

**2002 Economic and Environmental  
Analysis Conference  
Comments for Col. Peter Rowan  
July 16, 2002**

Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to start my tour as district engineer of the New Orleans District by welcoming distinguished guests and participants to this conference and to New Orleans.

Like many of you, I'm a recent arrival to the city. My family and I are excited to be here and look forward to learning all that this great city has to offer.

One thing I've already ascertained however is that New Orleans and south Louisiana provide the Corps with a lot of challenges and opportunities to address pertinent economic and environmental issues relative to our projects. The area is a veritable showcase for sustainable development when one considers the enormity of our environmental, flood control and navigation missions.

How appropriate then that General Flowers chose to introduce his seven Environmental Operating Principles on a recent visit to south Louisiana. On March 26<sup>th</sup>, the chief attended two dedication ceremonies, both significant ecological projects that will benefit the environment for years to come. They represent to the rest of the nation what can be accomplished when citizens, their governments and interested organizations come together with a shared vision and common goals.

The first ceremony was for the Blackwater Conservation project in Baton Rouge. The district transformed an abandoned dirt mine with minimal environmental value into a 62-acre nature park and in the process, provided a habitat that offers tremendous environmental benefits, biodiversity and recreational opportunities to its users.

This was a project of many firsts. It is the first Continuing Authorities Project of its kind in the Mississippi Valley Division to go to construction and one of the first to be completed in the entire Corps of Engineers. It is also the first non-coastal restoration project by the New Orleans District.

And it was at Blackwater that Gen. Flowers filmed a video announcing his Environmental Operating Principles – a video that is required viewing for every employee of the Corps of Engineers. These environmental operating principles will provide the Corps with direction on how to better achieve its stewardship of air, water and land resources, while demonstrating the connection between water resources and protection of environmental health.

Currently, nowhere in this nation is the relationship between water resources and protection of the environment more significant than here in south Louisiana. The state is experiencing the highest rates of coastal land loss in the country, losing 25 to 35 square miles per year. Diverting fresh water from the Mississippi River is considered by many to be the most effective means of halting the loss and restoring Louisiana's coastal ecosystem.

General Flowers' second stop that day was to the dedication ceremony of the Davis Pond Freshwater Diversion Project. Davis Pond, like the Caernarvon freshwater diversion project built in 1990, imitates historic spring overflows, providing a controlled flow of fresh water, sediments and nutrients from the Mississippi into targeted basins.

Diverting fresh water will restore former ecological conditions by combating land loss, enhancing vegetation and improving fish and wildlife habitat.

The chief unveiled his Environmental Operating Principles to the public at Davis Pond, making evident the direction the Corps will be taking henceforth to achieve greater synergy between environmental sustainability and execution of USACE civil works and military activities.

The challenge for us is to assure that everyone across the Corps adjusts their awareness of the economic and environmental importance in making daily project decisions. The Blackwater video on the environmental principals will aid in that endeavor.

What makes the challenge so appealing is that we're all in the right place at the right time with the right people. Concern for our environment, for our nation's natural resources, for our children's future, will enhance and strengthen our resolve to blend economic and environmental solutions in carrying out our ecosystem restoration mission.

In closing, I charge each of you to enthusiastically embrace your role in the environmental stewardship of this Nation and adopt the Corps' efforts in effectively utilizing our water resources while restoring and protecting the beauty of our natural world.