

**Blackwater Conservation Dedication Ceremony**  
**Remarks for Col. Tom Julich**  
**March 26, 2002**

*Final*

Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to be here today as we dedicate the Blackwater Conservation Area Project. This project is the result of the great partnering efforts between Mayor President Bobby Simpson of Baton Rouge, the Corps, and Eugene Young of BREC. I am pleased to have Lt. Gen. Bob Flowers, the Corps' Chief of Engineers, here to participate in such an environmentally rewarding project.

Blackwater Conservation Area is one of many firsts for the Corps and the New Orleans District. This project is the first 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.

The project raises the bar on swiftness of project execution. I attribute the quick turnaround time to the hard work of our sponsors – the City of Baton Rouge, the Parish of East Baton Rouge and the Park and Recreation Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge. The transformation of an abandoned dirt mine into a 62.5-acre nature park in such a short time is quite remarkable.

Thanks also go to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and the Department of Environment Quality for their advice and assistance. Our thanks are also extended to the Mississippi Valley Division in Vicksburg and our headquarters in Washington for their guidance and support.

In addition, I'd like to recognize the district's Hired Labor Unit D for their part in creating this environmental haven. These are the guys who stabilized the channel and moved the earth, 50,000 cubic yards of it to be exact, to build the lakes and the island. We depend on these guys to make quick work of complicated projects and we appreciate them for that.

The park's site originally hosted a river-forest system with freshwater swamp lakes and bottomland hardwood. These features were destroyed by mining activities in the 1980s.

Today we are celebrating an exciting new habitat consistent with the Comite River Basin, one that will provide the greatest amount of environmental benefits, bio-diversity and recreational opportunities.

Blackwater Conservation Area boasts 7,000 trees representing 16 native species, nine acres of lakes, and areas to be used by children for education, nature interpretation and enjoyment. Blackwater will provide for public recreation, as well as habitat for many forms of fish and wildlife.

While structural projects are built with a specific life span in mind, protected ecosystem restoration projects like Blackwater can last forever. We consider this a long-term investment that will provide dividends for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.

On that note, and with Blackwater designated as a natural area in perpetuity, the Corps and our partners agreed that it would be fitting to dedicate the park to those who perished on September

11<sup>th</sup>. The project was in the major construction phase when terrorists struck in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

Of the many who lost their lives, four called Louisiana home: Navy Lt. Michael Scott “Scottie” Lamana, Ret. Air Force Lt. Col. Robert Hymel, U.S. Naval Intelligence Officer Kevin Wayne Yokum and Phyllis Gail Rozas Talbot. Dedicating this park to them will be a perpetual reminder of their lives.

The combined effort of all involved in bringing this conservation area to fruition is symbolic of the American spirit. It is a spirit built on knowledge, expertise, resources and the will to restore areas such as Blackwater. It is a spirit driven to create a healthier environment for our citizens, and for America. We stand here today, saddened by loss, but full of hope for future generations. Blackwater is a symbol of that hope. Thank you.