

# Public Meeting In Re: Yazoo Backwater Meeting

Army Corps Meeting - (9 AM)

May 5, 2023

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Army Corps Meeting - (9 AM) 5/5/2023

US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

VICKSBURG DISTRICT

PUBLIC MEETING ON YAZOO BACKWATER

WATER MANAGEMENT

Public meeting held at the USACE office,  
4155 Clay Street, Vicksburg, Mississippi,  
on Friday, May 5th, 2023,  
beginning at 9:00 a.m.

APPEARANCES NOTED HEREIN

REPORTED BY:

ELLA J. HARDWICK, CVR-M, CCR #1749

1  
2  
3           Honorable Roger Wicker, U.S. Senator  
4           Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith, U.S. Senator  
5           Colonel Christopher Klein, Commander, Vicksburg  
6                    District Commander, US Army Corps of Engineers  
7           Mike Connor, Assistant Secretary of the Army  
8                    (Civil Works)  
9           Jeaneanne Gettle, Deputy Regional Administrator,  
10                    EPA Region 4  
11           Matt Strickler, Deputy Assistant Secretary for  
12                    Fish and Wildlife and Parks, US Department of  
13                    the Interior  
14           Stacey Jensen, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary,  
15                    Office of Assistant Secretary of the Army  
16           Jacob Brister, Programs and Project Management  
17                    Division Deputy Chief, USACE Vicksburg District  
18           Brian Frazer, Director, Office of Wetlands, Oceans  
19                    and Watersheds  
20           Clay Miller, US Environmental Protection Agency  
21           James Austin, US Fish and Wildlife Service  
22           Various Members of Governmental Agencies  
23  
24  
25

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1 COL. KLEIN: So welcome back, folks,  
2 to the Vicksburg District. Again, it's  
3 our honor to be able to host these public  
4 sessions, welcoming back our federal  
5 family this morning, our two Senators from  
6 Mississippi, as well. Welcome back to  
7 this Vicksburg District, sir, ma'am.

8 So a couple of admin things. First  
9 off, on your seat, you'll see there are  
10 some comment cards. As you go through  
11 this, the technical team is going to be  
12 asking you to write down your comments, or  
13 you can also come up and publicly testify.

14 With those comment cards is a brown  
15 box. It's right next to the door that you  
16 came in. Please drop those off there on  
17 your way out.

18 Second order of business, fire alarm  
19 goes off, it is a true fire. So please  
20 exit from whence you came, out towards the  
21 flagpoles. This is where look left, look  
22 right, please, because that's the person  
23 I'm going to ask you to keep  
24 accountability of.

25 If that person is not outside at the

1           time of the fire, and you don't see them  
2           at the flagpole, please let me know so we  
3           can let the local authorities know that  
4           there might still be people in the  
5           building.

6           All right. Last order of business is  
7           the bathrooms. There is a set of  
8           bathrooms out that back door, back  
9           hallway, out to the right. So at the  
10          hallway, hang a right, and it'll be in  
11          this front left corner, male and female.

12          If you're on this side of the room,  
13          probably best to go out that door in the  
14          rear and then keep walking down the  
15          hallway to the back left, And there are  
16          male and female back there, as well as a  
17          place to fill up any water bottles and  
18          water fountains should you need them.

19          Without further ado, I think that's  
20          all the admin for today. Sir, turn it  
21          over to you.

22          MR. CONNOR: Colonel Klein, as  
23          always, thank you very much for the  
24          hospitality and for the clear  
25          instructions, as the Army always does.

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1                   So, Senators, let me first by  
2                   starting -- acknowledging your presence  
3                   here yesterday, which is different than  
4                   yesterday. So we have a run of show where  
5                   I did some introductory comments.  
6                   Jeaneanne and Matt from EPA and DOI did  
7                   some introductory comments.

8                   But I will engage you on how you would  
9                   like to participate. I can go through, we  
10                  can do our introductory comments so you  
11                  can kind of hear us how we try and  
12                  table-set before the technical  
13                  presentation that's coming, or I can just  
14                  defer to you all right now. We appreciate  
15                  your attendance.

16                  SENATOR HYDE-SMITH: We can be brief.  
17                  How about that? That's kind of a laughing  
18                  thing of a politician to be brief.

19                  But just glad to be here. Thankful  
20                  for everybody involved, and the entities  
21                  that have worked together here. It's a  
22                  long time coming, and so we're very  
23                  optimistic. But we'll turn it over. And  
24                  just appreciate all of our federal  
25                  families that was just referred to working

1 together in a partnership. This is truly  
2 what this is about. Thank you.

3 SENATOR WICKER: And, yes. Thank  
4 you, Senator Hyde-Smith, and I certainly  
5 will also try to be brief.

6 Mr. Secretary, you are no stranger to  
7 the south Delta at this point, and we're  
8 sorry that we have the problems that we  
9 have, but we are so appreciative that you  
10 and your team and the federal team have  
11 been willing to come down and listen to us  
12 and take the pulse of the people and come  
13 up with a solution.

14 What we have seen rolled out yesterday  
15 and what we'll be discussing today is a  
16 culmination of actually years and years of  
17 work and decades and decades of  
18 frustration.

19 But over the last several months, a  
20 team of people from FEMA, from the  
21 Environmental Protection Agency, and from  
22 the Corps of Engineers, and also the White  
23 House leadership on the environment, have  
24 worked together as a team, acknowledging a  
25 problem that we've had and coming up with

1 a solution that not only benefits the  
2 people of Mississippi and the economy of  
3 Mississippi, but also is a major plus for  
4 the ecology and environment of our state.

5 It is a win-win-win all around. And  
6 so, I would join Senator Hyde-Smith in  
7 expressing my appreciation and saying how  
8 excited we are that this project is about  
9 to move forward. We've had good solutions  
10 in the past, I think. This is a better  
11 solution than has ever been proposed.

12 And, Mr. Secretary, we are grateful  
13 from the bottoms of our hearts. Thank  
14 you, sir.

15 MR. CONNOR: Thank you very much. I  
16 appreciate that. And as you feel the need  
17 as we move forward with the program,  
18 please feel free to interject at any point  
19 in time.

20 With that, I will start, as I usually  
21 start, on the third session of a  
22 multi-session event. We had two public  
23 engagements yesterday. I apologize to  
24 those who have heard this setup before,  
25 because it's going to be pretty much the



1 same as yesterday.

2 But I do also want to continue to give  
3 the gold star attendance to Peter Nimrod,  
4 who has made every session that I've ever  
5 been at on the Yazoo backwater pumps.

6 So thank you very much for joining us  
7 here. We are here to roll out the  
8 preliminary findings in the joint  
9 preferred approach to address the flooding  
10 issues in the Yazoo backwater basin.

11 This is a return engagement from the  
12 meetings we had back in February, two days  
13 of full meetings, public meetings,  
14 stakeholder groups that we pulled  
15 together. And at that point in time, I  
16 explained that, in January, after lots of  
17 discussions amongst the agencies at the  
18 urging of the Mississippi delegation, my  
19 counterpart at the Environmental  
20 Protection Agency, Assistant Administrator  
21 Radhika Fox for Water -- she's the  
22 Assistant Administrator for Water -- and I  
23 signed a collaborative MOU, which was  
24 intended to lay out a path of how we could  
25 work through issues that had long been in

1           contention with respect to the project  
2           that was intended to address the Yazoo  
3           backwater flooding issues.

4                   And we laid out a timeframe, that we  
5           would work through those issues and that  
6           we would come up with preliminary  
7           findings, a preliminary preferred  
8           approach, which is why we're here today,  
9           and then ultimately a final plan as a  
10          preferred approach that we would do at the  
11          end of June.

12                   And we are still on target, based on a  
13          lot of great work by our respective teams.  
14          And I should note that we have Matt  
15          Strickler here from the Department of the  
16          Interior, and that signifies that it's not  
17          just about EPA and Army. The Interior has  
18          a role. They have facilities, structures  
19          within the area as, of course, does the US  
20          Forest Service, but they also have a  
21          regulatory role here that we had to be  
22          cognizant of as we were putting together  
23          this plan.

24                   Let me just say the meetings that we  
25          had back in February were very

1           informative. I had to interrupt somebody  
2           yesterday as we were getting to very  
3           technical aspects of the plan and just  
4           say, my God, this is the most  
5           well-informed group of folks who get into  
6           the details, the science, and the  
7           technical aspects.

8                   And that was true back in February  
9           when we just were taking general  
10          engagement information at that point in  
11          time. What came through, in addition to  
12          the substantive input, was obviously the  
13          very urgent need and the issues that  
14          people had faced over time with the  
15          multiple flooding events exacerbated in  
16          2019.

17                   But they also gave us input on the  
18          path forward. I should say "you," because  
19          I see a lot of folks who were there and  
20          participated in those meetings. So that  
21          was very helpful to the cause to get the  
22          whole range of input that we did.

23                   As I mentioned yesterday, because I  
24          think it bears mentioning every time, we  
25          were impacted by the stories of, you know,

1 the crises people faced during the  
2 flooding time. And so, it was not lost on  
3 us that there's devastation from the  
4 flooding events, that I think we were all  
5 watching the news at the end of March, and  
6 there was obviously devastation from the  
7 tornadoes that rampaged through  
8 Mississippi and Alabama, but particularly  
9 this part of Mississippi, Sharkey County,  
10 which faced most of that devastation.

11 So certainly our condolences. We were  
12 thinking of you then. We want to  
13 acknowledge that now, for the devastation  
14 and loss of life that occurred. We can do  
15 something about flood control, though, and  
16 that's what we intend to do, and that's  
17 what we've moved forward with.

18 And based on the input that we  
19 received earlier this year, we already  
20 had, based on that collaborative MOU and a  
21 team of folks, I should say an army of  
22 folks, but only some of us are Army,  
23 others are EPA and Interior and other  
24 folks. And a lot of those folks are  
25 represented in the back part of the room

1           who were rolling up their sleeves already  
2           and thinking through what are the issues  
3           that has hindered us moving forward with a  
4           flood control plan previously and how were  
5           we going to work through those issues.

