



*Remarks by Brigadier General Don T. Riley,  
Commander, Mississippi Valley Division, at the New  
Orleans District Partnering Conference, New  
Orleans, Louisiana, 8 January 2003*

PLEASED TO BE A PART OF THIS CONFERENCE DESIGNED AS A FORUM FOR STRENGTHENING THE UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THOSE OF US INTERESTED IN SECURING A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY WATERSHED.

PARTNERING MEETINGS LIKE THIS ARE IMPORTANT:

- GET TO KNOW THE PLAYERS.
- UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES.
- GO TO WORK ON SOLVING PROBLEMS AT THE RIGHT LEVEL IN THE RIGHT WAY.

AND TEAMWORK IS ESSENTIAL FOR RIVER MANAGEMENT TO SUCCEED.

NOW, THERE'S A QUOTE OR TWO ON THAT TOPIC FROM MARK TWAIN.

IN HIS BOOK *LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI*, TWAIN SAYS: “MISSISSIPPI IMPROVEMENT IS A MIGHTY TOPIC, DOWN YONDER. EVERY MAN ON THE RIVERBANKS, SOUTH OF CAIRO, TALKS ABOUT IT EVERY DAY . . . AND EACH OF THE SEVERAL CHIEF THEORIES HAS ITS HOST OF ZEALOUS PARTISANS; BUT . . . IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO DETERMINE WHICH CAUSE NUMBERS THE MOST RECRUITS.

“WHEREVER YOU FIND A MAN DOWN THERE WHO BELIEVES IN ONE OF THESE THEORIES YOU MAY TURN TO THE NEXT MAN AND FRAME YOUR TALK UPON THE HYPOTHESIS THAT HE DOES NOT BELIEVE IN THAT THEORY . . . “ [P A U S E]

SOUND FAMILIAR? IT SHOULD. THE IDEAS AND THEORIES AS HOW BEST MANAGE THE MISSISSIPPI RUN THE GAMUT TODAY, JUST AS IN MARK TWAIN'S DAY.

AND WE USE FORUMS SUCH AS THIS TO DISCUSS MANY DIVERSE IDEAS AND THEORIES. ONLY THROUGH COLLABORATION WILL THIS GREAT NATIONAL RESOURCE RECEIVE THE BALANCED MANAGEMENT IT DESERVES.

WE HAVE LAUNCHED INITIATIVES TO PARTNER WITH FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING AT BOTH EXECUTIVE AND STAFF LEVELS, TO INCREASE ONGOING DIALOGUE ON SENSITIVE ISSUES, AND TO OPTIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOINT VENTURES.

AS A RESULT, INTERACTION BETWEEN THE CORPS AND THE BROAD SPECTRUM OF RESOURCE AGENCIES IS, MORE THAN EVER, CHARACTERIZED BY CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE. WE DON'T WORRY ABOUT WHO GETS THE CREDIT (TURTLE ON A FENCE POST.)

A PRIME EXAMPLE OF THIS INTERACTION IS DURING THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION'S ANNUAL HIGH- AND LOW-WATER INSPECTION TRIPS.

THE PURPOSE OF THESE TRIPS AND THE PUBLIC MEETINGS CONDUCTED ARE TO LISTEN TO THE PUBLIC AND HEAR THE NEEDS OF THE NATION FIRST HAND. MET 700, HEARD 100.

OUR CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, LTG ROBERT FLOWERS, LIKENS THIS PROCESS TO "SHOWING OTHERS WHAT YOU HAVE ON YOUR DESK" -- KEEPING INFORMAL LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN RATHER THAN HAVING A REPORT OR DECISION DOCUMENT LANDING ON SOMEONE'S DESK THAT REPRESENTS A FAIT ACCOMPLI.

THE MISSISSIPPI IS A CORNERSTONE OF THE NATION'S ECONOMIC HEALTH AND NOURISHES THE VITALITY OF BOTH METROPOLISES AND SMALL HAMLETS ACROSS THE NATION.

WE ASK ALL CORPS PARTNERS WHO CARE ABOUT AND SHARE IN THE RIVER'S BOUNTIES TO BROADEN THEIR PERSPECTIVE AND CONSIDER THE ENTIRE RIVER BASIN AS A WATERSHED OF MULTIPLE AND VARIED INTER-RELATIONSHIPS.

