

Dear Senator Dupre:

Thank you for your comments during the Mississippi River Commission public meeting held in Morgan City, Louisiana, on August 23, 2001. In your statement you discussed the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) bill, the Houma Navigation Canal Study, the Chacahoula Pump Station, the Golden Meadow Floodgate, the 35-foot channel in the Lower Atchafalaya River, and the new study under Coast 2050.

You noted in your presentation that passage of the CARA bill is important to restore coastal areas and that currently only the Breaux Act provides Federal appropriations. The Breaux Act accounts for a portion of the New Orleans District's efforts for coastal restoration. In addition, various Continuing Authorities Program projects focus on ecosystem and coastal restoration measures. Added to this is the Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration project, which provides for a 10-year, \$35 million feasibility study of ecosystem and coastal restoration features for the Louisiana coastal area. The CARA, if enacted into law, would create a permanent source of funding for conservation and restoration projects. CARA would provide a significant amount of funds to the State of Louisiana. The additional money from cost sharing Federal studies would be significant for implementing coastal conservation and restoration projects.

Preliminary evaluation of a 20-foot-deep channel in the Houma Navigation Canal indicates that the project, with a benefit-to-cost ratio of approximately 2 to 1, is economically justified. The New Orleans District staff will initiate a

navigation study with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development to investigate the proposed action in greater detail. The study duration is 12 to 18 months. The navigation lock design is currently proceeding with a sill depth of 20 feet. If construction is authorized, the first contract would be ready for award by June 2004.

The preliminary draft feasibility report for the Lower Atchafalaya Basin Reevaluation Study is currently under review by the Leadership Group. As requested by some members of the Leadership Group, the Corps extended the review period from August 30 to October 30, 2001. The draft report is scheduled for submission to the Mississippi River Commission by the New Orleans District in December 2001. The draft report recommends the implementation of a "barrier levee" to provide protection against backwater flooding from the Atchafalaya River to the areas east of Morgan City. Features of the recommended plan include a levee from Morgan City to Gibson, with floodwalls through residential and commercial areas; a lock or floodgate where the levee would cross the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (mile 89); a pump station and lock complex in Bayou Boeuf at Amelia; and the Chacahoula Pump Station on the Elliot Jones Canal near Gibson. The estimated cost of the barrier levee is approximately \$152,000,000 and, if authorized for construction, would be implemented over a number of years.

The frequency and durations of closures of the Leon Theriot Floodgate, formerly known as the Golden Meadow Floodgate, has been much higher than anticipated in the studies leading to the authorization of the Larose to Golden Meadow hurricane protection project. The New Orleans District is nearing completion of a post-authorization change report which will recommend converting the floodgate to a lock. This study is scheduled for completion in October 2001.

The Atchafalaya River and Bayous Chene, Boeuf, and Black Reconnaissance Study is scheduled for completion in September 2001. In this study, the Corps is addressing the feasibility of deepening the navigation project to depths of up to 35 feet, based on navigation benefits. If the conclusions of this preliminary analysis are that a deeper channel is economically justified and environmentally acceptable, the Corps would

proceed to the more detailed feasibility studies to further develop the plan. Flood control benefits will also be considered in the feasibility study.

In June 2001, the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources submitted a letter to the New Orleans District requesting a study of the "Parallel Conveyance Channel" concept. However, the District has been unable to initiate the reconnaissance-level study due to lack of funding. It is possible that the Corps could receive funding and initiate the study in Fiscal Year 2003.

Thank you again for your presentation. 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