway portion of the project is, consists primarily of the building a new levee with a stated purpose in the Corps document, primary purpose and cost-benefit analysis is based on increasing opportunities for more intensified agriculture in the area. This new levee would close a last remaining one-quarter mile opening connecting the Mississippi River to its floodplain. This would result in loss of critical wetlands for fisheries and wildlife whose unique value is the dynamic relationship with the river. Proposed mitigated wetlands would be more remote and isolated and unable to duplicate those lost acres.

Furthermore, the existing link between river and floodway provide some flood-risk reduction for this portion of the river. The building of a new levee would change that. Tomorrow, there will be a public meeting in Illinois, and we have heard from our neighbors on that side of the river that they have real concerns about the impact of this levee on their increased risk of flooding in their communities and you can talk to them about that tomorrow, I'm sure. This one-quarter mile opening in the floodplain has never been closed. Closure was an approved authorized option in the 1954 Flood Control Act as mentioned before. But we've learned a lot since 1954 about the importance about river and land connections to fisheries, to wildlife, and to flood risk reduction. Back to the stated purpose of the New Madrid Floodway project, which is to increase

opportunity for more intense agriculture. The Corps in its own report states that agriculture in the project is already profitable and reliable. Thus, we cannot see the cost that taxpayer costs and the purpose of the project as outweighing the cost of this river and floodplain connection and the many benefits that connection provides. Thus, we are opposing the New Madrid Floodway portion of this project. And thank you for consideration of our comments.

11th Speaker Jeff Glenn: Thank you, Colonel, and distinguished guests, and even more distinguished guests. Where to begin? 1950. 1950's our communities since then have been standing together trying to get this project done. We refuse to accept that this project can't be done. To separate these two projects sets up a win-lose scenario. We refuse to accept that a win-win scenario is no longer on the table. The flood control measures in this draft EIS need to be strengthened, as been mentioned before by several speakers. This project is about neighbors. This project is about providing flood protection for people on both sides of that set-back levee. And I strongly encourage everyone's support to keep it that way. Thank you.

12th Speaker Scott Downy: Thank you, Colonel, members of the Corps. I'm the superintendent of the schools of East Prairie School District. I'm used to talking to children and people that graduated. Many people that graduated are in here, hopefully most of you. I think there's a few that haven't. East Prairie School District respectfully submits the following statement in favor of the closure of the New Madrid Floodway at the location of the 1500-foot gap and subsequent modifications of the ditches within the St. John's Basin. Each year significant flooding occurs in the floodway causing numerous bussing issues for our District. In 2011, the activation of the spillway caused significant damage to roadways, housing, and farmlands. Several families were displaced and some even cities destroyed. Our school district encompasses over 400 square miles, most of it lying in the floodplain. As a result of the severe flooding the district has reduced the number of bus routes in the spillway to 2 to 1. And after that activation in 2011 they had none for awhile. This may not sound like much, but to those who need public school transportation, this is very important. For the past few months, residents have begun to re-establish homes in the spillway, and we fully expect to return to two bus routes in the future. Once again, we support the closure of the levee and hopefully it will alleviate the bussing issues for our school district. Thank you.

13th Speaker Michael Aiden: Thank you. I want to take a brief moment to talk about the agricultural growth in this region. We have some of the most abundant groundwater in the United States. It's clean and pristine. We have excellent transportation systems. We have capitalized, well-educated farmers. This region could be the most productive agricultural region in North America, especially given what California is doing in the Central Valley. This region is prone to bring in more agri-business to relocate here. We see that with Pioneer moving into New Madrid. We see that with other companies trying to move here. We now have thousands of acres in sweet potatoes growing in the region, thousands of acres of potatoes being grown in the region. Almost a quarter million acres of rice being grown here. The river is the gateway to Asian markets, this region is prone for agri-business and agricultural development. And it is our duty to the citizens of the state to use agriculture and agri-business as a vehicle to support the prosperity of the citizens who live here.

14th Speaker: I'm David McCarty with the New Madrid County Emergency Management, but I also own a grocery store over in Lilbourne. And I'm here more probably as a grocery merchant, but I've dealt with flooding and everything during the 2011 flooding. What I didn't hear mentioned, and I'd like to mention this, I know all you folks, either I know your face I don't know your name, but we get this environmental stuff just mentioned and thrown at us from all these sides, and you guys are some of the most environmentalist people I know. What you want to take care of your ground, I almost would bet 99 percent of you hunt and fish and do all the things and all the sporting that you do. You're not going to let a project come in here and destroy your hunting and fishing grounds. That's just not, you're not going to let that happen. And I haven't really heard that comment. And so I wanted to make that comment. Thank you.

