

Dear Mr. Minsky:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Vicksburg, Mississippi, on March 6, 2002. In your statement you discussed unparalleled progress on the Mississippi River Levee Enlargement program and steps toward keeping up with rights-of-way requirements to meet this pace. You also requested support and endorsement for legislation that would provide funds for a preliminary study to determine optimum use of water supplies, flood control, and environmental needs of the Tensas Basin.

The Commission is pleased with the progress being made in raising and strengthening the levees in your levee district. We appreciate your efforts with the state in securing the necessary rights-of-way and also funding required for these rights-of-way. However, there are still in excess of 100 miles of levee not up to section and grade. We are encouraged to hear that Item 503-R has been returned to the Levee Board for maintenance. This item had been the most deficient item in Louisiana for many years and was dramatized in the "Chocolate Tide" video as to what would happen if the levee should break in this location.

Item 487-R of the Mississippi River Levees project is up to final section and grade. We anticipate final dressing of this item and turfing to be completed in May. We appreciate your efforts in working with the Vicksburg District in solving the drainage problems experienced by those homeowners located along the toe of the new levee and berm. Once final turfing is established and the landside ditch is cleaned out and turfed, this problem should be eliminated.

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Construction is proceeding well on Item 480-R with the contractor 77 percent complete and ahead of schedule. Item 485-R was awarded late last year, and the contractor has cleared only the borrow areas. We anticipate both contracts will make progress this summer as stages on the Mississippi

River fall, thus allowing work in the borrow areas.

The Vicksburg District plans to advertise Item 461-R when right-of-way is provided by your board. The Corps appreciates the opportunity to perform the right-of-way surveys for the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) on both this item and Item 457-R. These surveys were completed in January 2002. The Vicksburg District has received the letter from DOTD approving the request to begin right-of-way surveys on Item 453-R using those funds remaining from Items 461-R and 457-R. This survey should be completed and forwarded to DOTD by early summer. The District is also starting design on other items such as 445-R and 450-R in the Tallulah area along with several items in the Vidalia area.

The Corps recognizes your desire to provide additional flood protection through new measures resulting from reconnaissance 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. The Vicksburg District was allocated \$100,000 in Fiscal Year 2002 to conduct a reconnaissance study of the Tensas River Basin, and the study was initiated in February 2002. Additional funds and time have been requested to expand this study to address the comprehensive needs of the basin. We will continue to coordinate with your board in addressing the basin's water resource needs.

Thank you again for your presentation. The Commission appreciates 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, Mississippi River
Commission