

**Boeuf-Tensas Regional Irrigation Water Distribution District  
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**Mississippi River Commission  
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Ann Cash, Executive Director  
Southeast Arkansas Study  
Southeast Arkansas and Northern Louisiana**

General Wehr and other members of the Mississippi River Commission I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you. My name is Ann Cash and I am the Executive Director of the Boeuf-Tensas Regional Irrigation Water Distribution District in southeast Arkansas and a member of the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission. I am also a member of the SE Arkansas and NE Louisiana Coordinating Committee for our water project. I am pleased to be able to give you a very positive report on the progress we have made since I reported to you last August. We have agreed on a Scope of Work and a schedule for the Feasibility Study for the SE Arkansas and NE Louisiana Project. The study is funded in its entirety with non-federal funds and is to be completed in ten months. The planning team is using the Corps' new "Smart Planning" process and should be able to keep the study on schedule.

Widespread stream modifications due to flood risk management projects have greatly impacted aquatic resources throughout the Lower Mississippi River Alluvial Valley (LMRAV). Most medium to large streams in the LMRAV, including the Boeuf River, have been altered to some extent. Streams within the Boeuf Tensas Basin exhibit degraded ecosystem functions, little or no riparian habitats, poor water quality, low in-stream cover, low dissolved oxygen and increased temperatures during low flows, increased turbidity during high flows, reduced habitat complexity, and reduced aquatic species richness and diversity.

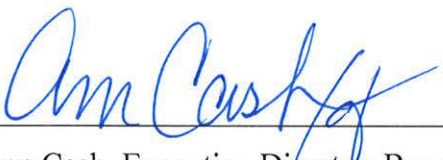
We propose to divert surplus Arkansas River water into the Basin to reestablish water levels throughout the year to restore pools and riffles that support aquatic vegetation and fish and other species and to restore riparian vegetation, principally bottomland hardwood. Improved ecosystem functions of smaller connecting channels, rivers and streams such as the Boeuf River supports as well as contributes to the larger ecosystem sustainability to the Boeuf Tensas Basin and thereby the Mississippi River through connectivity of migratory species and sustaining

connections of scarce riparian corridors. The health of small streams is critical to the health of the entire river network and downstream communities. These small streams often appear insignificant, but in fact are very important, as they feed into and create our big rivers. Continued irrigation practices through the use of surface and groundwater have led to low flows which have contributed to ecosystem degradation within the Boeuf Tensas Basin, as well as impacted groundwater recharging. Streams are also vital for recharging the nation's groundwater supply. Water enters the groundwater through the stream bed. These demands on water have created conditions that impact the ability of the system to support aquatic life, and create negative environmental externalities that affect downstream ecosystems and negatively affect the food security of the nation. The reduction of and inability to support bottomland hardwoods and similar forest species contributes to the overall reduction in contiguous forest cover in the Mississippi alluvial valley. Once dominated by forested wetlands, the floodplain is less than 25 percent forested today.

This project provides an excellent opportunity for the Corps and the sponsors to show what can be done to restore an ecosystem when surface water and base stream flows return. The project will demonstrate:

1. An effective way to restore damaged ecosystems through the use of surplus river water.
2. A cost effective way to eliminate groundwater depletion while improving the quality and quantity of the water supply in a multi-state area.
3. How municipal, agricultural and environmental interests can work together for good of the area.

We need to complete our feasibility study on schedule and then move ahead with the completion of the authorized study. On behalf of the project sponsors in both Arkansas and Louisiana I want to thank the MRC and the Corps for their support.



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Ann Cash, Executive Director, Boeuf-Tensas Irrigation Water Distribution District