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Mississippi

## Mississippi Valley Flood Control Association

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Arkansas

FURG HUNTER  
Missouri

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JOHN STRINGER  
Louisiana

**DEDICATED TO FLOOD CONTROL • BANK STABILIZATION • DRAINAGE • NAVIGATION**

GEORGE C. GRUETT  
Executive Vice President Emeritus

March 2015

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**ILLINOIS**  
RUSSELL E. KOELLER  
New Canton, Illinois

Alan Lomax wrote, "The levee is higher and longer than the Great Wall of China, very likely the biggest thing that man has ever made. It was the principal human response to the titanic power of the great river.

**KENTUCKY**  
DAVID WEATHERLY  
Hickman, Kentucky

I am Harry Stephens and what a privilege it is to stand before the Mississippi River Commission, thank you. I am here to represent the Mississippi Valley Flood Control Association concerning the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project. I have just come from Washington, D.C., along with many other men from up and down the river, pleading with our legislators for \$500 million dollars in appropriations for next year. We appreciate that this continues to be a line item in the budget. As much money as this is, in hard times, I would like to remind you that the investment in the MR&T system in preparation for the 2011 flood resulted in more than \$246 billion worth of damages prevented by the MR&T system. A return on federal dollar investment of 46-1. We cannot afford to stop or slow down the continuity of this high value; high return and much need national investment. It is an investment not an expense. The MR&T project affords billions of dollars in savings in transportation rates each year. This is of great value to the entire nation not just the people of the valley. We thank the congress for their support and past funding.

**MISSOURI**  
SAM HUNTER  
Cape Girardeau, Missouri

**TENNESSEE**  
JIMMY MOODY  
Dyersburg, Tennessee

**ARKANSAS**  
HARRY G. STEPHENS  
Helena, Arkansas

STEVE HIGGINBOTHOM  
Marianna, Arkansas

My great uncle James Millander Hanks, wrote in his diaries from 1864-1909 and told about traveling to Washington in 1866 to talk to then President Johnson about the levee. He was the first Representative from the 1<sup>st</sup> District in Arkansas, the job now held by Representative Rick Crawford. I don't know how much levee was there then but each of us should be proud to be a part of a partnership that began with private individuals, local and state governments and finally the federal investments. There is no other system that has been or continues to be of such benefit to our country.

**MISSISSIPPI**  
WILLIE GREGORY  
Clarksdale, Mississippi

FRED BALLARD  
Leland, Mississippi

**LOUISIANA**  
REYNOLD MINSKY  
Lake Providence, Louisiana

JERRY SAVOY  
Saint Amant, Louisiana

The MR&T project is a wise investment for this country and it is good for our economy. It will be a vital link to the defense of our country in the event of an attack by our enemies. This project must be targeted for swift completion and proper maintenance. Local interests have done their part. We need the federal government to fulfill its obligation and "infrastructure investment" and bring the MR&T project to completion now.

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A few years ago FEMA tried to initiate action that would require us to buy insurance on all real property improvements in their flood zone on the protected side of the levee. They gave the levee no credit even after proving itself in 2011. The MR&T project worked on a 500 year flood exactly as designed. Through a lot of work and wisdom our legislators and the corps stopped this tax. Now we have the National Levee Safety Committee which can impose unachievable standards on our levees. On January 30, 2015 we got an executive order 13690. This amends federal flood risk management standards, coming from a group working behind closed doors. They would raise the vertical elevation on our levees as much as 3' and the corresponding horizontal extend of the area protected by the levees. The EPA and the Clean Water Act "Rules Clarification" are so vague they could be regulating all water from the pothole in the road to your bath water and all between. We cannot let the federal bureaucracies negate the efforts that have provided the best flood control and navigation system on the face of the planet.

Thank you for your help in the resulting \$100's of billions of dollars in damages averted because you supported the funding of the greatest civil works project on the planet, the MR&T. Mark Twain once said, "Ten thousand river commissions... cannot tame that lawless stream... cannot say to it, go her or go there and make it obey".

Harry Stephens

