

cl

REPLY TO:

- 136 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1501
(202) 224-3744
TTY: (202) 224-4479
e-mail: chuck_grassley@grassley.senate.gov
- 721 FEDERAL BUILDING
210 WALNUT STREET
DES MOINES, IA 50309-2140
(515) 284-4890
- 206 FEDERAL BUILDING
101 1ST STREET SE.
CEDAR RAPIDS, IA 52401-1227
(319) 383-8832

REPLY TO:

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320 6TH STREET
SIOUX CITY, IA 51101-1244
(712) 233-1880
- 210 WATERLOO BUILDING
631 COMMERCIAL STREET
WATERLOO, IA 50701-6491
(319) 232-8867
- 116 FEDERAL BUILDING
131 E. 4TH STREET
DAVENPORT, IA 52801-1613
(683) 322-4331
- 307 FEDERAL BUILDING
8 SOUTH 6TH STREET
COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA 51601-4204
(712) 322-7103

United States Senate

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1501

December 12, 2002

Colonel William . . Bayles
District Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Clock Tower Building
P.O. Box 2004
Rock Island, Illinois 61204-2004

Re: Coralville Lake
Proposed Lease - Muslim Youth Camps of America

Dear Colonel Bayles:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter and other information from Mrs. Andrea Elliott, North Liberty regarding the Environmental Assessment for the Coralville Lake in connection with the proposed lease to the Muslim Youth Camps of America, **and** the Coralville Lake Master Plan. Mrs. Elliott is concerned the environmental assessment was not a serious assessment, but a validation of the Corps position.

Mrs. Elliott reports the Environmental Assessment has mislocated or failed to locate the location of residential neighborhood wells. She states the Coralville Lake Master Plan designates the site as Low Density Recreation rather than Recreation Intensive Use.

She requests the comment period for the Environmental Assessment be extended because the current period falls over three major holidays, making examination of the document and comments difficult.

I would appreciate any information you could send me regarding this matter. Please direct your response to my Cedar Rapids office.

Thank you for your attention to my request.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator

Committee Assignments:

BUDGET
JUDICIARY

CO-CHAIRMAN,
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
CONTROL CAUCUS

RANKING,
FINANCE CEG/mld

December 11, 2002

Andrea Elliott
3480 Cumberland Ridge Road
North Liberty, Iowa 52317
david-elliott@uiowa.edu

The Honorable Charles Grassley
United States Senator
206 Federal Building
101 1st Street SE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401

Dear Senator Grassley,

33-31 Many residents living in the North Liberty area are opposed to the Muslim Youth Camp of America (MYCA) leasing land from the Corps of Engineers to build a camp. The City of North Liberty and the Johnson County Board of Supervisors also consider this a misuse of federal land, as well having the potential to have significant impact on them and the infrastructure.

6-9 [The land has always been a primitive area, even when leased by the Girl Scouts, and was always available for public use. The Girl Scouts leased the land in the 1970's and 1980's, building a 30x50-foot lodge and a few tent platforms. There were usually no more than 32 people on site and it was only used a few weeks or weekends a year. At other times, school groups or the general public had access. The proposed MYCA camp accommodates between 150 and 300 people, has a two-story convention center 70 x 250 feet right on the water with a 36 foot prayer tower, a private beach, and a large parking area capable of handling buses. It also has 10 year round cabins with showers and toilets, in addition to twelve tent platforms and central bathroom.]
30-9 [The complex will require removing over 5 acres of hardwood forest and perhaps dredging or filling in wetlands. Keep in mind that this camp location is a narrow strip of land 600-700 feet wide, encompassing about a mile of shoreline on Coralville Lake.]
8-10 [The land is sloped steeply toward the lake and erosion is already a problem, without removing acres of trees and vegetation.]

13-6 [The Environmental Assessment (EA) was just completed and has many flaws. The residential neighborhood wells are mislocated by 400 feet, or not located at all.]
13-5 [The current state laws regarding separation distances from the lake, the residences, and wells would make siting a wastewater treatment system impossible. The camp is hoping the regulations will be changed or that the DNR will grant them a variance.]
13-17 [Even with the variance, it is still almost impossible to locate a sewage treatment system, but the EA misrepresented the dimensions and the steep slopes of the site. A few readings using a GPS unit make this quite clear.]

