

Testimony  
Of  
Jeff Dooley, Manager of Dakota Dunes Community Improvement District  
To  
Senate Subcommittee on Waste, Superfund and Oversight Management Hearing  
Five Years from the Flood: Oversight of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Management of the  
Missouri River and Suggestions for Improvement  
March 31, 2016

As I understand the purpose of this hearing today is to look at progress that has been made in improving the management of the Missouri River in the wake of the 2011 flooding that occurred in the basin. I hope to provide a stakeholder and private citizen's perspective as to what the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has done to minimize the chances of a repeat of the physical, financial and emotional damage caused by a flood event. In preparation for this testimony, I have reviewed the transcripts from two congressional committee hearings held on this topic and a report from the Corps titled "*Review of the Regulation of the Missouri River Mainstem Reservoir System During the Flood of 2011*".

Three major themes seemed to be prevalent as to what can be done to improve the Corps of Engineers management of the Missouri River.

- 1) Improved communications between the Corps of Engineers and stakeholders. As the events that precipitated the 2011 flood unfolded from April through May, there was insufficient communication as to the increasing problem of melting mountain and plains snow pack and rain events in the upper basin. By the time communications were established, the releases and projections were escalating quickly making it difficult to formulate a response. However, since 2011, the Corps has taken substantial steps to formulate a regimented schedule of monthly conference calls during the runoff season with Federal, State and Local Officials as well as the media to provide updates on climate and runoff conditions as well as reservoir releases and power generation plans. Additionally, there is time allotted for discussion and questions from each State, local jurisdiction and media during the calls. Had this system been in place in 2011, not only would the stakeholders had more information to prepare, they may have been able to challenge some of the assumptions and projections that the Corps was using in developing their management decisions.
- 2) Assessing and the prioritizing of the Authorized Purposes outlined in the Corps Master Manual. From a citizen perspective, the conflict of the authorized uses is commonly referred to as the major impediment to flood control on the Missouri River. A study entitled "*Missouri River Authorized Purpose Study*" was under way prior to the 2011 flood event. To my knowledge, its progress has been suspended. Discussion and study of these Authorize Uses in light of a flood event of this magnitude is crucial - if the best Missouri River Management Plan is the ultimate goal. The sometimes conflicting uses can cause a slower response and attention to flood control.

3) Improved data collection as it relates to plains snowpack and soil moisture. While the torrential May rains in the upper basin were major contributor to the record runoff and difficult or impossible to predict, the snow pack on the plains and in the mountains were also above average and quantifiable. An improved snow pack and soil moisture monitoring system would allow better predictions of known precipitation and the resulting runoff. The need for improved data collection is documented in the Corps of Engineers post-event review and is more thoroughly documented in a *February 2013 report entitled "Upper Missouri Basin Monitoring Committee – Snow Sampling and Instrumentation Recommendations"*. Section 4004 (a) of the Water Resource Reform and Development Act of 2014 address these improvements and directs the Secretary of the Army to coordinate with other Federal Agencies to implement these recommendations for improved snow pack and soil moisture monitoring and authorized funding. To date, no implementation action has been taken by any federal agency as no money has been appropriated and there are questions as to who the lead agency should be. Respectfully, I believe Congress needs to appropriate funds for this project and to dictate the lead agency. It also should set project development milestones to ensure this important project continues to move forward.

Respectfully Submitted,

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