

"A River Basin of Opportunity, A Century Plus of Commitment"



ORVA NEWS

Ouachita River Valley Association

"Dedicated to Quality of Life in the Ouachita Valley"

FALL 2022

MISSION:

ORVA is non-profit organization that promotes the development of water and land resources projects that are engineered and economically feasible, environmentally sustainable, and publicly acceptable that enhance the general welfare of the people in the Ouachita River Basin in Arkansas, Louisiana, and the Nation.

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Navigation: Johnny Martin

Finance: Johnny Martin/Barry Joffrion

Nominating Committee: Judge Mike Loftin/Johnny Martin

Executive Director: David Weeks,
david.weeks.ORVA@outlook.com; 318-366-3834

Fall 2022

OUACHITA-BLACK RIVERS NAVIGATION PROJECT

The never-ending cycle of high water/low water continues on the Ouachita! We're not alone in the fight. The nations waterways are all experiencing drought conditions. In fact, the western United States is facing its most severe drought in human history. Lake Mead (which we've all seen on our screens and read about) dropped to record low elevation levels this past summer. No end is in sight there. But looking at the National Weather Service Quantitative Precipitation Forecast (QPF) on its 7-Day Total Precipitation Model, considerable precipitation is forecasted, especially as weather systems move westward into the Ohio River Valley from the east. Hopefully Mother Nature is on the verge to catching up to her annual rainfall totals. We can sure use the rainfall!

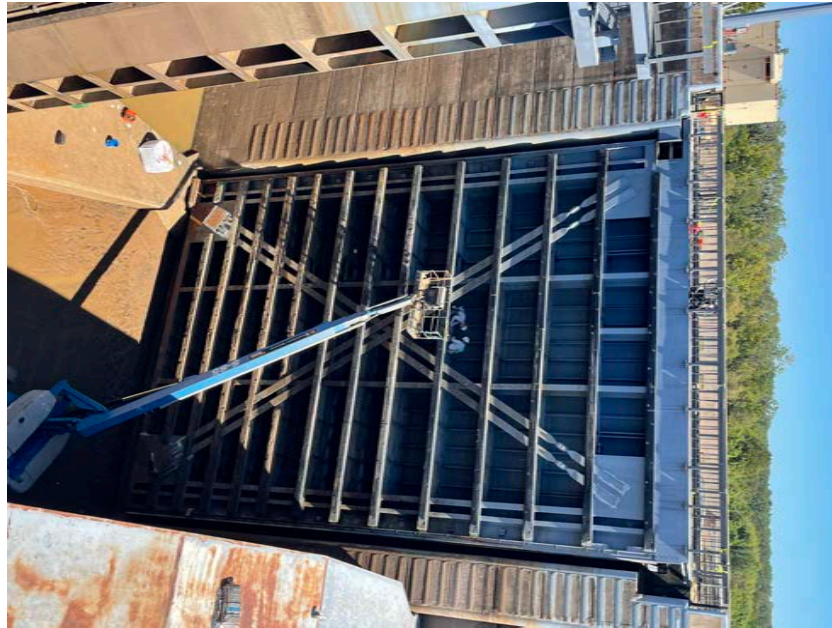
This edition of the newsletter addresses many of our typical topics: dredging, funding, tonnage, levels of service, and interaction with the Mississippi River Commission. The Fall 2022 edition also contains several articles and tidbits of information which we believe you will find interesting. The newsletter also includes comments from Colonel Chris Klein, Commander and District Engineer, Vicksburg District, US Army Corps of Engineers and we discuss the 55th Annual ORVA Conference held this past August in West Monroe, special because we were able to visit with old friends and colleagues, meet new friends, hear from Corps leadership and state executives, fellowship together, share ideas, and network.

As this newsletter goes to print, Thanksgiving is on my mind and just around the corner, Christmas items are already out in local stores and the results of local and national elections are still debatable. What is not debatable is how blessed we are as citizens of this great country! Stay safe and God bless!

Commander's Update – Vicksburg District, US Army Corps of Engineers

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Vicksburg District is responding to widespread low water conditions on the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Channel restrictions resulting in barge grounding issues started in late September along our stretch of the MS river. Working across USACE districts in the region with the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and industry partners, we were able to coordinate channel closures and complete maintenance dredging in problematic areas. As an example of our regional execution, on September 30th, the Dredge Hurley from Memphis District executed emergency dredging at Lower Mississippi River mile (LMR) 487 (Stack Island) so our survey vessels could coordinate safe passage for over 90 vessels. Meanwhile, Vicksburg's Dredge Jadwin was executing similar emergency dredging in St. Louis. It is the commitment of the USACE enterprise to support dredging needs throughout the entire region.

The river level is low, but steady. We completed emergency dredging and are working through maintenance dredging at historically problematic areas. The Dredge Jadwin conducted operations at Cumbyville (LMR 590), Lakeport (LMR 525), and Stack Island (LMR 487). Future maintenance dredging will require intermittent channel closures; we remain committed to coordinating closures with all stakeholders to mitigate major disruptions to this critical supply link in our economy.



Engineers working at Lindy C. Boggs Lock and Dam, Vicksburg District Public Affairs

For our tributaries, the cutterhead Dredge Dubuque is out of dry dock and completed test dredging in Vicksburg harbor. The team is heading to the Red River to conduct maintenance dredging south of Lindy C. Boggs Lock and Dam ahead of its scheduled November 12th opening. We are excited to have the Dubuque back in action, and equally excited to re-open Boggs lock and Dam after successfully completing maintenance in the lock chamber.

The dredge DuBuque conducting operational testing in Vicksburg Harbor prior to deployment to the Red River. Picture courtesy of David Jenkins, Vicksburg District Operations.



Our vigilance does not end on the dredge deck. The district is conducting surveys and monitoring river stages daily to provide timely updates to the public and our partners. This is the lowest that the river has been at the Vicksburg

gauge since 2012, where it reached -1.0 ft. This will be the 6th time since 2000 that Vicksburg has reached stages below 1.5 ft.

The USACE Vicksburg District measures water levels on the Lower Mississippi River by a vast satellite telemetry gaging system that transmits 15- minute data back to a satellite and subsequently to data acquisition servers at several federal agencies. The district has approximately 200 satellite gages across a 68,000 square mile area of responsibility of which a team of six hydrologic technicians oversees the maintenance of this complex system of gages.



Photo of the Mississippi River at Vicksburg, Vicksburg District Public Affairs

The Mississippi River is the backbone to our Nations' economy with 681 million tons of cargo moving on the river system annually and \$12.5 billion in transportation cost savings. The USACE Vicksburg District is committed to maintaining and protecting the Mississippi River and its tributaries.



Colonel Christopher Klein. Colonel Chris Klein assumed command of the Vicksburg District, US Army Corps of Engineers June 15, 2022. He has served in a myriad of key command and staff assignments. Colonel Klein comes to the Vicksburg District from Springfield, Virginia, where he attended the Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy. Prior to this, he served as the Military Assistant to the Chief Management Officer, Department of Defense. Colonel Klein holds a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the United States Military Academy and a Master of Science in Geological Engineering from the University of Missouri. He is also a registered Project Management Professional.

2022 Commercial Tonnage

Tonnage numbers surpassed the 1 million metric ton mark again in calendar year 2021 for the second consecutive year (the standard point for determining whether the waterway is a mid or low-use waterway). As we have previously discussed, the great majority of that tonnage is due to the movement of rock for the Monroe River Bank Stabilization and Levee Rehabilitation Project, known locally as the Monroe Floodwall Project. That project was completed earlier in the spring of 2022 and tonnage numbers definitely reflect the completion on the project.

Looking closer at tonnage with an eye on the future, it is possible that we might meet that milestone, albeit somewhat remote. Numbers for the first nine months of calendar year 2022 are depicted here:

| Jonesville 1/1/2022 – 9/30/2022 | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Commodity | Upbound (KTONS) | Downbound (KTONS) | Total YTD (KTONS) |
| Gasoline Incl Aviation (Except Jet) | 147.400 | | 147.400 |
| Residual Fuel Oil | 153.800 | | 153.800 |
| Dredged Material | | 1.600 | 1.600 |
| Limestone | 205.832 | | 205.832 |
| Wheat | | 14.400 | 14.400 |
| Corn | | 43.200 | 43.200 |
| Sorghum Grains | | 19.200 | 19.200 |
| Soybeans | | 20.800 | 20.800 |
| Machinery/Bulkheads (Not Electric) | 4.650 | 8.150 | 12.800 |
| Other | 2.330 | .013 | 2.343 |
| Total | 514.012 | 107.363 | 621.375 |

The numbers presented in the graphs below represent “Upbound” and “Downbound” tonnage (reflected in thousands of tons) on the Ouachita at the Jonesville Lock for the period January 1 – September 30, 2022. Data derived from the Jonesville Lock and Dam is selected because it is a good representation of tonnage on the river.

