

Dear Mr. Wanamaker:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting in Vicksburg, Mississippi, on April 4, 2001. In your statement you presented the following items of concern:

a. Discussed maintenance activities associated with the main-line Mississippi River Levees.

b. Commended the Greenwood/Greenville Area Office for a prompt response to high-water conditions on the Item 496-L construction area. However, you expressed dissatisfaction with the Vicksburg District's position on the slope for levee Item 496-L.

c. Pledged full support for the Big Sunflower River Maintenance project and expressed confidence that negotiations will proceed with disposal area options available to landowners.

d. Requested that the Corps assume responsibility for repair of the Shell Lake structure to maintain desired lake levels.

e. Stated that your Board will continue generating support for the Yazoo Backwater project.

f. Discussed your concern regarding the potential relocation of the Corps mat loading and grading unit from Greenville.

Due to the conditions you described along the main-line Mississippi River levees, the Vicksburg District has experienced a greater number of slides than normal. The District is

currently analyzing the options available to ensure that all of the critical slides, if not every slide, are repaired this season.

We appreciate the support of the Mississippi Levee Board on Item 496-L. As part of the contract on Item 496-L, the Vicksburg District, working with the Levee Board, developed the necessary flood-fight steps that would be taken should the river rise to certain levels. Having these steps included in the contract, along with having an exceptional contractor, has allowed the procedure to work well. The District is committed to working with the Mississippi Levee Board on the levee slope issues north of Mayersville. Additional meetings are being scheduled with your Board, the District, and the Mississippi Valley Division to address this matter.

The Commission appreciates the kind comments you made concerning the Vicksburg District and the progress made on the Big Sunflower River Maintenance project. You mentioned the success of the disposal facilities recently constructed on the Upper Yazoo project, and we share your confidence that once the first site is constructed on the Big Sunflower Maintenance project, future sites will be much easier to procure. The recent "Notice of Intent to Sue" from Earthjustice is reason for concern. However, we are committed to mitigating, as appropriate, adverse environmental effects in the pursuit of continuing maintenance of this project.

With regard to the Shell Lake/Clear Creek, which is a part of the Big Sunflower River project, we are pleased to report that the Vicksburg District staff is currently working to solve this problem. Field surveys by the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Joint Water Management District and design of the repairs by the Vicksburg District are underway. The District plans to re-build the deteriorated earthen plug and armor the structure and downstream energy hole with riprap and crushed stone. The District staff will keep you informed as this work progresses. This work is expected to be completed by the end of June 2001.

The Mississippi River Commission is highly appreciative to the Mississippi Levee Board for scheduling the tour of the South Delta and having local residents give insight into the problems and needs of the area. The Commission learned a great deal during this trip and has a greater appreciation for the needs

of the residents of the South Delta. The Commission supports the findings in the Draft Yazoo Backwater Reformulation Report because the recommended plan represents a balanced solution to the economic and environmental needs of the South Delta. The Commission will work to provide support to bring this project to fruition.

In January of this year, after consideration of findings by Management Analysis, Inc., the Memphis District Commander requested approval from the Mississippi Valley Division Commander to close the Greenville Engineer Yard (GEY), thereby physically transferring personnel and equipment of the Greenville-based mat loading unit to the Ensley Engineer Yard located in Memphis. The Memphis District requested that this action be taken to improve operational efficiency and reduce overall program costs. The Corps mat casting field, an unmanned facility also located in Greenville, still has a large inventory of concrete mat that will be used to supply revetment needs for at least the next 5 to 8 years. The District's request to close GEY has been reviewed by the Division staff. However, at this time, the Division has not approved the request as we continue to evaluate the input we have received before making a final decision. The Memphis District staff will contact you when a decision is made.

Thank you again for your comments before the Commission. We appreciate receiving your views and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Edwin J. Arnold, Jr.
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
President Designee, Mississippi
River Commission