

Dear Mr. Akin:

Thank you for the statement presented on your behalf by Mr. Thomas Horgan of your staff before the Mississippi River Commission during our public meeting held on August 17, 2001, in St. Louis, Missouri.

The Corps fully supports the Missouri River Levee System Unit L-15 project. This flood damage reduction project provides for total enlargement of 125,568 linear feet of levee along the Missouri River. The average increase in levee height is 1.6 feet, depending on the grade and location of the existing levee. The project also requires the removal of sand and railroad ballast from within the levee, construction of two 36-inch gravity drains, alteration of four existing gravity drains, and removal of trees within the levee. In addition, levee damage minimization features will be incorporated into the construction. These features include additional embankment material for flatter levee slopes, special grass mixtures to protect the levee, and a tree screen in a portion of the levee alignment subject to frequent failure. Funds are being used to execute the Project Cooperation Agreement and complete plans and specifications for the first levee contract.

In regard to the Monarch-Chesterfield, Missouri, Study, the authorized plan includes construction of an approximately 5-foot levee raise to provide 500-year flood protection to the Chesterfield Valley area, seepage berms and relief wells to control underseepage, a new railroad closure structure and small floodwall near Centaur Road, two closure structures at Long Road, a reinforced earthen concrete closure structure and

wall near Chesterfield Airport Road, and four pump stations and gravity drains. The Preconstruction Engineering and Design phase was initiated in August 2001 with signing of a Design Agreement between the Monarch-Chesterfield Levee District, the local sponsor, and the St. Louis District Engineer. This design will produce the necessary technical design and plans and specifications required for the first Corps construction contract. The first contract will be to construct the environmental mitigation for the entire project, any levee and berm improvements to the Missouri River levee (Centaur Road to the Boone Bridge), and the Chesterfield Airport Road (now known as Baxter Road) closure structure and adjacent floodwall. The local sponsor, the Monarch-Chesterfield Levee District, has submitted and received approval from the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), for three credit applications. The three credit applications are for: (a) construction of three pump stations within the protected area; (b) levee improvement from Centaur Road to Interstate 64/U.S. Highway 40; and (c) realignment of levee near Boone's Crossing interchange and levee improvement along the left bank of Bonhomme Creek.

The Commission appreciates your support on the Valley Park levee project. The project consists of 3.2 miles of levee with 3 feet of freeboard above the 100-year flood profile, six gravity drains, three closure structures, five ponding areas, 33 relief wells, and outdoor recreation facilities. Completed work includes 1.6 miles of levee, three gravity drains, two closure structures, and three ponding areas. The third closure is under construction. The sponsor is acquiring the land needed for the remainder of the flood control project, and design is underway.

On August 2, 2001, the Director of Civil Works, on behalf of the Chief of Engineers and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, instructed the Corps of Engineers to resume the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study. The refocused study will develop a plan to be used as a framework for the environmental sustainability of the river's navigation system, ecosystem, and floodplain management, while preserving the operational characteristics of each. A collaborative process is underway with all stakeholders of

the Upper Mississippi River to prepare an interim report on a comprehensive management plan by July 2002 with a final report due later.

The National Federal Senior Principals Task Force was established by the Corps of Engineers to provide national-level balance and guidance on important economic and environmental issues to assist in bringing this study to completion and to advise the Corps on appropriate study adjustments to address the National Research Council recommendations. The Principals Group includes senior Washington administrators of the Maritime Administration, the Agricultural Marketing Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Corps of Engineers. The Corps intends to continue to involve this group throughout the life of this study. A regional version of the group also provides Federal interagency input for the study. As Commander of the Corps' Mississippi Valley Division, I am chairman of this Regional Interagency Work Group.

With regard to the ongoing revision effort for the Missouri River Master Manual, the Corps of Engineers will be meeting with the State of Missouri and other Mississippi River stakeholders during our continued pursuit of a technical solution. A desired solution avoids jeopardy for endangered species while maintaining current standards of flood protection on the Missouri River and supporting navigation on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. Your statement and information submitted to the Commission during the public meeting have been forwarded to the Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division for consideration and use. The following paragraphs provide the current status of Corps consideration of modified Missouri River Reservoir operations and opportunities.

On August 31, 2001, the Corps Northwestern Division published its revised draft environmental impact statement (RDEIS) for public and agency review and comment. During the 6-month comment period, extending from August 31, 2001, to February 28, 2002, workshops and hearings will be conducted from Helena, Montana, to New Orleans, Louisiana, to provide information on the RDEIS and solicit input from individuals,

tribes, states, other Federal agencies, and interest groups. Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division staff will be available during workshops at the Mississippi River locations. Each meeting will follow the same format with a public informational workshop from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. and a public hearing each evening beginning at 7:00 p.m. Locations along the Mississippi River include:

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| November 13, 2001 | Radisson Hotel and Suites
2000 North Fourth Street
St. Louis, Missouri 63102
(314) 621-8200 |
| November 14, 2001 | Radisson Hotel
185 Union Avenue
Memphis, Tennessee 38103
(901) 528-1800 |
| November 15, 2001 | Pontchartrain Hotel
2031 St. Charles Avenue
New Orleans, Louisiana 70140
(504) 524-0581 |

Following language in the Senate version of the Fiscal Year 2002 Appropriations Bill, the RDEIS presents a range of alternative water control plans with and without a spring rise and low summer flows from Gavins Point Dam. The RDEIS does not identify a preferred alternative, which provides an unbiased forum for public comment. It also allows the Corps and the Administration more time to evaluate public comments and the National Academy of Science report prior to making important decisions regarding Missouri River operations. The National Academy of Science report is to be completed this fall.

Specifically, the RDEIS presents the impacts of six alternative flow management plans on a number of important economic uses and environmental resources in the Missouri River Basin. The RDEIS also examines the impacts of these alternatives on Mississippi River navigation economics and shallow water habitat.

After considering all public comments, the results of a study being conducted by the National Academy of Sciences, and other relevant information, the Corps will prepare a final environmental impact statement and a record of decision. These documents will serve as the basis for revising the master water control manual and for developing an annual operating plan. Currently, implementation of the selected plan is scheduled for March 2003.

Thank you again for your interest in our work. Balancing the interests within the Mississippi Valley remains a challenge. The Corps will continue its efforts to meet the flood control, navigation, and environmental needs in the valley. Our success is largely attributable to a strong partnership with local interests and continued support from you and other members of the Congressional delegation of the entire valley area.

The Commission appreciates receiving your views and looks forward to hearing from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Edwin J. Arnold, Jr.
Brigadier General, U. S. Army
President Designee, Mississippi
River Commission