

**Draft**  
**Supplemental Environmental Assessment**  
**Appendix I: Public Involvement**

**Arkansas River Navigation Study**  
**Arkansas and Oklahoma**

**January 2024**

Prepared By:

Regional Planning and Environmental Center  
Environmental Branch  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Little Rock and Tulsa Districts

**ARKANSAS RIVER NAVIGATION STUDY, ARKANSAS AND OKLAHOMA  
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

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# 1 Introduction

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Final Feasibility Report (FR) and Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Arkansas River Navigation Study, Arkansas and Oklahoma (ARNS), McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS) dated August 2005 (herein referred to as the 2005 ARNS FR/EIS) and the Report of the Director of Civil Works (Director's Report) signed on 27 September 2005 recommended modifications and improvements for navigation and channel maintenance. Since the completion of these documents conditions have changed warranting changes in the design of the Proposed Action and the implementation of a new Dredge Material Management Plan (DMMP). A Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) to the 2005 FEIS has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (as amended), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) guidelines (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508), and ER 200-2-2 Procedures for Implementing NEPA. The purpose of this SEA is to: 1) provide a concise summary of the history and status of the originally-authorized ARNS Project; 2) document the changes and refinements made to the MKARNS 12-Foot Channel design during the Pre-Construction Engineering and Design (PED) and Construction phases, including mitigation, and; 3) evaluate the potential environmental effects of the updated construction and design plans that may have changed since the FEIS was completed.

## 1.1 Project Area

The MKARNS system is approximately 445 miles in length and consists of a series of 18 locks and dams. USACE's Tulsa and Little Rock Districts cooperatively control flows in the Arkansas River system in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. The authorized project area includes the MKARNS from the Port of Catoosa near Tulsa, Oklahoma, downstream to the confluence of the Mississippi River in southeastern Arkansas.

- A 50-mile reach of the Verdigris River from the Port of Catoosa to Muskogee (navigation miles 445-394).
- Lower Arkansas River, which comprises 375 miles of the MKARNS (navigation miles 394 to 19).
- The Arkansas Post canal, a 9-mile canal connecting the Arkansas River to the lower portion of the White River (navigation miles 19 to 10).
- The lower 10 miles of the White River (navigation miles 10 to 0).

## 1.2 Purpose of this Report

The following report summarizes the public participation process for, and the public comments resulting from, the MKARNS 12-Foot Channel public involvement process.

## 2 Scoping Process

In accordance with NEPA and ER 200-2-2, USACE initiated public involvement for the MKARNS 12-Foot Channel SEA. Scoping is the process of determining the scope, focus, and content of a NEPA document. A scoping period for the MKARNS 12-Foot Channel SEA was held from June 5, 2023, to July 8, 2023. Members of the public, industry, resource agencies, and Tribal Nations were invited to provide their input on the project. The 2005 ARNS documents, additional project information, maps, and an online comment form were available at the website below.

<https://www.swl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Planning/MKARNS-12-foot-Channel/>

### 2.1 Public Involvement

The public was notified of the scoping comment period via a public notice (Attachment A) distributed by the Tulsa and Little Rock Districts' Public Affairs Offices on their websites and various social media platforms. Additionally, notification emails were sent to a list of 63 industry representatives. Four workshop-style meetings were held at different locations along the MKARNS and open to the public to solicit feedback on the MKARNS 12-Foot Channel Project. Table 1 below depicts the dates and locations of the public workshops. A total of 11 members of the public attended the four workshops.

