

Dear Senator Wooldridge:

Thank you for your statement before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting in West Memphis, Arkansas, on August 20, 2002. The Commission appreciates your warm welcome to Northeast Arkansas and acknowledges your support for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' work in Arkansas. In your statement you referenced the shortage of groundwater and the need to maintain groundwater for the state of Arkansas.

The Commission recognizes the importance of clean and abundant water. The Corps currently has the Grand Prairie Basin Demonstration project and the Bayou Meto Region General Reevaluation underway. These projects will address aquifer protection, water conservation, agricultural water supply, flood protection, and environmental protection and enhancement. They will utilize excess surface water from the White and Arkansas Rivers to alleviate the need to totally depend on groundwater from the Mississippi Valley alluvial aquifer and the deeper sparta aquifer.

Unfortunately, the President's budget request for Fiscal Year 2003 does not include funding for these projects. The budget request for the Mississippi River and Tributaries project focuses on its main-stem components and studies and projects whose outputs are related to flood control, navigation, and environmental restoration. House and Senate actions on the Fiscal Year 2003 appropriations have not been completed; however, funding for the Bayou Meto Reevaluation is included in the House and Senate bills.

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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