

"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"

SPRING 2023

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.

OFFICERS:

- President: Randy Denmon
- Vice President: Brandon Waggoner
- Secretary/Treasurer: David Richardson

Board of Directors:

Louisiana

- Kevin Crosby
- Johnny Martin
- Mayor Staci Mitchell
- Brian Bergeron
- Gene Moore
- Monty Adams, Jr.
- Brian Moore

Arkansas

- Judge Robbie McAdoo
- Dr. Corbet Lamkin
- Judge Mike Loftin
- Denny McPhate
- Mayor Crystal Marshall

Committee Chairman:

Navigation: Johnny Martin

Finance: Johnny Martin

Nominating Committee: Judge Mike Loftin/Johnny Martin

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

Spring 2023 OUACHITA-BLACK RIVERS NAVIGATION PROJECT

In this issue, we discuss tonnage, funding, testimony and responses from the Mississippi River Commission, ORVA input concerning WRDA 2022, new ORVA board members, our 2023 conference in Hot Springs, and other information. We're into the Spring work season and are hopeful that we'll soon see action on the river. Funding is there, contracts are being worked, and the river is perfect for dredging. We'll (hopefully) soon see rock headed north for gravel surfacing of the Ouachita River Levee System and clearing and snagging north of the state line in preparation for dredging in those regions. We're also hopeful that the mussel issue will soon be resolved and the long-awaited dredging will occur all the way to Camden. We missed our 1 million metric ton mark last year but are anticipating exceeded that level of tonnage this calendar year. Record levels of corn have been planted and the movement of agricultural commodities should not be impacted due to predicted low water or planned maintenance which would interdict river traffic. movements on the river are already occurring. What's 16 in diameter, 59 feet long, and super heavy; weighing in at more 130,000+ pounds? A kiln furnace. Manufactured in Italy, kiln made its way across the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, arriving in New Orleans April 15. At New Orleans it was placed on a barge and made its way up the Mississippi to the Ouachita, reaching the Port of Crossett just a few days ago. The long slow final movement



Big
feet
than
the
on
way

to Gum Springs,
AR is another story. Finally, be safe on the water this summer!

Commercial Tonnage

We had hoped to see movement of tonnage on the river above the 1 million metric ton mark again for the third consecutive year. Unfortunately, that did not happen. Tonnage was back down to 2019 levels, due partly to a slower COVID recovery and low water levels on the river, which played havoc with barge movement. The Monroe River Bank Stabilization and Levee Rehabilitation Project (known locally as the Monroe Floodwall Project) was completed in the Spring of 2022 and the movement of rock up the river slowed considerably. In fact, practically no movement of rock occurred during the latter part of 2022 and the movement of agricultural commodities were down more than 30%. The one bright spot in movement was an increase in residual fuel oil and gasoline (including aviation fuel), even with a greatly reduced capacity.

The chart below represents tonnage data which is reflected in thousands of tons from the Jonesville Lock and Dam, “upbound” and “downbound” for calendar year 2022.

Jonesville 1/1/2022 – 12/31/2022			
Commodity	Upbound (KTONS)	Downbound (KTONS)	Total YTD (KTONS)
Gasoline Incl Aviation (Except Jet)	217.300		217.300
Residual Fuel Oil	213.500		213.500
Dredged Material		1.600	1.600
Limestone	205.832		205.832
Wheat		14.400	14.400
Corn		48.000	48.000
Sorghum Grains		19.200	19.200
Soybeans		62.400	62.400
Machinery/Bulkheads (Not Electric)	4.650	8.150	12.800
Other	.825	.014	.839
Total	642.107	153.764	795.871

This data derived from the Jonesville Lock and Dam because it is a good representation of tonnage movement on the river.

We remain hopeful that tonnage will surpass the 1 million metric ton mark for 2023. As noted in Maj. Gen. Holland’s written response to ORVA dated November 17, 2022, we expect to see considerable movement of rock for gravel surfacing of the Ouachita River Levee system. The rock will support the stabilization of portions of the levee embankment to prevent erosion and bank caving and is funded through the authority of the Public Law (PL) 84-99 program. ORVA had anticipated the movement of rock (for the project Maj. Gen. Holland referenced in her letter) in the fourth quarter of 2022 but unfortunately with low water conditions, that did not materialize.

Looking back at our crystal ball, had we not experienced low water levels and had the movement of rock (to support erosion and bank caving for the Ouachita River Levee system) occurred as anticipated, it is quite possible we would have met that 1 million mark. Additional information gleaned from multiple sources and initial funding data certainly supports those early indications that we will reach that magic mark in 2023. We are certainly hopeful!

Mississippi River Commission Response to ORVA's Written Statement of August 2022

The Association received a written response dated November 17, 2022 to its August 24, 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 written statement provided to the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held aboard the MV Mississippi on August 24, 2022, in Vicksburg, Mississippi. The Commission appreciates the continued partnership we share with the Ouachita River Valley Association (ORVA).

Fiscal Year 2022 has been an unprecedented year in terms of funding received by the Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (DRSAA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Due to this historical funding, the PL 84-99 Ouachita Bank Stabilization Project was awarded in the amount of \$32M. As a part of the BIL, the Vicksburg District received \$7M to complete the gravel surfacing on the Ouachita River Levee. We plan to reduce some of the back-log maintenance and to address some Operation and Maintenance items associated with our lakes and dams within the Ouachita system with these additional funds. I share with you your concern for the need of a new DeGray Lake Field Office and Interpretive Visitor Center. A suitable project site has been identified for this work, and we are currently awaiting funding to begin site design and construction.

The Commission understands how important it is to ORVA to have the lower 63 miles of the Ouachita River Levee system incorporated as a part of the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project. We continue to await implementation guidance from USACE HQ on how to proceed in generating a proposal to incorporate the lower 63 miles as a part of the project. We understand how important adding bank stabilization authorization to the project would be as well in aiding in controlling the overall river system.

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

The Mississippi River and Tributaries Project (MR&T) was authorized by the 1928 Flood Control Act. As a direct result of the great flood of 1927, Congress deemed it necessary to develop a comprehensive public works system within the lower Mississippi valley with the purpose to provide a system of flood risk management and navigation. In existence now for almost 100 years, the MR&T represents the greatest civil works project in the Nation's history.