Tonnage was off to a slow start for calendar year 2022. Through March 2022, tonnage stood at 209 with Gasoline (48 KTONS), Residual Fuel Oil (48 KTONS), and Limestone (69 KTONS) as the top three commodities. The numbers gained momentum through late spring through early fall with the movement of agricultural commodities (wheat, corn, sorghum, and soybeans) but have slowed somewhat due to low water which is affecting barge movement.

Total agricultural commodities moved on the Project in calendar year 2021 were 306.5 tons: 123.2 tons of corn and 183.3 tons of soybeans. Current tonnage numbers reflect roughly 30% of 2021’s agricultural numbers. With many of our agricultural producers holding commodities (due in large part to low water at river offloading facilities) we are hopeful that we will see a substantial increase in downbound tonnage movement of those commodities. In addition, according to representatives with the Tensas Basin Levee District, we should see additional movement of rock in the fourth quarter of 2022. This rock, which is an unknown quantity at this point, will support the stabilization of portions of the Ouachita River embankment to prevent

erosion and bank caving and is funded through the authority of Public Law (PL) 84-99. These increases, combined with the continued shipment of fuel northward should put us in a good position.



Fuel barge moving on the Ouachita.
Photo courtesy of Clay Manly.

Fuel movement north on the Ouachita-Black amounted to a total of 386.8 tons in calendar year 2021; current fuel tonnage through September 30 is 171.2, or 44% of last year. That said, low water levels, have significantly affected fuel movements. Significant shallows (sand bars) south of Jonesville at mile markers 15-17 have greatly reduced capacity on fuel barges.

Low water, combined with Lock 1 closure, has also affected movement on the Red River. General Marine Services (GMS), who pushes fuel on both the Red and Ouachita-Black, have steadily reduced draft from the standard 9 ft.

On Monday, October 24, they reported the critical decision to cut back to one barge tows with a maximum draft of 7'6". As might be expected, these reductions become not only quite expensive but also quite timely, creating fuel shortage risks for the Monroe, Louisiana terminal and ultimately the city.

GMS must scale back to one barge tows with a max 7'6" draft due to low water.

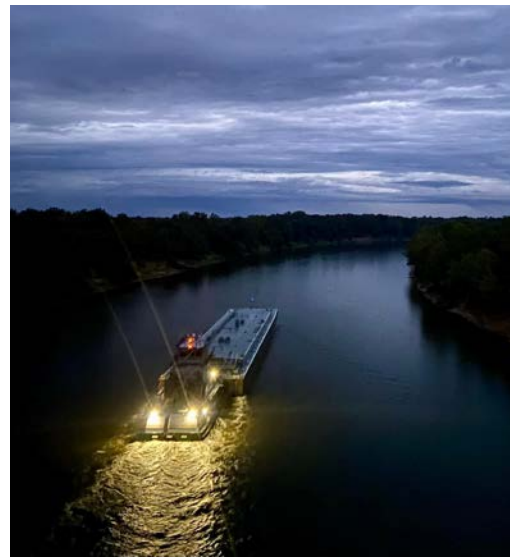


Photo courtesy of Clay Manly

Ouachita River Watershed Study Efforts

I first learned that there was a problem on the Ouachita when the staff from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's (AGFC) Camden Office contacted me in 2016. They asked if the Corps of Engineers' Vicksburg District had historic records of river levels. I told them that I'd find out - but asked them why they were looking into that. They said they were experiencing increased timber mortality at the Beryl Anthony Wildlife Management Area (WMA). In the 1990's, Beryl Anthony was one of Arkansas' healthiest bottomland hardwood forests. Timber, particularly our red oak species, are now dying en masse.

Together with members of the WMA staff, I went and visited the WMA. We were shown how the forest was responding to growing season flooding: there was no red oak regeneration, damaged bark, and large dead branches from the mature hardwoods. During the hours we were on the WMA, we heard at least three trees collapse to the ground. We all recognized and understood that we were dealing with a huge problem. But who else would care about a 7,000-acre, state owned, WMA? Who could help us?

When I went with our staff to view Beryl Anthony from the Ouachita River, I began to realize that it wasn't just our WMA which was affected. It was Felsenthal, the upper Ouachita, Mollicy Farms, Russell Sage, and Catahoula! From Hutting, AR south to Jonesville, LA there are over 350,00 acres of habitat along the Ouachita! That is definitely of importance to the nation!

Arkansas Game and Fish, together with our natural resource partners from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, convened to discuss what could be done to preserve our bottomland hardwood forests. The consensus was that we needed an updated watershed study focusing on the Ouachita River from Lake Ouachita to the Atchafalaya.

The Ouachita River basin is incredibly varied and crosses through many different ecoregions on its journey from the Fourche Mountain highlands in the Ouachita Mountains to the Mississippi Alluvial Plain. The authorized uses of the river are navigation, flood control, hydropower, recreation, and water supply. Problems along the river include bank instability, sedimentation, aging infrastructure, and growing season flooding in the bottomland hardwood ecosystems.

Over the past decade ORVA, AGFC, the Union County Water Conservation Board, and even the Congressional delegations for Arkansas and Louisiana have requested that a watershed study of the Ouachita be conducted. Our attempts to initiate a watershed study on the Ouachita have grown to include our partners on the Red and Atchafalaya Rivers. Through the continued persistence of the river's stakeholders, and many thanks to the support and work from Senator Boozman's Office, our request for an Ouachita River watershed study was added to the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022! Now we're just waiting for the President's signature!

Once WRDA 2022 is signed into law, we will begin the work of securing federal appropriations for the study. Recognizing that these Arkansas and Louisiana river systems are all connected, our ultimate goal is to combine an Ouachita study with the work that has been done on the Red and Atchafalaya so that we can create a better picture of these highly altered systems that we're all trying to manage on behalf of the people of the United States.



Ms. Jennifer Sheehan. Jennifer Elise Sheehan is the Chief of the Environmental Coordination Division at the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission (AGFC). She received a Bachelor's Degree in History and Anthropology from Augusta University, a Master's Degree in Environmental Policy and Management from the University of Maryland, and is a Fellow of the National Conservation Leadership Institute. Jennifer has worked for the University of Georgia's Savannah River Ecology Lab, the USGS-Biological Resources Division in Alaska, Birds Australia, Kansas State University, and the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission. Her background is in wetland biology and environmental policy. In her current role, Jennifer acts as the liaison between the Commission and the federal government, primarily the Army Corps of Engineers, where she ensures that AGFC upholds their responsibilities under the Fish & Wildlife Coordination Act by reviewing federally funded, licensed, and permitted water development projects statewide.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's mission is to conserve and enhance Arkansas's fish and wildlife and their habitats while promoting sustainable use, public understanding and support.



Low water continues to plague the Mississippi, Ouachita, and Red Rivers.

These photos of the mighty Mississippi River were taken October 26 near Alsatia, Louisiana (on the west side of the river) just north of Vicksburg. Many of the old-timers in East Carroll and Madison Parishes, Louisiana say they have never seen the river this low, especially at this time of the year.

Photos courtesy of Debbie Muse, Alsatia, LA

The historic low waters on the nation's inland waterways continue to restrict navigation channels, limit tow sizes, cause light-loading, and slow or halt river traffic, which affect millions of tons of agricultural commodities.

Whether delivered directly by a farmer or by another elevator, once the grain arrives at the river, in our case, the Mississippi,

Red, or Ouachita, it is loaded onto barges and begins a steady journey down river. With dozens of elevators located up and down the river, elevators act as strategic collection points where the grain is loaded into barges and transported to the Louisiana Gulf.

Ports on the Gulf of Mexico constitute more than 1.3 billion bushels (33M metric tons) of demand for U.S. corn. From there it is transferred into ocean vessels, destined for the export market. Corn and co-products will move to destinations all over the world, including Mexico, Japan, South Korea, Spain and many others.

The river system is the safest, most energy-efficient, environmentally friendly way to competitively move agricultural commodities; the combination of access, infrastructure, and economics make logistics very efficient. However, we can't control rainfall and (the lack of) this commodity severely restricts the river system.