**Table 1. Public Scoping Meetings**

Date/Time	City	Location	Address
Monday, June 5, 2023 4:00-7:00pm	Tulsa	Homewood Suites by Hilton Tulsa/Catoosa	201 Elliott Lane, Catoosa, OK 74015
Tuesday, June 6, 2023 4:00-7:00pm	Fort Smith	Arkansas Game & Fish Commission Janet Huckabee Arkansas River Valley Nature Center	8300 Wells Lake Rd, Ft Smith, AR 72916
Wednesday, June 7, 2023 4:00-7:00pm	Little Rock	Port of Little Rock	10600 Industrial Harbor Drive, Little Rock, AR 72206
Thursday, June 8, 2023 4:00-7:00pm	Pine Bluff	Governor Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center (Pine Bluff)	1400 Black Dog Dr, Pine Bluff, AR 71601

At the workshops, storyboards were provided to detail the existing MKARNS project and the need and benefits of the authorized 12-foot channel (Attachment B). USACE staff were available to talk through the project and answer questions at the meeting. Comment forms were available at the workshops for participants to submit feedback (Attachment C).

## 2.2 Agency Involvement

Resource agencies were notified of the scoping comment period via a public notice (Attachment D) distributed by email. The following natural resource agencies were notified of the scoping comment period.

### Arkansas:

- Arkansas Department of Agriculture
- Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment, Division of Environmental Quality (ADEQ)
- Arkansas Department of Health (ADH)
- Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism
- Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism (ADPHT)
- Arkansas Department of Transportation
- Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC)
- Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC)
- Arkansas Waterways Commission
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Finance & Administration
- FEMA, Region VI
- National Park Service, Intermountain Region
- National Park Service, Midwest Region
- The Nature Conservancy, Arkansas Field Office
- Southwestern Power Administration (SWPA)
- Southwestern Power Resources Association
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Department of the Interior
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Geological Survey

### Oklahoma:

- FEMA, Region VI
- Oklahoma Archaeological Survey
- Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality
- Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
- Oklahoma Farm Bureau
- Oklahoma Water Resources Board
- Oklahoma Wheat Commission
- Southwestern Power Resources Association
- State Historic Preservation Office
- SWPA
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Department of the Interior

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Geological Survey

Two workshop-style meetings were held in Little Rock and Tulsa (Table 2). A total of 11 resource agency personnel attended the two agency workshop, with representation from ADEQ, ADH, ADPHT, AGFC, ANHC, and SWPA.

At the agency meetings, the primary topics discussed were impacts to energy and environmental resources. In Little Rock, the most frequent request was to provide more detail on impacts the project would have on aquatic resources like fishes, mussels, and gravel bars. No official comment submission from agencies was received on the aquatic resource concerns during the comment period, though these concerns are addressed in the SEA in the mitigation chapter.

**Table 2. Agency Scoping Meetings**

Date	City	Location	Address
Monday, June 5, 2023 1:00-3:00pm	Tulsa	Homewood Suites by Hilton Tulsa/Catoosa	201 Elliott Lane, Catoosa, OK 74015
Wednesday, June 7, 2023 1:00-3:00pm	Little Rock	Port of Little Rock	10600 Industrial Harbor Drive, Little Rock, AR 72206

### 2.3 Tribal Nation Involvement

The USACE has determined that Feasibility Study-related activities may have an effect upon properties potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and has consulted with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), Arkansas and Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPO), the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO), Cherokee Nation THPO, the Choctaw Nation THPO, the Oklahoma Archaeological Survey (OAS), and fifteen additional tribes with interest in the project area pursuant to Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (54 USC 306108) and its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800). All agreed that subsequent to completion of the NEPA documentation, a Programmatic Agreement (PA) shall be implemented to satisfy the Corps’ Section 106 responsibility for all individual aspects of the proposed action. A PA has been prepared and will be implemented by the USACE for the identification, evaluation, and treatment of cultural resources adversely affected by the Proposed Action. The draft PA is included in Appendix E to the SEA, along with documentation of communication and comments from the consulting parties.

### 3 Summary of Scoping Comments

USACE accepted comments on the MKARNS 12-Foot Channel throughout the scoping period from June 5, 2023, to July 8, 2023. Agencies, industry members, elected officials, members of the public, and other interested parties submitted a total of 19

letters, emails, online comment forms, and comment cards during this period. Table 3 provides a summary count of the topics discussed. While this table does not include every comment received, it provides a general summary of the topics most frequently submitted during the comment period. It should be noted that the combined numbers of comments listed in the summary table is greater than the total number of comment submissions as most people discussed multiple topics in their submission.