Statement to the Mississippi River Commission – March 29, 2023 – Vicksburg, MS

The following written statement was presented to the Mississippi River Commission at their March 29, 2023 meeting:



**STATEMENT OF THE OUACHITA RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION
PRESENTED TO THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION
GREENVILLE, MISSISSIPPI
March 29, 2023**

General Holland and Members of the Mississippi River Commission:

The Association thanks you for the opportunity and privilege to present this statement and address the major needs and concerns on behalf of our members.

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

The mission of our Association 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, (commercial, industrial, and agricultural) water supply, recreation and conservation, waste water discharge, flood damage reduction, and economic development.



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 in any order of priority.

Funding for Backlog Maintenance. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Civil Works budget for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project, while close to par, still remains significantly

underfunded when considering recent inflation. The FY 2024 budgeted amount of \$11.607 Million for Operation and Maintenance (O&M), while commensurate with 2023 (\$10.017 Million), is well below 2022 totals of \$12.065 Million which was an all-time high and the best in recent memory. While 2023 projections are high compared to previous years, we are seeing a downward trend.

The Association was greatly concerned with maintenance funding in FY 2023 because it represented a 40% reduction from FY 2022. And though funding for maintenance jumped 35% from \$4.093 Million (M) in 2023 to \$5.532 M in 2024, we remain 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. Maintenance, typically the first item trimmed or on the chopping block, becomes critical, and therefore continues to backlog. Funding from additional sources in 2022 will address some of the backlog issues and for that we are most appreciative. Lack of maintenance funding as you are aware, if not addressed, will continue to backlog and eventually cause serious complications.

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; local interests were never capable to support the necessary maintenance to any acceptable standard. The Act, however, did not reinstate the lower 63 miles of the east bank south where the majority of erosion and damage occurs. Flooding and high-water levels have substantially increased the possibility for system failure leading to potentially disastrous results.

The Project (now almost 100 years old) is incomplete on the Ouachita-Black (O-B). The Association believes the levee system is a "system of systems" and should be viewed with an eye towards the "weakest link" concept and fully restored to the intent of the Flood Control Act of 1928. Although we continue to await implementation guidance from Corps' headquarters on how to proceed in generating a proposal to incorporate the lower 63 as a part of the Project, it is our opinion that removal (the "deauthorization") of the lower 63 was implemented in error. Considering the risk, there are no economies of scale when the system is piecemealed rather

The Corps of Engineers estimates the MR&T System is currently ~87% complete

than treated as a complete system. A levee failure would cause catastrophic damages to the people and communities within the Ouachita River basin.

Modification of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project to include Bank Stabilization as a feature of the Project. Closely associated with the above modification, bank stabilization, although not an official authorized project purpose of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project, is 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.

The Corps expends tremendous energy and resources addressing this issue through the PL 84-99 Project. As the Commission is well aware, this program, under Public Law 84-99, provides reimbursement for specific damages to levees that result from high-water events. To date, multiple sites have been repaired, several obligated, and more submitted for this program in Ouachita and Caldwell Parishes where the great majority of bank caving and erosion occurs. Funding, however, is limited; it must be linked to a high-water event and, in most all instances, is not addressed in a timely manner. For example, an erosion or bank caving problem linked to a 2018 high-water event may not be addressed until 2023; what was then a \$50,000 cost to repair (“fix”) has grown into (in 2023) an \$800,000 repair. Modification of the project to include bank stabilization as a project feature places it under federal authority for maintenance and repair. Using PL 84-99 funding, though effective, 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 and another project area in which the Corps can make a tremendous difference. The Corps’ lakes significantly contribute to the economies of Arkansas and Louisiana by supporting the Navigation Project in the areas of tourism, recreation, and development. Finally, after more than ten years, we are excited that a site has been identified and plans are being formulated for design and construction once funding is received. This new construction is not only important to the economic health of the community and critical for area visitors, but also necessary for the safety and health of Corps employees.

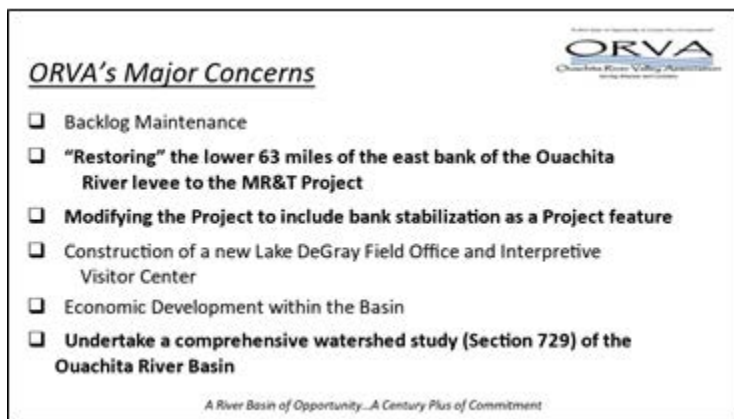
Economic Development. The Ouachita is critically important to the area economy. The Association continually demonstrates how the O-B has impacted the economy of the region. In February 2021, the Environmental Protection Agency Report titled, “Deeper Look at the Ouachita River”, details how the river serves as a center for navigation, recreation, economic development, drinking water, and community identity. The economic value of the O-B is high and continues to grow! The Association will continue to pursue 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.** The last river basin study was conducted more than 120 years ago in 1902. As one can imagine, much has changed in the Ouachita River basin. There exists the need 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. Agricultural and other land practices; river navigation; commercial, municipal, and agricultural water use; and an increasing and expanding population necessitate a detailed study of the basin. We believe a Section 729 Study would 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 providing a more comprehensive review of the Ouachita River Basin. In essence, the study would serve to address the many diverse social, environmental, and economic needs of this important watershed.

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 as per the original intent
- 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



We recently provided input to the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) for consideration in the development of guidance to provisions of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022. We are also working closely with our Congressional members and are optimistic that some of what has been discussed could 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 the continued superb 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 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 the members of the Association.

Sincerely and respectfully,

David L. Weeks
Executive Director

Lake Ouachita is the largest lake entirely in the state of Arkansas.



Brian Moore Selected to Fill Vacancy on the Board of Directors

Mr. Brian Moore was selected to fill the Louisiana vacancy on the Association’s Board of Directors. Mr. Moore is the Site Director for the ANGUS Chemical Company at the Sterlington, Louisiana facility.

ANGUS is the world’s only company dedicated to nitroalkanes and their derivatives and is a leading global manufacturer and marketer of specialty ingredients and consumables for Life Sciences and Industrial markets. Mr. Moore is responsible for the Site’s manufacturing activities including management of operations, engineering, maintenance, health, safety, and environmental requirements at the facility. Prior to becoming the Site Director, he was the Environmental Health and Safety Manager at the ANGUS Sterlington facility.

