

Dear Mr. Tamporello:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Morgan City, Louisiana, on August 22, 2003. In your presentation you discussed items of concern to your community and industry.

We are aware that fluff continues to be a problem in the Bar Channel reach of the Atchafalaya River and Bayous Chene, Boeuf, and Black. Historically, and during this fiscal year, funding appropriation for this project was not adequate to dredge frequently enough to keep the bar channel free of fluff and to perform routine annual maintenance in the other reaches of the navigation channel. Between October 2002 and February 2003, approximately \$10.4 million of the \$11.7 million that was spent on the Atchafalaya River and Bayous Chene, Boeuf, and Black project was utilized exclusively to perform maintenance dredging and to construct the test section in the bar channel. Another \$400,000 was spent to complete the fluff study.

In the bar channel where fluff is a problem, we measure channel depth acoustically and with a lead weight attached to a wire rope, also known as a lead line. The acoustic information provides the depth to the top of the fluff. Lead-line data reveal the depth to the hard bottom. Currently, the top of fluff in the bar channel ranges from -14 feet to -26 feet Mean Low Gulf (MLG), and the hard bottom readings range from -15.5 feet to -29 feet MLG.

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Since 2001, the New Orleans District personnel have rapidly investigated incidents of groundings in the navigation channel. While we are unable to address the two specific incidents you mention without the specific location of the groundings, District staff continue to follow up on reported groundings and channel conditions.

Your company reported a grounding in the Horseshoe reach of the channel on June 18, 2003. Additional funds were received in June of 2003 to prepare the channel for the transport of the Holstein Topside Component that is being fabricated at the J. Ray McDermott Fabrication Yard. Approximately 1 month after the reported grounding, the District used the additional funds

to dredge the Horseshoe reach. The work was completed on September 4, 2003. Dredging is currently underway in the Bayou Chene and Bayou Boeuf reaches. Work is scheduled to be completed in February 2004. Maintenance dredging in the Bar and Bay Channel reaches will be completed prior to March 2004 in order to accommodate the movement of the Holstein Component.

The New Orleans District continues to strive to maintain the 20-foot project with the funds that are appropriated annually by Congress. When additional study funds become available, we will continue to investigate and evaluate methods to solve the problem of fluff and to improve the operability of the channel at Morgan City.

The Commission appreciates receiving your comments 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