

**Ascension Parish - Environmental Infrastructure
Signing Ceremony
Comments for Col. Peter Rowan
August 5, 2002**

Good morning. It is a pleasure to be here today. It's quite an achievement for all present to be taking part in a ceremony that will improve water-related infrastructure, and hence, the environment, in south Louisiana.

Let me start off by recognizing our Congressional delegation. They have been steadfast in their efforts to secure funding for this program. In particular, I would like to express gratitude to Senator Mary Landrieu for taking a personal interest.

I'd also like to thank Harold Marchand, Ascension Parish president; Thomas Pierce, chairman, Ascension Parish Council; Adrian Thompson, chairman, Ascension Parish Sewer & Water Committee; and all the other distinguished guests whose diligent efforts have guided us to this point.

And last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank the Lamar Dixon Exposition Center and the Lamar Dixon Foundation. This project would not be possible without their considerable assistance.

This ceremony serves to mark the initial cooperation between the New Orleans District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and local governments under authority granted by Section 219 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1992.

This act authorizes the Corps to provide up to \$90 million dollars in assistance to nine Louisiana parishes and the city of Kenner for water-related environmental infrastructure and resource protection and development projects. That includes wastewater treatment and related facilities, and water supply, storage, treatment and distribution facilities.

The New Orleans District is presently executing agreements with Ascension, East Baton Rouge, and Livingston parishes who share a joint authorization of \$20 million dollars under Section 219.

Initial efforts in Ascension Parish include a study to determine if it's in the best interest of the parish to acquire a current wastewater treatment facility or relocate and build a larger facility on land donated by the Lamar Dixon Foundation.

The Ascension Parish project is the first in what we hope will be a growing mission in the Section 219 program. The project offers us the chance to capitalize on the synergy generated by a unique partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Ascension Parish and the Lamar Dixon Exposition Center.

The possibility exists for us to develop a project that can act as a cornerstone for Ascension Parish's wastewater treatment efforts for many years to come. Public benefit will include improved water quality in the state's receiving waters, particularly lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain, the Mississippi River and eventually the Gulf of Mexico.

The Chief of Engineers recently issued the Corps' Environmental Operating Principles. Today's signing ceremony reaffirms our commitment to sound environmental practices. Together with our partners, we will work to provide a healthy environment for all who call Louisiana home. Thank you.