6                   And they took that additional input  
7           from those public meetings, put it to use  
8           to help develop the draft preferred  
9           approach that we will roll out today in  
10          just a minute.

11                   So, as I mentioned before, we are on  
12          schedule. Good dialogue yesterday. Good  
13          dialogue, mostly focused on technical  
14          aspects and areas where people asked us to  
15          rethink a couple of the approaches, even  
16          while I think there was a general view  
17          that the plan that had been laid out was  
18          pretty good conceptually.

19                   And we've got to get through those  
20          details. And so, that input was very  
21          valuable. We look forward to more of that  
22          good input today.

23                   I'd say, overall, I'm just going to  
24          set the stage at a high level. The plan  
25          that has been developed on a collaborative

1 basis is really one that intends to  
2 protect people, protect critical  
3 infrastructure in the local economy  
4 through the water operations plan that  
5 will be laid out, and that minimizes the  
6 impacts and protects the critical fish,  
7 wildlife, and wetlands resources in the  
8 Mississippi Delta area.

9 And on that last note, we always talk  
10 about that in terms of compliance with the  
11 Clean Water Act, compliance with the  
12 Endangered Species Act, compliance with  
13 the environmental laws, but I just want to  
14 make a point, that was a big focus of the  
15 discussions from all of you back in  
16 February, your desire to ensure that those  
17 environmental resources were protected  
18 even as critical flood control was  
19 provided.

20 And having seen the devastation of  
21 prolonged, sustained flooding that  
22 couldn't be evacuated, we appreciated the  
23 input about the impact those other values  
24 that you all saw and encouraged us to take  
25 a look at during those public meetings.

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1                   So we've got a comprehensive plan to  
2                   lay out. A very talented group of folks  
3                   who are going to discuss the details  
4                   through a presentation that we'll get into  
5                   in just a bit.

6                   Let me just first introduce the folks  
7                   that you'll be hearing from. Jeaneanne  
8                   Gettle is the Deputy Regional  
9                   Administrator, EPA Region 4. Matt  
10                  Strickler, as I mentioned, with the  
11                  Department of the Interior. He's the  
12                  Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish,  
13                  Wildlife, and Parks.

14                 On my team is Stacey Jensen, who is  
15                 the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for  
16                 policy legislation and a whole lot of  
17                 other things. Jacob Brister with the  
18                 Vicksburg District Office here will be  
19                 doing our part of the technical  
20                 presentation.

21                 Brian Frazer with EPA's headquarters  
22                 operation in DC. Clay Miller will be  
23                 doing the technical presentation for EPA,  
24                 and James Austin with the US Fish and  
25                 Wildlife Service will be part of the

1 presentation team.

2 So we are committed to bringing a  
3 comprehensive whole of government  
4 approach, and that includes a lot of the  
5 folks that you see over here on the side  
6 of the room who participated in the  
7 workshop yesterday morning. FEMA, Forest  
8 Service, USDA, Transportation.

9 There are elements that you'll hear  
10 from later where we can use the expertise  
11 and the resources of all these agencies to  
12 bring this whole of government approach  
13 together. So I'll just end with that.

14 We are strongly committed to the  
15 position, the goals that were set out in  
16 our January collaborative memorandum. I  
17 think we've adhered to that through  
18 today's event with coming up with a draft  
19 preferred approach.

20 And based on the input that we had  
21 yesterday, we obviously want to hear from  
22 all of you. We think it's a good  
23 foundation to build upon and move forward  
24 on the timeline that we suggested. So  
25 with that -- I went on a little long.



1           That's the danger when you get practiced  
2           and rehearsed in this.

3                     But I think I forgot to introduce  
4           myself, again, as I did yesterday. Mike  
5           Connor, Assistant Secretary of the Army  
6           for Civil Works. And I will turn it over  
7           to Jeaneanne for some opening thoughts.

8                     MS. GETTLE: Thank you, Mr. Connor.

9                     Well, good morning, everyone. As  
10          Mr. Connor said, I'm Jeaneanne Gettle.  
11          I'm the Deputy Regional Administrator from  
12          EPA Region 4, which covers the Southeast  
13          United States.

14                    But I'm also here on behalf of  
15          Assistant Administrator Fox to bring you  
16          greetings and to tell you that EPA has  
17          long recognized the significance of the  
18          flooding in the Yazoo backwater area. And  
19          we have, through this process, been  
20          steadfast in working with our partners,  
21          both at Army and in DOI and other  
22          partners, to find a solution that is  
23          sustainable, that will reduce the impact  
24          on flooding in the backwater area.

25                    And it's our shared goal that this

1 project complies with the Clean Water Act  
2 and other applicable environmental laws.  
3 I also want to just take a moment to pause  
4 and acknowledge that the tornadoes, the  
5 devastation that happened here in  
6 Mississippi, our deepest sympathy to all  
7 of you who were impacted and on the loss  
8 of life. It's just a real tragedy.

9 And then, I just wanted to just add a  
10 couple of things to say that we were very  
11 happy with the input that we got in  
12 February. We are really looking forward  
13 to the input that we received yesterday.  
14 We value that, and what we'll receive  
15 today, as we look to finalize and work  
16 with the Army on how they're going to move  
17 forward with their proposal.

18 Personally, I'm very encouraged by the  
19 progress we've made so far, and I'm proud  
20 of the collaborative work by the federal  
21 family that we brought to the table. And  
22 we're absolutely confident that with your  
23 continued engagement and our continued  
24 collaboration, we can develop an  
25 appropriate and sustainable solution for

1 the flooding -- to address flooding and  
2 minimize flooding impacts in the Yazoo  
3 backwater area.

4 So thank you very much. I'm looking  
5 forward to the conversation.

6 MR. STRICKLAND: Hey, good morning,  
7 everyone. Matt Strickland, Deputy  
8 Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife  
9 and Parks at the Interior. I'll be very  
10 brief. Just first say thank you all for  
11 having us and taking your time this  
12 morning to come and share your knowledge  
13 and input with us. I think that's the  
14 most important part of today is to hear  
15 from you all.

16 So I'm not going to say a lot, other  
17 than that the US Fish and Wildlife Service  
18 has a really big role to play in the south  
19 Delta.

20 You all know we have multiple national  
21 wildlife refuges, and as Secretary Connor  
22 mentioned, some species aren't doing so  
23 great that we have to take care of, but  
24 also play a really important role in  
25 conserving the wildlife that folks depend

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1 on for hunting and fishing around here and  
2 that kind of sporting way of life.

3 So I know the Service considers  
4 themselves a part of this community and  
5 wants to be helpful. And so, that's why  
6 I'm really encouraged by the way that EPA  
7 and the Corps are approaching this process  
8 and look forward to working together with  
9 them to find a solution to flooding  
10 problems that is also protective of the  
11 important natural resources in the area.  
12 Thank you.

13 MR. CONNOR: Okay. I believe we're  
14 ready to move forward with the technical  
15 presentation. Jacob, just before you  
16 start, I should just let everybody know,  
17 the Senators and I have to step out for a  
18 little media engagement I think about  
19 9:45.

20 So there'll be a little bit of  
21 disruption. We'll try and time it so  
22 we're not walking right in front of you  
23 all. And I apologize, depending on how  
24 long that goes, I may not return just  
25 based on the fact that I have a flight --

1 a plane to catch.

2 So I apologize for that interruption.  
3 Just wanted to give everybody a heads-up  
4 as the technical team proceeds.

5 MR. BRISTER: Thanks, Mr. Connor.

6 Good morning, everybody. So my name  
7 is Jacob Brister. I'm Deputy Chief of  
8 Programs and Project Management Division  
9 here at the District. I am joined by two  
10 colleagues, which are -- after working  
11 with them over the last couple of weeks,  
12 they're friends of mine.

13 So I'll be followed by Mr. Clay Miller  
14 from EPA and then Mr. James Austin from  
15 Fish and Wildlife Service. So before we  
16 go to the next slide, you're going to hear  
17 some words, like, "approximately,"  
18 "about," "maybe," because we're still in  
19 this process, right?

20 So there's some numbers up here, some  
21 locations that may change, we hope not a  
22 lot, but just wanted to say that before we  
23 get started.

24 Next slide, please.

25 So this slide looks extremely

1 elementary. It's that way for a reason.  
2 So I want to walk through the operation on  
3 the illustration on the left just so we  
4 all kind of start the meeting on the same  
5 page, so everybody kind of understands why  
6 we're here and what we're going to do  
7 moving forward.

8 So we're going to focus on the  
9 illustration over here on the left. So to  
10 give some background, pretty clear for the  
11 ones in the room. 99 percent of you guys  
12 know this already. But you got the  
13 Mississippi River coming down. This is  
14 Vicksburg. Up here is Memphis. This is  
15 the area that this meeting is focusing on.  
16 Okay? The backwater area where the  
17 bathtub is.

18 The brown line over here is our main  
19 line, the Mississippi River levee. Over  
20 here is the backwater levee, and this is  
21 the Yazoo River, which drains into the  
22 three -- I mean, excuse me, the four  
23 northern Mississippi lakes.

24 So at the very bottom is the Steele  
25 Bayou structure. So that's where we're

1 focusing today is the backwater area. The  
2 way that that operates is, when the Yazoo  
3 River begins to rise and begins to back in  
4 the backwater area, we close the gates.

5 Conversely, when the backwater area is  
6 higher than the Yazoo River, we open the  
7 gates. That's the way this project  
8 operates.

9 Next slide, please.

10 So this is the purpose. I'm going to  
11 read this for everybody. "The recommended  
12 approach provides flood risk reduction for  
13 communities and the local economy. Flood  
14 risk reduction will target primary  
15 residences as potentially the roads  
16 isolating them, schools, infrastructure,  
17 commercial properties, and prime farmland,  
18 all while minimizing environmental  
19 losses."

