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**WRITTEN TESTIMONY:  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
COMMITTEE HEARING  
THE MISSOURI RIVER FLOODS: AN ASSESSMENT OF RIVER MANAGEMENT IN 2011 AND  
OPERATIONAL PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

Chairman Mica and members of the United States House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure:

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony for the record of your hearing regarding the Missouri River Floods and the assessment of River management in 2011 and the operational plans for the future. As chairman of the Missouri Levee and Drainage District Association, I represent levee and drainage districts, businesses, associations and individuals interested in the activities and issues surrounding the Missouri River and its tributaries. I understand the importance of this committee's work as it relates to flood control and the protection of human lives and property. I am honored to have this opportunity to provide comments on behalf of the levee association's membership and fellow Missourians who have been impacted by flooding this year.

I am a seventh generation Missouri farmer. My family farming operation produces corn, soybeans, wheat and alfalfa in the highly productive bottomlands along the Missouri River. As president of three local levee and drainage districts, I know and understand the importance levees and flood control projects play in protecting the lives and property in my community and communities across our nation.

2011 has been a difficult year for people living and working along the Missouri River. The Missouri River system was overwhelmed by inflows well above any seen before. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers were tasked with managing 60.4 Million-Acre Feet (MAF) of runoff into the system, which holds 73.4 MAF. The extraordinary runoff proved to be too much for the Army Engineers to handle and the result was major flooding from Montana to Missouri along the River.

The extreme snowfall and heavy rain events in the upper Missouri River Basin have been blamed for the flood event, but I believe there is more to the story that needs to be told. With only 6% of the Missouri River Reservoir System dedicated to exclusive flood control, the system cannot provide adequate flood protection. Sixteen percent of the system's storage is dedicated to multiple uses and flood control, but the Corps allows this storage to fill in the spring. This 16% should be added to the exclusive flood control pool to allow for a full 22% of exclusive storage to protect from future flooding. In addition, the Corps of Engineers should make better use of the Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs in the upper basin. These reservoirs were not properly managed for flood control during this year's flood event.

There is a great need to improve flood control infrastructure along the Missouri River. Levee improvements have not been made over time and the flood control system is suffering from years of neglect, as fish and wildlife

programs have become the focus of Missouri River management. Flood control infrastructure has not kept up with other development in the basin.

### **More water is reaching the River faster**

Let me provide an example: I am sure each congressional district across the country has areas in it like I am about to describe. This area has a four-lane highway running through it. Along the highway you will find fast food restaurants. A McDonalds on the right and a Wendy's may be on the left. In the area you will find several other restaurants, strip malls, and shops. You will likely find a large grocery store chain and Home Depot or Lowes. You might find a Wal-Mart Super Store on one side of the highway and a Target on the other. You know the areas and I'm sure you have them in the communities you serve. Surrounding this shopping area are neighborhoods full of homes, schools, churches and doctor offices. Areas and neighborhoods like I have described have been developed across our country over the past twenty to thirty years. Not just in the bottomland, but also in upland areas with rolling hills. These areas contain a tremendous amount of concrete and pavement.

When rain falls in these areas, the rain hits a roof, parking lot, driveway or roadway and runs to a gutter and quickly into a sewer system, which directs it straight to the River. Thirty years ago that same area was likely rolling pasture or farmland. When rain fell then it soaked into the ground or ran slowly through grass and timber to the river. The result is today water reaches our nations rivers faster and at greater volumes. We have not done anything to compensate for these increased flows coming faster to the rivers and we are seeing the damaging effects now. Communities along the Missouri River have been flooded multiple times in recent years. Many levees that failed in 2010, had not been fully repaired prior to this year's flood event. When the Corps of Engineers was forced to release record levels of water this spring and summer, the flood control system was not ready to handle the flows.

While our flood control system has been falling behind, the nation has spent millions upon millions of dollars on fish and wildlife projects. On the Missouri River, the Corps of Engineers has spent \$616 Million since 1992 on the Missouri River Recovery Program and fish and wildlife projects. While spending the equivalent of nickels and dimes on flood control, the Corps has spent over half a billion dollars on fish and birds. This imbalance must be corrected if we are to protect communities and property along the nations waterways.

