

Dear Mr. Neeld:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Hannibal, Missouri, on August 14, 2003.

In your statement you provided comments concerning three Upper Mississippi River System projects: (1) the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System Navigation Feasibility Study (hereinafter referred to as the "Navigation Study"), (2) the Upper Mississippi River System Flow Frequency Study, and (3) the Upper Mississippi River Comprehensive Plan (1999 WRDA Comprehensive Floodplain Study).

The Navigation Study has been restructured to give equal consideration to fish and wildlife resources and navigation improvement planning consistent with recommendations from the National Research Council and the Federal Principals Group. The primary goals are to reduce or eliminate commercial traffic delays and to improve the national and regional economic conditions while restoring, protecting, and enhancing the environment. The original study boundaries were extended to allow for the evaluation of management actions across the entire floodplain area. Floodplain issues as they relate to the navigation system have been identified and discussed with stakeholders, but they are not a primary area of concentration for Navigation Study alternatives.

-2-

Additional information concerning the Navigation Study can be found on the study's website located at: <http://www2.mvr.usace.army.mil/umr-iwwsns/>. Please refer to the July 2003 Status Report in the "Newsletters and Status Reports" section of the website for a detailed description of the tentative alternatives and the decision process that will lead to the selection of a final recommended plan. The full economic and environmental evaluations necessary to support a potential recommendation for construction of navigation improvements and implementation of ecosystem restoration measures will be completed by October 2003. These tentative alternative plans will be presented at a series of public meetings in October 2003 to gain public input prior to making a final recommendation. The September 2003 study newsletter, also provided on the

study's website in the "Newsletters and Status Reports" section, provides dates and locations for the public meetings. The final feasibility report is currently scheduled for completion in 2004.

The purpose of the Flow Frequency Study was to develop flow frequencies for the main-stem upper Mississippi, lower Missouri, and Illinois Rivers and to update flood profiles. Study products include updated digital floodplain elevation data, flow-frequency relationships, UNET hydraulic models, and stage-frequency relationships. New flood frequency water surface profiles will be used by the Corps of Engineers and other Federal and state agencies.

The updated flow frequency information is also being used to evaluate flood damage reduction needs on the upper Mississippi River along with alternative plans to address those needs. The primary emphasis of the Comprehensive Plan is flood damage reduction. It also will address Regional Economic Development using input gained at a series of recent meetings. The study team will continue to work closely with stakeholders regarding alternative plans.

The Mississippi River Commission appreciates your comments and concerns for the aforementioned studies addressing the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the Upper Mississippi River System. Corps personnel will continue to work closely with their partners and stakeholders to ensure that the Upper Mississippi River System continues to be a nationally

-3-

significant ecosystem and a nationally significant commercial navigation system as designated by Congress.

We look forward to hearing from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

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

River Commission