A tremendous addition to the Board, Mr. Moore brings more than 30 years of experience in operations, environmental health and safety, and process safety in both the chemical industry and consulting.

Brian holds a bachelor’s degree in Geology from Louisiana Tech University in Ruston, Louisiana. He is a Registered Professional Geologist in the State of Mississippi and currently a member of the Board of Directors for the Louisiana Chemical Industry Alliance (LCIA).

During the Civil War, Arkansas’ Ouachita County supplied several companies of soldiers to the Confederate Army. Several major fortifications were constructed on the Ouachita River, including the Camden Water Battery, Fort Lookout and Fort Sutherland. Further north of Camden, on a hilltop just below the confluence of the Little Missouri and Ouachita Rivers, the Confederates constructed a fortification at Tate’s Bluff.

The Tate’s Bluff Fortification

The Tate’s Bluff fortification, constructed in 1864, was a square earthen fort, 100 feet square, located on the bluff commanding the river area where the Little Missouri River meets the Ouachita River. The fort was constructed to thwart any federal incursion from the vicinity of Little Rock. Tate’s Bluff figured prominently in the Confederate strategy for southwest Arkansas but never saw action, serving primarily as an early warning post for a possible enemy attack, a staging area for Confederate troops, and possibly as a small supply depot.

The Association is working with stakeholders, Ouachita County Judge Robbie McAdoo, the Ouachita River Commission, Captain Ken Key with the the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission in Camden, and others to effect the placement of a river guage in the vicinity of the Tate’s Bluff bridge. During heavy rains, flooding at the confluence of the rivers creates dangerous and hazardous road conditions. Like the fortification some 160 years prior, the guage would serve as an early warning for possible danger.

Both Confederate and Union Commanders established their headquarters and occupied the McCollum-Chidester House in Camden during the Civil War....at different times of course.

Souls of the River (A discussion between Mike Bryant and David Weeks)

ORVA is proud to recognize Mike Bryant in this newsletter. Mike is a resident of Camden and has lived in the area his entire life. During our discussion, Mike chuckled somewhat when he said after graduating high school, he lasted about 5 weeks in college before coming home and going to work at the Camden Water Utilities. He has since completed his degree in Environmental Management (at age 30) and worked his way up to Assistant Manager at the water office. With more than 19 years of service, Mike has been engaged at every level of the water process from making water safe to drink to making it safe to discharge. As he says, “pull it out on one end and put it back in the other.”

Mike told me he has the perfect job. His life is centered around water. “I can be off work and in my boat in twenty minutes.” A self-professed “River Rat”, Mike has been fishing the Ouachita his entire life.



For about the last 20 years, he has fished commercially in his spare time, primarily for catfish and buffalo. When not running nets, Mike loves to be out and about in his “1444” fishing for crappie, bass, and catfish, oftentimes with his daughter Laney Bryant.

Mike knows the river well, especially from Camden to Calion and he is quite savvy, knowing when and where to fish. “It’s a daily thing; understanding the water levels, the clarity of the water, the temperature, and the right time of the year,” he quipped. “The rise means the water is going to dirty-up – which is good for net fisherman; bass fishing on the Ouachita is better when it’s hot,” he noted. It’s obvious that his knowledge of the Ouachita comes from experience!

Mike and I talked briefly about many of his experiences on the Ouachita. Mike has seen the river level fluctuate considerably, from 42.5 feet at the Camden gauge on New Year's Day 1988 to a gauge reading of 1.98 feet in 2018. He voiced concern that he doesn't see nearly the number of cypress trees on the river that he once did. "The water stays too high and the banks have changed considerably." He noted that, "when the river falls, much of the banks have just disappeared, leaving stumps and trees in multiple areas, hindering safe navigation of the waterway...It's more so now than I have ever seen." I mentioned dredging and his response was, "it will hurt fishing only for a few days but it is absolutely necessary to make the waterway safe for navigation."

I asked if there was the possibility of a "guide service" or running a similar business venture one day in the future? His quick answer was a resounding "No". "not interested; I love fishing, and I would enjoy taking anyone fishing."

Mike loves his work and he loves to fish! It's quite obvious that Mike is pretty good at both.

Yes, Mike has the perfect job!

From the Office of the Chief of Staff, Army. General Officer Assignment Announcement dated February 17, 2023

Brigadier General Kimberly A. Peeples, Commanding General, Great Lakes and Ohio River Division (LRD), United States Army Corps of Engineers, Cincinnati, Ohio to Commanding General, Mississippi Valley Division, United States Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Prior to coming to LRD, BG Peeples served as commander of Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall and Fort McNair, located in Arlington, Virginia. Commissioned in 1994, General Peeples is a graduate of the US Military Academy, West Point.



Mississippi River Commission Response to ORVA's Written Statement of March 2023

Maj. Gen. Holland forwarded the below response dated April 26, 2023, shown in its entirety. ORVA appreciates the honor and privilege to brief Maj. Gen. Holland and the members of the Mississippi River Commission on the priorities and major interests of the Ouachita River Valley Association. Her response was received just as this newsletter was headed to print.

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

Dear Mr. Weeks:

Thank you for your statement provided to the Mississippi River Commission during the public hearing held on March 29, 2023, in Greenville, Mississippi. The testimony provided by our partners and stakeholders enables the Commission to deliver sound policy, programmatic, and engineering recommendations to the Administration and Congress.

We appreciate the continued partnership and collaboration between the Ouachita River Valley Association and the Corps of Engineers on a multitude of efforts. The Mississippi River Commission is committed to advocating for sustained and consistent funding for operations and maintenance of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) project, recognizing that the MR&T performs best when it is being maintained at an optimal level.

Regarding inclusion of portions of the Ouachita levee system in the MR&T program, the Commission has supported recent and current legislative attempts submitted by your congressional delegation to remedy the situation. We advise you to continue working with your congressional delegation and the Vicksburg District to ensure future success in this realm. We also advise you to work with your congressional delegation on the potential creation of a "sister" program to the MR&T Channel Improvement Program, as this would require distinct authorization from Congress to undertake. We look forward to updates on your progress at future public meetings.

