

# THE LITTLE RIVER DRAINAGE DISTRICT

FLOOD CONTROL & DRAINAGE  
SINCE — 1907

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## STATEMENT OF THE LITTLE RIVER DRAINAGE DISTRICT MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION LOW-WATER HEARING August 14, 2015

Major General Michael Wehr, President  
Mississippi River Commission

General Wehr and Members of the Commission:

My name is W. Dustin Boatwright. I am Chief Engineer of The Little River Drainage District (LRDD) headquartered in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. Our District is a major contributor to the St. Francis Basin watershed. The Corps is authorized to make major improvements within the watershed of the St. Francis Basin, which is an integral part of the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project (MR&T).

All authorized work in our District for new construction and enlargements has been completed. The remaining responsibility of the Corps of Engineers is to maintain those features Congress authorized.

We are grateful for all of the work done by the Corps. Without your assistance much of this work would not have been done due to a limitation of District funds. We make the following requests to you today.

1. Excavate all of the channels under the Memphis Districts major maintenance responsibility. Ditch No. 1 Upper (North of Highway EE), Ditch No. 290, Ditch No. 39, and Ditch No. 251. All four of these channels are main outlets for LRDD channels. Nearly 1.2 million acres must drain through these channels. All four channels are in poor condition with heavy vegetation growth, shoaling, and sedimentation. Two of these channels have not had major maintenance in nearly 40 years. The condition of the channels are causing damage to private property, state and county roadways, and LRDD's upstream channels. Flooding is occurring more frequently making it difficult to farm and live in these areas. Land values are undoubtedly being affected by the lack of maintenance. All of the channels upstream from the channels under the Corps major maintenance have been excavated by LRDD since 2011 totaling nearly 750 miles. We request immediate attention excavate the channels.

E.B. Gee, Jr., Honorary Supervisor  
*Ocala, FL*

Glenn O. Petersen, Honorary Supervisor  
*Wardell, MO*

2. Ditch No. 1 has active erosion on the left descending bank approximately one-half (1/2) mile upstream of Highway "62" in New Madrid County, Missouri which is undercutting the levee on the eastside bank of the channel. This levee has provided protection to the landowners during flood events for nearly a century. There are a dozen homes and farming operations which would be devastated during a flood event if a failure were to occur at this location. We have been told there are plans to correct this erosion with Memphis District's hired labor crew. We request an update on this matter.
3. Develop flood profiles along the Castor Diversion Channel to determine the level of protection provided by the West Basin Levee (System 5). We received the 5 year periodic inspection report from private AE firm in April of this year. It was noted that there was insufficient data to conduct a levee height assessment on this reach of levee. Due to the lack of data this levee was found not to meet the necessary for the 100 yr. certification under FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) resulting in those living behind this levee being subject to mandatory flood insurance. To put this in perspective this levee protects 52,000 acres, 2700 people, and 1800 structures. In 2008 and 2011 this levee system passed two events that far exceeded the 100 yr. event without incident. We respectfully request flood profiles be developed for this reach. We will gladly work with the Memphis District to collect the data necessary to streamline the process.
4. Correct the work performed by the contractor on Ditch 1 Lower and Ditch 81 clearing, cleanout, and shoal removal work. Memphis District personnel is well aware of the issues our District has with the contractor's performance on this contract. Our request is for the Memphis District to require the contractor to complete the work as outlined in the plans and specifications. The current condition of the work is insufficient and incomplete though the contractor is calling the work complete.

This concludes the request of the Little River Drainage District. Please give these items careful consideration.

At this time I have a few general comments I would like to make.

The Mississippi River and Tributaries system is truly an engineering marvel. We passed a historic flood 2011 and averted 234 billion dollar in flood damages. The system worked as designed. The flood of 2011 is testimony that we can protect people and property from flooding. It works. In addition this system allows the United States to utilize our inland water way system and feed the rest of the world. The MR&T provides our country an economic advantage that is envied by every country in the world. Other countries want what we have. We have a system that has proven itself by protecting 4 million people who live and work behind the levees, by protecting 10.6 million acres of prime agriculture land that feeds the rest of the world, and by protecting the private industry. This system is the economic driver of our country.

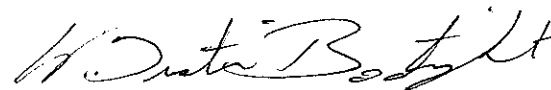
Given all of the facts outlined above we continue to short fund the construction and maintenance of the system. Many would argue it is a funding issue. I would argue it is a priority issue. The yearly budget in this county is nearly 3.8 trillion dollars. Yet we can't seem to find the

yearly funding of 500 million to maintain and complete a project that has provided this country a 44:1 return on investment on flood damages prevented. Just for the record that is less than .01% of the overall federal budget.

This year we have had events throughout the country that remind us all how devastating flooding can be when adequate infrastructure is not in place to protect people and property. We have the money, the expertise (The US Army Corps of Engineers), and the equipment necessary to build the needed infrastructure. We can protect people against floods. The MR&T is proof. In order for that to happen we have to find a way to cut through the regulatory and environmental red tape our government has created. The federal agencies are out of control in this country and are preventing economic development from occurring. We have lost our way. We must find it. Recent examples such as the executive order implementing the Flood Risk Management Standard, the Waters of the US Rule making (WOTUS), and the Principle and Guidelines are just a few of the most recent attempts to kill economic development our floodplains.

This country was built by great men and women who had a vision and made it reality. Our forefathers built the interstate highway system, locks and dams, railroads, airports, and converted land that was considered worthless swampland into the worlds most productive farm ground. These men and women built infrastructure with a fraction of the technology and equipment we have today. They were giants. We have been living on their backs far too long. It is time for this generation to step up to the plate and build this country for the next generation instead of letting our infrastructure crumble to ruins.

This concludes my remarks. Thank you for your time and attention. I will be happy to answer any questions.



W. Dustin Boatwright, P.E., M ASCE  
The Little River Drainage District  
Chief Engineer