



ORVA NEWS

Ouachita River Valley Association

"Dedicated to Quality of Life in the Ouachita Valley"

Fall 2023

ORVA is a 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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david.weeks.ORVA@outlook.com; 318-366-3834

Fall 2023

Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project

We're about six weeks away from Christmas! I will be asking Santa for water – and ask him to throw in a little cold weather to boot. This summer has been hot and dry. At some point, our annual rainfall will catch up to us and the Ouachita-Black will once again see high water (or at least higher water levels!)

Even though conditions on the waterway have not been ideal, we've seen some increased tonnage on the river, which we discuss in this newsletter. We'll discuss funding and dredging, backlog maintenance, and ORVA's concerns as articulated to the Mississippi River Commission. We will also discuss ORVA's input to the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) process, namely the request for modification of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project to include the portion of the Ouachita River Levee System at and below Monroe, Louisiana to Caldwell Parish, Louisiana, and modification of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project to include Bank Stabilization as a feature of the Project. Although separate, these two issues are closely related. Our partners in the Tensas Basin Levee District work diligently with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Vicksburg District to aggressively tackle bank caving and erosion through the PL 84-99 program. However, as you will note in the pictures at the bottom on page 14, we must also look northward to address bank stabilization before this issue becomes critical. It's really only a matter of time before the issue there becomes dire. We are hopeful that we will see a resolution to the mussel issue in the spring and the long-awaited dredging will begin.

There are also other tidbits of information our readers may find useful, perhaps entertaining, if not interesting.

We are looking forward to 2024! Have a happy Thanksgiving and have a very, merry Christmas! Enjoy the holiday seasons! Be thankful. Be blessed! Have a safe and prosperous new year. We've got work to do!

Did you know? Douglas MacArthur, one of the greatest war heroes of the United States of America, was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, January 26, 1880. General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, referred to as the “American Caesar,” was a top-ranking cadet from the United States Military Academy and served in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. He is a recipient of more than 100 military decorations both in the United States and internationally.

Statement to the Mississippi River Commission – August 31, 2023 – Vicksburg, Mississippi

In accordance with published guidelines, the following written statement was forwarded to the Mississippi River Commission (MRC) on August 31, 2023. On August 21, the MRC unfortunately had to cancel the remainder of the low water inspection trip and public hearings, including the Vicksburg stop scheduled for August 23. The decision to cancel was made in the best public health interest of the crew and the partners within the District and Division. The MRC response to this Statement, received October 20, is presented on page XXX.



August 31, 2023

Mississippi River Commission
ATTN: Edie Whittington
Post Office Box 80
Vicksburg, Mississippi 39181-0080

General Peeples and Members of the Mississippi River Commission:

The Association thanks you for the opportunity and privilege to present this written testimony on behalf of our members.

The Ouachita River Valley Association (ORVA) has been in existence for 130 years! The sole purpose of our organization when founded in 1893 was to obtain a year-round commercial navigation system on the Ouachita River in Arkansas and Louisiana. While our major focus is on the operation, maintenance, and completion of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project and associated infrastructure, ORVA also supports economic development projects throughout the Basin. Our non-profit association represents the private sector of the economy. We and are governed by a Board of Directors consisting of three officers and seven directors from both Arkansas and Louisiana.

ORVA's mission remains unchanged: 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. Major interests include navigation, water supply (commercial, industrial, and agricultural), recreation and conservation, waste water discharge, flood damage reduction, and economic development.

Though they appear to be following a "broken record" scenario, the Association has six major concerns which have remained constant for the last several years. These concerns, which we will address in the next several paragraphs, are not necessarily in any order of priority.

Funding for Backlog Maintenance. Funding in the civil works budgets for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project has fluctuated and reflected downward trends in recent years. We were greatly concerned with maintenance funding in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 because it represented a 40% reduction from FY 2022. Funding from additional sources in 2022 served to address some of the growing backlog issues, but it was still not enough. Though funding for maintenance jumped 35% from \$4.09 Million (M) in 2023 to \$5.53M in 2024, we remained concerned considering the aging infrastructure of the Corps' locks and dams; the Arkansas and Louisiana locks and dams are ~40 and 50 years old, respectively. With this said, we are excited to learn that the Vicksburg District is addressing backlog maintenance and we are optimistic that we will see this issue addressed in its entirety.

Modification of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project to include the portion of the Ouachita River Levee System (the lower 63 miles of the east bank of the Ouachita River levee system) at and below Monroe, Louisiana to Caldwell Parish, Louisiana. 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 Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project (Project). These restorations were critical as it made maintenance and repair of the levees a federal responsibility. The WRDA 2007 did not reinstate the lower 63 miles of the east bank south where the majority of erosion and damage occurs.

It is ORVA's opinion that the Project (now almost 100 years old) is incomplete on the Ouachita-Black. Furthermore, ORVA believes the levee system is a "system of systems" and should be fully restored to the designed intent of the Flood Control Act of 1928. The Project should not be piecemealed based upon later interpretations of this original intent. We are also of the opinion that removal (the "deauthorization") of the lower 63 was implemented in error.

The Project is not being maintained at its optimal level; it does not include the lower 63. Considering the risk, levee failure would cause catastrophic damages to the people and communities within the basin. Flooding and high-water levels have substantially increased the possibility for system failure.

Modification of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project to include Bank Stabilization as a feature of the Project. Closely associated with the above proposed modification, bank stabilization is of paramount importance to the people living within the river basin. We are greatly concerned with bank caving and other erosion problems on the Ouachita and Black Rivers in multiple areas. These issues occurring all along the Ouachita and Black Rivers threaten to cause

catastrophic flooding and, in turn, hinder navigation. This problem is not only confined to Louisiana, but reaches well into the upper Ouachita, especially in the Camden, Arkansas area and north.

The Corps expends tremendous energy and resources addressing bank stabilization through the PL 84-99 Project. Multiple sites have been repaired, several obligated, and still more submitted for this program in Ouachita and Caldwell Parishes in Louisiana. Thanks to our partners in the Tensas Basin Levee District, these issues are identified, detailed, and submitted to the Vicksburg District, who work in unison to address those bank caving and erosion issues. Funding for these issues, however, is very limited. In addition, they must be linked to a high-water event. In most every case, they are not addressed in a timely manner. And as time marches on, the erosion or bank caving issue at the site continues to grow, with a corresponding growth to the necessary funding needed for the repair. Modification of the project to include bank stabilization as a project feature places it under federal authority for maintenance and repair; local interests were never capable to support the necessary maintenance to any acceptable standard. In reality, using PL 84-99 funding for repair, though it is effective and most appreciative, is not an efficient use of taxpayer resources.

Construction of a new Lake DeGray Field Office and Interpretive Visitor Center remains an ORVA major concern. The Corps' lakes significantly contribute to the economy of Arkansas, and the Hot Springs community in particular, in the areas of tourism, recreation, and development. The Lake DeGray Field Office is the last remaining facility to be replaced at the Vicksburg Districts' Arkansas Lake Projects. Perhaps there is some negative community interest, some political maneuvering, and perhaps some funding concerns, but we cannot understand why the construction of this facility remains elusive. It represents a win-win for the Corps, the region, and area visitors, not to mention the safety and health of Corps employees. Rather than seeking a new site for the Lake DeGray Field Office and Interpretive Visitor Center, the construction of this new facility should be considered at its current location. The Corps can make a real difference here. We believe this course of action still accomplishes the win-win scenario for all parties.

