

MISSOURI RIVER — PUBLIC STATEMENT
1944 FLOOD CONTROL ACT
THE NORTH DAKOTA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Contemporary and sustainable management of the Missouri River are in the best interests of North Dakota, the seven other Missouri Basin states, and the Nation. Unfortunately, the 1944 Flood Control Act has locked in outdated river management that is not adaptable to the contemporary social, economic and environmental needs in the Basin. The North Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society believes that now is the time for Congress to address this issue. There is significant interest, from Montana to Missouri, in working toward sustainable management of the Missouri River System. Past and on-going efforts by both the Corps of Engineers and Federal Courts system have failed to find a workable balance for Missouri River management. Thus, we believe that it is time for the third branch of government, Congress, to step in and establish contemporary legislation to resolve the issue.

The 44 Flood Control Act has not kept pace with basin needs as is evidenced by the status of the river and its users today. Communities have been and continue to be threatened with the loss of municipal water supplies. Low water levels in Fort Peck, Garrison and Oahe reservoirs threaten fish and wildlife and the growing outdoor recreation industry. Hydropower production is increasingly inefficient due to low water levels. Many irrigation intakes are no longer close to a source of water. Endangered species populations on the river continue to struggle. Because the Act limits the Corps ability to adapt to the contemporary needs of the Basin, we firmly believe that the 1944 Flood Control Act should be rewritten or amended. A new or amended piece of legislation can do a better job of meeting the contemporary needs of the Missouri River basin and promote a sustainable productive future.

Principals that should guide modernized management of the Missouri River:

1. Engage in collaborative basin discussions to establish contemporary needs
2. Establish fair and practical management of River resources
3. Work toward a goal of sustainable river functions and values
4. Conserve the environmental integrity of the river ecosystem
5. Use adaptive management to meet the contemporary needs of the basin
6. Emphasize use of river functions to accomplish objectives, rather than working against the river.

There are many factors affecting the management of the Missouri River, such as drought, climate change, and social needs. Some can't be controlled or are difficult to predict, however, they are all affected by the direction provided by the 1944 Flood Control Act which sets how the Corps of Engineers operates the river, It is that primary direction Congress has provided that needs to be updated.

The North Dakota Chapter is committed to work towards an amendment or a rewrite of the 1944 Flood Control Act to update management of the Missouri River. We also encourage a collaborative effort to reshape this Act, and will work toward grassroots support for change by reaching out and working with other Wildlife Society and American Fisheries Society Chapters in the Missouri River basin, interested parties, and state and national legislators to develop an updated law related to the Missouri River system. Modernization of the law will establish an improved set of guiding principles that are in step with the contemporary needs of the Missouri River basin.

Approved by the membership,
January 31, 2008