

Dear Mr. Box:

Thank you for your informative presentation at the Mississippi River Commission public meeting in Lake Providence, Louisiana, on August 21, 2002. In your various slides, you demonstrated the many changes to this great river since the early days of Mark Twain and gave an overview of the objectives of the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee.

The Commission acknowledges the key role of the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee and other key stakeholders in obtaining the authority for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to perform the Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment in Section 402 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000. The Commission continues to underscore the need for the assessments. However, funding for this assessment was not included in the Fiscal Year 2003 President's general investigations budget request. To date, funding for this assessment is not included in either the House or Senate versions of the Fiscal Year 2003 appropriations bill; however, action of Congress on the appropriations bill has not been completed.

The Corps of Engineers met with the executive committee of the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee on June 13, 2002, to discuss a proposed Federal, state, and local framework and collaborative strategy. The Corps will continue to work with the Committee and the Governors of affected states to provide its professional expertise in developing this important initiative once the assessment receives an appropriation.

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Thank you again for submitting your statement for the record of our public hearing. We look forward to hearing from you at our future Commission meetings.

Sincerely,

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

River Commission