



Transcript of the Testimony of
**USACE Pearl River Flood Risk Management
Project Meeting (6_00),**

Date: May 23, 2023

Case: USACE Pearl River Flood Risk Management Project
Meeting (6:00)

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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
VICKSBURG DISTRICT

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PUBLIC MEETING FOR THE PEARL RIVER FLOOD RISK
MANAGEMENT PROJECT

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The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers - Vicksburg
District public meeting for the Pearl River Flood Risk
Management Project, held at Slidell High School
Auditorium, 1 Tiger Drive, Slidell, Louisiana 70458,
beginning at 6:03 p.m.

Reported by:

Jenna Limjuco, BA-CCR
Certified Court Reporter

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APPEARANCES:

Representing the Army Corps of Engineers:

Thomas R. Shaw

Robyn Colosimo

Leslie Prochaska

Colonel Christopher Klein

1 TOM SHAW:

2 Good afternoon, everyone. My name is
3 Tom Shaw. I'm the project manager for
4 the Vicksburg District. We'd like to
5 welcome you all here to this second
6 public meeting for the Pearl River Flood
7 Risk Management Project. We appreciate
8 you coming.

9 We are here for a couple of reasons.
10 One is to help provide information to
11 you, but most importantly, we want to
12 gain input and feedback from you about
13 the project. So we do thank you for
14 being here. And so I will go ahead and
15 recognize our guests on the panel today.

16 We've got Robyn Colosimo on your far
17 right. She is the deputy -- Assistant
18 Secretary of the Army for Project
19 Planning and Policy Review. Next to her,
20 we've got Colonel Christopher Klein, the
21 Vicksburg District Commander for the
22 Corps of Engineers; and then next to the
23 colonel is Leslie Prochaska. She is the
24 Plan Formulator with the Regional
25 Planning Environment Division South. And

1 so they will be helping, if you will, to
2 make this presentation, and then there'll
3 be a period of time afterwards we'll be
4 looking for comments and feedback from
5 you.

6 So if you will, I'm going to kind of
7 do a couple housekeeping things. We've
8 got, basically, a two hour window to
9 conduct this session and get some
10 feedback from you. When you came in,
11 there was some sign up sheets. We would
12 ask if you please -- if you're willing to
13 do so, please sign up at least your
14 address, maybe a phone number. I
15 wouldn't necessarily put your personal
16 email because it will become part of the
17 record and I would hate for you to
18 receive some unsolicited emails about
19 that.

20 So at this time, I want to talk about
21 a couple of things. One is you notice
22 there are multiple boards out in the
23 foyer when you came in, and on those
24 there are rules of engagement. There are
25 discussions about the public meetings,

1 which you will see on the slideshow, but
2 there's also a study area of what
3 constitutes Alternate A, which is a non-
4 structural alternate as proposed by non-
5 federal interests, and Alternate C, which
6 is the local preferred plan.

7 So we do have a virtual presence as
8 well. It's not only face to face here.
9 So I'm going to cover some really quick
10 things, if you will, with respect to
11 feedback. So I will just ask that, you
12 know, if you're here in the audience and
13 you want to ask a question at the end,
14 that you would wait to me recognized, if
15 you will, and then try to limit your
16 comments to three minutes or less.

17 There will be -- as I mentioned,
18 there is a virtual Webex going on as
19 well. In that Webex, you have the
20 ability to chat and ask questions. We
21 don't necessarily have a sign up on the
22 Webex, so if you would, just enter in the
23 chat your information, and that way we
24 have a record of you having participated.
25 So with that, let's -- let's go ahead and

1 get going.

2 We already talked about -- okay, so
3 agenda and purpose. We're here -- like
4 we said, we want to give you the
5 opportunity to hear about the project and
6 provide us feedback. It's vitally
7 important to us. The other thing is we
8 want to recognize the non-federal
9 interests, and that could be the Rankin-
10 Hinds Pearl River Flood and Drainage
11 Control District.

12 The authorization of this project was
13 done as submitted under Section 3904,
14 which allows the Secretary of the Army to
15 take action upon the submission, and then
16 there is -- we'll talk a little bit later
17 about Section 1176, which is the
18 assessment of the downstream impacts.

19 And so we'll do some discussions, if
20 you will, about the history of the
21 project and how we got to where we are
22 today. The non-federal interests
23 submitted a report under Section 211 in
24 July of '22, and they sent in comments,
25 and the Vicksburg District, the reason

1 we're here today is the Vicksburg
2 District was charged by the ASA to fill
3 in the gaps in those comments as we move
4 forward. We'll also talk about the
5 review process, but let's go to the next
6 slide, please.

7 Okay. As I mentioned earlier, this
8 is the second of two meetings here in
9 Slidell. Tomorrow, we will conduct
10 meetings in Jackson, Mississippi, and you
11 can see the schedule. It'll still be a
12 1:00 and 6:00 p.m. arrangement, and we
13 will be at the Mississippi Ag Museum
14 there on Lakeland Drive.

15 A couple of important things there is
16 the input that we're getting from you.
17 When you came in, there were comment
18 cards and comment box that you can enter
19 in your comments and basically place
20 those in the box. There is an email that
21 you'll see a little bit later, but the
22 email is at the very bottom. I don't
23 know if you can read that. And of
24 course, we can still get a hard copy in
25 U.S. Mail, and so any of those will do in

1 terms of us collecting information. The
2 big thing is we want you for that.

3 All right. At this time, we're going
4 to turn it over to Ms. Colosimo for her
5 to talk about the importance of the
6 project.

7 PRESENTATION

8 MS. COLOSIMO:

9 Mic check. Can you hear me? Bonus.
10 Thanks, everybody, for taking the time to
11 join us tonight. We did have a session
12 earlier today and it's good to see a few of
13 you back here as well, but also just to see
14 new faces.

15 This is a really important beginning of a
16 conversation around a potential project to
17 deal with flood risk management in Jackson.
18 We're going to unpack what we know today and
19 where we are through the three of us here,
20 and then take questions. I look forward to
21 all of that engagement.

22 Overarchingly, yeah, I'm Robyn Colosimo.
23 I oversee the Corps of Engineers. I've work
24 in that office that oversees it and my job --
25 sounds funky; right? Project Planning and

1 Review. What's that mean? It's really about
2 any proposal that comes through the Corps of
3 Engineers for an investment in a community
4 has to be cleared through our office before
5 it goes to Congress, ultimately through
6 project authorization or permission, and
7 ultimately, with the Administration as well.
8 So that is one of the reasons we're here.
9 This is an important priority, and I'll come
10 back to that.

11 But I want to turn now to a video of our
12 leader in the office, Mr. Michael Connor. He
13 is the Assistant Secretary of the Army for
14 Civil Works. He is the overseer of the Corps
15 of Engineers. He has some remarks, but he
16 could not be here today.

17 MR. CONNOR:

18 (Via video) Hi, everyone. I'm Mike
19 Connor, Assistant Secretary of the Army
20 for Civil Works. I direct policy
21 oversight and direction of the U.S. Army
22 Corps of Engineers Civil Works Program.
23 The purpose of this community meeting
24 session on solutions to address flooding
25 along the Pearl River in Mississippi. We

1 look forward to hearing from you about
2 the need -- your needs and concerns
3 regarding flooding issues and the
4 proposed projects to address these
5 challenges.

6 As all of you know, the city of
7 Jackson, Mississippi has experienced
8 devastating floods as recently as 2020
9 and 2022. I saw firsthand some of this
10 flooding in August of last year in a
11 visit to discuss a proposed project.

12 It is a priority to provide the
13 people of Jackson an effective near-term
14 solution to their flood risk, and we have
15 a tremendous opportunity to deliver these
16 solutions in the Bipartisan
17 Infrastructure Law with funding provided
18 through that legislation. This
19 administration will set aside sufficient
20 funding to complete planning and
21 implementation of the plan consistent
22 with existing authorities and in
23 compliance with federal environmental
24 laws.

25 Your input today will provide the

1 technical feedback needed to inform my
2 decision on the solution we will
3 implement to reduce flood risk in
4 Jackson. I appreciate your time today as
5 we work together to provide the best
6 solutions for the Corps for Jackson and
7 this region of Mississippi. Thank you
8 very much for your time.

9 MS. COLOSIMO:

10 A couple key takeaways from that video
11 from my boss is that, really, it's his
12 decision that, ultimately, you're going to
13 help inform, and Congress gave him that
14 authority in a number of places, and I'll
15 come back to that in a few minutes.

16 Mr. Connor is just a great person to be
17 working for for many reason, but in places
18 like this with really challenging water
19 resources problems, his vast experience is
20 particularly important in decision making.
21 He's held many positions in the federal
22 government and worked on the Hill, and most
23 recently, with the Deputy Secretary of the
24 Department of Interior. So he's seen the
25 government work across the water space, and

1 we appreciate his views to be able to walk
2 through this process with all of you. Next
3 slide. Great.

4 So why are we here? Really, in totality,
5 we want to start this engagement with you all
6 about advancing the flood risk management
7 solution after decades of repetitive flooding
8 in Jackson. For over a hundred years,
9 headwater flooding in the Pearl River has
10 caused destruction to businesses and industry
11 and residents, where 5,000 commercial and
12 residential structures have been damaged,
13 impacting a population of more than 500,000.

14 Notable events were in '79 and '83, and
15 more recently, '20 and '22. 1979 Flood
16 closed transportation routes, homes and
17 businesses. It also caused \$223 million
18 dollars in damages back in 1979 value, so you
19 can imagine what those would be today. The
20 highest crest was in 2020, and notably, the
21 impact was to minority and low income areas
22 in Jackson in particular.

23 The '22 event -- which I was here with
24 Mr. Connor for -- we were actually visiting
25 the area to understand what was happening in

1 the Pearl and the opportunity to do something
2 under Mr. Connor's leadership. It was
3 actually starting to rain as we left, and so
4 that's why he referenced that he was here.
5 It's fascinating to have been here and tour
6 the area and get an appreciation for it, and
7 then know the rain started to come and what
8 happened. It heightened the need to do
9 something here.

10 Of course, the Pearl River Basin also has
11 tremendous environmental value, including
12 wetlands that filter waters that eventually
13 flow into the Gulf of Mexico and support
14 thousands of geese, ducks, and migratory
15 birds. We are looking forward to working
16 with interested parties like you to solve the
17 flood risk management problems that have long
18 plagued communities in the Pearl River
19 drainage. Next slide, please.