Economic Development. The Ouachita River is critically important to area economies. The river is an interstate highway which serves as the center for navigation, recreation, economic development, drinking water, and community identity. Its economic value is high and continues to grow! For example, this past June the Columbia Port Commission in Caldwell Parish, Louisiana announced it will receive \$10.5M, for the Ouachita River and Louisiana Highway 165 Multimodal Connectivity and Safety Project. The project will fund land acquisition and construction activities for a Truck Parking Facility located near the inland Port of Columbia, Ouachita River, and Louisiana State Highway 165. News of this grant comes on the heels of a Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development \$15M grant for infrastructure improvement projects at the Port of Columbia. These grants are designed to support the Louisiana Green Fuels (LGF) Project, currently under construction by Louisiana-based green energy supplier Strategic Biofuels. The \$2.8B LGF Project will be the first renewable diesel project in North America to achieve "negative" carbon emissions. The Association will continue to pursue and support all avenues of economic development within the basin.

Finally, we must Implement a Section 729 Study vice Section 216 to Study the Water Resources Needs of the Ouachita River Watershed in Arkansas and Louisiana. With the last river basin study conducted more than 120 years ago, much has changed in the Ouachita River basin. A

Arkadelphia CSA Ordnance Works

This was a Confederate arsenal and ordnance facility in operation in 1862-1863. Arsenal workers were transferred to Shreveport, Louisiana in the summer of 1863 as the Federals began their operations in the area. The arsenal equipment was further transferred to Marshall, Texas.

real need exists to conduct a basin-wide comprehensive study to devise a plan for the development and conservation of water and land resources in Arkansas and Louisiana. This study, supported by numerous stakeholders and environmental associations, would also 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. Naturally, much has changed since the old 1902 study. A detailed study of the river would serve to address the many diverse social, environmental, and economic needs of this important watershed.

We are very optimistic that some of what we have addressed in this correspondence may be authorized in some future version of WRDA or addressed at the Corps level.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this statement to the members of the Mississippi River Commission. We look forward to a continued and fruitful working relationship with our Corps partners as we work together to further the development of water and land resources projects within the Ouachita River Basin.

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

Sincerely and respectfully,

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

David L. Weeks
Executive Director



Johnny Cash was born February 16, 1932 in Kingsland, Arkansas.

He was one of America's prominent singer-songwriters of the 20th century. Johnny is best-remembered for his deep, baritone voice and his meek demeanor. He was well known for his country music, but a great deal of his work went on to influence genres like rock and roll, blues, folk, gospel and rockabilly. Known as "The Man in Black" because he would always wear dark clothing, he garnered considerable fame and success. Many of his songs

were based on 'dark' themes, echoing his troubled past and other themes of pathos, lust, oddity, misfortune and redemption.

Tonnage Report


Tonnage data for the first three quarters of calendar year 2023 are depicted below. In our previous discussion of tonnage, we anticipated, with the current glide path, that we would reach the one million metric ton mark. Tonnage has now exceeded that mark by 180,000 tons. Using this data as a guide, we can predict tonnage for the calendar year to reach 1.4 million metric tons.

Jonesville 1/1/2023 – 9/30/2023			
Commodity	Upbound (KTONS)	Downbound (KTONS)	Total YTD (KTONS)
Gasoline Incl Aviation (incl Jet)	316.400		316.400
Residual Fuel Oil	297.600		297.600
Fertilizers	9.000		9.000
Limestone	389.800		389.800
Soybeans		78.368	78.368
Corn		70.352	70.352
Machinery/Bulkheads (Not Electric)	10.505	6.040	16.545
Other	1.112	.101	1.213
Total	1024.417	154.861	1179.278

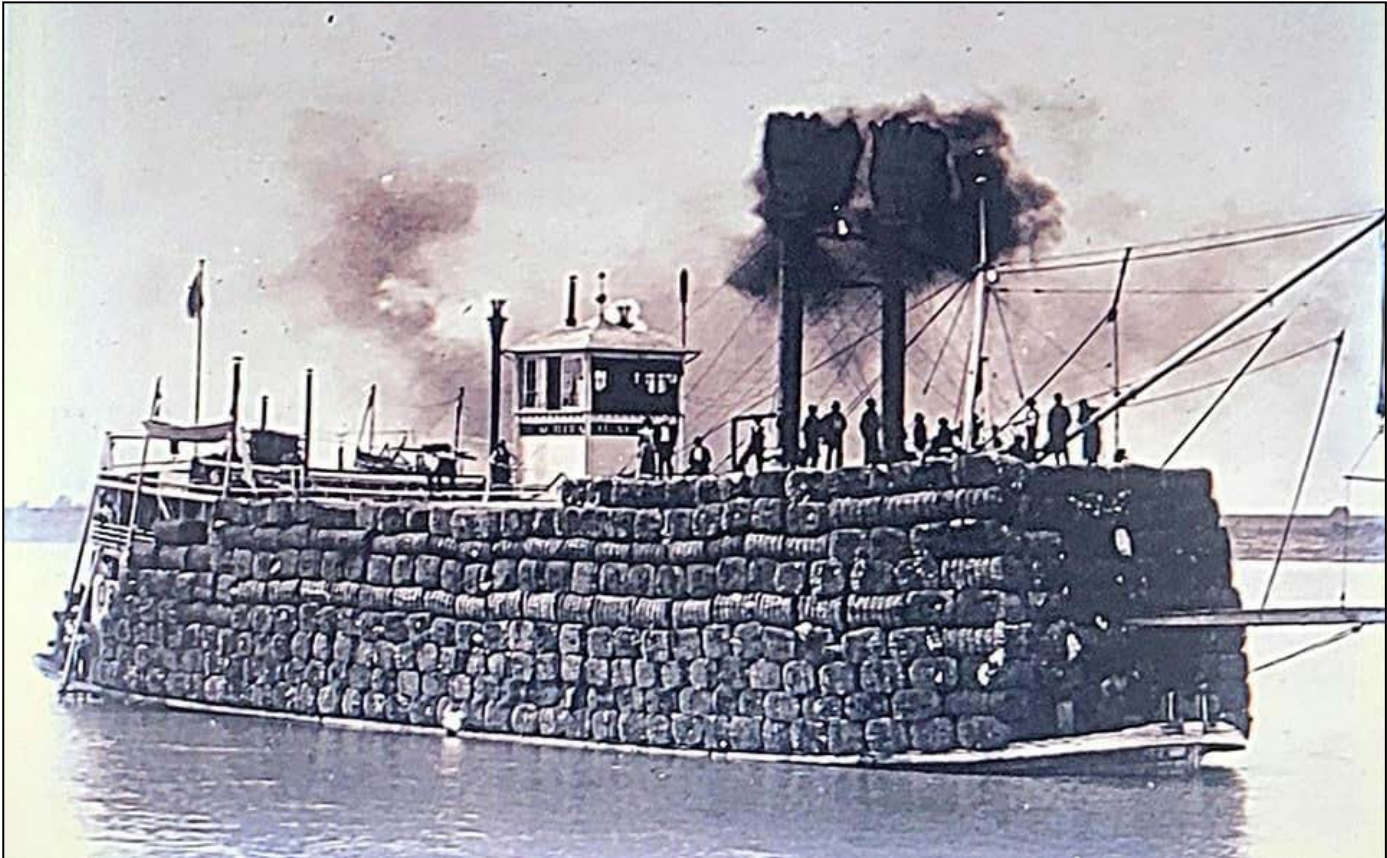
The numbers presented in the graphs represent “Upbound” and “Downbound” tonnage (reflected in thousands of tons) on the Ouachita at the Jonesville Lock. Data derived from the Jonesville Lock and Dam is selected because it represents an accurate measurement of tonnage on the river.

Considering total tonnage for calendar year 2022 was 796,000 metric tons, the data reflected above is quite impressive. Fuel shipments have increased substantially and are predicted to double by the end of the year. Agricultural commodities, namely soybeans and corn have increased sharply as well. Movement of corn increased almost 50% and soybeans nearly 25%. With the harvest season winding down, there may yet be further shipments of agricultural commodities moving downbound. Our guess is that area farmers are anxious to move commodities rather than store them with additional cost.

