



FACT SHEET LEVEE SYSTEM DE-CERTIFICATION

Madison County Planning and Development Department

BACKGROUND

- According to recent information provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Five levee systems in Madison, St. Clair and Monroe counties do not provide an adequate level of protection, and 150,000 people will now be included in a newly revised flood plain zone.
- FEMA representatives told participants at a levee summit organized by US Congressman Jerry Costello on Wednesday August 15, 2007 that FEMA is in the process of updating flood zone maps for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in Madison and St. Clair counties.
- This plan would call for the owners of all properties that fall within these new boundaries to carry national flood insurance and any new construction would require flood-proofing requirements. (Flood insurance is required on funds secured from any federally regulated financial institution. So if you owe money to the bank on your home or property, those amounts would have to be insured.)

- In addition, all Bottomland communities would be required to adopt new flood plain construction requirements in order for our continued participation in the NFIP.
- Participation in the NFIP requires: that flood-prone areas be identified and mapped; communities must participate in map modernization initiatives and the affected local governments adopt and enforce flood plain management regulations.
- FEMA indicated at the levee summit that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provided them with information that the Wood River, Chain of Rocks, Prairie Du Pont, Fish Lake and the Metro East Sanitary District levees do not meet the standard for protection in case of a 100 yr flood. (this means that there is a 1% annual chance of a flood)
- FEMA indicated that the problem with each of the levee systems is under-seepage. The Corps describes under-seepage as water pushing into the sand layer under the levee and causing swirls or voids. They have indicated that over time, the water would dig away at the levee, causing it to collapse.
- FEMA representatives said the new boundaries for the area's flood plain zone would follow the geographic landscape, which encompasses areas on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River eastward to Bluff Road/Illinois Route 157.

- Our concern is that the flood plain zone designation that will be assigned - is as if there were no levees there at all to protect the region.
- Corps representatives have indicated that the Flood of 1993 and Hurricane Katrina have made an impact on how the federal government views levee systems and congressional mandates have been passed that all levee systems in the US be assessed. This assessment is ongoing.
- Both Corps and FEMA representatives emphasized that levee projects do not protect the public against risk.
- Congressman Costello then asked East West Gateway to call a meeting of the three County Board Chairs (St. Clair, Madison and Monroe). This meeting was held on August 30, 2007 and had both FEMA and Corps representatives present.
- At the meeting at East West Gateway, the Corps and FEMA reviewed the issue for the local leaders and it was shown that the levees need to meet the 100 year requirement in order to be certified. Previous Corps work had been ongoing at the 500 year requirement.
- The Corps indicated that costs for the 100 year work need to be determined and that portions of the 5 levee systems in question do meet this 100 yr requirement and the 500 year requirement, but certain sections do not – hence the determination of a “deficiency” in the levee system.

- The timeline on this issue is that in September, (this has since been pushed back) preliminary DFIRM maps will be made available from FEMA with the new flood zone designations shown. After that there is a 1 year review period for public input and review - then the maps become official.
- According to FEMA, the maps can be appealed but the basis of the appeal must be scientific or technical. Appeals must be resolved either through coordination/consultation with the local government; independent third party or an Administrative Law judge. Final determination and a 6 month compliance period begins after the appeals are resolved. (total process is 2-3 years)
- At the local leader meeting at East West Gateway, the Congressman and the leaders learned that the MO Side of the river is perhaps 5-7 years away from this review process.
- Madison-St. Clair and Monroe are in a different FEMA region and have a different timetable than the MO side which is in another FEMA region. The Congressman indicated then he was going to look into the “un-even” nature of these requirements.
- The Congressmen announced that another meeting would be held with area Mayors to go over this information with them. This meeting was September 29, 2007.

MADISON COUNTY- REGIONAL RESPONSE

- This is Madison County's number one priority. The County has been on top of this since it was announced on August 15 and have been involved with meetings with the Corps, East West Gateway Council of Governments and the levee districts since then.
- This requirement would affect thousands of residents in the bottoms, numerous businesses and the economic development health of the entire region. Millions of dollars in tax revenues to local governments and schools are at risk.
- Madison County continues to also lead the effort to restore the Wood River Levee and is near a conclusion to the funding mechanisms for the local match requirements. (local matches to federal levee assistance funds is 65-35 or 75-25 varies) Working closely with the private sector a solution is about to be announced. Congressman Costello is doing his share on the federal side.
- This action will have impacts on the region which can ripple out and affect the entire economy of southwestern Illinois. It impacts over 50,000 jobs and over 150,000 people and would affect major employers such as Granite City Steel, American Steel, Kraft, Conoco-Phillips, Gateway Commerce Center not to mention other facilities in St. Clair and Monroe Counties.

- Madison County is part of the “Regional Response” to this crisis and will work through the East West Gateway Coordinating Council to coordinate the effort. Madison County will work with the three counties affected in SW Illinois on a coordinated effort.
- Congressman Costello and Congressman Shimkus were successful in attaching the Costello Amendment to HR 3121 the Flood Insurance Reform and Modernization Act of 2007. The amendment, if it remains in the Senate version, would allow no changes in flood insurance status until the remapping process is completed for the entire Corps of Engineers District which is affected by that map. This gives us possibly a 3-4-5 year window to get the levees up to standards and avoid de-certification.
- We will lobby Senators Durbin and Obama to keep this amendment intact on the Senate side.
- Madison County is committed to providing possible financial support towards this effort and will work directly with EWG to determine needs for engineers, consultants or others to work the issue.
- Critical now is the development of funding mechanism to bring the levees into compliance.
- The state will be approached for assistance and possible funding mechanisms for the local match requirements.

- Madison County does realize that the region has a problem and that there is development in the bottoms area of SW Illinois, however we are the second most populated area on the Mississippi River, the first is New Orleans. We have an investment here and we intend to protect that investment.
- The region, through EWG, is expected to apply for a Zone AR designation.

Affected Communities in Madison County

- **Venice**
- **Madison**
- **Granite City**
- **Pontoon Beach**
- **Hartford**
- **S Roxana**
- **Wood River**
- **E Alton**
- **Alton**
- **Godfrey**
- **Edwardsville**
- **Collinsville**
- **Maryville**
- **Unincorporated areas**

- **Affected Communities in St. Clair County:**

- **Dupo**
- **East Carondelet**
- **Cahokia**
- **Centreville**
- **East St. Louis**
- **Sauget**
- **Washington Park**
- **Caseyville**
- **Alorton**
- **Fairmont City**
- **Brooklyn**