

ATTACHMENT 1

TRANSCRIPT OF SCOPING MEETING  
30 NOVEMBER 1993

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
VICKSBURG DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI 39180

Scoping Meeting  
on  
Yazoo Backwater Area

Carson Seale Vocational Center  
Rolling Fork, Mississippi 39159  
30 November 1993

PRESENT:

CORPS OF ENGINEERS:

VICKSBURG DISTRICT:

Mr. William B. Hobgood, Chief, Planning Division  
Mr. Rogers C. Turner, Planning Division  
Mr. Marty Garton, Planning Division  
Mr. Jim Chandler, Planning Division  
Mr. Steve Reed, Planning Division  
Mr. Gary Young, Planning Division  
Mr. Michael Logue, Public Affairs Office  
Mrs. Patty K. Elliott, Public Affairs Office  
Mr. Johnny Sanders, Programs and Project Management Division  
Mr. Bob Fitzgerald, Engineering Division  
Mr. Tommy Shelton, Programs and Project Management Division  
Mr. Charles "Flash" Gordon, Greenville Project Office  
Mrs. Jeannine Beatty, Planning Division  
Mrs. Bobbie Hall, Planning Division  
Mrs. Myra Dean, Planning Division  
Mrs. Penney Mattingly, Planning Division

PRESENT ALSO:

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Mr. Luther Alexander, P.O. Box 1035, Greenville,  
Mississippi 38701  
Mr. Murry Alexander, Mississippi Levee Board, 1200 Kirk Circle,  
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Mr. Jeremiah Blackwell, General Delivery, Mayersville,  
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WXVT - Channel 15 (2 representatives)

MR. GARY YOUNG: Good evening. My name is Gary Young. I am a biologist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Vicksburg. I would like to welcome everyone to this scoping meeting for the Yazoo Backwater Area Project.

Before we get started with the presentations and the scoping meeting, I would like to take some time out to thank some individuals who helped us set up and provided the facilities here-- Mr. Tankson and Mr. Stevenson from the Vocational Center. They are in the back. They did a super job of helping us set this up and providing the facilities. I would like to thank Mr. Grayson who is with the school district for helping us out, also.

I would like to do one other thing at this time and that is to introduce some public officials who have taken some time out of their busy schedules to be with us here tonight. If you would as I call you name, please stand up and be recognized. From Senator Trent Lott's office, we have Mr. Bill Canty. From Representative Bennie Thompson's office, we have Mr. Wayne Nuckolls. It is nice to have them with us tonight.

The scoping process is the key to preparing a concise Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and also allows us to identify the critical issues that need to be analyzed in depth. The handout on scoping, which you should have picked up as you signed in tonight, gives a detailed explanation of exactly what scoping is all about. I will touch on it a little bit in my presentation a little later on.

I would like to emphasize at this point that the primary purpose of this meeting tonight is to gather public input to help us, the Corps, better define exactly what the significant environmental issues are and the ones we need to be analyzing in depth. If we keep that in mind as the meeting goes on, I think it will help everyone out.

We will begin tonight's meeting with a presentation by the study manager who will talk a little bit about the study process. After that, we will have some remarks from the local sponsor and our cooperating agencies. I will give a very brief presentation on the environmental attributes of the study area and, like I said before, a little bit about the scoping process.

After all that is done, we are going to allow you the opportunity to provide input, suggestions, or ideas about what you think are some of the environmental studies we might need to consider as part of this process; any kind of significant resources you think we may have overlooked or you believe is important; and any kind of issues you think we need to be looking at in depth.

At this time, I would like to introduce Mr. Marty Garton who is the study manager. He will give a presentation on the study process.

MR. MARTY GARTON: Thanks, Gary. Tonight I would like to talk a little bit about the history of flood control in the Backwater Area. I want to talk a little bit about the studies that we now envision doing and, also, about our study schedule.

I would like to mention first that we are just beginning this process. We started on our Backwater reformulation only this past July so we are in the front end of this. We are not going to have a lot of details to talk to you about tonight, but we are soliciting your input at the front end of our study process to help us out.

If you are familiar with the reformulation efforts that are ongoing now in the Yazoo Basin, you probably know about Steele Bayou and Upper Yazoo Projects. Well, this is the third phase in that overall reformulation effort. We are going to be using exactly the same approach that you may be familiar with that was used with those other two study efforts.

#### SLIDE 1

The purpose of our reformulation efforts will be to take a look at the Backwater Area, see what the problems and needs are from the water resources standpoint, develop what we think is the best plan for meeting those needs, and then determine if it is economically feasible. Now, in our planning process today, flood damage reduction and the environment are coequal planning objectives.