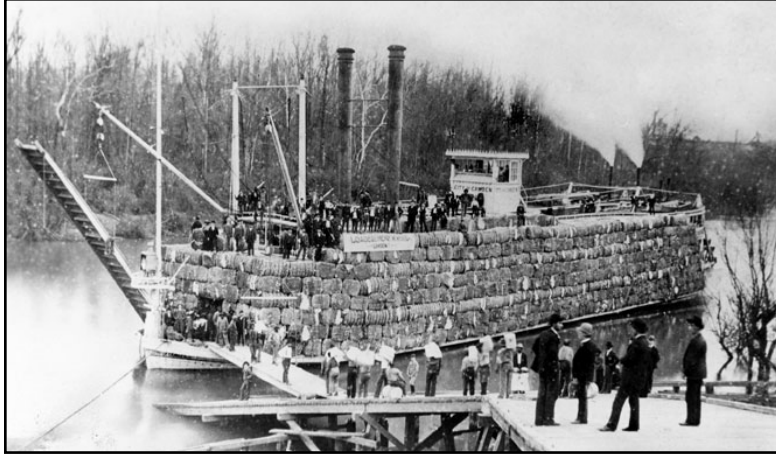
Thank you for taking the time to participate in our public engagement process. We appreciate your comm in the future.

Sincerely,

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

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

The working and professional relationship which exists between ORVA and the leadership and staff of the Mississippi Valley Division and Vicksburg District is greatly appreciated.



The steamboat *City of Camden*, ca. 1894, being loaded with cotton at the landing in Camden, Arkansas.

We assume this photo was taken in the Fall of 1894; there's not much foliage in the landscape and the cotton is baled and ready for shipment.

Can you estimate the number of bales of cotton?

2023 Dredging Update (See further information on page 19.)

The Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project began Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 armed with \$2.5M for dredging and surveys and early indication from the Vicksburg District indicated plans to dredge all the way to Camden with initial plans to leave the small cutter-head dredge DuBuque (a Corps owned vessel) at Camden to fully complete dredging in the Camden area.

You may recall the Corps' original intent was to maintain the DuBuque for operations on the Ouachita.

High water during Spring 2022 played a significant role in delaying start-up dredging operations. To compound matters, water levels were also too high in places to accurately "map" the river bottom.

By summer, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) had identified a potential endangered species of mussel with potential impacts to dredging operations in the Camden area. Water levels fell throughout the summer and the customary early fall through winter rains never materialized creating drought conditions. These two factors unfortunately necessitated the modification of the initial dredging plans.

FY 2023 began with a Continuing Resolution as expected. After several short-term measures, the President signed the \$1.7 Trillion spending bill December 29, 2022. The one plus in the dredging picture: FY 2022 funding is still available for dredging operations and the current fiscal year (FY 2023) funding is now available.

Water levels continued to fall throughout late summer and into December, further exasperating shipping operations. The long-awaited winter rains never really materialized but when they came, they came in force. We all remember the old saying, "when it rains, it pours!"

The dredge DuBuque, after completing dredging work on the Red River (primarily at Lock 1 and the surrounding area on the Red), remained in a "Standby" status for a period of time. It returned to Vicksburg Harbor for refit and maintenance, too late to accomplish anything significant on the Ouachita. The DuBuque is gearing up for the 2023 dredging season and we are again just now coming off high water on the river.

We do not anticipate repairs to the H.K. Thatcher Lock and Dam (permanent repairs to the hinged crest gate) until FY 2024 when funding will become fully available. The Corps continues to express the need of \$5M for repairs. Concerning the Thatcher repairs, in discussions with KC Ellis (with the Monroe Navigation Office) this past February he commented, “funds have been requested in every way possible since the emergency. There is the possibility for funding in the FY 2023 work plan but I haven’t seen any details on the work plan as of yet.”

We are hopeful that the necessary funding for the Thatcher permanent repairs will be available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) which the President signed into law in November 2021.

Again, in February, 2023, per Katy Breaux, Senior Project Manager with the Corps’ Vicksburg District, “The USFWS is currently reviewing the final scope of work for a mussel survey. No timeline has been provided for the scheduling, completion, or findings of this survey. This information will determine the direction of dredging operations. We currently have adequate funding for FY23 dredging operations up to Camden. Assuming we receive approval, it is our intent to complete dredging needs previously identified that were halted by environmental concerns due to potential disturbance of mussel beds.”

Related to dredging, Vicksburg District’s dredging chief, echoed the same comments as Ms. Breaux, and also said that the USFS should release their findings in sufficient time for dredging operations to extend north toward Camden. We are hopeful but realize we are dealing with a federal agency.

The Ouachita River at Monroe, Louisiana

Much has been written about the locks and dams on the Ouachita, both pro and con. The Fall 2022 edition of the newsletter contained an article (“The Dam Problem”) which spoke to one man’s opinion concerning removal of dams, not only on the Ouachita, but also on many of the Nation’s waterways. Although we’ve shown this artist’s depiction many times (what the Ouachita River at Monroe would look like if it were not for the Corps’ lock and dam systems), we believe it is important to get an idea of the inevitability of the river’s water level.



Yes, it is true that the maintenance of the Corps’ locks and dams represents a substantial investment in taxpayer dollars for the Army Corps of Engineers. But can you imagine the negative costs if there were no locks and dams? The sole purpose of the Association when founded 130 years ago, was to obtain a year-round commercial navigation system. The locks and dams are critical to that purpose and maintenance of those locks and dams is of

paramount importance. It is estimated that there is a \$22 Million backlog of maintenance activities for the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project.

The first stationary lock and dams were built on the Ouachita River from 1902 to 1926, and provided a navigable depth of 6.5 feet from the mouth of the Black River in Louisiana to Camden, Arkansas on the Ouachita River, a distance of 351 miles.

Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2022

The Association provided input during the comment period to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works for consideration in the development of implementation guidance concerning the provisions of the Water Resources Development Act of 2022.

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. These restorations were critical as it made maintenance and repair of the levees a federal responsibility; local interests were never capable to support the necessary maintenance to any acceptable standard. The Act, however, did not reinstate the lower 63 miles of the east bank south where the majority of erosion and damage occurs. Flooding and high-water levels have substantially increased the possibility for system failure leading to potentially disastrous results. The MR&T Project (now almost 100 years old) is incomplete on the Ouachita-Black (O-B). Considering the risk, there are no economies of scale when the system is piecemealed rather than treated as a complete system.

Recent WRDA 2020 language is interpreted as requiring a feasibility analysis prior to the inclusion of the relevant levee section into the MR&T. Although our local Corps partners at the Mississippi Valley Division are currently waiting (and have been) on implementation guidance from Corps headquarters, we believe it unnecessary. With return on MR&T investment reflected at 131:1, a levee failure on the O-B would cause catastrophic damages to the people and communities within the Ouachita River basin and, (if one looks solely at numbers and data), greatly diminish the current investment ratio.