*The steamer **B.L. Hodge** traveled the Ouachita River to bring Confederate General Kirby Smith and his staff to Camden, Arkansas during the Civil War. The vessel served on the Ouachita as a Confederate troop and supply boat for the duration of the war.*

Ouachita River Commission

Following the ORVA Annual Conference, I had the opportunity and privilege to brief members of the Ouachita River Commission. The Ouachita River Commission was created and established with the following powers, duties, and responsibilities:

- (1) To cooperate with the appropriate state and federal agencies for the study, planning, and implementation of needed improvements or projects, or both, to and along the main stem of the Ouachita River in Dallas County, Hot Springs County, Clark County, Ouachita County, Calhoun County, Union County, Bradley County, and Ashley County;
- (2) To review, study, and examine any plan by the State of Arkansas or the federal government, or any agency thereof, for the improvement of the main stem of the Ouachita River in Arkansas and to ascertain the nature and purpose of the improvement, the benefits to be expected therefrom, and the necessary, feasibility, and estimated cost thereof;
- (3) To determine the local, nonfederal costs necessary for the construction, operation, and maintenance of any Ouachita River improvement project, including, but not limited to, port and terminal facilities along and upon the main stem thereof;
- (4) To delineate the area to be benefited by improvement of the main stem of the Ouachita River; and
- (5) To receive and use any federal, state, or private funds, donations, or grants made available for promotion or enhancement of the recreational benefits of the Ouachita River in Dallas County, Hot Springs County, Clark County, Ouachita County, Calhoun County, Union County, Bradley County, and Ashley County.

ORVA is proud to partner with the Ouachita River Commission to help promote the recreational benefits of the Ouachita River.

Mississippi River Commission Response to ORVA's Written Statement – April 2022

The Association received a written response dated May 24, 2022 to its April 6, 2022 written statement to the Mississippi River Commission (MRC) from Maj Gen Diana Holland, President, MRC. Her response is shown here in its entirety:

Mr. David L. Weeks
Ouachita River Valley Association
P.O. Box 913
Camden, Arkansas 71711

Dear Mr. Weeks:

Thank you for your testimony before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held aboard the MV Mississippi on April 6, 2022, in Greenville, Mississippi. The Commission appreciates the continued partnership we share with the Ouachita River Valley Association. Your testimony and personal engagement help us gain a better understanding of the conditions and challenges that are unique to your experience.

Recently, the Vicksburg District received an unprecedented amount of funding from the Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (DRSAA) and the Infrastructures Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) passed by Congress. As a part of the DRSAA, Vicksburg District received adequate funding to award contracts on eight additional repairs along the Ouachita River south of Monroe as a part of the P.L. 84-99 Program. As part of the IIJA, Vicksburg District received critical funding for the three Arkansas lakes as well as additional funding on the Ouachita-Black Rivers. The Commission shares your support of a new DeGray Lake Field office and Interpretive Visitor Center. The Vicksburg District continues to express a capability for this much needed update at DeGray Lake.

The Commission understands your continued interest of incorporating the lower 63 miles of the Ouachita River Levee System as a part of the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project. We continue to await implementation guidance from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters on how to proceed in generating a proposal to incorporate the lower 63 miles as a part of the project.

We appreciate receiving your comments and look forward to hearing from you at future meetings.

Sincerely,

-----Original Signed-----

Diana M. Holland
Major General, U.S. Army
President, Mississippi River
Commission

Statement to the Mississippi River Commission – 24 August 2022 – Vicksburg, MS

The following written statement was presented to the Mississippi River Commission at their August 24, 2022 meeting:



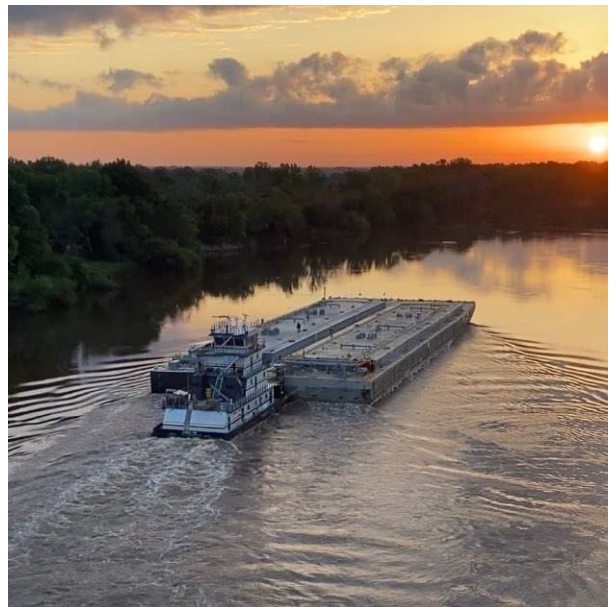
STATEMENT OF THE OUACHITA RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION PRESENTED TO THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI AUGUST 24, 2022

General Holland and Members of the Mississippi River Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity and privilege to present this statement and address ORVA's major concerns on behalf of the members of the Association.

The Ouachita River Valley Association (ORVA) has been in existence nearly 130 years. At its inception in 1893, its sole purpose was to obtain a year-round commercial navigation system on the Ouachita River in Arkansas and Louisiana. Today, while the major focus of ORVA is on the operation, maintenance, and completion of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project and associated infrastructure, it also supports economic development projects throughout the Basin. We like to say that, "we're not just about navigation."

The Association's mission is to promote the development of water and land resources projects that are engineered and economically feasible, environmentally sustainable, and publicly acceptable that enhance the general welfare of the people in the Ouachita River Basin in Arkansas, Louisiana, and the Nation. Our major interests include navigation, water supply (commercial, industrial, and agricultural), recreation and conservation, waste water discharge, flood damage reduction, and economic development.



Fuel barges returning from a delivery of fuel to the Monroe, Louisiana terminal.
Photo courtesy of Clay Manly.

Considering FY 2021 Project funding was a total of \$7.625M, the funding picture for the Project is the best it has been in most recent memory. Although the Project received a substantial increase in funding in FY 2022 over FY 2021 levels, it still faces a lack of funding for backlog maintenance. The passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in November 2021 should add some relief to funding shortfalls and we remain confident that the Division and the District are addressing the issue of backlog maintenance.

The Association's highest priority is the reinstatement of the 63 miles of the east bank of the Ouachita River levee ("at and below Monroe, Louisiana to Caldwell Parish, Louisiana") into the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project. The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2020 included language requiring a feasibility analysis prior to the inclusion of this relevant levee section into the MR&T Program. The WRDA 2007 included language restoring 43 miles of the upper east bank, 1.9 miles of floodwall in Monroe, Louisiana, and 7.2 miles of levee on the west bank of the Ouachita River Levees Project as part of the MR&T Project. The legislation did not reinstate the lower 63 miles of the east bank south where the majority of erosion and damage occurs.

We believe that adding, or rather reinstating, the 63 miles of the east bank of the Ouachita River levee to the MR&T Project is critical. Like the restorations resulting from the 2007 language, it in simple terms places the portion of the levee system under federal authority for maintenance and repair. While we await implementation guidance from the Corps headquarters on the feasibility analysis identified in WRDA 2020, the situation continues to deteriorate; levee repair and rehabilitation must be tied to funding associated with high-water events.

Modifying the Project to add bank stabilization as a Project feature is another major concern of the Association. The Ouachita River levee system is closely associated with navigation, especially south of Monroe, Louisiana, as it provides flood damage reduction which is of paramount importance to ORVA. As you are aware, flooding and high-water events substantially increase the possibility for system failure. While the Corps does address these events through the Public Law 84-99 Program, full restoration is necessary for navigation and flood control

Construction of a new Lake DeGray Field Office and Interpretive Visitor Center remains an ORVA major concern. Backlogged for more than 10 years, the Lake DeGray Field Office is the last remaining Corps facility to be replaced. This construction is sorely needed. It is not only important to the economic health and well-being of the community, but also necessary for the safety and health of Corps employees.


Several studies have demonstrated the economic importance of the Project to the people of the basin. Operation and maintenance, to include dredging, are key to the economic health of the Ouachita. And in a single word, its value is high! The Project is critically important to area economies within the Ouachita River Basin.

We did receive news at our recent annual conference that a basin-wide comprehensive study to devise a plan for the development and conservation of water and land resources in

Arkansas and Louisiana is almost a certain victory. The study will serve as a basis for both the Corps of Engineers and other agencies to examine current and future problems and needs related to flood damage reduction, navigation, water supply, bank stabilization, ecosystem restoration, and recreation. The Association believes this study will result in substantial wins in the areas of navigation and flood damage reduction.

