



Post Office Box 913
Camden, Arkansas 71711
September 15, 2020

Mississippi River Commission
ATTN: Mr. Charles Camillo, Director
1400 Walnut Street
Vicksburg, Mississippi 39180

Dear Mr. Camillo:

At the recent Public Meeting of the Mississippi River Commission at Greenville, Mississippi, Commissioner James asked at the conclusion of my presentation, "if the lower 63 miles of the Ouachita River – south of Monroe, Louisiana to Caldwell Parish, Louisiana – had ever been in the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Program?" You may recall during my presentation, I asked for support to "restore" that portion of the Ouachita River to the MR&T Program.

The answer: At one point, the 63 miles did, in fact, fall within the umbrella of the MR&T Program. The issue is contentious. Several historical and official documents do exist that reference that portion of the river as part of the MR&T Program. However, over the course of several years (if not decades), from various ambiguous Corps legal interpretations and with decisions of the Division commanders' years prior to Major General Holland's tenure, that portion of the river was removed from the program. The removal of those 63 miles placed the burden of maintenance on the Tensas Basin Levee District which lacks the resources to provide the necessary upkeep. I am unsure if I can accurately capture the issue in a white paper or similar document and explain in detail all the actions that got us to where we are currently. An in-depth discussion of the evolution of these 63 miles, from inception to removal and to requested restoration, is definitely warranted. The Association will, at your request, make available those personnel for discussion who have the historical and requisite knowledge of the events leading to the inclusion and removal of that portion of the river from the Program. Our goal all along has been to restore, or reinstate, the lower 63 miles of the east bank of the Ouachita from Monroe south to where the majority of erosion and damage occurs.

As I mentioned in my presentation, we are thankful for the work being performed by the Vicksburg District under the auspices of the PL 84-99 Program to perform critical repair to bank caving along the Ouachita River in those 63 miles in question. Without this much needed work, erosion will continue to destabilize the bank in multiple areas leading to potentially catastrophic flooding events, as well as hinder river navigation.

While we are very much appreciative of the work being performed and planned under the PL 84-99 Program, it really only represents a band-aid fix to the much larger issue.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address this question. I can be reached at david.weeks.ORVA@outlook.com or via my mobile at 318-366-3834 for comments, questions, or further discussion.

Sincerely and respectfully,

David L. Weeks
Executive Director