



Maj. Gen. John W. Peabody  
*President*



Hon. Sam E. Angel  
*Member*



Hon. R. D. James  
*Member*



Hon. Norma Jean Mattei, Ph.D.  
*Member*



Rear Adm. Gerd F. Glang  
*Member-designee*



Brig. Gen. Margaret W. Burcham  
*Member*



Brig. Gen. Anthony C. Funkhouser  
*Member*



# Mekong River Commission Exchange

**May 10-23, 2013**

*Listening, Inspecting, Partnering & Engineering since 1879*



# Mekong River Commission Exchange

The Mississippi River Commission exchange with the Mekong River Commission (MeRC) May 10-23, 2013, was a major success, thanks to the commitment to engage by all of the civilian commissioners, support from multiple partners (National Great Rivers Research & Education Center, The Nature Conservancy, Engineer Research and Development Center) and stakeholders and hard work by the Corps' Pacific Ocean Division team, especially Lt. Col. John Heaton and Mr. Jim Ligh.

The commission's visit focused mainly on Laos and Cambodia, and to some extent, Vietnam. Myanmar and Thailand comprise smaller segments of the watershed that are situated off the main stem of the Mekong River. China has heavily dammed the upper river reaches and contributes roughly 15 to 17 percent of the annual water flow.

There is tremendous population pressure on water resources in the Mekong valley in Southeast Asia (more than 65 million people). The watershed provides essential capabilities to all inhabitants, especially as a food source (fisheries and rice paddies). Much of the population in the watershed lives through subsistence methods, especially local farming and fishing, and many earn less than \$80 USD per month. As such, the local countries are motivated to develop the potential of the watershed as quickly as possible.

Because the Mekong River is navigable mostly in its lower reaches below Phnom Penh in Cambodia, Laos is motivated to build dams to develop the enormous hydropower potential - potentially selling 95% of the power to Thailand - in its area where higher river gradients make this economical. Such development on the river main stem could dramatically alter the ecosystem and may have major undesirable consequences downstream in Cambodia and Vietnam, especially related to fisheries and sediment transport. During the exchange with the Mississippi River Commission, some of the members of the countries indicated a lack of further patience with studies or additional delays to proposed projects, especially in Laos, where several studies date back to 1950's.

The American Embassies in Laos and Cambodia expressed concern with the need for the Mekong to be developed in a sustainable fashion, and desire long-term Mississippi River Commission engagement to that end.

The Mekong River Commission is staffed by a number of highly experienced and competent locals and Europeans. They have developed a well-considered five-year strategic plan that captures the key issues they need to address with remarkable clarity. While the Mekong River Commission does not need much in the way of technical advice, it could benefit from periodic technical exchanges, as could the Mississippi River Commission

During the exchange, both river commissions agreed to focus our efforts in three ways:

1. By identifying common "synergies" to work together on.
2. By engaging local countries to illustrate the governance and engagement systems that the Mississippi River Commission applies.
3. By helping show MeRC member countries the kinds of modeling tools we use to assist in risk-informed decision making. We believe the best way for the Mississippi River Commission to provide optimal value is via direct contact with the appropriate country governing entities, while coordinating with the MeRC.

We had the right people to leverage non-governmental partners and research facilities to provide the U.S. State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development and the MeRC member countries the technical advice that we are funded to deliver and the relationship contacts that will help them as well. The Mekong River Commission will be in the Ohio Basin, Great Lakes and Ohio River Division's footprint in June 2013, and Mr. R.D. James will join them in Paducah, Ken.

## Overview of Needs

- Establishment of baseline conditions for fisheries, sediment, water quality and quantities at this point in time without dams across the main stem Mekong River ... to accurately assess the impacts of proposed changes to the system.
- One-on-one coaching through peer relationships with Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar.
- A public engagement system throughout the Mekong watershed to gather input from the people who are directly impacted and make that information readily accessible by all so that all countries can consider, understand, assess and move forward.
- Assistance on ways of effectively flushing sediment from behind dams.
- A better understanding of how the Mississippi River Commission uses its process of listening and partnering to develop engineering solutions to problems that often have competing demands. MeRC would like a modular training program in conflict management.
- Vetted procedures for “real time” and other data exchange.
- Leadership training.



## What we Heard

- “We want to see our country lifted out of poverty by 2020 by using our natural resources responsibly.”
- “You (Mississippi River Commission) bring different ideas with long-term public engagements and the consideration of many voices.”
- “We need proof points on why it is in our “country’s” interest to “get the investment in dams right.”
- “If our countries screw the river up there will be instability.”
- Lower Mekong Initiative “LMI” is needed and should be more strategically implemented.
- AusAID’s current focus is on helping keep member countries to work together productively.



