

Grassley, Harkin urge Corps to factor in damaged levees in its water release plans

Written by Grassley Press

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WASHINGTON --- Led by Senators Chuck Grassley and Tom Harkin, a group of 10 U.S. senators today called on a top official for the Army Corps of Engineers to carefully consider the weakened level of flood protection caused by damaged levees and other river infrastructure when deciding on water releases this winter and next spring.

In a letter to the Corps commander responsible for the Northwestern division, the senators said the Corps plans for an aggressive approach with winter and spring releases is encouraging, but that infrastructure damage also must be a major factor in the Corps management decisions because repairs will not be completed before possibly high water flows in 2012. The reality of damaged levees means that water releases before March need to be above normal levels and that reservoir reserves need to be maximized, the senators said, noting the risk to communities and farmland.

Click [here](#) to read today's letter.

Senators Roy Blunt and Claire McCaskill of Missouri, Ben Nelson and Mike Johanns of Nebraska, Kent Conrad and John Hoeven of North Dakota, and John Thune and Tim Johnson of South Dakota signed the letter, along with Harkin and Grassley.

The Iowa senators are active participants in a Missouri River Working Group, which is comprised of the senators representing states along the river from Montana to Missouri. Yesterday, the working group asked the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office for a formal review of the 2011 Missouri River flood and the actions taken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as well as recommendations for improving flood control operations along the river system.

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In yesterday's letter to Gene Dodaro, Comptroller General of the United States and head of the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), the senators detailed the record flooding that occurred this summer. "There are varying viewpoints surrounding the recent flooding of the Missouri River. Various parties have suggested that more water than necessary was being held back in the upstream reservoirs. Corps officials, on the other hand, contend that the unprecedented amount of rain changed their picture completely, forcing them to release record levels of water through the system. Given the varying viewpoints on this issue, we are requesting that GAO examine key issues related to the Missouri River Flood of 2011," the letter said.

Click [here](#) to read yesterday's letter.