



**Flood Recovery Advisory Working Group**  
**April 13, 2020**  
**1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**  
**Virtual Meeting**

- Carol Comer, Director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Chris Chinn, Director of the Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA) welcomed the working group and participants.

### **Reports/Briefings**

- Spring/Summer Weather Outlook: Kevin Low (National Weather Service)
  - Mr. Low gave a presentation on meteorological data from recent past, current, and outlook of April through June 2020.
  - Mountain snowpack is slightly above normal. Based on historical data, the snow pack should be at its peak and begin to melt moving forward.
  - Majority Great Plains snowpack has melted and is passing through reservoir system. Minor snow fell over the weekend.
  - Current soil moisture levels throughout the Missouri basin are higher than last year. The good news is that due to slightly higher temperatures there is little to no frost remaining in the soil.
  - Precipitation through April/May/June is forecasted to be above normal
  - Current river conditions
    - Mississippi River – moderate to major flooding in areas
    - Missouri – No flooding reported currently
  - Next 3 month river projections
    - Mississippi River – moderate to major flooding in areas
    - Missouri River – moderate flooding
  - There were no questions or comments from the group.
- Reservoir Overview: John Remus (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE))
  - Mr. Remus stated that the main stem reservoir system is in a much improved status compared to last year.
  - Total main stem reservoir storage is currently slightly above multiyear average. Storage system is at 58.7 million acre-feet (MAF). About 84% of designated flood control storage is available to capture and manage runoff.
  - Gavins Point release is currently 35,500 cubic feet per second (cfs). This time last year approx. 69,000 cfs.
  - Projected releases at Gavins Point
    - 33-35,000 cfs through July

- 40,000 cfs through Fall
    - 20,000 cfs through Winter
  - Missouri River spring public meetings were held by video and can be found at <https://go.usa.gov/xvBpc>. Follow up teleconferences are scheduled in April. Times can be found at the listed website.
  - Questions/Comments:
    - Joe Gibbs (MO Levee & Drainage District Ass): What percentage of the Missouri River Basin is from unregulated areas?
      - Approx. 40 – 43% of basin runoff is from unregulated areas.
    - Ryan (Atchison County Levee District): Is rainfall in lower basin states considered when calculating main stem reservoir releases?
      - Yes to some extent, there is an approximately five-day lag before Northwest Missouri sees impacts of change in reservoir releases.
    - Henry Dienst (Clark County Commissioner): Do you have any knowledge on status or planned releases of Des Moines River reservoir?
      - Mr. Remus was unable to provide information but Adam Jones (farmer – work group member) said that he monitors the Red Rock Reservoir on the Des Moines River and that it currently is at normal pool (20’ below last year).
- Legislative Overviews
  - U.S. Senate Bill 3403 (S. 3403): Andrew Vlasaty (Senator Blunt’s Office)
    - The intent of the bill is to provide broader flood control. The bill is supported by the eight US senators from Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and Missouri.
    - Key elements of the bill include
      - Encompasses 735 miles of the Missouri River from Sioux City to mouth in St. Louis
      - Requires study & construction by USACE to provide flood protection at a system level
    - Bill items to encourage solutions to be completed in a more timely fashion
      - \$75 million provided of nondiscretionary spending on flood protection projects developed by USACE
      - Study & construction work could be completed concurrently
      - Implements a better seamless process
    - Items excluded from the bill to ensure broad support
      - Does not amend any existing environmental laws
      - Does not make any changes to the USACE Master Manual
    - Questions/Comments:
      - Dru Buntin (DNR) comment: Missouri working for passage of the bill with the assistance of the other 3 lower basin states would allow USACE to move smaller projects (< \$75 million) over from planning stages to construction stage faster.
  - S. 1565 and S. 1571: Josh MacGregor (Senator Hawley’s Office)
    - Mr. MacGregor gave brief overview of US senate bills being sponsored or co-sponsored