#### SLIDE 2

Now, the Backwater Area is shown on this slide and is located immediately north of Vicksburg and extends from the backwater levee to the vicinity of Belzoni--that is about 60 miles--and then it is bounded on the west by the main line Mississippi levees and the hill line on the east. This area you see highlighted here encompasses about 700,000 acres. The majority of the land within our study area is cleared land. However, there are some significant wooded lands in the area. There are approximately 130,000 acres that are public lands that are dedicated to woodland uses.

### SLIDE 3

The Federal Government has had a long involvement in the Backwater Area, as you can see by this slide. As a matter of fact, it has extended over 50 years. The first authorization for flood control in the basin was in 1941. Since that original authorization, as you can see on this slide, we have had numerous changes in amendments to that original plan as authorized. They impact both the flood control measures as well as the environmental areas. The latest evaluation we have had in the Backwater Area was done in 1982 in which we did a review of the pumping plant feature of the Backwater Project. Another significant event you see on this slide is the Water Resources Development Act that was passed in 1986, and I will talk about that a little later as well as that 1982 report.

### SLIDE 4

Over the years, it has evolved to where we have broken the Backwater Area down into five subareas. They are the Yazoo Area, the Carter Area, the Rocky Bayou Area, the Satartia Area, and the Satartia Extension Area. The features you see in black are those that have been completed. Those you see in green are those that are currently authorized, but construction has not started. Now, the completed features include about 27 miles of levee connecting the main line Mississippi River levees up to the right bank levees along the lower auxiliary channel. You also have the structured Muddy Bayou or Eagle Lake. You have a drainage structure at Steele Bayou. You have a drainage structure at the Little Sunflower River. You also have the Satartia Area levee along with its gravity drainage structure.

Now, the authorized features for which we have not started construction are the Rocky Bayou Area where we would be looking at the existing local levee--it is authorized to a higher grade and higher section. Then there is an authorized levee on the east of what we call the Carter Area that extends from the left bank of the Lower Auxiliary Channel levee along the right bank of the Yazoo River up to the vicinity of Yazoo City where it would tie into the Yazoo Headwater Project levee.

### SLIDE 5

We also have mitigation features that are authorized and have been implemented for the Backwater Area. They include the structure at Muddy Bayou or Eagle Lake. We have constructed four greentree reservoirs on Delta National Forest along with five slough control structures. Then we have the Lake George Wildlife Wetland Restoration Project which includes about 8,800 acres of frequently flooded clear lands the Corps has acquired and is now reforesting.



## SLIDE 6

When we talk about our Reformulation Study, we first took a look at the Satartia Extension Area. Back in 1962, the Corps did a study in which it turned out that this area, when you look at the relationship with the area protected to the cost, did not meet the feasibility test. We do not think anything has really changed from that original finding, and we do not propose to do any reformulation efforts in that area.

If you move upstream a little bit and look at the Satartia Area, you can see those features are complete and are in place so we are not going to look any further there as well.

Now, when you look up a little further at the Rocky Bayou Area at that authorized work, we do not plan to do any reevaluation efforts either because we have recent communications from the Rocky Bayou Levee and Drainage District that says that they are not interested in participating as a project sponsor in that area. So we are not going to do any reformulation in that area.

If you cross the river from the Rocky Bayou Area, you will see the Carter Area. Over the last several years, there has been a big dedication of lands within that area to environmental purposes. About 22,000 acres, as a matter of fact, have been acquired and dedicated to environmental uses. Because of this trend, we, at this time, do not propose to look at any reformulation efforts for that area or authorized project as well.

So that really leaves us concentrating on one area and that is the Yazoo Area.

## SLIDE 7

Now, as I mentioned earlier, the last study that we did in that area was in 1982. This is the result of that study. The study recommended the construction of a pumping station with 17,500 cubic feet per second (cfs) capacity. It had two operating criteria for the pump. During the cropping season, the pumps would not be turned on until the interior ponding elevation reached 80 feet, National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD). However, during the winter waterfowl season of December to March, we would let that interior ponding elevation rise to 85 feet, NGVD, before we turned the pumps on.

It also had recommended with it the acquisition of 6,500 acres of land for mitigation of the adverse environmental impacts. This project, at that time, cost approximately \$147 million. It returned about \$19.5 million annually in benefits, and the ratio

of those benefits to the annualized first cost was 1.3. In other words, for every \$1 we invested in cost we got \$1.30 back.

