

Dear R.D.:

This letter is in response to your comments during the Mississippi River Commission public meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, on April 6, 2001, in which you discussed several issues.

The installation of additional relief wells to protect levee integrity will not adversely affect the natural recharge of adjacent aquifers. These wells flow only during high river stages when the aquifer is fully charged and piezometric pressures are above the landside ground surface. Piezometric pressures will be reduced only within the radius of influence of the wells along the toe of the levee. Seepage will continue to occur landward of the relief wells. Also, effluent from the relief wells is usually returned to the river and ultimately the aquifer either by pumping or by subsequent gravity flow. At normal and low river stages, the relief wells will not flow and will have no impact on natural aquifer recharge.

In regard to your comments concerning the use of tree screens, fortunately there are only a few reaches along the Mississippi River where overbank scour occurs. In those areas, it is usually a localized problem that does not affect the flood control or navigation features of the Mississippi River and Tributaries project. If overbank scour were to threaten the integrity of either the mainline levees or the navigation channel alignment, tree screens would be examined as a possible solution to the problem.

We agree that our work along the Mississippi River is vital to the nation and that the general public may not always be aware of the work of the Corps of Engineers. In recent years there has been interest expressed by many communities to reconnect themselves to the Mississippi River. The Upper and Lower Mississippi River was designated as an American Heritage

River in 1998. The purpose of this initiative was to preserve, restore, and revitalize the nation's riverfronts. The Corps of Engineers is one of several Federal agencies participating in the program. There are numerous riverfront development projects being coordinated by the American Heritage Rivers navigators in which we are participating in varying degrees. Congress has authorized several resolutions for different locations along the Mississippi River that would allow us to plan, design, and construct riverfront development projects. Many of these resolutions are waiting funding from Congress. As we continue to develop these Federal/state/local partnerships to pursue riverfront development projects, the general public will become more aware of the vital services we provide to the nation. Also, as you are aware, the Memphis District and Mississippi River Commission staffs are analyzing a request from the Mayor of New Madrid for a riverfront development effort in association with the Mississippi River Levees project along the New Madrid city front. When this analysis is completed, a response will be provided to the Mayor and shared with members of the Mississippi River Commission.

I hope this reply addresses the concerns and issues you expressed during the public meeting. Thank you for your valuable service over the past two decades, and please call me if you would like to further discuss these matters.

Sincerely,

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

Copies Furnished:

Mississippi River Commission Members