



Nebraska Chapter

P.O. Box 4664, Omaha, NE 68104

Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study Council Bluffs Public Meeting – June 22, 2010

My name is Clyde Anderson of Omaha, Nebraska. I am Treasurer and Transportation Issues Chair for the Nebraska Chapter - Sierra Club. We have over 2,000 members in the state of Nebraska. Sierra Club is America's oldest, largest, and most influential grassroots environmental organization.

Back in the 1940's there was a vision for the Missouri River, one dominated by turning the river into an industrial, region-developing resource. Many benefits have derived from that plan: electricity, irrigation, and recreation. The costs, however, have been high: a fragmented food chain, dozens of native fish and bird species endangered or threatened, and people alienated from a dangerous river.

Sierra Club supports restoration of the Missouri River's ecosystem. Now is the time to provide for a healthier river basin-wide. Missouri River management needs to be better balanced between uses with less emphasis on commercial navigation. Also, the Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study should include the entire basin including tributaries, not just the Missouri River.

The Sierra Club Chapters in the nine states of the Missouri River Basin developed a basin-wide policy on Missouri River management in 2001 which was updated in 2004. A copy of the policy is attached to this statement.

A Government Accountability Office report¹ released in January 2009 shows that commercial barges that carry commercial commodities have all but disappeared from the Missouri River, and that virtually all that remain are barges carrying river sand and gravel from dredge operations to on-shore processing sites. The report covers the years 1994 to 2006. Nearly all barge traffic on the Missouri River moves less than 10 miles hauling sand and gravel which is further evidence the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers should stop managing the river for commercial navigation.

The Missouri doesn't have a lock system like the Mississippi does. So the Missouri River is narrow and fast-moving. As a result, it takes a lot more fuel to navigate the Missouri. And that translates into higher prices - as much as 60 percent higher than moving commercial traffic on the Mississippi.

Each year the federal government spends \$7 million maintaining the Missouri River Navigation System. Based on the miniscule volume of commercial traffic moving on the river, that's a poor use of taxpayer funds, especially since recreation upstream is a bigger moneymaker. Anglers and boaters generate \$85 million each year, while commercial navigation barely breaks even.

1 - Missouri River Navigation: Data on Commodity Shipments for Four States Served by the Missouri River and Two States Served by Both the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, January 15, 2009 - <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09224r.pdf>

Since 83% of the total tonnage shipped on the Missouri River originates or terminates in Missouri, as a first step Sierra Club recommends that Army Corps of Engineers support for commercial navigation be terminated upstream from Kansas City. Those resources could then be used to mitigate damage to wildlife habitats and make the river safer for recreation between Sioux City and Kansas City.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak this evening.

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