

Press Release

May 24, 2007

For Immediate Release

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St. Louis, Mo. – A United States District Court ruled today that an Environmental Assessment prepared by the United States Army Corps of Engineers for a proposed levee in Jefferson City, Missouri, is defective. The Court found that the assessment prepared by the Corps of Engineers failed to evaluate the cumulative impact of the levee combined with other flood control structures that currently flank the Missouri River.

In 1998, the Corps proposed constructing a 1,000 year levee along the northern bank of the Missouri River in Jefferson City. The levee was to have been 4.7 miles long with a height ranging from 15 to 23 feet.

According to papers filed with the court, two hundred years ago the Missouri River, along with its adjoining wetlands and floodplains, contained one of the continent's most complex and diverse ecosystems. By the late 1970's, the Lower Missouri River (735 miles) had been channelized and its natural floodplain ecosystems almost completely converted to agricultural or other uses. Today, the Lower Missouri River is flanked by levees and other flood control structures for most of its length.

Great Rivers Environmental Law Center filed suit in 2003 on behalf of the Sierra Club challenging the Corps' proposed levee. The suit alleged that the Corps was required by federal law to evaluate the cumulative impact of flood control structures on flood heights, rather than look only at the incremental impact of the proposed levee. "The Corps has been ducking the cumulative impact issue for years. In the meantime, flood heights have been spiraling upward," said Bruce Morrison, an attorney with Great Rivers on the case.

Great Rivers is a non-profit, public interest environmental organization in St. Louis that provides free legal assistance to citizens' groups seeking to preserve and protect the environment. Its website is: www.greatriverslaw.org.

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