- Sen. Hawley is a co-sponsor of S. 3403.
  - S. 1565 establishes a Presidential Advisory Council (Corps of Engineers Flood Control Civilian Advisory Council). Council would establish priority of Corps projects. Based on the council's recommendation, changes would be made in the USACE Master Manual.
  - S. 1571 establishes Flood Control as the USACE's highest priority, remove management for fish and wildlife as an USACE responsibility, and make changes to the USACE Master Manual.
  - There were no questions or comments for Mr. MacGregor.
- U.S. House bill 2174 (H.B. 2174): Leslie Parker (Representative Graves's Office)
  - The bill would prioritize flood control as main priority of USACE, remove management of fish and wildlife as an USACE responsibility, and make changes to USACE Master Manual.
  - Ms. Parker introduced Mr. Victor Sarmiento who gave an update on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA).
  - There were no questions or comments for Ms. Parker.
- Conservation Group Recommendations: Caroline Pufalt (Sierra Club), David Stokes (Great Rivers Habitat Alliance), and Jim Karpowicz (Missouri Coalition for the Environment)
  - Ms. Pufalt gave brief overview of a portions of *Conservation, Environmental, and Recreation Group's Response to Flood Recovery Advisory Working Group Interim Report for Governor Michael L. Parson* from February 25, 2020. Ms. Pufalt expanded on 4 main recommendations the group made in this report.
    - The need to focus on flood risk reduction and resilient floodplain development
    - Develop functioning floodplains. Healthy floodplains can provide multiple benefits.
    - Advisory group needs to acknowledge climate change and the new public safety risk associated with changing weather patterns.
    - Advisory group needs to improve public participation and outreach of overall process
  - Mr. Stokes spoke on the history of the Pick-Sloan program and other historical documents.
    - The need for 5,000 ft. wide floodplain for the length of Missouri River.
    - Missouri must be more aggressive in discouraging floodplain development through zoning. Referenced other states with tighter floodplain development rules (IL, WI, MN, etc.).
    - Missouri currently uses an allowed one-foot rise due to development in the floodplain when no zoning laws exist (Reference to Flood Insurance standard)
    - Suggest one-inch would be better standard (new Jefferson County zoning standard)
    - Listed current Missouri statutes that changes should be made to RSMo 49.60, RSMo 99.847, and RSMo 99.820
  - Mr. Karpowicz referenced American Rivers' latest ranking of most endangered rivers in country in which the lower Missouri River was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>.
    - Supporting fish & wildlife can be a benefit to help solve flood issues.
    - Funding streams that could help include:

- USACE Missouri River Recovery Project & Bank Stabilization and Navigation Project (BSNP) Fish & Wildlife Mitigation Project. Currently not funded.
  - NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program, Floodplain Easements. Atchison county levee district is utilizing these programs.
  - The Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. Congress authorized 60,000 acre total. Only 20,000 acres have been acquired.
- There were not questions or comments for any of the presenters.
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Floodplain Prioritization Tool: Barbara Charry (TNC)
  - Ms. Charry walked the advisory group through the use of the tool which can be found at [FPTool.org](http://FPTool.org). TNC in conjunction with USACE Silverjacket Program utilized the tool to develop a comprehensive plan for the Meramec River.
  - There were no questions or comments for Ms. Charry
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Services(NRCS) Easement Access: Chris Hamilton (NRCS)
  - Mr. Hamilton provide an overview of how NRCS was working with levee districts concerning existing Floodplain Easement and current funding and needs for Floodplain Easements and Wetland Easements by NRCS.
  - To make changes to existing NRCS Floodplain Easements requires an Administrative Action by NRCS.
    - Can be done but take time, 3-4 month process.
    - Consist of many steps, one of which is in the public's interest as determined at the state level and national level.
  - Flood Plain Easement Funding
    - Initially received \$9 million
    - Received over 100 applications, totaling over \$100 million
    - Current funding available after two increases - \$22 million
  - Wetland Reserve Easement Funding
    - Initial funding - \$7 million, requested a lot more. No decision yet.
    - Need based on applications - \$150 million
  - Questions / Comments
    - (Speaker did not identify themselves) Can NRCS easements be vacated?
      - No. Easements are perpetual in length.
    - Tom Waters (MO Levee & Water Drainage District Assn.) Why must the easement be changed?
      - Because the function of the easement is changed so then must be mitigated through Administrative Action. Process is doable but takes time, 3-4 months.
    - Tom commented that a legislative solution was needed to speed process up in times of emergency.

## Discussion of Group Draft Recommendations

- Dru Buntin (DNR) explained that two topics previously requested could not be presented today but efforts would be made to include in the May meeting.
  - Future Railroad Company Interaction and support for Levee Districts
  - Update on Missouri Flood Center

- New Suggested Recommendations
  - Legislative change to allow easier modification to existing NRCS easements during emergency periods
  - Simplify application to grant processes. Allow existing reports/process (environmental assessments, appraisals, relocation actions, NEPA, etc.) to be used across different state & federal agencies
    - HUD block grants
    - USACE

### **Public Comments**

- None

### **Future Meeting Dates**

- May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 1:00pm
- Lewis and Clark Office Building, Jefferson City
- In person meeting may be changed if COVID-19 emergency actions still in place.