# Our Team

## Mississippi River Commission Members



Maj. Gen. John W. Peabody,  
MRC President



Hon. Sam Angel  
Senior Civilian Member



Hon. R.D. James  
Civil Engineer



Hon. Dr. Norma Jean Mattei  
Civil Engineer



Mr. Stephen Gambrell  
Director MRC  
Civil Engineer



Mr. Chuck Shadie  
Hydraulics Engineer  
MRC



Dr. Dave Smith, Engineer  
Research and Development  
Center, Fisheries



Dr. Matthew Durnin  
The Nature Conservancy Asia  
& The Great Rivers Partnership



Dr. Dick Warner, National  
Great Rivers Research and  
Education Center &  
University of Illinois



Mr. Alfred Anakatsuma  
USAID Asia



LTC John Heaton,  
Pacific Ocean Division  
Liaison SE Asia



Mr. Jim Ligh through  
reach back at POD



## Summary of the Laos Embassy Update to USA by Matthew Kustel May 13-15, 2013



Maj. Gen. John Peabody, and Mississippi River Commission civilian members, met with Lao government officials and the Mekong River Commission (MeRC) Secretariat in Vientiane on May 13-15. Under the auspices of a sister river commission exchange visit, the delegation learned about Laos' hydropower development strategy, including plans for new dams along the riverine border with Burma and Thailand. Viraphonh Viravong, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Energy and Mines, reiterated the importance of hydropower to Laos' development, and asserted Laos would maintain its current dam construction strategy. In separate meetings, MeRC Secretariat CEO Hans Guttman and MRC members discussed the challenges of running a water management organization, and sought areas for further collaboration.

### *More Dams, More Cooperation with Upstream Neighbors*

Although Vice Minister Viraphonh repeated his talking points on Laos' hydropower strategy and the need to address poverty, he noted outside pressures had shifted his Ministry's priorities. Instead of focusing solely on economic needs, the Ministry of Energy and Mines now takes into account environmental impacts in order to meet sustainability criteria. Nonetheless, Vice Minister Viraphonh still views revenues from mining and hydropower as essential to sustaining Laos' economic growth, and told the delegation "large hydropower projects are becoming the norm," and "Laos cannot wait" to develop. While Vice Minister Viraphonh recognized the need for more scientific studies of hydropower's impacts, the focus on quickly leveraging natural resources in the name of development remains an overriding consideration.

Vice Minister Viraphonh said Laos is planning three mainstream Mekong dams along the Laos/Burma border, and two more along the Laos/Thailand border. The Laos/Burma dams will have a cumulative capacity of 2000 mW. Furthermore, Burma wants to join the Mekong River Commission, and the MeRC countries will give official approval soon, according to Monemany Nhoibouakong, Secretary General of the Lao National Mekong Committee (LNMC).

The MeRC countries are also seeking closer cooperation with their northern neighbor - the Secretariat is in discussions with China to obtain more detailed information about Chinese hydropower plans and operations. Vice Minister Viraphonh added that China's current practice of releasing of water from its upstream dams during the dry season is helpful to Laos, but he still expects more information about China's future plans.



# Summary of the Laos Embassy Update to USA by Matthew Kustel May 13-15, 2013 (continued)



## Opportunities for MiRC to Assist

Secretary General Monemany gave the delegation an overview of the Lao National Mekong Committee, which is currently chaired by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. She said it would be a “big challenge” to meet Laos’ development goals sustainably, and added that scientific findings must be complemented by talking to locals about the changes in the environment. Although hydropower construction is ultimately planned and overseen by the Ministry of Energy and Mines, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment runs the Mekong Committee and reviews hydropower companies’ Environmental Impact Assessments. MeRC member countries Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam each have Mekong Committees which meet annually to discuss lower Mekong issues, and subsequently farm out technical and administrative functions to the Secretariat.

In a separate meeting, MeRC CEO Hans Guttman said that member states’ priorities are to improve the environmental prediction capacity of the Secretariat. The CEO expressed gratitude for the partnership with the Mississippi River Commission, and agreed with Maj. Gen. Peabody and the commission members that key areas of focus could include exchanges on areas of mutual technical concern, modeling of key issues (such as infrastructure impacts on sedimentation and fisheries) and the Mississippi River Commission’s extensive public engagement process. Maj. Gen. Peabody, his delegation and three Presidentially appointed Mississippi River Commission civilian commissioners, highlighted the need for accountability and input from society during dam construction, and noted the commission could offer substantive technical assistance. Maj. Gen. Peabody invited MeRC member country senior authorities to join the Mississippi River Commission on its annual "low-water inspection trip" so water resource leaders can observe how the commission engages the public and balances competing interests and concerns. Furthermore, Guttman stated, despite the MeRC’s



development partners’ concerns about governance among the member countries, the MeRC’s true value is its ability to bring the countries together for discussions.



