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Emerson Wants Corps to Restore Area ASAP

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*By Annabeth Miller,
ShowMe Times Editor*

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson does not want the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to forget but instead to move with haste in restoring the land and the people who lived and worked in the in the Birds Point floodway in Southeast Missouri.

Emerson sent a letter Friday to Major General Michael Walsh demanding the swift restoration of the Birds Point levee in Missouri’s Eighth Congressional District. The levee was intentionally breached earlier this month by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in three places under the assumption that flooding in nearby areas would be mitigated. Emerson strongly voiced her opposition to the action.

“The people who live and work in the New Madrid Floodway cannot move forward with their recovery until some action is taken to stop water from entering the spillway. This needs to be done as soon as possible as part of a responsible process of restoring flood protection,” Emerson said. “The Corps decision has hurt these communities and counties very badly, and they ought to be a priority as the Corps begins to clean up the mess from this disaster.”

The text of Emerson’s letter follows:

An entire Missouri community and millions of dollars in economic activity in Missouri's Eighth Congressional District have been wasted by the decision to destroy the Mississippi River levees at Birds Point. My constituents and I will accept nothing less than your total commitment to restoring the New Madrid Floodway, repairing the resulting damage and returning flood protection to those harmed by the actions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in this disaster.

Pinhook, Missouri, is home to 48 constituents I represent in the New Madrid Floodway, which contains 288 residential structures total. Without restoration of the levees, these Missourians cannot return to their homes. The Floodway is also home to 132,000 acres which produced fully half of the value of Mississippi County's agricultural economy last year, totaling \$65 million. Without restoration of the levees, this county (already a persistent poverty county for four consecutive decades) will be economically devastated.

Not only do these Americans deserve protection from future Mississippi River floods, they must also be helped to their feet by the governmental entity which knocked them down. The restoration of the levees is the very least you can do for the thousands who have been injured by the Corps' actions. It is entirely appropriate that the Corps would also repair other public and private structures in the Floodway damaged by the levee breach.

Missourians in the Eighth District deserve your prompt and complete commitment to helping them recover from the disaster the Corps caused in their communities. Please provide an immediate indication that the full resources of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be made available to help us in our time of need.

Photo Above: U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (on right) listens as Col. Vernie Reichling Jr., answers questions during a briefing on the levee held by Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh when he announced the decision to blow the levee at Birds Point. (ShowMe Times File Photo)

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