

## **Economic and Environmental Challenges**

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### **Introduction**

Historically, flood control measures have been of interest to the public because they provide protection for existing structures and activities in the floodplain and because they enable new development to take place. Although floodplains offer significant risk for the persons, structures, and activities located within them, these have not been considered sufficient to outweigh the advantages of floodplain development, particularly when the development has been accompanied by an aggressive flood control program.

Flood Control is a developed technology that absolutely works. Natural rivers are not the ideal for the environment; it takes years for wildlife and habitat to recover from flooding. The benefits of flood control are absolutely essential to the well being of America, because flood control is the cornerstone of a river transportation infrastructure that permits navigation, economic development, environmental and social stability.

Each one of these four essential parts of inland development are distinctly separate, yet in today's, world of larger populations and intense competition for use of our resources, not one can survive for very long without all of the others. Flood control must have justification, which is provided by navigation, economic development, (present and potential), and social stability, without destroying the "environment". Navigation must have flood control, to provide bank and channel stability, to permit industrial development, to enhance and expand freight diversity. Economic development for the future must be situated adjacent to, or be readily accessible to, the most efficient transportation systems. The physical environment, as we enjoy it today, is dependent on a solid economic environment to protect it from exploitation such as is seen in third world countries, and to protect it from "natural disasters" such as flooding.

The environmental challenge facing everyone today, is to find a way to provide for all four in a compatible way without destroying or preventing future enhancement and development of any of the others. The Upper Mississippi Flood Control Association (UMFCA) believes that the way to accomplish this noble and patriotic cause, is to continue and finish what the wisdom and experience of our [forefathers] has delivered to us -- a comprehensive system of flood

control, navigation, economic development, and environmental protection.

The challenge is complicated by the political environment and financial reality. The tremendous power of environmental activists has been built largely upon the ability of a few well funded groups using unproven theories and exaggerations to influence public opinion. Today, after maybe the greatest flood since Noah's Ark and the awakening of millions who were indoctrinated by pristine environmental dreamers, it is no longer possible to obtain a "let us control the world" vote on Capitol Hill by several Henny Pennies with CAD System's yelling the sky is falling.

Paul Harvey recently told the rest of the story, "EPA regulations are now costing America \$115 Billion per year", because "Environmental protection has been taken away from the scientist and is in control of the activist". The financial reality is that America can no longer afford, nor are we willing to allow, a few activists and zealous bureaucrats to set the agenda for making infrastructure investments and controlling private property and our natural resources without valuing the benefits, accessing the cost, and identifying the source of funding.

### **Flood Control**

The 1993 flood was not discriminating in its destruction. Wildlife, its habitat, agriculture, navigation, local and cross country transportation, industry, communities, local governments and people suffered losses. It must be noted that not all areas were destroyed. Where Standard Project Flood Control levees were installed, the greatest flood in at least 500 years, passed without a single levee failure, no ecosystems destroyed, and economic and social life continued without disruption. There were two hundred twenty six (226) federally constructed levees in the affected area and not one failed before water stage exceeded design elevation.

"The Monarch-Chesterfield levee at Chesterfield, Missouri, is an example of a levee that induced floodplain development and of the residual risks that result from depending on a levee for flood protection," *Sharing the Challenge*. This observation is offered as if it were a final disqualifier for flood control and industrial development in the Upper Mississippi Valley. However, just 10 miles down the Missouri River, at River Port and Earth City, on either side of I-70 with almost identical conditions including a high

bluff on the opposite bank, there is a marvelous and untold success story. There the flood protection was 500 year, instead of 100 year as at Monarch-Chesterfield. The project cost for that 500 year protection was \$13.4 million and has resulted in development exceeding \$670 million and 18,000 direct jobs. A very wise investment which has been verified by the successful protection against the worst flood in at least the past ten life times. The same opportunity for development lies all up and down the Mississippi, Missouri, and Illinois Rivers, America's Fourth Coast and the midwest's access to world trade.

### **Flood Protection for Wildlife**

Biologists in Missouri and Illinois say hardwood mast bearing trees have been killed in areas that were inundated for months last summer, including in the river bottoms along the Upper Mississippi, Lower Missouri, and lower 80 miles of the Illinois River. " There are areas where we have 100 percent mortality. If I had to pick an average, I'd say 45 to 55 percent of the trees have died or will die ", (John Nelson, Plant Specialist, Illinois History Survey). Most of these bottom-land hardwoods, including 4 foot diameter Burr Oaks now dead, developed during the period from the middle 1800's to the middle 1900's when there was no major flooding. The dead hardwoods will be replaced by monocultures of Silver Maple and Willow, but not in the Levee & Drainage Districts that had adequate levees. There the mast bearing trees still are thriving and providing food and shelter to a wide diversity of wildlife.

