

**Remarks by the Kaskaskia Regional Port District, Mr. Ed Weilbacher, General Manager**  
August 12, 2016  
MV Mississippi

President Major General Wehr and members of the Mississippi River Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to make these public comments.

I'm Ed Weilbacher, General Manager, Kaskaskia Regional Port District. We are a "lean on overhead and strong on results" Port. In my part-time capacity I need to maximize efforts to insure that customers are served, agency partnerships are maintained, infrastructure is maintained, replaced or expanded and provide guidance to the Board of Directors of the Port on strategic and focused initiatives.

The Kaskaskia Navigation Project is a unique 3 way partnership between the Corps of Engineers, Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Kaskaskia Regional Port District. Due to this unique relationship we are the ONLY area in the State of Illinois where the state owns the entire navigable river corridor for 36 miles from the Mississippi River to Fayetteville, IL. This 20,000+ acres along with the adjacent River King State Fish and Wildlife Area demonstrates a strong commitment in the physical presence by the State. The Port was established to be the economic development entity to act in a timely manner and to work with private businesses to utilize the river for cargo.

The Corps, directed by Congress, built the Jerry F. Costello Lock and Dam in 1974, the State of Illinois acquired land rights for navigation and the Port District worked to establish industrial

sites, now totaling 5 terminals. Since the beginning of shipping on the Kaskaskia River we have shipped over 67.7 million tons. The Port is even bigger in that it includes the 71 miles of the Mississippi River and as the Corps' Statistics Center reports that the Kaskaskia Regional Port District, as a whole, shipped 6.2 million tons last year. That places the Kaskaskia Regional Port District the 72<sup>nd</sup> largest Port District in the country and 8<sup>th</sup> largest Inland Port!

Since the heady days of the 1970's when appropriations were adequate for operation and maintenance to today where budgets are woefully inadequate we now are starting to see the impacts of deferred and delayed maintenance. The annual appropriation does not cover the needs for the operations and maintenance of this navigation system. The only way we have been able to survive is to pray for a disaster. In the past when a disaster occurs additional funds are found to "fix" the items that needed to be addressed with routine maintenance but often now at a higher cost.

The Jerry F. Costello Lock and Dam is now 42 years old. By Corps policy the lock and dam is to be dewatered and inspected every ten years. The Lock and Dam has NEVER, let me repeat NEVER, been dewatered and inspected! Lack of resources for even basic routine, REQUIRED, operations are not being performed. For the first time the Lock and Dam received an appropriation this fiscal year for the dewatering and inspection to occur. This plan went awry when one of the largest floods of record occurred over the New Year's Holiday. This money is now being shifted for the purpose to dredge the navigation channel to insure that cargo can move through the lock and dam into the Mississippi River. Once again the dewatering and inspection will be delayed. I understand it may take another two years before it may be reprogrammed.

Our river serves the best available technology and the country's most recently completed coal fired power plant in the country. The plant serves the nation in producing energy and does it with the best clean air technology available. This plant and adjacent mine employs 700 people. These are excellent jobs in an area that is struggling economically. The Kaskaskia River transports ALL of the limestone to supply the scrubbers. The stone is shipped to the power plant by water and rail. Not one ton is moved by truck. As a result 30,000 trucks are kept off the roads. That a win, win, win for everyone!

The Port is investing in infrastructure. We are developing a new terminal at Fayetteville and just completed a new entrance road using a technique called roller compacted concrete. This technique allowed us to reduce our costs by 45% over traditional PCC method. \$840,000 was invested to provide access to the site.

At our KRPD #2 terminal we assisted an existing tenant to expand its dry fertilizer footprint and to build a new liquid fertilizer and chemical distribution facility. This \$5.5 million investment will create 14 new jobs and expand the products shipped on the river with liquid nitrogen being shipped inbound to serve the agriculture community. To assist with this expansion the Port rebuilt its entrance road and installed an 8 in. potable waterline under the Kaskaskia River. Over \$732,000 was invested to support new and existing businesses at this location and will put more tonnage on the river. Another new business was started last year called Kaskaskia Shipyard. They built their first towboat to meet the demands of the towing industry. Their second towboat is now under construction.

Another tenant employs 90 employees and processes coil steel. They have developed and patented an environmentally safe method to process steel. This eco-friendly patent is now being sold around the world.

The Port, through its tenants, employs over 325 employees. There are many more jobs that benefit from the river and its efficiency. The power plant that I mentioned above is just one example of an additional 700 jobs that rely on the river.

As you can see we have a vibrant Port with many products being shipped both inbound and outbound. None of this could/would occur without the Jerry F. Costello Lock and Dam. We need a proper functioning and maintained facility along with adequate resources to dredge our river, both at the mouth and at the upper end, in a timely manner to insure certainty to the businesses that rely on the river. Without certainty or confidence in the viability in the river I have difficulty attracting new tenants to our port locations.

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