#### SLIDE 8

In the Yazoo Area, we are going to be looking at two categories of measures. One of them are structural measures, as we call it, and the other would be nonstructural measures. We really are looking at two structural measures. One of them is a pumping station and the other one, in lieu of a pumping station, would be a levee system along the Big and Little Sunflower Rivers. The nonstructural alternative would include things like floodproofing of structures, possibly the evacuation of structures, or maybe the acquisition of land in title or easement that is subject to frequent flooding. All of these alternatives would be compared in terms of feasibility with a no-action alternative or leaving the status quo as it is.

#### SLIDE 9

In terms of pumps, we have decided this time to look initially at five different pump sizes. As you can see from this slide, the 17,500 cfs is right in the middle. The reason we do that is we need to decide whether or not there has been a change since that finding back in 1982. Do we need a smaller pump or maybe a larger pump in looking at the best plan and determining the economic feasibility.

An alternative to a pumping station would be a levee system along the Big Sunflower River. We believe we can achieve significant reductions in these interior ponding elevations with a system like this. The levees would extend from the existing backwater levee upstream to the vicinity of Murphy, Mississippi, which is a distance of about 50 miles.

One thing this plan would do is return a lot of the wooded lands that would be located within the levee system to the natural overflow that it originally had from the Mississippi River.

Now, you are probably wondering how in this world could this work. How can you get those reductions in ponding elevations? Well, I think this slide will demonstrate it for you. Eighty percent of the flow into the Backwater Area comes down from the Sunflower River system. If you open this system directly back to the Yazoo River, this water would not have to be stored within the Backwater Area, giving us those reductions in stages.

To help you visualize that, I have an artist's conception of what it would look like. You can see the levees going up the Sunflower River. Down at the existing Little Sunflower River

structure, we would essentially make a hole in the levee where we would have a large overflow section that would allow water to empty directly into the Yazoo River under high flow conditions. Under low flow conditions, we would probably operate the existing structure to accommodate those type flows. As you can see, the area now is essentially opened back up to the Mississippi River and its natural overflow facilities.

One thing we would do at the Little Sunflower, too, in conjunction with a plan like this is to operate that existing structure to induce ponding in this area under select conditions.

#### SLIDE 10

What I want to show you from this slide is that the environment is going to be an integral part of anything we do in this reevaluation effort. You can see here that we are going to be looking at a wide range of environmental resources. I want to emphasize again that during our studies, the environment will be a coequal planning objective for flood damage reduction.

Now, the Corps does not assess impacts on environmental resources alone. We have what we call cooperating agencies that help us in the analyzing and the formulating and evaluating of our various alternatives. We are also going to be using the Waterways Experiment Station which has been involved extensively in the studies that already have been done in the Yazoo Basin, and we will be making use of private contractors as well.

#### SLIDE 11

We are going to be taking every opportunity we can to make sure the environment is adequately considered and is protected. As I said at the beginning of this presentation, we are just starting. We are just at the beginning. I do not have any specifics regarding that, but there are a lot of things we can do from an environmental standpoint. As a matter of fact, there is a four-step procedure we go through in our planning process regarding the environment.

The first one is we try to avoid impacts where we can. We try to minimize impacts associated with our features when we can. We look for opportunities to improve or restore environmental resources. Also, when all else is considered and we have unavoided and unmitigated impacts, we have to compensate for those. So we will be employing those four steps.

#### SLIDE 12

When you talk about the pump alternative, we are going to be looking just like the people did before about how you operate that pump to maximize its impacts on flood damage reduction, as well as, minimizing the impacts and possibly the restoration of environmental resources.

When we look at that levee alignment, we certainly want to locate it as to minimize its impact upon valuable environmental resources. We also could include environmental features in all our plans such as greentree areas or the creation of wetlands or moist soil areas. We could look at restoration or reforestation of cleared lands. We could look at operations of existing structures at Steele Bayou and the Little Sunflower River to see if we can do things there to improve the environmental resources in the area. So we are going to be taking a good look at all the environmental aspects in our reformulation.

#### SLIDE 13

Cost sharing--the study we have underway will be fully funded by the Federal Government. However, the law I mentioned to you earlier, the Water Resources Development Act of 1986, placed new cost-sharing requirements nationwide on Corps water resource projects. It has been determined that under current guidelines and policy, the construction of the pumping station or alternative for this area, as well as operation and maintenance of whatever project might be feasible, would have to be cost shared with a local sponsor.

#### SLIDE 14

We have several ongoing studies you may be familiar with that I will touch on just briefly. The first one is the Sunflower River Rehabilitation Study that is underway to see what kind of flood control capacity has been lost over the years in the lower part of the Sunflower River. The other one is the Mississippi Delta Study that we have underway.

