

EPA Decision Protects 67,000 Acres of Mississippi Wetlands

(Washington, D.C. - Sept. 2, 2008) Today EPA is announcing its final decision under the Clean Water Act (CWA) to prohibit construction of the proposed Yazoo Pumps Project in the Mississippi Delta. EPA is taking this action following an extensive evaluation of the environmental impacts the project poses to tens of thousands of acres of wetlands and other water resources.

"Together with our state and federal partners we can improve flood protection and ensure environmental protection," said Assistant Administrator for Water Benjamin H. Grumbles. "We're helping to identify a better project that reduces flooding, protects the environment and saves taxpayer dollars."

EPA continues to support the goal of providing improved flood protection for the residents of the Mississippi Delta while safeguarding the area's valuable natural resources. The cost of the Yazoo Pumps Project would be more than \$220 million for construction, with an annual operational cost of more than \$2 million.

EPA is committed to working with other federal and state agencies, and the public, to identify an alternative project for providing improved flood protection.

The Yazoo Backwater Project is a federally funded U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposal first authorized in 1941, designed to reduce flooding in an area in the state of Mississippi between the Mississippi and Yazoo rivers. The primary component is a 14,000 cubic feet per second pumping station that would pump rainwater out of the South Delta during high water events on the Mississippi River.

The Yazoo Backwater Area contains some of the richest wetland and aquatic resources in the nation, and serves as critical fish and wildlife habitat. EPA concluded that the proposed project would result in unacceptable damage to these valuable resources that are used for wildlife, economic, and recreational purposes.

Under the CWA, EPA can prohibit, restrict, or deny using waters of the United States as a disposal site for fill material when it determines it will have an unacceptable effect on municipal water supplies, shellfish beds and fishery areas, wildlife, or recreational areas. EPA has used this CWA authority only 11 times since the law was passed in 1972.