It is time for the nation to invest in flood control infrastructure across the country. When congress spends \$20 Million on a levee or flood control project, the result is a levee or structure that can be seen and provides protection for people and property. On the other hand, when congress spends \$20 Million for fish and wildlife the result is, more often than not, 200-300 pages of reports from a study and a stack of hotel receipts from meetings and conferences.

Flood control projects create jobs and protect lives. Reducing spending on fish and wildlife projects is an easy place for congress to trim the budget without harming the nations economy. In today's weakened economy it make sense to make improvements to our nation's flood control systems, which will put people to work and reduce future costly disaster recovery expenses.

### **The Corps of Engineers is not listening**

People throughout the Missouri River basin have been concerned about the failing flood control system for years. Throughout each year the US Army Corps of Engineers holds public meetings, hearings, workshops and listening sessions. Following this year's flood event the public strongly voiced their opinions during two weeks of Annual Operating Plan meetings conducted by the Corps of Engineers. The people of the Missouri River Basin want change. They want to see flood control once again become the Corps of Engineers top priority for river management with less emphasis on fish and wildlife spending.

Following the recent round of meetings, the Corps of Engineers issued a news release saying they have listened to the public and heard their concerns. The release says, "the Corps will assume a more flexible posture as water

is evacuated through the system for the remainder of the fall and winter”, and “the Corps will take an aggressive stance with winter and spring releases”. The release also said the Corps would communicate more frequently and more broadly as the 2012 season unfolds. What the release did not tell us is what exactly a flexible posture and an aggressive stance are.

The Corps did not tell us they would be making any additional room for flood storage in the system. In fact, it appears the system storage will remain the same as last year. Given recent NOAA forecasts for another wet season in the upper Missouri River basin and numerous damaged levees, which have breached and will not be repaired by spring, The Corps of Engineers should be creating additional room in the system for above normal runoff again this year.

Corps of Engineers decisions for river management are made well before public comments are requested. Hearings, workshops and listening sessions seem to be only an exercise for the Corps. They hold the meetings, and check the box, but no change takes place. In fact, I believe there are only two things that can make the Corps of Engineers place flood control as their top priority, 1) Legislation or 2) Legal Action. Testifying at Corps of Engineers hearings, making phone calls, attending meetings or even pressure from our elected officials seems to have no effect on the Corps of Engineers.

In order for the Corps of Engineers to change their ways, Congress must act. This committee can start to turn things around by adjusting the Corps of Engineers’ budget. By funding levee repairs and flood control projects ahead of fish and wildlife projects, Congress can and should direct the Corps of Engineers to focus on flood control. Congress has an opportunity to fund flood control projects, create jobs and make real improvements in our economy. While doing so, the emphasis should be on levees and structural improvements to the Missouri River system.

### **Damaged Levees are not being repaired**

I am very concerned about getting breached and damaged levees repaired. The Kansas City District Corps of Engineers Emergency Management Branch has identified 53 levees, which were breached or damaged during the 2011 flood event. Only 8 of these levees have received funding for repairs. In the Omaha District, only two levees have received partial funding and 20-24 levees have damage but no funding.

It is critical for Missouri River levees to be repaired as soon as possible, yet the administration still has not requested and Congress still has not appropriated funds to repair the levees. The Northwestern Division seems much more concerned with setting up working groups, holding meetings and conference calls and finding ways to not fix the levees. The Division’s push for alternatives to levee repairs has caused many of us to question the Corps’ true motives during the flood recovery.

The Division’s lack of urgency is disturbing at best. Farmers and landowners want to repair their land and put it back into production. Home and business owners want to make repairs and get their lives back in order. Without levee protection, these people are taking incredible risks. Crop insurance rates have tripled in areas with breached levees. This adds even more to the risks of planting without levee protection. Weather forecasts for next spring are also disturbing. NOAA forecasts indicate another year of above normal precipitation in the Missouri River Basin.