LAST MONTH, I SPOKE HERE IN NEW ORLEANS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AMONG OUR PARTNERS. IN A SIMILAR VEIN, A WATERSHED IS ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS.

ACTION, REACTION, COUNTERACTION, ABSORPTION, DILUTION. HYDROLOGY, GEOLOGY, GEOGRAPHY, SOIL CONTENT, WEATHER, SEDIMENT FLOW, NUTRIENT LOAD, AND ON AND ON. IT IS A SYSTEM OF ECOSYSTEMS, AND MORE.

AND PROTECT INITIATIVES -- WHETHER ON THE UPPER OR LOWER MISSISSIPPI OR ITS TRIBUTARIES -- ARE NOT DISCRETE, LOCALIZED MATTERS. ANY ACTION WE TAKE HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ENTIRE SYSTEM.

YOU KNOW THAT BETTER THAN MOST.

YESTERDAY -- INTERVIEW WITH NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL -- TOLD THEM IT IS SAID THAT IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD. I SAY IT TAKES A NATION TO MANAGE THE MISSISSIPPI.

THE FUTURE OF THE MISSISSIPPI WATERSHED DEPENDS UPON UNITY OF EFFORT FROM HUNDREDS OF FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL, AND PRIVATE INTERESTS.

WE PLACE GREAT EMPHASIS ON CORPORATENESS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE THROUGHOUT THE CORPS.

YOU WILL SEE MORE EFFECTIVE HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL COORDINATION WITHIN THE CORPS -- AND WE NEED YOU ON THE TEAM WITH US.

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT TEAMWORK THAT DIDN'T GO SO WELL – (JOKE – SATAN AND ST. PETER – LAWYER & ENGINEER).

NOW, LET ME GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT WE ARE IMPROVING, AND YOU TRY TO GUESS WHERE I FOUND THIS LIST:

- COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING
- DEVELOPMENT OF COMMON VISION WITH CONSENSUAL BUY-IN AND SUPPORT
- CLEAR DELINEATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES AMONG PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS
- BALANCE AND EQUITY IN COMPETING INTERESTS
- INTEGRATION, ALIGNMENT, AND LEVERAGING OF AUTHORITIES AND RESOURCES
- PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING, INVOLVEMENT, AND SUPPORT

I PULLED THIS LIST FROM THE INTERIM REPORT ON THE UPPER MISS NAV STUDY - AND MANY OF YOU HAVE HEARD OF THIS CONTROVERSIAL PROJECT.

BUT I TELL YOU, THE TEAMWORK ON THIS PROJECT IS TREMENDOUS. ALL THE FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE NOW PULLING TOGETHER ON THIS VERY COMPLEX AND CHALLENGING STUDY.

THERE ARE STILL MANY CRITICS, BUT THEY ARE HAVING AN AWFULLY DIFFICULT TIME IN EFFECTIVELY ATTACKING THIS VERY CREDIBLE WORK.

AND THESE ARE THE KINDS OF THINGS I ASK YOU TO CONSIDER AND PUT PROCEDURES IN PLACE TO MOVE OUR WORK FORWARD.

ALL TOWARD THE GOAL OF A SUSTAINABLE WATERSHED WITH AN EFFECTIVE BALANCE OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS.

NOW, LET ME REMIND YOU OF SOME PARTNERING SUCCESSES HERE IN THE NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT:

**NAVIGATION PARTNERS**

**MISSISSIPPI RIVER MAINTENANCE FORUM**

THIS FORUM MEETS ONCE A MONTH TO PROVIDE PROJECT CONDITION STATUS, FUTURE PLANS FOR MAINTENANCE, GATHER FEEDBACK FROM OUR NAVIGATION CUSTOMERS, PARTNERS AND USERS, AND TO SOLVE PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, BATON ROUGE TO THE GULF OF MEXICO PROJECT AND MANY OTHER ASSOCIATED WATERWAYS.

**SUPPORT FOR OTHERS PARTNER**

**EPA'S AREA-WIDE OPTIMIZATION PROGRAM (AWOP)**

THIS IS AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAM THAT PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK THROUGH WHICH STATES MAKE POSITIVE IMPROVEMENTS IN THEIR DRINKING WATER PROGRAMS.

AND EPA RECOGNIZED THE SUCCESS OF THE CORPS/LDHH PARTNERSHIP AND HAS ENTERED INTO AN INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT TO PURSUE EXPANSION OF CORPS PARTICIPATION TO A NATIONAL LEVEL.

