

Madison County officials say improving drainage will prevent flooding

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EDWARDSVILLE — Madison County officials are striving to improve Horseshoe and Long lakes drainage systems to reduce flooding and protect properties in the American Bottoms during heavy rains.

“We need to do more to improve drainage,” County Board Chairman Kurt Prenzler said. “To start we are looking at dredging part of Horseshoe Lake and replacing the outfall structure.”

Prenzler said last year Metro East Sanitary District made improvements in its system, but more work is needed. He said the level of Horseshoe Lake was lowered to increase water storage capacity and the ditches and canals were cleaned out to improve the flow of storm water.

“Removing sediment and upgrading the outfall structure will increase the lake’s capacity for flood control,” he said.

Planning and Development Administrator Matt Brandmeyer said while levee improvements are being completed to protect low-lying areas, the interior flooding has not been addressed. He said drainage issues are what causes the interior, or surface, flooding.

An outfall is a discharge point of a waste stream into a body of water and within MESD it’s the storm sewers emptying into the lakes.

Brandmeyer said more comprehensive improvements are needed and include increasing Horseshoe Lake storage capacity, improving drainage of Long Lake, maintenance and improvements to Cahokia Canal, County Ditch and Brushy Lake would make a difference.

Stephen Adler, executive director of MESD, agreed. He said the flooding is caused when water in the canals and ditches are unable to drain into the lakes, which are the retention areas that absorb the influx of storm water.

“We need to improve the flow of water and these projects will help with that,” Adler said.

Prenzler said officials are looking into using sales tax monies as a way to pay for the projects.

“The county collects a .25 percent sales tax that we believe can be used for flood prevention,” he said.

In 2008, voters in Madison, Monroe and St. Clair counties approved the .25 percent sales tax (Flood Prevention Retailer’s and Service Occupation Tax) in response to the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s announcement to “de-accredit” the 74-mile levee system protecting the American Bottoms. Each county maintains its own Flood Protection District and the three form the Southwestern Illinois Flood Prevention Council, which uses the sales tax for repairs and restorations of the levees.

Brandmeyer said the county is evaluating the state statute and elements of the current framework in order to ensure all steps are properly completed. The County Board oversees the budget of the Flood Protection District.

“These projects are important in improving drainage issues and protecting people in the American Bottoms,” Prenzler said. “