

Dear Dr. Black:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting in Cairo, Illinois, on March 4, 2002. In your statement you stressed the importance of the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway project to the welfare and economic development of the local community. You also expressed a desire for the Commission to hold other government agencies responsible for following proper procedures for compliance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

The Commission appreciates your kind words regarding Corps support for flood damage reduction measures in East Prairie and the adjacent St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway areas. The Corps of Engineers and the Commission understand the impact flooding has on the lives and livelihood of East Prairie, Pinhook, and adjacent rural areas. We recognize the efforts of area residents and your organization to make life better for themselves and the entire community.

We understand your disappointment and frustration because of delays in processing the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). The Commission shares your opinion that the SEIS should be processed as soon as possible. The Memphis District is currently evaluating comments received from public coordination of the Draft SEIS. The District is now preparing the revised Final SEIS and plans to file the SEIS with the Environmental Protection Agency early this summer, which will begin a 30-day state and agency review. At this time, the Memphis District will also request water quality certification

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from the state of Missouri for the preferred plan. A Record of Decision (ROD) could be signed after the 30-day state and agency review of the Final SEIS and consideration of comments received during that review. Signing of the ROD, along with water quality certification, would complete the requirements for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

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, Mississippi River
Commission