20 Next slide.

21 So what is our proposed water  
22 management solution? So this is your  
23 three-legged stool. Okay? So we've got  
24 three things: Pump, which is our  
25 structure, we've got non-structural, which

1 we'll talk about, and then we've got lots  
2 of agreements that the agencies will do  
3 together.

4 So, first off, pump, 25,000 CFS pump.  
5 This pump is planned to be located at its  
6 original location just north of the  
7 current Steele Bayou structure. How are  
8 we going to manage that pump? So we're  
9 going to manage it seasonally.

10 So when I say "seasonally," we're  
11 talking about non-crop and crop. So those  
12 dates of that, for the five-year  
13 floodplain, which is non-crop season,  
14 we're going to manage it to that level.  
15 Okay? It's approximately 93 feet. So  
16 those dates are going to be November the  
17 1st through March 24th. Okay?  
18 November 1st through March 24th, we're  
19 going to manage the backwater area to the  
20 five-year floodplain, which is  
21 approximately 93.

22 The other one is crop season. Crop  
23 season is going to be March 25th through  
24 October 31st. March 25th through  
25 October 31st. We're going to manage that



1 to the two-year, which is approximately 90  
2 feet.

3 So moving on to -- well, let me give  
4 you some context, okay, with the 25,000  
5 CFS pump. Everybody remembers the 2019  
6 flood elevation. We peaked at 98.2 feet.  
7 If this project would have been in place  
8 during that flood, it would have peaked at  
9 93.5. Okay? Just to give some context of  
10 where we are.

11 So non-structural, the second leg. So  
12 remember the Steele Bayou structure that  
13 we referred to. We're going to modify the  
14 way that we currently operate that. So if  
15 you recall, I mentioned when the water  
16 gets to elevation 70 inside of the  
17 backwater, we close the gates.

18 We're going to let that water go up a  
19 little bit. Okay? So this is where the  
20 approximate comes up. We're going to go 4  
21 to 8 feet. So 74 to 78. We're going to  
22 try to finalize that in the next 30 to 60  
23 days. That's going to help  
24 connectivity -- excuse me, connectivity  
25 between the Mississippi River, the Yazoo

1 River, and the Yazoo backwater. Also  
2 benefits the fisheries.

3 So the second bullet under  
4 non-structural. So we're looking at  
5 potential buyouts, potential of ring  
6 levees, also home elevations, and even  
7 road elevations.

8 So the last leg, federal agreements.  
9 So the federal agencies are going to do  
10 formal agreements to provide assurances  
11 that these three extremely important  
12 things happen. So the first bullet, the  
13 water control manual. If you work with  
14 the Corps long enough, you understand  
15 we've got a manual of how we operate.  
16 There's triggers that we do.

17 If we decide at the Corps that, hey,  
18 we might need to operate this differently,  
19 we've got to go back to the table where  
20 all of us are on the same page. Same  
21 thing with the follow-up monitoring.  
22 We're going to continue to do scientific  
23 investigations, keep data on hand to make  
24 sure that what we're doing is correct, and  
25 then, finally, the mitigation plan.

1                   Once again, we're all three going to  
2                   be on the same page about what we're  
3                   looking for, where we're looking for it,  
4                   and how we acquire it.

5                   So at this point, I'm going to turn it  
6                   over to Mr. Clay Miller.

7                   MR. MILLER: Good morning.

8                   First of all, thank you, Jacob, for  
9                   the opening up of this session.

10                  I'm Clay Miller. I'm with EPA  
11                  headquarters in Washington, DC, and I'm  
12                  really, really pleased to be here today.

13                  One of the components of the project  
14                  purpose that Jacob just outlined was this  
15                  matter of protecting primary residents,  
16                  providing that flood risk reduction --  
17                  providing that flood risk reduction to  
18                  those primary residents within the Yazoo  
19                  backwater area.

20                  As outlined by Jacob in the water  
21                  management solution, residents above the  
22                  five-year floodplain would be provided  
23                  protection by the use of the pump. For  
24                  residences within the five-year  
25                  floodplain, we're going to have to look at

1 other options to address that flood risk  
2 reduction for those families.

3 To identify those primary residences,  
4 the Corps of Engineers, over the last few  
5 months, has been conducting field surveys,  
6 trying to identify the location of those  
7 primary residences within the five-year  
8 floodplain, as well as the elevation of  
9 those homes and whether or not those homes  
10 currently had alterations to address flood  
11 proofing.

12 So, for instance, whether or not those  
13 homes have already been elevated and/or  
14 have construction of a ring levee in  
15 place. The map that you see on the screen  
16 here depicts sort of that preliminary  
17 field assessment. Everything in pink is  
18 within the five-year floodplain.

19 The stars that show up on the map are  
20 either individual or clustered series of  
21 homes or primary residences within that  
22 five-year floodplain that were identified.  
23 We estimate at this time, preliminary,  
24 that we have about two dozen homes that  
25 fall within this.

1           So about those homes, those primary  
2           residences, we needed to look at whether  
3           or not -- one, whether or not they're  
4           being impacted, whether or not water is  
5           actually touching or underneath the home,  
6           and trying to address that short of using  
7           a pump.

8           So to do that, we're looking at or  
9           considering the use of buyouts from  
10          willing sellers, elevating those homes, or  
11          either providing ring levees. We're also  
12          very concerned about those homes being  
13          isolated.

14          So not only are we looking at the  
15          homes, but we're also looking at the  
16          access to those homes. So any roads that  
17          are providing that primary access to them,  
18          we're taking spot elevations to understand  
19          what are the elevations, because during  
20          that seasonal flooding in that five-year  
21          where we're allowing the water to come up  
22          to that approximate 93 elevation, you  
23          know, up to the top of the five-year  
24          floodplain, we want to make sure we're not  
25          isolating anybody from being able to come

1 to or leave their home.

2 Another aspect that we're also very  
3 cognizant of and being aware of that we'll  
4 need to take some concern about is whether  
5 or not those homes are -- either their  
6 wastewater is being treated through septic  
7 or through a sanitary sewer, and we'll  
8 need to have to protect those, as well.  
9 So we're looking at options for that.

10 With respect to the primary  
11 residences, we welcome any feedback and  
12 you can either, as we pointed out earlier,  
13 put that on the cards, put it in the back  
14 there, or through your questions here, you  
15 can identify whether or not there's some  
16 things that we need to also take into  
17 consideration.

18 Again, primary residences within the  
19 five-year floodplain, we're going to be  
20 looking at non-pump options to address  
21 those. Primary residences above the  
22 five-year floodplain, the pump should be  
23 providing that flood risk reduction.

24 Next slide, please.

25 If you recall earlier when Jacob was

1 talking about the project purpose, in  
2 addition to providing flood risk reduction  
3 for the primary residents and addressing  
4 environmental issues, we also have another  
5 element of that project purpose, and that  
6 is to provide flood risk reduction to the  
7 agriculture.

8 We understand the importance of  
9 agriculture to the community of the Yazoo  
10 backwater area. We also understand the  
11 importance that it has to the economy of  
12 that area. We worked very closely with  
13 the NRCS and the Mississippi Department of  
14 Agriculture to understand what were the  
15 primary crops within this Yazoo backwater  
16 area, as well as the crop seasons, days to  
17 reach maturity for those primary crops and  
18 what methods would be necessary for field  
19 preparation.

20 From that, we prioritized our focus as  
21 far as protection for primary crops on  
22 three crops: Soybeans, field corn, and  
23 cotton. Now, balancing sort of the crop  
24 season with the needs of fish, wildlife,  
25 and wetlands, we are estimating a pump

1 turn on date of March 25th to start to  
2 draw down the water to enable the farmers  
3 to get in to plant their crops and be able  
4 to harvest.

5 So from that point, from March 25th  
6 until October 31st, the crop season, we  
7 will maintain or manage the water to not  
8 go beyond the 90-foot or two-year  
9 floodplain. So we'll be maintaining that.

10 After which, going into the non-crop  
11 season, we'll manage the water to allow it  
12 to return to the top of the five-year  
13 flood elevation until March 24th. So from  
14 October 31st to March 24th, water will be  
15 allowed, when it's present, that backwater  
16 flooding is present, to go back up, touch  
17 the top of that elevation.

18 It's not going to be maintained at  
19 that elevation. We'll start to pull it  
20 back down at that time, but we're allowing  
21 that dose of water, that pulse of water to  
22 be able to provide necessary water for the  
23 wetlands, which provides the habitat for  
24 fish and wildlife.

25 Also, with this, as with the



1 residents, we look to get any feedback  
2 from the public as far as these crop  
3 season dates. We understand there may be  
4 some, you know, need for us to rethink,  
5 and we're willing to hear people out.  
6 And, again, these were just estimated.

7 So next slide, and I'm going to turn  
8 it over to James Austin from Fish and  
9 Wildlife Service.

10 MR. AUSTIN: All right. Good  
11 morning, folks. As Clay said, I'm James  
12 Austin. I'm with US Fish and Wildlife  
13 Service. I'm the field supervisor for the  
14 Mississippi Ecological Services field  
15 office in Jackson, and I'm going to visit  
16 with y'all for a few minutes this morning  
17 about some of the fish, wildlife, and  
18 wetland considerations that went into this  
19 current proposed solution.

20 And I start out by saying I kind of  
21 feel like I'm preaching to the choir a  
22 little bit. I'm looking at folks that  
23 live in this part of the world, that  
24 understand these resources in this part of  
25 the world, could probably explain some

1 things to me about some of these natural  
2 resources in this part of the world.

3 But I just wanted to point out a few  
4 of the things that we feel are important  
5 about the Yazoo backwater area from a  
6 natural resources standpoint. So, No. 1,  
7 this area contains a productive floodplain  
8 fishery.

9 This area is one of only a few  
10 remaining examples of the bottomland  
11 hardwood ecosystem that once occurred  
12 throughout most of the Mississippi Delta  
13 and the Delta in other states, as well.  
14 And it's one of only four remaining  
15 backwater ecosystems that continues to  
16 maintain that important hydrological  
17 connection with the Mississippi River  
18 through that water that you heard Jacob  
19 talk about that backs up the Yazoo and has  
20 the opportunity to come into the area  
21 through that Steele Bayou structure.