6-1 [In the EA, the sole reason for choosing the MYCA plan as the preferred alternative was based on a false premise. They said it was preferred because the 1977 Coralville Lake Master Plan designated the site as Recreational-intensive Use. In fact, if you go back to the 1977 Master Plan, or even the updated OMP's, there is no such designation. On the contrary, it is designated as part Low Density Recreation (LR) and

part Reserve Forest Land (RF), see attached document on the Natural Resources Inventory dated February 1990.

22-11 [There have been many concerns about this development on federal land, some of which were expressed at a public comment period in July 2000, all of which were considered invalid in the EA. With a facility that can accommodate 200 for a seminar or wedding, the on site parking is not adequate. Concerns about camp users parking on the narrow county road or on the private residential road are well founded. The access site is in the midst of a residential area.] A noise study used a traffic model, but noise from 150-200 campers just 300 feet from rural private homes was never addressed. There is potential for additional noise sources at a camp, like amplified sound, bells or a "call to prayer" five times a day. There would be significant impact by the need for lighting the facility and the entrance road.

25-7
25-9
23-6
9-7- Construction of the camp and the constant human presence, besides possible security fencing, would affect animal habitat and animal movement. Wildlife would be displaced into the neighborhood and roads. This land is directly across the river from the McBride Nature Center leased by the University of Iowa and developed for wildlife education of school groups and the general public. They have a raptor center and an osprey release program. There is an osprey-nesting platform opposite them, which is located about 200 feet from the MYCA convention center.

22-5 [Johnson County has a major concern with the chip seal road, which would have to accommodate the additional traffic. The vehicles, including buses, would travel two miles on Scales Bend Road, which has blind curves, steep embankments and is approaching maximum capacity for chip seal roads. Both my husband and I in separate incidents, have run off this section of the road in the first year we lived here and had to be towed out of a ditch. It is dangerous anytime, but especially in bad weather, and especially to the unfamiliar traveler.]

6-6
7-17 In summary, we are shocked by this unprecedented use of this federal land without regard to any of the clear impacts. The facility is without equal anywhere on Coralville Lake. Indeed, the lodge at Lake McBride State Park is one story and only 30 x 100 feet. The permanent closure of this valuable resource to allow a private, religious use of the land seems to violate the Establishment Clause. MYCA has clearly expressed that it will not be able to allow access to the site if they lease it, because of three concerns. They need to protect their multi-million dollar investment and will have a caretaker residence at the gate, they don't want to cover insurance costs of injury liability, and they are concerned with nuisance lawsuits by "hostile neighbors." The leased land borders on private property, which has been open to the public for the last 30 years with primitive trails and signs welcoming people to Sherwood Forest. These trails will have to be closed if the Corps leases the land to MYCA because the trails provide access to the public to the shoreline through that federal land.

2-3 [It is important to stop this lease application from being approved. The Corps refused to give equal consideration to other lease applications.] The Corps had planned to issue the lease two and a half years ago, but was delayed for the Environmental Assessment. It was not a serious assessment, but rather one that validated the Corps own position. If the application is approved before the permits and variances are granted, and they cannot comply with regulations, MYCA can tie up the land for at least the next 20 years. The Corps seems eager to find other groups to manage their land for them.

32-5

6-1
However the 1977 Master Plan states that "The relative value of the forest resource is perhaps even higher in Johnson County because of the large urban populations in and near the county. Emphasis **will** be continued on those management policies which encourage recreationists to use the forested areas around Coralville Lake in their natural state with a **minimum** of manmade developments."

6-1
21-1
I would like you to **ask** the Corps of Engineers some questions about signing a lease for a large development without precedent on Coralville Lake where the land can not accommodate a wastewater treatment facility. I would also like you to ask to see original documentation from the Corps Master Plan designating this site Recreational-Intensive Use. I would also ask that you encourage them to extend the public comment period since it falls over three major holidays when many people are preoccupied or traveling. The experts (Zambrana Engineering) had two and a half years to review the data and concerned citizens are given 45 days. If there is any information you can assist us with, or if you would like to visit the site; please contact us as soon as possible. The public comment period expires on January 2, 2003.]