Among the 18 total comments submitted, 13 were positive and five were neutral, primarily with project-specific questions. Three of these comments were formal letters of support from the Arkansas Department of Commerce, The Arkansas Waterways Commission, and the Economic Development Corporation of Jefferson County, Arkansas. Additional comments were received from the Agricultural Council of Arkansas, the World Recovery Group, and the Conway County Judge, among other individuals.

**Table 3. Summary of Comments Received**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Related Comments Received and Count</b>
Pro-Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General support of the project – 13</li> </ul>
Commerce and Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports efficient transportation of goods – 6</li> <li>• Lowers transportation/product costs – 5</li> <li>• Supports critical commerce abilities – 5</li> <li>• Benefits employment and new industry – 3</li> <li>• Increases safety on roads and railways – 3</li> <li>• Cohesion with the Mississippi River – 2</li> <li>• Benefits the agricultural community– 1</li> </ul>
Flood Risk Management and Water Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MKARNS supports irrigation – 2</li> <li>• Deepening the channel would decrease flooding – 1</li> <li>• Concerns that deepening the channel would increase flooding – 1</li> <li>• Desire pools to be raised for irrigation – 1</li> </ul>
Environment and Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive effects on greenhouse gas emissions – 5</li> <li>• Concern for impacts to cultural resources – 1</li> <li>• Support for project if risk to environment is acceptable – 1</li> <li>• Decreases dependency on outside energy sources – 1</li> </ul>
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project is overdo/should begin as soon as possible – 5</li> </ul>

## 4 Additional Correspondence

Multiple news articles also addressed the request for comment on the MKARNS 12-Foot project. The articles are summarized and linked below (Table 4).

**Table 4. Summary of News Correspondence**

<b>Article Title</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Link</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Army Corps of Engineers Begins Effort to Deepen Arkansas River</b>	Arkansas Business	<a href="https://www.arkansasbusiness.com/article/145234/army-corps-of-engineers-begins-effort-to-deepen-arkansas-river">https://www.arkansasbusiness.com/article/145234/army-corps-of-engineers-begins-effort-to-deepen-arkansas-river</a>	Reposted on KSFM
<b>Corps seeks public input on Upper Miss channel deepening project</b>	WorkBoat	<a href="https://www.workboat.com/coastal-inland-waterways/corps-seeks-public-input-on-upper-miss-channel-deepening-project">https://www.workboat.com/coastal-inland-waterways/corps-seeks-public-input-on-upper-miss-channel-deepening-project</a>	
<b>Plans underway to deepen Arkansas River Navigation System</b>	40/29 News	<a href="https://www.4029tv.com/article/plans-underway-to-deepen-arkansas-river-navigation-system/44215500">https://www.4029tv.com/article/plans-underway-to-deepen-arkansas-river-navigation-system/44215500</a>	News report with transcript
<b>OPINION: EDITORIAL: Up around the bend</b>	Arkansas Democrat Gazette	<a href="https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2023/jun/14/up-around-the-bend/">https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2023/jun/14/up-around-the-bend/</a>	

## 5 Next Steps

The purpose of scoping is to provide an opportunity for the public, agencies, Tribal Nations, and other interested entities to comment on the purpose, need, and alternatives proposed for analysis, as well as aid the project development team in identifying issues that should be evaluated in the NEPA documentation. The SEA evaluates potential impacts resulting from the MKARNS 12-Foot Channel updated design and the 2023 DMMP. Comments received during scoping were thoroughly considered and incorporated where appropriate into the Draft SEA. An additional public comment period will be conducted to solicit additional feedback on the Draft SEA. An analysis of comments received during the draft comment period will be including in this appendix upon completion.