22 So based on these things, again, it's  
23 just a diverse area, a unique area, and  
24 it's an important part of our state. The  
25 area also supports a number of wildlife

1 species, and that includes many, many  
2 species of migratory and resident land  
3 birds, shore birds, wading birds, black  
4 bears live in this part of the world, a  
5 number of amphibian and reptile species.

6 I could keep naming species up here  
7 all day long. I mean, basically any  
8 taxonomic group of wildlife of critters  
9 that we've got in Mississippi are  
10 represented within this backwater area,  
11 and that includes some species that are  
12 federally protected and some species that  
13 have been proposed for protection under  
14 the Endangered Species Act. And I'm going  
15 to list those.

16 The first one, again, you all are very  
17 familiar with this area and this project,  
18 pondberry is one that you've all heard of.  
19 It's an endangered plant that occurs  
20 within the backwater area. It's primarily  
21 on Delta National Forest.

22 Another one that's a little bit newer  
23 to the scene with regards to this project  
24 is the northern long-eared bat. So that  
25 species was recently uplisted from

1           threatened to endangered, and it's thought  
2           to occur within the area.

3                     We've got two more species, the  
4           tricolored bat and the alligator snapping  
5           turtle, both of which do occur within the  
6           area, and both of those have been proposed  
7           for listing under the Endangered Species  
8           Act.

9                     Now, along with these more non-game,  
10          federally protected kinds of species but  
11          of equal importance are the game species  
12          that occur within the area. And there's  
13          quite a few of those. Again, you folks  
14          are more familiar with those than I am,  
15          because you live and work in this area.

16                    But some of the more important ones  
17          there would be whitetail deer, waterfowl,  
18          eastern wild turkey, squirrel. You could  
19          keep going down that list, too. A ton of  
20          those species that folks like to hunt and  
21          fish and that sort of thing within the  
22          area.

23                    And so, we realize that all of these  
24          natural resources support a wide variety  
25          of outdoor recreational opportunities

1           within this area, as well, things like  
2           fishing, hunting, boating, camping,  
3           birding. Again, I could keep on going  
4           down that list, too.

5                   And so, the EPA, the Corps, and the  
6           Fish and Wildlife Service -- I'm going to  
7           say the three agencies from this point  
8           forward because I'm not going to  
9           repeatedly say the Corps, the EPA, and the  
10          Fish and Wildlife Service. Okay?

11                   So the three agencies realize the  
12          importance of these resources and these  
13          activities to local residents, to  
14          communities, to local economies, to the  
15          tourism industry, right? Because it's not  
16          just folks that live within this area that  
17          take part in these activities. Folks come  
18          from other parts of the state. They come  
19          from other states. People come from other  
20          countries to experience this part of the  
21          world.

22                   So we recognize that these activities  
23          are important. And so, all three agencies  
24          are very committed to making sure that  
25          these resources continue to thrive within

1 this area, because they are important.

2 So to that end, the Fish and Wildlife  
3 Service has long maintained that any water  
4 management solution within the backwater  
5 area should really strive to balance the  
6 needs of fish and wildlife resources  
7 alongside the need to provide that flood  
8 risk reduction, again, for local  
9 communities and for local economies.

10 We believe this solution does that.  
11 We believe it does achieve that balance  
12 through things that you heard Jacob talk  
13 about earlier. Things like adjusting the  
14 way we operate the Steele Bayou structure  
15 so that, you know, important connectivity  
16 between the Mississippi River and this  
17 area continues to happen, and we can  
18 further enhance that by allowing just a  
19 little bit more backwater to come in when  
20 the opportunity is available.

21 The other thing you heard about was  
22 the levels that we're going to allow  
23 flooding to reach. So by allowing water  
24 to touch that two-year and that five-year  
25 floodplain, that helps to maintain those

1 habitats that are important for these fish  
2 and wildlife resources. It helps to  
3 maintain wetland functions for those  
4 wetlands that occur within that two- and  
5 five-year floodplain.

6 And so, we feel that these measures  
7 and other measures that are part of the  
8 current proposed solution help to avoid,  
9 minimize, and reduce the impacts that the  
10 project will have on fish, wildlife, and  
11 wetlands.

12 But we also acknowledge it's not  
13 always possible to completely avoid  
14 adverse impacts, right? Particularly when  
15 you're looking at a project of this scope  
16 and complexity. And so, there will be a  
17 need to provide appropriate compensatory  
18 mitigation to help offset some of those  
19 impacts.

20 And so, to work towards that end,  
21 three agencies have collaborated. One of  
22 the first things we've done, we developed  
23 a list of species, and we consider this a  
24 working list. And this is an opportunity  
25 for you folks who are present to provide

1           some feedback to us. If you've got strong  
2           feelings or thoughts about any of these  
3           species that we've included or if you feel  
4           there's some additional species we should  
5           be looking at to assess the impacts that  
6           the project will have on fish and wildlife  
7           resources, we'd like to hear from you.

8                    Again, we've got the comment cards or  
9           during the Q-and-A later on, you can stand  
10          up and let us know those things. So we've  
11          got this list that we've developed. Also  
12          want to mention fisheries resources. The  
13          three agencies have collaborated to look  
14          at the impacts that the project may have  
15          on fisheries resources within the area.

16                   And so, we've worked together to kind  
17          of tweak some of those methodologies a  
18          little bit, again, just to ensure that we  
19          are fully assessing the impacts of the  
20          project.

21                   And so, moving forward, again, the  
22          three agencies working together, all these  
23          folks that you see back here at the back  
24          table and others, are going to continue  
25          working together as a team to further



1           develop methods to assess these impacts,  
2           and that's going to inform the  
3           compensatory mitigation that we'll need to  
4           see moving forward.

5                     And those are a couple of things that  
6           Clay's going to touch on, and so, I'm  
7           going to turn it back over to him.

8                     MR. MILLER: Thank you, James.

9                     I think we're going to -- I didn't  
10          know if I start speaking, everybody starts  
11          leaving. Boy, that takes the wind out of  
12          my sails a little bit.

13                    You just heard James talk about the  
14          Fish, Wildlife, and Wetlands component of  
15          the multifaceted project purpose, and you  
16          also heard James mention that we expect  
17          that there will be impacts that we'll have  
18          to mitigate for.

19                    And so, the first step we'll have to  
20          do is assess what those impacts are.  
21          Under the water management solution that  
22          Jacob outlined earlier in the  
23          presentation, you heard us talk about  
24          seasonally managing the water to the  
25          two-year and the five-year floodplain, and

1           you've heard us time and time again talk  
2           about the non-crop season where we're  
3           going to allow the water to go up to the  
4           five-year floodplain extent, and during  
5           the non-crop -- or, excuse me, the crop  
6           season maintaining it or restricting it so  
7           it doesn't go beyond the two-year  
8           floodplain.

9                        This solution manages in a manner that  
10           will result in a reduction of impacts to  
11           wetlands, fish, wildlife, and other  
12           ecological resources, as well as reducing  
13           the flood risk to those primary residents  
14           and agriculture, again, capturing all  
15           three of those components of the project  
16           purpose.

17                      When comparing this project, what  
18           we're proposing with the water management  
19           solution, when comparing that to previous  
20           proposals, we expect that there will be  
21           less environmental impacts or at least  
22           impacts to those environmental resources.

23                      So I want to draw your attention to  
24           the graphic here on the slide. And  
25           looking at this, it illustrates why we

1 believe that the impacts will be  
2 significantly less to those resources, to  
3 the fish, the wildlife, and the wetlands.

4 This slide shows that the proposed  
5 2023 water management solution, the  
6 solution that we've been talking to you  
7 today about, and it compares it to a  
8 previous proposal that came out in 2020.  
9 That 2020 proposal would have turned on  
10 the pump at 87-foot year round.

11 So anytime the water got up to 87  
12 feet, pump would have come on, which would  
13 have restricted those floodwaters to an  
14 elevation less than -- or they're less  
15 than the two-year flood, just below the  
16 two-year flood. It would not have allowed  
17 that water to reach above the elevation to  
18 provide benefits to fish, wildlife, and  
19 wetland resources all the way up to the  
20 five-year elevation.

21 So during a part of the year, we're  
22 going to allow that dose of water to go on  
23 up to provide those benefits to wetland  
24 habitat, which benefits fish and wildlife  
25 resources.

1                   Impacts to these resources by the 2020  
2                   proposal would have been realized  
3                   year-round and are depicted in this  
4                   graphic in gray and in red. In fact, it  
5                   includes -- everything that's in that bar  
6                   would have been above the 87 all the way  
7                   up to the five-year flood, we would have  
8                   expected that there was going to be  
9                   impacts based on how that would have been  
10                  managed under that 2020 proposal.

11                  However, for the 2023 proposal, we're  
12                  expecting the impacts to these fish,  
13                  wildlife, and wetland resources to be what  
14                  is depicted here on the graphic as the red  
15                  bar, significantly less than what would  
16                  have been expected under any other  
17                  previous proposal.

18                  The red bar depicts the turn on around  
19                  90-foot elevation all the way up to the  
20                  top of the five-year but from the time of  
21                  the crop season. So that's when we're  
22                  expecting that we would get impacts to  
23                  those resources, during that timeframe  
24                  from late March all the way to the end of  
25                  October.

1           And, as James pointed out, there's  
2           going to be -- there are impacts, and we  
3           have committed to thoroughly evaluate  
4           those impacts. The three agencies have  
5           agreed on the geographic extent of the  
6           impact assessment area.

7           We've also agreed on the criteria and  
8           on the scientifically-approved  
9           methodologies and procedures to assess  
10          those impacts to fish, wildlife, and  
11          wetland resources.

