

**Testimony of the Missouri Farm Bureau Federation  
Before the  
House Committee on Small Business  
“Missouri River Management: Does It Meet the Needs of  
Small Business Stakeholders?”  
August 21, 2013**

**Presented by: Jason Gregory**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Small Business Committee. My name is Jason Gregory, and I am a fourth generation farmer. My wife, Beth, and I raise corn, soybeans, feeder cattle and children (Bailey and BreAnne) near Easton in northwest Missouri. I am speaking on behalf of the Missouri Farm Bureau Federation. I serve on the Buchanan County Farm Bureau Board of Directors, and my wife and I serve on the state organization's Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee.

Thank you for holding this field hearing. It comes as no surprise to the Chairman, or other members of the Small Business Committee, that management of the Missouri River is both complex and controversial. Widespread agreement is elusive as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) attempts to manage for eight diverse Congressionally authorized purposes (flood control, navigation, water supply, irrigation, hydroelectric power, water quality, recreation and fish/wildlife).

The Missouri River is 2,341 miles long with a basin covering 529,350 square miles in ten states (Nebraska, Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, Colorado, Minnesota and Missouri). Elevation of the Missouri River drops from 14,000 foot peaks to about 400 feet at its confluence with the Mississippi River in St. Louis. We could talk all day about our recent experiences with both floods and droughts. As you know, this area was hit hard by flooding in 2011 and is extremely dry as we speak. To be honest, I'm not sure what a “normal” year is anymore.

My comments will touch on several topics important to those who not only live along the Missouri River but are protected by the system of levees constructed over the past several decades. While you aren't likely to read this in a paper or hear it on the news, construction of the main stem reservoirs and implementation of the Bank Stabilization and Navigation Program (BSNP) are a success story. Over the 1938-2001 period, estimated accumulated flood control damages prevented by the system are \$24.8 billion.

There are six areas in which I will provide brief comments:

1. ***Passage of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) is critical to the future of our inland waterway system.*** Agricultural exports remain a bright spot and it's important we remain competitive in world markets. Other nations understand the concept of competitive advantage and are moving quickly to upgrade ports and waterways. We need to modernize our locks and dams and provide shippers with assurances that navigation

channels on the Mississippi, Missouri and other rivers are reliable. Congress needs to pass WRDA this year.

2. ***There must be adequate annual funding for the Bank Stabilization and Navigation Program.*** The Missouri River is highly engineered and thus requires ongoing maintenance. Flood control remains paramount and Congress must appropriate sufficient funding to ensure the integrity of federal and non-federal levees, flood gates, revetments, dikes and other structures. Levees not only protect highly productive crop land but also homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, railroad tracks, sewage treatment facilities, water wells, and power plants.
3. ***Common sense must prevail on the Missouri River Recovery Program (MRRP).*** Stakeholders from throughout the Missouri River Basin are working with federal and state agencies to address management challenges. Dialogue is useful but doesn't erase agendas. We will always fight the efforts of those who ignore the importance of protecting infrastructure by seeking to return the Missouri River to a perceived natural state of an era long gone. This includes objecting to taxpayer dollars being spent on unnecessary projects such as the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan and the Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study. We applaud the efforts of Chairman Graves, Congressman Luetkemeyer and other members of the Missouri Congressional delegation for leading efforts to defund these programs.
4. ***The spring pulse should be shelved permanently.*** Scientific studies have failed to prove the benefit of these man-made spring rises and there is no reason to experiment further with flow modification.
5. ***Congress should prevent soil dumping in conjunction with the creation of shallow water habitat.*** Although not convinced of the scientific benefits of constructing chutes along the Missouri River under any circumstances, it makes no sense to pump mechanically excavated soil directly into the Missouri River. This ignores best management practices, contradicts enforcement actions taken by the Missouri Clean Water Commission and increases nutrient-rich sediment flowing to the Gulf of Mexico. We support Congressman King's efforts to prevent further soil dumping and are pleased his amendment was adopted by the House in its version of the FY2014 Energy and Water Appropriations Act.
6. ***The Endangered Species Act (ESA) should be improved to better reflect the human and economic impacts of listing decisions.*** The ESA is too rigid and relies on regulation to protect imperiled species. Landowners, and other affected parties, should be viewed not as the source of the problem but as a part of the solution.

In conclusion, we don't need more experiments, mosquitoes or publicly-owned land in the Missouri River Basin. We must minimize the effects of weather extremes by protecting lives and infrastructure, make wise investments in the BSNP and the inland waterway system, and manage flows for human needs, and where possible, enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat.