

MGR-19-013: Flooding of the Morganza Floodway

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Date

May 28, 2019

To

All Approved Insurance Providers

All Risk Management Agency Field Offices

All Other Interested Parties

From

Martin R. Barbre, Administrator

Subject

Flooding of the Morganza Floodway

Background

Mississippi River Commission President and United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Mississippi Valley Division Commander Maj. Gen. Richard Kaiser has approved the request to operate the Morganza Control Structure and Floodway. If forecasted conditions remain unchanged, the operation will begin on June 2, 2019.

The Morganza Floodway is part of the Mississippi River Valley Project located about 20 miles south of Natchez, Mississippi. The Morganza Spillway is intended to operate during emergency flooding to divert excess floodwater from the Mississippi River into the Morganza Floodway and Atchafalaya Basin. Current forecasts indicate that the river will reach a stage of more than 62 feet at Red River Landing on June 5, 2019. Based on this information, the USACE New Orleans District Commander Michael Clancy requested permission to operate the Morganza Floodway to prevent the flood control structure from overtopping, to minimize stress in leveed reaches and to preserve encroachment on freeboard downstream.

Although conditions can change, USACE currently anticipates the need to divert approximately 150,000 cubic feet per second into the floodway to avoid overtopping

of the structure. In accordance with lessons learned during the 2011 historic Mississippi River, USACE will implement a gradual opening of the floodway to minimize impacts to wildlife. The gradual opening allows the USACE to limit elevations in the floodway by adding one foot of water per day for the first three days. The current flood fight is historic and unprecedented. May 27th marked the 214th day of the flood fight and is expected to surpass the 1973 event (225 days) as the longest flood fight. This flood is also the first time the Bonnet Carre' Spillway has opened in back-to-back years as well as the first time it has been operated twice during the same calendar year.

Section 508 (a)(1) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act specifies that coverage is provided for flood, drought or other natural disasters. This is reflected in section 12 of the Common Crop Insurance Policy Basic Provisions (18-BR) (Basic Provisions), which states:

"Insurance is provided only to protect against unavoidable, naturally occurring events."

Action

In scenarios presented by the USACE, flooding of significant amounts of cropland was inevitable with or without operation of the Morganza Spillway due to the severity of this flood event.

Therefore, crop losses resulting from such flooding is caused by unavoidable, naturally occurring events and is insurable under the Basic Provisions and the individual Crop Provisions for crop programs applicable to this area.

DISPOSAL DATE:

December 31, 2019