

Dear Ms. Emerson:

Thank you for the statement made on your behalf by Mr. Lloyd Smith before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Tiptonville, Tennessee, on August 18, 2003. In your statement you expressed appreciation to the staffs of the Memphis District and the Mississippi Valley Division (MVD) for their negotiation of a settlement on the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid Floodway project. You also expressed great concern over the recent decision to change seasonal flows on the Missouri River, especially since the Endangered Species Act was used to make that decision.

The Commission also appreciates the work of the staffs of Memphis District and MVD who worked with local and state interests to resolve issues and negotiate a settlement that led to the issuance of Water Quality Certification on the St. Johns-New Madrid project. Such an achievement would not have occurred without the collaboration, teamwork, and persistence of Congressional, Corps, local, state, and other Federal team members. The Mississippi Valley Division completed the review of the project documentation and the Record of Decision was signed on August 25, 2003. This completes the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and clears the way for moving forward to construction. As you know, a dedication and Project Cooperation Agreement amendment signing ceremony is scheduled to take place on October 10, 2003.

We concur in your assessment that changes in the flow of the Missouri River may have an impact not only on that river system but also on the middle Mississippi River Valley. The Commission and its staff, along with local interests, continue to provide input to the Northwestern Division on the impact of Missouri River operation changes to the Mississippi River.

The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and will be pleased to hear from you or your staff at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

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