

To whom it may concern:

My name is Victoria Darden I live in Onward, Ms in Issaquena County. I farm 1100 acres of row crops with my 74 year old father Randy Darden. The historic 2019 backwater flood affected us not only emotionally, physically, but financially as well. We were unable to plant a single seed on our land we lost access to our road, we had to boat into our homes. One of the houses on the property has a levee around it built from the flood of 1973 which was the last time this farm has completely went under. We had to stay behind to pump the rainwater out from the inside of the levee to prevent the house from flooding. Tropical storm Berry also came in during this time and dropped large amounts of rainfall.

The things that took place in the Yazoo Backwater area in 2019 were almost unbelievable. People were having to drive an hour to hour and half to get to their work. They couldn't just take six months off work they still had families to provide for and children still had school to attend. Some of the children in the areas had to take a school bus down the gravel backwater levee which is very narrow and they would have to leave much earlier to allow for the detour. A lot of the social interaction was affected such as church events, birthday parties, and weddings were missed. Many people didn't leave home at night and tried to avoid early morning travel because of the high rates of animals getting killed on the roads. The poor animals in the backwater flood area had no where to go they were starving to the point you could see their skeletons. The worst part was the animals couldn't speak out for themselves and say they needed help. This flood hit during the peak of the birthing season for the deer. Many does lost their fawns due to stress abortion and lack of nutrition. Several cases were reported where the mother would birth twins and only be able to care for one of the fawns. On our daily boat rides in and out of the farm we would witness deer dying daily and the smell alone was enough to make

your stomach turn. We had alligators getting hit and killed by vehicles on the roads. On a small stretch of highway between valley park and flowree road over 31 gators were reported for bring ran over.

Due to water being over roads for upwards of six months we had a lot of damage to our road systems. The road I live on was blacktopped it bubbled up when the water came off and since has broken off. Our county has still not had the funds allocated to them to help us recover the road systems.

The Yazoo Backwater Project began work in 1986 as of today April 2, 2020 the project is still unfinished.

If the project had been completed and the pumping station been in place during the flood of 2019 the water would have not overtopped any roads and no homes would have flooded. The whole Yazoo Backwater area highly depends on agriculture for its revenue in some shape or form. 2019 caused several businesses to have to close their doors for good. When the farmers can't farm and aren't spending money in the parts houses, restaurants, financing things through the bank the whole community suffers. The toll this took on the residents in this community is almost unimaginable. When you are forced from your home, your home is destroyed by the water, you cant work because your job is in agriculture and the land is flooded. What are you to do? People in this community have been through the absolute worst conditions possible and still haven't fully recovered or moved back yet. Its hard to see many of these residents who have worked their whole lives for their land and their homes to have it taken away when it could have been avoided.

This is just a small glimpse at some of what we as backwater flood residents have went through in the past few years. I would like to take the time to thank the current administration for their support of this project. We as residents are so thankful for USACE and the EPA for working together to try and resolve this disaster. We look forward to the Army Corp of Engineers presenting a Record of Decision on

January 15th 2021. We need the federal government to complete this project as soon as possible we simply can't withstand another flood much less a historic flood of the proportions we saw in 2019. This project is about the future and bettering it for the next generation. I hope that one day if I have children they will never have to worry about their home flooding and livelihoods being affected by Yazoo backwater. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Victoria Darden

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