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Nixon Asks USDA To Begin Assessment ASAP

MAY 09TH 2011 BY NEWS

Nixon Asks USDA To Begin Assessment ASAP

Gov. Jay Nixon announced Monday that he has asked the USDA's Farm Service Agency to start damage assessments "as soon as possible" for 56 Missouri counties hit by this spring's severe storms and flooding.

The request is the first step in declaring the counties as primary disaster areas -- those where at least 30 percent of the estimated yield of a crop will be lost or where individual farmers suffer production losses of more than 30 percent. A disaster declaration would allow eligible Missouri farmers to be considered for USDA assistance.

Nixon's request includes Stoddard County and the following other counties in the ShowMe State: Barry, Barton, Bollinger, Butler, Camden, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Cedar, Christian, Crawford, Dade, Dallas, Dent, Douglas, Dunklin, Franklin, Gasconade, Greene, Hickory, Howell, Iron, Jasper, Jefferson, Laclede, Lawrence, Madison, Maries, McDonald, Miller, Mississippi, New Madrid, Newton, Oregon, Osage, Ozark, Pemiscot, Perry, Phelps, Polk, Pulaski, Reynolds, Ripley, St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve, St. Louis, Scott, Shannon, Stone, Taney, Texas, Vernon, Washington, Wayne, Webster and Wright.

Late last week Nixon asked the federal government to declare a disaster in several counties affected by flooding, including Stoddard County and much of Southeast Missouri. A federal disaster declaration would allow individuals and governments to get federal funds to help with flood cleanup.

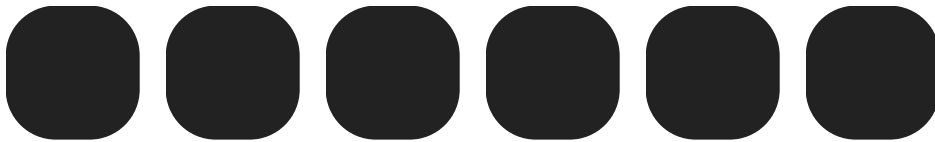
Photo Above: Gov. Jay Nixon exits a Blackhawk helicopter while on a tour of flooded

areas in southeast Missouri. Behind him is Maj. Gen. Stephen L. Danner, commanding general of the Missouri National Guard. (Governor's Office Photo)

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SEMO Instructor Discusses Post-Flood Soil

MAY 09TH 2011 BY NEWS

SEMO Instructor Discusses Post-Flood Soil

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo, - A professor and area agriculture expert at Southeast Missouri State University has delivered a lecture concerning the possible damage to the land in the Birds Point New Madrid Floodway.

Dr. Michael Aide, chair of the Department of Agriculture at Southeast Missouri State University, presented a special lecture on soil damage likely to occur to farms and agriculture in the Missouri Bootheel as a result of the breaching of the New Madrid spillway. The lecture was presented in an AO215 “Soils” class.

Aide presented the lecture at the request of students and transmitted via interactive television to Southeast’s regional campuses.

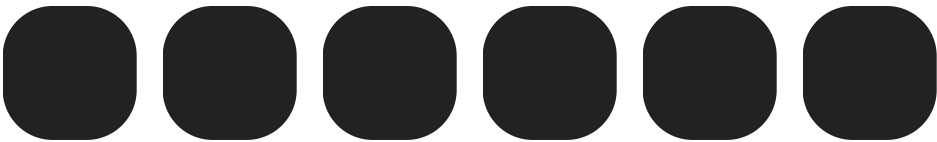
The 45-minute lecture is now available online from Southeast. Those interested in this recorded video may connect from any PC From any PC with a high speed connection. A spokesman for the University says the link should open Windows Media Player and play the video.

http://wmserver.cstl.semo.edu/itv/AO215_Aide_830_TR_SP11-027.wmv

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I-155 Bridge Open; Roadways Still Closed

MAY 04TH 2011 BY NEWS

I-155 Bridge Open; Roadways Still Closed

SIKESTON - The I-155 river bridge from Caruthersville to Dyersburg, Tenn., has reopened after being hit by a barge on Tuesday.

The Missouri Department of Transportation reported the bridge was inspected after Tuesday's incident and is now open.

Water covered Highway 51 at the Route 60 overpass Tuesday afternoon, despite efforts by crews to keep the road open.