In summary, we ask for your support and assistance in addressing ORVA's major concerns:

- Increasing funding for backlog maintenance, to include the three Corps lakes
- Restoring the lower 63 miles of the Ouachita River east bank levee to the MR&T Project
- Modifying the Project to add bank stabilization as a Project feature
- Construction of a new Lake DeGray Field Office and Interpretive Visitor Center
- Supporting the economic development within the Ouachita River Basin
- Undertaking a comprehensive watershed study of the Ouachita River Basin

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><u>ORVA's Major Concerns</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Backlog Maintenance<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adding Water Supply as a feature of the Navigation Project<input type="checkbox"/> "Restoring" the lower 63 miles of the east bank of the Ouachita River levee to the MR&T Project<input type="checkbox"/> Modifying the Project to include bank stabilization as a Project feature<input type="checkbox"/> Construction of a new Lake DeGray Field Office and Interpretive Visitor Center<input type="checkbox"/> Economic Development within the Basin<input type="checkbox"/> Undertake a comprehensive watershed study of the Ouachita River Basin <p><small>A River Basin of Opportunity...A Century Plus of Commitment</small></p> |  |
|--|---|

Thank you for the opportunity to present this statement to the members of the Mississippi River Commission. We are proud of our relationship with the Commission and the Vicksburg District. We are proud to partner with the District on the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project and look forward to the continued superb working relationship as we work together to benefit the people of the Ouachita River Basin.

Please contact me at david.weeks.ORVA@Outlook.com or 318-366-3834 (Mobile) if I can be of assistance or answer any questions. Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit a statement on behalf of our ORVA members.

Sincerely and respectfully,

----Original Signed----

David L. Weeks
Executive Director

As of the date this newsletter was sent to print, the Association had not received a written response to the above written testimony.

Madison Parish Port offers a strategic location on the deep side of the Mississippi River. It's seven miles north of Tallulah, Louisiana with direct access to U.S. Interstate 20 via U.S. Highway 65. Rail service is first-rate with Port owned, short-line service onto the river right to the end of the dock – facilitating faster, easier on- and off-loading of cargo. With Army Corps of Engineers support, the Port is open for business virtually year-round.

The Ouachita River at Monroe, Louisiana



These two pictures depict the Ouachita River at Monroe, Louisiana. On the left is a recent photograph taken south of Monroe looking north. Below is an artist's rendition of what the River at Monroe would look like if it were not for the Corps' lock and dam systems on the Ouachita River.

The continued maintenance of the locks and dams on the waterway represents a substantial investment for the Army Corps of

Engineers. In past years, maintenance of these structures has been lacking due to funding shortfalls. The Corps estimates a \$22 Million backlog of maintenance activities for the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project.

On page 31 of this newsletter we will look at and discuss an opinion that proposes the Corps remove the locks and dams. Please look further for this interesting article.



Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2022

The Association forwarded information mid-February for our Congressional delegations to begin working WRDA 2022. This initial step, followed by submission to the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW), will begin laying the groundwork for project and/or policy requests for inclusion in the bill.

ORVA submitted two requests, both Project Modification Requests and major ORVA concerns:

-Modify the Ouachita River Levee Project and its Components (Columbia Ring Levee, the Bawcomville Ring Levee, and the folding Monroe Floodwall) to include it as part of the Mississippi River & Tributaries (MR&T) Project. In simple terms, it restores the lower 63 miles, at and below Monroe, LA to Caldwell Parish where the majority of erosion and damage occurs and places that portion of the levee system under federal authority for maintenance and repair. The Association has presented this issue to our delegations and the MRC many times. We remain confident that at some point in the future, the lower 63 miles will be included in the MR&T.

-Modify the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project to include bank stabilization as a project feature. Bank caving and other erosion problems occur all along the Ouachita and Black

Rivers and threaten to cause catastrophic flooding and hinder navigation. The Corps addresses this issue (with emergency funding) through the Public Law (PL) 84-99 program. The PL 84-99 program, while a tremendous help for which we are grateful, in the scheme of things is really a band-aid approach to the much bigger issue. (A bank caving problem must be tied to a high-water event; it may be years before it is actually addressed. What was a \$50,000 repair cost in 2018 may become a \$500,000 repair in 2022, assuming funds are available.) This modification of the Project to include bank stabilization as a Project feature places it under federal authority for maintenance and repair.

For the first time since 2007, the bill authorizes new environmental infrastructure projects and modifies existing ones. It also directs the Corps to expedite the completion of several ongoing studies and projects that are critical to addressing coastal and inland flood risk mitigation, navigation, and ecosystem restoration.

History has suggested that the WRDA 2022 will not be signed into law until sometime after the November elections.

The Ouachita River is named for the Ouachita tribe, one of several historic tribes who lived along it. Others included the Caddo, Osage Nation, Tensa, Chickasaw, and Choctaw. The historian Muriel Hazel Wright suggested that word Ouachita "owa chito" is a Choctaw phrase meaning "hunt big" or "good hunting grounds".

ORVA's 55th Annual Conference

Third time is a charm!

We started working the 55th Annual Conference in 2020, shifted to 2021 because of COVID, and with a new variant surging, the Directors made the agonizing decision to cancel the 2021 event after much planning and coordination had been done. In fact, ORVA returned several thousand dollars in registration fees because of the cancellation. It was the right thing to do.

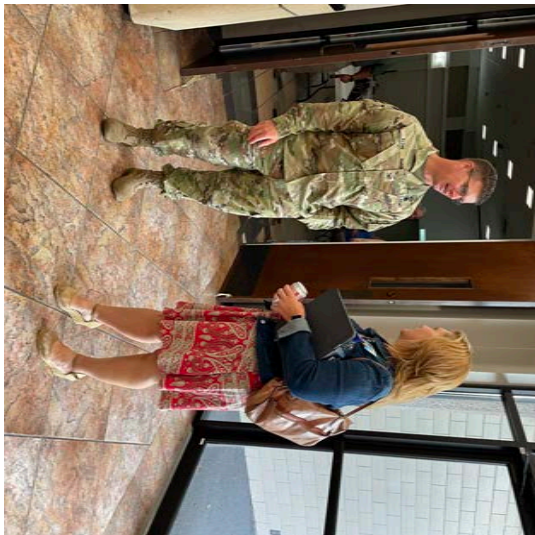
With COVID waning, conditions were finally favorable to allow us to hold an event at the West Monroe Convention Center this past August 11 and 12.

The conference kicked off with registration at noon on Thursday, August 11 followed by welcome and announcements by ORVA President Randy Denmon. Mr. Denmon was followed by a discussion and presentation on Ouachita River navigation and the status of the lock and dams by Mr. K.C. Ellis, Chief of Navigation of the US Army Corps of Engineers Monroe Project Office. K.C. was followed by Mr. Jason Mooney, Chief of the Vicksburg Districts' Project Resources Management Branch, who provided an informative update on the three Corps lakes. Prior to the afternoon break, Ms. Jennifer Sheehan, Chief, Environmental Coordination

Lake Hamilton and Lake Catherine are a pair of man-made lakes located in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Both lakes serve as a tourist attraction and destination for thousands of annual visitors. These beautiful lakes were developed by Arkansas Power & Light.

Division of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, provided attendees an update on the Ouachita River Watershed Study. (Please see page 5 for more on this important study.)

Following the afternoon break, Mr. Ed Knight with the Louisiana Department of Transportation Levee and Dam Safety Program, presented on the topic of dam and levee safety, floodplain management, and the Louisiana Watershed Initiative. Ms. Cassandra Caldwell, Director of the Arkansas Waterways Commission gave an informative presentation on Arkansas' greatest natural resource. A presentation from Mr. Rob Reynolds on the topic, "Saving the Sparta Aquifer Using High Quality Ouachita River Water" helped round out the afternoon's presentations. Mr. Reynolds, a volunteer advisor with the Union County (Arkansas) Conservation Board, delivered this brief. Following his presentation, there was no doubt he



was much more than a volunteer! A video which featured West Monroe's Sparta Reuse Facility completed the afternoon's presentations and discussions.

Col Chris Klein speaks with West Monroe Mayor Staci Mitchell

Conference attendees gathered again at the West Monroe Convention Center to enjoy the evening reception. West Monroe Mayor Staci Mitchell welcomed the dinner participants who stood to honor America with a presentation of the colors by the West Monroe High School Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps and national anthem. Camden Arkansas Mayor Julian Lott delivered the invocation and blessing. Following an outstanding dinner, we

were indeed fortunate to have Dr. Mike Strain, Louisiana's Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry serve as the dinner speaker. As a plus, State Representative Francis Thompson provided introductory comments. This was a tremendous opportunity to hear and see the two most influential individuals in Louisiana agriculture! Mr. Denmon provided concluding remarks to a very successful day.

