

Editorial: *Waterways Journal*

Olmsted Opening A Time For Reflection And Resolution

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The Olmsted Lock and Dam Replacement Project, formally inaugurated on August 30, almost didn't happen as recently as 2013. Now it is already being put to work impounding a pool so that de-construction work on Lock 53 can proceed.

At the ribbon-cutting, project supporters of the present and past, from politicians to labor leaders, were remembered and invoked. Many, many people spent all or most of their careers on getting this project to fruition. Some are already receding into the past, reminding everyone of just how long this project took to complete its "twisting, turning path," in the words of Sen. Mitch McConnell.

The Olmsted project has been a major source of employment for the Paducah area for years. We hope its transition to active status will quickly bring the prosperity it promises as project employment winds down. Several speakers pointed out that with expected benefits of about \$650 million a year the project should pay for itself in five years, despite its cost and its fraught history.

Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite, Chief of Engineers, promised listeners that the lessons of Olmsted would be applied at other Corps projects. We certainly hope that is the case. There were some exciting innovations involved in the Olmsted project's completion. All the workers, contractors, engineers and designers had every right to be proud.

The parade of dignitaries involved in the project's completion included Mike Toohey and Marty Hettel as representatives of the navigation industry. That was only right. What unlocked and made possible all the technical innovations was the achievement of the Water Resources and Reform Development Act of 2014 and related bills in providing full and efficient funding to the project. That came about only with leadership of the navigation industry and its advocates providing titanic labors behind the scenes.

As several speakers pointed out, now is the time for Congress to keep in mind the Kentucky Lock, Lower Mon and Chickamauga Lock and Dam projects and make sure they continue to receive the funding they, too, need to be completed in good time, so that the full benefits of Olmsted can be realized and our unmatched river system can be restored to its full potential.

That is really the single overriding lesson to be drawn from Olmsted. As the Corps continues to work on its \$96 billion backlog of water infrastructure projects, we hope Congress will hear it: please, please make sure that the next time a project like Olmsted is authorized, it receives full and efficient funding.