



Mississippi River Commission listens to citizens' concerns during annual high-water inspection trip

By Bob Anderson
MVD Public Affairs Office

For 133 years, the Mississippi River Commission has journeyed down its namesake to listen, inspect, partner and engineer for the people who live, work and depend upon our continent's greatest natural treasure. Despite a new President-nominee, Maj. Gen. John Peabody, and its first female member, Brig. Gen. Margaret Burcham, this year was similar to the previous 132 years in that the commission listened to more than 50 people testify during four public meetings. The public meetings and several MRC related special events attracted approximately 900 citizens to engage the commission and its staff.

This year, the commission held

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public meetings in Tiptonville, Memphis, Vicksburg and New Orleans. The meetings lasted an average of three hours, and the commissioners listened to testimony that ranged from ground-water conservation to the protection of endangered species, with heavy doses of flood risk reduction and navigation in between. The commission listens very closely because its mission is to provide water resources engineering direction and policy advice to the Administration, Congress and the Army for a drainage basin that comprises 41 percent of the United States and parts of two Canadian Provinces. The well being and safety of the public depends on how effective the commis-

sion is in achieving its mission.

Testimony this year paid tribute to one great American success story, the incredible Mississippi River and Tributary System, a flood control system that turned back the greatest water flow levels in the river's history, and prevented more than \$112 billion dollars in damages last year alone.

"The MR&T has now prevented almost half-a-trillion dollars in flood damages since we began construction in 1928," said Maj. Gen. Peabody. "At an investment of \$14 billion, that represents a 35-1 return on investment for the American people."

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Pictured above—Maj. Gen. John W. Peabody addresses citizens and stakeholders during the annual high-water inspection trip in Vicksburg, MS on the vessel MISSISSIPPI.



Around the Bend



Maj. Gen. John W. Peabody
Commander
Mississippi Valley Division
President-nominee
Mississippi River Commission

MVD Team,

What a fantastic experience late last month to participate with the Mississippi River Commission on the annual high-water inspection trip as the commission’s President-nominee. The commission had the opportunity to listen to, and exchange ideas and opinions with, hundreds of people during a trip that included four public meetings attended by more than 350 people. We listened closely to testimony from 52 people who shared their water resources challenges, so that the commission can use their input and concerns to provide water resources engineering direction to the Corps, and policy advice to the administration and Congress. The

well being and safety of the public depends on how effective we are in achieving this duty.

As I summarized during the meetings, the MRC inspection trip is a microcosm of the uniquely American ideal of democratic participation in governance. Despite differences of belief and opinion, we are able to carry on a civil dialogue that allows for the development of better, more comprehensive solutions than any one approach that might be developed without the benefit of a robust discourse.

During each meeting I provided a “State of the Valley” update that included a discussion of the inherent value that the Mississippi River watershed contributes to the economic well being of our nation, and how it sustains critical competitive advantages for our nation in the world marketplace. The U.S. inland navigation system is not only the largest in the world, it is also larger than all the other navigation systems in the world combined. The coalescence of this massive and navigable system with the abundant natural riches of agriculturally productive land, mineral and energy resources, makes the United States a uniquely advantaged country throughout the globe. Not only are we a maritime nation due to our exterior coasts on the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, as well as the Gulf and Great Lakes, but the entire Mississippi Basin

watershed drains 41 percent of the interior of the country. These geographic realities provide the critical foundation for America’s successful economic development and geopolitical global supremacy.

A second topic of tremendous interest to all was the Mississippi River and Tributaries system’s performance during the Great Flood of 2011. This was the largest flood in the recorded history of the Mississippi River basin, passing more water volume than any other event, to include the great floods of 1927, 1937 and 1973. The amazingly well-integrated efforts between the Corps of Engineers and local authorities and levee boards made a decisive difference in preventing an enormous natural disaster. Instead of a catastrophe, we managed a notable event, and life went on normally in most places within a few weeks of the flood. This is an incredible American success story. The system worked as designed and in managing the greatest water-flow levels in the river’s history, we prevented more than \$112 billion in flood damages last year alone. In its history the MR&T has now prevented about \$478 billion - almost half a trillion - dollars in flood damages since we began construction in 1928, at an investment of \$14 billion. And that does not even count the nearly \$3 billion in annual transportation rate savings, as well as all of the other productive agricultural,

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industrial, and small and large business activity that takes place in the valley enabled by the river and the Corps ability to prevent devastating floods. That represents a 35-1 return on investment. Very few infrastructure investments in world history can boast such a magnificent return on investment.