The impact of flooding upon the environment and wildlife habitat has long been recognized by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). In the 1989 Environmental Management Plan, the FWS requested \$1.9 million at the Lake Odessa National Wildlife Refuge on the Mississippi River, mile 435R, " for raising and broadening the levee " because " Breaches of the low levee have resulted in impacts lasting several years to aquatic vegetation growth and consequently waterfowl, and the silt-laden flood waters have also negatively affected the fishery ", (Environmental Management Program, June, 1989). The 1993 Flood breached the levees, washed all the ecosystems down the river, and replaced one of the best " crappie " lakes in the Midwest with a "bullhead" factory. There is currently a joint venture underway to rebuild the levees and restore the damage.

Just across the Iowa River in the " National Treasury Area " better known as the Iowa River-Flint Creek Levee & Drainage District the good tax paying citizens had enough levee and fight to save the levees, the ecosystems are doing just fine, and the wildlife and Grand babies are feasting on a bountiful harvest. Where are the studies and endless articles of why the Levee & Drainage Districts provide the best

habitat and hunting in the midwest while contributing billions to the national treasury?

The Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge at Havana, Illinois is a 12,000 acre site on the Illinois River that has legislative approval for purchase by the U.S. Department of Interior, and is awaiting willing sellers. The Environmental Assessment states on page 28, " Both lakes will remain independent of the Illinois River waters " and on page 47 the method of separation is stated " protected by 200 to 500 year levees ".

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is presently proceeding with a \$250 million Environmental Management Program for the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. The program consists primarily of dredging backwaters to create pot holes and placing spoil on islands and along the bank where it will wash back into the pot holes. The program also provides for the building of Levee and Drainage Districts for the FWS. The St. Louis District is currently building four on the Mississippi and one on the Illinois, complete with levees, outlet structures, and pump houses. However, there will be a few differences: there will be less than half the wildlife to be found in a privately owned Levee & Drainage District, no law abiding, hard working, tax paying citizens to pay for the whole thing, and no benefit/cost analysis is being done.

The environmental activists and the FWS are building and maintaining flood control for wildlife while at the same time diligently working to discredit the benefits of flood control for agriculture and economic development. Scientists and wildlife managers who demand facts and proven practices quickly recognize the superior benefits of navigation and of improving existing Levee & Drainage Districts.

### **International Development**

The development of inland waterways is recognized around the world as essential for the growth and well being of a nation. Only 30% of development in the United States is inland. The World Bank has recently loaned \$65 million to Indonesia to build dikes for flood protection and improve navigation. Germany has widened and deepened the Rhine main canal to connect the Rhine and Danube Rivers, which allows 2.5 meter draft barge traffic from the English Channel to the Black Sea. Germany, the world's industrial leader with an industrial wage rate of \$30 per hour, has also just announced plans to spend \$19.2 Billion by 2010 to upgrade the Hamburg to Berlin waterway and build the Elbe-Havel Canal.

It is time we stopped compromising with the environmental activists and accepted the challenge of our world competitors before the "King of the Hill" is knocked flat of his back into a mosquito infested mud hole. Do we

really believe Germany is so naive and deaf that they would destroy their rivers after all the screaming in this country that the Corps has destroyed our rivers by putting them to work? I do not think so.

Navigation will not continue if we are satisfied with the status quo of the major tonnage being grain. Has the barging industry bought any new grain barges lately? Why not? How many have been moved to South America? The reason is world competition. There must be diversity of freight to pay for improvements and maintenance of the waterway in order to lower rates. The rate for grain was 250% to 360% of tariff this fall. The barge industries' best customer -- farmers -- needs a cheap rate to sell an oversupply, but must pay a high rate because of the lack of equipment. Flood control and industrial development in the Upper Valley would provide extra equipment that could be shifted during a large harvest, lower barge rates, and help restore our position in the world grain market. This would be of national importance in improving trade and the comparative balance of trade.

### **Swamps or Wetlands**

The 1850 Swamp Control Act drained the swamp and stopped many insect borne diseases. One of the primary reasons for the 1850 Swamp Control Act was to stop viral infectious diseases carried by insects and stagnant slack water. The State of Illinois spent \$30 million in 1990 for Wetland insect control. Dr. Robert Novak has recently stated that if plans for wetland restoration are carried out that cost could increase 10 fold, to \$300,000,000.

Dr. Novak has also stated that a large increase in wetlands is extremely risky, due to the certain increase in mosquito populations and present high mobility of world insects and diseases. Such restoration of wetlands is fool hardy without a thorough investigation. Now here is an environmental challenge -- where do we find environmentalists who are more interested in protecting my grandchildren from third world plagues than in taking private property and collecting millions of dollars from uninformed, misinformed well meaning Americans.

### **Tax Dollars and Land Use**

" The wealth of Illinois is in her soil and her stability lies in its intelligent development ", Andrew S. Draper, President University of Illinois, 1899.

