MARY L. LANDRIEU
LOUISIANA

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510–1804

May 11, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20502

Dear Mr. President:

As the waters of the Mississippi River continue to rise each day, communities in the lower Mississippi River valley are bracing for widespread flooding. In my state of Louisiana, farms and towns along the Mississippi and in the Atchafalaya Floodway are busy preparing to safeguard lives and property from devastation, and we need your help.

The U.S. Army Corps and FEMA should continue their ongoing efforts to notify individuals of the impending risk and help them to escape from harm. I urge you to also move swiftly to approve the pending and anticipated requests for disaster declarations in the affected parishes of Louisiana. While I appreciate the emergency declarations that have already been issued for Louisiana and other states, more help will be needed to fight the flood waters and help communities to recover.

Specifically, I believe that public and individual assistance from FEMA, crop disaster, conservation, and watershed assistance from USDA, fisheries disaster assistance from NOAA, disaster loans from SBA, and housing vouchers and recovery grants from HUD will be needed in some communities. Further, I urge you to instruct all of these agencies to perform expedited damage assessments in order to determine eligibility for Federal assistance.

By all accounts, the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project is performing as intended and critical investments over many decades have paid huge dividends in reducing damage. However, not all communities in the path of these flood waters have adequate protection, and additional system upgrades will ultimately be required. According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, only 88 percent of the MR&T Project has been completed since its initiation after the Great Flood of 1927. I call on you to join me in analyzing these remaining needs and developing a strategy to address them as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Mary L. Landrieu
United States Senator