But of course now we face the critical task of restoring the damages wrought by this massive flood, and it was concerns regarding these damages that dominated commission testimony. We currently estimate damages to be about \$1.7 billion, and they are likely to approach \$2 billion when all of the accounting is finally complete. Congress passed a supplemental appropriation in December to allow the Corps to repair the many damages to floods nation-wide in 2011. Our singular focus now must be to deliver repaired projects throughout the system before the next flood season of 2013 is upon us. We are making

great progress in planning and designing those repairs, but we must execute as many of the repairs as possible this year, in order to reduce the risks to flood damages

for those who depend on the MR&T system for their safety and livelihood.

Building Strong!



Pictured above—Maj. Gen. John W. Peabody listens to the concerns of citizens at the public hearing held in Tiptonville, Tenn., on Mar. 26, 2012. More than 90 members of the public were in attendance. The MRC conducted three other public meetings in Memphis, Tenn., Vicksburg, Miss. and New Orleans, La., as part of the annual high-water inspection trip on the Miss. River.



Pictured left—More than 110 citizens boarded the motor vessel *MISSISSIPPI* to attend the public meeting held in Memphis, Tenn., on Mar. 27, 2012.



MRC listens to citizens during annual high-water inspection trip

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Navigation was also a hot topic, as supplemental funding for flood recovery work included money to dredge the increased siltation caused by the floodwaters in the harbors along the Lower Mississippi River. One speaker compared the closing of all the harbors in the Mississippi to shutting down all of the exits along Interstate 40 between Memphis and the Atlantic Ocean. Commerce would be severely impacted and the people who live along the Interstate would suffer great economic hardship.

“Not only do we have the largest inland waterway system,” said Maj. Gen. Peabody, “But our inland waterway system is larger than all of the other inland waterway systems in the entire world combined.”

In addition to its traditional mission concerns, today the MRC is focused on watershed priorities. The management of the sub-basins comprising the watershed directly impacts the operations and decisions in prosecuting the MR&T project. Since 1997, the commission has reviewed and inspected the watersheds along the upper Mississippi, the Ohio, the Missouri, the Illinois and the Arkansas-White rivers. These reviews aid the commission in its attempt to garner broad support for a working 200-year vision – an intergenerational commitment – for the world’s third largest watershed: America’s watershed.



Pictured above—Maj. Gen. John W. Peabody and other MRC members visit the construction site of the future Lower Mississippi River Museum and Riverfront Interpretive Site as part of the inspection trip held in Vicksburg, Miss., on Mar. 28, 2012. Approximately 60 members of the public attended the MRC’s public meeting at Vicksburg.



Pictured above—Maj. Gen. John W. Peabody and the MRC listen to the public’s concerns during a high-water inspection public hearing held in New Orleans, La., on Mar. 30, 2012. About 55 members of the public attended the meeting, including U.S. Senator David Vitter of La.



Major General Peabody reaches out to stakeholders

By Public Affairs Office
Mississippi Valley Division

Listening to the concerns, ideas and issues of local residents, partners and stakeholders in the Mississippi valley is one of Maj. Gen. John W. Peabody's main priorities as Mississippi Valley Division's commander and President-nominee of the Mississippi River Commission.

And he did just that when he recently met with the Ouachita River Valley Association from Northeast Louisiana and South Arkansas at MVD's Headquarters in Vicksburg.

The Ouachita River Valley Association promotes and supports the development and use of the Ouachita River. It is led by Mike Dumas (president) of Eldorado, Ark., and Bill Hobgood (executive director), formerly of Vicksburg and the Vicksburg District.