20 In terms of federal interests, I think
21 about it very simply, and it's here: 1986,
22 Congress authorized the Corps to plan,
23 design, and implement a flood risk management
24 project. Essentially, that meant we had the
25 authority, through the Corps of Engineers, to

1 go study the problem and develop potential
2 solutions to flood risk management.

3 In 2007, the authority was modified to
4 allow the ASACW, Mr. Connor, to determine the
5 appropriate plan to implement without further
6 consultation by Congress. This is a pretty
7 big deal. Typically, after a study is done,
8 you have to go back to Congress to have them
9 authorize it. This signals Congress's
10 continuing intent to resolve flood risk
11 management in Jackson and throughout the
12 Pearl drainage.

13 In 2018, we also got specific direction
14 to include analysis of potential downstream
15 impacts. Mr. Shaw referenced that earlier,
16 and that was perhaps, from many of you, that
17 we were hearing there concerns about any
18 unintended consequences of any investment in
19 Pearl. And so those are things that are the
20 basis for the foundations of the law and
21 direction to our office, and by extension,
22 the Corps of Engineers, to solve something in
23 Jackson in flooding. We continued to have
24 interest for years, but there was no plan or
25 funding to support moving out, and that's why

1 we still end up in this situation years later
2 that there is no viable solution that have
3 been put forward.

4 So why now? What's different? We have a
5 tremendous opportunity because of the
6 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, where funding
7 was actually allocated to the Corps to
8 identify, design, and ultimately implement a
9 flood risk management project subject to the
10 approval of Mr. Connor. What we are seeking
11 to do, with your help, is to formulate and
12 advance a solution that can happen, and
13 quickly. So the big thing here is it's
14 different because we now have funding
15 allocated by Congress to allow something to
16 move forward.

17 So the process we're going to walk
18 through and we're beginning through today
19 ultimately leads to a decision which quickly
20 allows design, the construction to happen
21 because we have those funds already
22 allocated. Of course, in all of this
23 process, we're going to comply with process
24 and procedure, including environmental laws
25 and all requirements.

1 We are excited to be reinvigorating
2 technical and community work to deliver for
3 Jackson. Many of you have experiences we
4 heard from earlier today, and I look forward
5 to hearing more about the additional folks
6 that are here today. Big picture, this is
7 the beginning of an important process and
8 we're looking forward to advancing it,
9 beginning with your input.

10 With that, I turn to Colonel Klein to
11 walk through some additional information.

12 COLONEL KLEIN:

13 Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'm
14 Colonel Chris Klein, Commander of the
15 Vicksburg District. The Pearl River
16 Watershed is one of the nine watersheds that
17 we oversee from up in Vicksburg, Mississippi.
18 I'm honored to be here tonight, and thank you
19 for taking the time to come out and provide
20 us your feedback.

21 We had a really good first session --
22 really good first sessions where we heard
23 about the aging infrastructure on the river,
24 silting concerns, erosion concerns from the
25 banks. We greatly appreciate hearing about

1 that. We also heard about the downstream
2 impacts of whatever project will be put in
3 place, whether it be flooding, or even the
4 drying up of the river. You know, both of
5 those concerns were expressed.

6 Greatly appreciate that; hope to hear
7 more about that as well, as well as habitat
8 impacts. So we heard about, you know,
9 concerns about this is a very rich ecosystem;
10 a lot of critical habitat for endangered and
11 threatened species, and so we want to keep
12 taking that into account.

13 The other key takeaway I think I took
14 from the first session was the desire and
15 potential support for having a comprehensive
16 Pearl River Watershed Study. That's not the
17 purpose of this particular project, but it is
18 something to be considered, and we greatly
19 appreciate the feedback on that.

20 It's really because the Pearl River has
21 had a long history, starting with navigation
22 -- now it's also flood risk management -- and
23 the story of the flood control, particularly
24 up in Jackson, included those initial levee
25 structure which were constructed in 1968. A

1 flood of record occurred in 1979 -- real
2 devastating flood, plenty of pictures to
3 prove it -- and that resulted in the
4 authority to execute a flood control project
5 for the city of Jackson. And since then,
6 there have been multiple both locally
7 proposed as well as USACE proposed solutions
8 for flood risk management in the Jackson
9 area.

10 So the latest locally presented plan was
11 prepared under Section 211 of the Water
12 Resources Development Act, and that allowed
13 the locals to put together a plan -- a
14 reviewed plan -- and then present it directly
15 to the Secretary for consideration, and
16 that's really what brings us to our work that
17 we're doing today. Can we go to the next
18 slide, please?

19 So our USACE activities for today and our
20 latest efforts start at the end of last year,
21 2022, at the direction of the Secretary, and
22 our mission is to build off of all previous
23 work -- all previous work that has been
24 presented to us -- and develop a report that
25 assesses all options that are technically

1 feasible, environmentally acceptable, and
2 legally compliant. All right, so we're
3 taking a look at all the options in order to
4 provide that flood risk mitigation for the
5 city of Jackson.

6 The two most critical items that we're
7 looking for in this work that we're doing are
8 identified in the National Economic
9 Development Plan, as well as completing the
10 Environmental Compliance -- all quality
11 environmental compliance activities. And so
12 we talk about the National Economic
13 Development Plan -- what is that?

14 That is the plan that provides the
15 greatest benefit -- the greatest benefit to
16 meet our national economic growth priorities,
17 and so you know, all plans will then be
18 assessed against what is identified as the
19 National Economic Development Plan.

20 You know, if we have any questions, I'll
21 let you know in a little more depth on the
22 National Economic Development Plan. That's
23 going to be the baseline, and so that is
24 going to provide the expected flood risk
25 management that we need up in Jackson. And

1 all alternatives must meet at least that, if
2 not more, and so that's why the NED becomes
3 that baseline to look at.

4 We're also going to be providing an
5 analysis of comprehensive benefits. So
6 comprehensive benefits boast quantitative --
7 those that we can measure either via
8 economically, the amount of water passed
9 through the system, levels of gauges up and
10 down stream. I know from this morning, there
11 was some concerns about the flash flooding
12 that occurs on the Pearl during high water
13 events, so we're going to look deeper into
14 that in our modeling and our analysis.

15 We're also going to be taking a look at
16 qualitative, so things that are not
17 necessarily measured in numbers, but other
18 benefits that are not conventionally
19 measured, but definitely need to be
20 considered in the overall -- in the overall
21 analysis of a project and whether it should
22 or should not be built.

23 And so the thing I want to leave you
24 folks with, in my remarks at this point, is
25 to remember that the Corps of Engineers,

1 we're neither a proponent or an opponent of
2 any one project. What we want to do is we
3 want to get the engineering right, and we
4 appreciate your input into helping us
5 identify what is that best flood risk
6 management solution for the city of Jackson
7 and the Pearl River Basin.

8 At this point, I'll turn it over to
9 Leslie, who will go into the technical
10 details of where we're at in the project
11 right now.

12 MS. PROCHASKA:

13 Thank you. I'm Leslie Prochaska,
14 Regional Planning. So the non-federal
15 interests report that was submitted, it
16 builds upon the historical studies, assessing
17 over 60 different flood risk reduction
18 features. At the conclusion of the report,
19 three plans were identified for further
20 assessment: a non-structural plan, a levee
21 plan, and a channel improvement plan.

22 The non-structural plan consisted of
23 relocating structures and buying the land
24 upon which the structures were located. The
25 levee plan included upgrading existing

1 levees, construction of additional levee
2 segments and or flood walls in unprotected
3 areas, and addition of pumps or gating
4 structures.

5 The Channel Improvement Plan, which was
6 the non-federal interest Rankin-Hinds locally
7 preferred plan in their report, consisted of
8 excavation to increase the channel capacity,
9 demolition of existing weir that's near the
10 J.H. Fewell Water Treatment Plant,
11 construction of a new weir with low flow
12 gates, and fish passage structure further
13 downstream. It proposed a location of
14 placement of excavated material, upgrading an
15 existing non-federal levee into a federal
16 ring levee over the Savannah Street Water --
17 Wastewater -- Street Wastewater Treatment
18 Plant as well. So those are the three final
19 array of plans that were submitted. Next
20 slide.

21 So now, since that report submittal, the
22 Corp of Engineers and Rankin-Hinds are
23 working collaboratively on our work to
24 provide comparison of flood risk management
25 levels. The Corps of Engineers is going to

1 be lead author preparing the draft
2 Environmental Impact Statement to identify
3 the National Economic Development Plan, as
4 discussed.

5 It will compare the level of flood
6 protection provided by that plan to the level
7 of flood protection provided by all the
8 alternatives being assessed. Additionally,
9 the report is going to include the downstream
10 assessment of potential impacts on the Pearl
11 River Basin. The comparison of plans will
12 include the non-federal interests Section 211
13 final plans in the report they're submitting,
14 as well as additional plans.

15 A revised non-structural plan is
16 currently being worked on and assessed.
17 We're looking for feedback on that, but right
18 now, we're already looking at items maybe
19 such as structural elevation and flood
20 proofing of structures; as well as a plan
21 that can be a combination or hybrid of the
22 Channel Improvement Plan and non-structural,
23 and it can be other plans or alternatives
24 that are included in this report. This
25 report will not be a recommendation. Again,

1 rather, it provide a comparison of
2 alternatives so that the Assistant Secretary
3 of the Army for Civil Works may make the
4 decision on a range of flood risk management
5 options. Next slide.

6 So the Pearl River Basin is large -- over
7 8,000 square miles -- but our study area is
8 focused on providing benefits -- the flood
9 risk reduction benefits on the area between
10 River Mile 270, which is just south of
11 Richland, Mississippi, and then going north
12 up to River Mile 302 at the Ross Barnett
13 Reservoir Dam. The study area encompasses
14 portions of Hinds and Rankin Counties in
15 Mississippi. And when we see that in the
16 study area, downstream impacts or potential
17 for impacts are definitely going to be
18 considered and evaluated. Next slide.

19 Areas of interest, also known as
20 comprehensive benefits -- several have been
21 identified, as you can see on the slide.
22 We're looking for public feedback regarding
23 other areas that aren't identified on the
24 slide, as well as feedback on the areas that
25 have been identified. So if you see

1 something up there that's not presented,
2 please provide it -- that comment -- so we
3 can get that and include it in our
4 evaluations and for consideration.

