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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DIVISION, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 80
VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI 39181-0080

March 7, 2006

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

Mr. Don Hultman
Upper Mississippi River
National Wildlife and Fish Refuge
ATTN: CCP Comment
51 East Fourth Street, Room 101
Winona, Minnesota 55987

Dear Mr. Hultman:

I refer to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) News Releases dated December 5, 2005, and January 3, 2006, regarding the public review and comment period for the new preferred alternative (Alternative E) for the draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Impact Statement for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

My staff and the staffs of the St. Paul, Rock Island, and St. Louis Districts have reviewed the draft document and offer the following comments.

a. We believe the FWS did an excellent job addressing our previous comments dated September 6, 2005.

b. We concur with the plan with the understanding that interagency partnership activities will continue as required by the existing Cooperative Agreement and as stated in the Draft CCP.

c. Once finalized and approved, the CCP will require many step-down plans that will involve coordination with other agencies. We feel the FWS has stressed this sufficiently in the plan, and we look forward to participation in these step-down plans. Implementation of the CCP will also require some Corps of Engineers actions, such as updating Land Use Allocation Plans, Shoreline Management Plans, and Forest Management Plans. Coordination will also be required on the Historic Properties Management Plan. Work on these plans should begin immediately after approval of the CCP.

We appreciate the willingness of the FWS staff to provide forums for communication and discussion throughout this process. We believe your communications were timely and were indicative of your acknowledgement of our close partnership with you in this region. We look forward to a continued positive relationship as

our agencies collaboratively work to improve the ecosystem of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Mrs. Susan Smith of my staff at (601) 634-5827.

Sincerely,

Robert Crear
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
Division Engineer