

Dear Mr. Black:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Memphis, Tennessee, on August 20, 2001. In your statement you discussed the U.S. Department of Agriculture definition of wetlands; existing land use in the New Madrid Floodway; the strong local support for the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway project; and misconceptions of the project area and impacts published by extremists and media from outside the basin.

As you know, the Memphis District has devoted extensive effort to the proper identification of the wetland impacts of the project. In the preparation of the revised draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, the District is continuing to work on clearer, more concise descriptions of the impacts of the Phase 1 project on area wetlands.

The Commission appreciates and acknowledges the local input and support of the Corps of Engineers in its efforts to formulate the best overall project for the area and to comply fully with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. We also appreciate your participation in our efforts to work cooperatively with resource agencies in the process.

The Commission acknowledges your concern regarding the negative publicity about the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway and the Corps flood damage reduction project for that area. We continue to work on ways to get the story out about Corps projects to provide a more balanced and objective view of our work.

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Thank you again for your presentation. The Commission appreciates receiving your views and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

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