5 But the ones that I identify in addition
6 to flood risk reduction priority right now
7 would be water supply, water and wastewater
8 treatment, ecosystem and environmental
9 impacts, existing waste sites, cultural
10 resources, transportation, downstream
11 impacts, recreational access and
12 opportunities, community impacts, and
13 economic opportunities. Now I hand it over
14 back to Colonel Klein.

15 COLONEL KLEIN:

16 All right, thanks, Leslie. Can you go to
17 the next slide? So our timeline, this is
18 where we are today. The technical team is
19 continuing to do their work, and it's really
20 critical that we execute now these sessions
21 with you, so that we can receive your
22 feedback, your considerations, and even from
23 Session 1, we've already received things.
24 I've got a checklist going of things that I'm
25 going to go back to the team and make sure,

1 "We are doing this; right? We are doing
2 this; right?" Your feedback is critically
3 important.

4 By the end of August, we will have a
5 draft report complete. In September, that
6 will go out for review as well, in order to
7 inform the final report, which will be
8 submitted at the end of December for the
9 Secretary to make a decision in January.

10 It's a very streamlined timeline, but I
11 just want to reiterate, as well as feasible,
12 and that's because we're working off of a lot
13 of years of great work that's been done up to
14 this point. So at this time, I'd like to
15 turn it over to our moderator, and we look
16 forward to hearing your feedback.

17 TOM SHAW:

18 All right, thank you. So as I
19 mentioned earlier, there are multiple
20 ways that you can provide your feedback
21 and your input, and we're going to leave
22 this slide up. We're going to have a
23 question session where you can come up
24 and make your comments, but we'll leave
25 this slide up that gives you several ways

1 that you can provide your input.

2 Of course, don't forget there are
3 comment cards out in the foyer. There's
4 also -- and if I didn't mention this,
5 there is a study map out there where you
6 can take -- put a pushpin in that will
7 represent where you're from, your
8 residence, or your area of concern, and
9 we would appreciate that feedback as
10 well.

11 So as we mentioned earlier, we've got
12 two microphones down here in the aisles.
13 The people that are online as part of the
14 Webex, we would ask that they please
15 provide information in the chat. If you
16 have a question and you would like that
17 question presented before the panel,
18 that's one way to do that. There will be
19 a record of that chat that will become a
20 part of the public record of this. We
21 will -- your questions and your
22 responses.

23 We have a court reporter up here.
24 She's taking those down, as well as we
25 have video rolling that's going on as

1 well. So at this time, Scott, could you
2 bring the house lights up for us. And if
3 you will, please wait until you're
4 recognized so that we don't talk on top
5 of each other. So if you have questions,
6 please make your way to the microphones
7 and we'll get started.

8 I would reiterate, though, because we
9 do have the virtual audience and because
10 there are some people that might not be
11 able to hear you, particularly if you're
12 pointing this way, please use the mic if
13 you have a question. So with that, the
14 lights are coming up, and make your way
15 to the microphones if you would like.

16 Yes, sir?

17 PUBLIC COMMENTS

18 BRAD PELLEGRIN:

19 Yeah, my name is Brad Pellegrin. I'm
20 born and raised in Slidell, my family's been
21 here forever. I actually graduated here, and
22 my other family members. I live down on
23 Porters Island, and I know of many, many
24 people who live in the flooded areas. My
25 brother lives in River Gardens, right at the

1 corner of Magnolia. That is the lowest point
2 in River Gardens, and there's like six months
3 out of the year, he can't even drive a
4 vehicle to his house. He's got to park down
5 the road and walk up.

6 I know a lot, a lot of people who fish.
7 They do everything on the river -- they
8 crawfish and they hunt -- everything.
9 There's a lot of livelihood that comes from
10 the river. I'm sorry if I'm a little -- I
11 had a stroke and it's kind of messed up my
12 thought process, so I --

13 COLONEL KLEIN:

14 No hurry.

15 MS. COLOSIMO:

16 Take your time.

17 BRAD PELLEGRIN:

18 I lived in Picayune for a while, and I
19 was there when they had that war over the
20 Wilson Slough. Was that the Army Corps of
21 Engineers project to do that? You can go
22 walk out and go to the river -- the real
23 Pearl River, not the big West Pearl -- and
24 the weeds are six feet tall, and you can walk
25 on dry land to Louisiana.

1 It was a slough that was built to divert
2 the water from the Pearl River over to the
3 other areas, to the West Pearl and stuff, and
4 I don't understand why they did that. So the
5 Pearl River actually comes down over by
6 Stennis. That's the Pearl. What we call now
7 the Pearl is the West Pearl, and then it
8 breaks down into the east and middle, you
9 know, and then it goes into the marshes and
10 the swamp. Y'all don't know anything about
11 the Wilson Slough?

12 COLONEL KLEIN:

13 No, sir, I personally do not.

14 MS. COLOSIMO:

15 We'll have to investigate.

16 BRAD PELLEGRIN:

17 Because it seems like that would be an
18 option to block that back off and divert the
19 water back where it's supposed to go.

20 Another thing that I get from some of the
21 things that I hear is why is Jackson more
22 important than the people who are down river?
23 This is all about Jackson; right? Jackson
24 flooding -- what about us?

25 MS. COLOSIMO:

1 Do you want me to tell you where
2 we're coming from? Are you finished?
3 I can respond, if you like.

4 **BRAD PELLEGRIN:**

5 No, well, why is the focus being on
6 **Jackson flooding?**

7 **MS. COLOSIMO:**

8 So if I may? So this is one
9 really important point, to say the
10 Corps has to respond to the direction
11 we're given from Congress. So the
12 direction was to study the flooding
13 problems in the Pearl. It doesn't
14 mean the rest of any other part of
15 the country is unimportant; it's just
16 we're responding to that direction
17 from Congress.

18 And so that direction, as we
19 outlined earlier, has continued over
20 time to encompass making sure we're
21 taking care of downstream interests,
22 perhaps in direct response to all of
23 you and others, to make sure if we
24 can solve the flooding in the Pearl,
25 it doesn't cause additional

1 challenges for your area. And that's
2 absolutely part of this analysis,
3 it's not inducing something else
4 somewhere else.

5 BRAD PELLEGRIN:

6 I'm just wondering what Jackson did or
7 what Mississippi did to where they're getting
8 more focus than we are. This river's been
9 needing dredging -- you can ride down the
10 river and you'll hit bottom with your boat --
11 your motor hits on the bottom -- and
12 sometimes it gets low enough to where you can
13 get hurt. It needs dredging. We all know
14 that. We've been wanting that for years and
15 years. Just dredging would help with the
16 flood down here -- dredging the river.

17 MS. COLOSIMO:

18 Thank you for that. We heard a
19 little bit about that earlier as
20 well.

21 BRAD PELLEGRIN:

22 Yeah. Thank you.

23 TOM SHAW:

24 Thank you so much. Sir?

25 DARREN STEVENS:

1 Thank you. I definitely agree with
2 everything this gentleman just said. My name
3 is Darren Stevens, and just to give you a
4 little bit of my background, I'm a paramedic
5 for 27 years. I'm now safety manager for an
6 aerospace company, and I live in Lower
7 Slidell, very close to the Mississippi line.

8 I am not a water expert whatsoever;
9 however, I am colleagues with a very awesome
10 water expert. He does water rescues that is
11 just amazing, and I've been in contact with
12 him about this meeting tonight, and he
13 couldn't be here, so I would like to share
14 his thoughts and his questions with this
15 committee today.

16 This is from my colleague, and as well as
17 the chief of the Pinegrove Fire Department,
18 and this is what they would like to have
19 asked. In 2006, the Army Corps of Engineers
20 completed construction of the Wilson Slough
21 off Parkside Drive, between St. Tammany
22 Parish and Pearl River County, Mississippi,
23 and then they never returned. It never
24 properly drained the way as promoted by the
25 Army Corps of Engineers, then was neglected

1 and ignored.

2 Because of that neglect and the failure
3 of the Army Corps of Engineers -- no
4 disrespect, please -- to fix or at least
5 maintain what they built to start with, the
6 erosion is destroying the ecosystem of St.
7 Tammany Parish, and as it stands right now,
8 the water gets so low in the summer, you can
9 drive a truck straight down the bed of the
10 river.

11 What is the plan, if any, to restore any
12 water flow back into the river channel past
13 the Wilson Slough, and is the Army Corps of
14 Engineers even concerned about the potential
15 environmental impacts that the failure of the
16 weir is and will be in the future without
17 immediate repair? It would appear that the
18 Army Corps of Engineers is completely
19 avoiding the area which is experiencing the
20 greatest impact of decreased water flow to
21 hold a meeting in Slidell. Can you speak to
22 that?

23 COLONEL KLEIN:

24 So thank you. Again, appreciate the
25 feedback. Please pass that on to them as

1 well.

2 DARREN STEVENS:

3 I will.

4 COLONEL KLEIN:

5 You know, absolutely fantastic
6 feedback. So what has happened with all
7 projects on the Lower Pearl -- we started
8 addressing this earlier -- with the aging
9 infrastructure we have, is we've --
10 they've gone to caretaker status; okay?
11 Caretaker status is probably, you know,
12 the lowest level of funding. I'm not
13 saying it's great, okay, and go -- you
14 know, go ahead, that's what I'm here for.

15 I'm here to take that criticism so
16 that I can take it back to our leadership
17 as well and say, "We need some -- we need
18 the appropriate funding so that we can do
19 caretaker status right," right, to
20 maintain these properly over time.
21 Because to your testimony, sir -- to
22 their testimony, they're not performing
23 as designed; right? And so now, I think
24 what we have to do as a nation, right, as
25 our -- as our elected officials and even

1 us as the Corps, is go back with that --
2 with this feedback and let them know
3 that, "Hey, things that we did are not
4 performing, you know, as they're supposed
5 to," and ask that question of what are we
6 going to do about it; right?

7 And one of the solutions could be --
8 I'm sorry, now I get it a little more,
9 sir -- could be, "Hey, let's close the
10 thing back off, right, and redivert the
11 water back to where it should be"; right?
12 That could be one solution. I think
13 we've now got that in the Record so we
14 can certainly take back.