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

Closely associated with the above modification, bank stabilization, although not an official authorized project purpose of the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project, it 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.

The Corps expends tremendous energy and resources addressing this issue through the PL 84-99 Project. This program, under Public Law 84-99, provides reimbursement for specific damages to levees that result from high-water events. To date, multiple sites have been repaired, several obligated, and more submitted for this program in Ouachita and Caldwell Parishes where the great majority of bank caving and erosion occurs. Funding, however, is limited; it must be linked to a high-water event and, in most all instances, is not addressed in a timely manner. For example, an erosion or bank caving problem linked to a 2018 high-water event may not be addressed until 2023; what was then a \$50,000 cost to repair (“fix”) has grown into (in 2023) an \$800,000 repair. Modification of the project to include bank stabilization as a project feature places it under federal authority for maintenance and repair. Using PL 84-99 funding, though effective, is not an efficient use of taxpayer resources.

Implement a Section 729 Study vice Section 216 to Study the Water Resources Needs of the Ouachita River Watershed in Arkansas and Louisiana.

The last river basin study was conducted more than 120 years ago in 1902. As one can imagine, much has changed in the Ouachita River basin. Agricultural and other land practices; river navigation; commercial, municipal, and agricultural water use; and an increasing and expanding population necessitate a detailed study of the basin. We believe a Section 729 Study would provide a more comprehensive review of the Ouachita River Basin; it would serve to address the many diverse social, environmental, and economic needs of this important watershed.

Lake Greeson is one of three lakes located within the Ouachita River Basin. It is named after developer Martin White Greeson, an attorney, businessman, and civic activist who spent most of his adult life advocating for the construction of the dam on the Little Missouri River, known as Narrows Dam.

Narrows Dam, named after the local area known as “the Narrows”, is located 6.2 miles north of Murfreesboro, Arkansas in Pike County. The construction of the dam was authorized as a flood control and hydroelectric power project – the Little Missouri River Project – by the Flood Control Act of 1941. The Project was authorized \$3 Million by Congress but construction was delayed until after WWII. Construction began by the Corps of Engineers in April 1947, was completed in 1950, and dedicated in 1951. The strategy for the dam was the impoundment of water from the Little Missouri River to create Lake Greeson, part of an overarching plan for the Ouachita River Basin.



Flood waters flow over the spillway for the first time since 1968.

The dam has a total length of 151 feet and a height of 196 feet. Its powerhouse contains three generators capable of generating 28 million kWh (kilowatts of electricity per hour or rather, how much energy you're using per hour). Lake Greeson is divided into three "layers" so the dam can operate effectively. The top "layer" of the lake is usually empty unless it is holding

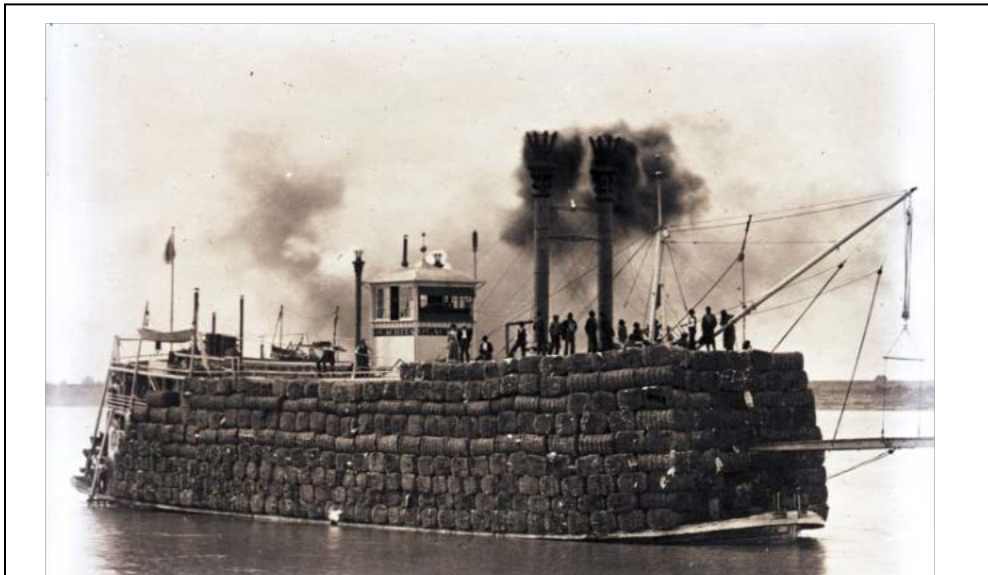


floodwater. The spillway at the top of the dam helps to regulate the top layer. In the event of major rainfall and flooding (which has occurred only twice - first in 1968 and again in 2009), walls control the direction of the water to a basin at the base of the dam in order to prevent erosion.

View of the dam from the waters of Lake Greeson

Lake Greeson Fast Facts:

- 16,135-acre multi-purpose project with over 15,000 forested acres
- 150 feet deep at its deepest with an average depth of 40 feet; 60 feet deep in the majority of the river channel
- 12 miles in length
- 134 miles of shoreline
- 15 recreation areas, 416 campsites, 10 boat ramps, six swimming beaches, and three pavilions
- More than 2 million visitors annually
- Recognized for its variety of fish, including striped, largemouth, spotted, and white bass, flathead and channel catfish



The Steamboat *Ouachita* loaded with bales of cotton, pictured here ca. 1905, plied the Ouachita River for many years. The steamboat was integral to everyday life on the Ouachita, moving people and supplies up and down the river. The rapid expansion of the rail system all but doomed travel by steamboat.

Red River Valley Association 98th Annual Convention

The Red River Valley Association (RRVA) held its annual convention in Shreveport at the Sam's Town Convention Center, 22-23 February 2023. Highlights of the convention included:

-Recognition of Mr. Richard "Rich" Brontoli, outgoing Executive Director, with more than 30 years of service and introduction of Ms. Emily Mott, incoming Executive Director. Rich will stay on for a transition period of one year.

-Welcoming remarks by the Mayors of Shreveport and Bossier City.

-Presentation by Colonel Andy Pannier, Deputy Commander of the US Army Corps of Engineers' Mississippi Valley Division (MVD). Highlights of his brief included the change of command and retirement of Maj Gen Diana Holland with Brigadier General Kimberly Peeples assuming command; a look at the "central coast", i.e., the inland waterways; and a discussion of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project – in existence for almost 100 years with a 131:1 return on investment. I was intrigued by his comment, "we must understand the river...but we can never control it," which is spot on.

