

Dear Mr. Matte:

Thank you for your comments during the Mississippi River Commission public meeting held in Houma, Louisiana, on August 23, 2002. In your statement you discussed several items of concern to the Atchafalaya River Coalition.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will continue to investigate and evaluate means to improve the operability of the channel at Morgan City and the problem of fluff. Placement of maintenance material on the west side of the cut should help the situation since the near-shore currents move from east to west.

The advanced maintenance test section is a series of five non-continuous 28-foot-deep sections that are currently being constructed in the bar channel in conjunction with the routine maintenance work. Authority was granted to the New Orleans District to conduct additional advanced maintenance for a one-time event. Since the District has just begun construction of the test sections, sufficient data has not been collected to either confirm or oppose the hypothesis that channel deepening improves operability, either by reducing redredging requirements or by providing the least overall cost.

The Corps has authority under Section 10 of the River and Harbors Act to request a pipeline owner to relocate his pipeline, at the owner's expense, if it is determined that the pipeline impedes the Federal Government from maintaining an authorized navigation channel. Currently, the most shallow pipeline located in the bar channel where maintenance is

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required is at elevation -27.2 feet Mean Low Gulf (MLG). Even with the presence of the pipeline, the Corps is able to dredge to -22 feet MLG, a depth which provides 2 feet of advanced maintenance in this area. Prior to pursuing actual deepening of the pipeline, the District must demonstrate that pipeline relocations are necessary and justified for maintenance of the existing channel. The results of the study being performed by the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center (formerly the Waterways Experiment Station) and the current monitoring of the channel will be utilized to make a determination.

The Corps initiated a 3-year feasibility study of the deepening of the Atchafalaya River and Bayous Chene, Boeuf, and Black project in May 2002. We will address navigation benefits and environmental restoration benefits in this study. There is potential for environmental restoration benefits from the beneficial use of dredged material.

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