

Dear Senator Gautreaux:

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 Lake Palourde shoreline stabilization project, the need for a 35-foot channel in the Lower Atchafalaya River, and concern about the adequacy of the existing 15-foot channel in the Houma Navigation Canal.

The Lake Palourde project is a prime example of positive cooperation among the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, St. Mary and St. Martin Parishes, and Morgan City. Construction of the rock retention dike was initiated on July 7, and placement of dredged material began on August 31, 2001. The Corps estimates completion of these activities in October 2001. Currently the Corps anticipates the need to place a "cap" of sand over the emergent land in September 2002. Upon completion of this placement of material, the project will be complete.

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.

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 plans to 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. Detailed design of the lock is underway, and if construction is authorized, the first construction contract would be ready for award by June 2004.

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