The attendees included representatives from the Crossett, Ark., paper mill, as well as representatives from some oil companies, towing companies, municipalities and other local government agencies.

The meeting discussions focused on reduced funding and its impacts. Specifically, the navigation project and other projects in the region have experienced reduced funding for several years. (The navigation project consists of four locks and dams built in the 1970's and 337



Pictured above—Maj. Gen Peabody listens to the concerns of the Ouachita River Valley Association during a meeting in the MRC conference room on March 15, 2012.

miles of river channel from the Red River to Camden, Ark.) projects, such as the Ouachita.

The impact has been reduced dredging in the past, which is now expected to result in reduced hours of operations at locks. For the Ouachita River Valley, it means going from 24/7 to 16 hours per day at its lower two locks (Jonesville and Columbia) and eight hours per day, or less, at Felsenthal and H.K. Thatcher.

Maj. Gen. Peabody expressed his appreciation and understanding of the Ouachita group's concerns, but stated that due to constrained funds nationally, the Corps was having to reduce levels of services at all projects, especially the lower use



Life Jacket Wear policy remains in effect at Miss. Corps of Engineers lakes

By Kavanaugh Breazeale
Vicksburg District

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers lakes in Mississippi will continue to implement the mandatory wearing of a life jacket. A U.S. Coast Guard life jacket test program was initiated in May 2009 to determine if more stringent life jacket wear requirements would improve wear rates and decrease the number of water related fatalities. The test program was implemented at Arkabutla, Sardis, Enid and Grenada lakes and will conclude in May 2012.

Prior to the implementation of the test program, adult life jacket wear rates at the Mississippi lakes were below 10 percent. During the first year of the test, adult wear rates peaked in the 80 percentile and drowning fatalities dropped from seven to three deaths.

As the nation's number one provider of water-based recreational opportunities, our goal is to minimize the potential for public drowning fatalities. This program has clearly demonstrated that the life jacket policy has increased wear rates and has clearly saved lives. Due to its success, the program will continue as it is currently structured.

The following life jacket wear requirements will remain in effect



Pictured above—A Corps Ranger assists a young swimmer with his PFD (personal flotation device) at a beach on Enid Lake.

on Arkabutla, Sardis, Enid and Grenada lakes:

1. All persons must wear a Type I, II or III U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket at all times while swimming outside of designated swimming areas. Waivers may be issued by Corps Resource Managers to exempt participants of special events, such as triathlons, from this requirement while participating in the event.
2. All persons must wear a Type I, II or III U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket at all times while skiing or being pulled by a vessel, regardless of vessel length.
3. All persons must wear a Type I, II or III U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket on powered vessels 16 to 26 feet in length whenever under power by the main propulsion unit. (This does not include when the

vessel is stationary or powered by a trolling motor.)

4. All persons must wear a Type I, II or III U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket at all times on powered vessels less than 16 feet in length or on non-powered vessels, regardless of length. Non-powered vessels include, but are not limited to, canoes, kayaks, flat bottoms/john boats, sailboats and paddleboats.

For more information on the North Mississippi Lakes Mandatory Life

Jacket Wear Policy please contact: Arkabutla Lake Field Office at 662-562-6261, Sardis Lake Field Office at 662-563-4531, Enid Lake Field Office at 662-563-4571, Grenada Lake Field Office at 662-226-5911 or visit the North Mississippi Project Office Website: <http://www.mvk.usace.army.mil/lakes/ms/msprojoff/index.php>.





MVD Training and Development



Pictured above—Col. George T. Shepard welcomes several MVD supervisors and managers to the *EEO Update for Supervisors and Managers*, held in the MRC conference room on Mar. 21, 2012.



Pictured left—Ms. Eddie Abdujhaqq presents “The Reasonable Accommodation Process: The Roles of EEO, Office of Counsel and Civilian Personnel Advisory Center,” during MVD’s *EEO Update for Supervisors and Managers*, Mar. 21, 2012. Other presenters included Randy Merchant (“Role and Responsibility of OC”); Jane Byrum (“Role and Responsibility of CPAC”); James Hughes (“Role/Responsibility of EEO”); Toni-Lowe Fisher, PhD (evaluation); and Ann Bargains, PhD (closing).



