

# ***SNY ISLAND LEVEE DRAINAGE DISTRICT***

*110,000 Acres in Adams, Pike and Calhoun Counties*

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**TO:** Major General Michael Wehr  
President, Mississippi River Commission

**FROM:** Mike Reed, Superintendent  
Sny Island Levee Drainage District



**SUBJECT:** 2015 Low Water Inspection Public Hearing  
Cape Girardeau, Missouri

**DATE:** August 14, 2015

General Wehr and members of the Commission: Thank you for the opportunity to attend this year's low water public hearing. I not only appreciate the time allotted to me to provide input on issues of concern to the Sny, but also the chance to sit in on the many presentations of others, including Corps officials, offering their comments on a wide variety of topics affecting the vitality of the Mississippi River.

Sny Island protects about 125,000 acres in southern Adams, Pike and northern Calhoun Counties in Illinois. Our annual \$2,000,000.00 operating budget is funded by per acre drainage assessments paid by our landowners. The average cost per acre for our annual maintenance budget is \$18.50. In addition to that, our landowners funded a \$5,500,000.00 additional assessment a little over a year ago to pay for budget shortages following the 2008 flood in the upper valley. No federal or state funding flows to the Sny unless a disaster declaration is made. As you can see, our landowners pay their own way and are committed to maintaining the system handed down to them from past generations of Sny landowners.

I want to begin this testimony by stressing the value of the cooperation that has existed in the past with the Rock Island District in developing and utilizing five long range dredge material disposal sites on the land side of the main stem Mississippi River levee out of the floodway. These sites have been successfully used numerous times by the Rock Island District for the deposit of sand dredged both hydraulically and mechanically from the channel to facilitate barge traffic. We not only cooperated with the Corps in providing the sites for the deposit

of the material, but we have also accepted responsibility for the channeling of water resulting from the hydraulic dredging process through our drainage system back to the river. We utilized the sand deposited at the various sites to strengthen the land side slopes of our main stem river levee and to assist with flood fighting efforts on both the Mississippi and Illinois rivers. Just last week I was contacted by Rock Island's operations staff that another round of channel maintenance in our area may be required in the next few weeks. We will readily accept the resulting material at any of our sites. Based on estimates provided by the Rock Island District, our flood control system prevented more than \$268,000,000.00 in damages in the 2008 flood, the second highest in the history of the upper valley, and nearly \$145,000,000.00 in damages in the 2011 flood. We estimate that nearly \$400,000,000.00 in damages were prevented by our system in the 2013 & 2014 floods. Since the '08 flood, the Sny's flood control system has prevented more than \$800,000,000.00 in damages just in the Sny alone. Think of that. Arguably, this might not have been possible without the long range planning by the Corps and the Sny in developing these sites. What a great example of a public/private working relationship that has resulted in multiple benefits by facilitating the free flow of commerce up and down the river due to maintaining adequate water depths for barge traffic, enhancing riverine habitat by completely removing dredge material from the floodway in selected areas, providing material for use in flood fights on two river systems and enhancing a flood control system for generations to come. This is a practice that if feasible should be incorporated in more Corps Districts in the future.

We also want to compliment the St. Louis District for assisting us with riprapping trouble areas along several segments of shoreline where erosion has occurred during past flood events. The St. Louis staff responded with professionalism and respect in addressing our concerns.

The Sny would be interested in working with the St. Louis staff on management practices being utilized in maintaining river elevations in pool 25 between Clarksville and Winfield. Prior to the flood of 2008, we were able to operate our gravity outlets at Pump Stations 3A and 4, both of which flow into pool 25. These gravity outlets allowed for the water from the Sny channel to flow directly to the river from basically early July until March of the next year. In other words, our pumping season lasted from about March to the first of July annually. Since the flood of '08, that has all changed. River elevations since the flood of '08 have prevented the opening of these gravity outlets but for a couple of months out of the year now. The operational costs for our pump stations have increased dramatically. From 1996 to 2007, we purchased an average of 170,000 gallons of diesel fuel per year to power our three pump stations. Since 2008, we have averaged purchasing 362,000 gallons per year. There were high water years mingled into both averages. What is interesting is this year has not been a "high water" year on the upper Miss, yet we have purchased to date 315,000 gallons of

diesel fuel with more to come and we cannot open our aqueducts to free flow to the river. Have management practices on the river elevations changed any? We would be interested to work with Col. Mitchell's staff to address this.

There are regulatory issues that are on the minds of all of us in the levee and drainage business, but time restrictions will not allow for addressing these today.

And finally, General Wehr, we in the Sny are truly appreciative of the time you and your staff from the Vicksburg Division office as well as the St. Louis and Rock Island District offices commanded by Col. Mitchell and Col. Baumgartner – both of whom are present today, have made available to us in gathering the facts relevant to the recognition and accreditation of our flood control system. Almost from the time you took command of the Division, you have taken a personal interest in gathering the details involved in the issue. Thank you for that. Also, I would be remiss in not acknowledging the courtesy extended to us at several meetings at headquarters in Washington to let the facts of this issue be known. Although we are well acquainted with many members of the Commission, we have not formally presented our perspective on the matter to you backed up by written, detailed documentation. My Commissioners and I would be happy to do that if the opportunity presents itself in the future. Much has been said in the past several months. Less than accurate information has been circulated regarding the impact of our flood control system on our neighbors. So, the importance of having the facts can never be underestimated or understated. We have welcomed these meetings in the past and look forward to continued dialogue to find a fair and equitable resolution to the issues before us, not only for us in the Sny, but for other communities and levee and drainage districts throughout the upper Mississippi River Valley.

My Commissioners and I want to thank all of you for serving on this Commission. It's a tough, thankless job, and we appreciate the manner in which all of you serve. Thank you for your service to the Mississippi River valley and to this great country.