

Dear Mr. Barthel:

Thank you for your comments during the Mississippi River Commission public meeting in Houma, Louisiana, on August 23, 2002. In your statement, you expressed concern about maintenance dredging needs in the Houma Navigation Canal (HNC).

The Commission acknowledges that it has been a challenge this year to provide channel maintenance needs for the Houma Navigation Canal within the funding appropriations for the District's Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Program. Unexpected, high-priority O&M needs throughout the Mississippi Valley Division, coupled with limited O&M appropriations, resulted in HNC maintenance dredging being deferred. Shoaling conditions in the lower portion of the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers have been greater than average and have placed an additional strain on funds.

We are pleased to report that in August 2002, maintenance dredging was completed in a 3.5-mile portion of the Terrebonne Bay Reach. This action addressed the most critical need for safe and efficient navigation. The New Orleans District staff, in coordination with the personnel of the Port of Terrebonne, as well as other Federal and state agencies, have generated plans to conduct additional maintenance dredging in the Houma Navigation Canal. A second contract for maintenance dredging

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of the remainder of Terrebonne Bay was awarded on August 20, 2002 and dredging is scheduled to commence in early November 2002. We will award future maintenance dredging contracts in accordance with overall priorities and availability of funds.

Thank you again for your presentation. The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and looks forward to hearing from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Don T. Riley
Brigadier General, U. S. Army
President Designee, Mississippi
River Commission