## **Attachment A: Public Scoping Notice**



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers** ®

# Public Notice

Date issued: May 26, 2023

Close of comment period: July 8, 2023

USACE Point of Contact: Kelly Dobroski

**TITLE:** McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System 12-ft Channel Deepening Public Open House Workshops & 30-day Comment Period

**SUBJECT:** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Little Rock and Tulsa Districts are initiating the preparation of a Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, for the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS) 12' Channel Deepening Project to account for potential changes in the project and changes in the project area. In 2005, the USACE completed an EIS for the MKARNS 12-foot project.

**REQUESTER:** US Army Corps of Engineers, Little Rock and Tulsa Districts

**DATES & LOCATION:** Public open house workshops will be held from 4:00pm to 7:00pm at the following dates and locations:

**June 5, 2023 - TULSA, OK**

Homewood Suites by Hilton Tulsa/Catoosa  
201 Elliott Lane, Catoosa, OK, 74015

**June 6, 2023 - FORT SMITH, AR**

Janet Huckabee Arkansas River Valley Nature Center  
8300 Wells Lake Rd, Ft Smith, AR 72916

**June 7, 2023 - LITTLE ROCK, AR**

Port of Little Rock  
10600 Industrial Harbor Drive, Little Rock, AR 72206

**June 8, 2023 - PINE BLUFF, AR**

Governor Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center  
1400 Black Dog Dr, Pine Bluff, AR 71601

**DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION:** This project would deepen the navigation channel to a minimum navigable depth of 12-ft throughout the MKARNS. This would require placing rock structures to scour the channel, dredging the channel, and utilizing in-water and upland dredge disposal sites throughout the project area. Additionally, some lock modifications are planned to accommodate the increase in vessel size that the deepened channel would allow. These changes are due to changes in river-sediment dynamics and changes in project area resources, such as federally protected species.

**REGULATORY AUTHORITY:** The MKARNS 12-ft Channel Deepening Project is authorized by Section 136 of the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act of 2004.

**SOLICITATION OF COMMENTS:** The USACE is soliciting comments from the public; federal, state, and local agencies and officials; federally recognized Tribes; and other interested parties to consider and evaluate the impacts of the proposed alteration. Comments received will be considered by the USACE to determine whether to modify this action. The public comment period will begin June 5, 2023 and end July 8, 2023. At each workshop, project information will be available for viewing and USACE staff will be available for discussions. Project information provided at the workshops will also be available for viewing at:

<https://www.swl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Planning/MKARNS-12-foot-Channel/12-footchannel-documents/>

It is presumed that all parties receiving this notice will wish to respond to this public notice, therefore, a lack of response will be interpreted as meaning that there is no objection to the proposed alteration as described herein.

**CLOSE OF COMMENT PERIOD:** Comments must be submitted in writing and mailed to "U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ATTN: Kelly Dobroski (RPEC), 2000 Fort Point Rd, Galveston, TX 77550" post-marked by July 8, 2023. Comments can also be submitted electronically to [CESWL-NAV-MKARNS12FOOTCHANNEL@usace.army.mil](mailto:CESWL-NAV-MKARNS12FOOTCHANNEL@usace.army.mil), or online at: <https://www.swl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Planning/MKARNS-12-foot-Channel/Comment-Card/>

## **Attachment B: Workshop Story Boards**

## MKARNS 12-Foot Channel

**What is it?**

- Authorized under Section 136 of the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act of 2004, the MKARNS 12-Foot Channel purpose is to improve commercial navigation operation by deepening the current 9-foot navigation channel to a 12-foot operational depth. Over 85% of the MKARNS is already at this 12-foot operational depth.

**Why is it needed?**


- Deepening the channel will allow the existing inland commercial fleet to sail at deeper drafts that are consistent with those on the Lower Mississippi River and load more cargo onto their barges thereby lowering transportation costs. This benefits producers and consumers throughout the region and nation. Roughly \$5 billion of goods are moved on the MKARNS annually. In addition, shipping more cargo on the MKARNS versus road or rail may have the added benefit of reducing landside congestion on roads and railways. Lastly, air emissions from barges on ton per mile basis are far less than trucks or rail.