Monday, May 13, 2013

The Mississippi River Commission delegation met in Laos on Monday morning with U.S. Ambassador Madam Stewart and country team of the Defense Attaché Office and Matthew Kustel, Political-Economic Advisor.

Ambassador Stewart provided interesting insights into the MeRC and the dynamics with member countries. She also gave the delegates advice on handling sensitive questions. There was much discussion on Lao plans for hydropower dams and potential impacts and benefits.

Maj. Gen. John Peabody and the civilian commissioners held a short office call with MeRC CEO Hans Guttman. Afterward, the full Mississippi River Commission delegation and MeRC staff gathered for group discussions and presentations. The MeRC provided a series of briefings on basin development planning, MeRC procedures, sustainable hydropower development and climate change adaption. Maj. Gen. Peabody then discussed current challenges for the



Mississippi River Commission. Following the presentations, both commissions continued the information exchange with a lengthy question and answer session.

The MeRC hosted dinner for the Mississippi River Commission delegation at a local restaurant. Ambassador Stewart, members of the Embassy staff, Director Madame Monemany and Australian hydropower consultant Mr. Simon Krohn (Chief Technical Advisor, Initiative Sustainable Hydropower) attended the dinner, as well.





Tuesday, May 14, 2013

The Mississippi River Commission delegation met with Lao Mekong Committee Director Madame Monemany and her staff. She asked very insightful questions of the commissioners about the state and federal interaction in the United States, the budgetary process, the desire to work with MeRC and the Mississippi River Commission's expectations of this collaboration.

Afterward, the commission team traveled to the Ministry of Energy and Mines and met with Vice-Minister Viraphon Vilayvong. The Vice-Minister was a vocal advocate of Laos' hydropower policy and provided great detail on Laos' hydropower strategy for development. The commission and the Vice-Minister also discussed the United States experience with dams and dam safety challenges. Maj. Gen. Peabody specifically discussed the Corps' challenges with dam safety as it relates to aging infrastructure (many of the United States' dams are beyond their 50-year design life).

Following lunch with the MeRC, the commission delegation traveled for two hours to the Nam Ngum Dam site where operators of the dam gave a presentation on the hydropower activity and a tour of the facilities and reservoir. The delegation was also able to observe the natural occurrence of dramatic fish activity at the base of the dam on the downstream side.



Listening, Inspecting, Partnering, and Engineering since 1879





Tuesday, May 14, 2013

Mr. Alfred Anakatsuma, USAID Asia, indicated that in addition to the technical assistance work he has talked to the Pacific Ocean Division about, there is \$1 million that USAID will pledge to the MeRC to fulfill Secretary Hillary Clinton's promise to assist the Lower Mekong Initiative. This could be accomplished via the MiRC Memorandum of Understanding. USAID may be interested in using the funding on the fisheries/fish passage issue and would like the Corps to be involved. The issue would still need to be negotiated with MeRC at the upcoming donor meeting.

Lt. Col. Heaton (Pacific Ocean Division's Liaison with SE Asia) discussed with Mr. Anakatsuma the possibility of using the USACE Water Participating Agency Service Agreement for the technical assistance work, to which Mr. Anakatsuma was agreeable.





Wednesday, May 15, 2013

The Mississippi River Commission and MeRC met with the new Director for the Australian Agency for International Development Ms. Rachel Jolly. The MeRC gave a short presentation on their cooperation with AusAID and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), an entity that allocates water in the Murray-Darling Basin in Australia.



AusAID then gave a presentation on the MDBA and their cooperation with MeRC as well as information on the AusAID programs and funding to MeRC. Alfred Nakatsoma (United States Agency for International Development) was very appreciative of this meeting as he sees some synergies with their efforts. Hans Guttman suggested some key areas that

could be good for partnership and collaboration between the three basins. Governance and conflict resolution between stakeholders seem to be areas for cooperation and interest.

The MDBA and MeRC also have more in common, in that both are strictly governance bodies and do not operate infrastructure like the Mississippi River Commission with the Corps of Engineers. It was suggested a future MeRC trip to the United States should be timed with a Mississippi River Commission bi-annual inspection trip on the Mississippi River, to enable the MeRC to view the interaction with partners and stakeholders and observe our public engagement and governance techniques. In addition, the MeRC is interested in technical cooperation, especially with data gathering techniques for modeling and real-time data sharing.