Sincerely,



Andrea Elliott

RESOURCE INVENTORY

SPECIAL COMPARTMENT CONSIDERATIONS

COMPARTMENT **NAME** AND/OR NUMBER: **Daybreak**

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: Mostly **upland mixed hardwood forest habitat**. The soils of **Daybreak** compartment have been designated forest soils in the Soil Survey of Johnson County; however, the **vegetation** found in **daybreak S-02 & 03** suggest a highly degraded prairie.

NO. OF SEGMENTS: 52

COUNTY: Johnson

DISTURBANCE: Compartment contains the **Mehaffey Bridge** maintenance **complex** and the **Camp Daybreak** Girl Scout Camp.

AERIAL PHOTOS NUMBER: 425, 427 and 811

ACREAGE: 564

OUTSIDE AGENCY INVOLVEMENT: Girl Scouts of America

WILDLIFE AND FISH RESOURCE: On numerous occasions **Bald Eagles, Osprey, and Red-tailed Hawks** have been seen perched in the **mature hardwood** trees along the shoreline of the **Daybreak** compartment. **Neotropical migrants** such as the **Cerulean Warblers, Acadian Flycatchers, Ovenbirds, Red-eyed Vireos** and a **Veery** were **observed during** the **1994** breeding/nesting **season**.

CULTURAL RESOURCES:

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PRESCRIPTIONS: The mature oak-hickory forest will be **managed** to **increase** the quality and rate of growth of the **desirable** canopy trees. 70 acres of the **Daybreak** Compartment underwent a timber stand improvement **during** the late **winter/early** spring months of 1990. **Daybreak S-02 & 03** will continue to be managed as tallgrass prairie habitat. Prescribed burns have been conducted on 3 occasions, and brush removal was undertaken during **the** fall of 1993.

ACCESS: Most **areas** are only capable of being reached **from** private property. **Daybreak S-02 & 03** are accessible from the **Cumberland Ridge** Subdivision. The owners of **Sherwood Forest** to the south of **Camp Daybreak** have granted the Corps permission to walk across their property to reach **public** land.