We are just getting started, like I said, on ours. The Mississippi Delta Study has just gotten underway. They are about half way through with a Sunflower River maintenance study. So we do not know exactly how all these interact and what the impact of one might be on the others. About the best answer I can give you today on how we are going to consider all three of these since they are in the same area, is to say that the people that are doing my study, as well as these others, are all working in the same office. If we see something coming out of one of the other

studies that need to be taken into consideration as we progress through our evaluation, we are able to reflect that and take it into consideration. That is going to be a big part of what we are doing to make sure these are all compatible.

SLIDE 15

The last thing I want to talk about a little bit is our study schedule. As I mentioned, we initiated our efforts in July of this year. We are looking at around March 1995 to have some indication to the preliminary economics in terms of feasibility. If it turns out that we have a project that is still justified, we would hold some public meetings probably in the April 1995 timeframe. We would come back to the public and say this is what we found, this is what we looked at, how does it look to you, give us your feedback, do we need to look at other things.

A final public meeting is scheduled for March 1997. There will be a submission of a final report with our recommendation to Headquarters in a July 1997 timeframe.

That is all I had prepared to talk about on the study. I will turn it back over now to Gary.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you, Marty.

At this time, I would like recognize one other public official, and if you would stand up when I call your name, Mr. Hayes Dent from the Governor's office.

I would like to introduce the President of the Board of Mississippi Levee Commissioners, Mr. Rives Carter.

MR. RIVES CARTER: I am Rives Carter, and I serve as President of the Board of Mississippi Levee Commissioners. The Levee Board is sponsoring this reformulation study for the purpose of identifying a project which will reduce the frequency and the duration of flooding in the south Delta in an affordable and environmentally sustainable manner. We are looking forward to this study proceeding in a timely fashion, and we welcome the opportunity to meet with any interested parties as the study progresses.

You talk about this being the first phase. This thing started in 1941, if I recall, so we have had plenty of time to study it.

MR. YOUNG: I would like to introduce Mr. Jim Wanamaker.

MR. JIM WANAMAKER: Thank you. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce one of our Commissioners from Washington

County, Mr. Murry Alexander. We have our attorney, Mr. Charles Tindall. We also have Mr. Nick Chandler who is employed by both of the Levee Boards to serve as an environmental consultant to help us on some of these projects.

As most of you know with the implementation, as it was brought out earlier, of the cost sharing in 1986, construction of this project stopped after completing the first item of work on the pumps.

In June 1992, the Mississippi Levee Board agreed to sponsor this project in an effort to expedite completion of the reformulation study, and at the same time, we plan to continue work to eliminate the burden of cost sharing. In the event that cost sharing cannot be totally eliminated, we are also working to have the guidelines for computing the local share modified to utilize local economic conditions which has been directed by Congress on two occasions in 1990 and 1992 which will reduce the percentage of the local cost share for this project.

We are looking for the reformulation study to accomplish two major goals. The first is to provide a less expensive design with the necessary capacity to provide adequate flood protection to the area. The second is to provide an environmentally sustainable design and a thorough evaluation of any environmental losses resulting from construction of the project with a plan for concurrent mitigation.

Over the recent weeks, I have had the opportunity to read the transcript of the public meeting held on the pumping plant project in 1979 that took over 5 hours. What surprised me more than anything was that the vast majority of the people who expressed concern about the project were fearful that the mitigation for the project would take away their private hunting lands.

Under the current law, mitigation lands for any project have got to be acquired from willing sellers only. An emphasis is placed strongly upon cleared land that can be converted to bottom-land hardwoods. From information we have received regarding the Upper Steele Bayou Project and some other projects, the availability of suitable land from willing sellers has far exceeded the need of the recent projects.

We plan to work closely with the Corps to keep the public and other organizations informed as this study progresses over the next 3 to 4 years. We hope that the end result will be, after 50 or so years of project, a long-needed project.

Thank you.

MR. YOUNG: At this time, I would like to allow our cooperating agencies that Marty pointed out in his presentation to have an opportunity to make some remarks. I will start with Mr. Ken Quackenbush of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

MR. KEN QUACKENBUSH: My name is Ken Quackenbush from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Our agency has agreed to be a cooperating agency in this project.

We have been involved in project studies dating back into the early 1950's. We have numerous concerns regarding the Backwater Project. They date back from our first beginnings with it. Those concerns relate to impacts associated with endangered species, decreases in winter availability of flooding, food availability for migratory waterfowl, impacts to wetlands, etc.

We will cooperate, as I said, to develop an EIS. We are pleased to be part of the program.

MR. YOUNG: Would any of the other cooperating agencies like to make a statement at this time?

