

Dear Mr. Minsky:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting in Vicksburg, Mississippi, on April 4, 2001. In your statement you discussed progress of the Mississippi River Levee Enlargement program and mentioned problems associated with Item 501-R. You also noted successful maintenance to remove encroachments along the main line and Red River Backwater levees and expressed a desire to work toward solutions to maintenance problems along the Tensas River.

The Vicksburg District appreciates the support of the Fifth Louisiana Levee District, Governor Mike Foster, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LDOTD), and the Louisiana Congressional delegation in the progress on the Mississippi River Levees project. The Fifth Louisiana Levee District, along with LDOTD, has made the necessary rights-of-way available in a timely manner, and sufficient funding has been provided by Congress in the past few years to advance construction in the Lake Providence area. To date, 20.6 miles are under construction near Lake Providence with the remaining two reaches set for award this summer.

Item 501-R has been completed for several years, except for turfing. The Vicksburg District has been working with the contractor to get sufficient grass established so this reach can be turned back over to the Fifth Louisiana Levee District. The Vicksburg District has reviewed the area where you indicated that insufficient gravel exists and concurs in your conclusions. Sufficient gravel will be placed in the reach this summer. In addition, the levee slide you mentioned has been inspected and will be repaired this year.

Control of encroachments is a continuing problem for other levee boards as well. The Fifth Louisiana Levee District has made a concentrated effort the past several years to address these concerns and is commended for its efforts.

We recognize your desire to provide additional flood protection through maintenance of the Tensas River, Louisiana, project. Many areas are experiencing water supply and environmental needs similar to those present in the Fifth Louisiana Levee District. We appreciate your concerns regarding the optimum use of water to meet the needs of your area. While there is authority to conduct a study of the multiple needs of the area, there are not funds for such a study. If you are successful in your efforts to have funds added by Congress in Fiscal Year 2002, then the Corps will initiate the study upon receipt of the funding. If these funds are not added, there will be consideration of including funds to initiate this study in the initial budget request for Fiscal Year 2003. The receipt of funds, however, will ultimately be based upon national funding priorities.

Thank you again for your presentation before the Commission. We appreciate receiving your views and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

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