1

## MKARNS 12-Foot Channel Construction Features

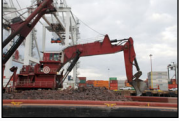
Features are designed based on updated hydrologic and sediment modeling done since 2021 and include:

**Rock weirs**



Re-directive or resistive structures that use the river's energy to deepen and enhance the navigation channel, increase environmental diversity, and maintain system status.

**Dredging**



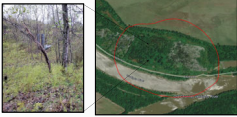
Removal of sediment and debris from the channel to allow ships to pass and maintain river flow.

2

## MKARNS 12-Foot Channel Construction Features


Features are designed based on updated hydrologic and sediment modeling done since 2021 and include:

**Upland disposal sites**



Disposal sites allow dredge material to be used to improve habitat. Image depicts habitat available after fill placement.

**Lock modifications**



Modifications strengthen locks to accommodate barges with a draft of more than 9ft.

3

## MKARNS 12-Foot Benefits

- Increased cargo capacity by deepening the channel
- Potentially reduces roadway congestion by allowing more cargo to ship on the MKARNS, rather than using truck and rail routes
- Beneficial use options available for dredge material
- Deepening the channel will allow the existing inland commercial fleet to sail at deeper drafts that are consistent with those on the Lower Mississippi River



4

## MKARNS 12-Foot Schedule

July 8, 2023	Late summer or fall 2023	Late 2023/early 2024	2025
• Comment period ends	• Draft SEA available for review and comment	• Final SEA available	• Construction begins

5

## How Can You Participate?

- Today's Workshop**
  - Review information on the display boards and handouts
  - Ask the USACE Staff questions
- How to Provide Comments (4 options)**
  - Place comment cards in comment box tonight
  - Submit comments online at: <https://www.swl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Planning/MKARNS-12-foot-Channel/Comment-Card/>
  - E-mail comments to: [CESWL-NAV-MKARNS12FOOTCHANNEL@usace.army.mil](mailto:CESWL-NAV-MKARNS12FOOTCHANNEL@usace.army.mil)
  - Mail comments to:
 

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
 Attn: Kelly Dobroski (RPEC)  
 2000 Fort Point Rd.  
 Galveston, TX 77550

Comments must be postmarked by: July 8, 2023

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## **Attachment C: Comment Card**



US Army Corps of Engineers®

# Public Workshop

## Comment Form

### MKARNS 12-Foot Channel

**Questions, comments, or suggestions?**

Your input on the MKARNS 12-Foot Channel is valuable. Your participation is key to developing the Supplemental Environmental Assessment that is being developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Please write your questions, comments, or suggestions in the space provided below. Feel free to use additional pages if needed. Forms may be submitted at the public workshop or by July 8, 2023, to the address below. Thank you for your participation!

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**Optional Information (used for mailing list to keep you informed and will not be used for any other purpose):**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone:(\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail or email comment sheet to the following Point of Contact:**

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ATTN: Kelly Dobroski (RPEC)  
2000 Fort Point Rd, Galveston, TX 77550

**Email:** [ceswl-nav-mkarns12footchannel@usace.army.mil](mailto:ceswl-nav-mkarns12footchannel@usace.army.mil)

Comments can be submitted electronically. On-line comment sheets and additional information can be found at the following:

<https://www.swl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Planning/MKARNS-12-foot-Channel>



**Attachment D: Agency Scoping Notice**



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
LITTLE ROCK DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
POST OFFICE BOX 867  
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72203-0867

May 25, 2023

## **McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System 12-ft Channel Deepening Federal and State Agency Workshop Notification**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Little Rock and Tulsa Districts are initiating the preparation of a Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, for the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS) 12' Channel Deepening Project, authorized by Section 136 of the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act of 2004.

The USACE is requesting information and comments that would assist in preparing the SEA. Two Federal and State Agency workshops will be held to accommodate agency staff in Oklahoma and Arkansas. The purpose of these meetings is to provide a project overview and discuss agency coordination efforts.