What I would like to do right now is give you a brief overview of some of the environmental attributes of the study area, talk a little bit more about the scoping process, and explain what we are trying to accomplish tonight.

#### SLIDE 1

There are two main objectives to scoping. One is to determine the scope of issues to be addressed, and the second one is to identify significant issues. As we go along through this process tonight, try to keep these objectives in mind as what we are trying to accomplish.

#### SLIDE 2

The Yazoo Backwater Area has several significant environmental areas including the Delta National Forest, Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, and three state-managed areas that were purchased by the Corps for mitigation purposes--Lake George Wildlife Wetland Restoration Project, Twin Oaks Wildlife Management Area, and Mahana Wildlife Management Area. There are also several large tracts of private lands that are managed for wildlife purposes including the Delta Wildlife and Forestry Lands south of Delta National Forest.

#### SLIDE 3

In addition to the significant environmental areas, there is also an extensive amount of farmland in the project area. It is one

of our responsibilities during the planning process to evaluate the impacts of the project based on other Federal laws, regulations, policy; state laws, regulations, and policies; and any local ordinances or policies that might be in effect. I just want to point out that this is part of our process in developing the EIS.

#### SLIDE 4

There is extensive acreage of bottom-land hardwoods and wetlands within these significant areas. These areas not only provide some high quality terrestrial wildlife habitat, but they also serve a wetland functional value, also. These areas, as you know, are used for hunting, nature study, photography, and other related uses.

#### SLIDE 5

The aquatic resources in the study include numerous oxbow lakes, sloughs, streams, and rivers. These areas provide fishing opportunities as well as some other recreational opportunities. They also provide significant and very important riverine aquatic habitat and flood plain aquatic habitat.

#### SLIDE 6

The waterfowl resource in the Yazoo Backwater Area is a significant resource. There are several Federal and state agencies, private organizations, and private landowners that actively manage wintering waterfowl.

#### SLIDE 7

There are several endangered and threatened species that may occur in the project area. The yellow plant on this slide is the endangered plant called pondberry. It definitely occurs in the project area. In addition to those, the other two species are the Louisiana black bear and the pallid sturgeon which may also occur in the project area.

#### SLIDE 8

Cultural resources is also something we consider in our planning process. There are an abundant number of prehistoric and historic cultural sites in the Yazoo Basin. We will do surveys to identify those sites and evaluate the project impacts. If we determine that any of those sites are eligible to be placed on



the National Register of Historic Places, we would first try to avoid those sites; and if we cannot do that, we will mitigate for the impacts to those cultural resource sites.

SLIDE 9

These are the broad categories that we generally consider in a study of this nature. In thinking about the scoping process and providing input, you may want to add to these. You may want to provide specific input about any one of the categories. I have touched on each one of these a little bit except for the water quality, and water quality will definitely be part of the planning process.

SLIDE 10

Some very broad considerations when you think about scoping. First is what kind of environmental studies do you think need to be included as part of this process? Which resources do you think are significant. Also, you may want to consider what issues need to be analyzed in depth. What kind of alternatives do we need to evaluate? And, of course, the other is anything that you believe is important.

SLIDE 11

I would like to close my presentation with reemphasizing the importance of this scoping process. It does two things. It helps clarify what the significant environmental issues are that we are considering in this process, but it is also the key for preparing a concise EIS. So keep that in mind as you are formulating ideas for input.

That concludes my presentation. Could we get the lights please?

What I would like to do now is record your input, ideas, and suggestions on what kind of environmental studies that may need to be considered, what kind of significant resources you think are in the study area, what issues we need to analyze in depth, and anything else, like I said before, you believe is important.

The way I would like to do that is we will start right here on the front row. If you would like to provide some input, I would ask that you come to the microphone because we are recording and need you to come to a microphone so we can record it clearly.

Okay, we will start right here on the front row.

MS. KATHLEEN CARTER: My name is Kathleen Carter. I am from Rolling Fork, and I am Vice Chairman of the Flood Control Committee of Delta Council. We appreciate the Corps of Engineers

holding this hearing tonight because it is important that the public be allowed to have input on the matter of flood control in the south Delta.

Delta Council has been a constant proponent of practical flood control in the Delta. It is in this tradition that we endorse the Backwater Project reformulation study defined by the Vicksburg District, Corps of Engineers, and approved by the Board of Mississippi River Levee Commissioners.

We request that the Corps of Engineers expedite the completion of this study to the maximum extent possible. Delta Council members have repeatedly recognized the urgent need for the completion of the Backwater Project including pumps. We view this project and this study as one that is essential to the flood protection and the future development of the entire south Delta region.

