

Dear Ms. LeBlanc:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, on April 11, 2003. In your statement you discussed the need for large-scale coastal erosion projects to protect the residents, habitat, and infrastructure of coastal Louisiana from hurricane damage.

The Commission appreciates your support for the Louisiana Coastal Area and other large-scale restoration projects. New Orleans District continues to work closely with the State of Louisiana to develop comprehensive solutions to restore and protect the natural and human environment and create a sustain-able ecosystem for coastal Louisiana. The Comprehensive Study will present implementation and restoration solutions for the nine coastal basins of south Louisiana. A Preliminary Draft Report of the Comprehensive Study is scheduled for submission to our Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in June 2003 for review and approval.

We are also working on flood damage prevention projects, such as the Morganza to the Gulf of Mexico and the Donaldsonville to the Gulf of Mexico hurricane protection projects. Morganza focuses on hurricane flood protection for Terrebonne Parish, and Donaldsonville covers the Barataria Basin. The Feasibility Study for the Donaldsonville to the Gulf is scheduled for completion in 2005.

Morganza to the Gulf is awaiting Congressional authorization for construction. The Chief of Engineers' report on this project was signed on August 23, 2002. The National Economic Development

-2-

plan providing a 100-year level of protection has been selected as the recommended plan. The Pre-construction Engineering and Design (PED) phase for levees and floodgates is underway. The first construction contract is scheduled for award in Fiscal Year 2005, pending Congressional authorization, appropriation of funds for construction, and the execution of a Project Cooperation Agreement.

The PED phase for the Houma Navigation Lock is underway

and is scheduled for completion by October 2005. Besides permitting navigation in the Houma Navigation Canal, the lock will also prevent saltwater intrusion to preserve the freshwater supply for the city of Houma.

The Third Delta Conveyance Channel (TDCC), an initiative by the State of Louisiana, is in the feasibility stage. After review of the feasibility study, which is being prepared by an Architect/Engineer firm for the state, we will have a better understanding of the features and impacts. While we support the concept of large river diversions, we believe that it would be prudent to investigate alternative routes for the TDCC. The current proposed route will cause detrimental effects in the Barataria Basin. Guide levees will restrict the natural sheet flow, from north to south, in the basin. The cut for the channel will destroy a significant amount of diverse habitat. One possible alternative would be to move the diversion structure near Myrtle Grove. Water could be diverted from the west bank of the Mississippi River to Little Lake. This route appears to offer the same ecosystem restoration benefits to the Barataria Basin as the proposed action, but has fewer environmental impacts.

The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and looks forward to hearing from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

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