

# The Flow of Arkansas Waterways



*The Flow of Arkansas Waterways* is a joint publication of the Arkansas Waterways Association and the Arkansas Waterways Commission. It is published quarterly.

The Arkansas Waterways Association is comprised of private companies, corporations, and municipal, county and state agencies. It is dedicated to establishing Arkansas as a leader in waterborne transportation usage for economic development. The Arkansas Waterways Commission is a state agency charged with protecting, promoting and developing the five navigable rivers of the state for commercial navigation. Those rivers are the Arkansas, Mississippi, Ouachita, Red and White Rivers.

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## Arkansas River Navigation Project Gets Green Light *Changes already in place to reduce impact of high flows*

**M**ajor General Don Riley, director of Civil Works, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers signed the Record of Decision on the Environmental Documentation for the Arkansas River Navigation Study in September 2005. As part of the Arkansas Governor's Conference on Waterborne Transportation held that same month, commanders of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Little Rock and Tulsa Districts conducted a ceremonial sign-off on the document. This symbolized the formal go-ahead for the start of the Arkansas River Navigation Improvement Project.

The project is the result of a multi-year study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer Little Rock and Tulsa Districts under the direction of the U.S. Congress. The study investigated possible operational and structural changes to the entire McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System that could improve the productivity of commercial navigation on the system, while maintaining the other project purposes of flood control, recreation, hydropower, water supply, and fish and wildlife.



Colonel Miroslav Kurka, commander of the Tulsa USACE District (left) and Colonel Wally Walters, Little Rock USACE District Commander, sign off on documents that approve the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation Project.

"Making the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System more efficient will be a boon to waterborne transportation and our nation's economy," said **Keith Garrison**, executive director of the Arkansas Waterways Commission. "As our economy expands and our nation's highways and railways face ever increasing traffic and congestion, it makes good sense to get the most we can out of our river system." The \$166 million project will mean operational and structural changes to the entire McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System. The total economic benefit of the project is estimated at more than \$22 million annually. The project also features numer-

ous enhancements to wild life habitat. As of the date the document was signed, immediate steps were taken to improve the efficiency of the 445-mile long waterway. The project changes flow management of the river to use the 60,000 cubic feet per second bench at Van Buren instead of a 75,000 cubic feet per second flow. This regulated river flow will reduce the impact of high flows on the navigation of the river and flood damage to lands affected by the river flows. Before these changes were made, commercial navigation on the river was virtually halted an average of 30 days a year when the river was deemed unnaviga-

( See **Project**, page 5 )

# Hurricanes Teach Nation Tough Economics Lessons

**W**ith budgets tight in Washington even before hurricanes devastated our nation's gulf coast, competing for waterways money just got a little tougher. Roads, bridges and infrastructure will have to be rebuilt across the gulf states. In addition, there are many expensive, long-range decisions to be made about how to deal with aftermath of the environmental and economic blow suffered by the entire region. How can waterways needs possibly compete with the region's requirements in the face of such ruin? The short answer: It won't get any easier.

However, in the midst of this destruction sits an example of the importance and economic benefit that waterways bring to the region and our nation. The Port of New Orleans was knocked down, but not out, as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita raced across the South. Wisely, the importance having the port operational quickly became apparent from not only a recovery aspect, but also in terms of economics. The effort to get it up and running again was swift. Similarly, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Coast Guard also worked non-stop to insure

that the Mississippi River was opened and safely navigable as soon as possible. The Port of New Orleans is at the center of the world's busiest port complex — Louisiana's Lower Mississippi River. About 380,000 total jobs in the U.S. and \$16.9 billion in personal income are related to the Port of New Orleans maritime terminals according to an economic study completed just before Hurricane Katrina. The Port met its goal to work its first cargo ship after Katrina by September 14<sup>th</sup>, about two weeks after the hurricane. In mid-November, the Port was handling about between 40 and 50 percent of its pre-Katrina ship traffic.

