

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 17, 2015

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
Department of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310-0108

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy,

We write to express concerns with current proposed alternatives for the Missouri River Recovery Program Management Plan (Management Plan). Specifically, we are concerned that these proposed alternatives, if finalized, could have significant negative impacts on landowners and stakeholders throughout the Missouri River basin and could require a revision of the Missouri River Mainstem Reservoir System Master Water Control Manual (Master Manual).

As you know, the most recent full-scale revision of the Master Manual was the product of an extensive 17-year process which cost the taxpayers more than \$30 million. A subsequent revision in 2006 resulted in the current manual which balances the eight congressionally authorized purposes and adheres to the intended purposes outlined in the 2003 Biological Opinion issued by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

As should be expected for a project with the size and scope of the Missouri River System, altering the operational regulations requires an inclusive process with involvement from state, local, and tribal governments as well non-governmental organizations, trade groups, and landowners. This process is not only time consuming and costly but also requires difficult decisions and compromises from stakeholders throughout the basin. The Corps and FWS should not proceed hastily toward a Master Manual revision without considering these costs and burdens placed on all entities involved.

It has come to our attention that the Corps and FWS have presented a list of proposed alternative recovery actions meant to aid the recovery of the two listed bird species. The proposed alternatives call for significant changes to the operation of the mainstem reservoir system including alterations to the spring pulse, addition of a fall pulse, and addition of a low summer flow. These actions could threaten water supply for municipal use and agricultural irrigation, create difficulties for controlling flood risks, eliminate the navigation season, and reduce recreational opportunities. In short, revising the Master Manual to adhere exclusively to a single purpose would be to the detriment of the other authorized purposes.

While we understand the desire to consider a comprehensive set of alternatives, such alternatives should be guided by the best available science, should seek to minimize risks to stakeholders, and should be constrained by the guidelines set out in the current Master Manual.

Due to our concerns regarding the current process, we strongly urge the Corps and FWS to only pursue a management plan that would not necessitate a revision of the Master Manual or incur damaging impacts to stakeholders and landowners.

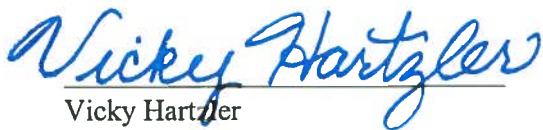
Sincerely,



Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress



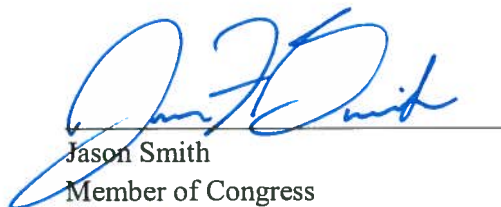
Sam Graves
Member of Congress



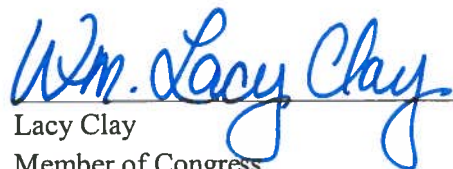
Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress



Kevin Yoder
Member of Congress



Jason Smith
Member of Congress



Lacy Clay
Member of Congress



Roy Blunt
United States Senator



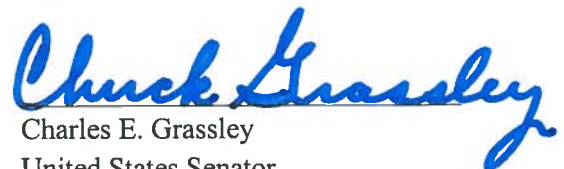
John Hoeven
United States Senator



Claire McCaskill
United States Senator



Joni Ernst
United States Senator



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



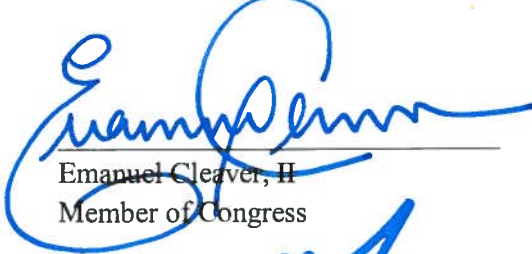
Deb Fischer
United States Senator



Ann Wagner
Member of Congress



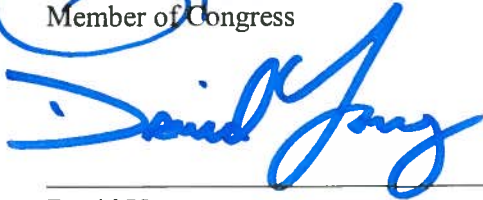
Adrian Smith
Member of Congress



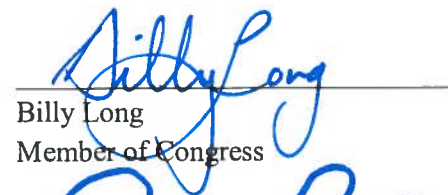
Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Steve King
Member of Congress



David Young
Member of Congress



Billy Long
Member of Congress



Kevin Cramer
Member of Congress



Rod Blum
Member of Congress

cc:

The Honorable Dan M. Ashe, Director, USFWS

Brigadier General Scott A. Spellmon, Division Commander, USACE, Northwestern Division

Ms. Noreen Walsh, Regional Director, USFWS, Mountain-Prairie Region