Additionally, the MeRC is interested in updating the five-year plan/collaboration plan to account for areas of cooperation completed and address any new ideas.





Thursday, May 16, 2013

The Mississippi River Commission delegation met with U.S. Ambassador William E. Todd and Brig. Gen. Mark Gillette, Defense Attaché Office. Ambassador Todd gave an analysis on the dynamics of the region, emphasized his support of the Corps' efforts in the region and mentioned that he was interested in starting a dialogue with the commission following this trip.

The Mississippi River Commission will communicate "wins" to Ambassador Todd over the next few months. The commission plans to increase the dialogue with him and the Embassy on how the commission is helping and offering help to Cambodia through the exchange with the MeRC. The Mississippi River Commission will show current science and scenarios of what will happen short and long term based on current river and water resource decisions.

Following the meeting with Ambassador Todd, the commission delegation met with MeRC Secretariat Director Satit Phromchai in Phnom Penh. The MeRC gave presentations on Flood Management and Mitigation, Freedom of Navigation, Sustainable Fisheries and Knowledge Management and Sharing (Hycos).

After the MeRC presentations, Dr. Dave Smith (Engineer Research and Development Center) gave a fish modeling/fish passage presentation. The MeRC technical staff was very interested in these ideas and asked many insightful questions.





Thursday, May 16, 2013 *(continued)*

Next, Maj. Gen. Peabody discussed the Mississippi River Commission's current challenges. Open forum questions from the MeRC staff lasted another hour, with both river commissions dynamically engaged in the exchange.

The Mississippi River Commission then toured the flood management center. The center's functions are flood forecasting and flash flood guidance. It is a modern system which integrates National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration data, rain data and water levels from stations on the river and shows the data "real-time," within about three hours of taking.



Listening, Inspecting, Partnering, and Engineering since 1879



Friday, May 17, 2013

A formal meeting was held, led by Secretary General H.E. Te Navuth of the Cambodia National Mekong Committee (CNMC). Mr. Navuth gave an introductory speech, followed by Maj. Gen. Peabody's overview.

The CNMC then gave a detailed presentation on their role within the Cambodia government and their work with MeRC and other member nations.

Meeting with the CNMC included an hour of back and forth questions and dialogue between the commissions.

The CNMC was interested in how they can partner with the United States to improve capacity in terms of knowledge, technology and computer skills. Mississippi River Commission members stated that opportunities for scientific exchanges are possible. They also emphasized that the United States can learn important lessons about fisheries and habitat from the more natural state of the Mekong River.



Other issues and concerns brought up by the Cambodian National Mekong Committee included:

- Concern about upstream developments and impacts on the river, although Cambodia has development plans.
- Importance of power generation for their development and their country's growing demand for electricity. For emphasis, the power went out twice during this meeting.
- Discussion of water quality issues in Cambodia and the United States; e.g., United States' water quality standards, how the

United States regulates water and meets the challenge of regulating large scale distributed affects on water quality.

- Importance of fish production to Cambodia's food supply and their way of life.



Saturday, May 18, 2013

The following America's Wetland Foundation delegation joined Mississippi River Commission, MeRC and CNMC for an all-day site visit:

- Sidney Coffee, Senior Advisor, America's Wetland Foundation
- Karen Gautreaux, Director of Government Relations, The Nature Conservancy, Louisiana
- Jeffrey Buchanan, Senior Domestic Policy Advisor, Oxfam America
- Mrs. Rebecca Templeton, Executive Director, Bayou Grace Community Services, Chauvin, Louisiana
- Mr. Daniel Nguyen, Program Director, Mary Queen of Vietnam Community Development Corporation, New Orleans, Louisiana
- Mr. Jerome Zeringue, LaCPRA Deputy Director
- Dr. Steve and Ms. Linda Mathies



Listening, Inspecting, Partnering, and Engineering since 1879



Monday, May 20, 2013

## Site visit to Mekong Delta



Listening, Inspecting, Partnering, and Engineering since 1879



Tuesday, May 21, 2013



The Mississippi River Commission delegation met with the Vietnam National Mekong Committee. United States attendees included:

- Mr. King Milling, Chairman, America's Wetland Foundation
- Ms. Sydney Coffee, Senior Advisor, America's Wetland Foundation
- Mr. Jerome Zeringue, LaCPRA Deputy Director
- Ms. Karen Geautreux, Director of Government Relations, The Nature Conservancy, Louisiana
- Mr. Stephen Gambrell, Director, Mississippi River Commission

Other meeting attendees included: H.E. Dr. Nguyen Thai Lai, Deputy Minister of the Vietnam Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Truong Hong Tien (official liaison with America's Wetland Foundation / Mississippi River Commission / MeRC) and their team. Summary of the discussion:

- Vietnam's study on the impacts of mainstream hydropower dams on downstream areas will be shared with United States colleagues for information. The

study costs five million dollars (U.S) for international consulting services with a start date of June 2013.

