

Dear Mr. Brescia:

Thank you for your remarks before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Alton, Illinois, on August 15, 2002. In your statement you discussed the Upper Mississippi River Navigation Study, the Missouri River Master Manual, and the need for increased operation and maintenance funds.

Relative to the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterways (UMR-IWW) System Navigation Study, the Corps appreciates the cooperative efforts your organization has had in working to keep this project moving. The Commission recognizes the position of your organization in supporting lock modernization. The UMR-IWW System Navigation Study has been restructured to give equal consideration of fish and wildlife resources and navigation improvement planning consistent with recommendations from the National Research Council and the Federal Principals Group. The restructured study will ensure the UMR-IWW system continues to be a nationally significant ecosystem and a nationally significant commercial navigation system as designated by Congress. The restructured study will address the navigation efficiency needs of the UMR-IWW, the ongoing cumulative effects of navigation, and the ecosystem restoration needs with a goal of attaining an environmentally sustainable navigation system. The full economic and environmental evaluations necessary to support a potential recommendation for construction of navigation improvements and implementation

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of ecosystem restoration measures will be completed by October 2003. These potential plans will be presented at a series of public meetings beginning in October 2003 to gain public input prior to making a final recommendation. The final feasibility report is currently scheduled for completion in 2004. For more information and details concerning the UMR-IWW System Navigation Study, please refer to the Rock Island District website: <http://www2.mvr.usace.army.mil/umr-iwwsns/>.

The Commission recognizes the position of the Midwest Area River Coalition 2000 in support of navigation impacts relative to the Missouri River Master Manual. In regard to your comments

concerning the Missouri River Master Water Control Manual Review and Update, a recommendation for a Preferred Alternative (PA) water control plan was made to the Headquarters of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works in May of this year. At that time, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the Council on Environmental Quality were also informed of the PA. The Corps and the Service agreed to enter into informal consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and are currently engaged in that process.

During the informal consultation, the Corps and the Service are working cooperatively to assess available scientific and technical information and explore a range of possibilities regarding operation of the Missouri River Mainstem Reservoir System. The two agencies believe the public will be much better served by a product that reflects the coordinated position of the entire Executive Branch. The Corps of Engineers will use the results of the consultative process as we complete the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Master Manual Review and Update. The FEIS will include a description of the environmental and economic impacts of the PA including an analysis of impacts to some Mississippi River uses/resources. A 30-day comment period will follow release of the FEIS to provide the public an opportunity for review and comment. Following the comment period, the Corps will prepare a Record of Decision, revise the existing Master Manual to reflect the selected water control plan, and implement that plan.

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Although critical operation and maintenance needs are prioritized across the Mississippi Valley Division and identified to higher Corps Headquarters and various stakeholders, our ability to address these needs is dependent on appropriations. The Corps appreciates your organization's recognition of and support for additional operation and maintenance funds to address backlog maintenance and overall operations.

Balancing the flood control, navigation, and environmental needs within the Mississippi Valley remains a challenge. Your

continued input is invaluable to the Corps' ability to meet this challenge. The Commission appreciates receiving your views 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