04/01/95

Coralville
Natural Resource Inventory System
Compartment Report

2/17/90

Physical Information For Compartment: daybrea

| Compartment | Segment | Land Cat | Map# | Mgmt Use | Habitat Type | Acreage | Geomorph Type | Soil |
|-------------|---------|----------|--------|----------|--------------|---------|---------------|-------|
| daybrea | 01 | RF | 811.00 | C2 | DF | 13.0 | U | 163E |
| daybrea | 02 | RF | 811.00 | C1 | GR | 13.0 | U | 163E |
| daybrea | 03 | RF | 811.00 | C1 | PE | 1.0 | U | 16302 |
| daybrea | 04 | RF | 811.00 | C2 | OF | 2.0 | U | 163G |
| daybrea | 05 | RF | 811.00 | C2 | DF | 11.0 | U | 163C |
| daybrea | 06 | RF | 811.00 | C2 | DF | 5.0 | U | 163C |
| daybrea | 07 | LR | 811.00 | C2 | DF | 9.0 | U | 1630 |
| daybrea | 08 | LR | 811.00 | C2 | DF | 20.0 | U | 163C |
| daybrea | 03 | LR | 811.00 | C2 | DF | 21.0 | U | 163F |
| daybrea | 10 | LR | 811.00 | C2 | DF | 4.0 | U | 163C |
| daybrea | 11 | LR | 811.00 | C2 | DF | 18.0 | U | 163G |
| daybrea | 12 | RF | 811.00 | C2 | DF | 29.0 | U | 1636 |
| daybrea | 13 | RF | 811.00 | C2 | DF | 20.0 | U | 1636 |
| daybrea | 14 | RF | 811.00 | C1 | DF | 32.0 | B | 163E2 |
| daybrea | 15 | RF | 811.00 | C2 | DF | 8.0 | U | 1630 |
| daybrea | 16 | LR | 425.00 | C2 | DF | 4.5 | U | 16302 |
| daybrea | 17 | LR | 425.00 | C2 | DF | 7.0 | U | 1636 |
| daybrea | 18 | LR | 425.00 | T5 | DF | 15.0 | U | 163D |
| daybrea | 19 | LR | 425.00 | T5 | DF | 9.0 | U | 729B |
| daybrea | 20 | LR | 425.00 | C1 | WE | 3.0 | B | 729B |
| daybrea | 21 | LR | 425.00 | C2 | DF | 3.0 | U | 729B |
| Daybrea | 22 | LR | 425.00 | C2 | DF | 25.0 | U | 163D2 |
| daybraa | 23 | LR | 425.00 | C2 | DF | 3.5 | U | 163E2 |
| daybrea | 24 | LR | 425.00 | C2 | DF | 14.0 | U | 163E2 |
| daybrea | 25 | LR | 425.00 | C2 | DF | 6.0 | U | 163E2 |
| daybrea | 26 | LR | 425.00 | C2 | DF | 11.5 | U | 163E2 |
| daybrea | 27 | LR | 425.00 | C2 | DF | 11.0 | U | 163E2 |
| daybrea | 28 | LR | 425.00 | C2 | DF | 13.0 | U | 163F? |
| daybrea | 29 | LR | 427.00 | C2 | DF | 4.0 | U | 163G |
| daybrea | 30 | LR | 427.00 | C2 | DF | 13.0 | U | 163G |
| daybrea | 31 | RF | 427.00 | C2 | DF | 6.0 | U | 163G |
| daybrea | 32 | LR | 427.00 | C3 | MA | 4.0 | U | 163G |
| Daybrea | 35 | LR | 427.30 | C1 | FB | 21.0 | B | 1316 |
| daytree | 34 | LR | 427.00 | T5 | MA | 1.0 | U | 163E2 |
| daybrea | 35 | LR | 427.00 | 52 | OF | 8.0 | U | 163G |
| daybrea | 36 | LR | 427.00 | C2 | DF | 9.0 | U | 163C2 |
| daytree | 37 | LR | 427.00 | C2 | DF | 37.0? | U | 163C2 |
| daybrea | 38 | LR | 427.00 | C2 | DF | 19.0 | U | 1632 |
| daybrea | 39 | LP | 427.00 | C2 | DF | 7.0 | U | 163G |
| daybrea | 40 | LR | 427.00 | C2 | OF | 21.0 | U | 1316 |
| Daybre | 41 | LR | 427.00 | C2 | ER | 13.0 | U | 163C |
| daybrea | 42 | LR | 427.03 | C1 | SA | 7.0 | A | 163C |
| daybrea | 43 | LR | 427.00 | C2 | DF | 3.0 | U | 163C |
| daytree | 44 | LR | 427.00 | C2 | DF | 4.0 | U | 163G |
| daybrea | 45 | LR | 427.00 | C1 | DF | 15.0 | U | 163G |
| daybrea | 46 | LR | 427.00 | C2 | DF | 4.0 | U | 163D2 |

Total Acreage **540.5**



-

Physical Information For Compartment: daybrea

| Compartment | Segment | Land Cat | Map# | Mgmt Use | Habitat Type | Acreage | Geomorph Type | Soil |
|-------------|---------|----------|--------|----------|--------------|---------|---------------|-------|
| daybra | 47 | LR | 427.00 | C1 | SA | 13.0 | U | 16362 |
| daybrea | 48 | LR | 427.00 | C2 | DF | 3.0 | U | 1316 |
| daybrea | 49 | LR | 427.00 | C2 | DF | 3.0 | U | 163E |
| daybrea | 50 | LR | 427.00 | C1 | SA | 10.0 | U | 16302 |
| daybrea | 51 | LR | 425.00 | C2 | GR | 3.0 | U | 163C |
| daybrea | 52 | LR | 425.00 | C2 | BR | 6.0 | U | 163E2 |

Total Acreage 565.5

A, Segment numbers are **arbitrarily assigned** to the various segments (stands) and entered on **the NRIS** inventory sheet, **stored in** the NRIS **and** drawn on the acetate overlay **kept in** the compartment file and indexed to a **set** of segment prescriptions.