While all our navigable rivers and ports can't be compared to the size and economic importance of the Mississippi and the Port of New Orleans, each port and waterway is part of an intricately connected system. Each part must be dependable and available to get the best economic value from the system. Grain from America's heartland can't be shipped around the world easily if the Mississippi River isn't opened to traffic. And, likewise, ports and businesses upstream from New Orleans are hurt if shipments can't make it up river from one of our

nation's busiest ports. The result is that goods cost more and shipments take longer, or are just flat out impossible.

Our Arkansas farmers felt the direct effect of this disruption caused by Hurricane Katrina in the prices paid for their soybean crop. The basis, or difference between the Chicago Board of Trade price and the price paid to farmers, ranged upward to more than 50 cents a bushel at the Port of Helena to more than 80 cents per bushel at Newport. These were historic spreads. What this means is that, almost instantly, due to transportation interruptions, farmers lost 50 to 80 cents per bushel on their crop. Arkansas farmers grow about 100 million bushels of soybeans. Not everyone lost that much money, but farmers who were forced to sell during that time faced losses. The basis cost was not the only loss the interruption caused. The market prices for grains fell because overseas customers could not get grain delivered they had already purchased, so they backed out of the market. Storage costs also rose because grain could not be moved from storage. So farmers took a triple hit because of the basis number, rising storage costs and

declining markets prices. This was felt from New Orleans to Canada.

Failure of locks and dams on our waterways are no different. If they don't work, river traffic is delayed or stops completely and costs go up.

All this points out the importance of our waterway system and the need to improve it. Our rivers are a critical component to our nation's transportation system. Large sectors of our economy rely on its existence and dependability every day. The highway and rail systems could not absorb the cargo carried by our waterways if they became unavailable. Some cargo simply cannot be moved by any other means except by water because of bulk or cost considerations. Some industries would dry up. The question is, if we can't maintain and improve our nation's navigable waterways, can we afford to live without them?



## Success is Sweet

As the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Arkansas Governor's Conference on Waterborne Transportation comes and goes, the Arkansas Waterways Association seems well on its way to promoting and educating the people and officials of Arkansas about waterborne transportation.

Although the hurricanes prevented some from attending our conference, attendance was good. We had many new faces in attendance. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Coast Guard gave very informative and interesting reports on hurricane

recovery. We are especially grateful to Brig. Gen. Crear, of the Corps of Engineers, who took time out from recovery operations in New Orleans to come and speak to us. The hurricanes have proven just how fragile our industry can be, but also how resilient we are at bouncing back after a catastrophe strikes. Needless to say, it makes me proud to be affiliated with an association directly tied to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Coast Guard. When a crisis arises, they are at their best and they proven that countless times in dealing with

the hurricanes and their aftermath.

We had informative speakers who addressed issues concerning waterborne transportation. It was nice to meet some new people and possibly stir up some new business. Part of the value of the conference is not only in what you learn from the program, but getting to know others involved in transportation and related industries.

Thanks to the people of the Arkansas Waterways Commission and the Arkansas Waterways Association for their tireless efforts to bring the conference to-

gether. It takes a lot of work and attention to a lot of details to organize and run a conference. This year's program was complicated by the cancellation of speakers due to the hurricanes, but changes were well covered and the conference ran smoothly.

With this said, there is still a lot of work to be done. I hope each of you will continue to assist the Association in recruiting new members and educating people about waterborne transportation. Let's help each other and help our waterways.

## Former LR Corps District Engineer, AWC Member Passes Away

**Colonel Charles Maynard**, former long-time commissioner with the Arkansas Waterways Commission, passed away in October, 2005.

He was appointed to the commission by three governors and served a total of 21 years from 1981 to 2002. During that time, he served as the commission's chairman and was an avid supporter for waterways projects in Arkansas and around the nation. His engineering expertise was always important to the Commission. Colonel Maynard was honored for his many years of service to Arkansas waterways at the 2002 Arkansas Governor's Conference on Waterborne

Transportation.

