

Dear Ms. Emerson:

Thank you for the statement made on your behalf by Mr. Lloyd Smith of your staff before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting in Cairo, Illinois, on March 4, 2002. In your statement you expressed appreciation for the support of the Mississippi Valley Division office and the Memphis District in support of projects in your District. You also discussed the Fiscal Year 2003 President's budget request for the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) project; the Commerce to Birds Point Levee project and review of maintenance of its relief well collector ditches; work on the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the St. Johns Bayou-New Madrid Floodway; and the Wappapello Lake road raise and the Perry County levee project.

The Commission recognizes your efforts in securing additional funds for the MR&T project. Although the project is 87 percent complete and provides significant flood protection and navigation benefits, there is still additional work to be completed to ensure that the project functions properly and can accommodate the project design flood.

The Commission appreciates your comments regarding Memphis District work on the levee grade raise and section enlargement of the Commerce to Birds Point reach of the mainline Mississippi River Levee. In regard to the maintenance of the relief well collector ditches, the Memphis District is currently reviewing the authorities and policies regarding maintenance of said ditches in the Mississippi River Levees project. Features of the Mississippi River Levees project include over 3,000 miles of levees and associated berms, floodwalls, drainage structures, relief wells, and relief well collector ditches in the Memphis, Vicksburg, and New Orleans Districts. The application of maintenance policies and authorities for levees and other features of levees are generally consistent throughout all three districts. The Memphis District anticipates implementing a solution that is consistent with legislative authorities and Corps policies and regulations. The Memphis District is planning

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to meet with the local sponsors (Levee District No. 2 of Scott County and Levee District No. 3 of Mississippi County), County

Commissioners, and your office in the near future to discuss this and other issues.

The Memphis District is currently evaluating comments received from public coordination of the Draft SEIS for the St. Johns Bayou-New Madrid Floodway project. The District is now preparing the revised Final SEIS and plans to file the SEIS with the Environmental Protection Agency early this summer, thereby beginning a 30-day state and agency review. At this time, the Memphis District will also request water quality certification from the state of Missouri for the preferred plan. I plan to sign the Record of Decision (ROD) after the 30-day state and agency review of the Final SEIS and consideration of comments received during that review. The ROD signing is currently scheduled for September of this year. Signing of the ROD, along with water quality certification, would complete the requirements for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and clear the way for construction on the project to be resumed.

In regard to the Wappapello Lake road raise and the Perry County levee project, the Commission appreciates your continued support of the road relocation project at Wappapello Lake. In Fiscal Year 2002, work is continuing on the subordination of Highway FF. The Corps plans to award a construction contract for Highway D-1 in September 2002.

The Commission appreciates your support of the Corps of Engineers. We look forward to hearing from you or members of your staff at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

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