15th Speaker Shirley Dunn: I'm from Illinois. And there was some comments made during the night about not blowing the levee. I want to say blow the levee. The land was bought for that. This is the face that comes from an entire town that was almost destroyed. Our land was not bought for a floodplain. We were, have talked here tonight about people that died. You know in the last two stories. I've seen people that died. They were senior citizens in our area trying to remove the merchandise. Now this story has nothing to do with what you're talking about here tonight, except for what I've heard it said a few times about the Illinois people. The land was bought. Maybe not this land that you're talking about. But when you start talking about moving in the new stuff, the building up of this area, because you get the pump. That frightens us in Illinois. That the more that moves in here, the harder it's going to be to get that levee blown. You know, I was not going to say anything tonight, but I am. I want to say there was three feet of water in my home. Working, our community, day and night, we didn't stop sandbagging. Or should I say bagging sand to sandbag. When we asked for help and they got us a truckload of sand and sandbags and threw them out to 12 elderly people in our neighborhood, to protect our homes. But you know we worked day and night. We didn't sleep. Because we kept getting pats on the back telling us, don't give up. Don't quit. They're going to blow that levee. The land there's for it. You're saving your homes. Keep going. Well, I've seen some of my neighbors now in nursing homes. Some of my neighbors are dead. Some of my neighbors have moved. Some of my neighbors were told that 50 percent damage, too bad you've got a 40 thousand, a 50 thousand, 60 thousand dollar mortgage, you can't go back to your home, because you have 50 percent damage. Now those same people are in bankruptcy and their credit has been ruined forever, they're struggling. We've been promised all this stuff for almost 2 1/2 years now. We're going to get a buy out; we're going to be relocated, it's not come yet. And these were the promises were made. I wouldn't depend on them too much; I'd get everything you get in erasable ink because that levee was supposed to be blown, when it reached 59 foot in Cairo. And that's why I bought my house, because it was supposed to be blown, to protect our area, and it wasn't. And I find myself very angry when I hear some, counter voice say blow that levee, or don't blow that levee again. Well, I just want to say, blow it. And if bringing more industry, bigger agriculture, and more development to this area is going to make that decision harder to blow, the levee, think about what you're doing. Because we have rights too. Okay?

16th Speaker: COL Bennet: Presiding Commissioner in Mississippi County. Colonel, I want to congratulate you on your command. I look forward to working with you. Thank you guys for putting in all the work you say you did on this EIS, Corps members. I know you're all tired and hungry, so I'll be really, really brief. Most of the things that need to be said tonight have been

said, have already been said. So the lady from Illinois knows that everything that happened to her neighbors, happened to my neighbors also because the levee was blown. So there's two sides to every point. I just want to state that and make it known. One of the things that was said tonight that I wanted to address again is what you're going to find in this room and in this county are a lot of farmers, and what you are going to find are farmers are best stewards of the land that you're ever going to run across. Much more so than environmentalists, or the Sierra Club, or any other person without a stake in the game. Farmers are some of the best stewards of the land you can get. To be brief about this, the Mississippi County Commission cannot support this plan in the current configuration. We do support the closing of the gap, of course. The city of East Prairie desperately needs the pumping station; we support that as well, whole heartedly. Some of the mitigation issues that you bring forth have been stated all night long much better than I can do it. We do not support it. But we certainly look forward to working with you to try to work out something with you. Thank you.

17th Speaker Josh Bill: Thank you, Mr. Ward. Welcome, Colonel. I passed on indicating in the registry that I was going to offer statements because of, frankly, here I worked here on a statement and couldn't get it down to 5 minutes. And so I thought that I'd just submit some in writing, but now you've thrown stuff out, I'll be happy to sign what I do say and leave it with you. I'd also like to supply a larger, longer statement I can't speak. My name is Josh Bill, I live in Sikeston, Missouri. It has definitely come to our attention how important this project is to our community. FEMA came to us last year, and put large sections of our community into floodplain, indicating that it was backwater from the St. John's Ditch, and the St. John's Ditch tributary, whatever that means. And they managed to run a model that shows water backing up to the top of the Sikeston Ridge that's 17 feet high, where it spread out and took in most of the, or a good number of them higher income homes, which made some of us think that they were here for the money. But that wanted a premium paid on homes that they knew and we knew, would never flood. But they did put some areas that are prone to flooding in floodplain, with devastating impact to those homeowners. The price of a home and value the home once they put it in the floodplain, declined by 20% nationwide. That doesn't even speak of the premiums these people have to pay. And people do have to pay those premiums now, who know they know they'll never be flooded, I think rightly resent it. But I didn't come to speak just to Sikeston's and Scott County's interests. I've had some interest in following the comments in the national press, in environmental websites, in some of the blogs, and I think a good number of people are dramatically misinformed. One article in the Washington Post in 2007 used the terms swamp-east and water-soaked southeast Missouri 11 times in a 1500-word article, that the people in southeast Missouri even use the term swamp-east Missouri. That term was coined by gentlemen from Indiana who didn't like it here very much, but fact is, that term stuck. So I did a little research, and I found that this area was originally surveyed in 1836 by an engineer from the Army Corps of Engineers, and I will submit his report and Congressional reports based upon his report for the record and hope it will be digested. But this one point about this project that I think has been overlooked; I haven't heard any mention of it. We're talking about closing the last 1,500 feet on the main-stem of the Mississippi River. And it made me wonder what it was that people of southeast Missouri ever did to deserve being last. Because on the upper Mississippi, from St. Louis north, there are 8,000 miles of levees. On the Missouri River, there are 2,500 miles of levee, protecting those farmlands, protecting those communities, protecting the people who live there. On the lower Mississippi, there are 1,600 miles. But for some reason,

