

Dear Mr. Skerrett:

Thank you for your statement filed for the record of the Mississippi River Commission public meeting held in Houma, Louisiana, on August 23, 2002. In your submitted document you highlighted the importance of improving the Buffalo Cove Water Management Unit to local, state, and Federal stakeholders.

The Buffalo Cove Water Management Unit (Buffalo Cove) is the first of two "pilot" units that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is authorized to construct in support of the water management feature of the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System, Louisiana, project. To date, the Corps has advanced a plan for Phase 1 of Buffalo Cove that consists of constructing 10 elements within the management unit area. In accordance with the project authority, these elements are designed to introduce fresh water into the Buffalo Cove area in a manner that will enhance the aquatic environment within the area, thus prolonging the life expectancy of the productive aquatic and cypress tupelo habitat.

The Corps has held several meetings with our partnering resource agencies (Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Service, and Louisiana Department Agricultural and Forestry) to advance the goals and objectives for each proposed element. The New Orleans District is currently developing the necessary decision documents and draft

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Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) for Phase 1 of the Buffalo Cove unit. Construction of Phase 1 is scheduled for late Fiscal Year 2003, contingent upon approval of the decision documents, execution of the PCA, provision of sufficient funding and programming authority to the New Orleans District, and acquisition of the necessary real estate interests.

Thank you again for submitting your statement for the record at the Houma hearing. The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and looks forward to hearing from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

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