The movement of rock continues at a steady pace. Much of the rock is used for gravel surfacing of the Ouachita River Levee System. The majority, however, can be attributed to the Vicksburg District’s aggressive support of bank stabilization through the Public Law (PL) 84-99 Project.

	<p>Iron Mountain Lodge and Marina is a family owned Arkansas Resort now celebrating more than 40 years on beautiful wilderness DeGray Lake. Spreading over 130 acres, Iron Mountain includes DeGray Lake's only lakeside cottages, a full service marina, scuba air refills, water toys and boat rentals, and a spacious conference facility perfect for an Arkansas lakeside vacation or retreat. Located off Interstate I-30 and scenic Highway 7 between Arkadelphia and Hot Springs, guests enjoy a wide range of recreational activities offered in a beautiful wilderness setting.</p>
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Sarah Huckabee Sanders is the 47th Governor of Arkansas. Inaugurated on January 10, 2023, she is the first woman to serve as governor of the state and currently is the youngest governor in the country.



The Steamboat *Ouachita* loaded with bales of cotton on the Ouachita River, ca 1900.



Dredging

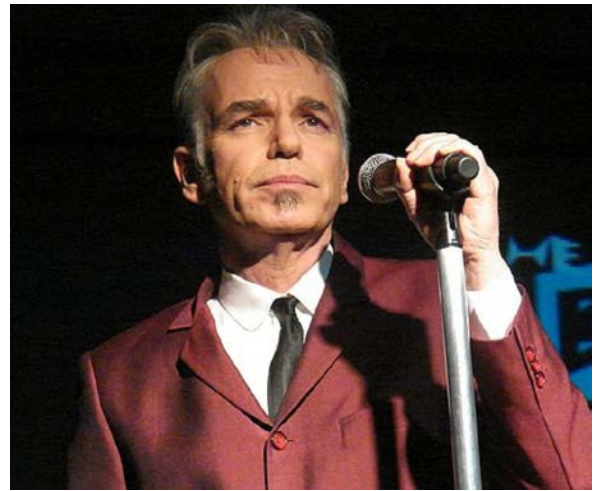
Despite low water levels, dredging operations on the Ouachita-Black have endured throughout the long, hot summer. Traditional hot-spots near the mouth of the Black and other areas in the Columbia area were tackled to allow movement on the river.

The small Corps-owned Dredge Dubuque will soon wrap-up operations on the Red River (~ 9 November) and proceed to River Mile 16 (Blue Cane area) on the Ouachita-Black for additional dredging.

Our mussel problem still lingers. Threatened and endangered species of mussel have stymied efforts to dredge portions of the Ouachita in the upper reaches above the state line. The Vicksburg District’s environmental staff (continued on page 10.)

Dredge headed back to the Columbia area. Photo courtesy of Clay Manly.

Billy Bob Thornton, was born in Hot Springs, Arkansas August 4, 1955. In 1973, Billy Bob graduated from Malvern High School in Malvern, Arkansas. Shortly thereafter, he enrolled at Henderson State University in Arkadelphia to study psychology but dropped out after two semesters to pursue an acting career. Moving to Los Angeles in the mid-1980's, things weren't as easy as they seemed to be and he had to work as a waiter, fast food manager, telemarketer, and offshore wind farmer in between minor acting gigs. Beginning his acting career with a few supporting roles, he later switched to writing screenplay for movies. It was in the mid-1990s that his career witnessed a complete turnaround with the release of the movie 'Sling Blade' for which he served as an actor, writer, and director. It also won him an Academy Award. **Billy Bob Thornton** is now a household name with several movie credits and awards. Who would have ever thought he was born in Hot Springs, Arkansas?



Camden CSA Ordnance Works

Like the arsenal and ordnance works at Arkadelphia, the Camden Works produced munitions for the Confederate armies in 1862-1863. With the approach of General Frederick Steele's invading Federals into Arkansas, the foundry equipment was moved to Shreveport, Louisiana in May 1863.



Pictured here with Camden Mayor Charlott Young (seated), ORVA's newest board member, is Ms. Rose Moore. Ms. Moore serves Camden as an Executive Secretary to Mayor Young. Rose also supports ORVA with a multitude of administrative matters.

Thank you ORVA 2023 Silver and Bronze Sponsors:



Member FDIC

El Dorado, the county seat of Union County, is a center for oil production and refining. Called once by boosters the "Queen City of South Arkansas" and, more recently, "Arkansas's Original Boomtown," the city was the heart of the 1920s oil boom in South Arkansas.

Funds Status. It’s definitely worth another look:

President’s Budget for Fiscal Year 2024
for the Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works Program
 (With FY2021, FY2022, and FY 2023 shown for comparison)

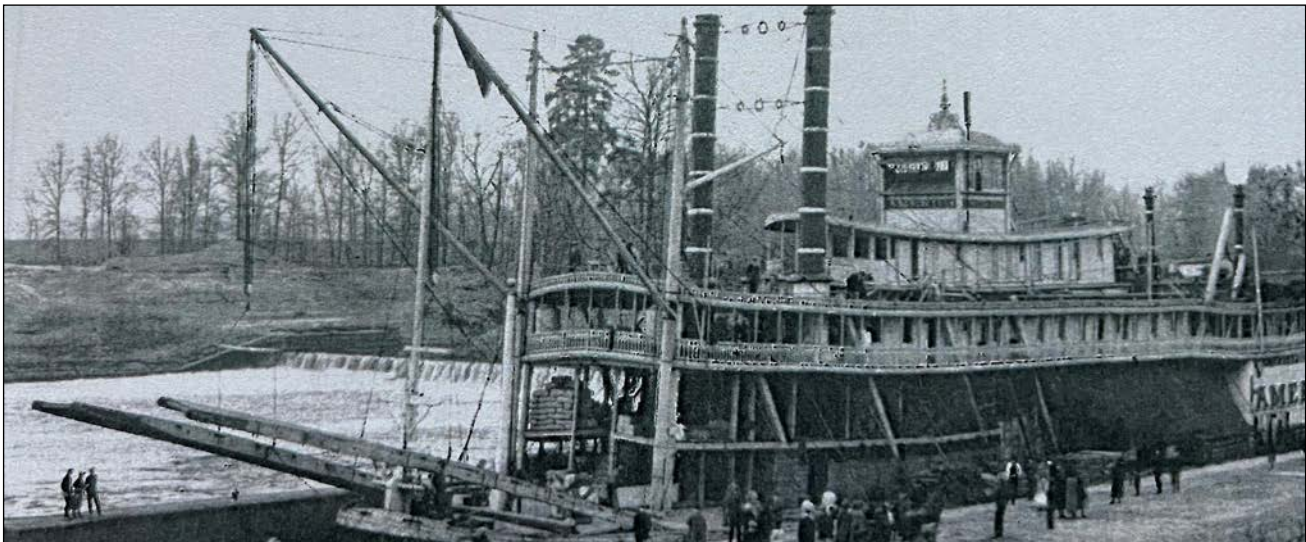
FY 2024 (in \$ Millions)

Category	FY 2024 Opns	FY 2024 Maint	FY 2024 Total	FY 2023	FY 2022	FY 2021
Blakely Mountain Dam and Lake Ouachita, AR	7.143	.710	7.853	8.028	8.028	8.285
DeGray Lake, AR	5.215	2.001	7.216	6.445	6.587	6.605
Narrows Dam and Lake Greeson, AR	4.456	1.674	6.130	5.500	5.691	5.861
Total of the Corps Lakes	16.814	4.385	21.199	19.973	20.306	20.751

Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project	\$ 6.075	5.532	11.607	10.017	12.065	\$ 7.625
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Initial thoughts for the FY 2024 funding picture were good, but not great. Considering the current 8% inflation we’re experiencing and overall prices are upwards of 13% higher than just two years ago, funding is on par with FY 2023; perhaps slightly lower. Unfortunately, no funding data is available for FY 2025. Considering we have a Continuing Resolution (CR) in effect, it’s no surprise that we have no budget for FY 2025.

