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*Michael L. Parson*

GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MISSOURI

January 9, 2020

Brigadier General D. Peter Helmlinger  
Commander, Northwest Division U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
P.O. Box 2870  
Portland, Oregon 97208-2870

RE: Levee Segments L-550/L-536 in Atchison County, Missouri

Dear General Helmlinger:

We have all experienced the impacts of the prolonged flooding during 2019. My administration and cabinet acted promptly and decisively to respond to Missouri's citizens to ease the impacts. Additionally, I have been clear in my direction from the start that we must look at doing things differently than we have in past floods if we expect better protection and mitigation of impacts in the future. In July, through Executive Order 19-14, I formed the Flood Recovery Advisory Working Group to provide input on the state's short-, medium-, and long-term flood recovery priorities, and feedback on the state's current levee system with suggested changes to benefit Missouri and its citizens.

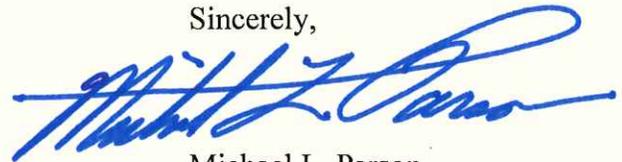
I have met and communicated several times with Governors Reynolds, Kelly, and Ricketts of Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska respectively to ensure that we are working together to coordinate our efforts in order to bring a better level of protection to the entire Lower Missouri River. I recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the other three governors to ensure that our state agencies continue to look for innovative flood response that ensures the most effective systemic outcomes in the future.

One recovery effort I have been following particularly closely is progress to repair and improve two levee segments in Atchison County, L-550 and L-536. Atchison County Levee District 1 is represented on my Advisory Working Group, and the group has heard from your staff on progress by the Omaha District. We have learned from recent examples, such as the setback of L-575 in Iowa, that reducing constriction points can provide critical additional protection for landowners upstream of these "pinch points". A few inches of freeboard on a levee may mean the difference for a farmer trying to save a home and livelihood, and farmers in the L-550 and L-536 areas are asking us to help give them that protection by setting back those levees.

While I appreciate the Corps' efforts toward recovery, I also understand that authorities, particularly in the PL 84-99 program, are prescriptive about how levee repair is completed. I am offering my strong support for the farmer-led initiative to set back both L-550 and L-536. I understand that securing real estate is one of the most significant hurdles to effecting a setback. Several state agencies have already been working with the levee district and the Nature Conservancy to chart a successful path forward. Though the Omaha District has participated in discussion, I would like to see greater involvement between District staff and my administration working toward the same end goal of levee setback.

As leaders who must consider our higher charge to improve the lives of the citizens we serve, I ask you to join me in finding innovative solutions for providing increased protection from future flooding. A levee setback that will provide added protection for citizens, their livelihoods, and our vital infrastructure will also result in lower future recovery costs. I believe that has to be taken into account when determining the best course of action. Additionally, I believe you have the creative thinking and authority to direct your staff toward an action that provides a significantly better future outcome and I look forward to working with you on this project.

Sincerely,



Michael L. Parson  
Governor

cc: COL John L. Hudson, Commander  
US Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District  
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