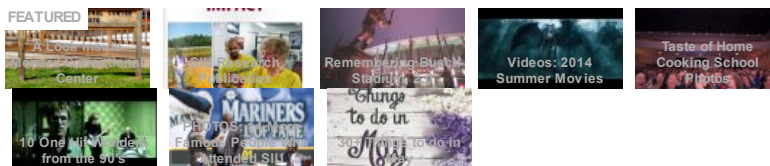




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Groups sue Corps over construction on Mississippi River



PROVIDED BY US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Wing dikes are seen on the Mississippi River in Southern Illinois.

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May 23, 2014 12:15 am • By [Nick Mariano](#)

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Several environmental groups filed a lawsuit Thursday against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers seeking to delay river training construction on the Mississippi River.

An injunction, if ordered, would halt projects planned for Southern Illinois.

"While these structures promote self-scouring of the navigation channel, extensive peer-reviewed science shows that they have increased flood heights in the Middle Mississippi River by 10 to 15 feet, creating very real threats to public safety," said Melissa Samet, senior water resources counsel for the National Wildlife Federation.

The Federation was joined by the Prairie Rivers Network, Missouri Coalition for the Environment, River Alliance of Wisconsin, Great Rivers Habitat Alliance and the Minnesota Conservation Federation as plaintiffs.

The lawsuit, filed in Southern Illinois U.S. District Court, seeks to halt construction until the Corps updates what the plaintiffs contend are outdated and inadequate environmental impact statements used to justify the work.

Some of those studies date back to the 1970s, though one was completed in 1997. None address Corps work on the river as a whole, including hundreds of construction projects, the lawsuit

contends.

Plaintiffs want a comprehensive study that will look at the impact of the entire work done so far, arguing projects in the Upper Mississippi River basin have already caused ecological damage and increased risk of flooding.

"The risks to public safety will only increase as the Corps constructs more river structures," the lawsuit states.

The Corps would not comment on the litigation but has maintained that research over an 80-year period, conducted by the Corps and independently from it, shows the structures do not cause flooding.

According to Corps documents, the agency has monitored the effects of river structures since the first navigation system was built in the 1800s. However, outside concerns with flooding prompted federal officials to seek independent reviews.

"Results of these expert external reviews all lead to the conclusion that the navigation structures have not resulted in increased water surface elevations," the Corps states.

In February, the Corps held a public hearing in Union County on two proposals to build man-made dikes near Union and Alexander counties.

The projects are needed to reduce a reliance on expensive dredging practices in an effort to maintain safe river navigation, Corps officials have said.

However, dozens of local levee and water district officials, along with Shawnee School District educators in Wolf Lake, have written Corps headquarters at the Pentagon asking for a moratorium on construction.

They have yet to hear back.

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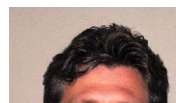
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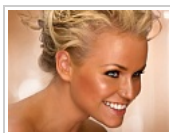


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