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PLAINTIFFS WIN FLOOD CASE

Farmers, landowners sued Corps over damages due to river management



File photo | News-Press Now
 Roger Ideker, left, and Dan Boulware, an attorney with Polsinelli law firm in Kansas City, Missouri, address members of the media regarding a class-action lawsuit against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in March of 2014. Mr. Ideker, one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit about flood control, has a farm near Corning, Missouri, shown in the 2011 photograph on the left.

By **BRENDAN WELCH**
 News-Press Now

A federal judge in Washington, D.C. ruled Tuesday the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers bears responsibility for causing recurrent flooding and damaging farms and property in four Midwest states along the Missouri River.

Senior Judge Nancy Firestone ruled in the case Ideker Farms, Inc. et al. v. United States of America that the government must

compensate farmers, landowners and business owners for damage caused by flooding, which is estimated to exceed \$300 million.

Firestone stated in her trial opinion that the evidence established the Corps' changes to the river "had the effect of raising the Missouri River's water surface elevations ("WSEs") in periods of high flows."

She found that since 2007, the flooding has been among the worst in the history of the river

and the Corps' changes in the management of the river caused or contributed to the flooding.

The mass action case against the government began in March of 2014.

The case was brought by 372 plaintiffs comprised of farmers, landowners and business owners, and has been led by law firms Polsinelli in partnership with Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll.

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Chiefs offer deals to Watkins, Hitchens

Sources: Kansas City has agreed to deals with wide receiver Sammy Watkins and middle linebacker Anthony Hitchens to help fill two of their most glaring position needs.

Details in SPORTS

Sammy Watkins Anthony Hitchens

CRASH CLOSES U.S. HIGHWAY 59 | Police investigate fatality involving a tractor-trailer, vehicle wreck



Flood

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Polsinelli Shareholder R. Dan Boulware of the firm's St. Joseph office served as lead counsel on the case.

Boulware said the ruling was the day that the plaintiffs had waited for the past four years, but more action will be needed to fix the problems on the riverfront.

"It should now be clear that we have a changed river — one that is flood prone. We hope the Corps of Engineers will now do the right thing for our clients and that Congress also will act soon to restore flood control to a higher priority as it was during the last century."

Lead plaintiff Roger Ideker of Ideker Farms in St. Joseph was pleased with the ruling.

"As a farmer and landowner who has experi-

enced substantial losses from these floods, I'm extremely pleased with this outcome," Ideker said. "It rightfully recognizes the government's responsibility for changing the river and subjecting us to more flooding than ever before."

More than 90 witnesses testified during 55 days of the trial, which lasted a total of 63 days.

Plaintiffs alleged that the Army Corps of Engineers made changes to its policies which led to atypical flooding, which the judge ultimately agreed with.

Firestone said the federal government was found to have caused a "taking" of plaintiffs' properties by flooding.

The case will next proceed to phase two, where the court will determine the extent of losses due to the taking.

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Associated Press

British ambassador to Russia, Laurie Bristow, center, leaves after a meeting at the Russian foreign ministry on Tuesday in Moscow. Russia will only cooperate with Britain on the investigation into last week's poisoning of an ex-Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia if it receives samples of the nerve agent that is believed to have been used.

Russia dismisses poisoning accusations by Britain as 'nonsense'

By GREGORY KATZ and NATALIYA VASILYEVA
Associated Press

LONDON — Russia on Tuesday dismissed accusations of any involvement in the poisoning of an ex-spy and his daughter as "nonsense," saying it will only cooperate with a British investigation if it receives

backing of its allies if any new sanctions are to have any impact.

Her Downing Street office said she discussed the Salisbury incident with U.S. President Donald Trump, and that the U.S. was "with the U.K. all the way" in agreeing that Russia "must provide unambiguous an-

School

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to our district and to compete with larger districts," Superintendent Dr. Sandy Steggall said. "A four-day school week is something that could possibly be a determinant for applicants to apply for our school district ... It's the difference of having, if we have an opening in our district, to have three applicants versus 30 applicants."

Since Stegall first presented the proposal to her board of education in February, the district has hosted three community feedback sessions, where Stegall said the reaction has been mixed.

"Coming out of the forums, we were about 50/50. A little over half were in support of the four-day school week. Based on the community feedback, we've adjusted the recommendation to address those needs from

our community," she said. The community's primary concerns, Stegall said, had to do with childcare on Mondays, which is the day the district is looking to have off each week, and a proposed simultaneous move to an eight-period school day.

District administrators are opting to provide childcare on Mondays as well as retain the current seven-period daily class schedule. (Those classes would be extended from 49 minutes to 60 minutes, as each school day would be an extra 45 minutes long to meet the state-mandated 1,044 hours of instruction, annually).

Community members had one last chance to voice their concerns or support at follow-up forum on Tuesday night.

"I don't think it's been thought completely through," district patron Frank Lewis said. "Roughly 550 schools (districts) in the state of Missouri and 20 are on a four-day school week — why

aren't the others?" "I think it's idea," said district Donna Baker, who employed as board secretary of the St. School District. going to bring t in that are good t to this area, yeah it'd be great."

Good teachers, said in a final wo ate successful stu

"The reality of ation is the more qualified teache have in the cla the more succes students are goin she said.

The CCR3 Sch trict Board of E will vote on the next Wednesday 21. If it's approve burg will join th boring Lathrop District, which mented a four-da week in 2010.

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Tillerson

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White House officials unaware. The firing was just the latest in an exodus of administration officials, including those in Trump's inner circle, with the president already setting records for staff turnover and several other Cabinet secretaries facing ethics investigations.

However, Trump emphatically rejected talk of chaos in his year-old administration as he nears a pivotal moment on the international stage with his planned meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. He declared Tuesday, "I'm really at a point where we're getting very close to having the Cabinet and other things that I want."

He said he was nominating the CIA's deputy director, Gina Haspel,

Trump's liking.

"We were not really thinking the same," said Trump.

Public policy aside, in the view of current and former White House officials, Tillerson's "moron" comment to senior administration officials last summer — and the subsequent revelation in the press — permanently eroded trust between the two men and it was only a matter of time before Tillerson would be pushed out.

Tillerson himself, his voice occasionally quavering, gave brief farewell remarks at the State Department, thanking department staff and diplomats around the world — but not mentioning Trump except to say that he'd spoken by phone to the president Tuesday while Trump was on Air Force One, hours after the tweeted firing. The gulf that separated

involved around the impact of Trump cent reported cri

However, U.S. tary of State Stein and other department officials that Tillerson learned he was dismissed until Trump's early tweet, and ha cussed it directly president. Golds Tillerson was ' of the reason' fired and "had l intention of stay ing he was mak ress on national

That was the Goldstein. Hour was fired, too.

Even after announcement, House and Tille were still stru determine when Tillerson would ter hours of bu tug-of-war, Til his final sombe fore the camera