The Recommended Plan will result in unavoidable adverse impacts to wetland habitat by 42,293 wetland functional capacity units/habitat suitability units, to waterfowl habitat by 662,951 duck-use-days, and to terrestrial wildlife habitat by 1,606 average annual habitat units. The Recommended Plan will result in a gain of 866 aquatic habitat units. To mitigate for unavoidable adverse impacts, the USACE will perform active reforestation on 1,447 acres of agricultural lands within three hydrologic zones, as described in Section 5 of the Final SEIS II: Mitigation Zone 1) in the batture area (i.e., lands between the river and the levee); Mitigation Zone 2) frequently flooded areas, or those with a hydrologic connection to the Mississippi River landside of the MRL; and Mitigation Zone 3) low lying flooded areas landside of the MRL whose hydrologic conditions are dictated by precipitation and landscape position. Restoring wetland vegetation within these three zones would mitigate 100 percent of the wetland losses and greater than 100 percent of the waterfowl and terrestrial habitat/wildlife losses. The project results in benefits to aquatic resources; thus, compensatory mitigation was not required for fish and other aquatic resources.

Public review of the draft SEIS II was completed on 13 October 2020. All comments submitted during the public comment period were responded to in the Final SEIS II. A 30-day waiting period and state and agency review of the Final SEIS II was completed on 14 December 2020. Comments from state and federal agency review did not result in any substantive changes to the Final SEIS II.

Funding for the 143 Work Items will be received through annual Congressional appropriations. Based on traditional funding allocations, detailed design and construction of these phased Work Items is likely to extend for many years; and the strategic framework for the coordination and updating of environmental compliance are incorporated into the Final SEIS II.

As described in the coordination report dated 5 November 2020, the USFWS recommended addressing threatened and endangered species in a programmatic manner, consulting on impacts with individual Work Items after construction details (site-specific conditions, exact timing, etc.) are developed prior to the construction phases of each Work Item. USACE anticipates there will be no effect to interior least tern, pallid sturgeon, fat pocketbook mussel, whooping crane, piping plover, and red knot with implementation of the proposed project. USACE anticipates the proposed activities may affect but are not likely to adversely affect the wood stork, gray bat, Indiana bat, northern long-eared bat, and eastern black rail. Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, after Congressional appropriations are received and as investigations and additional design work for each work item are underway, USACE will reevaluate these effect determinations and will initiate consultation with USFWS, as appropriate. Applicable surveys and Endangered Species Act coordination, including an official effects determination, will be made for each Work Item during the consultation process.

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, USACE determined that the effects on historic properties could not be fully determined before Congressional funding was received for each Work Item, and accordingly USACE, the State Historic Preservation Officers for the States of Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation entered into a Programmatic Agreement, dated 4 March 2021, that would govern USACE's Section 106

review process for this series of undertakings. All terms and conditions resulting from the agreement shall be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to historic properties.

Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, all discharges of dredged or fill material associated with the recommended plan have been found to be compliant with the section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR 230). The Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines evaluation is found in Appendix 3 of the Final SEIS II.

Water quality certifications pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act will be coordinated with from the respective states with each Work Item, as scheduled according to annual Congressional appropriation funding. No adverse comments on the framework for receiving Section 401 water quality certifications were received from any state during the review period.

A determination of consistency with the State of Louisiana Coastal Zone Management program pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 will be coordinated for each applicable Work Item from the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Office of Coastal Management, prior to construction. In a letter dated 13 October 2020, the State of Louisiana stated that the Recommended Plan appears to be consistent with state Coastal Zone Management plans, pending confirmation of each applicable Work Item based on information to be developed during the pre-construction engineering and design phase.

All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in evaluation of impacts to the human environment. The Final SEIS II and supporting documentation contain sufficient information to make a reasoned, informed decision. After careful consideration of the purpose of and need for the project; the analysis contained in the Final SEIS II; the reviews by other Federal, State, and local agencies, and Tribes; input of the public; and based on the Project's Congressional authority and continued benefit of the remaining construction; I find that the public interest will best be served by implementing the Recommended Plan. Based on the review of these evaluations, I certify that all of the alternatives, information and analyses submitted by State, Tribal, and local governments and public commenters based on the summary in the Final SEIS II have been considered. This Record of Decision completes the National Environmental Policy Act process.

March 11, 2021
Date

DIANA M. HOLLAND
Major General, USA
Commanding