12          Next slide, please.

13          Which brings us to, once we've  
14          identified those impacts, how do we  
15          mitigate for those? Those impacts to  
16          those resources will have to be mitigated.  
17          And the agencies have agreed on three key  
18          components to that mitigation strategy.

19          The first is that all compensatory  
20          mitigation will either be done in advance  
21          or concurrent with the construction of the  
22          project. The second component is that all  
23          those mitigation sites will be secured  
24          prior to the impacts.

25          And then, the third key component is

1 all the mitigation plans that will be  
2 developed will be approved by the three  
3 agencies, that being the Corps, Fish and  
4 Wildlife Service, and EPA.

5 Another key aspect of this mitigation  
6 strategy and why we feel that this has  
7 been such a success working with our  
8 colleagues is that we are going to be  
9 developing a memorandum of understanding  
10 between the three agencies that will help  
11 guide the key mitigation details. It will  
12 help guide in the development of those  
13 mitigation components, as well as the  
14 review, the approval, and the oversight.

15 Now, where is this mitigation going to  
16 happen? We're going to be looking at  
17 opportunities within the Yazoo River  
18 Basin, as well as outside the river basin.  
19 We're going to include -- you know, a key  
20 focus will be on ecosystem restoration and  
21 enhancement, but there will be other types  
22 of mitigation that we will be considering,  
23 and one that we're contemplating is the  
24 use of supplemental -- use of water from  
25 groundwater wells in the northern end of

1 the basin that will help supplement or  
2 augment stream flows within certain  
3 streams within the Yazoo basin, thereby  
4 providing during that low-flow year, parts  
5 of the year, enough water to help benefit  
6 fisheries that would be potentially  
7 impacted by the way we manage this  
8 project.

9 So that concludes the discussion on  
10 mitigation. Again, if you have any  
11 comments or concerns or have any thoughts  
12 that you want to leave with us, there's  
13 the comment cards, or during the Q-and-A,  
14 we can try to answer those questions, or  
15 you can at least leave us your thoughts.

16 Next slide, and I'll turn it over to  
17 Stacey and Brian to finish this off.

18 MS. JENSEN: Thanks, Clay.

19 Yeah. So this slide is basically just  
20 depicting where we're at and where we're  
21 going. So where we're at, we're here with  
22 all of you over the course of yesterday  
23 and today to present to you our draft  
24 preferred approach, gather your comments  
25 and input as we work towards our final

1 preferred approach.

2 In addition to these sessions, we have  
3 a web page, which is listed on the handout  
4 that all of you are receiving, I think.  
5 And on that web page, this presentation  
6 will be posted. So also, please let your  
7 community members know who weren't able to  
8 join any of our sessions that they can  
9 access the materials on the web page.

10 And then, there's also room for  
11 comments on our web page. So over the  
12 course of the next month, we'll be  
13 gathering not just what we heard yesterday  
14 and today, but over the course of the next  
15 month, any comments submitted to that web  
16 page we will also be considering as we  
17 work to finalize our preferred approach at  
18 the end of June. So we're still working  
19 for that target date as we committed to in  
20 our joint memorandum.

21 And then, from the end of June  
22 forward, the Corps will be developing an  
23 environmental compliance report. We have  
24 to make sure we document that this  
25 approach is compliant with environmental



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1 laws and regulations, Clean Water Act,  
2 NEPA, Endangered Species Act, and so on.

3 So we'll be working expeditiously  
4 through that environmental compliance  
5 report documentation process before we  
6 then turn to the appropriations process.  
7 That's where we're going.

8 So, now, I think, Brian, do you want  
9 to provide any --

10 MR. FRAZER: Sure. I just want to,  
11 again, like I've been saying for the past  
12 couple of sessions, that I want to thank  
13 all of you for coming out today. And as  
14 Mr. Connor had mentioned, I just want to  
15 amplify this point that we really  
16 appreciate the feedback that we got on  
17 February 15th.

18 And we took that feedback, went back  
19 to the technical team, and developed a  
20 preferred approach. So the feedback that  
21 we get from you today, that we got from  
22 folks yesterday, we're going to take that  
23 information and work, as Stacey said, to  
24 come up with the final approach.

25 So, again, thank you for your

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1           comments. I greatly appreciate it. And  
2           we can do Q-and-A right now.

3           MS. JENSEN: Yeah. So if you have  
4           any comments, and you'd like to stay  
5           seated, just raise your hand. I'll bring  
6           the microphone to you, or if you prefer to  
7           stand up, please do so.

8           MR. MITCHELL: I'm Jeffrey Mitchell.  
9           I'm a farmer from Cary and an avid  
10          outdoorsman, and I saw y'all in February.  
11          The two things I saw -- thank y'all for  
12          working on this. We need this. This  
13          project does protect our communities and  
14          everybody that lives there.

15          The two things I saw that need, I  
16          think, tweaking, the cropping season. The  
17          federal government tells me I can plant  
18          corn March the 1st to insure it. You  
19          know, just off the top of my head, the  
20          last three years, I started the 6th this  
21          year, the 18th of March last year, and the  
22          10th the year before. Would have started  
23          March the 1st if it had been dry.

24          The earlier we can plant our crop, the  
25          earlier we can get it out of the heat of

1 the summer, the better our crops do. So  
2 the cropping season, you know, March 1st  
3 to October 31st, because March the 1st, if  
4 it's dry, there's going to be planters  
5 running from the gates north.

6 The other thing, on the elevations, I  
7 understand as an outdoorsman, at 90 feet,  
8 most of Delta National is underwater  
9 already. And so, so is the CRP  
10 surrounding it. And with our spring  
11 floods, I don't know necessarily the  
12 impact of holding the water on the trees  
13 in April, what that will do to the  
14 bottomland hardwood forest.

15 I know the rising and falling of water  
16 doesn't hurt the bottomland forest, but  
17 the stagnant, consistent water. I think  
18 it's the largest bottomland hardwood  
19 forest in the United States. And so, if  
20 we lose that, we're not getting it back.  
21 Not in my lifetime, not in my kids'.

22 So the constant holding of water on  
23 it, that worries me, especially in the  
24 springtime of the year when our floods  
25 occur, because that's when the sap's

1 moving in the trees, and most of us --  
2 some of us understand that. I don't  
3 understand it all.

4 And then, two, the other problem with  
5 it is, at 90 or 93, where are the wildlife  
6 going to go? At that elevation, most of  
7 the coverage land, CRP, hardwoods is  
8 underwater, and that pushes them out to  
9 ditch banks, edges of highways. We saw  
10 this in '19 and in '20, in '18, any other  
11 flood year. You know, the deer run over  
12 on the highway, hundreds of deer in a  
13 field where there usually are no deer.

14 So the place for them to live, if  
15 you're holding it at 90-foot, that  
16 concerns me, because they don't have  
17 anywhere.

18 MS. JENSEN: So I think, yeah, one,  
19 the crop season data information, that is  
20 one key area, as you heard, that we are  
21 seeking information on. So that's  
22 helpful, especially related to the crop  
23 insurance. I think that is something that  
24 we're really interested in hearing about.

25 And I think Jacob, yeah, if you can

1 talk about the pulsing and how it's not  
2 stagnant and how that would work, plus I  
3 think a little bit about what exactly is a  
4 two-year floodplain, because I think  
5 that's --

6 MR. BRISTER: So we're not holding --  
7 we're not going to hold water. The  
8 project is going to operate the same way.  
9 So the gates are going to be open. We're  
10 just not going to let it go above 93, and  
11 we're not going to let it go to 90. Okay?

12 So let's just talk about the five-year  
13 floodplain, the 93. The way we would  
14 operate that, the smart guys in the back  
15 of the room are going to be doing their  
16 hydraulic calculations. They're going to  
17 be calculating stream flows from the  
18 headwaters coming down, calculating the  
19 forecast of rain and all that stuff.

20 So we're not going to wait to turn it  
21 on at 93. Okay? So we may turn it on at  
22 90. We may turn it on at 92, -3, just  
23 going to depend on that situation. Okay?  
24 So it's going to go to 93, and we're going  
25 to pump it down to 90, then turn the pumps

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1 off. Okay?

2 It may fill back up. It may keep  
3 draining. But we're not holding water.  
4 Okay? Does that make sense to everybody?

5 Okay. So five-year floodplain  
6 basically means you have 20 percent chance  
7 of that flood any given year. Not every  
8 year, but any given year. Two-year  
9 floodplain, same situation. It's just a  
10 50 percent chance. Okay? So a 50 percent  
11 chance in any given year that you'll get  
12 to the two-year floodplain.

13 Any questions about that operation?  
14 Okay. Thank you.

15 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Like I say,  
16 just from my knowledge of the area,  
17 because I love to duck hunt. And when the  
18 bayou gets to 78 feet, it starts backing  
19 into the woods. And then, from 78 to 88,  
20 you go from hunting what is Phil Bryant  
21 right by the gates. Then you go to Delta  
22 National, and you're up just about to  
23 Highway 16.

24 So the elevation of it, that just  
25 concerns me. If we're worried about

1 wetlands and wildlife and all this stuff,  
2 the holding of too much water scares me,  
3 because in the spring, we don't get 1-inch  
4 rains. We get 4-inch rains. And then,  
5 Clarksdale gets six, and then, it all  
6 comes. We've all lived through it.

7 You know, the ability to have the  
8 hardwood bottomland and all that and the  
9 wildlife to be able to live and have  
10 places to live is my concern.

11 MS. JENSEN: No. We appreciate that.  
12 And I think with the two-year, right,  
13 again, it's a 50 percent chance of  
14 happening. So that's like a natural  
15 thing. I mean, that's what those species  
16 are accustomed to.

17 And then, with the operation -- so the  
18 Corps does this across all of our  
19 operating in reservoirs or water control  
20 structures, it's forecast informed. So  
21 that's exactly what he's talking about out  
22 there, those smart people, they look at  
23 all the pieces and what's coming in in the  
24 system and the weather forecast, and then,  
25 they use that to perform our operations so

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1 we don't run into that sort of situation.  
2 But that is great feedback.

