


August 16, 2016

Alan Lomax wrote, *“The levee is higher and longer than the Great Wall of China, very likely the biggest thing that man has ever made. It was the principal human response to the titanic power of the great river.”*

Good Morning, I am Harry Stephens and what a privilege it is to offer testimony to

the Mississippi River Commission, thank you. I represent the Mississippi Valley Flood Control Association concerning the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project. We have just come from Washington, D.C., along with many other men from up and down the river, pleading with our legislators for a minimum of \$500 million dollars in appropriations every year and \$2 billion as a strategic investment to

regain and help protect our economic engine in the heart of the country.

We appreciate that the MR&T continues to be a line item in the budget. As much money as this is, in hard times, I would like to remind you that the investment in the MR&T system in preparation for the 2011 flood resulted in more than \$246 billion worth of damages prevented by the MR&T system. A return on federal dollar investment of 46 to 1. We cannot

afford to stop or slow down the continuity of this high value; high return and much need national investment. It is an investment not an expense. The MR&T project affords billions of dollars in savings in transportation rates each year (your MRC records indicate \$5.6 Billion annually; and 670 million tons of cargo moved on the Miss River system). This is of great value to the entire nation not just the people of the valley. We thank the

**congress for their leadership, support and
past funding.**

**My great uncle James Millander Hanks,
wrote in his diaries from 1864-1909 and
told about traveling to Washington in
1866 to talk to then President Johnson
about the levee. He was the first
Representative from the 1st District in
Arkansas, the job now held by**

**Representative Rick Crawford, the
President of the Mississippi Valley Flood
Control Association. I don't know how
much levee was there then but each of us
should be proud to be a part of a
partnership that began with private
individuals, local and state governments
and finally the federal investments. There
is no other system that has been or
continues to be of such benefit to our
country. *The federal government would***

be wise to openly discuss this MR&T project as an example of how federal partnerships and investments WORK to help people and our nation's economic success.

The MR&T project is a wise investment for this country and it is good for our economy. It will be a vital link to the

**defense of our country in the event of an
attack by our enemies. This project must
be targeted for swift completion and
proper maintenance. Local interests have
done and continue to do their part. We
need the federal government to fulfill its
obligation and “infrastructure
investment” and bring the MR&T project
in line with the needs of our nation for
today and tomorrow.**

A few years ago FEMA tried to initiate action that would require us to buy insurance on all real property improvements in their flood zone on the protected side of the levee. They gave the levee no credit even after proving itself in the record 2011 flood. The MR&T project performed as designed. Through a lot of work and wisdom our legislators stopped this tax. Now we have the National Levee

Safety Committee which can impose unachievable standards on our levees.

On January 30, 2015 we got the executive order 13690. This amends federal flood risk management standards, coming from a group working behind closed doors.

They would raise the vertical elevation on our levees as much as 3 feet and the corresponding horizontal extend of the area protected by the levees. The EPA and the Clean Water Act “Rules

Clarification” are so vague they could be regulating all water from the pothole in the road to your bath water and all between. They want to connect the alluvial plane to the river, no levee. Food

Problems: Where there is no food on your dinner plate, there won't be but one problem, no food! We cannot let the federal bureaucracies, out of control, unelected, monstrosities, negate the efforts that have provided the best flood

control and navigation system in the world. It remains envied by all countries that are in need of improving reliable productive living for their people.

Commission, thank you for your help in the resulting \$100's of billions of dollars in damages averted because you supported the investment of funds and other resources in the greatest civil works project on the planet, the MR&T.

It is becoming known in other countries as the “Eighth Wonder of the World”. Mark Twain once said, “Ten thousand river commissions...cannot tame that lawless stream... cannot say to it, go here or go there and make it obey”. He did not have the privilege of seeing the MR&T project at work. We are grateful for your leadership.