

## MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: J. Bennett Johnston Waterway Public Awareness Trip

1. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District, the Red River Waterway Commission (RRWC), the Red River Valley Association (RRVA), the Port of Shreveport-Bossier, the Natchitoches Parish Port, the Alexandria Regional Port, and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) hosted public awareness trips on the J. Bennett Johnston Waterway on 25, 28 and 30 October 2002. Mr. Robert Simrall, Senior Project Manager, represented the Vicksburg District. The trips were intended to inform community leaders, U.S. and state legislators, media, Federal agencies, industry, and other stakeholders about the Waterway. During each of the three trips, arrangements were made to lock through a lock and dam and give attendees a first-hand look at its function. Corps staff presented information on how navigation is maintained and the economic benefits of inland waterways to our Nation and local communities, which include commercial, recreational, and environmental enhancement.

2. On 25 October 2002, we departed the Port of Shreveport-Bossier with 280 passengers. On 28 October 2002, we departed the Natchitoches Parish Port with 230 passengers and on 30 October 2002, we departed the Alexandria Regional Port with 380 passengers. On each trip the MV *Fred Lee* and two inspection barges with a capacity of 450 people were utilized.

3. Prior to the trips, all involved parties were asked to look for areas of improvement. During the trips, Corps staff and trip sponsors discussed different ideas for improvement on future trips. After the trips were completed, an informal After Action Report (AAR) was conducted on 6 and 7 November 2002. The meeting on 6 November 2002 was held at the RRWC office with Messrs. Ken Guidry, Executive Director of the RRWC, Rich Brontoli, Executive Director of the RRVA, and Chief Larry Davis of the USCG. There was a great deal of feedback from all in attendance. On 7 November 2002, we met with and received

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feedback from Vicksburg staff members who made presentations and represented the District on the awareness trip. After these two meetings, a draft AAR was prepared and disseminated to all who participated in the meetings for their review and comments.

4. Following are the results of the AA.

a. Issue: The Coast Guard noted that very few visitors toured the aids to navigation boat they utilize on Red River.

Discussion: During the awareness trip, it was announced the Coast Guard's aids to navigation boat would be available for tours after the awareness trip. It is believed that most people in attendance did not make time for the tour or had forgotten the boat was available for tours.

Recommendation: On future public awareness trips the Coast Guard will attach their aids to navigation boat to the Corps inspection vessel, making it available for tours prior to departure.

Action Taken: We coordinated with the Coast Guard and they will attach their aids to navigation boat to the Corps inspection vessel when the public embarks, which should further enhance public interest and opportunity. The Coast Guard would then detach their aids to navigation boat prior to departure on the awareness trip.

b. Issue: Speakers gave a scheduled 2- to 3-minute talk during the trip. However, more time is required for individuals who show more interest or have questions on topics.

Discussion: During the awareness trip, speakers gave a scheduled talk that lasted for approximately 2 to 3 minutes. After each talk, presenters announced they would be available for questions and comments. Many presenters indicated that quite a few people had questions and asked for clarification on certain issues not completely discussed during their short talk.

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Recommendation: The presenter will announce at the end of each talk that on the attached barge he/she will be available to answer questions, have an exhibit (e.g. photos, artifacts, graphics, etc.) and/or have a 10-15 minute PowerPoint presentation elaborating on their topic.

Action Taken: On future trips each presenter will be responsible for setting up the equipment or display materials on the attached barge.

c. Issue: Would like to increase media on awareness trip.

Discussion: It was noted at all three locations that there was not enough media in attendance.

Recommendation: A press outreach plan is required.

Action Taken: Project Management will coordinate with the Public Affairs Office in the development of a press outreach plan.

d. Issue: Need to be aware of who is in attendance and what organization or company they are associated with.

Discussion: During the public awareness trip, blank nametags and pens were provided to the attendees for completion. As a result, many attendees only listed names and not their affiliated organizations or companies. It was also noted that some attendees did not even wear nametags or their nametags were not legible.