Lt Gov Nungesser speaks with Ms. Pat Hemphill, Vicksburg District and Maj Gen Diana Holland, Mississippi Valley Division, US Army Corps of Engineers



The conference began Friday, August 12, 2022 with welcoming comments by Monroe Mayor Friday Ellis and West Monroe Mayor Staci Mitchell. The keynote presentation was made by Billy Nungesser, Louisiana's 54th Lieutenant Governor. His tremendous presentation titled, "*The Louisiana Experience*," was greatly enjoyed by all in attendance. His love and zeal for Louisiana and its people were quite evident. The two key Corps of Engineers leaders who

were indeed fortunate to have Dr. Mike Strain, Louisiana's Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry serve as the dinner speaker. As a plus, State Representative Francis Thompson provided introductory comments. This was a tremendous opportunity to hear and see the two most influential individuals in Louisiana agriculture! Mr. Denmon provided concluding remarks to a very successful day.

support the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project followed Governor Nungesser. We were also very fortunate to have Maj Gen Diana Holland, Commander, Mississippi Valley Division and President, Mississippi River Commission join the conference and provide an overview of the Corps of Engineers and the operations of the Division. Colonel Chris Klein, the Vicksburg District Commander and District Engineer followed General Holland. Colonel Klein delivered an important presentation, focusing on the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project and river operations. (I jokingly, but respectfully, refer to Colonel Klein as my commander. He is the key senior Corps of Engineers point of contact for our Association.)



Monroe Mayor Friday Ellis provides opening comments at the conference.

Dr. Richard Fulford, Lead Researcher with the Environmental Protection Agency provided an in-depth look at the river with his presentation, “A Deeper Look at the Ouachita.” Dr. Fulford’s thought-provoking research and presentation provided a “human dimension” to the river and was very eye-opening.

Conference attendees enjoyed a luncheon with Ms. Sheila Snow from Discover Monroe-West Monroe providing comments. Her presentation “The Economic Impact of the

Ouachita River,’ greatly supported Dr. Fulford’s comments and gave us the complete picture of the Ouachita River.

ORVA wishes to thank all those that supported the conference with “vendor” and information tables as well as the staff of the West Monroe Convention Center and the West Monroe West Ouachita Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Dan Blakeney, the premier caterer in West Monroe and Ouachita Parish, provided excellent food and food service throughout the conference. Indications are the conference was greatly enjoyed by all in attendance.



Col Chris Klein speaks with Tyler Gipson, Hydrologic Civil Engineer with the Southwestern Power Administration

Planning is currently underway for the **56th Annual ORVA Conference** to be held at beautiful Hot Springs, Arkansas and the Corps of Engineers’ Lake Ouachita Project Office. Dates for the conference are **August 10-11, 2023**. The City of Hoy Springs will host and assist with the administration, planning, and execution of this important event. **Please mark these dates on your calendar! You will not want to miss it!**

Photos provided by the Public Affairs Office, Vicksburg District, US Army Corps of Engineers.

We are greatly indebted to the many supporters and sponsors who financially support ORVA. Many thanks to the following sponsors of the 55th Annual Conference:

GOLD LEVEL SPONSORS - \$1,000

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Terral River Service | Lake Providence, LA |
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ORVA Annual Raffle

The raffle consisted of chances to win one of three very nice prizes. The grand prize, compliments of Mountain Harbor Resort, consisted of a Mountain Harbor Resort 2-Night Vacation package at beautiful Lake Ouachita. This excellent package consisted of a two-night vacation getaway, weekend cottage or condominium, with a day's use of party barge and a \$50 meal credit in the Harbor Lodge Restaurant. Drawing number 2, donated by Stoeger Industries, was for a Stoeger model 3000 semi-auto shotgun chambered in 2¾ or 3-inch magnum, decked out in Mossy Oak Shadow Grass Blades camouflage. Drawing 3 was for an Outdoor Gourmet 2-Burner 22-inch griddle donated by Academy Sports and Outdoors in West Monroe, Louisiana.

Ms. Clara Culp of Camden, Arkansas was the winner of the Mountain Harbor vacation package, Mr. Jason McMillan of Columbia, Louisiana was the winner of the shotgun, and Judge Mike Loftin of El Dorado, Arkansas won the 2-burner griddle.

The drawing was held at the conclusion of the conference with Ms. Debbie Gipson from the Tensas Basin Levee District selecting the winners by random drawing.

Funds raised through the Association's annual memberships, our conference sponsors, and the annual raffle are used to support the Association's efforts to improve the economic development and the development, operation, and maintenance of water resources projects within the Ouachita River Basin in Louisiana and Arkansas.

Lake Hamilton is a 7,200-acre reservoir near Lake Hamilton, Arkansas and Hot Springs, Arkansas, located on the Ouachita River. It was named after Hamilton Moses, who later became president and chairman of the board for Arkansas Power and Light. The lake was created in 1932, formed as a result of Carpenter Dam (after Flavius Josephus Carpenter) which was constructed to generate hydroelectric power. The dam, which extends 1,000 feet in length and a height of 100 feet, was completed in 1931. The lake subsequently functioned as a recreational site spurring the development of resorts, restaurants, and motels in the area, along with various water sports facilities. Carpenter Dam was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.

Membership in the Ouachita River Valley Association

The Ouachita River Valley Association is very interested in membership retention and recruiting new members. Current membership consists of members in the following categories: individual, small business, corporate, civic/professional, public entity, and primary users. Annual dues range from \$50 for an individual membership to \$2,500 for primary users.

To be a viable organization, It is critically important that ORVA maintains its current membership and grow new members.

The strength of ORVA is in its membership; always has been – always will be. There is “strength in numbers!” Numbers speak volumes to our elected officials, to our partners, stakeholders, and others. They know ORVA is a non-profit organization. They know we represent the private sector of the economy. They know the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project is a tremendous economic impact to the people of the Ouachita River Basin in Arkansas and Louisiana. They know the Association has a tremendous heritage, a proven record of accomplishments, and a sound reputation for success.

Lake Catherine is smaller than Lake Hamilton, sized at 1,940-acres. The Lake Catherine State Park is located on the lake's shore. The lake was created in the 1920's with the building of Rammel Dam, a concrete-and-steel Ambursen-type buttressed dam. Rammel Dam was created to provide hydroelectricity for the Hot Springs and surrounding area. This beautiful lake later developed into a recreational site as a result of the lake's location next to Hot Springs, Arkansas. Today it is considered part of the Hot Springs recreational area.

Invite a Friend to Become a Member of ORVA

There are many reasons for joining ORVA:

-Be part of an organization that has been in existence for more than 128 years in the development of water and land resources and has a proud record of longevity and accomplishments to include being the organization that represented the voice of the private sector during the planning and construction of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Projects in the mid-twenties (6-½ foot project) and during the 70's-early 80's timeframe (9-foot project) under the unparalleled leadership of Mr. H. K. Thatcher, ORVA Executive Vice President.

-Be part of an Association that is recognized by Congress, Federal, and state agencies as the lead organization that promotes and supports the development of water and land resources throughout the Ouachita River Basin.

-Be part of an Association that makes two visits annually with congressional members representing the Ouachita River Valley in Louisiana and Arkansas to express water and land resources needs. We are an Association of constituents of our elected congressional representatives. Competition for Federal funds is very competitive in today's world, and our voices must be heard. Yes – numbers are very important!

-Participate in our annual conference which features some of the top experts in the field of water and land resources development. Featured speakers normally include congressional members, key leaders from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and experts in the fields of navigation, flood control, water supply, recreation and tourism, and fish and wildlife.

-Stay informed of what is going on in the water and land resources development in the Ouachita River Valley through receipt of newsletters, media releases, and the ORVA website.

-Participate in annual inspection trips on the Ouachita-Black and Mississippi Rivers with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (when funds are available) and see firsthand how valuable our water and land resources are. (ORVA is currently working with the Vicksburg District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for use of its inspection barge for the Spring of 2023.)

-Associate, network, and socialize with like-minded individuals who want to ensure the economy, environment, and quality of life for residents of the Ouachita River Basin are improving on a continuous basis.

The Old River Lock opened to navigation November 6, 2022, ahead of the scheduled November 12 planned opening. The entire lock was dewatered for the first time in 44 years and the second time since its construction in 1963, some 59 years ago. The planned 75-day closure occurred simultaneously with the dewatering of the Lindy C. Boggs Lock and Dam on the Red River, scheduled to reopen November 12. Although necessary, these closures beginning at the height of harvest season, created already exasperating conditions with historic low water on the Mississippi, Red, and Ouachita Rivers.