15 Or if the decision is going to be,
16 "Hey, we're going to maintain these
17 things for the original intended purpose
18 that we put them in for," then I can go
19 back and express capability and say,
20 "Please fund me at the level it's going
21 to take to do that"; right? Because
22 there's some testimony earlier, in some
23 cases, because of the low funding that we
24 have, caretaker status has created
25 hazards; okay?

1 And as, you know, water safety rescue
2 folks -- you know, fire folks, they're
3 the ones that get called and do the
4 responses. So you know, we have a great
5 appreciation for that and understand it,
6 and so, sir, I appreciate that testimony,
7 and we'll, you know, go back, express our
8 capability and your concerns to my
9 leadership, as well as anyone else we
10 talk to.

11 DARREN STEVENS:

12 I appreciate that, and I'm sure a lot
13 of the first responders would.
14 Definitely take it back to your
15 leadership and let's just hope for the
16 best for it. Thank you, sir.

17 TOM SHAW:

18 Yes, sir.

19 GREGORY DAIGREPONT:

20 My name is Gregory Daigrepont. I own
21 land on the navigational canal, and I think
22 this really is all about Jackson because they
23 had a bad water problem a few months ago --
24 it was all over the news -- and sure, if we
25 can help out Jackson, that'd be great. It

1 seemed like the Pearl River's been very high
2 the last four, five months. There's been a
3 lot more water than normal, as it has been
4 coming down.

5 If they can just hold the water and use
6 it for good use, that would be great. But it
7 would be nice if they could keep an easy
8 medium, so to speak, because we ski in
9 between Lock 1 and Lock 2. It would be nice
10 to keep that water level at a certain medium
11 so that -- you know, we don't want the dam to
12 break up at Lock 2, or the lock to break and
13 flood everything. Even though we have the
14 assessment come all the way up the bank that
15 y'all could -- that the Corps could really
16 access any time they want to -- but
17 hopefully, it doesn't get to that.

18 My main thing is a while back they had a
19 dump over in Bogalusa -- that paper mill.
20 They dumped something and killed a bunch of
21 fish. If they could just restrict the
22 dumping in the river and keep the water
23 fresh, that could keep the water level at an
24 easy medium for it not to get too low, or
25 control for it not to get too high, so people

1 can make it to their houses and such, and for
2 it not to get too low for it to get
3 overfished real easy. That's my concerns, is
4 those three things right there.

5 MS. COLOSIMO:

6 So we heard some similar concerns
7 about this earlier today, so I really
8 appreciate you amplifying some of that.
9 Hadn't heart about the dumping and the
10 killed fish, so that was definitely
11 information I'm sure folks around here
12 may be more privy to that.

13 So we want to make sure that we're
14 making best use of that infrastructure
15 that exists, and that we're making it for
16 its original purpose, and we're not
17 implicating other problems as a result of
18 that. I think some of the things you
19 highlighted here, we need to make sure we
20 look at that.

21 GREGORY DAIGREPONT:

22 There is one other thing. Above Lock 2,
23 there was two drownings up there because the
24 way the water flows over from the dam -- I
25 haven't even been up there, but if they could

1 take a look at that and do something with
2 that to -- there's several drownings over the
3 years, but recently, there was two drownings
4 lately. That's just another problem up
5 there.

6 COLONEL KLEIN:

7 Yes, sir. Thanks for that, and we
8 are aware of those. I've expressed that
9 concern back to our leadership so we can
10 find some mitigation solution to prevent
11 future drownings there. I just want to,
12 too, thank you for the information on the
13 chemical spill. I was a child who grew
14 up downstream from Union Garmine, and I
15 remember the fish killed in the small
16 stream by my house, so I can only
17 imagine.

18 GREGORY DAIGREPONT:

19 I think it was 2008.

20 COLONEL KLEIN:

21 Thanks, sir.

22 TOM SHAW:

23 Yes, sir, I believe you're next.

24 STANFORD OWEN:

25 My name is Stanford Owen. I live at 117

1 Shirmac Drive in Slidell. I'm a commissioner
2 in the St. Tammany Parish Levee Drainage and
3 Conservation District, and I represent that
4 district's eastern edge, which is all along
5 the Pearl River all the way up to
6 Mississippi. I have been living in the same
7 location since 1979. I remember the '79
8 flood, the '80 flood, the '83 flood, the '96
9 flood, and Katrina flood.

10 The last slide that you had up there, you
11 got 13 impact points that y'all are looking
12 at. One of them was downstream effects. Do
13 you have any information, data, presentation,
14 water flow data on the downstream effects,
15 specifically as it effects the Pearl River
16 Wildlife Management Area Marsh, the Biloxi
17 Wildlife Management Area Mash, Bayou Sauvage
18 Wildlife Management Area Marsh, and the Big
19 Branch Marsh?

20 All of those marshes are critical marshes
21 relative to storm surge protection. What you
22 did -- I worked with the Army Corps from
23 Vicksburg from 1984 to 1992 on the projects
24 that they were working for mitigating flood
25 in Slidell. I remember on a large account,

1 what they did was look at not only the
2 effects of flooding in the Slidell area, but
3 the affect of water flowing in the marsh. I
4 haven't seen any of that with this.

5 That will directly impact tens of
6 thousands of homes relative to storm surge.
7 So if it's a big negative, we need to know
8 that, and we need to know some data relative
9 to that. There are other issues relative to
10 environmental concerns that, quite honestly,
11 if that information could be forthcoming,
12 that is a pretty mundane route.

13 COLONEL KLEIN:

14 So we hear your concern. Thanks
15 for that. So for the downstream
16 analysis that's currently ongoing,
17 yes, it will be released and
18 available. I can't speak to each of
19 the specific wildlife management
20 areas. And also, to tie into that,
21 we're also assessing those
22 environmental impacts, so we'll be
23 working really closely with local
24 fish and games, environmental folks.

25 STANFORD OWEN:

1 So when -- in the decision making to
2 launch this project and actually do this
3 project, you're having these hearings and you
4 give us that information, and that's it? We
5 have more hearings? Is there any other
6 impact after that, or is that a done deal?

7 MS. COLOSIMO:

8 So a couple things that we're going
9 to tag team on this. So the Corps is
10 doing a report to support secretarial
11 determination. It will include National
12 Environmental Policy Act processes;
13 right? So the draft report's in
14 September, out for public comment. We
15 will produce a final report. We have a
16 NEPA document that's encompassed in all
17 the environmental impact statements, so
18 it's all -- we can come back and walk
19 through the eaches, but we're starting
20 with the early engagement.

21 We're going to determine how to do
22 more engagement along the way between now
23 and September, and try and, as we're
24 coming through that, make sure we're
25 building the information and getting

1 folks -- you guys are talking about it;
2 others are going to want to come in.
3 We're going to want to make sure that
4 we're learning so that we don't deliver
5 something that's incomplete.

6 SANFORD OWEN:

7 So I want to clarify what you just
8 said.

9 MS. COLOSIMO:

10 Yes.

11 SANFORD OWEN:

12 So between now and September, we're
13 going to have all the environmental
14 reports plus meetings to feed back on
15 that, and then you'll make a decision?

16 MS. COLOSIMO:

17 No. The September is a draft report.

18 SANFORD OWEN:

19 Draft report.

20 MS. COLOSIMO:

21 If you want to put up the slide with
22 the scheduled, can somebody do that?
23 It's hard to see with the light on;
24 right? So September 1 is the draft
25 report; right? And the public will have

1 an opportunity to comment. In December,
2 we're going to produce a final based on
3 the public comment to include all of you,
4 others -- the resource agencies, state
5 officials, all those things.

6 STANFORD OWEN:

7 And again, to clarify, the project
8 you're proposing is a single project?
9 You don't have multiple options to --

10 MS. COLOSIMO:

11 We do have multiple options. The
12 legislation requires -- I'm glad you
13 asked this. The legislature requires
14 this National Economic Development Plan,
15 which is a very funky term, and then we
16 have this non-federal interest plan that
17 was submitted by Rankin-Hinds, and then
18 there was this combination thereof that
19 Leslie referenced.

20 All those alternatives that are out
21 there that have been looked at in some
22 portion thereof, or other ideas people
23 have suggested, we're going to encompass
24 in how would that fit into the
25 combination thereof.

1 **SANFORD OWEN:**

2 I'd just like to make a point for the
3 Record that all of those marshes are
4 mostly dependent on Pearl River water for
5 survival; not Mississippi River at all,
6 and very little from Lake Pontchartrain.
7 So the Pearl River is the survival mode
8 for those marshes, which are not just
9 important for storm surge, but for
10 wildlife and fisheries itself.

11 **MS. COLOSIMO:**

12 Okay.

13 **SANFORD OWEN:**

14 Okay.

15 **MS. COLOSIMO:**

16 Thank you so much.

17 **TOM SHAW:**

18 Thank you. Ma'am?

19 **SHARON HEWITT:**

20 Thank you very much. I'm Sharon Hewitt.
21 I'm the state senator in this area, and so
22 first of all, I want to start by saying thank
23 you all for being here. You know, we very
24 much appreciate that. It's an important
25 issue in our area, and I appreciate the fact

1 that you're in Slidell, which is the area
2 where we're most affected, having this public
3 hearing, and thank you for the people who are
4 here in the audience.

5 I wasn't here for the afternoon meeting,
6 but I do appreciate the people that are here
7 to learn more about the project and to
8 express your concerns about it, because that
9 is the only way, right, that we're going to
10 make an impact on this project. This
11 project, as you talked about in your
12 presentation, has been under consideration
13 for some time. We formed a Lower Pearl River
14 Basin Taskforce through the legislature in
15 the state capitol, and the mission of that
16 has evolved a little bit over time.

17 It's currently configured to include all
18 the relevant state agencies that have
19 anything to do with managing water and
20 rivers, so our taskforce has representation
21 from the Department of Natural Resources,
22 Wildlife and Fisheries, the Coastal
23 Protection and Restoration Authority -- which
24 is our coastal zone management program -- the
25 Department of Environmental Quality,

1 representation from the legislature, as well
2 as Washington and St. Tammany Parishes.

