



## ST. MARY LEVEE DISTRICT

7327 Hwy 182 East  
P.O. Box 2079  
Morgan City, LA 70381  
(985) 380-5500

August 19, 2016

Major General Michael C. Wehr  
President, Mississippi River Commission  
Post Office Box 80  
Vicksburg, Mississippi 39181-0080

**RE: 2016 Low Water Inspection Trip**

Dear General Wehr:

Thank you for this opportunity to address you and the Commissioners.

The St Mary Levee District is charged with the responsibility to maintain and operate a system of levees that protect the people and property of the parish from damages of high waters of the Atchafalaya River; to direct activities which will dissipate the threat of high water and flood damages from rivers and streams; and to furnish the local cooperation required for flood control and drainage projects of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. We take the threat of high water from storms or river events very seriously. We need help, particularly in the following areas:

1. For many years our area representatives have expressed the need for the Atchafalaya Basin Flood Control project to include backwater protection for areas east of the Atchafalaya River in addition to the existing Avoca Island Levee. Due to continuing changes in the River, the Avoca Island Levee is not adequate to fully protect Morgan City, Amelia, and the areas to our north and east. The Flood of 2011 as well as the flood of 2016 again proved the need for back water flood protection for our region as flood waters from the Atchafalaya River threaten all of the surrounding areas including St. Mary Parish, Terrebonne Parish, Lower St. Martin Parish and Assumption Parish. We believe that this event made a strong case for the need for this protection. As has been stated many times over the past years, the Avoca Island Levee Extension was authorized as a component of the MR&T, Atchafalaya Basin project offering protection to this area. The withdrawal of this project has not been followed by another project providing this protection. We believe that a Permanent Bayou Chene Closure System is the best way to protect the area and justifies its inclusion in the M R & T project. Our own modeling has documented that a "project flood" event would in fact put water in Lake Palourde to an elevation of +7' (NAVD 88). The Levees that currently exist in Morgan City would only provide protection to an elevation of 5.5'. We need the support of the Commission to achieve the inclusion of a structure on Bayou Chene and would like to see funding to accomplish this project. The Atchafalaya Basin Flood Control portion of the MR&T Project is not complete without the inclusion of real backwater protection for these areas. In an effort to see this project brought to reality as quickly as possible, the Levee District has begun the design of this structure, including soil borings and other engineering work to prepare for its approval. We have submitted a permit application and await your action on that permit.



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2. The New Orleans District has prepared a "white paper" which justifies backwater protection for this area as a component of the MR&T project. This white paper has been signed by Gen. Peabody, one of your predecessors. It is now time to allocate the appropriate resources to the decision document needed to move this project forward.
3. Recent project flood flow line studies have indicated deficiencies in the MR&T levees in St. Mary Parish. Some of these levee reaches are also deficient based on the revised heights needed to protect from the 100-year storm. If the deficiencies for project flood were addressed timely, we would also meet the 100-year flood protection requirement. With the pending changes to the National Flood Insurance Program, the failure of the levees to meet the 100-year requirement will force many of our citizens to incur severe financial hardships. We ask that St. Mary Parish's deficient levees be given a priority in the repair schedule.
4. In order to assume our role as non-federal sponsor of the federal levees in St. Mary Parish, the St. Mary Levee District has sought and received State legislative language to clarify our assumption of the requirements of the non-federal sponsor. We have also entered into agreements with our predecessors to assume those obligations. We now ask that the District recognize our current role as the entity responsible for those obligations.
5. We would like to offer our sincere thanks to the staff of the New Orleans District for their assistance in our flood fight efforts for this past spring flood. Their participation was critical in meeting our flood fighting objectives.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance in this regard.

Sincerely,

**ST. MARY LEVEE DISTRICT**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy Matte".

Timothy Matte  
Executive Director