We originally reported in the Spring 2023 issue of the newsletter that the Vicksburg District is addressing the backlog issue. You may recall that backlog maintenance has been a major concern for ORVA considering Thatcher and Felsenthal are 40 years old and Columbia and Jonesville are 50 years old. Funding just hasn’t supported it in the past. We’re also concerned with the larger funding picture when we look critically at the Corps lakes. But the good news is that some backlog maintenance is being addressed. We are excited that backlog maintenance is currently being conducted at Felsenthal Lock and Dam.



The first steamboat (*America*) to go through the “new” Lock 4 at Monroe, Louisiana, ca. 1925.

Dredging (Continued from page 7)

forwarded their report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFS) November 1, 2023. We understand that the USFS, together with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, should reach a decision in 60-120 days. We are hopeful that dredging operations will reach full approval but a compromise position was alluded to in our discussions with Vicksburg District staff. A possible indication of a positive outcome was clearing and snagging operations above the state line which concluded on October 31.

In either case, it is doubtful that any dredging will occur until Spring 2024. Typically, high water levels prevent early dredging operations (and that is if we see sufficient rainfall to create high-water conditions on the Ouachita-Black). We also understand that funding for dredging operations looks good for FY 2024 (see page 9 above). A Spring 2024 start also depends on the passage of appropriations. Hopefully we are not still operating under a Continuing Resolution.

We all understand how important dredging is to the waterway and in turn, to the local economy.

Hot Springs is engaged in its largest and most ambitious infrastructure project in the city's history. The Lake Ouachita Water Supply Project is 13 years in the making, and will provide pristine water to residents and the surrounding area from Lake Ouachita for current and future needs. The project is comprised of four construction phases: the intake structure, the new 15.0 mgd water plant, the raw water transition main, and the finished water main. All phases showed consistent progress throughout 2022 and 2023. One of the most anticipated milestones was mobilizing a custom-built tunneling machine on its 2,400-foot journey through Blakely Mountain toward the fresh water of Lake Ouachita on the other side. This engineering marvel was briefed on Day 1 of the ORVA Convention. What an impressive engineering feat!

Floating the beautiful Ouachita River. See the graph at page 17 for current Lock levels on the Ouachita River



<u>Highest Ouachita River Recordings at Thatcher Lock and Dam</u>	
3 Jan 1988	93.6
14 May 2009	93.0
1 Jan 2010	91.7
16 Mar 1990	90.6
6 May 1991	90.5

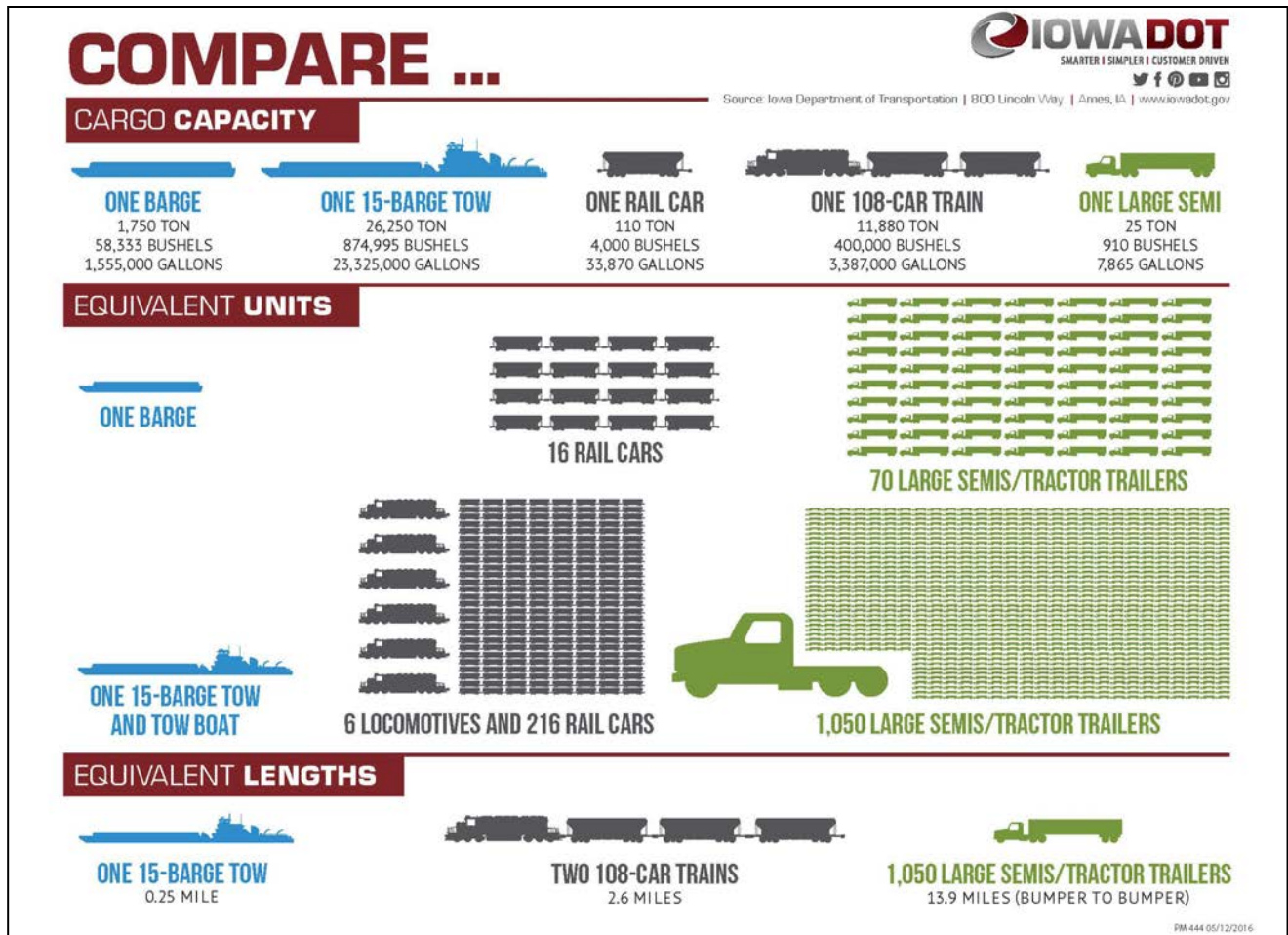
<u>Highest Ouachita River Recordings at Jonesville Lock and Dam</u>	
4 May 1991	50.5
23 May 1958	50.5
16 Apr 1945	50.4
9 May 1973	48.7
11 Nov 2009	47.8

Repairs to the H.K. Thatcher Lock and Dam

When will we see permanent repairs to the H.K. Thatcher Lock & Dam, the northernmost navigation structure on the Ouachita River?

In late October 2021, lock operators at the H.K. Thatcher Lock and Dam noticed the gate was unable to hold the 77 ft pool level, prompting the Vicksburg District’s Army Corps of Engineers to immediately investigate the issue. The 200-foot-long hinged crest gate stretches across the Ouachita River and stands roughly 5 feet high. In normal conditions, it has about a 1-foot head over the top. After a thorough investigation and analysis, engineers from the Vicksburg District successfully installed a “Poiree Needle System” on November 28, 2021 to repair the leak in the seal of the hinge crest gate. This temporary repair was later fortified with steel I-beams. The Poiree Needle System continues to hold. You might say it is a “long-term” temporary repair.

