



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**  
Memphis District

# News Release

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## Corps to begin half million dollar Mississippi River study

MEMPHIS, Tenn., January 28, 2008 – The Memphis District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is set to begin work on a major reconnaissance study of the lower Mississippi River. Titled the Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment (LMRRA), up to half a million dollars in Federal funds may be used to work in cooperation with Federal resource agencies and river border states that have joint responsibilities for its management.

“This is a great opportunity for us to work together as a broad-based team to determine the best ways to restore and benefit from this vital natural resource,” said Col. Tom Smith, commander of the Corps’ Memphis District. “We will be looking toward the future to ensure that the river can be used and enjoyed by the generations that follow us. This project will not impact the quality of the Corps’ Federally mandated navigation or flood risk management efforts.”

Section 402 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 authorized the LMRRA, which includes three assessments:

1. information needed for river-related management;
2. natural resource habitat needs; and
3. need for river-related recreation and access.

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The study area includes 954 river-miles of the Lower Mississippi River from its confluence with the Ohio River at Cairo, Illinois to the Gulf of Mexico and portions of seven states that border the river. Additionally, engineers and scientists will assess river reaches and adjacent floodplains within the Lower Mississippi River Alluvial Valley, such as the Mississippi River mainstem and tributaries south of Cairo, Ill., and in the Atchafalaya River Basin, that have commercial navigation channels.

“The river’s 2.7 million-acre leveed floodplain nearly equals the Florida Everglades in size and contains 1,600 floodplain lakes and 145 side channels encompassing more than 110,000 acres,” said Leighann Gipson, the Corps’ project manager. “The Lower Mississippi River remains one of the most productive freshwater ecosystems in the world.”

Ultimately the study will also provide a blueprint for future restoration of the river's natural resources and allow riverside communities to develop locally led plans to entice nature tourists to economically deprived rural areas in the Lower Mississippi Valley. Tourism and outdoor recreation are major industries worldwide. International tourism generates \$2 billion daily and arrivals are projected to reach 1 billion annually by 2010. A recent study found that outdoor recreation is a \$628 billion industry and accounts for 1 in 17 jobs in the United States. Ron Nassar, Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee Coordinator, notes that "The Lower Mississippi River region's natural resources, history, and culture represent a virtually undeveloped, non-exportable industry."

The Corps will work on the study collaboratively with the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Commission, two U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regional offices and a variety of resource agencies in seven states. Other key public and private stakeholders are expected to join the effort as the study moves forward.