

UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STUDY PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

Identification of floodplain problems, need and opportunities, economic and environmental concerns, and methods for reducing flood damages within the floodplain were all major topics of discussion at a series of four public open houses held during September 2002.

Through a cooperative effort of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Districts from St. Louis, Rock Island, and St. Paul, the open houses were held in St. Louis, Missouri, Quincy and Peoria, Illinois, and Dubuque, Iowa.

Two identical open house sessions were held at each location from 2-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. Study team members from the project management/plan formulation, hydraulic and hydrologic engineering, economics, and environmental work groups were on hand to provide information and answer questions on a one-to-one basis. Work group displays exhibited information about the study background, problems identified to date, example flood profiles, and land cover/land use on the floodplains in the study area. A voiceless PowerPoint presentation provided a general study overview, and handouts with additional study-related information also were available.

Opportunities for public input were made available via the August study newsletter comment sheet and the open house comment sheet. Input also was received by email and letter correspondence through the mail. The written comments submitted were sorted by theme and organized into 11 categories: erosion; siltation; sedimentation; ecology and natural resources; water quality; river issues; structural measures; non-structural measures; development; water control; other issues.

Major problems and opportunities needing to be addressed by the study are seen as:

- ecology and natural resource issues (loss of wetlands and wildlife areas, or the opportunity to restore and increase wetland and habitat areas)
- structural measures (enhance levees, floodwalls, containment areas protecting floodplain areas, or the opportunity to remove them and improve the environment)
- non-structural measures (problem of obtaining funding for buyouts, easements, etc., which is also an opportunity to acquire more land to set aside for floodplain and habitat use)
- water control (problems of backwater storage, runoff in watershed, water level management, or opportunity to develop methods for handling flood water distribution)
- development (restricting, relocating, removing structures in the floodplain, which in turn allows for more land to be returned to floodplain use)

Opinions on which methods for reducing flood damages within floodplain areas should be investigated in this study centered around:

- structural measures (raise or lower levees, build new levees; or remove and reconnect river to natural floodplain)
- ecology and natural resources (restore natural habitats to act as buffers, store flood water, and improve water quality)
- non-structural measures (buyouts, easements, farming and conservation practices, crop programs, upland treatments, mitigation)
- floodplain development (restrict, relocate or remove)
- water control (backwater storage, runoff in watershed, water level management)

Structural measures for reducing flood damages were also viewed as the most detrimental to the ecosystem, followed by issues of river dredging and channelization.

Non-structural measures were viewed as having mostly positive effects on the ecosystem, followed ecology and natural resources with restoration of wetlands and habitat. Structural measures viewed as being positive reflect the opinion that removing them would increase the floodplain and create more wetlands.

Major environmental concerns in the floodplain areas are ecology and natural resources, water quality, sedimentation and siltation.

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. The information received at the open houses is distributed to the study team members for consideration and analysis as the study progresses.