3 MR. MITCHELL: Thank y'all.

4 MR. HOLLIS: Hey. I'm Paul Hollis.  
5 I kind of want to piggyback what Jeffrey  
6 said, and he knows this, but the reason  
7 that we want to plant corn in March is not  
8 for convenience. It is for insurance, but  
9 it's also because that's an optimal time  
10 for us to plant.

11 You can plant corn any time of year  
12 you want to. There's a real interesting  
13 thing about corn when it pollinates.  
14 Those silt that you try to clean off an  
15 ear of corn is actually a small tube.  
16 When the temperatures reach over 95  
17 degrees, it will not pollinate. Those  
18 tubes close.

19 If you've ever eaten a kernel of corn,  
20 and you've seen a blank in it, that kernel  
21 did not get pollinated. That's why we  
22 need to plant during that period of time.  
23 You know, I came yesterday, and I went  
24 back, and I talked to some farmers. And I  
25 know Jacob said we're tweaking with



1 everything. The March 25th is of a big  
2 concern to a lot of people, particularly  
3 in the south Delta, because not only if  
4 you turn it on at 25 and it's been wet, it  
5 takes time for it to dry before you can  
6 get into that field. Then you're into  
7 April.

8 If you would consider an earlier date  
9 than that would be real advantageous to us  
10 to farm, particularly corn, in the south  
11 Delta.

12 UNIDENTIFIED: Non-farmer. All  
13 right. So my primary concern is, first  
14 off, I've lived in the Mississippi Delta  
15 my entire life. Grew up between Cleveland  
16 and Marigold. All my relatives are from  
17 Rosedale. So where I lived was about 5  
18 miles from the Sunflower River.

19 Met my girlfriend and wife for 42  
20 years at Delta State. She's from Holly  
21 Bluff. So I moved -- she taught school.  
22 We moved to Holly Bluff. We actually  
23 lived in the suburbs of Holly Bluff over  
24 in Sharkey County.

25 And so, my home was built in 1974,

1 right after the '72 flood, and it belonged  
2 to my wife's grandparents. So their whole  
3 house was basically destroyed in the '72  
4 flood, which occurred because the gates  
5 were under construction, and you couldn't  
6 block the hole in the levee.

7 And so, we had a big flood, and it was  
8 a sustained flood. Anyway, it damaged  
9 their house. They built a new house, and  
10 they took a good shot at elevating the  
11 (indiscernible) and did a little Kentucky  
12 windage and thought they had it high  
13 enough.

14 Well, it wasn't high enough. So when  
15 this flood occurred, we were cut off from  
16 our home. And you put my wife and I in a  
17 boat and try to go, we're going to drown.  
18 So we don't do boats.

19 But I am an avid hunter. Not duck,  
20 but deer, squirrels, that kind of stuff.  
21 And I love where I live. I live right on  
22 the bank. The Sunflower River is actually  
23 one of my property lines. I live next to  
24 the 16th section, which a section is a  
25 mile square, which is 640 acres, which the

1 average home in a suburb is probably a  
2 half-acre. So that's just to give you an  
3 idea how big a section is.

4 Well, that's normal for us people here  
5 in the Delta to talk about these big  
6 tracts of land. I married well. My  
7 wife's got some land that she inherited  
8 from an aunt, but we were cut off. And  
9 I've got PTSD from the flood.

10 I retired after 38 years of working  
11 for a chemical company that sells  
12 products, fertilizers, especially to  
13 farmers. So everything in this area is  
14 agri related. I commuted 30 miles to  
15 Yazoo City to work at a big chemical plant  
16 for my entire career. I retired in 2018,  
17 just in time to get ready for the 2019  
18 flood.

19 So that was a traumatic thing for us.  
20 We protected our home with a ring levee,  
21 and we were cut off and isolated. So my  
22 brother-in-law loaned us a big tractor.  
23 Nobody -- they couldn't plant. Nobody  
24 could. So the tractors were just sitting  
25 there.

1                   We wouldn't ride on the tractor. And  
2                   we drove down the highway to my house. It  
3                   was about a two-mile stretch that had  
4                   gotten so deep you couldn't drive through  
5                   it with a regular vehicle, even a  
6                   four-wheel drive truck. You had to  
7                   eventually put equipment here that could  
8                   get to our house.

9                   But I'm a grown man, and I stood there  
10                  days. We filled approximately 4,000  
11                  sandbags during this time. We covered our  
12                  levee with Visqueen. It was whitecap  
13                  waves. There was 2 foot of water in that  
14                  field next to my house, but it's 7 foot to  
15                  12, 15 foot back in the Delta National  
16                  Forest.

17                  Nothing that lives on the ground can  
18                  survive. Even squirrels, they can't live  
19                  in a flooded area. They got to go. They  
20                  got to get on the ground sooner or later.  
21                  Turkey, snakes, whatever. So all these  
22                  critters, my little island ring levee was  
23                  where they all wanted to be.

24                  So we rigged up a bunch of stuff on  
25                  our tractor where we could take supplies

1 in and out of our house, and we stayed  
2 there, because we had to maintain pumps  
3 when it rained to pump water out of our  
4 ring levee.

5 So, anyway, despite having flood  
6 insurance, I did not want my property to  
7 flood, and we fought through that. But  
8 every rain was just terrifying to me,  
9 because every rain, if it rained 6 inches,  
10 the water came up 6 inches. But if it  
11 rained 4 inches in Clarksdale, it came up  
12 another 2. And it just kept coming up.  
13 Kept coming up.

14 I had pelicans swimming around my  
15 house. I live in Holly Bluff,  
16 Mississippi. I never saw a pelican that  
17 wasn't on the Gulf Coast. So we had  
18 pelicans swimming around. We had dead  
19 fish by the jillions, because fish are  
20 stupid. They swim out in the field.  
21 There's no oxygen out there. They die.

22 Our hardwoods in Delta National have  
23 been devastated. They split open, because  
24 they grew so much in that sustained flood.  
25 And now, they're dying. It really needs

1 to be a survey for that.

2 But I was standing there at my home  
3 one evening, and I was thinking, Oh, my  
4 God, if I have a heart attack, my wife  
5 can't get me on that tractor. You can't  
6 land a helicopter anywhere. I'm going to  
7 spend my golden hour dying trying to get  
8 to Holly Bluff, which is not where you  
9 want to be.

10 And vice versa. I couldn't get my  
11 wife on the tractor and get her to Holly  
12 Bluff, and nobody could get -- we couldn't  
13 get any help. Somehow our community water  
14 stayed on the whole time, and our power  
15 stayed on the whole time for this flood,  
16 for months. What a blessing. I only  
17 remember a couple of short power outages  
18 where we had to run generators.

19 But I was scared for my life. I was  
20 scared for my wife's life. And I lived in  
21 a beautiful home. I'm a stick in the mud.  
22 I grew up in one home, went to a dormitory  
23 for college, and then, I've lived in the  
24 same home for 42 years in Holly Bluff. So  
25 I just, I love it, and I want to live

1           there, but I'm terrified of a flood.

2                   I'm just going to tell you how it is.  
3           It's life-changing to go through a  
4           sustained flood like that. I've seen that  
5           water come up in the back of those fields  
6           a million times. It's just part of life  
7           and part of the ecosystem, but to be cut  
8           off, you had to -- I took T posts and  
9           flagging and eventually bought the  
10          triangle signs that go on the back of a  
11          tractor and put them along our road all  
12          the way to my house just so people would  
13          know where the water was.

14                   It was like driving through the ocean,  
15          and you didn't want to -- you know, my  
16          tractor, I could go off the road and make  
17          it, but you couldn't have done it  
18          otherwise.

19                   But it was very traumatic to be kind  
20          of trapped in that situation.

21                   (Indiscernible) will cheer that. They'll  
22          cheer that for where I live, and it still  
23          floods the forest. But I saw my -- this  
24          is 2023, and I've seen my first set of  
25          turkey that, you know, are young turkeys

1 in that 16th-section land next to my house  
2 this year. First time I've seen it,  
3 because you lost them all in 2019, all  
4 your ground birds.

5 So, anyway, I'm thankful that y'all  
6 are here. I'm thankful we're paying  
7 attention to this. I hope we protect the  
8 forest. But more importantly, we have to  
9 protect our infrastructure and our farmers  
10 in the big scheme of things.

11 Because it doesn't matter whether you  
12 farm or not, if you live in this part of  
13 the country, you're either related to  
14 agriculture or you're related to hunting  
15 and fishing, and that's what this is all  
16 about. And we've got to protect our  
17 natural resources. These pumps will do  
18 that.

19 I'm thrilled to be here, and I'm  
20 really thankful for you guys. And I think  
21 you need to do a survey through Delta  
22 National of the hardwoods, because they're  
23 still dying, these big trees.  
24 100-year-old oaks. They're dying now, and  
25 I think it's because of the floodwater.



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1           They've got -- you can see marks on them  
2           as high as the ceiling where water sat on  
3           them for eight months.

4                    They can't handle that. They can  
5           handle a month or two in the winter,  
6           because they're dormant, but they can't  
7           handle it once they -- once they bud out  
8           and everything and start growing. Just  
9           don't it. But thank y'all for coming.  
10          Appreciate it. Appreciate the Senators  
11          and the Secretary of the Army for being  
12          here, but especially Matt, you guys,  
13          appreciate y'all being here. Thank you.

14                   MS. JENSEN: Thank you.

15                   MR. WHITTINGTON: Andy Whittington.  
16          I'm with the Mississippi Farm Bureau  
17          Federation. I'm the Environmental  
18          Programs Coordinator and have been in that  
19          role for 16 years. So I have been through  
20          these Yazoo backwater projects more times  
21          than I would care to admit.

22                   I am appreciative of the approach you  
23          have taken. Today is a good day. I think  
24          we will have better days ahead, but today  
25          is a good day because of the collaboration

1           between the agencies, the approach you've  
2           taken, I think we are close to a legally  
3           defensible program and one that puts us on  
4           a path to have a structural pump.