Although high on the Mississippi Valley Division’s priority list, we do not anticipate funding until Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. The repairs were originally estimated to commence in FY 2024 at a cost of \$4M. Today, the cost of repairs, considering inflation and the ever increasing loss of buying power, are estimated to run north of \$5M. Though that estimate continues to grow, it is doubtful the operation and maintenance budget will; not to mention the possibility of shifting priorities.



This chart prepared by the Iowa DOT provides an excellent comparison of transportation systems. We can easily see why the river system is so much more economically feasible and safer.



The Motor Vessel *Becky Garcia* heading north towards Monroe, Louisiana, October 22, 2023.
Photo courtesy of Clay Manly.

ORVA Convention 2023

ORVA held its 56th annual convention in beautiful Hot Springs, Arkansas this past August 10-11, 2023. Day One was held at the Hot Springs Convention Center in beautiful downtown Hot Springs, Arkansas. Several important and informative presentations were made including Corps update and discussions of navigation, dredging, environmental concerns, water management, Locks and Dams, and the Corps lakes. Dr. Wendy Richter, retired Arkansas state historian and Director of the Arkansas State Archives gave an informative presentation on the history of Lake Ouachita. An informative and well-received presentation of the Lake Ouachita Water Supply Project rounded out the afternoons' activities.

The evening activities began with a reception in the Plaza Lobby complete with hors'de ouvres, beer, and wine. Dinner attendees proceeded into Horner Hall and following a presentation of the colors, the national anthem, and blessing, a delicious dinner of filet mignon and grilled shrimp was served. Mr. Ben Batten, Deputy Director, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission served as the Association Dinner Speaker. (Continued on Page 14)

...here is as fine soil in Ouachita as any in Louisiana, and the forest growth of the bottoms is magnificent. Everything grows vigorously, furiously. Fruit trees flourish exceedingly. I have never seen such peaches, pears and apples, as are raised in and about Monroe in the most profuse abundance. Next summer, when the railroad will be finished, New Orleans will be a market for these delicious commodities. I have been into an orchard which apparently, would almost supply alone the New Orleans demand for fine peaches. The Ouachita and bayous Bartholomew, De Siard and Boeuf river, secure to the parish a vast extent of bottom lands of the most fertile description, and such is their valuation that they may be averaged altogether, at about \$30 per acre, though many tracts, if they could be bought at all would be sold at twice or three times that price. There are plenty of pretty good uplands which may be had for five or six dollars, or perhaps less.

The New Orleans Crescent (New Orleans, LA) August 20, 1860



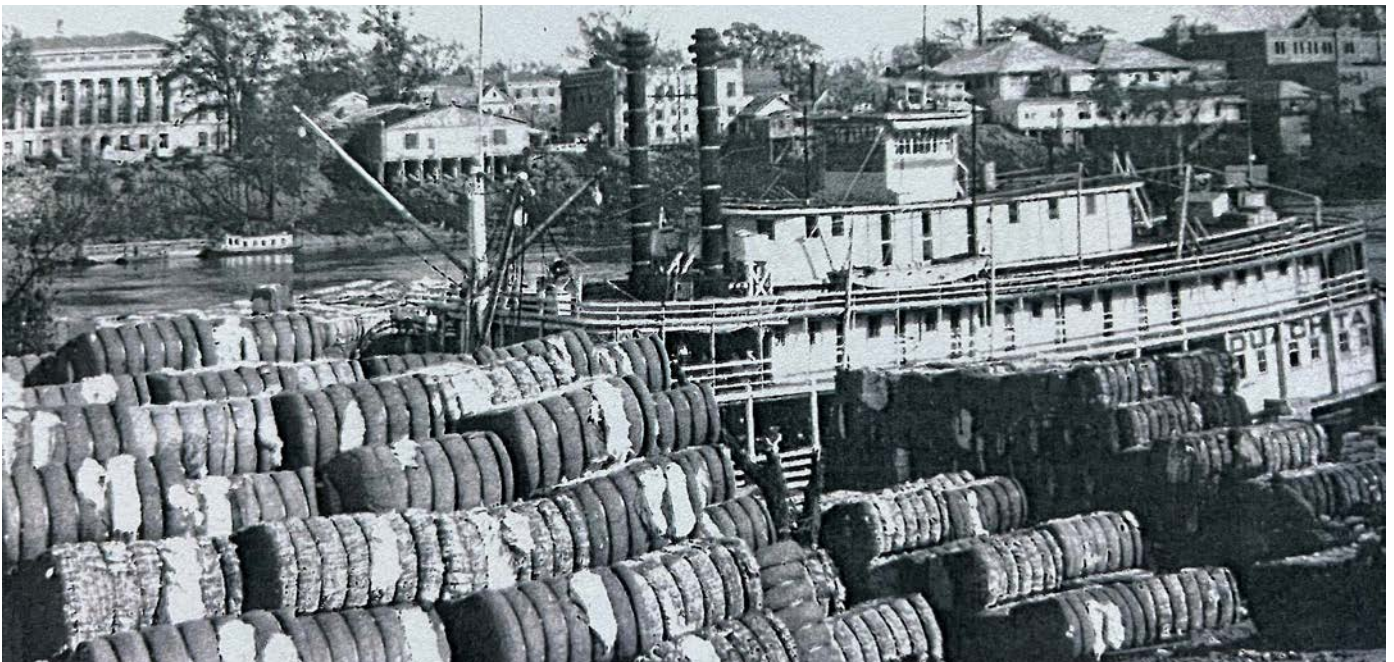
Mayor Charlotte Young to Serve as a Board Member from Arkansas

Charlotte Young, Camden, Arkansas' dynamic Mayor, has been selected to fill a vacancy on the ORVA Board of Directors. Born and raised in Camden, Mayor Young is an award-winning community activist, city promoter, and is the undisputed "Go To" leader in Camden.

Energetic and tenacious, she is well known throughout the community for getting the job done. While serving on several non-profit boards, and other governing bodies, she has won a host of awards for the Camden community, receiving accolades from local, state, and national organizations. She is the energy behind countless achievements within both the City of Camden and Ouachita County.

In addition to her civic involvement, Mayor Young has served more than 14 years on the Ouachita County Quorum Court, the legislative body of the county.

ORVA is excited to welcome Mayor Young to the Board of Directors. She will bring to ORVA those skill sets and experiences for which she is known for in Camden!



The **Ouachita** docked in Monroe, Louisiana. In the background is the "new" Ouachita Parish Courthouse.

Arkansas raised 48 infantry regiments, 20 artillery batteries, and over 20 cavalry regiments for the Confederacy, mostly serving in the Western Theater, though the Third Arkansas served with distinction in the Army of Northern Virginia. Major General Patrick R. Cleburne was the state's most notable military leader. The state also supplied four infantry regiments, four cavalry regiments and one artillery battery of white troops for the Union and six infantry regiments and one artillery battery of "U.S. Colored Troops."

ORVA Convention 2023 (Continued)

Friday's activities opened with welcoming remarks by Mr. Randy Denmon, ORVA President. Representative Matthew Shepherd, representing Arkansas' District 97 and the Speaker of the Arkansas House of Representatives followed Mr. Denmon's remarks. His keynote presentation was informative and on point.

Colonel Jeremiah Gipson, Deputy Commander, Mississippi Valley Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, presented an overview of operations of the Army Corps of Engineers and provided a history of the first two-hundred years of our country. He brought his comments home to conclusion with the phrase, "the Corps does what Congress says...and Congress does what constituents say." Colonel Christopher Klein, Commander and District Engineer, Vicksburg District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, followed Colonel Gipson. Wearing a flotation device, Colonel Klein immediately garnered the audience's attention. His goal, which was clearly met, was to stress the importance of water safety and the use of flotation devices while on the water. He focused on three important things the Corps does: protect people from water (flood control), protect water from people (regulatory), and make water useful (navigation).

