



Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson
Office of Communications

Missouri River Congressional Testimony
April 17, 2019

The following testimony is submitted by Missouri Governor Michael L. Parson to the United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works for the Committee's April 17, 2019 Field Oversight Hearing on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Management of the 2019 Missouri River Basin Flooding:

As the 57th Governor of the great State of Missouri, I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works about the impacts of this year's Missouri River flooding on Missourians and our hopes for a smooth recovery and prevention of recurrence.

Missouri has participated for decades in discussions on management of the Missouri River system, however, throughout this time we have continually been frustrated about the need for greater focus on flood control. It should not be hard to realize why when nearly one-third of our state falls within flood plain and our state economy's number one industry is agriculture.

Despite our concern, Missouri has for the second time this decade seen destructive flooding hit our citizens along the Missouri River. The most recent flood, however, brings to the fore yet again disastrous impacts that are occurring all too often along the Missouri River system.

Two weeks ago, I met with the Governors of Iowa and Nebraska to begin a conversation as to how the states can work together to lead toward improving our flood protection infrastructure and improving the operation of the Missouri River system for flood control.

That meeting only further emphasized my belief that the U.S Corps of Engineers should return to managing the river in a manner that clearly reflects the dominant congressionally authorized purposes of flood control and navigation. Additionally, if we are to ensure that the system is managed in a way that reflects the priorities of basin citizens, it is imperative that the states of the Missouri River basin have direct input and that our recommendations are given due consideration.

In all fairness, while the Corps of Engineers is the focus of much frustration as it relates to the agency's management of the Missouri River system, it is worth noting that many of the changes in the Corps management approach have been at the direction or urging of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Discussion about management of the system has centered for too long now on fish and wildlife species impacts, effectively prioritizing species habitat above not only the congressionally authorized dominant project purposes of flood control and navigation, but also above loss of human life and property.

Missouri has spent time and effort year after year explaining the negative impacts to flood control from proposed artificial spring rises and experimental habitat projects to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Fish and Wildlife Service. The continual focus on fish and wildlife issues has distracted the federal agencies from the discussion we need to be having: how can the states of the Missouri River Basin work with Congress and the federal agencies to improve flood control and flood protection on a Missouri River system that has once again proven to be inadequate to protect our citizens?



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I respectfully request that this Committee direct the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to take a more pragmatic approach to protection fish and wildlife species that recognizes that there are ways of addressing these needs that do not put human life and property at risk.

I would also suggest that this Committee consider authorizing an independent review of the Corps' operations of the Missouri River system and the adequacy of the system itself as it pertains to flood control. Such a review should also include the identification of implementable solutions to improving flood protection and control in the Missouri River basin and should analyze the feasibility of actions such as:

- increasing flood storage capacities in existing reservoirs
- improving the flood conveyance capacity of the Missouri River channel below Gavins Point Dams
- what infrastructure changes would be need to facilitate greater barge navigation

After flooding in 2011, we saw many federal, state and local governments work quickly to ensure that aid got to those that needed it, flood prevention structures were repaired, and there was a sense of overall cooperation to ease the severity of impacts to our citizens. My hope and optimism is that we will have that same experience in 2019, but an important part of repeating that success will be Congress' ability to work with us to expedite the delivery of federal aid as we recover – and I implore you to do that.

Missouri, again, stands ready to assist this committee and the federal interests under its oversight to chart this new course for the Missouri River system.

Our citizens cannot continue to risk their lives, homes, livestock, and futures on a flood-control system that is insufficient to protect them.

On behalf of the State of Missouri, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Our state also appreciates the committee's role and oversight on these important topics. Thank you.