

Dear Dr. Movassaghi:

Thank you for the statement made on your behalf by Mr. Ed Preau at the public meeting of the Mississippi River Commission in New Orleans, Louisiana, on April 11, 2003. A copy of this letter is being sent to Mr. Preau. Mr. Preau presented comments on the following areas of concern or interest to your office:

- a. Discussed progress on the Louisiana State Penitentiary Levee and Donaldsonville to the Gulf Feasibility study.
 - b. Requested support for inclusion of Morganza to the Gulf in the next Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill.
 - c. Expressed concern about the vulnerability of south Louisiana from hurricane flooding and discussed the comprehensive hurricane protection study.
 - d. Discussed the status of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) project and requested support for a higher level of funding in FY 04.
 - e. Expressed concern and opposition to the Administration's transfer of civil work programs to other Federal Departments or by increasing the level of contracting out of services normally performed by the Corps' work force and about the Administration's proposal to use funds from the Inland Waterway Trust Fund to pay for operation and maintenance costs of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.
 - f. Urged that Homeland Security initiatives in south Louisiana do not draw our attention from maintaining the integrity of the Mississippi River levee system.
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- g. Requested support for higher level of funding for the entire Civil Works program in the New Orleans District.
 - h. Provided a copy of Louisiana's requested civil works budget and projects recommended for inclusion in the next WRDA Act.

The Commission is pleased that the Louisiana State Penitentiary Levee project was substantially completed in May 2003, ahead of schedule and below the estimated cost of construction. Currently, field data is being obtained for the hydraulic analyses, hurricane levee design, and economic analyses for the Donaldsonville to the Gulf Feasibility study. The study is on schedule for completion in September 2005.

Recent storms revealed the urgent need for hurricane protection for the residents of Terrebonne Parish. The Commission is aware of and encouraged by the degree of community and state support for the Morganza to the Gulf project and we are proceeding diligently with several Pre-Construction Engineering and Design initiatives, pending inclusion of the project in the next WRDA bill.

The New Orleans District has completed the Hurricane Protection, Louisiana, reconnaissance study report. The initial focus has been on the east bank of Jefferson Parish in order to utilize currently available information and thereby reduce the study time and cost. The District is working closely with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development in the development of a plan to provide protection from Morgan City to the Mississippi state line. This effort is underway, and we hope to complete the Project Management Plan by September 2003, if sufficient Federal funds are available.

The MR&T project is 87 percent complete. In Louisiana, approximately 114 miles of levee remain to be raised. Maximum deficiencies have been reduced from the 7- to 8-foot range to the 4- to 5-foot range, with the most deficient areas being raised first. As you are aware, the completion date of 2031 for the MR&T project was based on anticipated Congressional funding; however, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the levee boards have indicated the capability to complete the levee enlargement program by 2020. In the last several years, the levee program has been funded to its capability.

The Commission continues to hear from those who are opposed to the use of the Inland Waterways Trust Fund for

maintenance activities. The Commission has passed your concern and that of others up the chain of command to the Chief of Engineers and the office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works.

The Commission concurs that protecting lives and defending homes, businesses, and the infrastructure of south Louisiana from the ravages of floods is of paramount importance. The Corps continues to pursue levee construction and other flood damage prevention projects as high priority items within the overall appropriations.

The Commission shares your concerns about the need for higher level funding for the entire Civil Works program in the New Orleans District. We will continue to present your views about funding to the Chief of Engineers and to the office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. However, as you know, funding is ultimately based on national funding priorities. We appreciate your continued testimony before the House and Senate Appropriation Subcommittees regarding the need for funds.

The Corps will continue to work closely with the State of Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development on mutual project budget matters and projects to be recommended for inclusion in the next Water Resources Development Act.

Thank you again for the presentation at our New Orleans meeting. The Commission appreciates receiving the views of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and looks forward to hearing from you or your representatives at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

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