A popular environmental industry propaganda theme is that we must protect taxpayers from bad land use decisions by rendering highly productive agricultural and environmentally healthy land useless. However, no studies exist that would confirm the present reasonable balance.

Proper consideration is not being given to the present balanced system which provides economic stability and habitat enhancement and protection.

How about waste of tax payer dollars like in the Harrisonville Levee District that protects the town of Valmeyer, Illinois. A raise of 4 feet, on the flank levee along Fountain Creek at a cost of \$6 million would have prevented the 35,000 acre district and the town of Valmeyer from flooding in 1993, the greatest flood in history. The tax payers will spend over \$54.5 million, not including bureaucrat payroll, expenses, and flood insurance claims, to restore the district and move Valmeyer. The tax payer is coming up \$50 million plus short, and unfortunately this is typical up and down the River. Now that is a bad tax dollar use decision, and part of Valmeyer is still going to be there, waiting for another disaster because the \$6 million levee improvement project is not in the present restoration plan.

The \$6 million levee improvement would have prevented the three greatest floods in the past 500 hundred years, 1993, 1844, and 1973. We must overcome the hyperbolic rhetoric and inform the American people that reasonable people can determine from the record that with the levee improvement Valmeyer would not flood again for at least 250 years, the present tax base would be intact, future development remain possible, and the ecosystems would remain protected and healthy just like in a national wildlife refuge.

### **Wetlands and Levees**

Wetlands do not function as sponges; the basic identifier of a wetland is hydric soil which is almost impermeable and unlike a storage reservoir, storage capacity is used up before the major flooding begins. Wetlands do not filter water during flooding along the major rivers; water is 15 feet deep over the surface of the wetland and no filtering can possibly happen. The major river bottoms are not a flat spill way that tributaries gently flow across, 90% of sediment is carried into the major rivers when the silt laden water is within tributary banks. The 1993 flood left less than 2 inches of silt in the flat river bottoms while billions of tons were carried into the main channel and dropped out in the backwaters along side the channel. The best wetlands in the Midwest river bottoms are in the Levee & Drainage Districts. Protection from destructive flooding and controlled release of water with controlled flushes is the difference. Come to South Quincy Levee & Drainage District for a guided tour of an industrial, agricultural, wildlife Levee District.

The Levee & Drainage Districts along the navigable rivers are the most efficient sediment traps ever devised. Drainage is by a closed system with pumping or gravity drainage outlets. All water is held within the system while the sediment settles out in the drainage ditches. As part of

normal maintenance sediment is dredged out, spread across the land and farmed instead of being dumped into the river by a flooding tributary.

In 1985-86 a series of tests for St. Louis were performed by the Corps using the Mississippi Basin Model at Clinton, Mississippi. It was discovered that with levee and reservoir effects, today's stage-frequency relationships are not much different than those of the early 1820's. The levees do cause 4 inches to 4 feet of additional stage and not 8 feet to 13 feet as stated by some local interest. The greatest flood of history before 1993 was in 1844, only .8 of a foot higher than 1973, (Dyhouse 1994). The opponents of flood control know that 8 to 13 feet is probably not manageable, but 4 inches to 4 feet certainly is as demonstrated in 1993 in the constricted leveed areas at St. Louis and Kansas City.

### **Conclusion**

The major problem in the Upper Mississippi, Missouri, and Illinois Rivers is sediment and sand which is filling the side channels and back waters and is destroying habitat and recreation. Since our national economy cannot survive without navigation, a free flowing river is not possible. The only practical place to stabilize the sediment and sand is on the 2000 miles of levees from Cairo to Rock Island, St. Louis to Sioux City, and Grafton to Peoria. The project cost is \$1.8 Billion. The corn and soybean production alone on the 2 million acres protected by these levees has produced \$13 billion in taxes (93 dollars) since the levees were built 80 years ago, (\$73 per acre taxes), (Wisner, 1994). Hundreds of billions in taxes will be

produced as appropriate industry is located in the high work-ethic rural areas. This is a doable project where all interests will benefit and our leadership in World Trade can continue .

The UMFCA remains a strong supporter of navigation improvements, the continued protection of private property, economic development, and environmental protection. We believe that the balanced system of flood control and natural flooding areas, now in place, along the navigable rivers is the best environmental and wildlife producing system that has ever existed. Our river management does not need a radical shift in another unproven direction, but only needs continued improvements and maintenance.

We believe when the cost to our Nation of " flood plain management " is examined it will become painfully clear, that the initial cost will be in the billions with the future impact costing 100's of Billions because of excessive restrictions upon midwest access to world markets and will diminish America's economic position in the world. The wise use of natural resources and sustainable, affordable

programs to protect our environment, through private enterprise and government support and cooperation, is absolutely essential for the future of America. We do not intend to equivocate, compromise, or move one inch from that position.

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