there is natural and the government is absolutely crowded with organizations who are well organized and well funded and absolutely dedicated to making sure that we pay a price that no one else in this tributary is willing to be paid or is being asked to pay. And so I wonder again, what was the original sin of the people of southeast Missouri that this would be visited upon us, that 50,000 to 85,000 acres of farmlands would be flooded every 2 and 5 years? The value of those people's properties diminished significantly. The numbers have been provided; I am grateful that you all put them together. But looking into the history of what was found by the gentleman in 1836, Captain Duion, I cannot pronounce it; it is D-u-i-o-n, the Army Corps of Engineers, and in his report that was filed in 1837, and 1849 there were a series of Congressional reports based on his study. And I'd like to quote briefly from those, I'll try to be brief. Thank you. It said the land in the St. Francis Basin did have areas that were perm, where cypress trees grew; however, these cypress swamps are limited in extent, comes to a small portion of the overflow. There were much larger tracts of land, and in these swamps its natural formation is elevated enough to be dry and if costs were removed, would be sufficiently sold for agricultural purposes. The water on these lands is generally one of the, is 1-2 feet deep, and remains nearly the same year round. As is the water, and as the water has passed September, presents the appearance of a lake that was studded with forests of snags, and forms a picture of desolation not easily surpassed. The character of the timber of these snags being peculiar; however, dry land open that their perishing conditions amidst the waste of water tells the history of a past and that at no remote period more eloquently than any language can portray that these immense overflows and shallow lakes were unquestionably the result of the earthquakes of the New Madrid years in 1811 and 1812, whose terrible history is familiar to all. And whose awful ravages have left their imprint upon the whole face of the country, but not so indelibly as to be beyond the reach of improvement. And it appears that for a long time the intention prevailed that the swamps were occasioned by the Satan of the earth amidst these convulsions which if true, would have ridden down their reclamation hopeless. But subsequent investigations have demonstrated that this is not to be the fact. And so they were formed not by the sinking of the earth, but by the choking of the channels of the river, forcing them out over the land. This is done by the upheaval's of beds of the rivers at various places forming a complete check of the channels prostrating the timbers, so constitutes subordinate dams to hold water in check, even as it is forced to leave its natural channel. That these are the true nature of the obstruction and cause of the overflow, no one now pretends to doubt. And, being so, it is demonstrable that the face of the country, in its original beauty would be restored upon their removal. The next question is, so goes this committee report, can these obstructions be removed and is consideration for their removal sufficient to justify undertaking provided to be practical. The committee expressed their opinions, "We believe that by removing these obstructions to the channels by which the water would be permitted to resume its natural channel, that the great portion of work would be accomplished, and adding to some temporary channel to drain the lower ground shutting up the channel that has warped the Mississippi River by levee, and so keep the water from coming back through these drains at high water, that the whole task would be accomplished. But they said it would require a herculean labor. And so it did. And the people who settled here after the Swamp Act of 1850 was passed, they were the ones who undertook that herculean labor. Many of those individuals that I have in record by Section, Range, and Township, received their land grants from military vouching warrants in exchange for their service to their country in the 1812 War, the Mexican War, and the various Indian wars. I believe the government of the United States has a covenant with the people who are descended

from those individuals who served their country, who cleared this land, and who made this remarkable engine for agriculture possible. Thank you.

Danny Ward: Are there any other speakers? Okay, I want to remind everybody that the public comment period has been extended to November 25th. You can submit written comments to the Corps, contact information is in the back of the room, it is also available on the website. The public testimony we did record it, we're going to transcribe it, it will be available in the final EIS. And with that I'll turn it back over to Col. Anderson.