Colonel Maynard was a retired engineer officer with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and was best known in this area as the Little Rock District Engineer in charge of planning and building the locks and dams on the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation Project. His final military assignment with the Little Rock District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Colonel Maynard capped off a long and distinguished military career. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1941 with a degree in engineering. He served in World War II as Engineer Plans Officer for the planned

invasions of Japan as well as the occupation of Japan. He was also in charge of construction of the Keflavik Air Field in Iceland in support of the Berlin Airlift. He had assignments with the Army General Staff in Washington, as an engineer battalion commander and as a mathematics professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He went on to earn several post graduate degrees and completed extensive military education including the U.S. Army War College.

After retiring from the military in 1965 following his Little Rock District Engineer position, he remained in Little Rock and began a long and successful career in

business. He served as a vice president of Arkansas Louisiana Gas Company and later joined Union National Bank of Arkansas as a senior vice president. He was also active in community activities, serving in leadership capacities with several Little Rock area organizations including the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce, Central Arkansas Radiation Treatment Institute, the Arkansas Arts Center, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra and the Foundation Board of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

# AWA, AWC Honor Two Waterways Supporters at Annual Conference

The Arkansas Waterways Association and the Arkansas Waterways Commission honored two long-time

river terminal business for more than 35 years and has worked hard to promote the waterways and their economic contribution to

made available their 30,000 square foot climate-controlled warehouse to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for use as a staging area for hurricane relief supplies.

Dr. Nunnally served as chairman of the Commission in 2004. During that time, a legislative hearing held at Camden, Ark. focused on the value of the Ouachita River when funding for the navigation project was severely reduced in the proposed federal budget. In recent years it has faced challenges to its funding because it has been considered as a



**Dr. Robert Nunnally** was presented an award for his seven years of service to the Arkansas Waterways Commission. A retired physician from Camden, Nunnally has had a life long

(Left) Buck Shell receives his award from Brig. Gen. Robert Crear, of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Arkansas Waterways Commission Chairman Jim Frazier. (Below) Dr. Robert Nunnally accepts his award from Brig. Gen. Crear and Jim Frazier.

supporters of waterways at the recent Arkansas Governor's Conference on Waterborne Transportation.

The Arkansas Waterways Association presented its Distinguished Service Award to Van Buren business owner **Buck Shell** for his commitment to Arkansas waterways

Shell is a partner in Five Rivers Distribution, the newest intermodal port facility on the Arkansas River system. The river system is 445 miles long, with 313 miles of channel located in Arkansas. Five Rivers Distribution offers all modes of transportation into and out of three handling docks and a US Customs Bonded Warehouse. It also has its own trucking company.

Shell has been in the

his community, his state and the nation. He started out as a fork lift driver and worked his way up to vice president of a warehouse company. When the company was sold, Shell's job went with it. He rolled up his sleeves and started over with nothing but his reputation to build the newest river terminal on the Arkansas River. Five Rivers opened for business in 1996.

Despite operating his own port, Shell has been a supporter of public ports as well and the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System as a whole. He serves on the Arkansas River Basin Interstate Committee and meets with Arkansas' congressional delegation annually in that capacity.

Most recently, Five Rivers Distribution has



interest in river navigation. **Governor Mike Huckabee** appointed him to a seven-year term on the commission beginning in 1999. His term expires in January 2006. He represents the Ouachita River, one of the state's five navigable waterways. The 336-mile long Ouachita/Black River Navigation System runs through north Louisiana and includes 117 miles in Arkansas.

low use river, ignoring its additional use as a water-source for several cities, recreational benefits and power generation capacity. Funding for the system was subsequently restored and a study on the river system is now being conducted to document its true value.

# Corps Study Continues on How to Tackle Ark-White River Cutoff Problem

As the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation 12-foot Channel Project gets underway, the Little Rock District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to study a problem on the lower end of the system that could potentially threaten navigation.

Containing the Arkansas-White River cutoff has been a focus of the Corps since the 1970s, and the current formal study was initiated in 2002 to look at long-term solutions to this complex problem. The current study schedule calls for completion in FY 07. Carry-over funding from FY 05 is currently being utilized to continue the study in FY 06.