- During the course of the Vietnam study's implementation, the Vietnamese will send reports of intermediate results to the United States for comments;
- The United States will consider sending experts/specialists to Vietnam for supporting the Vietnam study as well as share knowledge and experiences in sustainable management and development of the deltas.
- The United States will consider providing financial support (through Pacific Ocean Division's lead and approved engagement strategies) for organizing small workshops aimed at creating opportunities for different regional and international organizations who are carrying out the research on the Mekong River basin to discuss and share results of their research.





Tuesday, May 21, 2013 *(continued)*

Response by Mr. Val Marmillion, Managing Director, America's Wetland Foundation (AWF), and Mr. Stephen Gambrell expressed AWF's pleasure to support collaboration to assist Vietnam with a quantitative assessment of impacts that programs in the Mekong watershed and delta might have on the future of the Mekong delta and ecosystem. The America's Wetland Foundation agreed to the aforementioned items and understands that our help might also include the following:



- Organize compilation and interpretation of existing studies on downriver impacts from upriver structures, in the context of trans-boundary cooperation drawing context from the Mekong, Rhine and Mississippi Deltas and river systems. Tell the story gathered from the real reports that provide scientific proof of impacts.
- As Vietnam progresses with their assessment, provide peer review from the United States and Dutch scientists in an ongoing exchange.
- Host workshop in Washington, DC, or New Orleans, La., that brings small groups of scientists together with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to offer initial survey of existing studies and to chart a continuing schedule for exchange of information.



- Help organize ways to share proof of impacts with other countries in the Mekong watershed that show not only impacts to the delta, but how negative impacts on the delta have consequences for all countries and interests of the river system.

