PP-D

January 19, 2001

Planning, Programs, and
Project Management Division
Project Management Branch

Mr. Jeff Goodwin
County Administrator
Rankin County Board
of Supervisors
211 East Government Street
Suite A
Brandon, Mississippi 39042

Dear Mr. Goodwin:

I refer to your letter of January 11, 2001, regarding the Independent Evaluation of the Two Lakes Flood Control Plan conducted by the Architect-Engineer firm URS for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District, and the Pearl River Basin Development District (PRBDD). The Independent Evaluation was performed at the request of the Two Lakes Foundation to ensure impartiality since both the Corps and PRBDD had performed previous evaluations. The selection of URS and the Scope of Work was a consensus decision by the Vicksburg District, PRBDD, and the Two Lakes Foundation. Your specific concerns are addressed in the following paragraphs. However, I wish to point out that although the URS report indicates that the Two Lakes Plan could significantly reduce Pearl River flooding in the Jackson area, the evaluation also substantiates the 1997 position taken by the Vicksburg District that "the plan does not meet legislative, technical, or policy criteria for involvement of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers." Therefore, we conclude that the plan, which is mainly a commercial development proposal with flood control benefits, would not prove to be either economically feasible or environmentally sustainable under current Corps criteria and is not the best plan as presently formulated for Federal involvement.

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Your first concern dealt with the level of flood protection provided by the Two Lakes Plan and questioned the need for purchasing businesses, residences, and other improvements. As noted above, we agree that the plan could significantly reduce flood damages in the Jackson area. However, indepth investigations would be needed to determine the actual level of flood protection provided by the plan. The structures estimated to be purchased are located primarily in the Fairgrounds area. We agree that the Fairgrounds area could be protected with the Two Lakes Plan in place. An additional component could be added to the plan to protect this area, if needed. Therefore, we will remove the cost for relocating structures from the Fairgrounds area from the cost estimate presented in the report.

Your second and third concerns dealt with the water surface elevations in downtown Jackson generated by the UNET model used in the evaluation of the Two Lakes Plan. We concur that the UNET model calculations are overstating the amount of drop in water surface across the lower weir. We also concur that the profile depicting 1979 existing flood conditions is low compared to actual high water observations. The observed high water for the Town Creek area was 277.7 feet, National Geodetic Vertical Datum, as your letter stated. In discussions with PRBDD and Two Lakes Foundation, we have agreed the necessary corrections will be made and incorporated into the report.

Your final concern questioned the large amount of estimated excavation yardage required for the plan resulting in higher than expected construction costs. We believe the excavation quantities developed by URS are reasonable for this level of study. We have also reviewed the costs per yard for excavation and find these to be comparable to other ongoing construction projects in the Vicksburg District.

Although some costs could be reduced, others such as mitigation for fish and wildlife losses, cultural resources preservation/recovery, modifications to Ross Barnett Dam, and engineering solutions to lessen impacts to tributary streams, could be added. Therefore, we concur with the overall cost estimate in the URS report.

We propose that further flood control studies be conducted for the Jackson area to investigate all flood control alternatives including plans similar to the Two Lakes proposal.

We believe a plan can be formulated which can incorporate components and concepts of the Two Lakes Plan, along with other flood control features, which would be economically feasible and environmentally sustainable. Further studies of all alternatives by the Corps would require a non-Federal cost-sharing partner willing to provide 50 percent of the cost for the investigations. We estimate studies necessary to complete an investigation that could lead to Federal participation in water resources plan of improvement to require approximately 3 years to complete with an estimated study cost ranging between $3 to $5 million.

By copy of this letter, we are also advising Mr. Mike Davis (Executive Vice President, PRBDD) of our position regarding this matter.

The Vicksburg District is committed to exploring opportunities for providing flood control improvements for the Jackson area. We plan to continue to work with all interested parties and stakeholders, together with a non-Federal sponsor, in an attempt to find a feasible solution.

Sincerely,

Douglas J. Kamien, P.E.
Deputy for Programs and
Project Management

Copies Furnished:

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