3 And in 2018, when we had our last
4 opportunity for public comment, we prepared a
5 very, I think, well documented response on
6 behalf of the State of Louisiana to that
7 draft EIS, and I'm going to read maybe just a
8 couple highlights of that, and I'm going to
9 officially submit that again into the public
10 record to make sure that you all have that,
11 because we have all the technical work done
12 by all of our experts at the state level in
13 addressing the proposal as it was presented
14 at that time.

15 You know, one of our big concerns has
16 always been how the project area has been
17 defined. It's defined, as you said, Hinds
18 and Rankin Counties, without really looking
19 at the whole river as a system all the way
20 down to the Gulf of Mexico. And having that
21 -- you know, the impact of the downstream
22 areas added to the WRDA Bill in 2018 was work
23 that we did -- the people in this room, along
24 with, you know, legislative leadership, along
25 with our Congressional delegation -- to make

1 sure that it wasn't just about Rankin and
2 Hinds County, but it's also all of the
3 parishes here in Louisiana along the river
4 that are affected, and the people who live
5 here.

6 And so one of my questions is, you know
7 -- yes, you've said a couple of times that
8 you're going to be looking at the downstream
9 impacts, but I'd like to better understand
10 how it kind of factors into the decision.
11 You know, is this something where you're
12 going to look at the cost benefit analysis in
13 the project area, and the downstream is kind
14 of like a footnote on the downstream?

15 How -- because we're not going to have
16 any benefits on the downstream. There are no
17 benefits of this project to us that I can
18 see. You know, it's really just -- we're
19 just going to be -- we're going to get the
20 consequences of it, and how are those
21 factored into the overall decision when
22 you're looking at flood control projects for
23 the Jackson area.

24 MS. COLOSIMO:

25 So thank you for your continued

1 involvement in this effort in the basin,
2 and so eloquently putting those things
3 forward. So a couple things: first of
4 all, are we aware of your comments of all
5 the things out there? Yes.

6 Have I personally read them? No, but
7 I know that the District is, and we will
8 be looking at that entire record of prior
9 documents, prior comments, how those
10 things were brought through in today's
11 world, and what we additionally get,
12 right, because things could have changed
13 and merged since 2018 --

14 SHARON HEWITT:

15 Sure.

16 MS. COLOSIMO:

17 -- which only seems like yesterday.
18 So full confidence that we are going to
19 do that, but please submit to make sure
20 we didn't miss something. And that's
21 always the way it should be; right? You
22 know how that is.

23 I also appreciate you making sure
24 you've highlighted this taskforce for us,
25 and how they actually played in getting

1 the 2018 language, because sometimes we
2 don't know the backstory of how language
3 comes to be, and that speaks volumes to
4 this.

5 But to the more fundamental point,
6 you've got downstream impacts. I mean,
7 fundamentally, as an agency, investing in
8 solving a problem in one community should
9 not implicate problems in another
10 community that we fully understand;
11 right? And so yeah, we're not looking to
12 implicate any kind of flooding,
13 environmental damage downstream to
14 benefit one community, and then cause a
15 problem in another; right?

16 And so benefit costs? We're going to
17 be doing benefit cost analysis on these
18 various alternatives. On some level, it
19 depends upon what data we have, how we
20 describe those benefits -- whether it's
21 quantified monetized, or simply described
22 in basic terms. I mean, even just
23 talking about impacts to wetlands in the
24 number of acres is a significant
25 important way. Generally, we've talked

1 about how the water from the Pearl
2 provides the water to those refuges.
3 That gives us a good example. You don't
4 need to quantify this, as much as we can
5 understand.

6 So all those things are going to be
7 presented in a very complete way, and if
8 you think there are places we have
9 weaknesses, we want to know about them
10 and we want to make sure that they are
11 presented to my boss as a decision among
12 the alternatives that are out there.
13 Pros, cons -- yes, benefits to cost --
14 but also potential implications of other
15 unintended consequences.

16 **SHARON HEWITT:**

17 Okay, and I appreciate that answer. So
18 for those in the room, we will be working on
19 them. As we see the plan in September, we
20 will be working through the Lower Pearl River
21 Basin Taskforce, again, to develop a
22 consolidated response from all of our, you
23 know, executive branch agencies to try to
24 help address what we still see as benefits,
25 perhaps, or concerns that we may have.

1 I want to just highlight it -- and I can
2 read all this, but there were a handful of
3 kind of big bullets that came out of the work
4 that we did in 2018. At that time, again,
5 with the project as it was proposed, we felt
6 like there was little consideration given to
7 the potential impacts to the water quantity
8 and the water quality of the Lower Pearl
9 River Basin. (Perusing computer) Sorry, I'm
10 never good at this.

11 MS. COLOSIMO:

12 No worries.

13 SHARON HEWITT:

14 We also believed that the construction
15 and the operation of the proposed project
16 could have a reasonably foreseeable effect on
17 coastal land use, water use, and natural
18 resources in the Louisiana Coastal Zone, and
19 we believe that a consistency determination
20 was necessary pursuant to the Coastal Zone
21 Management Act of 1972.

22 Third, we were concerned about during
23 the project construction, the water quality,
24 quantity, and sediment issues in the Lower
25 Pearl River. Fourth, we were -- we were

1 interested in consideration of downstream
2 mitigation projects and looking at, again,
3 weird and silt removals and things like that
4 that should be considered as part of the
5 overall gameplan.

6 There was certainly a lot of talk about
7 endangered species and the protection of rare
8 and threatened species, such as the Gulf
9 Sturgeon and the Inflated Heelsplitter, and
10 we have about 47 different species of animals
11 that are of concern in the Lower Pearl River
12 Watershed.

13 There's an issue of hazardous waste
14 sites, and we're concerned about how those
15 are going to affect the water quality for us
16 here downstream, and then just the --
17 finally, the impact of potential population
18 growth and future development along the
19 shoreline of the new reservoir to come with
20 the One Lake Project around here, and how
21 that is going to affect us again downstream.

22 So those were kind of the high level, you
23 know, themes of our concerns in the past, and
24 you know, we'll probably refresh some of that
25 when we see the new report. But don't forget

1 about us here -- and again, I know I'm
2 talking to a table full of engineers -- you
3 have to look at the river as a whole system,
4 and not just in isolation.

5 You know, we are going to be impacted
6 down river with whatever is done up river,
7 and we very much care. As the gentleman
8 said, you know, we're just as important in
9 Slidell, Louisiana as they are in Jackson,
10 Mississippi, and we're going to continue to
11 work with our Congressional delegation, and
12 hopefully continue to work with you all in
13 providing feedback and input and constructive
14 suggestions. Thank you very much.

15 MS. COLOSIMO:

16 We really appreciate that, ma'am, on
17 so many levels. Really, at the end of
18 the day, it's about community resilience;
19 right? Community resilience has broad
20 implications, and that's something my
21 boss would certainly say here, and so we
22 want to be engaged in that conversation,
23 we want to answer questions as they
24 emerge. We want to start with where we
25 were and inform the path forward, and so

1 really look forward to doing that with
2 you.

3 SHARON HEWITT:

4 Thank you.

5 TOM SHAW:

6 Sir?

7 ANDREW WHITEHURST:

8 Thank you. My name is Andrew Whitehurst.
9 I'm the Water Program Director for Gulf
10 Restoration Network, or Healthy Gulf, and I'd
11 like the Corps and the Army Secretary's
12 staff. This is the first time in ten years
13 that people have been invited to speak from
14 the microphone at one of these types of
15 meetings.

16 Meetings have been orchestrated, but not
17 allowing open public comments so we can be
18 heard by our peers and we can learn from
19 them. So thank you for that, and I'd also
20 like to thank Andrea Walker on the Army
21 Secretary's staff for being a great source of
22 information. Thank you, Ms. Walker.

23 MS. COLOSIMO:

24 Wave, wave.

25 MS. WALKER:

1 (Complying.)

2 MS. COLOSIMO:

3 There you go.

4 ANDREW WHITEHURST:

5 The Army Secretary's Office and the
6 Vicksburg Corps District are asking people
7 here on the lower end of the Pearl to help
8 the Corps fill in the gaps, as we heard from
9 Mr. Shaw, on the work they're doing since
10 they took over the writing of this draft
11 environmental impact statement for this
12 federal flood risk management project.

13 So we're being asked for the full scope
14 of issues -- you call them "areas of
15 interest" -- that need to be addressed in the
16 draft document being prepared for publication
17 by September 1. That's my understanding that
18 this is a scoping meeting, or re-scoping as
19 part of the NEDA process, and that's how I'm
20 going to treat it.

21 The Army Secretary's Office has had
22 access to two extensive reviews of the gaps,
23 if that's what you're looking for, and the
24 weaknesses of the 2018 Draft EIS. One was
25 done by the Army's own nationwide team of

1 reviewers, and one was done by Patel
2 Institute, a large engineering firm and
3 defense contractor.

4 The Army Secretary's office has access to
5 all the comments from 2018, and knows the
6 Lake Plan or whatever you call it -- the
7 Channel Modification Plan -- was not well
8 accepted, yet it seems that the Army
9 Secretary, in your memo of Notice of Intent
10 for this meeting, is describing advancing
11 four alternatives, and two of them involve
12 the lake: C -- Alternative C, and Alternative
13 A1.

14 In 2018, the lake dredging project was
15 one of three alternatives, plus a no action.
16 I didn't imagine that after finishing agency
17 technical review last July, that the Army
18 Secretary's office would repackage the
19 Rankin-Hinds Drainage District's work and
20 offer the lake dredging plan in two of its
21 four alternatives. That's a surprise. And I
22 don't know what the combination of all of the
23 above's going to be and I don't know what's
24 contemplated by other alternatives. I hope
25 there will be another agency technical

1 review.

2 On slide number eight, which is titled
3 "USACE" -- or "USACE Activities," there's one
4 leg of analysis that's not on there, and I'd
5 like that to be on for tomorrow night's
6 meeting in Jackson. You say that the project
7 has to be environmentally acceptable,
8 technically feasible, but the language in the
9 2018 WRDA in Section 1176 also added
10 economically justified, so that's three
11 levels of analysis, and it should be on your
12 slide. If you're, you know, going to do the
13 economic analysis, please put it up there.