Recommendation: Nametags should be made available to attendees before boarding the vessel. Additionally, a passenger manifest is necessary for attendance and safety purposes.

Action Taken: On future trips, the RRVA will send a requested amount of invitations with RSVP to the Ports, Levee Boards, Police Juries, Chambers of Commerce, U.S. and State legislators, and the RRWC, etc. From the RSVP the RRVA will make nametags with all appropriate information noted. A tent

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will be set up by the RRWC for processing all the attendees prior to boarding the vessel. During this processing nametags will be furnished and a final manifest drawn up of all who have boarded.

e. Issue: Trips are too lengthy for key people who would like to attend.

Discussion: The round trips average 4 to 5 hours and some key individuals (U.S. and State Legislators, community leaders, business leaders, etc.) have expressed a concern they could not set aside this amount of time for the trips.

Recommendation: Make arrangements to have a mode of transportation available at the locks to transport individuals back to the origination point.

Action Taken: The RRWC and RRVA will make arrangements to have buses/vans located at the locks to transport key attendees back to their origination point.

f. Issue: There needs to be a closer tie between each of the speaker's subjects and the particular section of the river when they spoke.

Discussion: We scheduled when a speaker was to talk and tied it to an applicable location on the river.

Recommendation: On future trips, we will coordinate talks with applicable points on the river.

Action Taken: Project Management will coordinate with boat crew and have the vessel slow down at the section of the river that the talks are referencing.

g. Issue: An agenda should be given to all attendees.

Discussion: If an agenda was provided to attendees, they could better anticipate their topics of interest and what river mile the discussion would take place.

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Recommendation: An agenda should be developed and provided to attendees upon arrival/sign-in.

Action Taken: Project Management will develop an agenda that will be handed out when the attendees pick up their nametags. The agenda will note approximate time and river mile location where specific topics will be discussed, as well as times of any additional presentations on attached barge (i.e. PowerPoint, etc.).

h. Issue: Microphone needs to be on a stand.

Discussion: The microphone used on the last trip had to be held by the presenter. This was not practical due to the wind and the presenter needed all hands on papers referred to during their presentation.

Recommendation: Need to explore options for hand-free microphone, as well as one with wind-resistant foam tip.

Action Taken: On future trips, we will utilize a lapel microphone or have a microphone with a stand.

i. Issue: Participant recommendations.

Discussion: It was noted that there was no system for attendees to make written comments.

Recommendation: Develop a system to accept attendee comments.

Action Taken: On future trips, we will have an evaluation form that will be distributed during processing before boarding the vessel.

j. Issue: Inclement weather.

Discussion: The possibility of inclement weather during a week of public awareness trips is likely. The inspection barge and the attached barge had enough covered area to protect all attendees.

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Recommendation: Continue utilizing inspection barge with covered area and the attached barge with the covered area.

Action Taken: We will continue utilizing the same facilities.

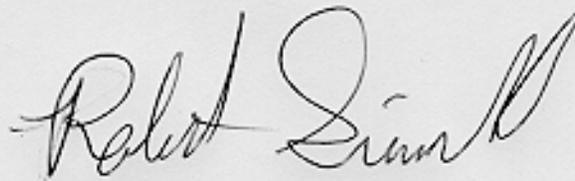
k. Issue: Time of year for trip.

Discussion: The second or third week of October is perfect for this trip. The weather is cool and the dynamics of the river are good during this time of the year with low flow. Generally during October you will also be able to see more migratory birds.

Recommendation: Continue having the Public Awareness Trip during the second or third week of October.

Action Taken: We will continue to have the trip during the same timeframe.

5. In conclusion, we believe the speakers needed more time with interested parties to address their questions and concerns. There will be more time set aside on the attached barge to possibly have a PowerPoint presentation, have some detailed graphics, photos or artist rendering of nesting sites along the river, and pictures of specific artifacts or salvaged materials retrieved from the Red River. Additionally, nametags are needed with the name of the attendee and his organization. A passenger manifest could be developed by staging the attendees before departure. This AAR will be linked to the Red River Project Homepage.



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Project Management Branch

CF:  
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