



# LEVEE ISSUES ALLIANCE MARKS NEW MILESTONE ON LEVEE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

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*With schedule in hand and construction just weeks away, Alliance convenes to reinforce that timely completion of the \$161 million project remains region's top priority.*

EDWARDSVILLE, ILL., MAY 1, 2012 . . . Members of the St. Louis Metro East Levee Issues Alliance, who represent the residents and businesses in the American Bottom whose lives and livelihoods depend on the timely completion of the Metro East levee improvements, gathered today at America's Central Port to mark an important milestone in the project. With the design and funding in place, they released the official construction schedule that has been developed by the Flood Prevention District Council (FPD Council), along with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), for the planned levee improvements, which are set to get underway starting on June 6th.

As the \$161 million project heads into this critical phase, the Levee Issues Alliance, which is administered by the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois, is calling on its members and other area citizens to join in taking an active role in charting the progress of the FPD Council, celebrating each new milestone reached, and reinforcing that timely completion of the project remains the top priority for the region.

The improvements are essential to ensuring that the levee system continues to be FEMA-certified and to safeguard the homes and businesses of the 156,000 residents and 55,000 workers that lie behind it in the American Bottom. As ground is broken in the coming weeks, the construction will put people to work and help to demonstrate that regional leaders are fully committed to allocating the resources needed for the levees to quickly

be improved to the new federal standards. It also will help to reassure existing and potential new businesses considering expanding in or relocating to the American Bottom that Southwestern Illinois is a place where they can invest with confidence.

To help keep the project and its schedule top of mind, and to reinforce the importance of receiving timely permits and approvals in order to keep the project on track and within budget, the Alliance today activated a Countdown to Completion Clock on its website at [www.stlmetroeastlevees.org](http://www.stlmetroeastlevees.org). As the clock counts down from today to December 31, 2014, the target date for all phases of the project to be completed, the public will be able to see, at anytime, if the project is on schedule or if any issues are resulting in delays that threaten the project timeline.

A condensed copy of the schedule is now also available on the Alliance's website. It visually depicts the key milestone dates for the various bid packages that will be worked on over the next two and a half years to bring the levees up to the new federal standards.

The Levee Issues Alliance believes that meeting each of the deadlines detailed in the schedule is critical to completing the levee improvements by the end of 2014 and ensuring FEMA certification of the levees in order to eliminate the future threat of much more costly insurance requirements for people who can least afford them. It's also essential to continuing to provide the highest level of protection for the lives and livelihoods in the American Bottom and the economic future of the entire region.

"We trust the Flood Prevention District Council will do everything necessary to move this project forward and we're pleased to hear the Corps' public commitment that this is the District's number one priority and that they will work to expedite their review and approval process to keep us on track," noted Rich Conner, president of the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois.

As the project shifts into high gear, the Alliance is committed to charting its progress and getting the word out as each new milestone is reached. But Conner noted that the Alliance also believes that part of its job is to sound the alarm if it appears that issues are arising that will delay the project and threaten the project timeline. With that in mind, any delays in the project will cause the Countdown Clock to stop, and the number of additional days that may need to be added to the schedule as a result of the delay will be tracked on the website as a reminder to all involved to work through the issues and get the project back on track.

"If the cause of the delay is something we believe we can influence through outreach to our legislators, the administration or other means, we will be calling on the members of the Alliance and the general public to get involved," added Conner. "Our goal will be to work together to try to

address any threat to our region's ability to move this project forward and to complete the work within the timeframe and budget established."

The Alliance event was held at America's Central Port, which lies at the foot of the land side of one of the five levees in the Metro East levee system. A mixed-use development featuring housing, offices for small business, manufacturing facilities such as the Arizona Air dome, and large industrial operations, such as the Abengoa Ethanol plant, America's Central Port is representative of the entire American Bottom. It's also a \$200 million economic engine for our region, one of several protected by the levees that are set to be improved.

"Thanks to the leadership and decisive action by our three County Board Chairmen - Alan Dunstan from Madison County, Mark Kern from St. Clair County and Delbert Wittenauer from Monroe County - the stage is set for this critical project to get underway," noted Conner. "We're eager to move forward."

The St. Louis Metro East Levee Issues Alliance serves as the organizational framework for the regional, public/private effort to help prevent the unintended economic consequences produced by FEMA's update of the flood insurance rate maps in our region. The Alliance's coalition of business and civic organizations, community leaders and concerned citizens is currently working to help ensure the timely completion of the levee improvements so they meet new federal standards and continue to protect the lives and livelihoods in the American Bottom, which is home to 156,000 residents and 55,000 existing jobs.