14 And this is a long river. It doesn't
15 belong to Jackson. As you've heard from
16 speakers tonight, there are a lot of economic
17 issues all the way down the river, starting
18 with the discharge permits that cities have
19 to have and that paper mills have, and have
20 to meet for the Clean Water Act. Those are
21 economic issues. There's the fishing, the
22 ability to access the river in small boats
23 safely. The seafood industry that's
24 dependent on the marshes and estuaries is an
25 economic issue.

1 So that economic analysis needs to be on
2 slide number eight, and I'd like to know more
3 about how are you going to tackle it, because
4 that was part of the language that Senator
5 Cassidy and Representative Scalise put in the
6 WRDA in 2018 to protect the Lower Pearl in
7 Mississippi all the way to the mouth at Lake
8 Borgne.

9 Some of the scoping issues, if you're
10 looking for scoping issues, are here -- the
11 study area for the project should go all the
12 way to Lake Borgne, not be truncated at Hinds
13 and Rankin Counties. An unsteady three-
14 dimensional model should be used for the
15 Pearl River. That's been suggested to you by
16 the engineering department of this parish. A
17 water budget needs to be developed and
18 presented so we know the true picture of
19 water influx, water use and evaporation.

20 The Pearl River's falling below its 7Q10
21 minimum flow marks for a significant
22 percentage of days. When the record is
23 examined, post-Barnett Reservoir construction
24 in 1963, what will another source of
25 evaporation mean to that falling short of

1 minimum flows? What are the affects of a
2 warming climate on the Pearl River? This has
3 all been ignored in the 2018 DEIS.

4 Can the Ross Barnett Reservoir be used
5 more aggressively to store and release water
6 to manage rains in this watershed? Are the
7 present minimum flows released from the Ross
8 Barnett adequate for the lower river's needs
9 in the dry months of July to October?

10 I'll stop there, but there are more, and
11 I know that people need to be thinking along
12 the lines of what else should these scoping
13 factors hold, and I hope we get some more of
14 that tonight. I appreciate the ability to
15 make comments at all and to speak, in
16 particular. That's a nice change.

17 MS. COLOSIMO:

18 Thank you, Andrew. Just a couple
19 things I just want to make sure I respond
20 to. First of all, we really appreciate
21 your comprehensive thoughts there, and
22 please make sure you're submitting them.
23 I'm sure you're planning on doing that,
24 but I want to make sure we have them all
25 captured -- and that applies to

1 everybody, of course.

2 Couple things. One: in terms of peer
3 reviews and prior reviews, on some level,
4 current analysis is in response to that;
5 right? We have current direction, so I
6 want to clear up the direction. Why do I
7 hear 3104? Because that's the direction
8 where the Secretary can make a decision.
9 It also references two alternatives;
10 right -- the NED Plan and the non-federal
11 interest plan, otherwise known at the
12 FRDA Plan, or a combination thereof.

13 So we're not inhibiting or biased in
14 any way to the solution. We're being
15 very directly responsive to that
16 legislation, but can encompass other
17 ideas and alternatives. Many of you have
18 suggested some here, we heard some
19 earlier, and we've heard some others from
20 letters and whatnot, so open to those
21 ideas for certain. We are not biased to
22 it.

23 In terms of economic analysis, yes --
24 we are doing the economic analysis. We
25 just may have worded it strangely here.

1 Often, when we talk about technical
2 feasibility, it encompasses the cost
3 analysis, so we will certainly clean up
4 that language a bit. Not a problem. I
5 also appreciate some of your Qs.

6 One of them is the Ross Barnett, so I
7 just want to be clear about this: it is
8 not a federal facility. We are modeling
9 as it's supposed to be currently
10 operated. In the last session, it was
11 also suggested can they operate it
12 differently. I think that's a policy
13 matter for the people who own that, and
14 certainly, we can talk to them about
15 being able to offer any opportunity,
16 given your advice.

17 Whether or not we can implicate that
18 as a decision Mr. Connor makes is a whole
19 other thing, but for the good of the
20 public and transparency, certainly, we
21 can talk to what it does, how it's
22 operated, what its mandate is, and it is
23 not mandated in flood management.

24 Don't know anything about if they are
25 willing to entertain that, but we should

1 certainly talk about it for sure, and I
2 think another gentleman might talk about
3 that a bit earlier. So having taken all
4 that on, we can talk about other things
5 if you want to.

6 MS. PROCHASKA:

7 I would like to add -- on the A1
8 alternative for non-structural, the non-
9 structural will be non-structural only
10 plan. It will not have structural
11 components such as a weir and a ponding
12 behind the weir.

13 ANDREW WHITEHURST:

14 A1, when I read it in NOI, looked like it
15 would be the lake plan, build the lake, and
16 then decide if you have to do other non-
17 structural projects if you have flooding
18 after the lake's built. That's the way I
19 read it.

20 So you have C, which is the lake dredging
21 plan; A, which is non-structural -- flood
22 plain buyouts, relocations. A1, which is a
23 combination of C, the lake, and non-
24 structural after the lake's built; and then
25 the combination of all of the above. And I

1 don't know what that looks like or how it's
2 imagined, but if I'm wrong about A1, let me
3 know. But I heard it described twice today,
4 and it seems like it involves the lake
5 dredging, or the channel modification, as
6 well as some additional non-structural.

7 MS. PROCHASKA:

8 So the team's plan strategy right now
9 is to assess a non-structural only plan
10 without structural. That will be one of
11 the plans that's being assessed, so it
12 would not have the lake, the weir, the
13 compounding movement to the weir included
14 into one of the plans. It would just be
15 non-structural.

16 What that non-structural looks like,
17 though, is what we're looking for
18 feedback on. It could be elevation of
19 structures, flood proofing of structures.
20 It could be a combination of that. It's
21 things that don't change the hydrology,
22 but get things to reduce the flood risk
23 to the individual structure.

24 It also includes recommendations for
25 flood management plan updates, flood

1 warning systems, but not structural
2 things like a weir. So that would be a
3 plan for nonstructural only.

4 MS. COLOSIMO:

5 So thanks for that. This is great.
6 So this a good example of where we get
7 wonky as an agency. It depends on where
8 you sit on these terms. So even if you
9 look at the alternatives under evaluation
10 slide, A is relocating structures --
11 bilateral relocation. These are all
12 considered non-structural, but A1 is
13 additional measures to include elevation
14 and flood proofing.

15 So it's really at an additional what
16 most folks would call non-structural
17 measures. And so people define those
18 measures differently. We will clean up
19 the language so it's abundantly clear.

20 ANDREW WHITEHURST:

21 Before it comes out in another form
22 like a Notice of Intent, it needs to be
23 clearer.

24 MS. COLOSIMO:

25 Appreciate it.

1 **ANDREW WHITEHURST:**

2 It's capable of being read a number
3 of ways, so I mean, if you want to list
4 four alternatives, list them and be very
5 tight with them. The way it's written in
6 the NOI is, you know --

7 **MS. COLOSIMO:**

8 Absolutely appreciate the feedback.
9 Like I said, this is a wonky area, so I
10 get exactly what you're saying. Thank
11 you for that.

12 **TOM SHAW:**

13 Ma'am?

14 **MARGIE VICKNAIR-PRAY:**

15 I'm Margie Vicknair-Pray. I'm with the
16 Delta Chapter Sierra Club, which is the state
17 of Louisiana. Everything that Andrew said,
18 we definitely reiterate and are worried about
19 and interested in, and I'm very glad to see
20 Senator Hewitt also here to express the same
21 feelings that we have about the One Lake
22 Project, listening to that.

23 We are very concerned, honestly, about
24 the people, because a lot of people use the
25 Pearl for recreational fishing and oystering

1 down near the mouth of it, and all of that
2 could be affected by reducing the flow. I'm
3 sure y'all are aware of it, but the Pearl
4 River's been named one of America's top three
5 endangered rivers in the United States, so --
6 and it's number three out of all the rivers
7 in the country, and dams and weirs are the
8 main reason for it being endangered, and
9 slowing the flow -- anything that slows the
10 flow or reduces the amount of water coming
11 through the river and through the system.

12 And because of reduced flow, we get
13 dissolved oxygen problems, we have siltation
14 problems, and again, that affects everyone
15 down here, and we also have coliform bacteria
16 problems. I have done tests myself of the
17 river -- the Pearl River -- a couple of
18 locations in the Louisiana area from
19 Pearlinton up to around the Bogue Chitto,
20 and the numbers of coliform bacteria are just
21 astonishing and scary.

22 And when you reduce the water flow coming
23 down the river, that means those numbers are
24 going to be in an even higher percentage in
25 the water. In the summer, when the water

1 flows are less, is when people are using the
2 river more -- kids are swimming in it and
3 things like that. So anything that reduces
4 the water coming down the river is a
5 negative, as far as we're concerned.

6 And of course, we're also worried about
7 the endangered species -- things like Gulf
8 sturgeon and the palla fish, which need at
9 least fairly clean water to survive, and the
10 Gulf sturgeon to lay its eggs. People don't
11 realize that it's like the salmon, where it
12 comes up the rivers and lays its eggs, and
13 the babies grow up in the river.

14 The reason we're losing them is because
15 the river, and especially the Pearl, is one
16 of the ones that was a major river nursery
17 for the sturgeon, and it's not able to get to
18 its egg laying grounds and a lot of them have
19 been silted over, and then the flood -- the
20 level of water is so low that the fish can't
21 get upstream. So we are definitely against
22 anything that would reduce the amount of
23 water coming down through this area. Thank
24 you.

25 MS. COLOSIMO:

1 Thank you for that.

2 **TOM SHAW:**

3 Ma'am?

4 **MELINDA WHITE:**

5 Thank you. Thank you. Melinda White,
6 representative District 75, which is
7 Washington Parish, Lower St. Tammany, and the
8 river is the water of my district. It's not
9 only that -- it's part of our life. It's
10 part of our family, it's part of our
11 community, and it's a large basin that is a
12 part of our state and a part of the United
13 States, for that matter.

14 What concerns me right now -- and I came
15 in a little late, so I apologize for that --
16 but did I see that you're not including this
17 area in the environmental impact study?

18 **MS. COLOSIMO:**

19 No, we're including the area.

20 **MELINDA WHITE:**

21 Okay. Because the footprint that I
22 saw -- and I think I took a picture of it
23 -- did not include us.

24 **MS. PROCHASKA:**

25 So when we identify a study area,

1 that is not talking about the hydrolic
2 connectivity area. So that watershed in
3 its entirety is hydrolically connected,
4 so all of that will be assessed. We want
5 to make sure that we're not transferring
6 risk to other places, whether that
7 transferred risk is flood risk,
8 environmental impacts. So that is being
9 studied.

