

Dear Ms. Stoller:

Thank you for your comments before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting in Davenport, Iowa, on August 13, 2002. In your statement you discussed many items of concern to the Two Rivers Levee and Drainage Association including natural resources for future generations, dredged material placement on levees, flood control, loss of levee integrity, and the problem of mosquitos in swamps and wetlands (primarily relating to the West Nile virus).

The U.S Army Corps of Engineers works within budgeted funds received from Congress each year for the maintenance of the 9-foot navigation channel. Thus, as a government agency accountable to U.S taxpayers and Congress, the funds received by the Corps must be spent responsibly. The evaluation process to determine the Corps' "base plan" or "preferred alternative" for dredging activities must consider operationally feasible and cost-effective placement options. Additionally, as stewards of natural resources, the Corps designs dredging activities in an environmentally responsible manner.

When the Corps considers dredged material placement on a levee adjacent to a dredge cut during our evaluation process, the previously mentioned criteria must guide that decision. Authorization for channel maintenance is not to strengthen, repair, or improve agricultural flood control levees, but rather to find the least costly, most environmentally acceptable placement site available.

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Operation and maintenance of locally owned levees is the sole responsibility of the local levee district. While situations sometimes allow placing dredged material along a levee, at other times analysis shows that placement behind the levee within a farm field that has been purchased, or at other locations, is the least costly, environmentally acceptable option. In any case, the dredged material is usually available to the local levee district for its use.

While protection of agricultural lands in the floodplain is important, wetlands are also an essential part of the floodplain ecosystem. A well functioning wetland will have a balance

between the number of mosquitoes produced and the population of predacious insects and animals that feed on them.

Through the Corps' ongoing investigations and efforts in the Comprehensive Study, Environmental Management Program, environmental impacts of dredged material placement studies, and the Dredged Material Management Plan program, we are striving to help our nation better understand, utilize, and conserve our complex river ecosystem resources. Agriculture has been, and will continue to be, an important partner in these efforts. The Corps has worked well with the Two Rivers Levee and Drainage Association in the past, and we look forward to continuing this work within the limits of our authorities.

Thank you again for your presentation before the Commission. We appreciate the support you have shown the Corps 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