



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Mississippi Valley Division**

News Release

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Corps signs Record of Decision approving revised floodway supplemental environmental impact statement

VICKSBURG, Miss., August 26, 2003 — Brigadier General (P) Don T. Riley, President Designee of the Mississippi River Commission and Commander of the Mississippi Valley Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers signed a Record of Decision (ROD) approving the Final Revised Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (RSEIS) for the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway Project Aug. 25. The ROD completes the Corps' requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act, and will allow the Corps, through the Memphis District to initiate the construction phase of the project.

The St. John's Bayou-New Madrid Floodway Project (SJNM) represents an intense effort by the Corps to address ecological and environmental concerns, while also reducing regional personal and economic suffering caused by frequent agricultural and urban flooding. The Corps coordinated with the Environmental Protection Agency, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and Missouri Department of Conservation to add innovative measures to address concerns regarding environmental impacts.

For example, through a cooperative effort with MDNR and other resource agencies, the plan will

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preserve the old growth bottomland hardwood forest in the Big Oak Tree State Park by purchasing adjacent lands to enlarge the park. The plan also provides a source of surface water for seasonal flooding.

The revised plan also addresses environmental concerns raised during project development by allowing for a connection between the Mississippi River and the New Madrid Floodway during the critical spring fish reproductive period. Opening flood control gates until mid-May will make the connection possible. The gate management approach will also allow for the inundation of up to 2,000 more acres of forested and farmed lands in the lower Floodway than would occur in previous designs, thereby reducing impacts to wetlands and fish.

Additional habitat improvement measures will provide vegetative buffer strips up to 100-foot-wide, along 64 miles of stream and channels in the Floodway. These strips benefit the surface water by providing shade and structure, and filtering runoff. Constructing in-stream structures for larger channels in the Floodway and the St. John's Bayou basin will also enhance fish habitat. Planting a vegetative corridor between Big Oak Tree State Park to the Ten-Mile Pond Wildlife Conservation Area will enhance wildlife habitat.

Moreover, the project mitigation plan will reforest 8,375 acres — more than doubling the bottomland hardwoods in the project area. These reforested lands will also increase wildlife habitat and provide important wetland functions for the region's overall ecology. The Corps will purchase the mitigation lands from willing sellers. The Fish and Wildlife Service and the Missouri Department of Conservation will assist the Corps in identifying areas that would be suitable for purchase.

In keeping with the Corps' environmental operating principles, the St. John's Bayou and New Madrid Floodway Project seeks balance and synergy among human development activities and natural systems by offering an environmentally sustainable solution that supports and reinforces the needs of both. The Corps is proud to be part of a national team of Federal, State, local and private organizations dedicated to meeting the Nation's needs.