

ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL LISA MADIGAN

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MADIGAN MOVES TO PREVENT FLOODING OF CAIRO

Attorney General Intervenes in Federal Case to Allow Army Corps Authority to Alleviate Rising River Waters in Southern Illinois

Cape Girardeau, Mo. – Attorney General Lisa Madigan today moved to intervene in a lawsuit brought by the state of Missouri that attempts to stop the Army Corps of Engineers from pursuing its plan to save the town of Cairo, Ill., from potential floods due to dangerously high water levels on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

“Any delay in the Army Corps’ operation plan will put the residents of Cairo in the direct path of almost certain disaster,” Attorney General Madigan said. “I am intervening in this case so that the people of Southern Illinois are fairly represented and given a voice in this critical decision. It is imperative that the Corps be allowed to do everything it can to protect the people who are at risk of losing their homes, or even worse, their lives.”

In addition to her motion to intervene, Attorney General Madigan filed a response opposing Missouri’s request for a temporary restraining order that would prevent the Corps from implementing its Birds Point-New Madrid Floodway Operations Plan. The plan, which has been in place since 1986, calls for the demolition of a frontline “fuseplug” levee. The controlled demolition would release water into farmland located on the Floodway to alleviate flooding on both sides of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers in the tri-state area and beyond. The levee was constructed specifically to be demolished.

Madigan argued that banning the Corps from acting will directly threaten the nearly 3,000 residents of Cairo. The motion notes that if the levees protecting Cairo are breached, water levels in the city will rise 18 to 20 feet, a height that reaches above most two-story buildings.

Among the filings, Madigan included affidavits from an expert at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and James Wilson, the Director of the Alexander County Housing Authority and former mayor of Cairo, attesting to the tremendous impact on Southern Illinois communities if the Corps is not permitted to implement the Floodway Operations Plan.

Representatives of Attorney General Madigan's office will appear at a 1:30 p.m. hearing in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri to argue these motions.