10 The study area is the area that we
11 focus on for flood risk reduction
12 benefits. That is the primary area that
13 is targeted for a project to get the
14 flood risk reduction, so that's what we
15 mean by study area. It's the area that
16 focuses on to achieve the flood risk
17 reduction benefits -- you know, provide
18 protections -- some type of level of
19 flood protection for the community there.

20 It does not mean that the hydrolic
21 activity anywhere else is limited.
22 Anything that's connected is going to be
23 evaluated for different flood sources to
24 make sure there's no transferred risk,
25 there's nothing being impacted, or what

1 those impacts are.

2 **MELINDA WHITE:**

3 Well, we've been waiting for the
4 environmental impact study to get to us so
5 that we can see, validate our concerns. And
6 you know, we've been working with Senator
7 Hewitt on the study, and you know, it's just
8 very hard for us to go along with what seems
9 to be -- you know, we're sorry about what's
10 happening in Jackson. We want relief for the
11 folks that are flooding, but we don't want it
12 to cost all the rest of us down the river
13 with multiple issues, and lack of water flow
14 in this area is a problem.

15 As much as I like to say it's a scenic
16 river, it's a working river, so it has a lot
17 of industry, a lot of municipalities that
18 depend on it. I guess our concern there
19 would be that we're not impacted any further
20 than we already are with all of the manmade
21 projects that are currently on the river that
22 we see 50, 60, 70 years later the problems
23 that we have -- for instance, on the silts
24 that we have on the Bogue Chitto and on the
25 Pearl, for Pearl River Navigational Canal

1 System that I'm sure that many years ago
2 seemed like a great idea. It's not a great
3 idea, and it was not ever used for the
4 purpose that it was established many years
5 ago.

6 So then it becomes real disheartening for
7 us that we're dealing with things that were
8 built many years ago, and we're talking about
9 building more on that river. So when we look
10 at the alternatives for what we can do to
11 eliminate or downsize the issues of the
12 flooding in Jackson, we don't need to think
13 in terms of putting more manmade projects on
14 that river that are going to impact everyone
15 below it, including our Mississippi neighbors
16 below that.

17 So I've taken trips to DC with them --
18 they're also objecting to this. They are
19 feeling the impacts of the structures that we
20 already have on the river, and it just -- it
21 sends a lot of wrong messages down this way.
22 We are not receiving that economic or
23 environmental impact on what this is going to
24 cost and cost us, and whether it's a good
25 idea or not, we would like to make sure that

1 our voices are heard and that we actually see
2 a result for that. I guess that would be my
3 main concern.

4 MS. COLOSIMO:

5 Yeah, thanks, ma'am. I completely
6 hear you; right? So a couple things.
7 First of all, I think since 2018, there
8 was a report produced that did not get
9 released to the public. I don't think I
10 ever saw it at the Secretary's office
11 either, but what we are responding to is
12 that it was basically, effectively,
13 paused; right? So there has been pause
14 for the need of information. Now we have
15 an update needed of that information that
16 was not released.

17 So understand the need for
18 transparency and visibility. We're
19 absolutely about that, and that's why
20 we're holding this session, to let folks
21 know what we're about to launch into
22 without preconceived notions of where we
23 land. So we to be responsive to our
24 direction from Congress. The big change
25 here, though, is that there was monies

1 allocated in the Bipartisan
2 Infrastructure law to solve a flood risk
3 management problem in Pearl, to the
4 extent that it's achievable; right?

5 So there is no pre-decision including
6 potential analysis. Our analysis will
7 include no action. So it is complete in
8 that sense, and you will be able to see
9 all that. We want to make sure we're
10 hearing those ideas. Appreciate
11 everything you've expressed.

12 It sounds like the communities I
13 suspect you're actually talking about are
14 communities we've heard from in a variety
15 of sources already and a variety,
16 perhaps, through some of you, and that's
17 actually one of the reasons the non-
18 structural was put out there, as we
19 believe it's probably going to need
20 planning because we know that some of
21 these other plans, they could pass didn't
22 pass the benefit cost test. And there
23 has been an overarching interest in
24 relocations and buyouts, which would
25 largely happen on a voluntary basis, but

1 we need to put it out there so people can
2 digest it and see if that's what they
3 want. We're definitely all in on that.
4 Did I miss something there? Thank you.

5 MELINDA WHITE:

6 And thank you for allowing us to be
7 able to speak in a public manner and for
8 being here. We appreciate that.

9 TOM SHAW:

10 Sir?

11 HUNTER SESSIONS:

12 How y'all doing? My name is Hunter
13 Sessions and I've got some questions -- right
14 now, not so much about what's going on here.
15 Who decides when the Ross Burnett is opened?

16 COLONEL KLEIN:

17 So the Ross Burnett is managed by a
18 non-federal entity, so that's a local --
19 Craig, who is that?

20 SPEAKER:

21 It's the Pear River Valley Waterway
22 Commission.

23 HUNTER SESSIONS:

24 And what parameters do they use to
25 tell them when it's time to open it up?

1 COLONEL KLEIN:

2 So they've got a water control manual
3 they use to perform that.

4 HUNTER SESSIONS:

5 Do they look at anything down river
6 at the time, like the water levels or the
7 tide?

8 COLONEL KLEIN:

9 That question's probably best for
10 that private entity.

11 HUNTER SESSIONS:

12 Yeah, all right. What about --

13 COLONEL KLEIN:

14 If I controlled the water manual, I
15 could tell you. Sorry.

16 HUNTER SESSIONS:

17 That's a big thing about all this,
18 too, because it's happening now and
19 you're putting something else on top of
20 it without seeing what's going on on the
21 river.

22 MS. COLOSIMO:

23 We do model it based on their manual.

24 COLONEL KLEIN:

25 We do.

1 MS. COLOSIMO:

2 So if they operate it as they're
3 supposed to operate it.

4 HUNTER SESSIONS:

5 How accurate are the monitors that
6 level the water as we speak? How
7 accurate are they, like the water heights
8 in different areas?

9 COLONEL KLEIN:

10 Are you talking about for the model
11 we're using right now?

12 HUNTER SESSIONS:

13 Not right now. Just today, when you
14 pull it up on your phone, like the level
15 at Pearl River or Pearlington, or
16 anywhere. How accurate are those?

17 COLONEL KLEIN:

18 Our USGS -- is it the USGS gauges
19 that we publish on our website? Unless
20 you correct me if I'm wrong, they are
21 probably within a hundredth, .01.

22 HUNTER SESSIONS:

23 I think you need to check those out
24 again. I know they're putting new ones
25 up. I see new ones coming up when I

1 actually worked on the river, but I don't
2 think they're as accurate as most people
3 think they are, because MSU's doing a
4 study right now on the erosion of the
5 sandbars and stuff, and those girls keep
6 coming down here to do their studies when
7 the river's over the sandbars, and she
8 said that their gauges say that it
9 shouldn't be. So you're wasting a lot of
10 their time and money coming down here to
11 do research and they're not getting any
12 research done.

13 MS. COLOSIMO:

14 So we want to be connected. We want
15 to know about that data person you're
16 talking about at MSU.

17 HUNTER SESSIONS:

18 MSU doing a study on it. Just
19 throwing that out there.

20 COLONEL KLEIN:

21 Just let us know who it is.

22 HUNTER SESSIONS:

23 All right. I'll get with you. Thank
24 you.

25 MS. COLOSIMO:

1 Certainly. Thank you.

2 TOM SHAW:

3 Yes, sir.

4 NEIL BENSON:

5 Good evening. My name is Neil Benson,
6 1174 Yorktown, Slidell. I have some
7 questions regarding the slideshow. You've
8 been dealing with this for several years down
9 here. There's been many proposals over the
10 last nearly two decades, and our concerns
11 have always been the same. We just don't
12 have enough water.

13 As far as my experience with the river
14 and the swamp, I grew up, of course, out
15 there, but I owned an ecological tour
16 business on the Pearl River for 18 years, and
17 I'm currently in the employ of another tour
18 company, so I'm out there every day. I sold
19 my business to them a couple years ago.

20 And the effects we see is further
21 saltwater intrusion of the rivers, which thus
22 causes loss of more swamp and life which
23 holds the ground intact, and thus more
24 erosion. Yeah, we definitely don't have the
25 water flow we used to have now, whether

1 that's due to blockages, sills, or other
2 effects from man. All of those need to be
3 studied, but our concerns are really our
4 water level.

5 A lot of people have brought up tonight
6 -- I've listened when they talked of Wilson
7 Slough, and that has to do with the Walkiah
8 Bluff project that was done in the mid '90s
9 where I believe they were diverting water
10 from the West Pearl to the East Pearl to try
11 to increase waterflow to the East Pearl, and
12 basically, that had to do with navigation up
13 to the Stennis property at the time, which
14 turned out to be a nightmare. Due to Walkiah
15 Bluff, we've lost the West Middle Pearl where
16 it feeds off the West Pearl River. We've
17 lost other smaller waterways in the swamps,
18 such as Mill's Bayou, but there's so many
19 things that need to be address.

20 We know the Mississippi Gulf Coast --
21 your state -- is not favorable of this
22 project because their fisheries have suffered
23 for so long. Their fisheries are finally
24 starting to come back, yet there's still no
25 oyster fishing out there. The reefs have not

1 returned. And it's a fine mix of fresh and
2 saltwater and the Pearl River definitely
3 affects the Mississippi Sound, and all of
4 those, I believe, need to be addressed as
5 well.

6 It's unfortunate, again, that the Corps
7 has to come in and try to help solve problems
8 that could have been addressed in the early
9 '80s by, you know, the leadership in that
10 area through building requirements and green
11 space, but the flooding, apparently,
12 persists. And believe me, our hearts break
13 for the people up there in Jackson because we
14 experience it all too well. But we just want
15 to know that everything's being addressed,
16 you know, as far as this project, not just
17 looking at Jackson.