B. The segment description (**NRIS** data sheet) contains the following information:

1. Segment Number
2. Computer Abbreviated Compartment Name
3. Land Allocation Category Code
4. **Aerial** Photographic Number (**1984 Infra-Red**) containing segment.
6. Management Use Delegation Code
6. Habitat Type Code
7. Acres Contained in Segment
8. **Geomorphic** Type Code
9. **Soil Type** Code (Johnson County Soil Survey)
10. **Slope** Percent
11. Aspect Code
12. Elevation in **Feet NGVD:** Lower & Upper
13. Square Feet of Basal **Area**
14. Age of **a** Typical Dominant Species Individual
15. Growth - Number of **annual** rings in outer inch of growth
16. Number of Den **Trees**
17. Size **Class** Code
18. Average **Understory** Height
19. Observed Understory Species **1, 2, 3**
20. Dominant Species Observed **1, 2, 3**
21. **Notable** Other Species **Observed 1, 2, 3, 4, 5**
22. **Treatment** Prescription **Code** Plus Date **Planned &** Completed

The following codes and descriptions are used in processing the NRIS reports:

LAND ALLOCATION CATEGORY

These categories can be found in the project master plan:

| CODE | DESCRIPTION |
|------|-------------------------|
| PO | Project Operations |
| HR | High Density Recreation |
| LR | Low Density Recreation |
| WM | Wildlife Management |
| RF | Reserve Forestland |
| NA | Natural Area |

For land areas that do not fit in any of the above categories, the symbol "UC" is used to designate "unclassified".

MANAGEMENT USE DESIGNATION

This designation consists of two parts. The first is a letter code which designates the agency that manages the segment. The second is a number code that designates the short range management goals.

The following agency codes designate responsibility of the management of the segment:

| CODE | DESCRIPTION |
|------|--|
| C | Full management of the segment retained by the Corps. |
| F | Management of fish and wildlife resources leased to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, remaining management retained by Corps. |
| S | Management of fish and wildlife resources leased to the states thru the US Fish and Wildlife Service, remaining management of the segment retained by the Corps. |
| U | Management of the segment leased to a city for a special use. The Corps would insure that the leasee is following the requirement of the lease. |
| T | Management of the segment leased to a state for a special use. The Corps would insure that the leasee is following the requirements of the lease. |

- O Management of the segment leased to a county for a special use. The Corps would insure that the leasee is following the requirements of the lease.
- B Management of the segment leased to a private business. The businessman may be a small concessionaire or a major corporation. The Corps would insure that the leasee is following the requirements of the lease.
- P Management of the segment leased to a private individual. The Corps would insure that the leasee is following the requirements of the lease.

The short: range management goals are coded as follows:

| CODE | DESCRIPTIONS |
|------|--|
| 1 | Wildlife Management. Produce and maintain habitat: for game and nongame wildlife. |
| 2 | Forest Management. Maintain future forest cover in a healthy productive condition to meet project goals. |
| 3 | Intensive Recreation. Maintain intensively used recreation area. |
| 4 | Low Density Recreation. Area used for low impact recreation such as hiking. |
| 5 | Operations. Areas used to conduct operation of the project. |

HABITAT TYPE

The habitat types which best describe the vegetative habitat of the segments are as follows:

| CODE | TYPE | DESCRIPTION |
|------|---------|---|
| PR | Prairie | Grasslands of native grasses and forbs. |



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ROCK ISLAND DISTRICT, CORPS OF **ENGINEERS**
CLOCK TOWER BUILDING - P.O. BOX 2004
ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS 61204-2004

December 20,2002

Planning, Programs, and
Project Management **Division**

Honorable Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator
206 Federal Building
101 -1st Street SE.
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401-1227

Dear Senator Grassley:

I am writing in response to your letter of December 12,2002, and the accompanying December 11, 2002, letter you received from Mrs. Andrea Elliott of North Liberty, Iowa, regarding the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed lease at Coralville Lake.

