

Dear Mr. Hengerson:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in St. Louis, Missouri, on August 15, 2003.

The Commission appreciates the comments made by organizations to help us better understand the issues relative to the Mississippi River watershed. We understand your concern about improved access by the river to its floodplain and improved access to the river for people. We must continue to work collectively to find a balanced approach to managing the watershed that meets all the needs and maintains a sustainable system.

Regarding the Missouri River Master Water Control Plan, the Corps has not identified a preferred alternative water control plan. The Commission has received testimony and correspondence expressing concern about proposed modifications and the potential for resulting low flows on the Mississippi River. The Corps objective in its Missouri River operations is to implement a water control plan that meets the contemporary needs of the Missouri River Basin, serves the Congressionally authorized project purposes, complies with environmental laws including the Endangered Species Act, and fulfills responsibilities to Federally recognized Tribes. There are a myriad of complex operational and resource management issues. Upriver interests want high, stable lake levels to address recreation, irrigation, and hydropower needs. Environmental interests seek a hydrograph that more closely approximates the natural hydrograph of the Missouri River. Downriver interests

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(below the dams) support different flow regimes for commercial navigation, flood protection, municipal water supply, and thermal generation.

The Corps is currently engaged in examining adjustments to the Modified Conservation Plan (MCP) and is conducting numerous model runs that eliminate the "fixed trigger" and "negative storage check" features of the MCP. Modeling of these adjustments to the MCP was requested by the Missouri River Basin Association and includes the concerns expressed by the State of Missouri. The Missouri River Basin Alliance has indicated they

have no objection to modification of the MCP alternative to eliminate these features, provided the drought storage target of 42.7 million acre-feet for a drought similar to the one experienced in the 1980's as defined in its original 1999 recommendation.

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

Sincerely,

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