

Dear Mr. Christoff:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during our public meeting in Alton, Illinois, on August 15, 2002. In your statement you urged the Commission to work closely with the Office of Management and Budget to secure full funding for the Environmental Management Program. You also discussed the Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment.

Legislation passed in 1986 and 1990 established environmental preservation and restoration as one of the primary missions of water resources projects of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This legislation has allowed the nation to initiate environmental activities to enhance or restore natural resources at Corps projects. An example of an ongoing program to preserve and restore critical habitats within and along the Upper Mississippi River System is the Environmental Management Program. This program has been successful; however, more is needed to stabilize and restore the river's ecosystem. The Corps is working closely with other Federal and state agencies and environmental interests to define these additional needs as part of the restructured navigation study. Additional information on the Environmental Management Program can be found at the Corps of Engineers Rock Island District website: <http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/EMP/default.htm>.

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 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.

Balancing the interests within the Mississippi Valley remains a challenge, and the Corps of Engineers will continue its efforts to meet the flood control, navigation, and environmental needs of all. The Commission appreciates receiving your views and will be pleased to hear from you at future public meetings.

Sincerely,

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