



# **CORPS accepts FPD Council's New Levee Improvement Plan, Agrees to Schedule**

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After months of joint meetings of the Flood Prevention District Council and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the St. Louis Metro East Levee Issues Alliance is pleased to announce there's about to be some more forward progress on the levee improvement project. Major issues have now been resolved for the FPD Council's bid package #2a, which is made up of a small pump station in the Fish Lake district. A formal approval from the Corps is expected. More importantly, a new project schedule has been finalized and agreed to by both parties. At the latest meeting facilitated this week by the Levee Issues Alliance, the Corps and the FPD Council committed to meeting the deadlines set forth for review and approval of each phase, so the required permits can be issued in time to meet the revised project completion date on or around January 20, 2015.

To mark this important milestone, the Levee Issues Alliance reactivated the countdown clock on its website at [www.stlmetroeastlevees.org](http://www.stlmetroeastlevees.org) and reaffirmed that it will continue to serve in a watchdog capacity and sound the alarm if it appears the project schedule is being threatened.

"We're encouraged by the latest developments and pleased to see that the majority of the time lost due to the impasse regarding the original design can be regained as the new plans are implemented," noted Ronda Sauget, president of the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois, which administers the Levee Issues Alliance. "Of course, making up for that lost time and preventing any additional future delays will be dependent upon each element of the project staying on schedule, and we'll be continuing to keep a close eye on its progress."

The FPD Council's new plans no longer call for the use of certain design features to control underseepage at key points in the levees that were a cause of disagreement

between the FPD's engineering team and the Corps. In order to find a different path forward that fits its available financing and timeline, the FPD Council has, over the past few months, devoted its resources to developing alternative designs consisting of more traditional underseepage controls. Those designs were developed in coordination with the Corps and the finalized new design uses relief wells, berms and limited cutoff walls to control underseepage. It's a plan that also can be implemented within the \$161 million budget supported by the sales tax dedicated to funding the levee improvements.

Despite the actual deadline for completion of construction being pushed back a little into 2015, those leading the project remain confident, at this point, that the work can still be completed early enough in 2015 for the levees to be recertified as meeting the new federal standards so that their accreditation by FEMA will be assured before the end of that year.

For those interested in learning more about the updated schedule, the reactivated countdown clock including the official project schedule is available at [www.stlmetroeastlevees.org](http://www.stlmetroeastlevees.org). The website also includes additional background information on this issue and a tab to sign up to become a member of the Levee Issues Alliance, which represents the 150,000 residents and 55,000 workers in the American Bottom whose lives and livelihoods depend on the timely completion of the Metro East levee improvements. The improvements are essential to ensuring that the levee system continues to be accredited by FEMA and to safeguard the homes and businesses that lie behind it in the flood plain area that encompasses 25 individual communities in Madison, St. Clair and Monroe counties. They 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.

"The funding is in place to accomplish our goal thanks to the leadership and decisive action by our three County Board Chairmen – Mark Kern from St. Clair County, Alan Dunstan from Madison County and Delbert Wittenauer from Monroe County," adds Sauget. "We appreciate the willingness of the Corps and the FPD Council to sit down and work through the issues that threatened the project so work can proceed and those dollars can be invested in the levees and in the future of our region."

*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.*