The Port of Rosedale, Mississippi

The Mississippi River is a uniquely valuable resource for the Nation. Bolivar County, Mississippi has always recognized this resource and has enjoyed a deep connection to the Mississippi River ever since the days of the paddlewheel steam boats. When the opportunity to develop a port presented itself in the early 1970s, the county was determined that the project would be handled with the utmost care and professionalism, beginning with a top-tiered feasibility study.



Rosedale Harbor as it appeared in early October 2022

A nationally recognized engineering firm was hired and a report was presented in February, 1974 indicating that a port development project was economically feasible and should be strongly pursued. The Board of Supervisors immediately petitioned the Mississippi Legislature to create a five-person County Port Commission within Bolivar County. Five energetic individuals were appointed from the five districts within the county and the group was “off to the races.” Their efforts took them from Bolivar County to the Vicksburg District, U. S. Corps of Engineers, to the halls of Congress.

In January, 1977, the Corps of Engineers issued a detailed project report entitled "Rosedale Harbor, MS" and with Congressional support, the project was launched. Within the specifications of the project, a benefit-cost ratio of 2.7 was proposed. The Corps was to provide construction with certain assurances from Bolivar County under Section 107 of the River and Harbor Act of 1960 as amended.

The result of the project was a port ready to provide superior service, featuring a 150-foot wide channel over 2.7 miles long with an additional 400' width turning basin on the upper end and a "T" shaped 211' x 51' general cargo dock with a crane adjoining a 20 acre hydraulic fill for a terminal.

Crossett Harbor - In addition to the facilities at the park, Crossett Harbor is located in the center of the Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge which makes it ideally located nearby to some of the best hunting and fishing areas found within the entire river basin.

**OUACHITA RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION (ORVA)
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

I/We hereby subscribe the sum of \$ _____ annually, payable in advance, for a one-year membership in support of the Ouachita River Valley Association, Inc. (ORVA). This membership becomes effective immediately and will remain in force so long as I/we remain a member/member in good standing and pay the membership dues when due each year.

Name: _____

Contact person (organizations only): _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Fax Number: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Membership Fees:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| _____ \$ 50 per year (Individual) | _____ \$ 200 Civic/Professional |
| _____ \$ 100 Small Business | _____ \$ 200 Public Entity |
| _____ \$ 500 Corporate | _____ \$1,250 User Fee |
| | _____ \$2,500 Primary User |

Please return completed form and cashier's check, money order, or personal check to:

**Ouachita River Valley Association
P.O. Box 913
Camden, AR 71711**



Lake Providence Harbor

The Lake Providence Harbor requires a minimum of \$1.3M annually for dredging its harbor channel. The port has always experienced sediment laden flows into the harbor channel, especially during high Mississippi River conditions. Dredging here is extremely important.

The Lake Providence Port Commission is a member and significant supporter of the Ouachita River Valley Association. We are proud to represent and assist them with funding and dredging requests.

This picture is taken of the channel at late October 2022, rendering the harbor completely closed to river traffic. Thankfully, the early area harvests helped prevent a complete catastrophe from occurring due to low water.

Photo courtesy of Debbie Muse, Alsatia, Louisiana



Camden – the little town that has become a “Combat Multiplier” for the Fight in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine has greatly increased the demand worldwide for artillery, large-caliber ammunition, rockets, and missile systems. We’ve all seen the visuals of burnt-out Russian tanks, armored personnel carriers, troop transports, and other military equipment. We’ve seen the heroic efforts of the Ukrainian people and their response to the invasion with a massive call to arms. (My thoughts about the 2nd Amendment come to mind...but I digress.) And we’ve seen the most recent advances in technological munitions – rockets and missile systems – played out on our phones and TV screens. It is a “David and Goliath” story that has captured the media and news outlets for the last seven months.



At the center of the fight in Ukraine are the twin cities of Camden and East Camden, Ouachita County’s secret “hot spot.” Workers for the defense industries in this southern Arkansas community are at “full throttle” to meet the demand for munitions.

“Camden is in a critical front-line position to support the Ukrainians who are stopping the Russian army from overrunning their nation,” said Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson recently.

U.S. Airmen load guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) munitions produced at Lockheed Martin’s plant outside Camden aboard a Boeing 747 bound for Ukraine.

The demand for rockets and missile systems will be here long after the fight in the Ukraine is settled, but it may take several years to replace U.S. stockpiles depleted to support the war there. In late August this year, Lockheed Martin received \$600 Million from the defense department to replenish stocks of MLRS and the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or HIMARS. The demand is real because the external threat is real.



Aerospace and defense workers have helped produce components that power weapon systems such as the Javelin anti-tank weapon (used by Ukrainian soldiers to wreak havoc on Russian armor) and the state-of-the-art Israeli Iron Dome missile defense system. Just a few days ago, Lockheed Martin announced the expansion of its missile production operations in south Arkansas to support the increased production of PAC-3 missiles for the Patriot missile system. The PAC-3 is a high-to-medium altitude long-range air defense “hit-to-kill” missile



designed to defeat tactical ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and aircraft. It is the world’s most advanced air defense missile. The 85,000 square foot expansion (the second major expansion) – the All Round Up III facility – will also be located in Camden. This capital investment will add 326 new jobs by 2024 to the more than 1,000 employees who currently work at the Camden operations facility.

At the center of Camden’s footprint is the Highland Industrial Park – the epicenter for aerospace and defense manufacturing in Arkansas. The Park is located in the former WW II era Shumaker Naval Ammunition Depot. It is the largest industrial park in a five-state area with more than 18,000 acres and more than five million square feet of industrial and warehousing capability. Among the critical products produced at the park are the PAC-3, THADD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense), HIMARS, MLRS and Guided MLRS. Needless to say, Camden, Arkansas and operations at the Highland Industrial Park have caught the attention of the nation and our allies.



Founded to take advantage of the existing infrastructure of the former naval depot, the park is the largest employer in the region. The aerospace and defense workers in Camden are certainly a combat multiplier. They help produce components that power weapons systems used very successfully by the Ukrainians to stop and reverse the Russian invasion of their homeland.

Martin, Raytheon Technologies, Aerojet Rocketdyne, Armtec Defense Products, General Dynamics, Spectra Technologies, and B&M Painting.

The Park is home to many aerospace and defense firms, including Lockheed

Camden Mayor Julian Lott

This past August, the Biden Administration announced the largest aid package for Ukraine, totaling almost \$3 Billion, followed in September by another \$2.2 Billion. Much of the aid is geared toward rearming allies who have transferred ammunition and weapons systems to Ukraine. But, the Administration plans to ask for billions more in aid, to include contracts for new production. The nucleus of many of those contracts are focused on south Arkansas and the Camden area.



Camden Mayor Julian Lott is doing his part to support industry with the recruitment and training of a quality workforce. He is focused not only on those seeking to move to Camden for aerospace and defense jobs, but growing and developing the workforce within the Camden area. A good percentage of the defense workers commute from El Dorado, Hot Springs, or even the Arkansas capital at Little Rock. Still, many “live” in Camden Monday through Thursday and travel back to their permanent places of residence for the weekend. Mayor Lott is working to improve that statistic. He is also a strong supporter of the revitalization of downtown Camden and the reuse of its commercial buildings for housing. With the influx of defense dollars, Camden is moving forward and Lott is the head cheerleader for the creation of a better quality of life for Camden and its residents. Camden is on the move once again to become the “Queen City of the Ouachita.”



The revitalization of the Camden downtown is one of the priorities for Mayor Lott.

Funds Status

As is usually the case, we began the 2022 fiscal year October 1, 2021 with none of the 12 appropriations bills signed into law. Congress had to pass several short-term extensions to allow lawmakers the extra time to enact a federal spending package for FY 2022. The extensions were necessary to keep the government funded and operational. President Biden finally signed the FY 2022 Omnibus Appropriations Bill on March 15, 2022, five and a half months into the fiscal year.

Fiscal Year 2023, like previous years, has proven to be no different. We began the fiscal year October 1, 2022 with a Continuing Resolution (CR). I am not optimistic that we will see the President sign the FY 2023 bill into law any time soon. The absence of an appropriation greatly hinders efforts at maintaining a navigable waterway on the nations' waterways; under the CRA, funding is simply not available in sufficient amounts to execute planned programs.

The good (funding) news is (at a substantial cost to taxpayers) the President did sign into law the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in November 2021 which provided \$17 billion in funding to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) civil works projects. Without the IIJA, the Corps' Civil Works Program was set to experience a 13% reduction in funding from FY 2021 to FY 2022.