-Presentation by the Corps Districts. Our focus is primarily on that by Colonel Chris Klein, Vicksburg District's Commander and District Engineer. Colonel Klein discussed inflation and what that does to the buying power of the Corps, its aging infrastructure, and how to get the best value from our taxpayer dollars. He noted, "No - really means not right now, but we must be focused on getting to yes." In closing, he said, "not all the best ideas are in the federal government...we're working from the same data set." His comments in my opinion were straight-forward, down-to-earth, and focused at the user level. All in all, a great presentation providing a common-sense approach to the same and similar issues we face on the Ouachita.

-Update by Ms. Julie Ufner, President and CEO of the National Waterways Conference whose focus was primarily on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022. The update was very enlightening and I jotted down her comment, "we can't make it happen overnight...it's a process."

-Luncheon presentation by US Representative Mike Johnson (R-Louisiana) who provided insights into what is happening in Washington DC and the rest of the world.

-Presentations by those representing Carbon Rho LLC, the US Maritime Administration (MARAD), the Port of Morgan City, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation.



The Lindy C. Boggs Lock and Dam (also called lock 1) is the front door to the Red River.

The Boggs Lock and Dam resumed operation November 12, 2022 after a two-month closure. The routine maintenance dewatering began August 30. The closure was temporarily opened for navigation September 29-October 13 to allow traffic to pass. Boggs is the foreshadowing of potential (maintenance) issues with locks and dams.

ORVA's 56th Annual Conference

We're headed back to beautiful Hot Springs, Arkansas! Planning and preparations are at the mid-point for ORVA's 56th Annual Conference which will be held in Hot Springs, Arkansas at the majestic Hot Springs Convention Center & Bank of the Ozarks Arena. Day Two will be held at the beautiful and impressive Corps of Engineers Lake Ouachita Project Office.

Please mark your calendars: **conference dates are August 10-11, 2023.** "Save the Date" notices have been mailed. The City of Hot Springs is hosting and the outstanding staff from the Office of the City Manager is assisting with the administration, planning, and execution of the conference.

You will not want to miss this conference!

The Port of Yellow Bend, Arkansas

The \$7 Million project which began operations in 1993 is located directly on the Mississippi River just south of Arkansas City. Yellow Bend Port is a slack-water harbor (**a harbor that is located on a river or other waterway that is not affected by tides, i.e., little or no horizontal motion of tidal water**) and easily accessible through a 250-foot-wide entrance to a 350 x 810 foot turning basin. With the ability to handle diverse shipments of commodities, its location on the Mississippi makes it one of the most convenient port locations on the inland waterway system. Yellow Bend has substantial capability for industrial use and development and is easily accessible and convenient to land transportation systems in Little Rock and Tallulah, Louisiana (I-30, I-40, and I-20, respectively).

Lake Ouachita is the largest lake entirely in the state of Arkansas.

The Inland Waterway System is a network of rivers, canals, backwaters, and creeks which can be utilized for transportation instead of or in addition to roads and rails. The system comprises navigable rivers linked by a series of major canals. It includes 12,000 miles of commercially navigable channels and some 240 lock and dam sites. America's "inland marine highways" move commerce to and from 28 states, serve industrial and agricultural products, and exports at gateway ports.



The ORVA Board of Directors has selected Denny McPhate to replace Bill Burrough as a member representing the State of Arkansas on the Board following Mr. Burrough's term of service.

Mr. McPhate has been employed by the City of Hot Springs for 18 years. He is the Deputy City Manager for the City of Hot Springs, AR and is responsible for the management of 5 City Departments consisting of Public Works (Street, Traffic, Urban Forestry, Property Maintenance and Stormwater), Parks and Trails, Engineering, Utilities (Billing, Sewer and Water) and Sports and Recreation.

Denny also serves the City of Hot Springs as the Community Rating System (CRS) Coordinator for the City's participation in the Nation Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and is one of two of the City's Certified Floodplain Managers (CFM) and also serves as the City's Floodplain Administrator.

Denny began his professional career in 1984, having obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Construction Engineering from the University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He has 39 years of Construction Management experience in a diversity of construction fields ranging from residential, commercial, industrial and municipal construction.

Both Confederate and Union Commanders established their headquarters in Camden during the Civil War, occupying the McCollum-Chidester House....at different times of course.

Levels of Service

The operating hours of the locks and dams on the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project remain unchanged. The Arkansas 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. No changes occurred with the Louisiana locks and dams at Columbia and Jonesville. ORVA remains concerned that the reduction in hours of operations have, and continue to, have negative impacts on the area's economic picture, especially in Arkansas with subsequent impacts to the entire Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project.

After two years of shipping greater than 1 million tons, tonnage has again dropped below 1 million metric tons, which by waterways standards, places the Ouachita-Black in the "low use waterway" category. This places the waterway in a position for potentially reduced funding and with the lack of river movement, especially north of the state line, we cannot expect the levels of service to change anytime soon.

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.

Dredging (Continued)

Corps' representatives have told us that they intend to dredge *all the way to Camden* (after snagging and dragging – it is also reported that there is substantial bank caving north of Thatcher lock and dam – *all the way to Camden*.) Funding is there; available from last fiscal year and from current FY 2023 funding. In the past, it has been said that "there is no shipping because there is no dredging, and likewise, no dredging because there is no shipping." We've all heard the cliché, "which comes first, the chicken or the egg?" It is certainly overused but applies in this scenario.



The potential for business and economic development is there. The Ouachita-Black “interstate system” remains the most economical shipping “highway” in the multi-state area. Together with our stakeholders and our local partners in the local economic development offices, we can hopefully entice business into the area. Coordination and networking is key. ORVA is all in!

Brian Bergeron replaces Barry Joffrion as a Louisiana representative on ORVA’s Board of Directors

Brian began his professional career at Placid Refining Company LLC’s Port Allen, Louisiana Refinery in 1981.

Mr. Bergeron moved steadily through the company from transporting and receiving crude to Chief Operator for refinery operations (some 27 years later), to Refinery Shift Foreman, then in 2012 to Terminal Superintendent in the Refinery Terminal Department. As the Superintendent, he was responsible for all crude oil, finished product, intermediate storage, and transfers via tankage, barges, pipelines and on-road transports.