The pumping capacity in the earlier design will accomplish the objective of substantially reducing the extent of economic losses sustained in the Backwater Area and would be operated in a manner which is sensitive to the environmental issues which might otherwise be a concern. We trust that the reformulation study will once again reestablish the Yazoo Backwater Project including pumps as a high priority.

Due to a determination by the Department of Army that completion of this project will require a non-Federal share to be borne by a local sponsor, Delta Council reiterates its position that it is both responsible and timely for the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Levee Board and the Board of Mississippi River Levee Commissioners to develop a formal study or prospectus outlining options that must be evaluated in preparation for any informed consideration that might be given to the completion of this project.

Delta Council reaffirms its commitment to assist and cooperate at the request of the Levee Boards at making certain that the most reliable analytical and technical methods are incorporated into the findings and options identified through this study. Although it is wise to proceed responsibly in a thorough study for the implementation of any flood control plan, we need only look back to the south Delta of 1973, 1974, 1975, 1979, 1983, 1984, or 1989 to get a vivid reminder that effective flood control is not a luxury but a necessity. The timely completion of this study will hopefully lead to the objective of flood protection in the south Delta.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here tonight and to deliver this statement on behalf of Delta Council.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you. I have one more small request. Unless you really just want, I would prefer you use the microphones in the center isle. I should have mentioned that.

MR. BILL CLINKSCALES: My name is Bill Clinkscates. I am President of the Delta National Forest Conservation League which is a group of hunters that hunt in the Delta National Forest.

We are real concerned about the Corps doing anything that is going to--in other words, Little Sunflower River. We do not want a monigan put in it and dredge it out, cut the trees off the bank, and make a big drudge ditch out of it. It is a scenic, beautiful river and we do not want it tampered with.

If anything has to be done to it, maybe something along the line of underbrushing the brush and leaving the trees where they come over the bank and not disturb that. Big Sunflower River goes through it, too.

All right, now, that kind of takes my part about what I have to say about the Delta National Forest Conservation League.

All right, I am a landowner up and down the Big Sunflower River between Highway 14 and Balmer's Ferry. If you are talking about putting a levee on the side of the river, the people that live on that river--they live right on the bank of it because that is the highest ground. They have their shops there. That is the best cotton land and everything. If you put those levees down the side of it, you are going to destroy the best land that the folks are farming right now.

To my way of thinking, the only thing you can do that the people down here are going to agree with is to put those pumps in down there and be real careful how you treat these rivers. In other words, I am thinking that if you are going to put a dredge boat in Big Sunflower River to dredge it out, it ought to be--before people agree to let you do it, it should be that you have to--you cannot take 40 acres of land from somebody that does not want to sell. The reason I am trying to say that--like for instance, where I live I have some pivot systems that make a turn. If you come in there and take 40 acres away from me just because you can, you screw up my whole farming operation. You see what I am saying? In other words, we have some concerns about that, and we want you to put some thought into it before you do it.

Thank you.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you, sir. We appreciate those comments. We skipped over a couple of people. Anybody back there on that row back there want to say anything or have any input?

MR. KEN OUACKENBUSH: I say something else to say. I did not expect it to work quite like this.

One of the things we are concerned about in the Backwater Area is wetland changes. The pool size in the sump needs to be a variable. Research has shown historically that in other areas when you maintain a constant stage of water on an annual basis, you will eventually change the timber composition and, as a result and effect, the wildlife species and the habitat quality that is out there.

We would prefer and recommend that we try to seek nonstructural measures and try to avoid impacts, if at all possible, and mitigation.

One of the things that is likely to occur is monetary impacts that will increase over time. This past time, I guess, is a very vivid reminder of that. Some structural measures will induce structure construction activities to move further down into flood prone lands. The result of that is going to be increased flood damages. That needs to be fully considered when we are taking into account the cost-benefit ratio and evaluating that versus nonstructural measures as opposed to structural.

Another thing that fits right in with that is, as in the case in the Huxtable Pumping Plant in the St. Francis Basin, what you saw very rampantly occur following the completion of the station up there were very radical changes in cropping patterns and the dramatic change in damages within the sump area.

Like I say, we are pleased to be working with the Corps on this and pleased to be a cooperating agency. We do have some very large concerns, and we want to work with you to make sure that those concerns are, in fact, addressed.

Thank you.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you.

MR. KING EVANS: That reminds me of blind men describing anything. Everybody has a different idea of what it looked like.

I am King Evans from Anguilla. I farm a little piece of land across the Sunflower River. Like Mr. Clinkscales said, if you put a levee out there, it is going to take my house and best land.

