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April 11, 2016

General Wehr, Members of the Mississippi River Commission, Colonel Anderson and members of the Memphis District Corps of Engineers. My name is Charles Davis, and I am the Chief Engineer of the St. Francis Levee District of Missouri.

The reason I am appearing before you is the concern we have about the Caruthersville Floodwall. This floodwall was constructed in 1932, which makes it 84 years old. Our floodwall is 2,840 feet in length, with 7 openings in it, originally it had 10 openings. The elevation of the floodwall is 285.81 feet, which means a Mississippi River stage at Caruthersville, Missouri of 50.32 feet.

In 2011, the Mississippi River reached a historic level of 47.7 feet. At that level we only had 2.62 feet of freeboard on the floodwall. The Mississippi River had been forecasted to go to 49.5 feet at Caruthersville. When this forecast was released, the Missouri National Guard and local authorities decided to construct a drainage basin along the floodwall. This basin was designed to collect over topping of the floodwall, and then pump it back over the wall. This was only going to work for minimal overtopping.

In the past few years, the storms we have been receiving are getting more severe and producing substantial more amounts of rain up the Ohio River Valley and are more frequent.

With the floodwall being 84 years old and only intended to last 50 years, we would like to have a new higher floodwall, since our existing floodwall is our lowest flood control structure. In the high water of 2011 event, citizens of Caruthersville and Pemisot County were more concerned about the floodwall being overtopped, than a failure. Another option, if possible, is to extend the height of the floodwall. I had thought of this in 2011, but was informed that raising the wall could lead to a complete failure. We ask that this option be explored in more detail, to see if this is a viable option. Also there has not been any substantial rehabilitation to our floodwall since 1998. There is highly visible horizontal cracking on several monoliths and some expansion joints that need repaired.

I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you to address our concerns. If you have any questions I would be happy to answer them.

Charles Davis
Chief Engineer
St. Francis Levee District of Missouri