### **Tulsa, OK Federal, and State Agency Workshop**

June 5, 2023 - 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
Homewood Suites by Hilton Tulsa/Catoosa (Great Room)  
201 Elliott Lane, Catoosa, OK 74015

### **Little Rock, AR Federal, and State Agency Workshop**

June 7, 2023, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
Port of Little Rock  
10600 Industrial Harbor Drive, Little Rock, AR 72206

If you are unable to attend one of these workshops, the USACE will host public workshops from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on the same days at each location to provide a project overview, allow the public to ask questions from USACE staff, and accept comments. You are welcome to attend one of these meetings as well.

The focus of the Supplemental EA is to assess and/or update the analyses previously completed for deepening the MKARNS to 12 feet, as project design and needs may have changed since the analyses conducted as part of the 2005 Arkansas River Navigation Study Final Feasibility Report (FR) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The SEA will capture any additional project benefits and adverse impacts on the environmental conditions within the project area not previously analyzed or disclosed in previous NEPA documents. The previous documents and additional project history are available to view at:

**<https://www.swl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Planning/MKARNS-12-foot-Channel/>**

Your agency has been identified as having interest in the proposed project based on your jurisdiction by law and/or special expertise. As the lead Federal agency under



NEPA, in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) final implementing regulations for NEPA (40 CFR § 1501.6 and § 1508.5), we invite you to be a Participating Agency with the USACE in the development of the SEA. As a Participating Agency, you would be requested to provide the following during development of the Draft SEA:

- Participation in coordination meetings, and/or field visits;
- Meaningful and early input on the overall scope of the document, analyses and assessment methodologies, range of alternatives, and proposed mitigation;
- Identification of the impacts and important issues to be addressed in the Draft SEA pertaining to the intersection of the alternatives with the resource(s) in your jurisdiction;
- Guidance on relevant technical studies as required for the Draft SEA; and
- Timely review and comment on NEPA documents that explain the views and concerns of the agency on the adequacy of the document, anticipated impacts, and mitigation.

If your agency does not wish to be a Participating Agency, the USACE respectfully requests that you decline this invitation in writing, indicating that your agency (A)(I) has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the project; (II) has no expertise or information relevant to the project; or (III) does not have adequate funds to participate in the project and does not intend to submit comments on the project; or (B) does not intend to submit comments on the project. Please note, your designation as a Participating Agency does not imply you support the proposed project nor does it diminish or otherwise modify your agency's independent statutory obligations and responsibilities under applicable federal laws, regulations, and Executive Orders.

In order to give your agency adequate opportunity to weigh the relevance of your participation in the environmental review process, a written response to accept or decline this invitation is requested by July 8, 2023. Your written response may be transmitted electronically to Mr. Craig Hilburn, Biologist, Environmental Branch, Regional Planning and Environmental Center at David.C.Hilburn@usace.army.mil or by mail to "U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ATTN: Craig Hilburn (RPEC), 700 West Capitol Avenue, Room 7500, Little Rock, AR 72203." Mr. Hilburn may also be reached by telephone at 501-324-5735 for any questions you may have.

We look forward to working with your agency to prepare the SEA.

Sincerely,

*Brandon Wadlington*

Brandon Wadlington  
Chief, NEPA & Natural Resources Section  
Regional Planning and Environmental Center

## **Attachment E: Letters of Support Received**



Sarah Huckabee Sanders  
GOVERNOR

Hugh McDonald  
SECRETARY OF COMMERCE

June 30, 2023

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Attn: Kelly Dobroski (RPEC)  
2000 Fort Point Rd.  
Galveston, TX 77550

RE: MKARNS 12-Foot Channel Supplemental Environmental Assessment

Dear Ms. Dobroski:

The Arkansas Department of Commerce is fully supportive of the MKARNS 12-foot channel project.

This project would significantly increase Arkansas' ability to compete for major industrial development projects with adjacent states that currently have the ability to load each barge with up to 43% more cargo on the deeper channel of the lower Mississippi River.

