

Dear Mr. Wanamaker:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission (MRC) during the public meeting held in Mayersville, Mississippi, on August 20, 2003. In your statement you presented the items of interest or concern shown below.

2003 HIGHWATER

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers acknowledges your concern regarding buildup of drift materials and the value of the timber screen for protection of the levee.

MAINTENANCE LEVEL - MAINTENANCE GRAVEL

We appreciate your kind words regarding furnishing maintenance gravel for the main line Mississippi River levees. The Commission knows the importance of having a reliable levee roadway, especially during periods of high water. The Corps is committed to continued maintenance of levee roadways.

The Commission understands that levee slide repairs are critical to maintain the integrity of the Mississippi River levee system. The Vicksburg District conducted an inspection of the levee in May, and we anticipate that all slides should be repaired by December of this year.

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YAZOO BACKWATER PROJECT

The Vicksburg District has been working closely with the staff from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region IV, to address their wetland concerns in the Yazoo Backwater Area. This included 2 weeks of intense field verification of over 150 sites that EPA picked to verify on their e-map model. The Vicksburg District appreciates the effort of the Mississippi Levee Board (MLB) in securing the rights-of-entry on such a short notice so this work could be accomplished. We are optimistic that this effort will result in agreement by both agencies as to the number of acres of wetlands in the project area, how many acres are impacted, and the extent of the impact.

The Vicksburg District is continuing to work on completion of the Yazoo Backwater Reformulation report. The District has not only reworked the wetland analyses, but has undertaken a study of the endangered pondberry plant in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Vicksburg District has completed the analysis of an additional non-structural alternative, revised the economic analysis, and updated the cost of the project. Additional water quality studies were undertaken and completed. These additional studies were initiated based on comments received from the public review of the draft report. Once we complete the new wetland analysis, a new wetland appendix will be prepared and distributed to the cooperating agencies for review and comment. A final report will then be prepared and released to the public in the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2004.

BIG SUNFLOWER RIVER MAINTENANCE PROJECT

The Commission is also concerned about the restart of the Big Sunflower River Maintenance project. Over the past few years, the Vicksburg District has conducted the necessary studies to complete the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) as quickly as possible. The draft report is scheduled for completion in January 2004, with the final SEIS completed in July 2004. The Commission appreciates the MLB's continued support to provide this maintenance project for the south Delta region.

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MAINLINE LEVEE CONSTRUCTION

Regarding the Mississippi River Levees, the Vicksburg District has accepted Item 502-L recently and will be returning this item to the MLB. Items 477-L and 496-L are 49 and 93 percent complete, respectively. A contract for Item 488-L was awarded to Weeks Marine of Covington, Louisiana, and work is underway. Thank you for the extra effort necessary to secure the rights-of-way for this project.

UPPER STEELE BAYOU PROJECT

Acquisition of mitigation lands and phased levee construction continues within the Upper Steele Bayou basin.

Completed channel improvements in the project area have resulted in many positive benefits. Heavy rains this past year, which prior to channel improvements would have caused major flooding impacts in the Greenville area, resulted in no reports of flooding.

EOH ENERGY

The Vicksburg District will be ready to provide technical assistance during the design process of the planned ethanol plant to ensure that the integrity of the levee is not jeopardized. A Vicksburg District representative recently attended a meeting with the City of Greenville, Washington County, the engineers designing the ethanol plant, and the MLB. Once the design is submitted, we will provide comments through our usual process.

GREENVILLE CASTING FIELD AND BUILDINGS

On August 29, 2003, Mr. Fred A. Ballard signed the "Notice of Termination of Lease" for the Greenville Casting Field and buildings. By signing this, he agreed to the payment of \$50,000 for relieving the Government of the responsibility for removing the buildings from the property and relieving the Government from any and all liability and responsibility for such structures, fixtures, and leased premises.

CORPS REORGANIZATION

It is my intent to set up a conference call prior to the end of this year to discuss USACE 2012 with our partners.

In closing, the MLB is commended for efforts in educating the public regarding the problems and needs of the south Delta. We appreciate the support the MLB provided to inform Congressman Hobson, the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Energy and Water, during his recent tour of the area. We believe this tour will pay dividends in the future as both the Corps and MLB continue to update Chairman Hobson on the needs of the Valley.

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