

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1803

November 17, 2011

Colonel Edward Fleming
District Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
New Orleans District
Post Office Box 60267
New Orleans, LA 70160

Dear Colonel Fleming:

As the Representative for South Louisiana, I respectfully request information about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) efforts to repair the damage to the Leland Bowman lock and additional efforts to combat saltwater intrusion into the Mermentau Basin. Considering the importance of preventing saltwater intrusion, I urge you to make addressing these matters a top priority.

As you are aware, the Leland Bowman lock was damaged when it was hit by a barge in September. While I certainly recognize that a saltwater problem existed in the Mermentau Basin prior to this accident, the problem has only worsened due to the damage sustained by the lock. As such, I am inquiring what the Corps is doing to repair the damage to the lock, when the Corps anticipates the lock being fully repaired and what steps the Corps is taking to mitigate the damage caused by the saltwater intrusion that resulted from the damage to this lock. Locals are concerned that if this project takes too long to fix, the local economy will take a drastic hit and have trouble recovering.

It is no secret that rice and crawfish are crucial to the economy of South Louisiana. The state is the third largest rice producer and accounts for thousands of jobs. Crawfish sits atop the list of Louisiana agriculture as the number one growing cash crop. Louisiana produces about 90 percent of the nation's crawfish. The damage to Leland Bowman lock has many worried that rice and crawfish yields will be down next year due to the resulting saltwater intrusion. I have heard from concerned rice farmers that are worried that they are not going to have adequate fresh water to grow next spring due to both the lock's damage and the current drought in the area. Some say that up to 40 percent of the rice crop might not be able to be planted due to the high saltwater levels. I fear that this will have a negative economic impact on South Louisiana.

Thank you for your thoughtful attention to this matter of importance to the people of Louisiana.

Respectfully,



Jeff Landry
Member of Congress