

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2009

The Honorable Pat Quinn
Governor, State of Illinois
207 Statehouse
Springfield, IL 62706-0001

Dear Governor Quinn:

As you know, two major floods along the Upper Mississippi River basin in the last 15 years cost billions in economic damage and caused heart-breaking devastation. The Comprehensive Plan for systemic flood control, as authorized after the 1993 flood, was completed within the last year, and has been endorsed by all three Governors affected by these preventable disasters. The Comprehensive Plan is a combination of structural and non-structural measures in both the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. Completion of the Plan would put the upper states to the same level of protection currently enjoyed by the lower five states along the Mississippi River.

Of particular concern is the Illinois River. While it has yet to see the type of events recently suffered by the Upper Mississippi, a similar event along the Illinois would flood numerous industries in the Peoria, Pekin, Beardstown area, and numerous wastewater and water treatment facilities along the many small river towns. It would likely close US 24 and US 67, as well as many state routes, railroads and other critical transportation corridors.

Congress recognized the multi-state threat of future disasters, authorizing and appropriating funds to complete a systemic plan using 100% federal funds. Now it is time to implement these much needed improvements. An important first step is to assure individual state rules match those used by the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan utilized the FEMA standard of one (1.0) foot induced head. Illinois Adm. Code, Chapter I, Section 3700 uses 0.1 feet.

This current Illinois standard has prevented permits for much needed flood control improvements—in some cases an appropriate position pending completion of a systemic model to clearly establish areas that should or should not improve levels of protection. However, now that the Corps of Engineers has completed this major planning effort, we urge the State of Illinois to move quickly in adopting the area covered in the Comprehensive Plan (main stem levees along the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers) as specifically allowing the 1.0 foot FEMA standard in its administrative code. Several elements of the Comprehensive Plan may meet “shovel ready” criteria from the stimulus funding, and we could start immediately working toward preventing another uncontrolled event.

Thank you for your assistance and support. State and local officials will be meeting with IDNR in very near future to help coordinate these changes and provide follow up as needed. Time is of the essence.

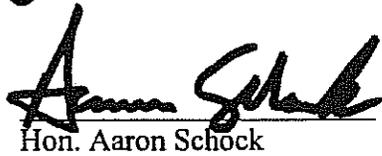
Sincerely,



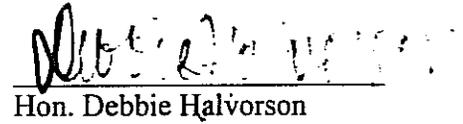
Hon. John Shimkus



Hon. Phil Hare



Hon. Aaron Schock



Hon. Debbie Halvorson

cc: Marc Miller, Illinois DNR