



Missouri Regional Advisory Committee Draft EIS Comments

April 20, 2017

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Omaha District
Attn: CENWO-PM-AC-Management Plan Comments
1616 Capitol Avenue
Omaha, NE 68102

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft Missouri River Recovery Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The Kansas Water Office (KWO) formulates a comprehensive state water plan for the management, conservation and development of the water resources of the state. The *Kansas Water Plan* includes sections corresponding with water planning areas which are determined by the KWO (K.S.A. 82a-903). Water planning is achieved by addressing issues in the regional areas of the state. Fourteen regional planning areas were established in December 2014 by the Kansas Water Authority (KWA) in conjunction with the *Long Term Vision for the Future of Water Supply in Kansas*. The 13 volunteer members of Missouri Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) represent the following interests: Recreation, Industry/Commerce, Agriculture and Agriculture Industry, WRAPS, Iowa Tribe of KS & NE, Public Water Supply, and Fish and Wildlife.

The Missouri RAC appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and supports the Preferred Alternative No. 3.

The Committee offers the following comments for consideration:

- Although there are significant uncertainties associated with its effectiveness in meeting the species objectives, Alternative 3 demonstrates it would be the least impactful means of meeting species objectives across the full range of interests in the Missouri River Basin. The USACE should implement Level 1 and Level 2 studies as outlined in Alternative 3.
- Alternative 3 has a wider range of benefits relative to Alternative 1 including certain benefits to endangered species, reduced program expenditures, and better performance for most of the Human Considerations (HCs).
- Hydrologically, the effects of Alternative 3 would be very close to those for Alternative 1 but without the specification for spawning cue releases in March and May. The differences in magnitude of the flows associated with Alternative 3 would be small compared to those associated with the other alternatives which makes this Alternative preferable.
- Alternative 3, which is preferred, has less channel reconfiguration for pallid sturgeon early life stage habitat relative to Alternative 1.

Missouri Membership: Carl Johnson, Chair, Leavenworth, KS; John Bishop, Atchison, KS; Neil Coufal, Troy, KS; Stephen Glaser, Atchison, KS; Jeffery Grossenbacher, Bern, KS; Carol Hughes, Seneca, KS; Alan Kelley, White Cloud, KS; Joel Mahnken, Leavenworth, KS; Brett Neibling, Highland, KS; Darcy Nightingale, Hiawatha, KS; Bill Shroyer, Sabetha, KS; Luke Terry, Robinson, KS; Michelle Wirth, Kansas City, KS

- Alternative 3 has the least National Economic Development (NED) impact and is a good balance between overall efficiency and impacts to certain NED resources especially when compared to Alternative 1 for the Missouri RAC Region.
- Alternative 3 operates inside the current Master Manual, however, four of the six alternatives include operating scenarios outside of the current Master Manual. Operations outside of the Master Manual have high probably of impacting water quality, a parameter not currently accounted for in the Water Supply Technical Report. Of particular concern is any flow regime(s) with the potential to create conditions optimal for cyanobacterial (blue-green algal) growth. With historical Missouri River operations falling within the defined constraints of the current Master Manual, little to no river water quality data exists for intentional and consistent operations outside of those defined constraints. Referring to Water Quality Technical Report, limited observed temperature data was available causing inaccuracies in modeled temperature changes for the alternatives and a loss of confidence in the data generated. What is known (and experienced with other source waters in Kansas) is that periods of reduced low flows result in slower and warmer waters conducive to blue-green algal growth. Nutrient loading on the Missouri River is more concentrated in Missouri RAC Planning Area and nutrient loading should be given more consideration in the EIS. Blue-green algae is harmful to aquatic life, can be costly for communities, impacting not only recreation, but public health and safety and is difficult to treat. These low flow impacts and the associated costs must be included in the EIS.
- Refer to Human Considerations Technical Report – Water Supply, Section 3.1 Paragraph 2, “The modeling results show that 33 of the 55 intakes would experience on average 57.1 days when water surface elevations would fall below operating thresholds. In addition, 21 of the 55 intakes would experience on average 14.7 days when water surface elevations are below shut-down elevations under Alternative 1.” These results will leave some communities without water supply for days. The report is also inconsistent in assessing risk assuming the worst case for flows, but best case for water utility to respond. Not all low water conditions can be solved by submersible pumps. The costs for the pumps are not accurate, asset life was shown as 10 years which is too long for this type of service under these conditions, it was also not apparent that a reduced wire to water efficiency was taken into account when calculating electrical costs and the cost in the report should be modified to reflect these considerations.

The cost to those communities without water supply has not been included in the report. The cost impact to Cleveland in 2003 when a regional power outage left 1.5 million persons in the city without water for 2 days was hundreds of millions when economic impacts in the region were considered. A water supply outage means a loss in fire protection, inability to cook, bathe, flush toilets and a shutdown of critical facilities like hospitals with an increase in the risk of disease outbreaks. A water supply outage becomes a state and federal disaster. The model needs to be modified using a realistic flow condition where water supply intakes remain in service. The cost impacts to water supply need to be accurately reflected in the report and the EIS.

- In 2012, US Army Corps of Engineers utilized water from the Kansas Reservoirs to protect nesting Least Terns and Piping Plovers on the Missouri River by calling for supplemental navigation support



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releases. There is significant investment in storage in the Kansas Reservoirs, (Milford, Perry, and Tuttle Creek) to meet the public's needs and the eight authorized purposes especially during drought conditions. Water from these Kansas Reservoirs should not be used to support the alternatives presented in the Missouri River Draft EIS that would impact Public Water Supply. Water Supply and Water Quality should be considered the highest priorities of the authorized purposes with substantial impacts to human considerations in the EIS.

- The impacts to land acquisition are understated in the Section 3.10 of the DEIS. Land Acquisition by the Corps removes property from the tax base for local government and this cost should be accounted for in the economic considerations. Property taxes are a source of revenues to local governments and schools that are tied to the productive cropland. The economic activity generated by farming, impacts local sales tax, personal property tax, special use taxes, and these impacts are underestimated in the analysis. Any conservation management plan should be voluntary and provide incentives to private landowners for protecting or enhancing habitat for the species needing protection. Non-participants in voluntary species conservation management plans should not be held to the standards of the plan. Benefit-cost ratio analysis for any alternative must result in higher benefits than the cost. Mitigation or replacement of habitat should be applied only in areas where conversion of the habitat is significant in relationship to the total amount of habitat available in the area.
- The land use model described in Section 3.1 Land Use and Ownership uses baseline assumptions related to cropland acres that will be taken out of production by the result of land being purchased and repurposed by the Corps. The cropland acres are not the only economic impact that should be accounted for. Interior drainage will be impacted by the alternatives which can delay or even prevent crops from being planted, cause structural issues, cause the need for rehabilitation of land, cause repairs of levee, and cause infrastructure damages. This cost should be included in the economic considerations in the EIS for each alternative.

Sincerely,

Carl Johnson
Missouri Regional Advisory Chair

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