THE VISION IS TO REPRODUCE PARTNERSHIPS LIKE THIS, IN STATES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

**FLOOD CONTROL PARTNER**

**SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA (SELA) FLOOD DAMAGE REDUCTION**

ON THE SELA PROJECT, WE ARE IN A PARTNERSHIP WITH SPONSORS IN ORLEANS AND JEFFERSON PARISH WHO NOT ONLY HAVE CONSIDERABLE EXPERTISE REGARDING THE NEEDS OF THEIR PROJECTS, BUT ALSO FORMIDABLE POWERS OF

PERSUASION IN RALLYING ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT.

THE EFFORTS AT PARTNERING AND COOPERATION BY THE CORPS, THE SPONSORS, THE CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTORS, THE OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES, THE CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS, AND THE RESIDENTS AND GENERAL PUBLIC HAVE BEEN NOTHING SHORT OF AMAZING.

**ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION PARTNER**  
**INTERACTION WITH NON-FEDERAL SPONSOR LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (LADNR)-**

THE NON-FEDERAL SPONSOR FOR THE LCA PROJECT IS THE LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES.

SINCE THE PROJECT'S START IN FEBRUARY 2000, REPRESENTATIVES FROM LOUISIANA HAVE BEEN AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PROJECT DELIVERY TEAM.

**PLANNING ASSISTANCE TO STATES**  
**TRIBAL STUDIES**

UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE PLANNING ASSISTANCE TO STATES PROGRAM, ONE OF OUR SPECIAL CUSTOMER GROUPS INCLUDES BOTH THE CHITIMACHA (**chit-a-MA-cha**) TRIBE AND THE TUNICA-BILOXI (**TOO-ni-ka – ba-LUX-i**) TRIBE OF LOUISIANA.

THE DISTRICT INITIATED ITS PARTNERING EFFORTS WITH BOTH TRIBES IN THE MID 90'S AND HAS ESTABLISHED AND CONTINUES TO NURTURE A POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP BENEFITING BOTH THE TRIBE AND THE CORPS.

THE DISTRICT HAS PARTNERED WITH THE CHITIMACHA TRIBE UNDER NINE PLANNING ASSISTANCE TO STATES AGREEMENTS AND ONE FLOOD PLAIN MANAGEMENT SERVICES EFFORT SINCE 1995.

IN ADDITION TO THESE LOCAL EXAMPLES, HERE IS SOME OF WHAT I HAVE OBSERVED OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS:

- NAVIGATION AND AGRICULTURAL INTERESTS RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND RESTORATION,
- ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEED FOR A BALANCED PROGRAM OF RIVER MANAGEMENT,
- AND THE WATERWAYS INDUSTRY LAUNCHING A VIGOROUS PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM.

AS YOU CAN SEE, THERE ARE MANY EXAMPLES OF MAJOR INTERESTS SEEKING A BALANCED APPROACH.

FIRST AND FOREMOST, THE OVERRIDING RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CORPS AND ALL PUBLIC AGENCIES REPRESENTED HERE IS TO PURSUE THE BEST INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES AND ITS CITIZENS.

AND THROUGH THIS VERY MEETING, WE ARE STRENGTHENING IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS AND IMPROVING OUR PROCESSES.

BUT RHETORIC ONLY RESULTS IN GOOD FEELINGS AND WARM COMPLEMENTS. WHAT I ASK ALL OF YOU TO DO OVER THE NEXT TWO DAYS IS NOT TO PAY ALL THAT MUCH ATTENTION TO WHAT I SAY. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS WHAT **YOU** SAY AND DO. YOUR MAJOR ROLE IS TO MOVE THE BALL FORWARD – TOGETHER AS A TEAM.

WE ARE WORKING TOWARD THE SAME GOAL, AND WE ALL COME WITH DIFFERING VIEWS AND PRIORITIES. LET'S FIGURE OUT HOW TO TAKE OUR DIVERSE NEEDS AND USE SOME HEALTHY TENSION TO GET CLOSER TO WHERE ALL WANT TO GO – TOWARD A SOCIALLY, ENVIRONMENTALLY, AND ECONOMICALLY SUSTAINABLE WATERSHED.

MY PERSONAL THANKS TO ALL OF YOU FOR YOUR  
PARTNERSHIP, YOUR DEDICATION TO THIS GREAT RIVER, AND  
FOR ALL THAT YOU DO FOR OUR NATION.