I do not think we will ever find anything that is going to alleviate all the periods of flooding in the south Delta. The people of Missouri and all that area thought they had it made because they had not been flooded in a long time. We are almost in the same thing.

It looks to me like after 1927, I do not believe if anyone in here was living and saw that 1927 flood. Maybe a few of us. Anyway, after the 1927, they told the Corps of Engineers to go in there and drain it. They went in and almost drained it. I have said that a cooter going up from Rolling Fork to Satartia in October would have to take a flask of water because everything was drained from here to Satartia. All those sloughs everywhere in the south Delta had been drained. If it was not then, it was last year. I think some water stayed in there this year.

It looks to me like we probably need to increase the level of the Sunflower River and Deer Creek. I see somebody that maybe does not have the same idea. I do not know whether there is an opening in the Sunflower River to the Yazoo or not. I do not know whether the water will all go down the canal or not. It looks to me like we ought to increase the level in the Sunflower River. Then where it enters into the Yazoo, we need to have a dumping gate there. If we find out there is a front coming down, we can open those gates and let the water out. We cannot drain this country completely dry because I do not want to see the salt water come in. With the rice farming, irrigation, catfish farming, we are pumping a whole lot of water out of the aquifers.

Right around the Sunflower River where the river caves off there sometimes, you might think it is just a shallow thing but it is deep down in there. It is perhaps 100 feet deep. It caves off down in there. I believe that if we would raise the level of that Sunflower River a little bit and have a dumping gate--and probably need to open the Steele Bayou gates a little wider--so when the Mississippi and Yazoo drop, we could let that water out so it will not pond in there.

I was wondering about the feasibility of a pumping station--how many years would we use the pumping station and what it would cost. The interest on the money that it would cost to build a pumping station. Somebody, when we are talking about it out here a few years ago, said the Corps could pay \$1,000/acre for all the land, I believe, south of Rolling Fork and it would be cheaper than building a pumping station.

So, I think all these things need to be considered. Thank you.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you very much. We skipped a gentleman over here on this side. Go ahead. We will pick him up in a second.

MR. WAYNE NUCKOLLS: I am Wayne Nuckolls, Ag Representative for Congressman Thompson. I am also a farmer from Issaquena County so I have two statements to make tonight.

I do not have anything written out, but I spoke with the Congressman yesterday. He wanted to express his support for the reformulation projects. He wanted to expedite as much as possible this process because he knows the concerns of the people of the south Delta. He would also like to say that there seems to be some disjointed connection between the Corps activities and the Corps final results that come from them.

We have a gentleman here speaking about impacting on the pooling area. Well, the largest impact that we have had in the south Delta from pooling has been from activities of the Corps of Engineers north of us. So that is something that needs to be taken into account. When you look at environmental issues, look at what this land was 20 or 30 years ago. Don't just look at the last 15 years. See what has happened because of activities that have taken place north of us.

Okay, that is the Congressman's end of it. Now, we should look at my end of it as a farmer from Issaquena County.

As everyone in this room probably knows--I wish they could all stand up and speak--I wish they would. I think you would get a little better feel of how the people that have farmed here for many, many years have seen the increase of flood control activities north of us and the affects they have on us. We understand how these people want to get rid of their water, but what those people need to understand is that we are now in a cost-share situation and we need their help the way we have been behind them when they needed help. We need the North Delta to join in with the South Delta Levee Board. We need an agreement.

So speak to your friends up north as often as possible because there are study projects underway that would be beneficial to them. I would hate to see the people of south Delta try to stop something that would be beneficial to anyone. We need to all work together on this.

One other thing from the Congressman's perspective. The cost share--we will be working to see what we can do as far as a reduction because of the local economy. I think the formula should be changed when you are looking at a very weak economy in the area. There should be some adjustments in that formula, and

with an agreement with the North Delta, maybe with that the project can continue speedily.

Thank you.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED: What is the cost-share ratio?

MR. YOUNG: Marty, do you want to handle that question?

MR. GARTON: The current law requires that the locals provide up to or I should say a minimum of 25 percent of the project cost. Now, they have to provide by lands, easements, relocations, and disposal areas that are appropriate for whatever project might be formulated. Those things they provide are counted toward that 25 percent minimum that they have to bear. Only 5 percent of it has to be in cash. The other 20 percent can be in what you might call in-kind type features. If the lands, easements, relocations, and disposal areas are greater than the 25 percent, they would have to bear whatever that cost is. There is a cap on the other side that it cannot be more than 50 percent. So whatever project is formulated, it lies between 50 percent as a maximum and 25 percent as a minimum under current guidelines and policy.

