

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 5, 2011

Major General Grisoli
Deputy Commanding General
US Army Corps of Engineers
441 G. Street, NW
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Brigadier General McMahon
Commander, Northwest Division
US Army Corps of Engineers
1125 NW Couch St., Suite 500
Portland, OR 97209

Dear Generals Grisoli and McMahon:

As members representing states along the Missouri River, our constituents have been impacted by the flooding this year. As you learned at the recent meeting of the Missouri River Working Group, we share the same goal of reducing the risk of flooding, and we look forward to working with you in the weeks and months ahead to make sure steps are taken now to better prepare for next year.

Based on our discussions, we understand the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has authority to make one-year adjustments to the Missouri River Master Water Control Manual as part of the system's annual operating plan and that your after action review of this year's flood event will form the basis for any adjustments to the 2012 operating plan. We believe it is critical that the lessons learned from this year's event be factored into next year's plan and that appropriate mechanisms be incorporated to allow for deviation from that plan should circumstances dictate.

In order to fully understand the scope and limitations of the USACE's authority, we ask that you provide responses to the following questions.

- Specifically, what type of adjustments can be made under the Master Manual as part of the annual operating plan? Does the USACE have authority to adjust the annual operating plan if conditions change from the assumptions used to formulate the plan? If so, what is the process and timing for making those adjustments? If not, what targeted changes to the Master Manual would the USACE need to do so?
- What criteria does the USACE use to determine whether adjustments should be made? If it is determined that adjustments are warranted, what factors are used to determine what adjustments are made? What is the timing and process for those determinations?
- Based on the review of this year's event, what specific changes is the USACE evaluating for the 2012 operating plan? What triggers, if any, will the annual operating plan establish to ensure the USACE has improved ability to quickly react to changing circumstances in the basin to minimize the flood risk? Does the USACE have sufficient authority to make the necessary changes to the operating plan to reduce the risk of flooding next year?

- How will the USACE utilize the National Weather Service's climatic outlook for the fall, winter and spring to formulate next year's annual operating plan? How will USACE change how it uses other data to anticipate and respond to the basin's hydrologic conditions? How will this year's flood event factor into the historical data the USACE utilizes to make assumptions on next year's forecast to formulate the annual operating plan?
- If conditions in the basin indicate concentrated episodes of runoff in 2012, what improvements will the Corps implement for how it disseminates to the public and other government entities information on the basin and reservoir conditions, its operating decisions, and potential flood risks?
- What is the USACE's plan and timeline for federal assistance in repairing eligible damage to nonfederal levees and other flood control measures damaged by this year's event to ensure protection from future floods? What is the USACE plan for investments in federal infrastructure to reduce flood damage in the near-term? Please include your current dollar estimate of the Corps' estimated capacity to complete work in the coming fiscal year and the Corps' estimate of the total cost of repairs in the long term.
- Repairing damage from this year's flood will take time. Since the flood protection system will not be 100% restored next spring, how will the 2012 operating plan be adjusted? Does the Master Manual allow the USACE to consider impaired levees or other protective measures in formulating the annual operating plan?

We appreciate your prompt attention to these questions and look forward to our continued cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kent Lamm

John Hovorn

Gene McCasill

Ray Hunt

Terry Moran

Mike Johnson

John A. L...

Chuck Graggley

Jim Johnson

Pat Phil

Tom Hankin

to Benjamin Nelson