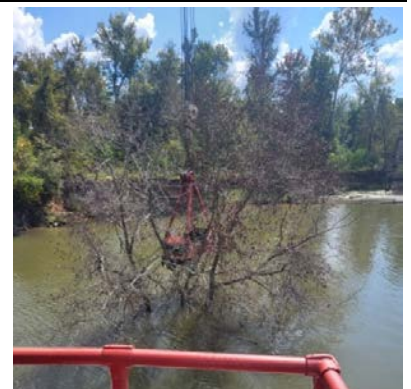
Mr. Clint O'Neal, Executive Director, Arkansas Economic Development Commission, closed the morning presentations with an insightful presentation. His presentation began with trivia questions and prizes. It was duly noted that Arkansas is a very patriotic and military state and more than 160,000 Arkansas are working today than just 8 1/2 years ago.

At the conclusion of the presentations, a tremendous barbecue luncheon with all the trimmings was enjoyed by all. Convention activities concluded with the raffle drawings which are discussed on page 22.

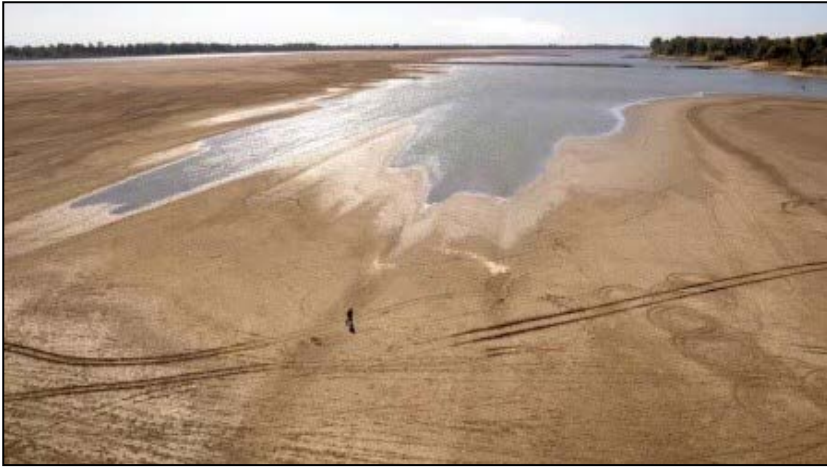


We're already looking ahead to the 57th Annual Convention. It's a possibility it will be held late Spring or early Summer 2024.

These are pictures of clearing and snagging operations on the upper Ouachita. With the completion of this mission on October 31, 2023, ORVA is hopeful that dredging operations will follow in Spring 2024 with the go-ahead from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. **But take a closer look at these pictures.** ORVA



is greatly concerned with bank caving and erosion throughout the entire system! While these issues are effectively tackled in Louisiana, to a great extent by the Tensas Basin Levee District (and addressed with Corps support though PL 84-99) it's only a matter of time before it becomes a major issue in Arkansas. **Bank Stabilization must become a Project feature!**



Mississippi River at Memphis

This picture taken in mid-October graphically shows the condition of the Mississippi River at Memphis.

The long drought of the summer of 2023 has extended well into the fall. Significant rainfall is anticipated the week of 13 November. Hopefully by the time this newsletter hits distribution, our prayers will have been answered.

Note the man walking across the sand bar in the bottom of the photo.

A lingering, blistering heat and low rainfall continues into fall. The great drought of 2023 continues to heighten worries about another – the second year – of costly shipping delays on the mighty Mississippi; delays which amassed to an estimated \$20 Billion in losses last year.

WRDA Policy and Project Requests

The Ouachita River Valley Association submitted the following water resource projects/policies for consideration in the development of the Water Resources Development Act at the request of Senator John Kennedy of Louisiana:

Priority 1. Modification of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project to include the portion of the Ouachita River Levee System (the lower 63 miles of the east bank of the Ouachita River levee system) at and below Monroe, Louisiana to Caldwell Parish, Louisiana.

Priority 2. Modification of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project to include Bank Stabilization as a feature of the Project. (See pictures

These two issues, although separate, are closely related.

Submission of this information was also provided to United States Senators John Boozman and Tom Cotton of Arkansas, United States Senator Bill Cassidy MD, of Louisiana. United States Congressman Bruce Westerman of Arkansas, and United States Congresswoman Julia Letlow of Louisiana. The most recent copies of written testimonies to the MRC and their responses were also forwarded to our congressional delegation, to include the current testimony on page 2. These written testimonies summarize ORVA's major concerns.

The detailed content of the submission to our congressional delegation is presented at page 19.

The Hunter-Dunbar Louisiana Purchase Expedition The Hunter-Dunbar expedition was one of only four ventures into the Louisiana Purchase commissioned by Thomas Jefferson. William Dunbar and Dr. George Hunter were called upon to explore the "Washita" River and "the hot springs" in what is now Arkansas and Louisiana.

The Association received a written response dated October 11, 2023 to its August 31, 2023 written statement to the Mississippi River Commission. General Peeples' response is submitted here in its entirety. Brigadier General Kimberly Peeples is the Mississippi River Commission President-designee.

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

Dear Mr. Weeks:

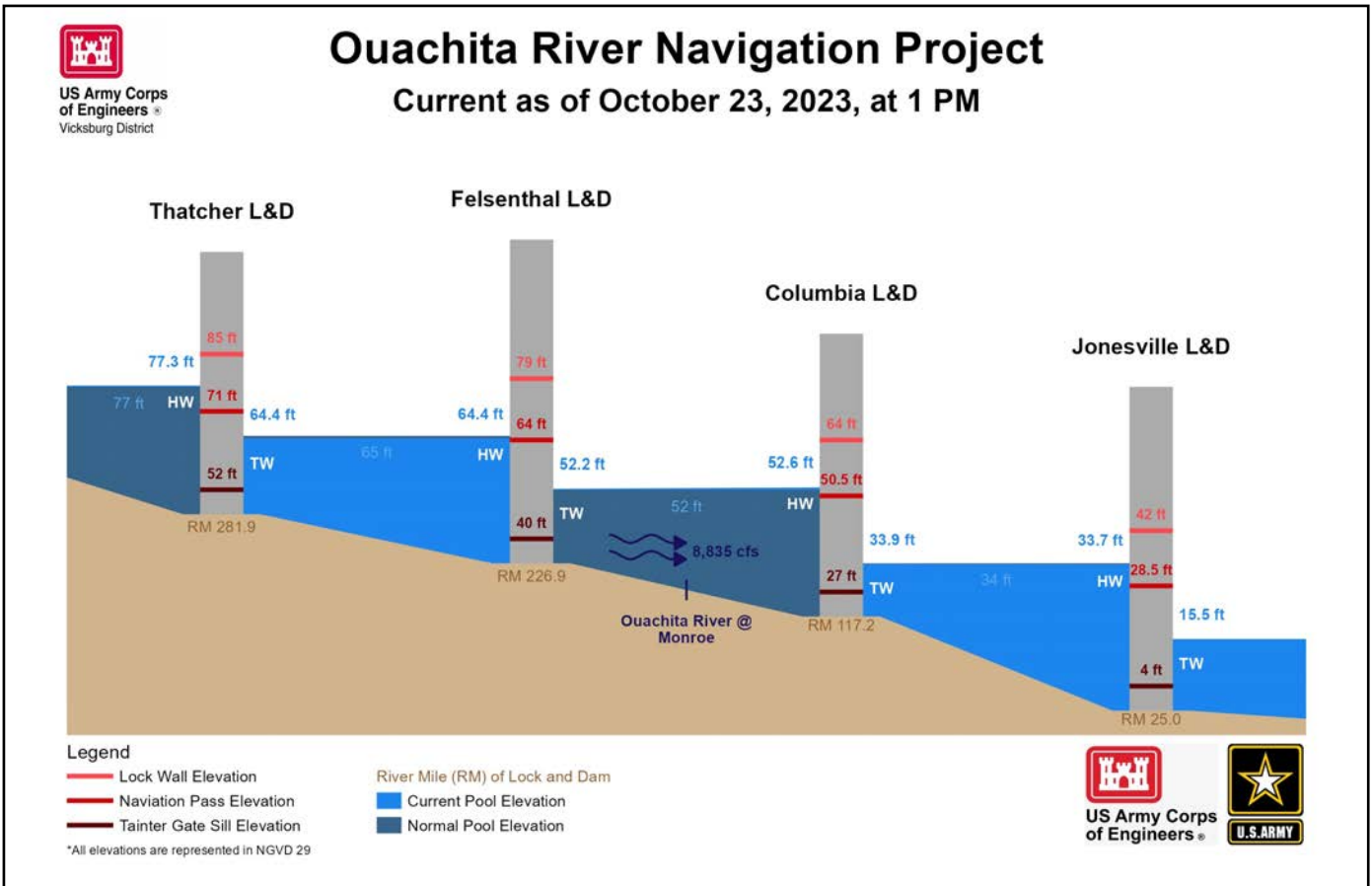
Thank you for participating in our public engagement process and providing a written statement filed for the record. Testimony from the stakeholders across the watershed gives the Mississippi River Commission a greater understanding of the challenges and obstacles facing our partners who live and work along the Mississippi River and its tributaries. This allows us to make more informed policy, programmatic, and engineering recommendations to Congress and the decision-makers in the Administration.

