



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

October 29, 2021

Mr. Jamie Pinkham, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary U. S. Army Corps of Engineers' Civil Works meets with Rise St. James

ST. JAMES, LA - Wednesday, October 26th was a historic and much appreciated day for the community of St. James, Louisiana, and all of Louisiana's River Parishes. Mr. Jaime A. Pinkham, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works held a listening session with members of Rise St. James in the historic Freetown Community. While Mr. Pinkham was in South Louisiana primarily to engage with senior leaders from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, he carved out over an hour to fellowship and have frank, candid discussions with the leadership of Rise St. James, along with the Louisiana Bucket Brigade.

This is the first time a government official has taken the time to see our humanity, we will forever remember Mr. Pinkham for taking this initial step. We hope this visit inspires others to do the same. So far, we have been dismissed and discounted by the local leadership. They are on the wrong side of history, not us.

In the listening session, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) re-affirmed that any industrial project's impact on the quality of human life was a priority. Despite all the loss and devastation due to Hurricane Ida, the members of Rise St. James are committed to their homes, families, and cultural heritage. They asked for protection from dangerous industry and support with public health and local government infrastructure.

Contrary to popular belief, the members of Rise St. James look forward to economic development in the region but are steadfast in their commitment to climate adaptation. Our communities are a front row seat for opportunities that involve modern infrastructure resilient to climate change, closing the climate education gap, transit funding and reconnecting neighborhoods, solar energy in public and emergency spaces, eco-tourism, and more.

Formosa's massive proposed petrochemical complex would include 14 chemical manufacturing plants and numerous support facilities, just one mile from an elementary school and a small descendent community. The project would worsen climate change and the ocean plastic pollution crisis.

The historic visit precedes future engagement leading up to the USACE ordering an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) related to Formosa Group (Formosa) Chemical Plant in the region.

It is time for our communities to heal. Many Thanks to Mr. Pinkham and Colonel Murphy for hearing the side of descendant communities and supporting environmental justice. As always, we welcome everyone to walk together with us, reclaim our community, and embrace a reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world.

Sharon Lavigne, President, [2021 Goldman Prize Recipient](#)
Rise St. James, a fiscally sponsored project of [Earth Island](#)