



News Release

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MRC High-Water Trip Final Report # 4

VICKSBURG, Miss., April 15, 2003 – Capping off a weeklong inspection tour by the Mississippi River Commission, Brig. Gen. Don T. Riley, president designee for the commission, opened the final meeting of the commission last Friday complimenting the number of witnesses seen so far at the three previous public hearings on the High-Water Inspection Trip.

“I can tell you at our three meetings so far, the input received to date has been extremely beneficial to the commission in gathering facts,” said Riley. “Those meetings have allowed the commission to personally engage our stakeholders. And I want to reemphasize the importance of this process.”

Riley went on to discuss the critical tenants under which the Corps of Engineers in the Mississippi Valley operate, focused primarily basing decisions on the best available science, maintaining the integrity of the process, being candid with stakeholders sooner than later, not raising expectations above what can be delivered, and delivering what is promised.

Among the numerous missions performed by the Mississippi Valley Division while supporting the mission of the Mississippi River Commission are urban and rural flood damage reduction, navigation, environmental protection and restoration, emergency management and recreation. The commission has authority for the entire Mississippi River from its headwaters at Lake Itasca, Minn., to Head of Passes, La., where the Mississippi empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

Emphasizing how critical the impacts of the Mississippi River on the rest of the nation at the New Orleans public hearing was Mr. Martin Cancienne from Congressman Billy Tauzin's office.

"Sixty-two percent of imports through the ports of New Orleans impact on other cities along the tributaries of the U.S.," said Cancienne.

Cancienne also emphasized the importance of the ongoing work in support of the Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration Comprehensive Study Plan that dominated the hearings.

"How can the American public know what we are talking about if they haven't seen it? Whose fault is that? Maybe it's ours because we haven't done a good job educating people."

This national restoration project was also the focus of an extensive Regional Working Group bringing in federal, state, local and private partners to begin dialogue on restoring the loss of the Louisiana coast.

Critical comments made at the public hearing were also focused on the impacts of Hurricane Lili and the real issues confronting the coastal areas in hurricane protection.

“If the Midwest is the breadbasket of the nation then Southern Louisiana is the seafood platter,” said Mr. Windell Curole, chairman of the South Lafourche Levee District.

Speaker after speaker went on to emphasize how important the mission of hurricane protection is to the citizens of Southern Louisiana, and each one of the commissioners guaranteed their support to the audience to continue to push for funding of the many worthwhile projects.

Brig. Gen. Riley closed the High-Water Inspection Trip thanking those in attendance at the final hearing for their positive comments on the work of the MRC and Corps.