5           The Corps knows that they manage  
6           rivers and levees as a system, and this  
7           system was designed with a pump at the end  
8           of it. The failure to put that there is  
9           why we are having these conversations  
10          today, because we designed the system and  
11          didn't finish it.

12          I urge you to give serious  
13          consideration to the comments that you  
14          will get from the local community, the  
15          farmers in the community, the wildlife  
16          agents that work in this area. They have  
17          an extensive amount of knowledge of what  
18          these floods do.

19          We went through several springs of  
20          floods where deer were pushed out,  
21          dropping fawns in a completely foreign  
22          place. I'm wondering whether those --  
23          they have set up a new home somewhere or  
24          if they're actually going to migrate back  
25          with the floodwater going down.

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1                   So I think today is a very good day.  
2                   I appreciate all of the work that y'all  
3                   have done. I am very enthusiastic about  
4                   this plan. I do believe there are going  
5                   to be some tweaks that would make it even  
6                   better, but I do want to thank y'all for  
7                   the work you have done, and I am pretty  
8                   excited about this approach. Thank you.

9                   MR. DIGGS: My name is Larry Diggs,  
10                  and I'm also the Issaquena Development  
11                  Secretary for the Issaquena Development  
12                  Committee for all of Issaquena County.  
13                  And I think I spoke with Stacey Jensen.  
14                  I'm Larry Diggs. I also spoke with  
15                  Michael Connor. I'd like to thank y'all  
16                  for inviting us to y'all's format.

17                  In Issaquena, we are -- a lot of our  
18                  streets after the floodwater left, the  
19                  water filled in all the ditches. So right  
20                  now, we have no drainage systems. The  
21                  roads are all still messed up. Potholes.  
22                  A lot of our main highways are no longer  
23                  paved. They back to rocks and gravel.

24                  So I feel like our responsibility for  
25                  the committee is to try to get things back

1           like they were, if not better. So I  
2           personally go out and conduct my own  
3           survey. I'm doing my own documentary for  
4           the whole county, especially in my  
5           district. I'm from District No. 2 in  
6           Issaquena, known as Tallulah and also low  
7           Fitler, Mississippi. We are one big  
8           family there.

9                   And Steele Bayou actually runs down  
10          the heart of our community. So anytime  
11          you close Steele Bayou gates up, Vicksburg  
12          is going to flood first. Fitler is going  
13          to flood immediately after that. So every  
14          time you close that gate up, minimize the  
15          flow of that water, we are always going to  
16          get flooded as soon as you close that  
17          Steele Bayou gate.

18                   And a lot of times it happens when the  
19          Mississippi River gets so high, you have  
20          to try to control the flow of the water.  
21          When you do that, you are literally just  
22          destroying our area. Every time you close  
23          that gate, we flood out, because the water  
24          right there, we're right on the Steele  
25          Bayou.

1                   And our homes were destroyed by the  
2                   flood. FEMA came out. The Delta Forest  
3                   came out. MEMA came out. It was  
4                   unlivable. So they asked for permission  
5                   to destroy it since it was unlivable.  
6                   Black mold, mildew, after seven months of  
7                   being in that area. It was a trailer  
8                   home. And the heat and the moisture, the  
9                   whole home was just filled with black mold  
10                  and mildew.

11                  So the (indiscernible) came out and  
12                  destroyed it. But my mother is an  
13                  87-year-old lady. Her husband is  
14                  deceased. All her parents is deceased.  
15                  She has her sibling with her, and I'm one  
16                  of them, and I'm her home provider. And  
17                  she were fond of her home, and when it was  
18                  destroyed, and she did not receive not one  
19                  red penny from FEMA after the  
20                  (indiscernible) came and determined it was  
21                  unlivable, she have not received not one  
22                  red penny from that situation.

23                  Now, I understand that there were  
24                  credits for those who was in her  
25                  condition, a minimum of 28,000 to help

1           them get back like they were since it was  
2           a natural disaster that we have no control  
3           over. But to this day, she never received  
4           not one penny.

5                    And when I found out about it, I  
6           called them. This was, like, three years  
7           they kept it pending and pending. So they  
8           closed it without notification. So I  
9           sought some legal assistance through my  
10          congressman, Bennie Thompson, who's also  
11          the head of Homeland Security. So I did  
12          see some.

13                   But at this point in time, she's so  
14          discouraged. We are living in Mayersville  
15          in a little two-bedroom apartment. So she  
16          would love to be able to go back home, but  
17          it don't seem like that's going to be  
18          happening no time soon.

19                   And my job is to look over the whole  
20          community. I'm not looking over just part  
21          of it. I'm concerned about the whole  
22          Issaquena County. So we have been seeking  
23          some real assistance. Right is right,  
24          wrong is wrong. So we're still in need of  
25          financial assistance. We need our road

1 and streets, we need paved and holes  
2 paved.

3 And even when I go to Jackson to the  
4 VA, I drive down potholes so big and  
5 destroying your tires, your shocks. Now,  
6 here it is, we're talking about  
7 revitalizing road construction, bridges.  
8 It's almost a year later. None of those  
9 things have happened, not here in  
10 Mississippi.

11 And it's terrible for us to go to the  
12 VA, and we are trying to duck and dodge  
13 big ole holes in the street, almost  
14 running over other people. That's a  
15 problem. And I'm glad to see everybody  
16 here from different committees. We should  
17 be able to have good solutions to work  
18 together to solve the problem no matter  
19 where we at.

20 But as far as water is concerned, we  
21 still need our streets rebuilt. We need  
22 our ditches dug out so we can have proper  
23 drainage when it do rain. A lot of time,  
24 we get a heavy rain right now, because the  
25 ditches are so full with dirt until the

1 roads is covered up, and then, you can't  
2 see the pothole, and the next thing you  
3 know, you're in the pothole. Done tore up  
4 a tire.

5 These things shouldn't be going on. I  
6 mean, it made -- y'all seem like  
7 (indiscernible). Let's do this, let's get  
8 this money, let's get -- I ain't seen none  
9 of this roadwork. All these bridges. I  
10 have three bridges in one area right now,  
11 I have people that have to use 465 to go  
12 all the way around in one direction,  
13 because they can't get home from a simple  
14 street, all because they bridges out.  
15 Three bridges still out in Issaquena  
16 County.

17 I mean, it would be nice if they would  
18 have one bridge fixed, but three of them  
19 is still out, and I don't see no solution  
20 right now being done about these bridges.  
21 At least you could get them some type of  
22 access. I mean, people with homes we done  
23 lived in all our lives. Places we done  
24 stayed. We can't go back there, because  
25 what's happened? Water. Okay. We scared



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1 of water. Water here, water there. It  
2 shouldn't be like this.

3 Here it is, 2023. We deal with  
4 technology around the world. We have  
5 technology around the world. Are we using  
6 it to the best of our ability? Of course  
7 not. But we should be. We should be  
8 looking out for these areas. This is our  
9 community.

10 These people should be working.  
11 Roads, there should be contracts done.  
12 Where's the building going on? There are  
13 none. A lot of supervisors, I understand  
14 they're supposed to represent their  
15 communities, but if they don't have the  
16 knowledge to know how to access those  
17 funds, you all should make it possible for  
18 them to have some type of work group.  
19 Help them out.

20 I mean, I understand that they get  
21 elected by the people, but all of them is  
22 not equipped to know what they need to  
23 know. So we in government, we go to  
24 classes, we help try to make people better  
25 to understand our system, because

1 government, the language can be very  
2 difficult to understand. And a lot of  
3 times if you don't have no legal  
4 assistance, you don't anymore know what  
5 they're talking about than the man in the  
6 moon.

7 So a lot of times you ain't going to  
8 have no legal assistance. I asked for  
9 legal assistance yesterday. I was in a  
10 situation where my identity was stolen,  
11 the DMV, out in Memphis. I gave --  
12 submitted my Illinois ID to the Memphis to  
13 switch over, and here I come find out my  
14 Illinois ID is now over in Denver being  
15 reused by somebody else. All through the  
16 same DMV.

17 These things shouldn't be occurring.  
18 So I asked the Judge the other day, Can  
19 you give me legal assistance? It seemed  
20 like they (indiscernible) stuff like that.  
21 We don't know. I'm still trying to find  
22 out who can I talk to about stuff like  
23 this.

24 These type things shouldn't be really  
25 occurring. We are here to represent

1           certain agencies. We ought to work  
2           together, stand for what is right, leave  
3           that what is wrong behind. We need to be  
4           more righteous and try to make America  
5           great as it should be and leave all this  
6           lying outside, because we're always making  
7           things worse in our own mind.

8                        So when our young people see us lying  
9           to one another, how do you think they  
10          supposed to feel? What directions would  
11          they go by? If we are not taking the lead  
12          and standing right, how can they follow  
13          right when there is no right? So let us  
14          try to do better than what we're doing.

15                      You'll be probably getting some more  
16          information, documentaries from Issaquena  
17          on what we need done, because I'm  
18          personally going out doing some  
19          documentary on my own, taking pictures,  
20          writing down things, and I'll be coming  
21          back to you.

22                      So hopefully we can do better than  
23          what we're doing, because there's a lot of  
24          room that we need to make corrections on.  
25          And when we elect our candidate to assist

1 us, don't expect to get no big paycheck  
2 and just sit there and not do nothing.  
3 Because when you want our vote, don't look  
4 for it if you ain't doing what we asked  
5 you for. When we may bring forth our  
6 points, we mean those points to be heard.

7 So when an election time come,  
8 sometimes it's good to just don't take  
9 from (indiscernible) go to the tree,  
10 because sometimes corruption just spreads,  
11 and sometimes it's just good to just start  
12 from scratch. So be careful how you treat  
13 us right now, because election time is  
14 near. So you'll be needing us again.

15 So I'll be seeing you again. I hope  
16 that we can do better than what we are  
17 doing. I hope I can start seeing a lot of  
18 contract work getting done, because right  
19 now, I'm not seeing that. I hope somehow  
20 bridges can get fixed. I'm not seeing  
21 that.