The problem has a history nearly as old as the navigation system, which opened in 1971. During the 1970s and 1980s, a new cutoff channel began to develop upstream from a natural cutoff channel that was closed during the development of the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System. The location of the new cutoff was in the Melinda Channel/Owens Lake corridor, resulting from erosion caused by water elevation differentials between the White and Arkansas Rivers. This is

happening in the strip of land that is as narrow as 1.25 miles and sits between the two rivers in the southeast part of the river system upriver from Montgomery Point Lock and Dam. This erosion threatens to allow the two rivers to actually join. In 1989, a set of structures known as the Arkansas/White Cutoff Containment Structure was built in an attempt to prevent continued development of the cutoff. The structure is made up of approximately 17,300 feet of containment levee, a controlled overflow section, and one headcut structure known as the Melinda Headcut Structure.

The Melinda Structure has been repeatedly overtopped and has had additional stone added at the structure to stabilize it. But there continues to be areas of active scouring and signs of additional cutoff channel corridors. Two new structures were completed in 2004 in the Jim Smith Lake area to stop erosion near the containment levee and prevent a new cutoff from developing through that area. Those structures were damaged in early 2005, and the Corps is currently making repairs to one of the structures to protect the containment levee in the event that flows

overtop during the winter of 2006. Additional repairs to the second structure will be made during 2006, if funding becomes available.

If a cutoff were to completely pass through the land mass, the results could seriously impact to the towing industry. Depending on the depth of the cutoff and the flow conditions on the White River, it could mean a loss of control of the navigation pool by Montgomery Point Lock and Dam and disrupt navigation.

"This is a very complex system down there in a very environmentally sensitive area," said project manager **Mark Brightwell**. "Extensive and careful analysis is necessary to arrive at a solution that will fix the problem long term." The environmental impact analysis and study is expected to be completed by March 2007. It will be reviewed by Corps officials up the chain of command. Once the study report and recommendation have been approved, construction of the recommended alternative would begin as soon as the budgetary process provides funding to complete the design and initiate construction.

input from project stakeholders, are working on a plan which will direct how the money will be spent during the fiscal year and the years to come. Much of the work will be done when crews are working on portions of the river to maintain the nine-foot channel. About 90 percent of the river is already at 12 feet or deeper. Barges can carry about 40 percent more per load using a 12-foot channel as compared to a nine-foot channel. The river is already 12 feet

or deeper in 90 percent of the 445-mile length of the system, which opened in 1971. The Mississippi River is authorized a 12-foot draft channel, so deepening the system's channel will improve efficiency when barge traffic moves between the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers. Estimates are that with optimal funding that it will take at least four years to complete the project.

## (Project from page 1)

ble due to high flow rates. River navigation traffic is extremely restricted when flows reach 100,000 cfs at Van Buren.

Construction will proceed, as funds are available. Funding totalling \$7 million was included for this part of the project in the FY 2006 budget which began October 1. Teams from the Little Rock and Tulsa U.S. Army Corps of Engineers districts, with

## Waterways Briefings

The Port of Little Rock is welcoming three companies who have purchased Port property.

Ring Container Technologies is constructing an 84,000 square foot manufacturing plant. It will produce plastic pre-forms to be used in packaging Skippy Peanut Butter. The plant, due to open in the second quarter of 2006, will employ 40.

Brooks Grease of Tulsa has purchased a 4-acre site where they will collect and recycle grease products, primarily from the restaurant industry. Due to their operations in New Orleans being negatively impacted by the storm, the construction date has been postponed.

Novus International has purchased a 9-acre tract. They are in the process of acquiring two other parcels from private owners. At that time, they will formally announce their building and employment plans. They will serve the agricultural industry.

While none of the firms will initially use water transportation, Ring and Novus are both rail users. Should their volumes increase, water transportation is an option, said Little Rock Port Executive Director **Paul Latture**.

The Arkansas Queen, a 130-foot stern-wheeler riverboat, is the newest part of North Little Rock's North Shore Maritime Center and Park. In the Spring, the three-deck 338-passenger riverboat will offer lunch, dinner and sightseeing cruises on the Arkansas River from March through November. December will be reserved for parties and charters.

