

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Thank you for your attendance at the public meeting of the Mississippi River Commission on August 15, 2001, in Keokuk, Iowa.

We welcome hearing various viewpoints on the many attributes of the Mississippi River. The varied missions of the Corps of Engineers reflect the public interest as determined and authorized by Congress. The Civil Works mission of the Corps includes navigation, environmental restoration, flood protection, and recreation. Generally, our greatest challenge is the equitable balancing of these missions among the diverse interests of the citizens of the upper Mississippi Valley.

You addressed the need for better flood control on the Des Moines River. Saylorville Lake and Lake Red Rock were authorized as part of a comprehensive plan for flood control for the Upper Mississippi River Basin. The reservoir regulation plans were developed to minimize flood damages along the entire reach of the Des Moines River downstream of the reservoirs and along the Mississippi River below the confluence with the Des Moines River. Reservoir regulation plans were developed by analyzing numerous hydrologic scenarios. These analyses allow selection of an optimal regulation plan providing maximum benefits throughout the system. Once a plan is selected, it undergoes extensive public review and coordination prior to implementation.

-2-

I understand your concerns about flooding along the lower Des Moines River this spring. Lake Red Rock is operated to minimize flooding along the lower Des Moines River by controlling reservoir releases to avoid exceeding control stages at Ottumwa and Keosauqua, Iowa. The occasions you mentioned in your statement concerning flooding near St. Francisville, Missouri, were primarily the result of intense localized storm events affecting the lower Des Moines Basin. During each of the eight occasions you mentioned when the river exceeded flood stage at St. Francisville, reservoir releases were reduced in accordance

with the regulation plan for the reservoir. Unfortunately, due to travel times on the order of 3 days from Lake Red Rock to St. Francisville, the potential to control flooding from localized storm events is limited. While the duration of flooding is reduced, the long travel time from the reservoir makes it very difficult to eliminate all negative impacts.

While your suggestion to implement a drawdown of the reservoirs in advance of spring runoff seems reasonable, it would do little to minimize downstream flooding due to localized rainfall. However, in the coming year, there are plans to update the reservoir regulation manual for Lake Red Rock. We will investigate your suggestion for implementing a spring drawdown at Lake Red Rock. Additionally, a study of the lower Des Moines River under the authority of Section 216 of the Flood Control Act of 1970 has been identified as a potential new start study by the Senate. Should Fiscal Year 2002 funding be provided by the Congress, the study would be initiated in early Fiscal Year 2002.

Thank you again for your comments and ideas. Your interest in Mississippi River Commission activities is appreciated. We look forward to hearing from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

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