The Corps' plan was released on January 19, 2022. In the plan, the IIJA provides \$17.1 billion for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Civil Works programs, projects, and activities (68% for construction; 23% for operations and maintenance (O&M) and 5% for the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project) stretched over the current (FY 2022) and next two fiscal years. The IIJA spend plan allocates approximately \$10.5 billion of the \$17.1 billion for FY 2022.

Under the IIJA Spend Plan For O&M in FY 2022, Blakely Mountain Dam and Lake Ouachita will receive \$2.24M, DeGray Lake \$1.635M, and Narrows Dam/Lake Greeson \$2.211M. The Ouachita and Black Rivers will receive \$3.915M.

The summary of work for the Ouachita-Black includes replacing barriers at Moon Lake Recreation Area, silt removal from recreation areas, repair of the H.K. Thatcher Lock and Dam hinge crest gate (FY 2024), and repair/replace Felsenthal Lock and Dam tainter gate.



It is almost certain we will not see permanent repairs at Thatcher Lock and Dam this fiscal year. With an estimate of repair costs at \$4M (and continuing to increase with the rise in inflation) we will hopefully see that work begin in FY 2024. (We looked at a chronological order of events at the H.K. Thatcher Lock and Dam in the Spring 2022 issue.)

A beautiful sunset picture of barge movement on the Ouachita River.

Photo courtesy of Clay Manly.

Data for the President’s Budget for FY 2023 with totals for FY 2022 and FY 2021 are shown here for comparison:

President’s Budget for Fiscal Year 2023
for the Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works Program (shown for comparison)

| Category | FY 2023 (in \$ Millions) | | FY 2023 | FY 2022 | FY 2021 |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Opns | Maint | | | |
| Blakely Mountain Dam and Lake Ouachita, AR | 4.990 | 3.038 | 8.028 | 8.028 | 8.285 |
| DeGray Lake, AR | 3.527 | 2.918 | 6.445 | 6.587 | 6.605 |
| Narrows Dam and Lake Greeson, AR | 3.759 | 1.741 | 5.500 | 5.691 | 5.861 |
| Total of the Corps Lakes | 12.276 | 7.697 | 19.973 | 19.738 | 20.741 |
| Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project | \$ 5.924 | 4.093 | 10.017 | 12.065 | \$ 7.625 |

Focusing solely on the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project and considering FY 2021 funding was a total of \$7.625M, the FY 2022 funding picture was the best it had been in recent memory, we believe in large part to the tonnage levels on the river. In addition, Fiscal Year 2023 projections are high compared to previous years.

The Project received a substantial increase in funding in FY 2022 over FY 2021 levels. However, maintenance is still a major concern (and an even greater concern is the issue of backlog maintenance.) The funding outlook for FY 2023 represents an almost 40% reduction in maintenance funding. This reduction in maintenance funding raises some serious concerns. With the age of the locks and dams (the two locks and dams in Arkansas are 40 years old and the two locks in Louisiana are 50 years old), maintenance becomes a critical item of concern for the waterway.

An example of one recent maintenance issue was the leak in the seal of the hinge crest gate at H.K. Thatcher Lock and Dam, creating a loss of pool. This reduction in the water level at Thatcher was the real threat of loss of water supply at Camden, Arkansas. (Camden Water Utilities supports five water associations – most of Ouachita County – and the City of Camden through two intake structures; supplying an average of 3 million gallons of water per day (mgd) to 20,200 customers.)

Although data concerning the FY 2024 President’s Budget is not available, we are optimistic that the funding outlook will be much better than in previous years (but most likely not at FY 2022 levels). It is our understanding that (for the FY 2024 budget) the Vicksburg District submitted under the navigation business line, a total of \$41.4M in work packages. Of that total, \$34.3M addresses backlog maintenance. We are excited that much of the backlog maintenance is being addressed through budget submission. Remember, though, it is only a

budget submission and much can happen in the next year. Time will tell the story. These submissions must pass through several hurdles before a federal spending package is signed into law, likely not until late winter/early spring 2024.

ORVA will continue to address the funding issue, among its other priorities, with its Congressional delegations.

Congratulations to Senator Boozman, Senator Kennedy, Congressman Westerman, and Congresswoman Letlow on their reelection victories.



HIMARS (High-Mobility Artillery Rocket System) was developed in 1996 by Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control. It is a highly-mobile rocket system with the firepower of a multiple-launch rocket system (MLRS) on a wheeled platform. The HIMARS system launches its weapons and moves away from the area at high speed before enemy forces can locate and engage the launch site.

Dredging Report

The dredging outlook for 2022 appeared optimistic at the beginning of the fiscal year on October 1, 2021. Armed with \$2.5M for dredging and surveys, early indications from the Vicksburg District indicated plans to dredge all the way to Camden, Arkansas and leave the small cutter-head dredge DuBuque at Camden with the intent to have it remain there to fully complete dredging in the Camden area. The dredge Integrity was also contracted for the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project.

Photo courtesy of Clay Manly

Once again, high water this past spring played a significant role in the start of dredging operations. To compound matters, water levels were too high in some places to accurately “map” the river bottom.

In early June 2022, the Corps provided a “Notice to Proceed” to the contractor on the Red River which allowed the contractor to also work the mouth of the Black River. Initial plans were to also send a contracted dredge from the Mississippi River ports and Harbors to the Ouachita River once the harbors were complete. Those operations were delayed, however, due to high water on the Mississippi.

From the Editor, New Orleans Crescent (New Orleans Newspaper), August 20, 1860

“The cotton is very promising for the season, and a fair average crop is calculated on. The corn crop is estimated at from a third to a half what it should have been. The weather is exceedingly warm and rain is very much needed. The Ouachita runs unusually low this season and particularly at this time. It is a little more than a creek winding through the lowest part of its broad and nearly empty bed. Boats cannot get nearer Monroe than about one hundred and sixty miles.”

See the Ouachita River... page 13

Also, during this period of time, the Corps-owned dredge Dubuque entered drydock to receive necessary repairs. Again, the initial plan was to send the Dubuque to the upper end of the Ouachita near Camden. ORVA also learned at this time the Corps was working with its Environmental Compliance Section as the US Fish and Wildlife Service was inquiring about dredging work and locations of threatened and endangered species.

By the fourth week of June, ORVA received information from the Corps concerning potential impacts to dredging operations in the Camden, Arkansas area. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) had identified a potential endangered species: the Pyramid Pig-Toe Mussel with most of the affected river area occurring downstream from the Camden area. Needless to say, this was a potential issue with impacts to dredging in the Camden area.

By mid-July with the Ouachita falling, General Marine Services (GMS) and other shippers were reducing draft down to 8’6” due to “hot-spots” and shallows. The Districts’ environmental team continued to work with the USFWS in an attempt to determine when to proceed with dredging operations on the Ouachita. The dredge DuBuque remained in drydock for upgrade and repair.

By early August the Corps and the USFWS were continuing to work the threatened and endangered species of mussel on the Ouachita. Later in August, a minimum amount of dredging was accomplished south of Columbia by the dredge Allison Crosby. (A small portion of the funding for the Ouachita is included on the Red River contract, which is a normal approach each year to capture needs near the Mouth of the Black.) ORVA remained hopeful; the dredge Integrity was still scheduled for the Ouachita-Black once it completed operations on the Mississippi. That optimism began to fade with the falling water levels across the Mississippi, Red, and Ouachita Rivers. Shippers reduced draft even further to 8 ft.

ORVA learned mid-September that the dredge Integrity would demobilize once dredging at the Mississippi harbors was complete. Discussions between the Corps and the USFWS continued. The USFWS began extensive environmental surveys in the Arkansas reaches north to Camden. The Corps’ survey team mapped from lower Columbia to the state line and saw no concerns. However, we still could not expect any dredging to occur above the state line but we were still hopeful that the mussel issue would be resolved and dredging would occur all the way to Camden. We also remained hopeful that the DuBuque would complete repairs and be operational by mid-October.

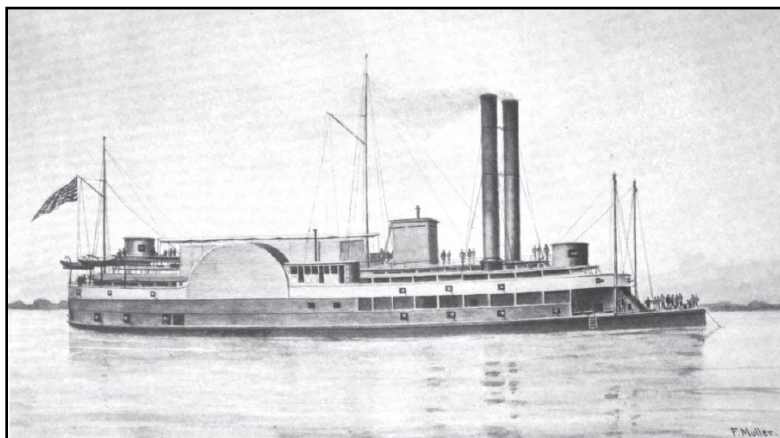
Water levels continued to exasperate shipping operations. By the fourth week of October, one of the Ouachita's principal shippers – General Marine Services – made the decision to scale operations back to a one barge tow with a maximum draft of 7'6". Not only do the reductions in draft and tow become quite costly, but potential damages to boats and barges becomes an almost certain possibility. The secondary effect as we discussed earlier in the newsletter, creates a potential fuel shortage in the north Louisiana area and ultimately the city of Monroe.