22 So all our elected officials, be  
23 paying attention to us, because we're not  
24 just going to be talking. You don't want  
25 our vote. If you're not listening, we're

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1 not going to be here. Thank you very  
2 much, ladies and gentlemen.

3 MS. JENSEN: Thank you. So yeah.  
4 This part, what our three agencies are  
5 discussing today is about the flood risk  
6 reduction solution for Yazoo, but we did  
7 bring the whole federal family. So we do  
8 have DOT and FEMA and others here.

9 So when we do conclude this portion,  
10 feel free to go and chat with our other  
11 federal family folks about their program  
12 services, how can they help the local  
13 community, the county supervisors, and all  
14 of that with some of the other issues.

15 MS. GETTLE: And, Stacey, I was just  
16 going to mention, we have several people  
17 here from EPA, and at the end, we have  
18 some ability to do some capacity  
19 development around grant writing. And so,  
20 the people from EPA can take your names,  
21 and if you need some assistance, we can  
22 work on that.

23 MS. GEHRT: Jackie Gehrt, retired  
24 waterfowl biologist. I just wanted to say  
25 thank you guys for coming together,

1 working together. I know you were asked  
2 to work on this project with a new set of  
3 eyes and ears, and that's kind of like a  
4 judge saying to a jury, "Disregard that  
5 last statement."

6 But I feel like you've done that.  
7 I've always wondered if it could be done,  
8 and, yes, you've done it. You've worked  
9 really hard. I feel like you've  
10 disregarded the arguments we've had on  
11 both sides for the last 15 years. I think  
12 you've disregarded politics.

13 I felt like you were listening to what  
14 we were saying, not how we were saying or  
15 who was saying it. And I feel like you  
16 weren't listening to how many times it was  
17 repeated at the same time. You looked at  
18 the research, you looked at the data, and  
19 you looked at the south Delta, and you  
20 came up with your conclusions.

21 I really appreciate this proposal. A  
22 couple of concerns I have is I hear people  
23 saying the flood is going to fill up those  
24 wetlands. I feel like those wetlands are  
25 filled up by the winter rains, not by the

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1 flood. And I think we have to be careful  
2 assuming that we need all this floodwater  
3 so that they get filled up.

4 I also was a little confused about the  
5 wells up in the north. I felt they were  
6 going to be there to help keep the  
7 moisture in the north continuously. I  
8 kind of felt like maybe we were saying  
9 that's going to keep the south flooded,  
10 and maybe I was wrong there. Okay.

11 And I just want to say that, as much  
12 as you've done, I hate to ask for more,  
13 but I want you to keep fighting for us to  
14 get this project done with no strings  
15 attached. Yeah, that's right. And as  
16 soon as you can. And what we can do on  
17 our end, just let us know.

18 Again, I would just want to thank you  
19 for doing what you've done and asking you  
20 to keep going, because it's worth it.

21 MS. JENSEN: Thank you for that.

22 MS. BOWDEN: My name is Miriam  
23 Bowden, and I am a new resident to  
24 Mississippi. I'm originally from Chicago,  
25 by way of great migration. I lived in

1 Maryland, and my mother is from Issaquena  
2 County.

3 I came here because of her dream, and  
4 her dream was to kind of make things like  
5 they were when she was a child. There  
6 wasn't as much flooding. And over the  
7 past few years, there has been an  
8 increasing amount of flooding. And I know  
9 a lot of that is from climate change, and  
10 then, I don't know the whole situation  
11 with the Yazoo backwater. Like I said,  
12 I'm brand-new here, so I don't know.

13 But I did come down to create a  
14 certain amount of economic development and  
15 revitalization for the area. What I am  
16 finding is that, just like Larry Diggs  
17 said, we are getting in Issaquena County  
18 an amount of flooding that we haven't had  
19 before on my family farm.

20 You go back on the property, and the  
21 roads are all flooded out. We can't even  
22 access the homes of some ancestral  
23 homeland that was, once upon a time, very  
24 accessible. Now, the road is overcome,  
25 and we can't get back there to the back



1 part of the property.

2 What I've noticed since I've been here  
3 are some of the practices that some of the  
4 farmers are using that I think are  
5 probably detrimental to the environment,  
6 and I'm hoping that the solution that you  
7 all have come up with is a mixture of the  
8 engineering approaches that are  
9 appropriate for your agency but also some  
10 sort of education or something that will  
11 help people to utilize the farmlands in a  
12 better way so that they're not  
13 contributing to the flooding problem.

14 Like Larry said, the ditches are all  
15 getting filled up, and the drainage hasn't  
16 necessarily been installed properly in  
17 order to maintain dry fields and to keep  
18 the wetlands wet. I mean, right now, I am  
19 trying to start a small farming operation  
20 where I'm growing hemp and vegetables, and  
21 there are certain parts of the field that  
22 I'm trying to use that are swamp, and it's  
23 like they're unusable for me. But once  
24 upon a time, those were wonderful fields  
25 to be using for my purposes.

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1                   So whatever the solution is -- and I  
2                   didn't get to hear it, because I thought  
3                   the meeting was at 10:00, and apparently  
4                   you guys started at 09:00. But I don't  
5                   know what the solution is, and I just  
6                   would like to see it happen.

7                   And instead of the historical  
8                   disenfranchisement of certain people,  
9                   whatever your solution is, I'm hoping that  
10                  it's going to include some sort of look at  
11                  what is happening to people economically  
12                  overall. Thank you.

13                 MS. JENSEN: Thank you. I appreciate  
14                 it. And for those of you who may have  
15                 come in late, there are handouts that have  
16                 a summary of the proposal, as well as a  
17                 web page that you can go to and the slide  
18                 deck and other things will be on there  
19                 describing the project.

20                 We also have our team here. So, if at  
21                 the conclusion, feel free to mingle, and  
22                 we can walk you through that, as well.

23                 MR. HOLCOMB: Good morning. I'm  
24                 Eddie Holcomb with the Issaquena County  
25                 Board of Supervisors, and I just want to

1           thank y'all for listening to us. I can't  
2           say I've been fighting the flood, but this  
3           has just been a part of my life. We've  
4           been trying to get these pumps my whole  
5           life.

6                    Like I've told you before, I learned  
7           to water ski in 1973 in 4-foot water  
8           behind this. But a lot of our -- you  
9           know, we're so frustrated, because we've  
10          been flooded so much. And our farmers, I  
11          know they're talking about crop dates, and  
12          I hope that y'all will listen to that,  
13          because farming is our way of life. If  
14          the farmers do well, we do well.  
15          Everybody.

16                   I'm an insurance agent. So, you know,  
17          Roy does well and buys new tractors, the  
18          more tractors he's buying, more money I  
19          make. And that's kind of a funny thing,  
20          but it's just our whole way of living.

21                   And I thank y'all so much for  
22          listening to us, being patient with the  
23          people that have lost in the flood. I  
24          haven't. I've been fortunate enough to  
25          live far enough north that my property has

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1 not flooded. But it's difficult.

2 We are making progress on bridges at  
3 one time. In Sharkey, Issaquena, and  
4 Washington County combined, we had 57  
5 bridges closed. So Briggs Hopson was here  
6 a while ago, and maybe he's in the back,  
7 I'm not sure now, but he's done great with  
8 helping us get stuff.

9 So we're making progress, but it's  
10 slow progress, and we've lost a tremendous  
11 amount of tax base because of the water.  
12 People moving out, not coming back. But  
13 all that being said, thank y'all very  
14 much. I know this is a big project.

15 I know -- you know, in life when you  
16 make changes to help someone, it's always  
17 going to hurt someone, and it's a  
18 tremendous balancing act. So I don't take  
19 lightly what y'all done for us, and I'm  
20 just telling you thank you.

21 MS. JENSEN: Any others?

22 (NO RESPONSE.)

23 MS. JENSEN: Jeaneanne?

24 MS. GETTLE: Well, I want to just  
25 say, again, thank you for being here with

1 us today. Thank you for all of the times  
2 that you come to talk to us, to give us  
3 comments. Encourage you to use the  
4 comment cards, to go to the website if you  
5 don't want to write it out today, and send  
6 us comments.

7 And we commit to you that we are  
8 continuing to work together  
9 collaboratively, and we will continue on  
10 in this progress. Thank you for being  
11 here.

12 I also want to point out that we do  
13 have the whole federal family here. We  
14 have representatives from a number of  
15 federal agencies here to talk to you about  
16 the resources that they can bring and to  
17 talk about things hopefully like roads and  
18 bridges.

19 And as I said, EPA has some capacity  
20 building opportunities at this point in  
21 time, which when I say that what I mean is  
22 we have opportunities to help people in  
23 developing and learning how to develop  
24 federal grants, which is not easy. And  
25 so, we'd be happy to talk to you guys

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1           about that.

2                    So thank you all very much. We'll be  
3           around for a few minutes.

4                    And thank you. Stacey, if you have  
5           anything else, or, Matt, did you want to  
6           say anything else?

7                               (NO RESPONSE.)

8                    MS. GETTLE: All right. Thank you.

9                               (MEETING CONCLUDED AT 10:35 A.M.)

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## 1 CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER


2 I, Ella J. Hardwick, CVR-M, #1749, Court  
3 Reporter and Notary Public, in and for the State of  
4 Mississippi, hereby certify that the foregoing  
5 contains a true and correct transcript, to the best  
6 of my ability, as taken by me in the aforementioned  
7 matter at the time and place heretofore stated.

8 I further certify that under the authority  
9 vested in me by the State of Mississippi that the  
10 witness was placed under oath by me to truthfully  
11 answer all questions in the matter. I further  
12 certify that I am not in the employ of or related  
13 to any counsel or party in this matter and have no  
14 interest, monetary or otherwise, in the final  
15 outcome of this matter.

16 Witness my signature and seal this the 22nd day  
17 of May, 2023.

18

19

  
Ella J. Hardwick, CVR-M #1749

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