MR. WANAMAKER: In regard to that, following some language that was in the Water Resources Act of 1990, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works presented some adjustments in the local cost-share criteria which would have reduced the cost share of the Backwater Project to about 5.6 percent. Because of some other problems nationally with that language, Congress in the 1991 Appropriations Bill told them to go back to the drawing board. In 1992 in the Water Resources Act, they again asked the Department of Army to reevaluate the guidelines in determining the ability of the local sponsor to pay for these projects. That has not been done yet. Primarily because at this point in time, we do not have a Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. We do not know when that is coming. We are in the hopes that through the political process in some manner while the reformulation effort is going on, we get the guidelines for the local cost share down to make it more affordable.

We think the project can be designed to a little different design that would not be as costly as the original design. We plan to participate with the Corps in helping make that determination, as an official local sponsor in this matter. We will continue to seek to get the Department of Army to reevaluate the determination that this part of the project is a separate element in hopes of getting it back to a full 100 percent Federally funded project. We have 4 years to work on this, and have made a

commitment to be the local sponsor under the condition that an affordable alternative can be arrived at. There is no formal commitment at this point in time by the Levee District for money. This will have to be over the next 5 years. We will have to work on these and hope that we can come up with a project that we can afford.

Thank you.

MR. YOUNG: Okay, we have kind of gotten out of sequence here. Is there anyone else that would like to provide some input?

MR. LIN SHIRLEY: My name is Lin Shirley. I am a Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner here in this county and also a farmer. I farm out here on the Little Sunflower River. We farmers down here in this Backwater Area are an endangered species. A lot of us are gone due directly to this. Anything that is done or not done directly impacts us.

One thing, as a Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioner, which I would like to see on these projects the Corps conducts is a little erosion control conducted on these things. On the cutoffs--from Whittington Cutoff down, there is a lot of silting that occurs there--\_\_\_\_\_. Those farmers are required to control this nonpoint pollution.

At the Steele Bayou drainage project, there is a lot of silting on that. There is no erosion control on that. So, we have a lot of concerns, but wildlife is not the only endangered species.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you. Is there anybody else that would like to provide some input?

MR. BILL TOMLINSON: My name is Bill Tomlinson. I represent the Mississippi Wildlife Federation (MWF). I am going to just read a simple statement.

The Mississippi Wildlife Federation was and is still opposed to the original plans of the Yazoo Backwater Pumping Plant. Our original comments were made to the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development on April 16, 1986 concerning the pumps.

MWF is sympathetic to the human suffering caused by the frequent flooding of the lower Delta. We believe that the Corps, through a combination of floodproofing, relocation, and flowage easements, can provide substantial flood protection without excessive substantial destruction and cost associated with the original pumping project.

Thank you.



MR. YOUNG: Thank you. Is there anybody else that would like to say something?

MR. MIKE MCPHERSON: I am Mike McPherson and we own property over there close to where Lin is talking about farming. I have a couple of concerns.

One question that came to my mind and was mentioned earlier is that the people in the Carter Area have begun to give up this land for the different programs. What situations have come up and prompted the situations to come up to encourage these people to turn their land over to whatever programs they are being turned over to?

Also, we are hearing a lot about the cooperative agencies watching out for the environmental welfare. To reiterate what Lin said, there is more here at stake than just the environmental impact. The environmental impact is extremely important, but the impact to the economy, especially of this entire area that we are talking about, is based solely on farming. From the farmers to the grocers and the chemical companies on up, I think it is very important that we see an equal amount of study done toward the economical impact. To be quite honest, from the groups that we have on the cooperative, I don't see that equality there.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you. Is there anybody else who would like to provide some input tonight? Is there anybody who has already made some remarks that would like to add to what they said or maybe delete from what they said?

MR. KING EVANS: Let me say one thing about the Corps of Engineers. If it had not been for the Corps of Engineers

\_\_\_\_\_, it flooded every year until they \_\_\_\_\_ and cleaned that bottom up and down \_\_\_\_\_. That stopped the water from coming. But for right now, it floods in February through May. You might see flooding all over south Delta. If anybody is old enough, you would remember before they built the levee dams \_\_\_\_\_.

MR. YOUNG: Thank you. Is there anybody else who would like to provide some input?

If you will look on those handouts we passed out as you came in, there is an address on the back of that. Once you get home if you decide you want to have some input and want to say something, you can provide written comments up to January 14, 1994. The address is on the back of that handout.

I certainly appreciate everybody's input tonight. Once again, I would like to thank the people at the vocational center for helping us set this meeting up. They were very, very helpful. Thank you for coming out tonight.

Meeting adjourned 8 p.m.