Other roadways closed in Stoddard County include:

- Route 51 - from two miles north of Puxico to Route C (Bollinger County)
- Route 60 - Westbound traffic diverted to east bound lanes from Route N to Route 114
- Ramp from US 60 east to Route 51 at Fisk
- Route 91 - from Route P to Route CC (Scott County)
- Route A - from Route E to MO153
- Route AE- from CRD 497 to Route 51
- Route BB - from Route C to Route M
- Route D - CRD 751 to CRD 765
- Route E - from Route FF to Route N
- Route MM - from Route U to Route 102 (Dunklin County)
- Route O - from Route 25 to Route P
- Route T - Route 51 to Route D (Wayne Co.)
- Route Y - from Route AB to Route Z

{BR}Photo Above: MoDOT crews and volunteers worked Monday afternoon to try and keep flood waters from covering Highway 51 near the Highway 60 overpass in Stoddard County. The water continued to flow, and the highway was closed later in the day.

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Corps To Blast Levee Late Monday Night

MAY 02ND 2011 BY NEWS

Corps To Blast Levee Late Monday Night

By Annabeth Miller, ShowMe Times Editor

BIRDS POINT, Mo. - After a long and rainy day Monday, the Army Corps of Engineers announced it would finally happened. What everyone fighting and watching the Mississippi River flood this spring had been talking about – the Corps would blast a hole in the levee between Birds Point and New Madrid.

Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh announced late Monday afternoon on the levee near Birds Point that he issued the order to activate the floodway and blow three holes in the more than 30 miles of levee system. The first blast will be a three-mile wide breach at the northern end of the system near Birds Point.

“I've ordered the district commander to operate the project,” Walsh said in a matter-of-fact tone.

Walsh made his announcement on top the rain-drenched levee within sight of the “old” Mississippi River bridge near Cairo. A gaggle of media was on hand – metro television stations, national networks and news services, large daily newspapers – and local news journals, radio and television. The Corps inflated a bright yellow tent at an intersection Highway 60/62 and a county road so officials and media could escape the constant rain

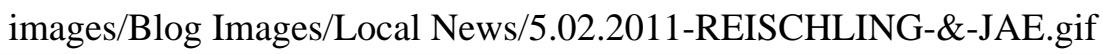
for the news event.

“Everyone I have talked with -- from boat operators, to laborers, scientists and engineers, and truck drivers have all said the same thing – ‘I never thought I would see the day that the river would reach these levels’,” Walsh said. He called this spring’s floods an “historic chocolate tide.”

Walsh said the Corps will blast the first of three holes in the levee between 9 p.m. Monday night and 12 midnight Tuesday morning.

He said he would prefer to blow the levee during the daylight but said they must detonate the explosives as soon as possible due to the weakening levee system. Walsh said the levee system needs relief as soon as possible from “enormous, unprecedented” pressure.

Walsh gave the order to activate the floodway to the Col. Vernie Reichling, commander of the Corps’ Memphis district. Reichling said crews began work on loading blasting agent into the pipes in the levee over the weekend. Crews were pulled from the work Sunday evening due to storms.

“You’re not going to see a  huge explosion,” said Reichling. “What you’re going to see is basically designed to uplift the levee and break it. The levee is designed with heavy clays; it is a very impenetrable structure. This explosive material was specifically designed to penetrate and loosen that up.”

For days the Corps has been trying to manage the flooding and to decide if activation of the flood plan originally written in 1928 should be activated. The only other time the flood plan has been activated was in the 1938 flood.

The multi-step plan will blow three holes in the levee system in Southeast Missouri, flooding more than 133,000 acres of prime agriculture land, destroying more than 100 homes and virtually destroying a way of life.

Local officials in Mississippi County as well as the Missouri National Guard have worked since the weekend to prepare residents of the region for evacuation. The Guard announced that they have completed evacuation the residents of the region, and only “had to escort” one individual from the area Monday afternoon.

"This doesn't end this historic flood," Walsh said. "This is just the beginning. This is just

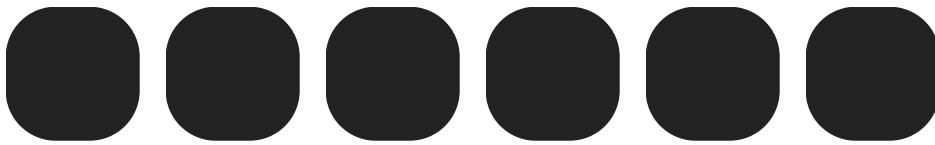
one floodway."

Photos Above: (top) Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh announced Monday afternoon he had issued the order to activate the Birds Point New Madrid Floodway late Monday night. (bottom) Vernie Reichling explains about the blasting of a plug in the levee at Birds Point as U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson listens.

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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.

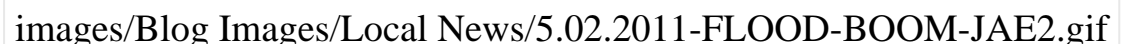
Emerson has opposed the Corps option of fighting the flood along the river by detonating fuse plugs of the system to relieve the river.

"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

images/Blog Images/Local News/5.02.2011-FLOOD-BOOM-JAE2.gif

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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