### **Highly productive farmland & national security**

The bottomlands along our nation’s rivers contain some of the most productive farmland in the world. This valuable land produces a safe and inexpensive food supply for our nation. For every 100,000 acres of river bottom ground, farmers can produce enough Calories to feed 1.046 million people for an entire year. With a projected world population growth from 7.0 billion to 9.3 billion by 2030 (That is equivalent to doubling the population of current China and India), we have a humanitarian imperative to farm the land we currently have in production.

The Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute and the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri have just released a report regarding the direct economic loss to Missouri farmers from the Missouri River flooding of 2011. I have attached a copy of the report and with your permission would like to enter it into the record of this hearing. The report estimates 207,200 acres were flooded by the Missouri River in 2011. According to the report, "These acres would have generated nearly \$176 Million in revenue had the flood event not occurred. Beyond the direct loss of this market revenue, there are spillover effects to the local economies affected by the flooding. The purchase of tractors, trucks, labor and other inputs does have a ripple effect on the counties. The IMPLAN model is often used to assess the broader economic impacts of a change in the economy ([www.implan.com](http://www.implan.com)). IMPLAN adds both induced and indirect economic effects to the direct change estimated. In this case, IMPLAN would estimate that the \$175.9 million decline in the value of crop production would result in a total economic value decline of \$326.5 million".

Keeping our most productive farmland in production is a matter of national security. Agriculture has always been and will remain the backbone of our country. U.S. citizens are spoiled with our abundant and safe food supply. We tend to forget how important agriculture is to our economy and our strength as a world leader. Taking the rich bottomland soils out of production weakens our national security. These soils produce food, fiber and fuel. Safe, plentiful and inexpensive food and renewable fuels produced in the floodplains across this country keep us strong.

In these times of economic hardships, American agriculture remains a shining light of hope and strength. I am not an economist and I don't know if we are headed into a double dip recession or even toward a depression. But I do believe, no matter how bad the economy gets, agriculture will be the industry that leads our country out of its economic woes. It has held true in the past. This is why it is vitally important to keep our best soils in production and this is why we should protect these soils from flooding with levees and flood control structures. Even if we were to remove all infrastructure from the floodplains, (homes, businesses, roads, power lines, pipe lines, bridges and more), the remaining farmland is worth protecting with levees.

The Corps of Engineers' efforts to take land out of production and not repair the flood protection structures is dangerous and a threat to our national security. Flood Control has taken a back seat in discussions relating to our nation's rivers. Endangered species and habitat creation have become the focus of the Corps of Engineers. Congress must refocus the Corps of Engineers priorities and direct their efforts toward flood control and fixing levees. It can all start today with a renewed commitment from Congress to put the Corps back to building and engineering, instead of spending time on studies, meetings, conference calls and senseless science experiments.

Your committee has important work to do. I appreciate your willingness to serve our country and lead us through these difficult financial times. I encourage you to push flood control forward, fund levee repairs and put the economic engine along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers back into motion. Members of the Missouri Levee and Drainage District Association and my friends and neighbors in Missouri will be looking for you to begin the recovery and rehabilitation process.

Thank you,

Tom Waters, Chairman  
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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
*Truth in Testimony Disclosure*

Pursuant to clause 2(g)(5) of House Rule XI, in the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include: (1) a curriculum vitae; and (2) a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. Such statements, with appropriate redaction to protect the privacy of the witness, shall be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness appears.

(1) Name:

Tom Waters

(2) Other than yourself, name of entity you are representing:

Missouri Levee and Drainage District Association

(3) Are you testifying on behalf of an entity other than a Government (federal, state, local) entity?

YES

If yes, please provide the information requested below and attach your curriculum vitae.

NO

(4) Please list the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by you or by the entity you are representing:

I have not received and the Missouri Levee and Drainage District Association as not received any Federal grant, subgrant or contract or sub contract as described above.

Amount is Zero

Source is None



Signature

11-22-11

Date