

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 5, 2011

Major General Michael Walsh
Commander
Mississippi Valley Division
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
1400 Walnut Street
Vicksburg, MS 39180

Colonel Edward R. Fleming
District Commander
New Orleans District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
7400 Leake Ave
New Orleans, LA 70118

Dear General Walsh and Colonel Fleming:

With your recent announcement that you will be opening the Bonnet Carré Spillway at 9:00 am on Monday, May 9, we respectfully ask that you use all available latitude to accelerate this date, based upon conditions, to delay the opening of the Morganza Spillway, and specifically ask that you immediately open the Bonnet Carré Spillway.

We understand that unless conditions drastically improve, the Morganza Spillway will need to be opened sometime next week to avoid catastrophic flooding in many local communities. However, such an action—combined with the increased flows through the Old River Complex—will cause flooding in the Atchafalaya Basin. As such, we should employ all means necessary and evaluate all options before this opening, thus providing the Parish Presidents, Sheriffs and residents of the Atchafalaya the time necessary to prepare for this historic flooding. To be clear, we are not asking to delay the opening of the Morganza Spillway at the detriment of those who live and work along the Mississippi, rather we are asking you to use sound judgment when deciding the best possible solution to protect those along both the Atchafalaya and Mississippi Rivers.

As you are aware, immediate and full utilization of the Bonnet Carré will remove 250,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water from the Mississippi River increasing the capacity of the river and delaying the need to open the Morganza Spillway. When the Bonnet Carré Spillway was last opened in 2008, it decreased the crest height by more than a foot, a similar decrease today could provide the time necessary to adequately prepare the Atchafalaya Basin for flooding not experienced in the basin since 1973.

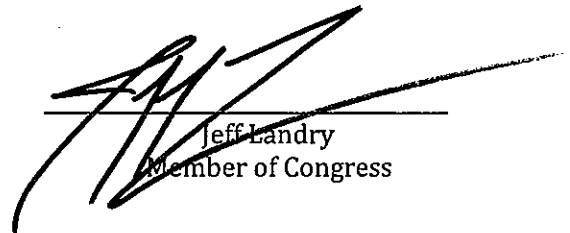
We also understand that the New Orleans District is concerned about the structural soundness of some of the flood control structures within the Atchafalaya Basin. The delay caused by immediate opening of the Bonnet Carré will provide the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers the time to make necessary repairs and armor these structures, thus protecting those living outside of the Atchafalaya Basin.

We thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request, your continued diligence in protecting the people of Louisiana and for your service to our nation. We stand ready to assist in any way possible.

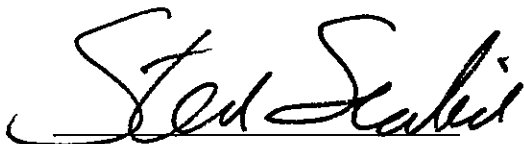
Respectfully,



David Vitter
United States Senator



Jeff Landry
Member of Congress



Steve Scalise
Member of Congress



Bill Cassidy
Member of Congress