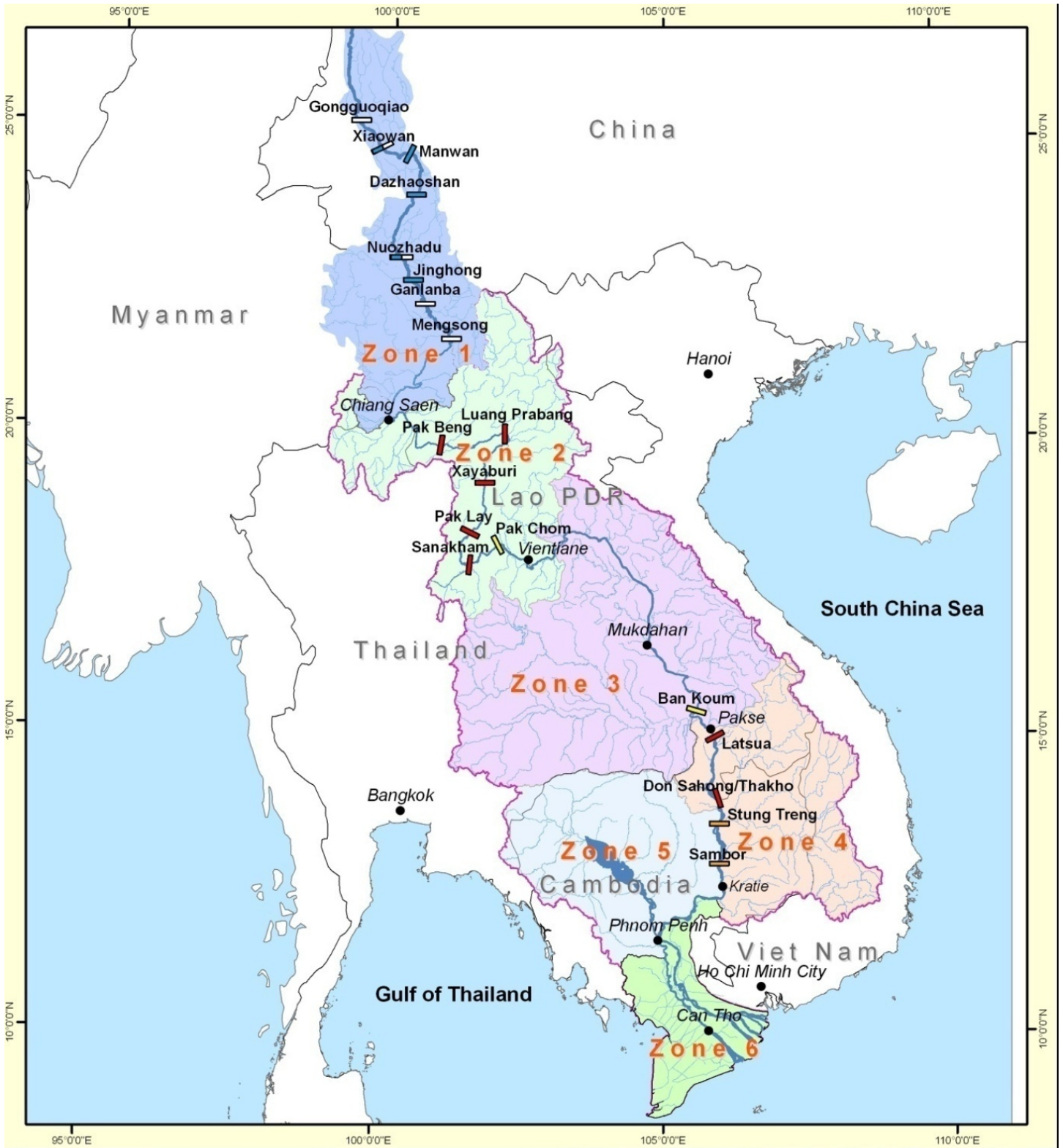


Tuesday, May 21, 2013 *(continued)*

AWF is encouraged by creating a literal triangle or delta of support including Vietnam, the Dutch and United States' resources. As an independent foundation, AWF is dedicated to finding balanced approaches to coastal sustainability and will involve the many governmental and non-governmental contributors in this process. AWF looks forward to continuing a mutually beneficial relationship.



Listening, Inspecting, Partnering, and Engineering since 1879



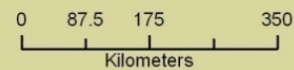
**Key to features**

- National boundaries
- Province boundaries
- Major rivers
- Minor rivers
- LMB boundary
- Proposed dam (Lao PDR)
- Proposed dam (Lao PDR)
- Proposed dam (Cambodia)
- China dam (planned)
- China dam (under construction)
- China dam (operational)