18 And you know, a lot of these studies, I
19 hope, are being done by the Corps, and
20 they're not taking old studies and other
21 effects, you know, that have been proposed by
22 the Pearl River Vision Foundation, or
23 entities before them, because this project
24 they've been pushing for a long, long time,
25 and it's been renamed and repackaged many a

1 times, and it's been One Lake now for I don't
2 know -- what, Andrew? Ten years now?

3 But again, I just wanted to get on the
4 Record and I wanted y'all to know our
5 concerns and that they are addressed, but I
6 thank Andrew here and Senator Hewitt and
7 Representative White have really made their
8 points as well. Thank you.

9 COLONEL KLEIN:

10 Thanks. And if I could, I'm also
11 hearing too, because Ms. Colosimo
12 mentioned earlier too that status quo, do
13 nothing is an option, too, right, that
14 we're considering, and that's not good
15 either from what I hear from you because
16 we've got saltwater intrusion; right?

17 NEIL BENSON:

18 We definitely have water flow issues
19 when it comes to our water, absolutely.
20 I mean, just from Hurricane Katrina
21 alone, we lost four square miles of
22 wetlands --

23 COLONEL KLEIN:

24 Yes, sir.

25 NEIL BENSON:

1 -- in the Lower Pearl River Basin,
2 and when you have that kind of loss, of
3 course it's going to affect many things,
4 as far as flood protection for us in this
5 area, saltwater intrusion and so forth,
6 and we just want to know that the Corps
7 is looking at all of these issues.

8 COLONEL KLEIN:

9 Okay. I appreciate that. Thanks,
10 sir.

11 TOM SHAW:

12 Any other questions? Yes, sir.

13 BRAD PELLEGRIN:

14 A couple things I've been listening to
15 and not fully understanding is some of the
16 options are weirs, dams. Weirs are deadly,
17 and if you're going to consider doing weirs
18 in that area, the citizens in that area need
19 to know how deadly they are.

20 I've also heard options of elevations for
21 structures to help with flooding and things
22 like that. What good does it do? My
23 brother's house is 14 feet off the ground.
24 He can't get to his house. He has to use a
25 boat. He can't drive. So elevating or

1 building dams around his house, that ain't
2 helping nobody. That's not going to do
3 anything. Anyway, that's a couple of extra
4 thoughts I had.

5 MS. COLOSIMO:

6 Thank you, sir.

7 COLONEL KLEIN:

8 Thank you, sir.

9 TOM SHAW:

10 Any other questions?

11 TONY TRAVIS:

12 Hi, I'm Tony Travis. Thank you for
13 allowing us to speak and for the information.
14 I'm a half life resident of Washington
15 Parish, and a half life resident of St.
16 Tammany Parish. I currently live on the
17 Pearl River Navigational Canal between Lock 1
18 and Lock 2.

19 I can't tell you the number of memories I
20 have of just water skiing up the Pearl River
21 and the canal. It's just multiple memories
22 of recreational skiing, fishing, outdoors.
23 It's a tremendous waterway all along the
24 separation of the Mississippi-Louisiana
25 border.

1 I'm not a hydrologist. I don't
2 understand everything. Can we see the
3 picture of the proposed project? Is that the
4 canal? So we're talking about building --

5 MS. COLOSIMO:

6 Sir, we don't have a proposed
7 project. I think it's just the drainage;
8 right?

9 MS. PROCHASKA:

10 It's just the water.

11 MS. COLOSIMO:

12 Oh, it's just the water.

13 TONY TRAVIS:

14 So this is above the Ross Burnett;
15 right?

16 COLONEL KLEIN:

17 Below.

18 TONY TRAVIS:

19 Below? Oh, okay. Now, first off,
20 we're having water restrictions from the
21 Ross Burnett. As many people have said,
22 it don't seem like we have enough water
23 in the summertime to navigate the river.
24 You can ask my buddies -- they've all
25 gone to jet drives because prop

1 navigation is becoming more and more
2 impossible.

3 The canal does great. Any water flow
4 restriction for the canal, it also
5 affects the river because the canal --
6 which was built in the '40s and is non-
7 natural -- restricts the flow into the
8 Pearl River. So if they restrict more
9 water from the Ross Burnett down, then
10 there's less water to go down the Pearl
11 River from Bogalusa to Lake Catherine, I
12 guess you would say.

13 So you know, I don't want to make a
14 big, long speech, but if there's any
15 further restriction of water flow down
16 the Pearl River, I adamantly reject any
17 modification to the current water
18 structure. I do not want the weirs done
19 at Bogalusa, Bogue Chitto, and Lock 1 due
20 to the recreational value of the Pearl
21 River Navigational Canal.

22 And I also feel that if you cut more
23 water off from Lake Catherine and the
24 saltwater estuaries, then there's going
25 to be that much more demise of our

1 brackish water inhabitants -- shrimp,
2 fish, and what have you. So I don't
3 exactly know -- and I know, like they
4 were saying, every day, we get a gauge
5 reading -- and sure, gauge readings range
6 from Bogalusa to Bush to Pearl River, but
7 I know there's been research on what the
8 levels of the water are every day.

9 And you know, just like, hey, global
10 warming has made the water rise and
11 global warming has made the temperatures
12 hotter, what has the water flow
13 restrictions from Ross Burnett had as an
14 impact on us? Because I can tell you the
15 Pearl River has become the Bogue Chitto,
16 the Bogue Chitto has become the Lee's
17 Creek, and the Lee's Creek has become a
18 ditch, in my opinion, over the 60 years
19 that I've been around this area, because
20 I've watched it all change over the
21 years.

22 So if there's any consideration that
23 there will be a reduction of water flow
24 along the Pearl River or the Lower Pearl
25 Basin, I reject anything other than what

1 you said -- a no action, or whatever.
2 You know, I hate it, but floods come and
3 go. We deal with them, they deal with
4 them. Was that the hundred year flood
5 for them? Because we've had our hundred
6 year flood as well, you know?

7 If flooding affects you, move away.
8 Eventually, New Orleans is coming here.
9 We all know that it's slowly sinking, and
10 you know, it seems like every -- we have
11 good water, but then sometimes we don't,
12 and like the gentleman said over there,
13 who's in control of the Ross Burnett and
14 who says when we're going to get water so
15 that we can navigate our waterway?
16 I'm against any changes other than the
17 natural or easily obtained changes to the
18 basin and the waterway. Okay, thanks.

19 TOM SHAW:

20 Any other questions? Sir?

21 MIKE ZABROWSKI:

22 One more comment. Mike Zabrowski, 109
23 Indian Mound Lane. I live down off the West
24 Pearl, a block back from it. So basically,
25 the West Pearl River's in my back yard. It's

1 up over my dock today and the river's has not
2 fallen still, and that river has only been
3 out of my yard for about three weeks since
4 November. So in combination with the river
5 gets really dry in the summer, well, it gets
6 really wet from November to now, and we're
7 getting hammered with it.

8 And I know we're picking on the people
9 who control Ross Burnett Reservoir, but we
10 need to take into account this environmental
11 impact study of when hurricanes start to come
12 -- and they start coming in on the Pearl
13 River by us. The water starts getting pushed
14 up and Ross Burnett can't -- and they put
15 everything out because it's coming up to them
16 in three, four, five days.

17 So we're caught in this sweet spot where
18 we've got water coming in and we've got an
19 east or south wind pushing in on us, and
20 Pearl River just backs up the whole way up
21 the river. It'll back up to the locks.

22 So I want to make sure when we're looking
23 at these environmental impact studies and
24 from modeling this stuff, we take into
25 account some of these hurricanes and the

1 amount of water they push in, and the amount
2 of water they release at the same time,
3 because as bad as it is when it's low, it's
4 just as bad when it gets high. That was all
5 I had to add.

6 COLONEL KLEIN:

7 Thanks, sir.

8 TOM SHAW:

9 Sir?

10 DARREN BOURGEOIS:

11 Good evening. My name is Darren
12 Bourgeois, I'm from here in Slidell. I just
13 have a couple questions. Correct me if I'm
14 wrong: in 2020, there were about 2400 homes,
15 structures that were flooded in Jackson, and
16 in 2022, there were approximately 3,000. Can
17 you tell me if I'm right? What's the cost of
18 this project?

19 MS. COLOSIMO:

20 We haven't determined the projects.
21 We haven't determined the cost without
22 the proper analysis.

23 DARREN BOURGEOIS:

24 I think it's important that we need
25 to consider the cost versus benefit.

1 Just because we have the money doesn't
2 mean we have to spend it, necessarily.

3 MS. COLOSIMO:

4 Completely agree. That's why we said
5 no action.

6 TOM SHAW:

7 Would anyone else like to make a
8 statement? If you prefer not to come up
9 and take the mic, please provide your
10 comments, your input. Like I said, we've
11 got an email address. There's comment
12 cards still out there. You can mail us
13 the old fashioned way, the U.S. Postal
14 Service.

15 Just as a reminder, we have an
16 additional two sessions tomorrow in
17 Jackson, Mississippi, and then on the
18 first of June, we're going to have two
19 virtual sessions as well, same time --
20 1:00 and 6:00 p.m.

21 Last chance, folks. We want to tell
22 you how much we appreciate you taking
23 time out of your schedules, out of your
24 time with your family, to come provide us
25 your input. It's been very valuable.

1 I'm sure the panel feels the exact same
2 way. Dr. Jeff Burgoyne with Slidell High
3 School and St. Tammany School District,
4 we're very appreciative of you making the
5 facility available to us.

6 So anything else? Okay. We're
7 adjourned.

8 MS. COLOSIMO:

9 Thanks, everybody, for your time.
10 This has been invaluable. Can't say it
11 enough.

12 (THE PUBLIC MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:36 P.M.)
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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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I, JENNA LIMJUCO, Certified Court Reporter in and for the State of Louisiana, as the officer before whom this testimony was administered, do hereby certify that the foregoing 93 pages is a true and correct transcription of the proceedings herein, taken down by me and transcribed under my supervision, to the best of my ability and understanding, at the time and place hereinbefore noted, in the above entitled cause.

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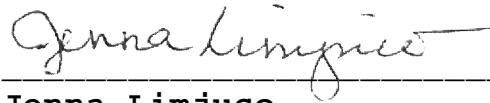
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12 IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have affixed my official
13 signature this 23rd day of May 2023 in Slidell,
14 Louisiana.

15
16 

17 Jenna Limjuco
18 Louisiana Certificate No. 2018004

