

# Lower Missouri River Watershed meeting notes

May 10, 2017 | Chesterfield City Hall

## 1. Introduction and Overview – Aaron Young, East-West Gateway Council of Governments and Chad Eggen, Boonslick Regional Planning Commission

This meeting is the fifth in a series of six planned meetings to discuss issues related to Missouri River and the Lower Missouri watershed from Hermann, MO to the confluence with the Mississippi River. The final meeting is scheduled for July 12 in Washington, MO and will be held in collaboration with Missouri River Country.

## 2. Plans for Howard Bend Levee District – Wayne Oldroyd, City of Maryland Heights

Wayne Oldroyd, Director of Community Development at the City of Maryland Heights provided an overview of their plans and considerations for the floodplain of the Missouri River in the city boundaries.

- 42 square miles of land, including Fee Fee Creek and Creve Coeur Creek, drains to the area in Maryland Heights protected by the Howard Bend levee.
- Several plans over the years were made for the Howard Bend Levee District. The most recent is the Maryland Park Lake District.
- The goal of planning in Maryland Heights is to make water an amenity, not an adversary.
- The Maryland Park Lake District will include entertainment, residential and commercial development.
- Maryland Heights formed a committee for Maryland Park Lake District to act as a catalyst for regional growth and development. The committee is a partnership with many different sectors and organizations.
- Using this land area as recreation and water quality infrastructure and stormwater infrastructure is the way to deal with flooding. We should not be sending flood risk down river for another jurisdiction to have to deal with.

## 2. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) – Shawn Sullivan and Robert Gramke

Shawn Sullivan, Strategic Planning Coordinator for the St. Louis District, provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the USACE regarding levee management along the Missouri River. Robert Gramke, Missouri Section Chief, provided an overview of the St. Louis district's regulatory program regarding levee permitting and compensatory mitigation.

- Kansas City district has the most 'real estate' in Missouri. The St. Louis district only has 70 miles of MO River.
- USACE districts are mostly delineated by watersheds.
- St. Louis District responsibilities:
  - Flood fighting
  - Inform of weather forecast to drainage and levee districts

- Existing levees that have been authorized by Congress, not ones that do not have federal input
- Repair levee damage – federal and non-federal levees that are eligible
- Levee inspections – example is Maryland Heights levee is part of a federal program to receive funding. To be eligible for funding, the levees must be inspected.
- Risk awareness with levee districts
- USACE St. Louis district has only built 3 levees in the past 30 years. There is not a lot of federal investment in levees. But there is investment going into fixing seepage into levees with protected property behind them
- The USACE regulatory mission is to protect the Nation’s aquatic resources, while allowing reasonable development through fair and balanced decisions. The Corps does not have overall authority for building levees.
- The USACE regulates fill or dredging of waters of the United States. The USACE usually only gets involved with permitting if the activity is on, in, over or under the water.
- MO Department of Natural Resources gives floodplain permits with the local community. Floodplains are managed by FEMA and SEMA; USACE does not do permitting in floodplains
- USACE manages wetland mitigation for development that cannot avoid a wetland.
- RIBITs – Regulatory In Lieu Fee Bank and Information Tracking System is the online portal to track mitigation sites

Questions:

- How are levees managed if they are not on the Missouri or Mississippi River? If a county or municipality is in a flood insurance program, they will have a floodplain manager.
- USACE now has authorization to look at non-structural floodplain protection under the 2016 Water Resources Act. USACE can talk to levee districts who want repairs about their non-structural options. An example of a non-structural option is doing a levee setback along the MO River.

### 3. Big Muddy Wildlife Refuge – Tom Bell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)

Tom Bell, Refuge Manager for Big Muddy, provided an overview of the Big Muddy Wildlife Refuge within the MO River watershed, and the importance of mitigation to improve habitat for floodplain species.

- Currently, Big Muddy is 19,700 acres. It is authorized to have 60,000 acres. The FWS has to work with willing landowners to keep expanding the refuge. It was created to mitigate the habitat lost during the channelization of the MO River.
- The FWS works with many partners such as levee districts, the USACE and non-profit organizations to manage the refuge. You have to in an environment such as the MO River floodplain.
- The purpose of the refuge is not for flood control or endangered species; the purpose is for floodplain dependent species.
- The FWS acquires and manages land for fish and wildlife – funding comes from sources such as the Nature Conservancy and Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

- MO River used to be a braided, slow moving river. Engineering changed it to better control flooding but in the process 500,000 acres of wildlife habitat was lost so the refuge is to help restore some of what was lost.
- The refuge is a series of units between St. Louis and Kansas City. It is part of the MO River Recovery Program. FWS staff work with the USACE to plan for a piece of property. Another goal of the refuge is to prevent a future endangered species.

#### 4. Challenges of River management to meet long term needs – Brad Walker, Missouri Coalition for the Environment

Brad Walker, Rivers Director for the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, presented on what might have been in the Lower Missouri River if planning had been implemented differently over time.

- Bank Stabilization and Navigation Project along the Missouri River was authorized in 1945 to build a 9ft deep channel and stabilize the river bank. Construction took place 1951-1981
- There are 8,000 wing dikes along the river.
- During construction, the USACE did not comply with the mitigation requirements. The Pick-Sloane plan said the MO River levees should be 3,000-5,000 feet apart but they are actually much closer together.
- A quarter of the levees were federally built; the rest were locally or privately built.
- Most floods over 29 feet have occurred after the channel was built
- The purpose of the channel was for barge traffic, but barge traffic has not met the projections
- The Missouri River Recovery Plan has had funding cuts
- The costs to maintain the channel are more than the economic benefits from barge traffic
- If the Pick-Sloane plan was followed, there would be more flood storage and less flood damage to levees
- There is a need to move agricultural land and development further back

Questions:

- What could have been done differently? Congress should have said no levees to be built between the federal levees
- Should responsibility fall to federal government or local bodies? One option is to form an authority similar to the Tennessee River Valley Authority. There was a movement to form such an authority but it didn't go anywhere.