



*Remarks by Major General Phillip R. Anderson,
Commander, Mississippi Valley Division,
at the Listening Session, Mississippi River Partnering
Conference, St. Louis, Missouri, 16 June 2000*

Good afternoon. On behalf of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a whole, and particularly the Mississippi Valley Division, I want to offer you my sincere thanks for being here today.

Let me start by welcoming the distinguished guests joining us today: From the Mississippi River Caucus -- Representative Ron Kind (and Mr. Allen Hance) from the 3rd District of Wisconsin; Mr. Lloyd Smith, chief of staff for Representative Jo Ann Emerson of the 8th District of Missouri; Mr. Thomas M. Horgan from Representative Jim Talent's office of the 2nd District of Missouri; and Mrs. Kelley Hankins representing Tennessee Senator Fred Thompson's office.

In addition, we also have with us Ms. Marie Therese Dominguez, Principal Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, and Dr. Kathleen Peroff, Office of Management and Budget, Deputy Associate Director for the Energy and Science Division.

You are giving us in the Corps of Engineers the opportunity to gain a better understanding of what's important to you regarding the nation's water resources.

One of our key functions as a Federal agency is to listen and be responsive to you - the Nation we serve. And that is what this session is about. In fact, this is one of many listening sessions the Corps is hosting across the nation.

Before we start, I want to be very clear about our purpose here. Our primary goal is to learn what you believe are the important water resource challenges facing our nation. As you might imagine, we in the Corps have spent a good bit of time thinking about this. Why? Well, partly to fulfill requirements from Congress as part of the Government Performance Review Act, but more generally as part of our own long-term planning.

As you all know, the Corps has done a lot of work in our almost 200 years serving the nation. — We've reduced flood damages that our citizens must endure, we've deepened rivers and harbors to help the cargo move and strengthen the economy, and just lately we've been working hard restoring the environment.

But, we still hear from many of you on an almost daily basis about more needs, more problems on which you need federal help.

We've collected some of those and we've grouped them into six areas, or challenges. These are described in this *Join the Dialogue* brochure (hold it up). Hopefully you already have one; there are some additional copies (point out where the stack in the room is located). You also see the challenge areas represented on these banners (point to the banners hanging on the wall).

And so that's what we're here to find out about. Have we heard you right so far? Are these the areas that are important to the nation's future? Can you tell us more about them.

We propose these six issue areas as a starting point. Do you see these as important challenge areas? Are there other challenge areas you see? What might be the appropriate role of the federal government in addressing them?

Obviously, these are national issues. But we know that you'll need to talk about some of these issues in terms of your local problems and the examples you see every day. That's fine, because when we compile all of this information we'll have a better idea of how your individual problem is repeated across the land.

Your work today will be compiled into a report. That report will be posted on our national challenges web-site.

The back of the *Join the Dialogue* brochure shows the web site address. Results from all the sessions across the country will be used to form a composite report to be shared with you, the folks we work with in the Executive Branch, the Congress and other decision-makers.

Our intent is that the information and priorities you provide will help decision-makers understand what's most important regarding the nation's water resources.

I am excited and honored to have you here, and my staff and I look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas.

Here to help with that process, we have a professional facilitator, Jim Creighton -- Jim would you please stand. Jim is a nationally recognized, expert facilitator. He'll be running the session and will explain the ground rules and how it's all going to work.

So thank you again for coming. Jim, let's start.