A neutral party, Zambrana Engineering, Inc (ZEI), prepared the Coralville EA. This EA evaluated four alternatives (three different levels of use and development and no action). Due to the controversial nature of this project, the Rock Island District of the **U.S** Army Corps of Engineers (*Corps*) and ZEI have worked very diligently to ensure public and environmental concerns were addressed to the fullest extent possible. This effort began with a public open house in July 2000. Identifying the concerns of the local citizens was of primary importance. Some of the concerns expressed as a result of that meeting, though valid, are not appropriately addressed through the EA process. For example, some comments concerned the leasing process. Publishing the EA was delayed due to the additional time needed to gather pertinent information and to ensure that the final document was as complete and of the highest quality as possible. Twenty-two impact criteria were included in the analysis, including, but not limited to, . . . wastewater, traffic, noise, infrastructure, land use (Corps and Johnson County), and natural resources. This analysis indicated that there would be no significant impacts as a result of the implementation of any of the four alternatives, including the highest use alternative, which was based on the Muslim Youth Camps of America, Inc. (MYCA) lease application.

The purpose of the public review is to provide an opportunity for the general public, potentially affected landowners, local governing bodies, and natural resource agencies to provide comments on the EA. The standard comment period for environmental documents such as this is 30 days. The Corps' Rock Island District has already extended this comment period an additional 15 days, due in part to the holidays. We do not believe that an additional extension of the comment period is warranted. In addition, the length of the comment period is independent of and irrelevant to the time needed to prepare the EA.

Land use planning for federally owned, Corps-managed lands is governed by the project Master Plan. This plan is prepared by the Corps, with input ~~from~~ other Federal, State, and local agencies, interested groups, organizations, and private individuals. Needs for recreational use and development are considered at both the local and regional scale. The 1977 Master Plan for Coralville Lake identifies the land use designations for the 106-acre site under consideration as Recreation-Intensive (subcategory quasi-public or nonprofit group use) for the northern segment of the site and Reserve Forest for the southern portion of the site. The proposed buildings and parking would be located in the Recreation-Intensive portion of the site. Trails are planned for the southern portion of the site. This proposed use is consistent with the two land use designations. Please refer to Figure 4-3 of the EA for a graphic depiction of the land uses, both Corps and Johnson County, of the immediate vicinity. The 106-acre tract proposed for leasing has been used for nonprofit group use, and has been designated as such, since 1964. No change in land use designation is necessary for the proposed lease action.

Mrs. Elliott has also provided you with the Natural Resources Inventory System (NRIS) compartment report for the Daybreak compartment, dated February 1990, of the areas in question. The NRIS was a planning tool used to manage project lands. The Corps no longer uses the **NRIS**, which has been absorbed into the Operational Management Plan and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) coverage of the project area.

Mrs. Elliott also expressed concerns about the location of area wells. Though ZEI located several private wells, corrections of this information through the public review and comment period is the appropriate venue through which to amend the EA. She also expressed concerns regarding the wastewater (sewage) treatment system. The standard Corps lease states that it is the responsibility of the lessee to comply with Federal, State, and local laws, ordinances, and regulations, including any permits needed to construct any of the proposed facilities. Siting a wastewater system with a leach field (septic system) under the current separation distances required by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources is not possible without approval of the nearby homeowners or a variance from the State. If such approval or a variance is granted, there is adequate room on the site for such a system. The MYCA may also investigate other ways to satisfy the State requirements to provide the necessary wastewater treatment on the lease area. This is depicted in Figure 5-1 of the EA.

All of the issues Mrs. Elliott raises are addressed in the EA. In addition, through our web site, <http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Daybreak/index.htm>, the Corps' Rock Island District has provided a list of Frequently Asked Questions which addresses many of these issues in a very concise way, issues such as public access of the site, proposed facilities, number of users, traffic, and noise. Also available on this web site is the MYCA proposal, background information used for the EA, and the EA itself, with instructions on how to submit public comments.

I hope that this information satisfactorily addresses the concerns expressed in Mrs. Elliott's letter. If you have further questions regarding this matter, your staff may call Ms. Karen Hagerty in our Economic and Environmental Analysis Branch, telephone 309/794-5286.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL SIGNED BY
William J. Bayles
Colonel, U.S. Army
District Engineer**

Copy Furnished:

**Honorable Charles E. Grassley
United States Senate
135 ~~Ext~~ Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510 1501**