

Dear Ms. Cohen:

Thank you for your statement filed for the record of the Mississippi River Commission public meeting on August 17, 2001, in St. Louis, Missouri. In your statement you addressed several issues including the importance of addressing the needs and opportunities concerning the future of the Mississippi River.

The Confluence Greenway project is an example where the St. Louis District of the Corps of Engineers has forged innovative partnerships with the community and region which provide new opportunities to cooperate with others to promote service to customers and operational efficiency.

The project is a unique opportunity to convert the land on Chouteau Island from its current predominantly agricultural use to a more natural condition, thereby restoring the island's floodplain ecosystem. Approximately 500 acres of land are currently being pursued for acquisition by various groups involved in the Confluence Greenway project. All land is being acquired from willing sellers--private citizens and Waste Management of Illinois. In 2000, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources acquired a large tract of land on Chouteau Island, which will be included in the restoration effort.

It is proposed to restore the area to a patchwork of bottomland forest and prairie on the land being acquired. Because the predominant uses of the area have been farming and borrow operations, the land has provided marginal habitat for wildlife and waterfowl. With the purchase of the land and the

shutdown of the landfill site in the near future, human disturbance will be reduced to recreational activities. Restoring the area's natural matrix of wet meadow/upland prairie and bottomland forest will increase the productivity and diversity of the area's biological community. The Preliminary Restoration Plan was completed and approved in April 2001. A study is now underway to determine the recommended plan (which will be the one that produces the most ecosystem restoration for the least cost). This study is anticipated to be completed in 2002.

The Corps of Engineers will continue its efforts to meet the flood control, navigation, and environmental needs of the Mississippi Valley. Our success is largely attributable to a strong partnership with our local interests.

Thank you again for your statement filed for the record. The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and looks forward to hearing from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Edwin J. Arnold, Jr.
Brigadier General, U. S. Army
President Designee, Mississippi
River Commission