

Dear Mr. Downer:

Thank you for your comments during the Mississippi River Commission public meeting in Houma, Louisiana, on August 23, 2002. In your statement you expressed support for the flood protection and ecosystem restoration efforts in south Louisiana. Specifically, you expressed support for the Morganza to the Gulf of Mexico Hurricane Protection project and the Coast 2050 or Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) initiative. You also noted the high degree of community support and requested the Commission's continued support for these projects.

The Commission is aware of and encouraged by the degree of support for the Morganza to the Gulf of Mexico project that is evidenced by the passage of a \$3.6 million local tax issue by the voters of Terrebonne Parish. The Morganza to the Gulf of Mexico Feasibility Study is complete. The Chief of Engineers' report was signed on August 23, 2002. The National Economic Development plan providing a 100-year level of protection has been selected as the recommended plan. The Pre-construction Engineering and Design phase for levees and floodgates is underway. The first construction contract is scheduled for award in Fiscal Year 2005, pending Congressional authorization, appropriation of funds for construction, and execution of a Project Cooperation Agreement. The Commission will continue to support this project as directed by Congress.

The New Orleans District, in conjunction with the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources as the sponsor, is currently completing feasibility studies for two component projects of the

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LCA Comprehensive Plan. Draft feasibility reports for the Barataria Basin Wetland Creation and Restoration Study and the Barataria Basin Barrier Shoreline Restoration are nearing completion, and the final reports will be finished on a schedule that will allow these projects to be considered for authorization in a potential 2004 Water Resources Development Act.

Thank you again for your participation in our meeting. The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and looks forward to hearing from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

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