

Dear Mr. Mueller:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Memphis, Tennessee, on August 20, 2001. In your statement you discussed an alternative to the current agricultural irrigation proposal of switching from ground water to surface water in eastern Arkansas. You also discussed the restoration of the prairie ecosystem as part of the Grand Prairie Area Demonstration project.

Efficient and sustainable use of our natural resources is key to the prosperity of our nation. The overdraft of the aquifers is not sustainable. However, Arkansas is blessed with an abundance of rainfall, though not in the distribution and timing necessary for agriculture. This rainfall could be used to achieve a sustainable balance with ground water. The projects being planned by the Corps in Eastern Arkansas first seek to reduce demand by increasing efficiencies and storage, use ground water in a sustainable manner, and then find a source of excess surface water. The water being used for irrigation projects being developed by the Corps is excess to the needs of the source for water quality, fish and wildlife, and navigation as determined by the Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission. The primary difference in the planning of projects with Corps involvement and the Klamath basin in Oregon is that the needs of the river for water quality, fish and wildlife, and navigation must be satisfied before water can be withdrawn for irrigation. The Grand Prairie Area Demonstration project

illustrates that a plan can be developed to protect the aquifers and sustain agriculture without significant negative impacts to the environment.

We look forward to working with you, the project sponsors, and other interested parties in the development of additional environmental features for the Grand Prairie Area Demonstration project. The prairie restoration feature is currently being optimized along with additional features. The analysis is scheduled to be completed in November.

Thank you again for your participation in our public meeting. The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and will be pleased to hear from you at our future meetings.

Sincerely,

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