

Sen. Chuck Grassley's Prepared Remarks

Prepared Remarks by U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
"Oversight Hearing on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Management of the 2019 Missouri
River Basin Flooding"
Wednesday, April 17, 2019

I thank the Environment & Public Works Committee for holding and Sen. Ernst for chairing this important field hearing on oversight of the Corps' management of the Missouri River.

Breached, overtopped, or compromised levees span hundreds of miles on the Missouri River in Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, and Kansas. It is estimated that the Corps may need \$10 billion to make repairs to the federal system. That figure does not include those levees not in the federal program nor does it address the need for higher or better structures.

It took a long time for these communities to recover from the catastrophic flooding that took place eight years ago. They have also suffered from more minor flooding more frequently since 2007. It is no wonder that an awful lot of Iowans are frustrated and feel that they are back at square one. Iowans want and deserve answers.

First, I have heard from many Iowans about the unresponsive Corps and the lack of communication with locals about the floods. After the 2011 floods, some communications were enhanced. However, we need to find additional ways to communicate potential flood risks.

Second, for years I have worked with my downstream Missouri River colleagues to make flood control the number one priority of the Corps in its management of the river. Protection of life and personal property should take precedence over recreation and experiments that may or may not help endangered species and the other six functions identified in the Master Manual.

In fact, last year a federal claims judge ruled in a mass action lawsuit of 372 plaintiffs from Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, and Kansas that the Corps' changes to the river "had the effect of raising the Missouri River surface elevations in periods of high flows." The court found that since 2007, the flooding has been among the worst in the history of the river and that the Corps' changes in the management of the river caused or contributed to the flooding.

The Corps should do everything it can to enhance flood warnings and reduce the possibility of flooding while working with lawmakers in Congress to enact whatever changes are necessary.

It seems to me that misguided decisions and misplaced priorities have eclipsed common sense. A little more Midwestern common sense might have protected local communities, millions of bushels of grain, and tens of thousands of acres of farmland.

The number one priority of the Corps should be flood control. Period.

