

State of Iowa Perspective on Missouri River Management

Working Draft* -- August 2011

**This working draft will continue to be updated per public input and further deliberations by the State Interagency Missouri River Authority (SIMRA).*

- ❖ The State is very encouraged by the interest of other states and Members of Congress to elevate flood control as the top priority for the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) when managing the Missouri River. Flood control needs to be clearly established as the highest priority for Missouri River management and we encourage the Corps and Congress to clarify and reinforce this prioritization.
- ❖ Although questions exist about the policies and decisions that led to this year's Missouri River flooding, we must commend the Corps for their solid response coordination after flooding began.
- ❖ State of Iowa leaders do not claim to know all of the answers for the Missouri River, but we do believe we have a good understanding of many of the questions that should be answered and the issues that should be examined over the months ahead. That is why we strongly support an independent and objective review of the decisions and circumstances that led to this year's historic flooding. We strongly encourage the Corps to strive for continual improvement and we think states can provide valuable input to help identify lessons learned. The following items should be examined:
 - Explore whether earlier changes to reservoir water levels after above-average snowfall in the Missouri River Basin would have been beneficial.
 - Examine whether the master manual provides Corps leadership with the necessary flexibility, including seasonal adjustments, to plan for and take unprecedented flood prevention measures in a timely manner.
 - Explore use of new technologies, including modeling technologies, to improve flood forecasting and management.
 - Identify any concrete examples of where the additional seven authorized purposes of the Missouri River (fish and wildlife habitat, irrigation, navigation, power generation, recreation, water quality, and water supply) directly conflict with effective flood risk management, and identify concrete steps to readjust priorities. Seek congressional action to better align Missouri River use priorities where appropriate.

- Identify improvement opportunities for information sharing, communication, and collaboration between federal and state operations personnel.
 - Clarify and align Missouri River roles and responsibilities across Federal agencies (Corps, US Coast Guard, and EPA).
 - Examine resource surge capabilities of the Corps. For example, early in the flooding response, the Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division had to rent pumps, which highlighted some shortfall in available resources.
 - Explore whether the appropriate levels of experience and expertise were maintained in the Corps' Omaha district. For example, some stakeholders have expressed concerns that the Corps' Omaha district experienced the loss of experienced personnel after Hurricane Katrina. Experienced personnel were then surged to the Omaha district, perhaps too late into the response considering the historic levels of snow and rain. Corps succession planning and personnel surge policies should be examined.
 - Examine if recent Missouri River and reservoir management practices have conflicted with the original roadway, reservoir, and levee system designs.
 - Explore if fish spawning season(s), both for upstream sport fishing and downstream endangered species recovery, delayed water releases in any way.
 - Assess if early spring flooding on the Mississippi delayed water releases on the Missouri River.
 - Examine whether the Corps' budget is appropriately aligned to the prioritization of the eight uses of the Missouri River.
- ❖ From Sioux City to Council Bluffs to Hamburg, there are still many lowans hurting from flooding on the Missouri River. Once the water recedes, residents, farmers, and businesses will face a long, and in many cases multi-year, recovery process. The Corps, FEMA, and the US Geological Survey must work proactively with Missouri Basin states to address mid-term and long-term recovery items. We strongly encourage the Corps to publicly commit to repairing the levees as soon as possible to prevent future flooding and complications with crop insurance coverage next year. The Federal Government must adequately fund repairs to the stressed levee system. There needs to be an examination of the requirement that temporary levees must be dismantled. Some towns like Hamburg, Iowa, are challenging the requirement that levees should be temporary in nature. This requirement should be carefully re-examined to determine whether it makes sense in all instances and whether there are particular situations in which temporary levees could remain in place. After the Missouri River flood waters recede, River bottom degradation, siltation, and changes in the location of the River may become apparent and will need to be appropriately addressed.

- ❖ The breadth of the impact of the Missouri River flooding on Western Iowa is demonstrated by the active engagement of our Congressional leaders including Senator Grassley, Senator Harkin, and Congressman King, state legislators, and state personnel from several state agencies, including those involved in emergency management, economic development, utilities, transportation, agriculture, and natural resources. Many individuals have helped respond to this year's flooding, including local and private sector partners and concerned citizens. Leadership of the State is dedicated to assisting Iowans in overcoming the challenges ahead and improving Missouri River management going forward.