



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Senate District 21

For the Week of:
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Capitol Building, Room 332
Jefferson City, MO 65101

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Protecting Missouri Farmland: Big Muddy Lawsuit

Living in this state, Missourians are aware of the ever-changing climate – our cold, blustery winters; long, hot summers; and thunderstorms in the autumn and spring. During the spring, Missouri can see up to 12 inches of rain and this year we have seen more-than-normal amounts of precipitation for our area.

In May, parts of Missouri, Iowa and Kansas received as much as 8 inches of rain in a 24-hour period during massive thunderstorms that moved through the Midwest. Levees broke along the Missouri River flooding farms, highways and railroad tracks, leaving dozens of homes surrounded by water. Governor Blunt declared a state of emergency and mobilized National Guard troops to help flood victims and work to protect areas that were prone to flood. Seventeen counties were included in a Disaster Declaration request including four in our district – Carroll, Chariton, Clay, and Lafayette.

Farmers along the Missouri River and its tributaries, many of whom are in our senate district, have been severely impacted by the flood waters that occurred in early May. Mid-Missouri saw first hand the devastation to crops and farmland. Farmers knew the economic challenges that they were going to have to face in the upcoming days and months.

In the past year, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has dumped millions of tons of dirt into the Missouri River for “side panel” or chute projects to restore fish habitats along a stretch of the river. At the Jameson Island chute under construction near Arrow Rock, the Corps intends to put 1.5 million cubic yards of dirt and sand into the Big Muddy. Corps officials said the project, which will cost \$3.7 million, adds extra sediment, which is good for the river.

The Corps is building the chutes for the sole purpose of helping the endangered pallid sturgeon at any cost. These are the same creatures that prompted an artificial spring rise in 2006. A federal environmental opinion issued in 2003 requires the Corps to build 20,000 acres of shallow-water habitat along the river by 2020.

Farmers say these projects raise flooding concerns and waste tons of valuable Missouri soil. Spring is not over and Missouri could see additional flooding in many areas. Dumping soil into the river could raise the water level and endanger the already taxed levees protecting the precious land farmers have left after the floods in May.

Due to a threatened lawsuit, the Army Corps of Engineers has suspended several Missouri River projects designed to restore fish habitat. I encourage all constituents to contact the Corps by visiting their website at <http://www.nwk.usace.army.mil/> or call (816) 389-3486. Ridiculous as it may seem, taxpayers need to voice their opinion on this project.

If you have questions or comments about the topic above or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or send me an e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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