

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2509

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SMALL BUSINESS
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

May 30, 2025

Lieutenant General William H. Graham, Jr., USA
Chief of Engineers and Commanding General
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Dear Lieutenant General Graham,

I write with great alarm about new reports that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) plans to buy out residential homes in the St. Louis region due to radioactive contamination.

Earlier this week, Florissant Mayor Timothy Lowery stated that city officials were recently made aware of proposed buyouts of six properties in the Cades Cove subdivision, which is near Coldwater Creek. These properties were previously publicly identified by USACE as the subject of detailed sampling. But the community deserves full transparency about your plans for further testing, remediation, buyouts, and any health risks to residents.

On March 5, 2024, I wrote to your predecessor about a nightmare scenario: disclosure by USACE that the nuclear contamination in Coldwater Creek may extend beneath residents' homes. At the time, your office said that the contamination in Cades Cove, which was identified as part of an "old creek meander," was buried deep enough it may not be a problem. In a response to my letter dated March 15, 2024, your predecessor said that the contamination at Cades Cove "does not present an immediate health risk" and "there is no immediate health hazard to homeowners and other residents." He also indicated that you first disclosed some findings to residents of the subdivision in May 2019, nearly six years ago. It should come as no surprise that the community is extremely concerned about proposals for residential buyouts after USACE previously downplayed the potential risks.

These residential buyouts also raise questions about other properties along Coldwater Creek. I have long requested that robust testing and sampling activities take place *outside* the 10-year floodplain of Coldwater Creek, and parts of the properties of the Cades Cove subdivision are outside this zone. In its response to my letter last year, USACE stated that it "remains committed to sampling any area requiring further investigation" while also maintaining that "to our knowledge, there are no other areas along Coldwater Creek with this specific situation of contamination within such close proximity to homes." The community deserves to know why you believe the risk is limited only to this subdivision.

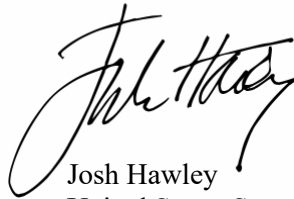
To ensure full transparency about your continued sampling and remediation activities, please respond to the following questions in writing by no later than June 27, 2025.

1. What changes, if any, to the risk assessment of these six properties led USACE to suddenly pursue buyout options, years after first identifying the risk?
2. Are you making every effort to work closely with the affected residents in Cades Cove to fully accommodate their requests and preferences?
3. My office understands that you have instructed some residents *not* to repair damage to their homes following recent tornado and storm damage. Is that because you are concerned about contamination risks? Did USACE find something new?

4. Please provide my office, in writing, with details about your process for determining which areas to conduct sampling *outside* the historic 10-year floodplain in Coldwater Creek.
5. Are there other residential areas like the Cades Cove subdivision that you have identified as in need of further sampling?
6. Does USACE stand by the assurance it provided me last year that no other residential homes are similarly situated?
7. Will you commit to fully informing local government officials of all additional sampling activities and buyouts that directly affect residents to maintain the public trust?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Hawley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Josh" being more prominent than the last name "Hawley".

Josh Hawley
United States Senator