

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** June 16, 2020

**CONTACT:**

Audubon Mississippi - Jill Mastrototaro, (504) 481-3659, [jill.mastrototaro@audubon.org](mailto:jill.mastrototaro@audubon.org)

Mississippi Sierra Club - Louie Miller, (601) 624-3503, [louie.miller@sierraclub.org](mailto:louie.miller@sierraclub.org)

Healthy Gulf - Andrew Whitehurst, (601) 954-7236, [andrew@healthygulf.org](mailto:andrew@healthygulf.org)

American Rivers - Olivia Dorothy, (217) 390-3658, [odorothy@americanrivers.org](mailto:odorothy@americanrivers.org)

Mississippi River Network - Kelly McGinnis, (708) 305-3524, [kmcginnis@1mississippi.org](mailto:kmcginnis@1mississippi.org)

**Conservation and Public Interest Groups Call for Immediate, Effective Flood Relief Solutions for Mississippi Delta Communities**  
*Corps urged to abandon wasteful, destructive Yazoo Pumps*

**JACKSON, Miss.** – Yesterday marked the public comment deadline on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) intent to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for a massive drainage project in Mississippi’s South Delta commonly known as the Yazoo Pumps. The \$440 million-dollar Yazoo Pumps are so environmentally destructive that in 2008 the George W. Bush Administration issued a veto through the Clean Water Act to stop the project.

“From conservation organizations to conservative taxpayer groups, there is a resounding call for the Corps to abandon this antiquated, ineffective project,” **said Jill Mastrototaro, Policy Director for Audubon Mississippi.** “Instead the Corps should pursue proven flood relief solutions that can deliver immediate, affordable, and effective benefits to affected South Delta communities while also restoring this ecologically-critical region.”

Over 100 national, state and local conservation, environmental, faith, recreation, and public interest organizations - representing millions of members and supporters joined the **Mississippi River Network** in delivering a letter to the Corps reinforcing this urgent message. [\[View this letter.\]](#)

Thirty-eight thousand concerned Mississippians and Americans from across the country accompanied this broad chorus by sending electronic letters to the Corps.

“The Corps’ unprecedented decision to spend more time and taxpayer money on a federally vetoed project defies logic and is an appalling breach of trust,” **said Andrew Whitehurst, Water Program Director for Healthy Gulf.** “The Corps is attempting to sidestep federal laws by refusing to consider any other alternatives except an outdated project that they themselves acknowledge will leave most local communities vulnerable.”

Although Congress authorized the Yazoo Pumps theoretically to provide flood control, in 2007 the Corps determined that 80 percent of the project’s benefits would be for agriculture. Corps analyses during the 2019 flood event reinforced these findings.

“The Corps’ stunning admission that 68 percent of the Yazoo Backwater Area would still be under water even with the Pumps says it all,” **said Louie Miller, State Director for the Mississippi Chapter of the Sierra Club.** “The Pumps are not intended to protect communities from flooding but are designed to benefit agribusiness by draining wetlands to intensify farming.”

“The good news for Yazoo Backwater communities is that federal programs are available now to provide relief and cost-effective protections for people’s lives, property and livelihoods,” **said Olivia Dorothy, Upper Mississippi River Basin Director for American Rivers.** “The Corps should deploy flood risk reduction measures that are being embraced by communities throughout the Mississippi River basin, such as elevating homes, voluntary buyouts, and paying farmers to restore cropland back to wetlands.”

These federal programs include the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s National Flood Insurance and Flood Mitigation Assistance Grant Programs, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s post-disaster programs, and U.S. Department of Agriculture’s voluntary conservation programs.

## Resources:

- [Comment letter submitted to the Corps by 109 national, state and local conservation, environmental, faith, recreation, and public interest organizations](#)
- [Technical comment letter submitted to the Corps by several conservation organizations](#)
- [Alternative Flood Relief Solutions to the Yazoo Pumps](#)
- [Corps of Engineers 2019 March Inundation Map of the Yazoo Backwater Area](#) *(Note: BLUE on map shows 347,000 acres of 512,000 acres that were under water in March 2019 would still continue to flood even with the Yazoo Pumps in place.)*
- [Federal Register Notice publishing the Corps of Engineers’ Notice of Intent to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Yazoo Basin Reformulation Study, Yazoo Backwater Area](#)

###