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Memphis District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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Cooperation, collaboration, communication

## **Memphis hosts regional environmental cooperation meeting**

**by Jim Pogue**  
Chief, Public Affairs Office

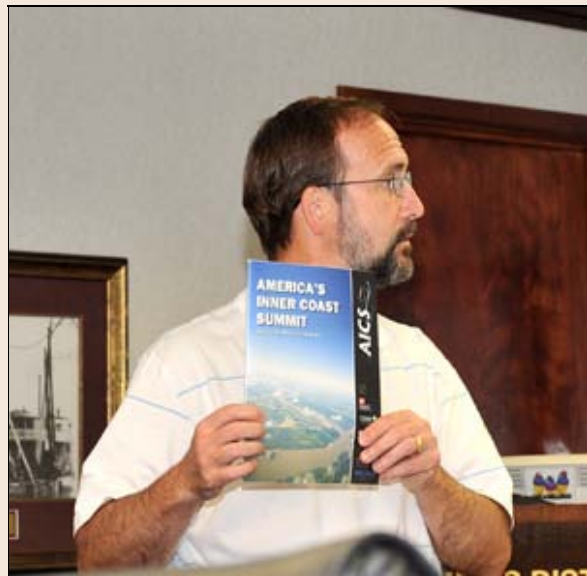
Corps of Engineers Senior Regional Biologist Dr. David Vigh said a meeting held at the Memphis District headquarters Nov. 30 – Dec. 1 broke new ground in the area of environmental cooperation.

"This is the first time any (Corps of Engineers) division has brought all their districts together with a majority of their non-governmental organization (NGO) partners in one room at one time," he said. Vigh is based at the Corps' Mississippi Valley Division in Vicksburg, Miss.

The meeting organizers set out ambitious goals for the diverse group of government and NGO participants.

"We're here to try and improve regional communications and develop some out-of-the-box projects and programs to leverage resources and improve partnering results," Vigh said. "We also want to put names and faces together, and find ways to work together as one team."

In addition to participants from six Corps of Engineers districts across the region, other attendees included representatives from Ducks Unlimited, Inc., The Nature Conservancy, the National Audubon Society, the University of Minnesota, the Sand County Foundation, the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association, the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center, the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee and Delta F.A.R.M. A total of 24 people participated in the meeting.



Cheryl Ramsey photo  
**Corps of Engineers Senior Regional Biologist Dr. David Vigh talks about the "Inner Coast Summit" held earlier this year..**



Cheryl Ramsey photo

**Col. Vernie Reichling (center) kicks off the meeting by addressing the attendees in Memphis District's conference room.**

Memphis District Commander Col. Vernie Reichling kicked off the meeting with opening remarks.

"This is all very much in line with Gen. Walsh's 200-year Vision of 'Bringing People to the River and supporting a sustainable watershed,'" he said. "We've already done some great work together, and there's more great work ahead here in

the Mississippi River watershed."

Col. Reichling highlighted cooperative efforts now underway between the Memphis District and The Nature Conservancy to begin work on a proposed ecosystem restoration project on Arkansas' lower Cache River.

"We have similar goals in mind," Col. Reichling said. "Cooperation, collaboration and communication are keys to successful partnerships. If everyone can see themselves in the end state, we can all get there together."

Col. Reichling also spoke about the way the Corps now approaches all its projects.

"Today's Corps sits down with its partners to identify and create solutions," he said. "We're interested in finding where we can strike partnerships, seeing where we have like interests and then moving forward."

Presentations on the first day of the conference included a review of current Memoranda of Understanding and Memoranda of Agreement, partnering efforts in the Mississippi Valley Division, a rundown on current cooperative efforts between the Corps' St. Louis District and The Nature Conservancy, and individual presentations from each of the NGOs attending.

Day two included a Corps Headquarters review of appropriate guidance and partnering successes from a national perspective, discussion on how to take the St. Louis cooperative model to a regional level, then a look at short-term and long-term goals and actions for the group. The group came up with 11 short- and long-term goals.

"I thought it was a great conference and effort on the part of the Corps to establish new partnerships and actively seek out organizations interested in doing ecosystem restoration," Matt Lindsey, Delta Project Manager at The Nature Conservancy's Arkansas Field Office in Little Rock.

Memphis District Planning Chief Edward Lambert said organizers hope to meet again next spring to follow-up on this initial meeting and develop more detailed plans for action.



Cheryl Ramsey photo

**Matt Lindsey, Delta Project Manager at the Nature Conservancy's Arkansas Field Office in Little Rock shares his view about the partnership with the group.**

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