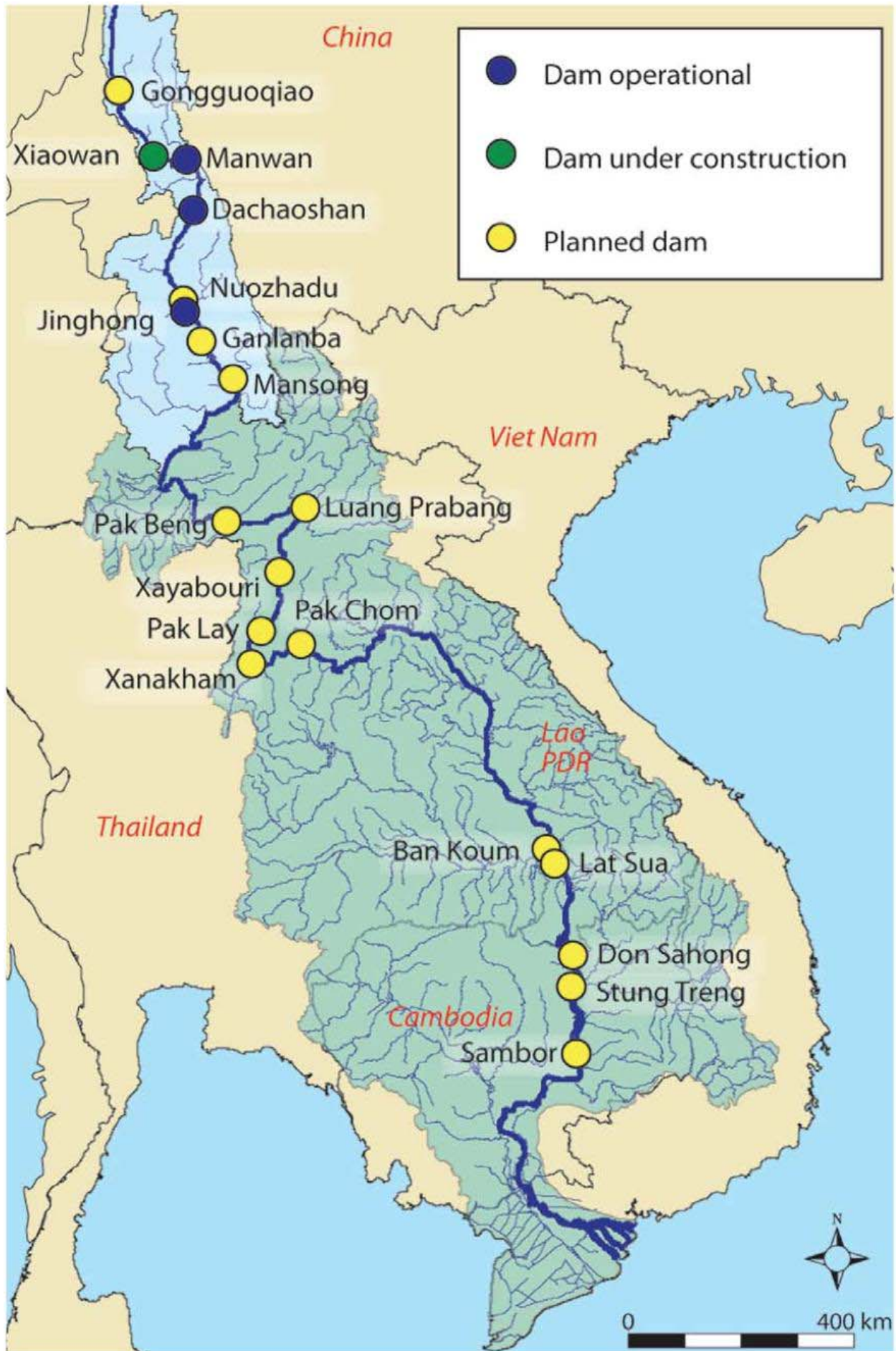
**SEA of Mekong mainstream dams**



Groups of Mekong mainstream dams



Mekong River Commission and ICEM:  
International Centre for Environmental Management





**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI 39181-0080

June 18, 2013

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

PRESIDENT, MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION  
CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
P.O. BOX 80  
VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI 39181-0080

Executive Office

Mr. Hans Guttman, CEO  
Mekong River Commission Secretariat  
Mekong River Commission  
P.O. Box 6101,  
Unit 18 Ban Sithane Neua,  
Sikhottabong District,  
Vientiane 01000, Lao PDR

Dear Mr. Guttman,

On behalf of the Mississippi River Commission (MiRC) delegates, please accept our sincere appreciation for the exceptional hospitality and the enlightened discussions we shared with the Mekong River Commission (MeRC) and the MeRC Secretariat during our visit to Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, Cambodia; Vientiane, Laos; and then in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam for a few of our MiRC team.

The exchange was a great success on every level, and we thank all those involved in its preparation and involvement. During the visit, we learned that our challenges on USA river basins are in some ways different, but in many respects similar to those faced in the Mekong River Basin. We return to the Mississippi Basin with fresh perspectives, and great appreciation for the people of the Mekong basin and the challenges they face with water resources management, leadership and decisions.

Our two river commissions share a critical partnership that has great potential to advance enduring water resource solutions, together with non-government organization (NGO) partners such as The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Great River Partnership and the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center. We believe that the lessons we each have learned can be reciprocally applied to both of our regions. It is a promising time to work together to develop solutions for the challenges our people and river basins face. With mutual experience and technical knowledge in water resources, shared data and

information on fisheries and sediment, as well as our strong partnership, we will endeavor to make a positive difference in crafting changes in the Mississippi and the Mekong Basins.

We will work closely with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. State Department to consider the next steps of our dialogue under the framework of the Lower Mekong Initiative and our Commissions' agreement. We look forward to continued exchanges and future engagements between the MRC's, with NGO partners, our research lab at the Environmental Research and Development Center, technical and leadership conversations and continuing to learn from each other and apply solutions for improved watershed solutions.

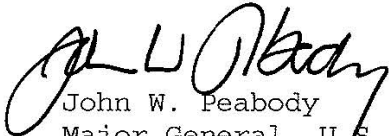
We have attached the next two planned MiRC inspection trip schedules for you to share with senior leaders from the member countries. As we discussed, it may be beneficial for MeRC member country leaders to attend at least a portion of an MiRC trip to observe the process we follow of listening, inspecting and partnering. Mr. Gambrell will remain engaged along with Mr. Ligh, to assure you have all the information you need to make a decision to join us. I am providing copies of this letter to Honorable William E. Todd, U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia; Honorable Karen B. Stewart, U.S. Ambassador to LAOS; and Honorable John F. Kerry, U.S. Secretary of State.

If you need to discuss anything with the MiRC, please contact me or Mr. Stephen Gambrell, MRC Director, at (601) 634-5766 or [stephen.gambrell@usace.army.mil](mailto:stephen.gambrell@usace.army.mil).

Thank you for your attentive and gracious support to the activities of the MiRC during our exchange in the Lower Mekong.