In 2017 Brian was concurrently elected to serve as President of Alexandria Terminal Company LLC, Monroe Terminal Company LLC, and Archie Terminal Company LLC. Mr. Bergeron was also placed in charge of Placid’s Loss Control Department due to his extensive process, logistical, and product knowledge.

Promoted again in 2022 to the position of Midstream Asset Manager, he has responsibility for natural gas, refined products, and crude oil pipelines in addition to serving as President of each independent fuel distribution terminal company, each with fuels distribution terminals located in central and northern Louisiana. This level of knowledge rarely seen, Mr. Bergeron has mastered each phase of the refining and logistical process from receipt of crude to end user in the consumer process.

ORVA is proud to welcome Mr. Brian Bergeron to the Board of Directors.



U.S. Congressman Mike Johnson (R-LA) noted in his luncheon comments at the Annual RRVA Convention this past February 23 that the U.S. has spent \$113B to date in Ukraine.

Engagement at Poison Springs

The little battle of Poison Springs, part of the Camden Expedition, was fought April 18, 1864 west of Camden in Ouachita County, Arkansas. Here, a federal supply column, escorted by nearly 1,200 Union soldiers was attacked and captured by Confederates. Federals at Camden, down to half rations, were starving. Federal foragers, ordered by Maj. Gen. Steele to gather food and forage, were thorough. Besides the necessary provisions, the 200 wagon column was brimming full of clothing, jewelry, silverware, pots, pans and household items, plundered from the citizens in the area. As news of the stolen loot spread throughout southwest Arkansas, Confederates, thirsty for revenge, located the unsuspecting federals the night of April 17 and routed them early the next day.

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)

_____ \$ 100 Small Business

_____ \$ 500 Corporate

_____ \$ 200 Civic/Professional

_____ \$ 200 Public Entity

_____ \$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**

Monroe, Louisiana on the beautiful Ouachita River.

Years before the Louisiana Purchase, when the area was under Spanish Colonial rule, Spain sent Don Juan Filhiol (considered the father of modern Monroe, Louisiana) to build a post on the Ouachita River – Post of Ouachita – around 1780. The post was later renamed Fort Miro ca. 1791 in honor of the Spanish governor of Louisiana, Esteban Rodriguez Miro. The fortification was built on the banks of the Ouachita River in what is now downtown Monroe and is where the parish courthouse now stands. The newly established town was designated as the seat of justice of "Ouachita County" in 1805. The name of the town was changed from Fort Miro to Monroe in 1820 in honor of then President James Monroe who first arrived there via the steamboat *James Monroe* in 1819. From the original plantation of Joseph de la Baume a major portion of the present cities of Monroe and West Monroe evolved. Together, Monroe and West Monroe, divided by the Ouachita River, are known locally as the "Twin Cities".

Funds Status

As expected, Fiscal Year 2023 began with a Continuing Resolution.

After several Continuing Resolutions (CR) – short-term extensions to keep the government funded and operational – the President signed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Omnibus Appropriations Bill into law on December 29, 2022.

Apparently, multiple CR's have become the new normal; they have direct impacts on funding for river operations.

We're just now beginning to see work plans developed and advertisements for dredging. The Corps normally lets two contracts for dredging. The good news is that the Corps will let three contracts; a separate contract will be awarded solely for dredging on the Ouachita. Part of the bad news is that the dredging contract is just now being advertised, meaning possibly (optimistically) two months before we see any action, i.e., dredging operations commencing on the Ouachita. The other bit of bad news is that we still have a mussel issue lingering. (That would be mussel and not muscle – but still a sore spot – especially when it comes to dredging.) The Corps will most likely face the probable prospect of expending funds for a mussel survey, first mentioned this past February (see Dredging Update on page 13) and

again late April. We're hopeful that contracts will be let and dredging operations will coincide about the same time the survey is complete and accepted by the USFS.

What does all this mean?

It means we're almost too late to adequately execute funding programs for the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project. In FY 2022 for example, work plans were not fully developed until June 2022, nine months into the FY!

IF we lived in a perfect world, budgets would be approved and appropriation acts signed into law before the start of the FY. But we do not live in a perfect world! With the absence of appropriations, funding is simply not known, not available in sufficient amounts, and not available in sufficient time to execute planned work plans and programs.

Data for the Civil Works Budget of the US Army Corps of Engineers for FY 2024, published this past March 2023, with totals for FY 2023, FY 2022 and FY 2021 shown here for comparison:

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)

Category	FY 2024 (in \$ Millions)			FY 2023	FY 2022	FY 2021
	FY 2024 Opns	FY 2024 Maint	FY 2024 Total			
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

Our initial thoughts concerning the FY 2024 data was good. However, considering that overall prices are 13% higher than they were two years ago, the FY 2024 totals bring us down to reality and are on par with FY 2023. When looking at the total budget for the Corps lakes (and considering inflation), we're on a slight downward trend.

ORVA is still greatly concerned with backlog maintenance and continues to bring that to the attention of our congressional delegations and the Mississippi River Commission, noting that as one of our major concerns. Maintenance of the locks and dams are critical to the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project, especially considering the two locks and dams in Arkansas are 40 years old and the two locks in Louisiana are 50 years old. Maintenance is also critical to the Corps lakes projects.

Maintenance may have been a key factor in the hinged crest gate issue at the Thatcher Lock and Dam. Although multiple sources of funding sources have been identified and the Corps is working diligently for funding, we are told (and it is highly likely) we will not see permanent repairs at Thatcher this FY and doubtful we will see funding in FY 2024. You may recall, in December 2021, a leak in Thatcher's hinged crest gate required an emergency repair, where a Poiree needle system fortified with steel I-beams was put in place as a temporary barrier. The leaking gate was successfully removed and the Poiree needle system has continuously held the pool at normal levels. The temporary repairs Thatcher are holding; the water level has been 8 feet above the normal 77-foot pool level on two different occasions, so temporary repairs are holding.

The permanent repairs are ranked high on the Mississippi Valley Division's priority lists for FY 2025. Permanent repairs were originally estimated at \$4M with work beginning in FY 2024. Now, due in part to inflation and other factors, that cost is now projected at \$5M. Many of our congressional members also have visibility of this issue and continue to stress the importance of the repairs.

As reported previously, it's also our understanding that for the FY 2024 budget submission, 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. As noted in her letter to ORVA last fall, Maj. Gen. Holland and her Corps team at the Division and District are addressing the backlog maintenance issue. Rest assured; our partners at the Division and the District are fully aware of the maintenance issue and the need for backlog maintenance funding.