St. Paul District's Nishek selected for annual hard hat award

By Shannon Bauer
St. Paul District

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi Valley Division, recently announced its selection of Corps of Engineers St. Paul District employee and Devils Lake, N.D., resident Loren Nishek as the recipient of its 2011 Construction Hard Hat of the Year award.

The 2011 Construction Hard Hat of the Year award is given out annually by the Corps of Engineers to recognize excellence in construction quality management by its construction field personnel to only approximately 10 personnel at the division level throughout the entire Corps of Engineers. Nishek will now compete Corps wide for the singular national version of this award.

Nishek, who's worked for the Corps of Engineers for 17 years and is based in Devils Lake, N.D., is a senior project engineer in the



Pictured above—Loren Nishek (left), St. Paul District senior project engineer, at a construction site in Devils Lake, N.D. Photo by Patrick Moes, St. Paul District

district's construction branch. Nishek is being recognized for his actions as project engineer in the Western Area Devils Lake Resident Office, where he has provided leadership and construction efforts associated with numerous Corps of Engineers contracts in the Devils Lake Basin.

"Loren sets the standard," said Mike Evenson, the district's western area engineer. "Through his leadership, construction knowledge and unrelenting work ethic he has accomplished a significant amount of construction placement in the Devils Lake Basin under some unique challenges."

Family First Friday Program features Maj. Smoot

By Tasha Butler
Mississippi Valley Division

The special speaker at our March 2, 2012, Family First Friday program was Maj. Angela Smoot. Maj. Smoot is a Contract Specialist at ERDC. She is involved in the planning for a Family Empowerment Weekend that will take place in Vicksburg April 27-29, 2012. This event is sponsored by the King Solomon Baptist Church, but several churches are involved and the events are open to the public.

Maj. Smoot provided the following information: The theme for the Family Empowerment Weekend (FEW) is "Restoring Healthy Families." If we get to the root of the family, we can repair a lot of issues in the community. Trust me, these events are going to be truly a help to the people that do attend. Everyone may not be able to agree on certain matters, but healthy families are something we can all stand behind. This is a cordial invitation to you, your church members, all of your family, employees and



Maj. Angela Smoot

anyone else you know. What affects one, truly affects all.



Around the Division



Raffield provides FLIPL training to Vicksburg District—Dale Raffield, Property Book Officer for MVD, provided Financial Liability Investigation Property Loss training to the Vicksburg District Hand Receipt Holders and Command on Mar. 7, 2012. This training proved added value to the district leadership and employees in ensuring that they understand the FLIPL documents and the circumstances concerning the loss, damage or destruction of government property. The district recorded this training to use for future leaders and employees.

Open Channels

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
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Dates to Remember

Holidays in April

8—Easter - The real meaning of Easter, is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To Christians, it is the most special day of the year. Yes, the birth of Christ is quite important. But, his resurrection offers the hope of everlasting life to everyone! The Lenten season leading up to Easter Sunday is a time of fasting, sacrifice and prayer. It is the christian way of replicating in a small way what Christ sacrificed for us, both in his fasting and his final death on the cross.

17—Income Taxes Due - Most years, taxes are due on the 15th of April.

22—Earth Day - Earth Day is a global holiday celebrated as a day to bring awareness and appreciation for the Earth and it's environment.

25—Administrative Professionals Day - Administrative Professionals' Day, previously known as Secretary's Day, is celebrated to recognize and show appreciation of the work of administrative employees. It is observed as part of Administrative Professionals Week.

27—National Arbor Day - National Arbor Day is the Tree Planter's holiday, and it has been celebrated since 1872. It began in Nebraska, a largely treeless plain back in the 1800's. It is a day to plant and dedicate a tree to help nature and the environment. Millions of trees are planted on this day. The National Arbor Day Foundation provides millions of trees for planting. It is estimated that 18 million trees are planted each year on Arbor Day.



Pictured left—University of Mississippi students interview Maj. Gen. John W. Peabody on the 2011 Flood for a magazine they are producing for their senior journalism project.