

# LOOKING FOR 500-YEAR FLOOD FIX: Work going strong on levees throughout county

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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**EDWARDSVILLE** - Those driving around the region will notice an enormous amount of work near Madison County and nearby Monroe and St. Clair County levees, all part of a project to providing a lasting fix.

**Madison County Chairman Alan Dunstan** said support was something that required city governments and three counties working together.

“We will be at 100-year flood levels with our levees by spring of this next year,” Dunstan said. “Ultimately, we will be at the 500-year flood level. People are starting to see construction work going on. Our levees now are probably in better shape than they have been in 40 years.”

Dunstan said the levee cooperative effort is being noticed on a national scale. Seven or eight years ago, the Corps of Engineers brought the problem to the forefront and the cities and counties started working hand in hand on the problem.

“This is truly a textbook effort on how local governments got together to solve a major problem,” Dunstan said.

Dunstan said this was not an easy task and praised Sen. William Haine, D-Alton, and then Sen. Frank Watson for his work.

“Mike Walters, a county board member, also lobbied a lot on this levee project,” said Dunstan.

After the Flood of 1993 and other floods over the years, the levee system throughout Madison County has greatly deteriorated.

The levee project will fix flooding issues for many businesses and residents in the area, Dunstan said and he sees growth in the Gateway Commerce Center area coming at a high pace with multiple million dollar investments going on.

“We have another \$30 million project under construction and another one in the Lakeview area, Dunstan said. “We have 5,000 jobs now we didn’t have 10 years ago and we think in five to 10 years we will probably double that.”

Dunstan said when the Corps of Engineers first talked with the counties and cities, they thought it would be 2044 before the levees could be fixed with their projected funding.

The Madison County chairman was proud of the main way the project is being funded.

“Most of the work is being done by a quarter-cent sales tax and some other legislation,” Dunstan said. “Most of it is local money.”

Dunstan said the local sales tax couldn't be going to a bigger priority than fixing the levees. He said he is hopeful eventually the levees are at 500-year flood levels, which would completely protect residents and businesses.

He said residents and businesses should still be paying for flood insurance in the future.

