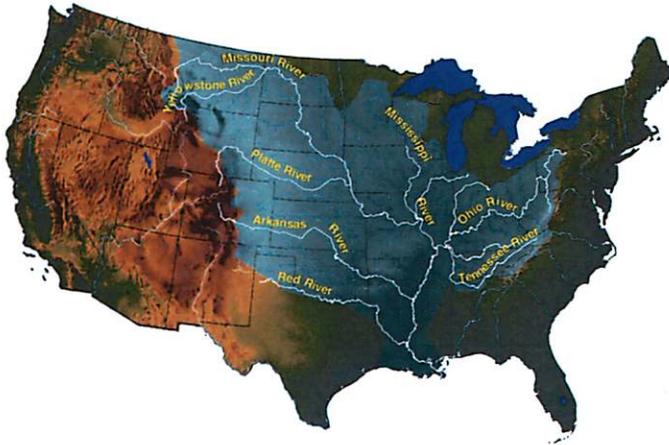


BIG RIVER COALITION



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June 25, 2012

The Honorable Cedric Richmond
U.S. House of Representatives
415 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Richmond:

The Big River Coalition (BRC) has been working with your staff in order to support the bill that you intend introduce to require the funding of deepening and maintaining the Lower Mississippi River (LMR) deep-draft channel at 50 feet at total federal responsibility. The BRC and navigation members from Louisiana to Pittsburgh and to Minnesota believe this deepening is critical for the nation in the Post-Panamax world as the Panama Canal expansion nears completion.

The cargo conveyed on the Mississippi River has an annual impact of approximately \$115 billion on the nation's economy. The Mississippi River Basin connects 31 states and 2 Canadian Provinces to international and domestic trade routes through the third largest river basin in the world, which is a true maritime superhighway that drains over 1.29 million square miles or over 40 percent of the continental U.S.

The BRC has also been engaged with the Corps' New Orleans District (NOD) to discuss the steps it believed were necessary to successfully deepen the Mississippi River from Baton Rouge to the Gulf of Mexico. As you are aware, the non-federal sponsor's lack of funding is the reason this channel has not been deepened from 45

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feet, even though the approval to increase the channel to 55 feet was approved in 1986. Earlier this year, the BRC presented you with an economic impact study that provided details regarding the losses associated with the channel being below 45 feet. Conversely, this same economic information could be applied to increases in cargo carrying ability. The long-standing average has been that every foot of draft represents approximately \$1,000,000 in cargo.

The impact on jobs and cargo efficiency would add a huge boost to Louisiana and our domestic trading partners connected via the Mississippi River and the overall U.S. economy. You have been a staunch supporter of the maritime industry in Louisiana, and your support of the Harbor Maintenance Tax reform has been exemplary in showcasing your understanding of the importance of promoting U.S. trade to compete in world markets.

In 2015, the expanded Panama Canal will be open with a maximum draft of 50 feet (15.2 meters). Currently, the Canal is the controlling depth for vessels transiting both the Mississippi River and the Canal. After the monumental expansion of the Canal, the LMR channel will reduce trade efficiency by not equaling the depth of the new Canal dimensions.

Your draft bill is a necessary step if we are to meet the President's declaration to double trade in the near future. In sincere efforts to deepen the channel and properly fund it, we believe there are also innovative ways additional beneficial use of dredge material can safely be delivered. This effort is in line with many of the current restoration efforts, including those often referenced along with the Restore Act. The maritime industry fully supports coastal restoration efforts, and the BRC has ideas on how to achieve the goal of increasing beneficial use of dredge material to conduct marsh recycling while also properly maintaining our arteries of trade.

The Mississippi Basin is the only major agricultural zone in the world that produces over 125 million hectares of grain and is connected to a major river system. Countries around the world have contacted the Corps acknowledging that their growing populations will depend more and more on the ability of the U.S. to export grain to feed their citizens.

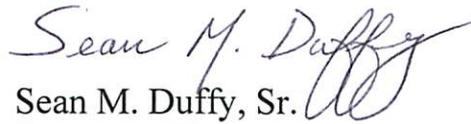
The President's March 11, 2011 Export Council's report on *Transportation Infrastructure* provided several key initiatives that must be undertaken to double trade. Several initiatives were specifically linked to the Mississippi River system.

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“The Lower Mississippi River is in need of reliable funding for dredging in order to maintain a safe depth for navigation and prevent disruptions to ship traffic and the commerce it supports.”

The Big River Coalition and its members appreciate your efforts and vow to do what we can to help gain support for this critical piece of legislation. Our members stand ready to engage their delegations to assist with this effort, and I will continue to work closely with you and your staff on this monumental effort.

Best Regards,



Sean M. Duffy, Sr.
Executive Director