

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 16, 2011

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

We write to express our opposition to a provision included in H.R. 1, the fiscal year (FY) 2011 Continuing Resolution, prohibiting funding for the Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study (MRAPS). This on-going, multi-year study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is an important priority in our region, and we urge you to ensure the final continuing resolution does not constrain the ability of the USACE to continue it.

The Missouri River is vital to the central United States. It is one of the most engineered river systems in the country, with six large dams that can store up to 73 million acre-feet of water. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for the management of the Missouri River Mainstem Reservoir System for eight authorized purposes outlined in the Flood Control Act of 1944, including flood control, water supply, water quality irrigation, navigation, recreation, hydroelectric power, and fish and wildlife. In 2009, Congress directed the USACE to conduct a comprehensive study to determine whether changes are needed to the original authorized purposes.

In the decades since passage of the Flood Control Act of 1944, the importance to the nation of the various authorized purposes of the Missouri River Mainstem Reservoir System has changed dramatically. Municipal and industrial water supply and recreation have become increasingly more important while other authorized uses, such as navigation, have failed to even come close to the economic impact projected. While studies have been completed related to the operation of the system, the MRAPS is the first dedicated solely to reviewing the authorized uses in the underlying law and whether those uses are still applicable and capable of ensuring the system's contemporary and future needs are met. MRAPS will not directly result in changes or additions to project purposes unless the law is changed by Congress, but it will provide critical, objective information to inform a decision on whether such changes are necessary and warranted.

The USACE has already conducted extensive work on this study to date, including holding more than 40 meetings in and outside the basin to gather input from numerous stakeholders. Given the importance of this river system to the country, it would be unwise to stop this study now, which is needed to ensure the system is maintained and operated in the most efficient and effective manner possible taking into account the current economic realities.

We strongly support this study and request that language prohibiting funding for it in H.R. 1 not be included in the final continuing resolution. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

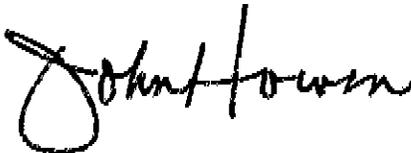
Sincerely,



KENT CONRAD
United States Senate



MAX BAUCUS
United States Senate



JOHN HOEVEN
United States Senate

JON TESTER
United States Senate

TIM JOHNSON
United States Senate



JOHN THUNE
United States Senate

cc: The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
The Honorable Thad Cochran
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
The Honorable Lamar Alexander