



News Release

US Army Corps of Engineers®

Mississippi Valley Division/
Mississippi River Commission
cemvd-pa@mvd02.usace.army.mil

Release #: 03-02
For Release: April 8, 2003
www.mvd.usace.army.mil

Contact: Public Affairs Office
Phone: 601-634-5760 / 7783

MRC High-Water Trip Report #1

ON BOARD THE MOTOR VESSEL MISSISSIPPI, APRIL 7, 2003 – Citing a spirit of cooperation, Brig. Gen. Don T. Riley, president-designee of the Mississippi River Commission, opened the first session of the twice-annual inspection trip at Cape Girardeau, Mo.

This High Water Inspection Trip is an opportunity for the commission to meet with concerned citizens, stakeholders and partners along the lower Mississippi River to hear their concerns and receive input and feedback from the public who attend the four scheduled public meetings held along the river.

“It is absolutely essential that we listen to the public, and this is an extremely important process,” said Riley during his opening presentation to those assembled at the meeting on board the MV Mississippi. “It truly takes a nation to manage this vital asset, and we are not in this alone.”

The Mississippi River Commission’s primary functions include recommendations of policy and work programs, the study of and reporting upon the necessity of modification or additions to the flood protection and navigation project, as well as recommendations upon matters authorized by law, and making these semi-annual inspection trips.

-more-

The commission is comprised of seven Presidential-appointed commissioners, with the president of the commission wearing a dual-hat and also serving as the Commander, Mississippi Valley Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in past years. One of those long-serving commissioners, Mr. R.D. James, of New Madrid, Mo., received congratulations repeatedly by those speaking to the commission, on his reappointment by the President to another term on the commission.

The topics of those addressing the commission at this first stop focused primarily on flood control, environment and ecosystem management of the river, as well as the impacts of navigation restrictions on commerce. Critical among those issues addressed were the St. Johns Bayou and New Madrid flood control projects.

Mr. Lloyd Smith, representing Congresswoman Joe Ann Emerson's office, spoke to the commission about the need to balance the needs of endangered species with those of the human species.

"Flood protection is not flood control – it's about protecting people," said Smith.

Dr. Martha Ellen Black, director of the Susanna Wesley Family Learning Center, spoke to the commission on the impacts of flooding in the area from the "victims" standpoint. To emphasize her points that the center's interest in the St. John's project has a victim's element to it, she brought along and introduced her victims' rights counselors to the commission.

One of the more lengthy discussions with the commission focused on the impacts of low water on both the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Mr. Michael Wells, director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, spoke at length of the ties between the two rivers, particularly in the area of commerce. He assured the commission of Missouri's intent to resolve the dilemma facing balancing the management of water release and water flow, citing specifically that there has to be a balance of all requirements for the river with no particular interest outweighing the others.

At the conclusion of the first public meeting, each of the commissioners addressed the audience, particularly citing the spirit of cooperation. Brig. Gen. Riley assured the attendees that their voices and concerns would be heard up and down the river, citing the necessity to ensure that balance pointed out by many of the presenters.

“Many of you may not know that the motto of the Corps of Engineers is Essayons – Let us try,” said Riley. “We also have an Army motto called ‘HOOAH!’ The essential message is that we are not in this alone, and it truly takes a nation to manage this great national treasure.”

Following the conclusion of the first public meeting, the MV Mississippi departed for New Madrid, Mo., while the commission toured many projects in the St. John's and New Madrid area.

The commission holds its next public meeting today at Mud Island in Memphis.