Respectfully,

*Thank you for  
a great  
partnership!*

  
John W. Peabody  
Major General, U.S. Army  
President, Mississippi  
River Commission



**LETTER OF INTENT**  
**BETWEEN THE**  
**MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION**  
**AND THE**  
**MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION**

Recalling the outcome of the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Lower Mekong Countries – Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam – and the US Secretary of State held in Phuket, Thailand on 23 July 2009;

Recalling the outcome of the discussions of the Mekong River Commission Joint Committee Members in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 27 July 2009;

Recognizing the importance of sound stewardship of the Mekong River and the Mississippi River to the prosperity and well-being of the people, and sustainability of the environment, in the jurisdictions through which they run;

Realizing that the Mekong River and the Mississippi River are experiencing challenges related to climate change adaptation, flood and drought management, hydropower and impact assessment, water demand, agriculture and food security, navigational improvement, water resources management and other related issues;

Recognizing that the Mekong River Commission and the Mississippi River Commission each have institutional and professional expertise in these areas, and that both organizations could benefit from closer partnership, technical exchange, and the sharing of best practices associated with managing the complex issues related to a great river that runs through diverse jurisdictional boundaries;

The signing parties express their intention to:

Pursue discussions to identify areas of mutual interest and cooperation with the aim of concluding a Memorandum of Understanding between the two Commissions, to include a Plan of Action outlining steps to enhance collaboration, within six months of the signing of this Letter of Intent.

Signed for the  
MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION



---

Jeremy Bird  
Chief Executive Officer  
Mekong River Commission Secretariat

for the  
MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION



---

Michael J. Walsh  
Brigadier General, US Army  
President Designee, Mississippi River Commission

On this, the 29th day of July, 2009





**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
CONCERNING A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN  
The Mekong River Commission  
AND  
The Mississippi River Commission**

The Mekong River Commission (MRC-Mekong) and the Mississippi River Commission (MRC-USA), referred to as "the Participants":

Recalling the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Lower Mekong Countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam and the US Secretary of State held in Phuket, Thailand on July 27, 2009

Acknowledging their Letter of Intent signed on July 29, 2009;

Sharing a common interest in water resources development and management while implementing independent missions to promote and enhance the use of effective water resources development and management policies in their respective geographical regions;

Desiring to promote and enhance public safety and community welfare by fostering research; improvement of water resources development and management; promoting, encouraging, and advancing systems of safer, more economical, efficient, and environmentally-sound water resources development and management;

Recognizing the benefit to each participant's mission gained through mutual cooperation and joint activities to the extent consistent with the policies, goals, and laws governing each participant;

Declare their intent to enter into the following framework of partnership:

**Section 1**

The Participants intend to cooperate in the field of water resources development and management by sharing available technical expertise and lessons learned.

Although the partnership is not limited as such, the Participants are especially interested in opportunities in the following areas of common interest:

1. Climate change adaptation
2. Integrated water resource management
3. Drought management
4. Flood forecasting
5. Hydropower development and impact assessment
6. Water demand and utilization
7. Agriculture and food security
8. Navigational improvement
9. Fish passage
10. Water quality
11. Wetlands

Either Participant may identify particular projects or issues within these or other areas of common interest and request the other Participant to share relevant technical information, expertise, and/or resources that would help that Participant achieve its mission.

As appropriate, each Participant can offer to serve as a central point of contact to locate, refer, and/or coordinate with other sources of technical expertise or resources within their respective geographic regions.

The Participants also intend to explore other possibilities to allow for collaboration on projects of mutual interest.

## Section 2

Each Participant intends to designate a Principal Representative to serve as the primary point of contact between the participants on all matters arising under this MOU.

## Section 3

Any exchange of information between the Participants under this MOU is intended to be subject to any reasonable conditions of confidentiality which the Participant disclosing the information wishes to impose, notwithstanding other areas of cooperation stated in the MOU. The Participant receiving such information is expected to respect such conditions fully, and in the case of any doubt or ambiguity, to consult with the disclosing Participant prior to the further release of any such information.

## Section 4

Both Participants recognize that any cooperative activity undertaken between the Participants may be accomplished only to the extent consistent with the laws, regulations, and policies governing each Participant

Section 5

Notwithstanding any other provision in this MOU, nothing in this MOU is to be construed as binding under international law or as obligating either participant to commit funds or resources to any project or work.

Section 6

This MOU is intended to commence upon signature by both Participants and to last for 5 years unless discontinued by mutual decision or by written notice from either Participant. A Participant should endeavor to provide 60 days advance notice of its intent to discontinue its participation in the MOU.

Signed for the  
MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION



---

His Excellency Mr. Pich Dun  
Chairman of the MRC Joint Committee for 2010/2011

for the  
MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION



---

Rear Admiral Jonathan Bailey  
Director, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

On this, the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of July, 2010 in duplicate in English.