You may recall 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. Prior to the IIJA, the Corps' Civil Works Program was set to experience a 13% reduction in funding from FY 2021 to FY 2022. The IIJA stretches those resources over three consecutive years beginning in FY 2022.

As Maj. Gen. Holland noted, Fiscal Year 2022 was an unprecedented year in terms of funding.



In addition to the IIJA, different revenue streams received by the Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (DRSAA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) should help alleviate some of the backlog maintenance issues associated with the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project.

Colonel Chris Klein, Commander and District Engineer, Vicksburg District, US Army Corps of Engineers, pictured here with David Weeks, Executive Director, Ouachita River Valley Association (ORVA) at the Red River Valley Association (RRVA) Convention in Bossier City, Louisiana this past February.

Colonel Klein’s convention comments were laser-focused to issues affecting the Red River. He and I discussed the Ouachita-Black in subsequent conversations during the two-day convention. Energetic and caring, he is straight-forward, down-to-earth, knowledgeable, and genuinely concerned with those issues we face on the Ouachita-Black; quite impressive considering the area of operations and the magnitude of the districts’ responsibilities. I consider Vicksburg District to be the premier District within the Corps’ force structure.



Navigation of the Ouachita–Black Rivers was first authorized in 1871 and consisted of the snagging and clearing of the channels.

Big Move Through the Port of Crossett

The Crossett Economic Development Foundation and the Crossett Port

Authority have worked alongside Barnhart Crane to move a 130,000-pound, wood-drying kiln through the Crossett Port. We are excited to have had the opportunity to be a part of this transaction and understand that this boost in commercial activity on the Ouachita River shows the viability and the value this river system has to the Ouachita River Valley.

To prepare for this project, geotechnical studies were conducted to ensure the grounds could support the immense weight of this equipment. Soundings were also taken through the river and up the turning basin at the port to determine the depth of the water.

Once the river portion of this transportation route was cleared, permits were secured from the Arkansas Department of Transportation to ensure that the kiln could safely be transported along state highways to its destination.



Crossett was honored to have been recommended by the Department of Transportation when approached by this manufacturer looking for the most efficient and economical route to transport this piece of machinery. “Our entire team works closely with our state agencies, local officials and industry to make projects like this successful for everyone,” said Crossett’s Mayor Crystal Marshall.



In order to protect the infrastructure of the port, timber was laid across the loading ramp to act as a cushion. This piece of equipment is so large that it could not be loaded onto any transport vehicle and a truck needed to be built around it before it could travel by land.

“We are always proud when our local infrastructure is used and demonstrates the utility and value of what we have in South Arkansas,” said Mike Smith, Executive Director of the Crossett Economic Development Foundation.

The kiln was purchased from Italy and traveled across the Atlantic, through the Gulf of Mexico, and up the Ouachita from New Orleans. The journey took more than 30 days for the equipment to make it to its destination in Gurdon, Arkansas.



ORVA will conduct its 56th Annual Conference August 10-11, 2023. Day one of the conference, which begins at noon, will be held in Hot Springs, Arkansas at the majestic Hot Springs Convention Center & Bank of the Ozarks Arena. Day Two will be held at the beautiful and impressive Corps of Engineers Lake Ouachita Project Office.

Complete registration packets will soon be mailed.

The conference will provide engagement and networking opportunities and a learning atmosphere for all participants.

The **Camden Water Battery** is a series of defenses constructed along the banks of the Ouachita River in Camden, Arkansas during the War Between the States. In late 1864, rifle pits and strong points were bolstered to supplement the existing rifle pits and gun emplacements already constructed in Camden. The defenses were designed to protect Camden and deter any federal incursion toward Shreveport.

Rifle pits and other Confederate fortifications can still be seen at the Camden Water Battery in Camden.

Maj. Gen. John Bankhead Magruder, commanding Confederate forces in the area, was determined to “hold the line” on the Ouachita. He also ordered the construction of a series of fortifications along the river, designed to block any federal advances toward Shreveport and Texas.

The earthworks were most likely constructed by Confederate infantry of Walker’s Texas Division who occupied the town after federal retreat. As in all other conflicts, the construction was most likely ordered by the troops occupied and therefore out of trouble.



May 4, 2023

Dear ORVA constituents,

On behalf of the City of Hot Springs, I would like to encourage you to attend the ORVA Convention on August 10-11 at the Hot Springs Convention Center. The City of Hot Springs and the beautiful surrounding areas, particularly for those who enjoy the natural resource - water.

Hot Springs is engaged in its largest, most ambitious infrastructure project. The Water Supply Project is 13 years in the making and certainly would benefit many other critical groups and individuals. While you are in town, you will see how we got to where we are today with this project, which promises to meet current and future needs. The project is comprised of four construction projects: a 100 MGD water plant, the raw water transmission main and the finished water transmission main. Consistent progress throughout 2022, despite the challenges now facing the project, the most anticipated milestones was mobilizing the custom-built tunnel from Blakely Mountain toward the freshwater of Lake Ouachita on the Ouachita River.

Beyond the information, networking opportunities, and other benefits, you would be remiss not to mention that Hot Springs continues to be a beautiful Natural State. So, please make time to enjoy all the many opportunities. Take a historical walk (and/or relaxing soak) on Bathhouse Row, a shopping trip, or possibly take your chances with a roll of the dice. The possibilities are endless and stacked in your favor for a great time in Hot Springs!

I look forward to seeing you all in August.

Sincerely,

Pat McCabe

Mayor, City of Hot Springs





A popular float trip on the beautiful Ouachita River occurs north of Lake Ouachita between Oden and Rocky Shoals. This lazy and scenic stretch is a great way to spend a day with friends on the river.

Be sure and check the water levels before you go and plan accordingly.



The Vicksburg Districts' Louisiana Project Office located in Monroe, Louisiana manages natural resources, recreation, and flood control on the Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project.

If you're a Civil War buff and enjoy studying the war in Arkansas, you will want to visit Ouachita County. Several small battles and engagements occurred in 1864 in and around Camden and



Ouachita County. The Engagement at Poison Springs was a part of Union Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele's Camden Expedition, which was part of the overall strategy of Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks' Red River Campaign. Unfortunately, both the expedition and the campaign ended unfavorably for the Union. Banks was stopped at Sabine Crossroads (Mansfield) in Louisiana and Steele, his troops weary and nearing starvation, headed back to Little Rock.

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



Post Office Box 913
Camden AR 71711