

General Wehr and Commissioners

I am Richard Brontoli, Executive Director, Red River Valley Assoc.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation this morning on behalf of the waterway interests on the J. Bennett Johnston Waterway. We have a navigation committee and local sponsor (Red River Waterway Commission) that have worked hard to ensure our Waterway is safe, efficient and reliable.

It is important to note that the Red River experienced a series of major flood events from May 2015 through April 2016. The Shreveport gage reached past flood stage four times during that one year period. This has never occurred since the gage was set and the flood of record was 45.9' in 1849. One of the 2015 crests events was 37.1' at the Shreveport gage; however, this is after the construction of fifteen flood control reservoirs above Shreveport-Bossier, LA, to include Lake Texoma on the main stem Red River. The Tulsa District calculated that if the reservoirs were not in operation the Shreveport gage would have reached 41.9'.

These high river levels closed four locks to navigation in 2015 and all five locks were closed to navigation in March 2016. This is the first time, since the waterway was operational, that more than 2 locks have been closed at the same time.

The Red River is one of the most high silt carrying rivers in the United States. In addition to the locks being closed due to high water, they were also closed for siltation and the lack of a 9' channel. This required an extraordinary amount of dredging, which was exacerbated by the four flood events in a single year. Today, only Locks 1 & 2 are open for navigation. Tows have not been able to reach the Caddo-Bossier Port, due to Lock 5 being closed for a

total of 127 days and counting; 79 days due to high water and 48 days for siltation and will be closed at least 2 more weeks.

During high water my navigation committee self restricts operations – 500 HP per barge for current & daylight only due to submerged dikes – we have had 164 days under restricted operations.

A major issue during the 2015 Flood was the difference between the actual crest and the projected crest. Compared to the 1990 flood the 2015 flood had a higher crest with lower flows. An additional item of concern is that the Base Flood Elevations shown on the current Flood Insurance Rate Maps, used to regulate development located in the Special Flood Hazard Areas, are not accurate and must be updated. These inaccuracies caused numerous homes and infrastructure to flood, even though they were constructed according to FEMA BFEs.

The Vicksburg District and FEMA expressed that a Hydraulic & Sedimentation Survey is important to identify the changes in river profile and flood storage capacity. Col. Cross was able to secure \$1.5 M from FY 2016 appropriations to conduct this survey and the Red River communities thank him for this effort and looking out for our interests. A local Flood Technical Committee was formed to coordinate with the Vicksburg District to provide assistance and get periodic updates on the study progress. Once the survey is completed and analyzed the Committee will address options to reduce the risk of flooding to our communities.

Col Cross decided to allow our five locks to remain operating 24/7/365 for CY 2016. We know there will be a re-evaluation each

year and we must show positive trends. The State of Louisiana, Red River Waterway Commission, communities and private industries have invested over \$2.8 billion. This is more than the federal investment of \$1.9 billion, a testament to the public and private efforts to make our Waterway a success. As a young Waterway it takes time for economic and industrial development. We want to express our appreciation to Col. Cross and his staff for understanding this and providing the Red River community the opportunity to succeed.

Congress passed the FY2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act, which had provisions for 'Additional Funds'. We appreciate that the Corps allocated an additional \$6 million for O&M on the J. Bennett Johnston Waterway that will be used for dredging and flood recovery. We also want to express our appreciation to the Vicksburg District and MVD for their support in submitting our needs to Corps HQ.

We are extremely disappointed that the President's FY 2017 budget submission reduced the Corps of Engineers by \$1.3 B; a 22% reduction from what Congress enacted in FY 2016. It is obvious the intent of Congress is to fund waterway projects.

We encourage the MRC and our delegation to support an Energy & Water Appropriation Bill enacted by 1 October 2015; the Corps of Engineer budget be at a minimum level of \$6 billion; and the appropriation bill continue to include the 'additional funding' provisions for GI, CG, and O&M.

Congress shares in the blame for the dire situation of our waterways. With the no 'earmark' atmosphere in Congress our delegation is unable to provide additional funding for specific projects as was done in the past. I emphasize this because the

Administration, can provide adequate O&M funding if they choose to. Congress has set the level of O&M funding for the Corps, but it is the Administration's decision as to which projects get funded and at what level. It is their decision not to fully fund our Waterway.

The main issue for industry is reliability of the Waterway. Costs, associated with delays and reduced drafts, will be passed on to industries making them consider alternate modes of transportation. New industries will reconsider locating on our Waterway if reliable navigation and transportation costs are uncertain. Waterways are the only competition to long haul RR.

We want to invite the MRC and MV Mississippi to consider an inspection trip on the Red River from Old River Lock to the Caddo-Bossier Port, with public meetings in Alexandria, Natchitoches and Shreveport-Bossier City. The RRWC and I would be available to assist you in this event.

Col. Cross is to retire and we want to publically thank him for his relationship & support to the citizens of the Red River Valley.

I want to thank the Mississippi River Commission for having these public meetings to receive our input.