The Commission appreciates the detailed testimony you submitted with comprehensive updates on all of the efforts your agency is undertaking along the Ouachita and Black Rivers. Your remarks also highlighted ongoing needs for elevated and sustained funding for dredging and maintenance work. We have just returned from visits to our congressional delegation and have expressed these same sentiments as a priority for our inland waterway system. It is critical to keep navigation flowing, as it constitutes the life blood of the national economy.

Your testimony also highlighted the challenges your organization sees with implementation of WRDA 2007 in relation to the Mississippi River and Tributaries project. The Commission has received an update from the Vicksburg District on this topic: they are currently awaiting guidance from the Appropriations Committee on the type of report to be drafted to consider any potential modification to the project. We encourage you to coordinate closely on this topic with the Vicksburg District (copy furnished). The Commission also believes that the district is best suited to answer your questions on the location and construction of a new field office and interpretive center at Lake DeGray, and to provide you updates regarding the Section 729 watershed study. The Commission is greatly interested in the progress of all these topics and looks forward to updates at future inspection trips.

Lastly, your organization requests a new channel improvement program for the Ouachita-Black Rivers navigation project. The Commission recommends you consult with the Vicksburg District and your congressional delegation on the potential for legislative drafting services. Since this would be a new authority and require funding, it requires Congress to take legislative action to implement.

Thank you for participating in our public engagement process. We hope to see you soon.



This is a tremendous Corps graphic of the Locks and Dams on the Ouachita River with data current as of October 23, 2023. Low water levels typically have an effect on shipping south of the Lock at Columbia and south of the Jonesville Lock near the Black River. The Corps dredging team is aware of the traditional dredging “hotspots” and closely monitors these areas.

On the left, MV Syble Fay returning from Monroe, LA with an empty fuel barge. On the right is the MV Nicholas headed north with a load of rock.



Photos courtesy of Clay Manly.

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**

ORVA is a non-profit organization representing the private sector of the economy. Your tax deductible gift would help support economic development within the Ouachita River basin.

Detail of the ORVA submission of the following water resource projects/policies for consideration in the development of the Water Resources Development Act are depicted below. These two priorities have remained constant over the last several years and have been presented numerous times.

Priority 1 of 2

Modification of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project to include the portion of the Ouachita River Levee System (the lower 63 miles of the east bank of the Ouachita River levee system) at and below Monroe, Louisiana to Caldwell Parish, Louisiana.

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 Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project (Project). These restorations were critical as it made maintenance and repair of the levees a federal responsibility. The WRDA 2007 did not reinstate the lower 63 miles of the east bank south where the majority of erosion and damage occurs.

It is ORVA's opinion that the Project (now almost 100 years old) is incomplete on the Ouachita-Black. Furthermore, ORVA believes the levee system is a "system of systems" and should be fully restored to the designed intent of the Flood Control Act of 1928. The Project should not be piecemealed based upon later interpretations of this original intent. We are also of the opinion that removal (the "deauthorization") of the lower 63 was implemented in error.

The Project is not being maintained at its optimal level; it does not include the lower 63 miles of the east bank of the Ouachita River levee system at and below Monroe, Louisiana to Caldwell Parish, Louisiana. Considering the risk, levee failure would cause catastrophic damages to the people and communities within the basin. Flooding and high-water levels have substantially increased the possibility for system

This request has been submitted previously.

The anticipated effect of this request is to modify the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project to include the portion of the Ouachita River Levee System (the lower 63 miles of the east bank of the Ouachita River levee system) at and below Monroe, Louisiana to Caldwell Parish, Louisiana. With this modification, the levee system becomes a complete system as per the original intent of the Flood Control Act of 1928.

An estimate of the cost of this request is unknown. To our knowledge, no engineering studies or analysis has been conducted. A conservative estimate may be upwards of \$50 Million.

Proposed legislative text: Modification of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project to include the portion of the Ouachita River Levee System (the lower 63 miles of the east bank of the Ouachita River levee system) at and below Monroe, Louisiana to Caldwell Parish, Louisiana.

ORVA submitted input to the ASA (CW) concerning the WRDA 2022 input period on March 20, 2023.

WRDA 2007 restored some portions of the Ouachita levee system as part of MR&T but did not include the lower 63 miles. This memorandum is attached in two separate pages.

This request has been submitted for inclusion in prior WRDA requests. The request may have been considered but it is unknown why it was not included in earlier WRDA legislation.

Priority 2 of 2

Modification of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project to include Bank Stabilization as a feature of the Project.

Closely associated with ORVA's Priority 1 request, "Modification of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project to include the portion of the Ouachita River Levee System (the lower 63 miles of the east bank of the Ouachita River levee system) at and below Monroe, Louisiana to Caldwell Parish, Louisiana", **bank stabilization** is of paramount importance to the people living within the river basin.

We are greatly concerned with bank caving and other erosion problems on the Ouachita and Black Rivers in multiple areas. These issues occurring all along the Ouachita and Black Rivers threaten to cause catastrophic flooding and, in turn, hinder navigation. This problem is not only confined to Louisiana, but reaches well into the upper Ouachita, especially in the Camden, Arkansas area and north.

The Corps expends tremendous energy and resources addressing bank stabilization through the Public Law (PL) 84-99 Project. Multiple sites have been repaired to date, several obligated, and still more submitted for this program in Ouachita and Caldwell Parishes in Louisiana. Thanks to our partners in the Tensas Basin Levee District, these issues in Louisiana are identified, detailed, and submitted to the Vicksburg District, who work in unison to address those bank caving and erosion issues. To ORVA's knowledge, no sites have been identified and submitted for PL 84-99 consideration in Arkansas. Funding for these issues is very limited. In addition, they must be linked to a high-water event and in almost every case, they are not addressed in a timely manner. As time marches on, the erosion or bank caving issues at these sites continue to grow, with a corresponding growth in funding for the necessary repairs. For example, an erosion or bank caving problem linked to a 2016 high-water event may not be addressed until 2023 when funding becomes available. What was a \$50,000 cost to repair ("fix") the bank caving in 2016 has grown into an \$800,000 repair in 2023. In reality, using PL 84-99 funding for repair, though it is somewhat effective and most appreciative, is not an efficient use of taxpayer resources.

Modification of the project to include bank stabilization as a project feature places it under federal authority for maintenance and repair. Local interests, the Tensas Basin Levee District for example, were never capable to support the necessary maintenance to any acceptable standard.

