

Dear Mr. Neeld:

Thank you for your comments before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Davenport, Iowa, on August 13, 2002. In your statement you discussed your opinions of environmental management and completion of the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway (UMR-IWW) System Navigation Study and Comprehensive Plan.

The missions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have evolved over the years as directed by Congress, as have the ways of accomplishing those missions. Central to the water resource mission is the goal to achieve sustainable communities, economics, and ecosystems. Meeting these competing goals requires the Corps to balance the needs of flood control, navigation, environmental preservation and restoration, and the management of natural resources. The Corps is committed to reaching this balance in both the UMR-IWW System Navigation Study and Comprehensive Plan.

The UMR-IWW System Navigation Study has been restructured to give equal consideration of fish and wildlife resources and navigation improvement planning consistent with recommendations from the National Research Council and the Federal Principals Group. The restructured study will ensure the UMR-IWW system continues to be a nationally significant ecosystem and a nationally significant commercial navigation system as designated by Congress. The restructured study will address the navigation efficiency needs of the UMR-IWW, the ongoing cumulative effects of navigation, and the ecosystem restoration needs with a goal of attaining an environmentally sustainable

-2-

navigation system. 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 potential plans will be presented at a series of public meetings beginning in October 2003 to gain public input prior to making a final recommendation. The final feasibility report is currently scheduled for completion in 2004. For more information and details concerning the UMR-IWW System Navigation

Study, please refer to the Rock Island District website:
<http://www2.mvr.usace.army.mil/umr-iwwsns/>.

The Comprehensive Study is primarily directed to flood protection in floodplain terrestrial areas, though environmental protection and restoration will be considered where appropriate. In the report to Congress, recommendations will be made on existing management plans and actions to be carried out by the responsible Federal and non-Federal entities. Where feasible, specific recommendations will be made to authorize construction of a systemic flood control project for the Upper Mississippi River. Recommendations will also address the need for follow-on studies for problem areas where existing data or current technology do not allow an immediate solution. The report will be completed in the summer of 2004 with submission scheduled for December 2004 to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate.

Thank you again for your presentation before the Commission. We appreciate your concern, support, and interest in the viability, health, and sustainability of the Upper Mississippi River infrastructure ecosystem and 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