

Dear Mr. Braudis:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in West Memphis, Arkansas, on August 19, 2003. In your statement you discussed safety issues in regard to debris removal from the old railroad trestles in Ditch 81 and the condition of Wapanocca Lake.

As you stated in your presentation, the old railroad trestles accumulate debris in Ditch 81 just north of Arkansas Highway 18. Ownership of the piers was apparently passed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); therefore, they are the responsibility of the USFWS. Memphis District is investigating possible ways they may be able to assist you with the removal of the trestles.

You mentioned in your testimony that there are plans to install both a new water line and a new bridge in the vicinity of the railroad trestles. You emphasized the importance of having the trestles removed prior to either of those events occurring. Please provide Memphis District with information on the schedule of these events to aid them in their efforts to provide assistance.

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The Commission shares your concerns about the high rate of sediment deposits and the resulting impact on fish and wildlife habitat in areas such as Wapanocca Lake. Unfortunately, as a Federal agency, the USFWS cannot participate as a local sponsor with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in a Section 1135 project; however, a non-Federal entity, which is legally and financially capable, could serve this role in such a project. Another option that you may consider in seeking Corps assistance would be our Support For Others program, where the Corps could plan, design, and construct improvements on a reimbursable cost basis with your agency.

Assistance could be pursued under the authority of Section 906(e) of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986. This

authority provides for improvements located on lands managed as a national wildlife refuge; however, due to budgetary constraints, this authority has not been used in the past. The Memphis District staff will be in contact with you regarding these different options.

The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

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