# Joint Hearing Lets Legislators Hear River Benefits

By *Harvey Joe Sanner Executive Director  
Arkansas Waterways Association*

The annually convened Governor's Conference on Waterborne Transportation always provides an interesting program on a variety of issues related to waterways. I want to mention one of those sessions that seems to fit in the "highlight" category. We were pleased that two important Arkansas joint legislative committees held a field hearing during the conference. We had members of the Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Economic Development and the Committee on Public Transportation. Joint committees have members from both the Arkansas House and Senate bodies. Total legislators present numbered near 40.

The hearing provided the committee members with an opportunity to hear from expert witnesses familiar with current and future infrastructure needs of four different river systems in Arkansas. They also heard an expert from the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department who explained the department's role in infrastructure development as it relates to ports and harbors.

**Alan Carter**, who in his former professional life was a fisheries biologist with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, testified on a project soon to be under construction that will provide a 12-foot channel on the Arkansas River's McClellan-Kerr Navigation System.

Currently the channel is maintained at a 9-foot depth from Mile 10 on the White River, where the canal provides access from the White into the Arkansas River, to the head of navigation on the system at the Port of Catoosa near Tulsa, Oklahoma. Mr. Carter explained to the committees how this project could deliver both greater transportation efficiencies and environmental enhancements. The project will make the McClellan/Kerr system compatible and competitive with the 12-foot channel of the Mississippi River. Shippers and receivers say they can transport 43% more cargo in a barge with the increase in channel depth while using the same equipment and realize substantial savings in transportation costs. A win win.

**Paul Revis**, former engineer with the Corps of Engineers and retired Director of the Arkansas Waterways Commission, is now serving as Executive Director of the Ouachita River Valley Association. Paul explained to the committees the many benefits the Ouachita River navigation system provides to a large area of South Arkansas and Louisiana. The system is responsible for creating and maintaining thousands of jobs, lowering highway congestion and causing less pollution to the environment due to the reduction in fossil fuel required to move

commodities on the river. Because the Ouachita is considered one of the "low use" rivers by the Office of Management and Budget in Washington D.C., funding for operation and maintenance of the system has been threatened. However, as Mr. Revis explained, OMB doesn't understand the many other benefits citizens enjoy due to the navigation system. Flood control, water supply for municipalities, hunting, fishing and other recreational activities are enhanced due to the navigation pools. Water from the Ouachita is also being used by industry to lessen the impact on critical ground water supplies. Mr. Revis pointed out the penny wise pound foolish position of OMB because employment opportunities created by navigation generates income at a level to the government, in the form of taxes collected, to provide the operation and maintenance funding. All the other benefits attributed to the system should be seen as a bonus for making intelligent infrastructure investments in the Ouachita River.

Former Arkansas **Senator Wayne Dowd** explained the benefits to the regions of North Louisiana, East Texas and Southwestern Arkansas by expanding navigation on the Red River. Mr. Dowd recognized the economic impact the Red River system is currently providing to the Shreveport/Bossier City area

which is now the head of the navigation system. He also pointed out the fact that certain species of wildlife were increasing in numbers where the Red River is navigable. As on the Ouachita River and the Arkansas River, navigation pools can provide a haven for waterfowl, recharge aquifers, provide irrigation and recreational opportunities that are otherwise not realized. Of course those same pools are great flood control assets too. The factual data provided by the Red River project study has been very positive in favor of expanding navigation on the Red River.

**Steven Rutledge**, a farmer from Newport, AR, and member of the White River Coalition brought the committee members an update on the White River Navigation Improvement Project. This project would improve the current navigation system on the White River by the installation of stone dikes to maintain a 9 foot depth from Mile 10 to Newport, AR. Dike installation would reduce the annual mechanical dredging needs by 50 percent. Currently, the river is navigable for barge traffic 50 percent to 60 percent of the year. The WRNIP would cause the river to be navigable year round. The White River is unique in that it's naturally navigable. Only 4 percent of the 255 miles

(See **Hearing**, page 7)

# Mack-Blackwell Center Studies Ouachita River System

The Mack-Blackwell Transportation Center at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville is using \$40,000 appropriated by the Arkansas Legislature to study the ancillary benefits of the Ouachita River Navigation System in Arkansas.