With operational testing of the DuBuque finalized early November, it deployed to the Red River for dredging operations. The Old River Lock opened on November 6 and the Lindy C. Boggs Lock and Dam on the Red (as of the date of this newsletter) scheduled to open November 12. We are unsure where the DuBuque will proceed from there. The Corps will review priorities and funding (suspect we will still be under a CR) and make decisions most likely by mid-November or shortly thereafter.

One of my friends at the Corps often remarks: "Mother Nature has last bat!" That certainly rings true when we look at dredging on the waterways and conditions in general this year; not only on the Ouachita, but also on the Mississippi and the Red. The professionals at the Corps have kept ORVA apprised throughout this trying period with weekly and sometimes daily conversations.

The plus in all of this drought crisis is the Corps has 2022 funding for dredging and we're very optimistic about 2023. Of course, at some point Mother Nature will remember the rains and we'll most likely by early-mid December see rainfall back to its normal annual amounts. We're just hopeful that it will not be 20-23" like it was in mid-August. But we don't have a vote in that!

If you haven't been to Hot Springs National Park in some time, you are definitely missing out! The historic bathhouses, the historic district, the thermal springs, miles of hiking trails, bountiful forest scenery, creeks, and the natural landscape of the area –all nestled in the Ouachita Mountains – make it a unique destination for a family vacation or a weekend getaway.



The USS Ouachita

The 720-ton side-wheel steamer was built in New Albany, Indiana in 1861 for civilian use. Captured by Confederate forces in early 1863 and renamed the *Louisville*, she served as a cargo vessel. The *Louisville* was captured by the federal gunboats *USS Manitou* and *USS Rattler* on July 13, 1863. Captured and taken as a prize (which was characteristic at that

time), the United States Navy purchased her on September 29, 1863 and commissioned her January 18, 1864 as the *Ouachita*. For the remainder of the war, the gunboat conducted patrol duties operating in the Mississippi River and its tributaries of the Ouachita, Red, and Black Rivers. In May and June 1865 she participated in the surrender of Confederate forces along the Red River.

Levels of Service

We continue to report on levels of service and operating hours of the locks and dams. The northern locks and dams – Felsenthal and Thatcher – began operating five days per week, Monday thru Friday, 10 hours per day with no weekend service effective November 15, 2015. During that period of time, ORVA was very concerned with the reduction in the hours of operation. Our concern was that it would impinge economic development, increase costs to shippers, and the perception that the reduction in hours, when combined with reductions in funding, would adversely impact the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project.

We believe that concern to still be valid. Although tonnage in recent years has been greater than 1 million metric tons and funding is greater than it has ever been, we believe industry is still very cautious. The potential is there. Overland fuel costs are at an all-time high; the Ouachita-Black “interstate system” remains the most economical shipping “highway” in the multi-state area. Businesses, however, are reluctant to invest a substantial amount of resources (especially now during a considerable inflationary period and the possible onset of a recession) to new business ventures. Could it be the “chicken or the egg” concept? There is no shipping because there is no dredging, or there is shipping because there is dredging. As we’ve seen, it still remains the Corps’ intent to dredge all the way to Camden. With Corps responsibilities for maintaining a navigable waterway, business and economic development should not be stymied. Mother Nature: now that is an entirely different situation.

Until river traffic increases, more so in Arkansas than in Louisiana, levels of service cannot be expected to increase. The current river usage simply does not support a change at this time. ORVA will continue to pursue it but until that happens, economic development in the region will continue its lackluster performance.

The 13,400 acre DeGray Lake is a reservoir on the Caddo River constructed by the US Army Corps of Engineers. The lake is located on the eastern shore of scenic Arkansas Highway 7, eight miles from Arkadelphia and 29 miles southwest of Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Non-Riparian Surface Water Use Permit for Water Supply Project

Crist Engineers, Inc. on behalf of the Saline Regional Public Water Authority (SRPWA) has submitted application to the Arkansas Department of Agriculture for a Non-Riparian Surface Water Use Permit for a Water Supply Project. The purpose of the project is to provide a new water supply for members of the SRPWA. Nature of project improvements include the construction of a new water intake on the Ouachita River below Rempel Dam (Lake Catherine), the construction of ~ 20 miles of new raw water transmission pipeline from the Ouachita River intake to Saline County, a new water treatment plant in Saline County, and new finished water transmission pipelines connecting to water customers of the SRPWA. The diversion point will be located approximately ¼-mile downstream from Rempel Dam on the Ouachita River. It is estimated the total quantity of water to be diverted will range from 2.9 billion gallons to 8 billion gallons per year with an initial average of 22 mgd and a maximum of 22 mgd. With a \$149M project cost, construction will begin in 2023 and continue through 2027.

The Dam Problem

Following the ORVA Conference this past August, I had the privilege and opportunity to brief members of the Ouachita River Commission. After the presentation, one of the commissioners handed me several articles I found interesting.

One El Dorado resident (described as a philanthropist and downtown developer) had written a Sunday column for the **Arkansas Democrat Gazette**. The column is generally picked up and (at times) tailored by the **Camden News** which is published the following Wednesday. Versions of these articles occasionally run in **The Parham Report**.

The gist of these columns was one man's opinion concerning the removal of many of the nations dams, citing tremendous benefits in the rivers health, public safety, and climate resilience, according to an **American Rivers** report. While some of the points in the article may be valid, it ultimately focused on the locks and dams on the Ouachita, Felsenthal specifically. He opines that hundreds of millions of dollars were wasted by putting navigational locks on the Ouachita, deeming it too small to be navigable and assuming it would be a "free flowing twin to the Buffalo." This statement can certainly be contested.

He states "there is no barge traffic on the Ouachita above Monroe, La., and never will be." This statement is certainly debatable. (I would enjoy listening to that debate from the experts on both sides of the issue.) While barge traffic has been somewhat nonexistent in recent years, the potential exists for tremendous business and economic development. He fails to recognize that potential.

The article discusses the removal of the Felsenthal lock and the resultant drop in the water level. Yes, reduction of the Felsenthal lock may be beneficial to the ecosystem: restoring fisheries and bottomland hardwoods in that area. (Please see Jennifer Sheehan's article on page 5 and 6.) Removal of the locks might also result in the loss of water supply for thousands of customers who enjoy and depend on Ouachita river water.

I believe the article fails to see the Ouachita from a historical perspective (see the highlighted block on page 28 taken from the New Orleans Crescent (New Orleans Newspaper) dated August 20, 1860) and he fails to visualize what the river would look like without the Corps locks and dams. (See the artists' rendition on page 13.)

His message to the Corps of Engineers and the Arkansas Waterways Commission: "Give us back our river!"



If so inclined, the article also notes you can also write to receive a free "Free the Ouachita! Remove the Locks! bumper sticker."

David Weeks, ORVA Executive Director, poses for a photo with Colonel Chris Klein at the ORVA Conference in West Monroe this past August.

Photo courtesy of Vicksburg District Public Affairs.



Rammel Dam, the first major dam on the Ouachita River is located at Jones Mills in Hot Spring County. The dam, 60 feet tall and 900 feet long, was built in 1924 at a cost of \$2,142,000 to support the growing electrical demand in Southern Arkansas and the surrounding states. It impounds Lake Catherine and with Carpenter Dam in Hot Springs, provides hydroelectric power for southern Arkansas. Rammel Dam is part of a three-dam project along with Carpenter Dam (built 1931) and Blakely Mountain Dam, completed in 1953. The power from

Rammel Dam services Louisiana and Mississippi as well as Arkansas through connections to the Entergy power grid.

Lake Catherine State Park is located on the lake created by Rammel Dam. The park was created by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930's as one of Arkansas' six original state parks. The lake has improved the economies of Hot Springs and Malvern through tourism, recreation, and increased real-estate values.

"A River Basin of Opportunity, A Century Plus of Commitment"

ORVA
Ouachita River Valley Association
Serving Arkansas and Louisiana

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