The MKARNS 12-foot channel will dramatically decrease the number of trucks on Arkansas highways, reduce the amount of fuel consumed and emissions released, increase highway safety, and lower transportation costs. The resulting energy savings, reduction in greenhouse gasses and other environmental advantages demonstrate this project is a win-win, not only for the Natural State, but for all concerned.

Our nation faces ever-growing dependence on others for energy as well as the need to protect and improve our environment. Greater use and development of our navigable inland waterways will significantly help in relieving these problems. The 12-foot channel is vital to economic and environmental success, and it will enable Arkansas to compete favorably for new jobs and continued economic growth.

We urge the project to continue without delay and look forward to a 12-foot channel.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hugh McDonald', written over a blue horizontal line.

Hugh McDonald  
Secretary



Hugh McDonald  
SECRETARY OF COMMERCE

Cassandra Caldwell  
DIRECTOR,  
ARKANSAS WATERWAYS  
COMMISSION

June 27, 2023

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Attn: Kelly Dobroski (RPEC)  
2000 Fort Point Rd.  
Galveston, TX 77550

Subject: MKARNS 12-foot Channel Supplemental Environmental Assessment

Dear Ms. Dobroski:

The Arkansas Waterways Commission expresses its highest recommendation and support for the execution of the MKARNS 12-foot channel project.

While the economic benefits of commercial navigation are frequently in the spotlight, the many positive environmental benefits of waterborne transportation are too often passed over with a minimum of concern and not given the recognition they deserve.

Barge transportation is over ten times more fuel efficient than trucks. The improvements under consideration in this project will further reduce the emissions of the transportation mode that already boasts the smallest carbon footprint. A 12-foot navigation channel will make an efficient system even more so without detriment to other beneficiaries. The combination of fuel savings, reduction in greenhouse gases and pollution resulting from the ability to load over 1/3 more cargo in each barge is beneficial for the environment and the economy, alike.

Global trade is predicted to increase by 70% in the next seven years. The importance of this critical resource as a freight transportation artery can only grow as our interstates and rail lines continue to become more congested. If we are to maintain the quality of life that we enjoy today, it is imperative that we invest in the greenest and most efficient means of transportation.

The Commission deeply appreciates the extraordinary time and effort the US Army Corps of Engineers, Little Rock and Tulsa Districts have given to communicate to and elicit input from MKARNS stakeholders. Please let us know how we may assist forward progress on this project.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Caldwell  
Director  
Arkansas Waterways Commission

# Economic Development Corporation of Jefferson County, AR

P.O. Box 5069 ♦ Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71611 ♦ Phone 870.535.0110 ♦ Fax 870.535.1643

June 23, 2023

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Attention: RPEC-12 ft. Channel  
2000 Fort Point Road  
Galveston, Texas 77550

Dear U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,

The Economic Development Corporation of Jefferson County, Arkansas (EDCJC) is in support of the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS) 12-Foot Channel Deepening Project. We believe the project will help existing industry, in addition to recruiting new industry, to the Jefferson County area since each additional foot of draft would allow a barge to carry another 200 tons of cargo.

The EDCJC offers a financial assistance program to help qualified businesses in Jefferson County, or looking to locate in Jefferson County, to offset the costs of capital expansion projects, creating new jobs, and/or training workers. The EDCJC is committed to helping industry grow and expand in Jefferson County and this deepening project would help achieve this goal. It would help lower transportation costs as well as improve air quality since emissions from barges on a ton-per-mile basis are far less than other means of transportation.

Lastly, inland waterways transportation is one of the safest, most economical, and fuel-efficient ways to move our nation's goods for use domestically and export. The MKARNS is vital to the economy of Arkansas as whole, but especially Jefferson County. With a consistent 12-foot channel, the MKARNS would have the capacity to carry as much as 40-45 million tons, placing us in a more competitive position when we talk to prospective businesses looking to call Jefferson County home.

Sincerely,



W. Scott McGeorge  
Chairman of the Board