This request has been submitted previously.

There are no entities that are opposed to this request.

The anticipated effect of this request – the modification of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project to include bank stabilization as a project feature – places it under federal authority for

maintenance and repair. A conservative Initial estimate of bank stabilization repairs if the modification is implemented (ORVA's estimate) is \$10-15 Million. Subsequent costs, dependent upon future flooding and high-water events, could range from \$2-4 M annually.

Proposed legislative text: Modification of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project to include bank stabilization as a project feature.

The Corps of Engineers addresses bank caving, erosion, and stabilization through the PL 84-99 Project. Public Law 84-99, provides reimbursement for specific damages to levees that result from high-water events.

Water Supply was authorized as a project feature for the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project as a result of WRDA 2020.

This request has been submitted for inclusion in prior WRDA requests. The request may have been considered but it is unknown why it was not included in earlier WRDA legislation.



A Beautiful Morning on the Ouachita River

This early morning picture, courtesy of Clay Manly, provides a detailed and majestic picture of the beauty and serenity of the Ouachita River.

The Ouachita River is a long and winding waterway with a rich and diverse history, culture, and ecology that make it a fascinating destination for explorers and adventurers.

Thank you ORVA 2023 Gold Sponsors



Raffle Winners and Sponsors

Mountain Harbor Resort and Spa graciously supported the Ouachita River Valley Association with a Gift Certificate for two nights' consecutive lodging in one of their two bedroom, two bath condominiums or cottages – with fully equipped kitchen, charcoal grill, color cable TV and a delightful view of the Ouachita National Forest or Lake Ouachita!



Plus, to enjoy the beauty of Lake Ouachita, Mountain Harbor included a day's use of a party barge, less fuel. To further compliment this package, Mountain Harbor included a \$50 meal credit – breakfast, lunch, or dinner – in their lodge restaurant! This mini-vacation package is valued at \$1,450.00. Mountain Harbor Resort and Spa, sprawling across 900 acres on the shores of pristine Lake Ouachita, is Arkansas' premier lake resort. It is nestled deep within the heart of the Ouachita Mountain range.

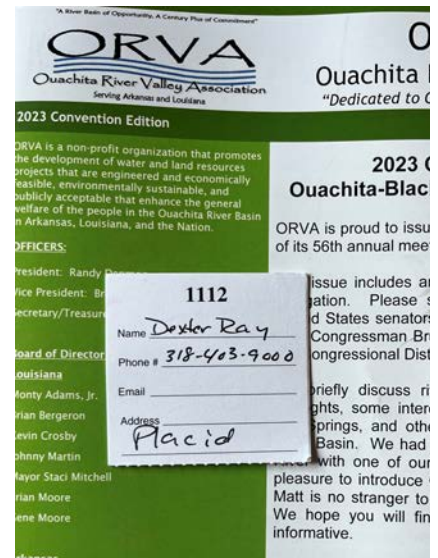
Pictured between Mr. Brandon Waggoner, ORVA's Vice President and Mr. David Weeks, Executive Director, is Ms. Jamie Lynn Barnes. Ms. Barnes was the winner of the **Mountain Harbor Resort and Spa** vacation package.



Stoeger Industries donated one of their premier shotguns as the second item in this year's raffle.

The inertia-driven **Model 3000 12 Gauge semi-automatic shotgun in Realtree Max-7 camouflage** is a waterfowler's dream! Rugged, weather-resistant construction and finish stand up to the worst conditions. The shotgun is chambered for 3 inch shells but cycles 2 ¾ shells equally well without any nedcessary adjustment. Five chokes are included to deliver the kind of reliable versatility and value only Stoeger can provide. This shotgun is valued at \$750.00.

Mr. Dexter Ray was the winner of the Stoeger Model 3000. At right is a picture of the winning ticket drawn at the convention.

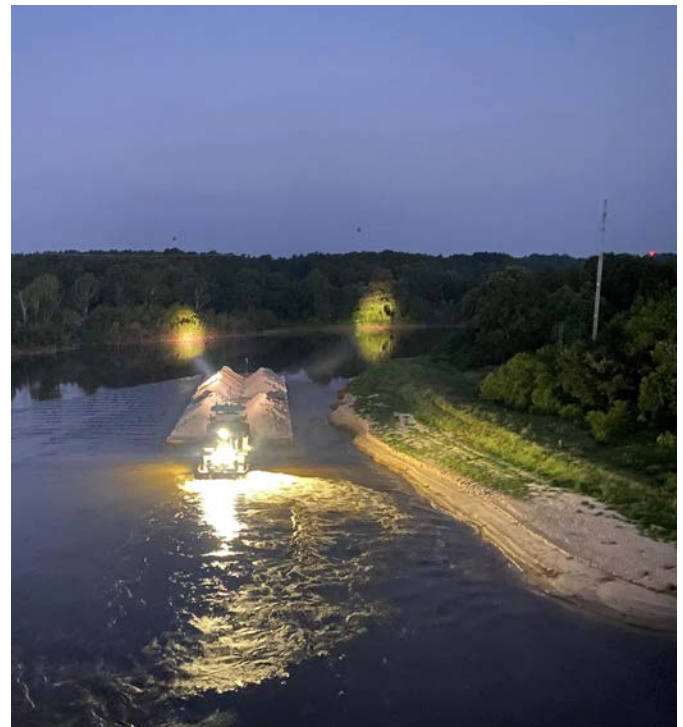


Thank you ORVA 2023 Gold Sponsors



America's First Resort

Louisiana Green Fuels is planning a 171-acre \$700 Million Renewable Diesel Refinery at the Port of Columbia in Caldwell Parish, Louisiana. The plant, which we hope to see operational by 2025, will produce up to 32 million gallons of renewable fuel annually through established refinery processes with wood waste as the feedstock.



Beautiful pictures of the **Syble Fay** (l) and the **Crosby Express** (r) courtesy of Clay Manly.

Fort Beauregard is located half a mile north of the village of Harrisonburg in Catahoula Parish, Louisiana. Located on a hill overlooking the Ouachita River, it sits several miles north of where it joins with the Tensas River and Little River to form the Black River. The fort is situated on a point where the upland hills of Louisiana come within artillery range of the Ouachita River; thus the batteries of the fort controlled the water approach to Monroe, Louisiana. Because the Confederates concentrated there, Fort Beauregard took on a greater significance: it was key to the Ouachita River Valley stretching northward.

On May 10, 1863, four Federal gunboats approaching from the south, anchored near the fort. Commodore Selim Woodworth, the federal commander, sent a flag of truce under Lieutenant William W. Fowler to demand the unconditional surrender of the fort and its surroundings. Confederate Lieut. Col. George W. Logan, commanding Fort Beauregard, reported later, "Just when we expected the boats to open fire, a yawl bearing a flag of truce was observed approaching the fort. Anticipating that its object was to demand the surrender of the fort, I deputized Captain Benton and my Adjutant, Lieutenant James G. Blanchard, to meet the yawl, with instructions, in case of such a demand, to respond that *'we would hold the fort forever'*". An hour after returning to the federal flotilla, three of the gunboats began bombarding the fort. More than 150 shells were fired. One Confederate officer was seriously wounded, one house located in town was destroyed, and some damage to the fort's earthen parapet was observed after the cannonade.

It's interesting to know that it wasn't the Confederates in Fort Beauregard that prevented the federal flotilla from reaching Monroe, but the low water in the Ouachita River!

The fort was never taken. However, on September 4, 1863 it was evacuated and destroyed by Colonel Logan in the face of considerable federal forces commanded by M.M. Crocker and Walter Q. Gresham who had arrived from Natchez.

Today, the fort is occupied by several re-enactment groups – but only on certain weekends!

Invite a friend to become an ORVA member

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



Post Office Box 913
Camden AR 71711