



[TOP](#)

Emerson: 'Terribly Disappointed' In Corps Decision

MAY 02ND 2011 BY NEWS

Emerson: 'Terribly Disappointed' In Corps Decision

*By Annabeth Miller,
ShowMe Times Editor*

BIRDS POINT, Mo. - U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson has been busy lately – listening to constituents and working with agencies trying to help the victims to this spring’s flooding. On Monday afternoon she was on top of a Mississippi River levee – listening as the President of the Mississippi River Commission ordered holes be blown into a 36-mile levee in her Southeast Missouri congressional district.

Emerson listened intently – and intensely - as Maj. Gen Michael Walsh announced had given the order to activate the Birds Point New Madrid Floodway plan and blow the levee holes in an effort to relieve the system from enormous pressure.

Emerson has opposed the Corps option of fighting the flood along the river by detonating fuse plugs of the system to relieve the river.

"This is not a political issue; it's a people issue," she said.

But Emerson was on top of the levee Monday afternoon, listening as Walsh gave the order to activate the plan.

“It’s terribly disappointing,” Emerson said minutes after Walsh’s levee-top news

conference concluded. “I feel horrible about it and I know everybody else does. I actually think Gen. Walsh feels pretty bad about it himself. It is his job to care about the whole system, but I care about Missouri.

Emerson did
acknowledge

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that “at the end of the day” the decision to blow the levee was, indeed, the general's.

She noted that an appeal to a the U.S. Supreme Court turned down a request to reexamine a federal suit filed by Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster to stop the Corps from blasting the levee.

“I am hopeful that in ruining the lives of all our constituents here (in the floodway) that somehow the system then maintains its integrity. But I don’t feel 100 percent sure that that will happen,” she said. The Corps’ decision saying that the decision puts residents’ lives and livelihoods at “unacceptable risk,” she said.

“The New Madrid floodway is not a failsafe for the rest of the Mississippi River Basin. The likelihood of dramatic flooding at other points along the river has not been changed by the decision today, but opening the floodway guarantees that the people living and working in the New Madrid floodway will suffer, she said. “We have a long, long road ahead of us.”

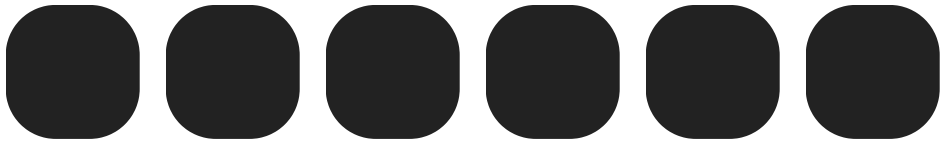
Emerson noted that damage to homes, buildings and productive farmland and the local economy would take years to set right.

“I have high expectations that the Corps go above and beyond to aid the recovery effort for the people and communities affected by this disaster,” she said.

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Route 60 Poplar Bluff to Dexter NOT Closing

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Route 60 Poplar Bluff to Dexter NOT Closing

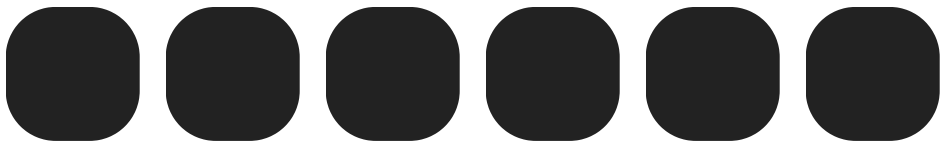
SIKESTON - The Missouri Department of Transportation has no plans to close Route 60 from Poplar Bluff to Dexter. MoDOT crews continue to monitor roadways throughout southeast Missouri and updated roadway information will be available as situations change.

For more information, please contact MoDOT's Customer Service Center toll-free at 1-888-ASK-MODOT (1-888-275-6636) or visit the Traveler Information Map at: <http://maps.modot.mo.gov/timi/index.aspx?district=10>

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Water Over Spillway; T Highway Cut In Two

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Water Over Spillway; T Highway Cut In Two

*By Annabeth Miller,
ShowMe Times Editor*

WAPPAPELLO, Mo. – In the wee morning hours, the “unthinkable” happened at Lake Wappapello when a temporary berm built last week was topped, allowing lake water to begin flooding below Wappapello dam.

Dale Moreland of the Stoddard County EOS office reported that the topping of the dam began at about 2 a.m. At 6:30 a.m. Monday, Moreland reported the lake stage was at 398.13, with an expected crest later in the day at 399.2. Output early in the morning was at 14,000 cfs (cubic feet per second) and expected to exceed 23,450 cfs.

“During the flood of 1945, the largest output was at 18,600 cfs, and lake level was 398.979. So we are getting real close to those records.”

Moreland reported he received a report early Monday morning on the condition of T Highway, which crosses the spillway and dam.

“I received a report from a highway patrol troop at the scene that T Highway was already cut in two,” Moreland said.

Floodwaters from Wappapello will flood an area along the St. Francis River Basin south into Arkansas and as far east as possibly Highway F in Stoddard County. In anticipation of the flooding in the county, Moreland said Stoddard County Sheriff’s deputies and members of Stoddard County’s volunteer fire departments have gone door-to-door in the projected area.

“They have warned people that they may be flooded and that they may want to evacuate,” he said. The affected area could reach as far east as Highway F (Aid Road), south of Puxico and the Powe community. “Dudley will be affected.”

