

Dear Mr. Keahey:

Thank you for your statement filed for the record of the Mississippi River Commission public meeting held in Vicksburg, Mississippi, on April 4, 2001. In your statement you expressed the following items of concern:

a. Stated that your levee district's main emphasis is the Ouachita River as it relates to completion of the remaining levee enlargement items. You also emphasized the need for a bank stabilization program.

b. Expressed satisfaction with the progress on the Sicily Island Levee project and the current schedule for construction of the remaining levee items.

c. Stated that environmental impacts should be considered during construction of a project but should not be the controlling factor in determining the feasibility of the project and expressed support for "avoid and minimize" techniques being used by the Corps.

d. Stressed the need to bring the main-line levee system up to design grade and section.

e. Requested that Vicksburg District advise how to prevent degradation of Mississippi River and Tributaries drainage channels in your levee district area.

The Vicksburg District completed the levee enlargement of Item 1 in the Bastrop to Monroe reach in September 2000. In addition, the erosion problems in the Bawcomville levee in April 2000 were corrected. The District has recently identified one remaining drainage structure under the West Monroe floodwall which is in need of rehabilitation. Design of that repair is

currently underway and is expected to be completed in May 2001. The Vicksburg District plans to advertise for construction of the rehabilitation in June 2001.

After many years of working together with your agency, we fully appreciate the need for completion of the Ouachita River Levees, Louisiana, project. The remaining unfunded items of work include levee enlargement of Items 2 and 3 in the Bastrop to Monroe reach of the east bank levee and resurfacing of the Monroe to Sandy Bayou reach of the east bank levee. These two remaining levee enlargement items are critical to the protection of the Monroe urban area. While no funds are included in the Fiscal Year 2002 President's budget, the Corps will consider including funds to complete this much needed project in the initial budget request for Fiscal Year 2003. However, the receipt of funds will ultimately be based upon national funding priorities.

As you know, the Corps does not have general authority for bank stabilization on the Ouachita River. The Corps has the authority to study the bank stabilization needs and assess the magnitude of these needs. However, there is insufficient funding for such a study. There will be consideration of including funds to initiate this study in the initial budget request for Fiscal Year 2003. The receipt of funds will ultimately be based upon national funding priorities.

With regard to the Sicily Island Area, Louisiana, project, construction is currently underway on Levee Items 1-C, 1-D, and 2-B. In addition, the Corps received the rights-of-way for the last item of work from the Tensas Basin Levee District in April 2001 for the Billys and Falcon Bayous plugs. The Vicksburg District plans to advertise the construction contract in May 2001. Based on this schedule, completion of the Sicily Island Area project is expected in December 2001 barring unforeseen delays.

As has been discussed in the past, both flood damage reduction and environmental issues must be considered in the formulation and planning of Corps projects. The Corps seeks to balance these competing needs for the public good. In doing so, the Corps first attempts to avoid or minimize any

environmental impacts associated with the project and then attempts to enhance the environment of the area. If the Corps is not able to pursue these actions, mitigation for the environmental losses is done.

We, too, are concerned with the deficiencies in the Mississippi River Levees in the Fifth Louisiana Levee District area. The Vicksburg District plans to award two items of work

in Louisiana this year, Items 480-R and 485-R. Design is also ongoing on five additional items in Madison Parish which could be awarded in Fiscal Year 2002 provided rights-of-way and funding are available.

The Tensas Basin Levee District has an aggressive channel maintenance program. The effectiveness of this program is restrained by the expense of mechanical maintenance and the limitations of chemical maintenance. The Vicksburg District continues to investigate and evaluate maintenance options and techniques to assist the levee boards in providing cost-effective maintenance.

At the request of the Tensas Basin Levee District, the Vicksburg District recently completed the hydraulic analysis of the Little Bayou Boeuf project. This analysis does not show any need for major maintenance. A copy of the analysis will be provided to your levee district to assist in maintenance activities. We are hopeful that all project streams in the area can be reanalyzed in the next few years.

Thank you again for your statement filed for the record of our meeting. The Commission appreciates receiving your views and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public hearings.

Sincerely,

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