**Dr. Heather Nachtmann**, associate professor within the University's department of Industrial Engineering, is serving as the principal investigator on the project which will run through June of 2006.

The study came about when the Ouachita River system faced a shut-down during the federal 2005 fiscal year. That year, no operations funds were appropriated. Without those funds, the locks and dams cannot be operated, resulting in the loss of navigation on the entire river system which runs through southeast Arkansas and northwest Louisiana. Funds for operations were later restored. However, funding challenges for the river system will continue since the federal Office of Management and Budget has classified the Ouachita River as a low-use river because of the amount of tonnage shipped on the river. But supporters of the river con-

tend that its value cannot be measured simply by tonnage that is shipped on its waters.

The Mack-Blackwell study will investigate and report the ancillary benefits of the Ouachita River waterway to the State of Arkansas. The study will look at, but not be limited

to recreation, tourism, commercial shipping, water supply and electrical generation. The study will provide a concise report with information that may be useful in seeking ongoing funding of the river.

## Ouachita Receives \$14 Million for Maintenance

The Ouachita River will get a top to bottom channel clearing in 2006 thanks to \$14 million allocated by Congress for river maintenance in 2006. That amount represents the largest appropriation in the river project's history. The entire length of the river's channel was last dredged more than two years ago. The Ouachita/Black River Navigation System, flows 336 miles and includes 117 miles in Arkansas. More than \$700 million was invested in construction of the current four locks and dams. Two of the locks and dams are in Arkansas.

In addition to dredging the river's channel, the maintenance appropriation will also allow the Vicksburg District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to install a new dewatering system at the Columbia lock and dam and perform other critical maintenance on the locks and dams. Maintenance on those locks and dams has been backlogged for several years due to low or non-existence maintenance funding.

The Ouachita River faced a virtual shut down at the beginning of the federal government's 2005 budget year when only \$1.9 million in recreation funds was allocated for on the river. With no operations or maintenance funds, locks and dams faced closure and river traffic would have ceased. A meeting held in Camden, Ark. attended by more than 100 supporters and business users of the river drew attention to the economic value of the river. It was determined that shutting down the river would not only cause significant economic and environmental losses to southeast Arkansas and northeast Louisiana, but that the federal government would also experience a net loss in tax revenue generated by the river project. Subsequently, the river was allocated operations funds of \$6.5 million for that year, but no maintenance funds were provided.

### (Hearing, from page 6)

from the Mississippi River to Newport requires maintenance. This project, like others but maybe moreso, has drawn protests from some in the environmental community. The protestations began even before the environmental and economic studies did. There is much emotion surrounding the White River and that might explain the reason for the many unfounded complaints. Fortunately, as Mr. Rutledge pointed out, the factual data

has disproven many of the claims that opponents had voiced in the early days of the study process. Mr. Rutledge also mentioned the growing list of new users that are committed to using the White River to move commodities when that day of dependability arrives. Experts say that the project will greatly enhance sport fishing on the river, increase the number of days that ducks will use the river, result in no change in water levels and provide for environmental enhancements at several

locations. Mr. Rutledge summed up the project by saying that it is truly a win-win for this 25 county study area in the White River Basin.

Arkansas has many blessings and our 1000 miles of navigable waterways is one of the majors. Our beloved state also has many troubles. Too many, in fact, to allow the fate of any proposed infrastructure improvements to be determined by less than sound science. Our conference on waterborne transportation

strives to present the facts surrounding navigable waterways and the above mentioned witness list met that goal. A fitting summation for all the witness' testimony might be that there is no logical reason that these four projects can't be completed while protecting and enhancing the environment, if people are willing to work together to make sure that the laws are followed and that all views are considered.

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