

Dear Mr. Huffman:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during our public meeting held in Alton, Illinois, on August 15, 2002. In your statement you discussed the impacts of the Missouri River flow modifications on the Mississippi River and presented an in-depth document outlining all of your concerns regarding the Missouri River Master Manual proposals.

In regard to your comments concerning the Missouri River Master Water Control Manual Review and Update, a recommendation for a Preferred Alternative (PA) water control plan was made to the Headquarters of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works in May of this year. At that time, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the Council on Environmental Quality were also informed of the PA. The Corps and the Service agreed to enter into informal consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and are currently engaged in that process.

During the informal consultation, the Corps and the Service are working cooperatively to assess available scientific and technical information and explore a range of possibilities regarding operation of the Missouri River Mainstem Reservoir System. The two agencies believe the public will be much better served by a product that reflects the coordinated position of

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the entire Executive Branch. The Corps of Engineers will use the results of the consultative process as we complete the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Master Manual Review and Update. The FEIS will include a description of the environmental and economic impacts of the PA including an analysis of impacts to some Mississippi River uses/resources. A 30-day comment period will follow release of the FEIS to provide the public an opportunity for review and comment. Following the comment period, the Corps will prepare a Record of Decision, revise the existing Master Manual to reflect the selected water control plan, and implement that plan.

Balancing the flood control, navigation, and environmental needs within the Mississippi Valley remains a challenge. Your continued input is invaluable to the Corps' ability to meet this challenge. The Commission appreciates receiving your views 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