

Dear Mr. Rash:

Thank you for your testimony before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in West Memphis, Arkansas, on August 19, 2003. In your statement you described several active and future U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects in your levee district. You also expressed concern regarding the Fiscal Year 2004 budget request for the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) project, Tennessee Valley Authority evaluation of alternative reservoir operations, and outsourcing of Corps engineering positions.

The Commission is pleased that you are satisfied with the assistance, cooperation, and support that the Memphis District has provided.

Regarding Corps projects in your district, the Memphis District has completed the Blue Lake Relief wells and outlet ditch contracts. The modifications to the relief well collector ditch were initiated in September 2003 and should be completed by the end of November 2003. As you know, construction and weather problems with the Madison-Marianna Bridge Scour Repairs have impacted completion of this work. Work is underway to complete modifications for quantities and design changes. This work is scheduled for completion during the next construction season.

Right-of-way acquisition for the first item of channel work on Fifteen Mile Bayou is underway and construction for

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replacement of the U.S. Highway 79 Bridge at mile 15.8 and the St. Francis County road bridge at mile 13.8 has begun.

Two contracts are scheduled for award in late Fiscal Year 2004, based on current priorities and anticipated funding levels. This work may be advanced if additional funds are received. Those contracts are for lime/fly-ash stabilization of the Haleside Levee Slope at Mile 121 of the St. Francis Levee and channel cleanout of the Monterey-Princedale Ditch.

Plans and specifications have been initiated for the scour problems riverside of the levee near the West Memphis pumping station. Due to the extent and severity of the scour problems

and the potential to damage the main line levee, the Memphis District plans to repair the scour areas next construction season.

The Geotechnical Design Report for the Pecan Point Seepage study was completed in April 2003 with a recommendation of relief wells for seepage control. Plans and specifications for those wells were completed in September 2003. Right-of-way acquisition was initiated in July 2003 and a contract for construction of the wells and any related drainage works is scheduled to be awarded by the Memphis District in April 2004.

The Commission shares your concern about the potential impacts of the changes in the operation of the Kentucky-Barkley Reservoirs which are being considered in the Tennessee Valley Authority comprehensive study. We will continue to work with our staff and local interests to stay engaged throughout this investigation to make sure that the interests and needs of the lower Ohio and Mississippi Rivers are fully considered.

The Commission recognizes and appreciates the valuable contribution of partners such as the St. Francis Levee District of Arkansas in the execution of our mission. Your efforts to inform Congress of problems and needs in your area are an example of this partnership. The Commission and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are committed to continuous improvement in the execution of our mission through an adequate and capable work force to better serve the Mississippi River Valley and the Nation.

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The President has directed all Federal agencies to open as many commercially available services to competition through outsourcing as part of his Presidential Management Agenda to assure the best value to the taxpayer. The requirement is to compete the function, not necessarily to outsource. In competitions to date, the Federal agency has won the majority of the time. In implementing this program, the Corps has been sensitive to the needs of its missions, including the need to maintain a high level of technical expertise. The Corps depends on contractors to execute much of its work under the oversight of its engineers and scientists. Under the current plan to open certain functions to commercial competition, core expertise has been specifically exempted from competition.

The Commission appreciates receiving your views and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

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