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CONTACT:

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

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

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

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

**Conservation Groups Denounce Federal Steamrolling of Law, Science, and Public Voice
As Final Yazoo Pumps Study Released**

JACKSON, Miss. – Today, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) hastily released a Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) for a massive drainage project in Mississippi’s South Delta commonly known as the Yazoo Pumps.¹

This announcement follows mere days after the close of the public comment period on the draft study, which was heavily criticized due to its many flaws. An antiquated project authorized by Congress in 1941, the Yazoo Pumps are so environmentally destructive that the George W. Bush’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stopped it by issuing a Clean Water Act veto – only one of 13 vetoes ever issued. Last week, however, the EPA Region 4 Office abruptly reversed course and exempted the recent proposal from the veto without any independent environmental analysis or public process.

Statement by Aforementioned Conservation Groups:

“Today’s announcement is further evidence of the Corps’ reckless effort to approve this unlawful project at all costs and without taking the time to address the fatal flaws in its proposal. The Corps’ headlong rush forward demonstrates a blatant, calculated attempt to steamroll the rule of law, ignore science, and disregard public comments and concerns.

Releasing this final study only days after more than 55,000 citizens, scientists, and public interest groups registered their widespread opposition to the incomplete and legally flawed draft proposal demonstrates an appalling breach of trust by a federal agency to expedite a sham process driven by politics rather than due public process and respect for bedrock environmental laws.

This rushed process is a disservice to the public and the agency itself. A key purpose of the public comment is to give the Corps an opportunity to carefully analyze and address the public’s concerns. The Corps has clearly short-circuited that process by intentionally failing to address the many shortcomings identified during the recent public comment period.

The Corps’ latest proposal is virtually identical in purpose, scope, and design to the plan EPA rejected in 2008 because it would cause unacceptable impacts to globally important wetlands, waters, and wildlife.

The current proposal is proof positive the Pumps were never designed to protect communities from flooding. The Corps’ draft study revealed a stunning conclusion that, **even with the Pumps installed, 82% to 89% of flooded lands in the Yazoo Backwater would remain underwater**, and it would take weeks to months to drawdown floodwaters on the remaining lands.² This reinforces what the Corps made clear in 2007; 80% of project benefits would be for agriculture by draining tens of thousands of acres of wetlands to intensify farming.

Rather than continuing to waste more time and taxpayer money on a long-vetoed project, estimated to cost at least \$500 million³, priority should be on providing commonsense natural infrastructure and non-structural approaches that are available today to help protect people's lives, property and livelihoods, such as elevating homes and roads, and paying farmers to restore cropland back to wetlands.⁴

These more effective, affordable and ecologically sustainable solutions are precisely the alternatives that EPA's 2008 veto recommended for consideration, yet the Corps ignored federal laws by refusing to consider any other flood relief options except the outdated, ineffective Pumps.

Our groups will hold the Corps and EPA fully accountable for the intentional abdication of their lawful responsibilities to the public and our nation's treasured natural resources."

Resources:

- 1) [Federal Register Notice publishing the Corps of Engineers' Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Yazoo Basin Reformulation Study, Yazoo Backwater Area](#)
- 2) [Corps' October 16, 2020, Draft SEIS, Appendix C \(Tables\), Table 5.3](#)
- 3) Adjusted for inflation. The Corps' 2007 Final EIS estimated the Yazoo Pumps would cost \$440 million dollars to construct. The Corps did not provided an updated cost estimate in the 2020 Draft Supplemental EIS.
- 4) [Conservation Organizations' Alternative Flood Relief Solutions to the Yazoo Pumps](#)

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