



**NEWS FROM MADISON COUNTY  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
157 N Main, Edwardsville, IL 62025  
Frank Miles –Administrator**

---

**For Immediate Release:  
Contact: Frank Miles 618.296.4408**

## **REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY PRESENTS AWARDS TO MADISON COUNTY**

**St. Louis, MO-** On Friday, November 21, the East-West Gateway Council of Governments presented Outstanding Achievement in Local Government awards to Madison County for its Environmental Planning Initiatives and to the Southwestern Illinois Flood Prevention Initiative. These awards were two of eleven awards that were presented to metropolitan local governments, agencies and individuals in the areas of successful intergovernmental collaboration, public service and leadership.

The presentations were made at a noon luncheon Friday, Nov. 21 at the Hilton at the Ballpark, Broadway Avenue at Market Street, in downtown St. Louis.

The Outstanding Achievement in Local Government awards, often referred to as “OLGAs,” are presented yearly by East-West Gateway to the local governments and individuals who have demonstrated a special commitment to their community and region.

The East-West Gateway Council of Governments is the St. Louis area’s federally designated metropolitan planning organization responsible for approving federal funding for major local transportation projects. East-West Gateway’s board, which is made up of the top elected officials of the eight-county region, meets monthly to consider issues of a regional significance.

**-more-**

The award for Environmental Planning Initiatives by Madison County was in the category of Leadership in Planning and Design Innovation. This award honors planning and design for public spaces or community development that challenges the way people think about their surroundings.

After the flood of 1993, Madison County developed and implemented a comprehensive Conservation Initiative Program to address several problems revealed by the flood. The multiple interrelated conservation initiatives included the Metro East Park and Recreation District, the Madison County Storm Water Management Program, and support for the Confluence Greenway and the Madison County Trails Network.

A regional Ecological Restoration Plan by the Army Corps of Engineers stressed the need to reestablish the natural ecosystem of the historic stream systems of the American Bottoms, the area that includes Madison, Monroe and St. Clair counties. In the past three years, Madison County has acquired more than 60 acres needed to implement the first project in the study, which is to recreate the Old Cahokia creek and its forest corridor.

Madison County was a strong proponent in the legislative effort that created the regional park and recreation district as it recognized the need for open space, trails and flood control. The county is working with the City of Madison on Chouteau Island, as part of that effort. Working with Madison County Transit and other partners, the county's conservation initiatives have resulted in more than 100 miles of improved trails connecting its communities.

The award for the Southwestern Illinois Flood Prevention Initiative was for Successful Intergovernmental Collaboration for efforts to improve the levees in the Illinois counties of Madison, Monroe and St. Clair.

**-more-**

The effort began about a year ago when the Federal Emergency Management Agency announced it was about to downgrade the official status of five Mississippi River levees protecting Madison, Monroe and St. Clair counties. These levees protect the Illinois portion of the St. Louis region known as the American Bottoms, an area with more than 50,000 jobs and more than 150,000 residents.

If the federal government released new flood hazard maps that showed these counties as not adequately protected from a catastrophic “100-year flood,” that classification would threaten or eliminate future economic growth, drastically increase the cost of flood insurance for residents and signaled that the risk of a catastrophic flood had unacceptably increased.

In response to this unexpected development, the political leadership of these counties, joined by the region’s elected leaders in the Illinois State Legislature and the U.S. Congress along with representative of civic and business organizations, joined together to respond to this crisis.

A regional leadership task force was created early this year to provide guidance to county elected leaders. To get the needed funds to restore the levees, Illinois State Senator William Haine of Alton wrote, sponsored and worked to pass enabling legislation to create countywide flood prevention districts that could impose, with the approval of county boards, a temporary, dedicated quarter-cent sales tax to be enacted for levee repair. The counties acted quickly to create the new districts and to impose the tax.

When the schedule for issuing the new flood hazard maps was first announced, the maps for Illinois were to be produced years before those in Missouri. Congressman Jerry Costello introduced legislation to bring some economic equity to FEMA’s plans by requiring that all remapping for a Corps of Engineers district be completed at the same time, so that Missouri and Illinois would be done simultaneously.

**-more-**

FEMA ultimately adopted the policy proposed by Congressman Costello as administrative policy. That change will allow the region more time to maintain or upgrade their levees and assures that Missouri and Illinois will be treated equitably as new flood insurance maps are adopted. Accepting the award for the Southwestern Illinois Flood Prevention Initiative was Joe Parente, Director of Administration of Madison County. Joe praised the unprecedented cooperation at all levels of government to get the project underway. Frank Miles, Madison County Planning and Development Director and Bill Meyer, Chairman of the Madison County Planning and Development Committee accepted the Environmental Planning award on behalf of Madison County. Miles said that the County's success was only as good as the many partnerships the County has developed through the years.

####