

## **Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers Feasibility Study Public Open House**

Issues ranging from improving levees to limiting development in the floodplain were raised at a public open house held on 14 January 2003 at the Des Moines Botanical Center. The open house was part of the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers Feasibility Study, and was a cooperative effort of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, and the City of Des Moines.

Objectives of the open house were to meet with the public to discuss the study status and the alternatives being evaluated for flood damage reduction; to obtain additional input on flood-related impacts and concerns; and to fulfill the National Environmental Policy Act's scoping requirements.

Two identical open house sessions were held from 1-3 p.m. and 5-8 p.m. Attendees viewed a voiceless PowerPoint presentation which provided a general study overview, and then they had the opportunity to discuss issues and concerns with representatives from the City of Des Moines and from the Corps of Engineers' project/study management, engineering, economics, and environmental disciplines. Open house displays included a large map of the entire study area, maps of selected study reaches illustrating the 100-year floodplain, existing and potential levee alignments, and wetland locations; flood photographs; and a video of the 1993 flood event in the Des Moines area. Handouts providing additional study-related information also were available.

Meeting attendees were asked to fill out a comment sheet after each session. Overall, comments were very favorable regarding the open house format and displays. Within the environmental arena, study-area residents recognize the importance and challenge of balancing the protection of people and property with the protection of the ecosystem. The major concerns centered around impacts to wetlands and farm land, and reducing rainwater runoff.

Other issues offered for consideration by the team as the study progresses include levee improvements-especially in the Central Place and Birdland Park areas; limiting floodplain development; potential floodwater damage impacts downstream of Des Moines; protection of the downtown business district; and the handling of interior drainage problems.

Impacts and damages resulting from the 1993 flood event in Des Moines were a major impetus for the initiation of this study. When asked if the study was addressing those impacts and concerns, nearly everyone who responded agreed that the study appears to have identified areas in need of improvement, and the final outcome will determine if those needs are addressed.

The public comments received as a result of this public outreach effort will be used as part of the scoping process for the study's conformance with the

National Environmental Policy Act. All information received at the open house is distributed to all study team members for consideration and analysis.