Moreland also said that the flooding from Wappapello would affect Highway 60, saying the major east-west highway would most likely be closed in different places from Fisk to the Aid Road. Heavy rains over the weekend dumped even more rain in the region, exasperating the situation. And almost like pouring salt onto a wound, an additional 3 – 4 inches of rain is expected Monday. Moreland said county emergency workers are watching the radar constantly for the new round of rain.

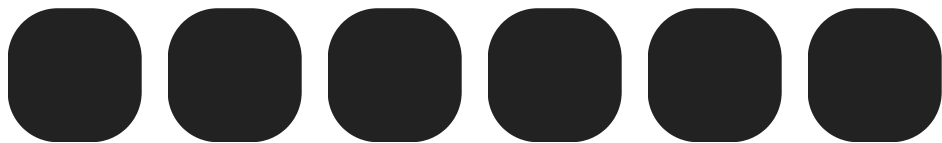
“The water is rising,” Moreland said. “It’s not going to be a gush. It will be a slow, gradual rise and it is rising at this time.”

Photo Above: Flooding waters escape over the berm at the emergency spillway at Lake Wappapello Monday morning. To the right in the photo, the damage to Highway T by the water is visible.

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[Go to post](#)



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TOP

Corps Takes Additional Step In Floodway Process

MAY 01ST 2011 BY NEWS

Corps Takes Additional Step In Floodway Process

BREAKING NEWS

An SMT News Report

SIKESTON, Mo. - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is taking the final steps to activating the Birds Point New Madrid levee in Mississippi County. For the second time on Sunday afternoon, the Corps has taken a step in the activation process.

However, the officer in charge says that decision has still yet to be made.

Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh ordered crews on Sunday afternoon to move barges loaded with 250 tons of explosives across into position on the levee and to load the pipes with the explosive agent.

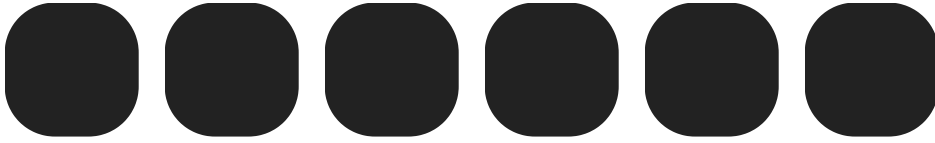
The final step would be to activate the floodway, which would send Mississippi River floodwaters through the breach in the levee and through the 130,000-acre floodway.

"The final decision to activate the floodway has not been made. Repeat - has not been made," the corps said in a release.

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[Go to post](#)



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[TOP](#)

Second Step Take In Floodway Operation

MAY 01ST 2011 BY NEWS

Second Step Take In Floodway Operation

Breaking News

An SMT News Report

SIKESTON, Mo. - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will take the second step in the activation of the Birds Point New Madrid Floodway this Sunday afternoon.

Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh, President of the Mississippi River Commission, has directed Col. Vernie Reichling, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Memphis District Commander, and field crews to be prepared to move to the next step in the Birds Point New Madrid Floodway operational plan at 3 p.m. today.

The second step in the operational plans involves repositioning the barges at Birds Point. These barges will contain the munitions that will be used to blast a breach in the floodway levee, thus activating the Birds Point floodway plan for only the second time since the 1937 flood.

At 1 p.m. Sunday the river gauge at Cairo, Ill., measured 59.89 feet, reaching an historic level.

Widespread storms Saturday night contributed to a swift rise in the river level. At Cape Girardeau, 1.5 inches of rain was measured from storms Saturday night.

The Ohio River at Cairo rose 0.7 feet in the 24 hours before the early Sunday afternoon reading of the gauge.

"The Project Flood is upon us," Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh, President of the Mississippi River Commission said today. "This is the flood that engineers envisioned following the 1927 flood. It is testing the system like never before."

Walsh said Public Safety is the Corps' highest priority and that all resources are being used to battle the effects of this flooding. Hundreds of Corps' personnel from around the nation as well as the Engineering Research Development Center, in Vicksburg, Miss., are working around the clock, monitoring the situation.

He added that he and his advisors are closely monitoring the situation but that no decision has been made at this time whether or not to operate the floodway. However, should flood pressures continue to increase it may be necessary to move to the next step in the Floodway Operations Plan.

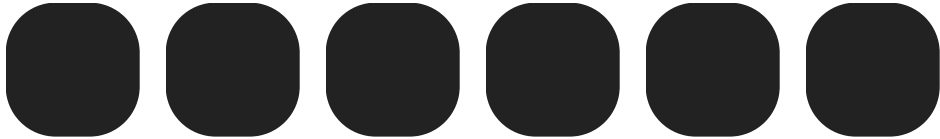
Activating the floodway is multi-step process, with step one taken Saturday in moving the barges to Birds Point, and step two Sunday in repositing the.

The other steps in floodway operation include loading the pipes in the levee with slurry (explosives), and finally activating the floodway.

On Saturday, Walsh held a briefing with news media in Sikeston, and U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson attended that briefing.

Walsh was scheduled to conduct a briefing at the Southeast Missouri Regional Port Authority in Scott city, with U.S. Senator Roy Blunt and Emerson both in attendance. That briefing was cancelled due to weather conditions.

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