

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 7, 2023

Colonel Christopher D. Klein
Commander, Vicksburg District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
4155 Clay Street
Vicksburg, MS 39183-3435

Dear Colonel Klein:

Thank you for your letter of notification regarding the *Lower Mississippi River Comprehensive Management Study* mandated by Section 213 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020 in response to the 2019 Bonnet Carré Spillway openings. As you are aware, active collaboration and input from state and local stakeholders is essential to the success of this necessary study. We stand ready to ensure the affected communities and business owners are prepared to consult with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) during these conversations to protect these important waters.

At a recent House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee hearing, Mr. Michael Connor, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, kindly committed to including Mississippi Gulf Coast municipal and county government leaders, fishermen, and business owners as key stakeholders in the study. We thank Mr. Connor for his commitment on behalf of the USACE.

As you know, Section 213 of WRDA 2020 directs the USACE to evaluate the effects of river management on fish and wildlife habitat resources in the Mississippi Sound Estuary. Section 213 also states the Corps shall investigate mitigation of adverse impacts from operations of flood control structures to the Mississippi Sound Estuary. In the wake of the Bonnet Carré openings, a group of Mississippi Coast cities and counties formed the Mississippi Sound Coalition (Coalition). Its mission is to restore and protect the ecosystem of the Mississippi Sound, as well as the way of life and economies of coastal communities that depend on it, based on empirical evidence and fair public policy.

We believe the Coalition and its work will be helpful to the USACE in its study of the impacts of the Mississippi River on the Mississippi Sound Estuary. Therefore, we respectfully request:

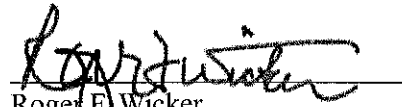
- The USACE consider the local governments and business entities of the Mississippi Sound Coalition as full stakeholders and participants in the *Lower Mississippi River Comprehensive Management Study*, including participation in meetings and access to information afforded to the relevant state and federal cooperating agencies.
- The USACE include USACE Mobile District and its appropriate personnel as a part of the support for the *Lower Mississippi River Comprehensive Management Study*. As you know, the Corps' June 1, 2023, announcement notes the study will be supported by personnel from the USACE New Orleans District, USACE Vicksburg District, USACE Memphis District, and USACE St. Louis District. The USACE Mobile District has worked effectively with Mississippi

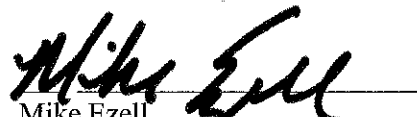
state and local governments for many years and has a wealth of technical capability regarding the Mississippi Sound and its resources.

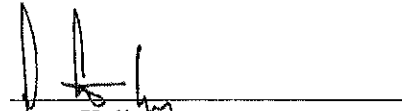
- The USACE consult with Mississippi's resource management agencies, such as the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, and affected state and local governments during the five-year period of the *Lower Mississippi River Comprehensive Management Study* about interim actions to mitigate damage to Mississippi's resources and economy in the case of a future Spillway opening.

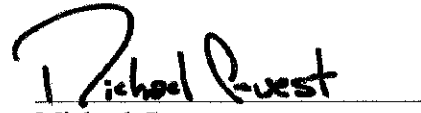
Thank you for your attention and leadership on these important projects for South Mississippi. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,


Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator


Mike Ezell
Member of Congress


Trent Kelly
Member of Congress


Michael Guest
Member of Congress


Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

cc: **Mr. Michael Connor**, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Department of the Army
Lieutenant General Scott A. Spellmon, Chief of Engineers and Commanding General,
USACE
Major General William H. Graham, Deputy Chief of Engineers and Deputy
Commanding General/Deputy Commanding General for Civil Works and Emergency
Operations, USACE
Colonel Cullen A. Jones, Commander and District Engineer, New Orleans District,
USACE
Colonel Jeremy J. Chapman, Commander and District Engineer, Mobile District,
USACE
Mr. Marlin Ladner, Chair, Mississippi Sound Coalition
Mr. Gerald Blessey, Manager, Mississippi Sound Coalition