

January, 2007

The Honorable John Paul Woodley
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
108 Army Pentagon
Room 3E446
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Via: Missouri River Basin Interagency Roundtable Federal Working Group

Subject: Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee Proposed Charter

Dear Secretary Woodley:

We are pleased to submit our proposed Charter for the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (Committee), drafted over the last eight months by a broadly representative group of Missouri River basin residents. This group included representatives from basin tribes, eight basin states, and diverse stakeholder interests.

This proposed charter has been agreed upon by consensus and is offered for acceptance without alteration in any respect. If its final form is altered in any way from its present form, unless the changes are agreed to prior to implementation by consensus of the Committee Drafting Team, this charter ceases being the work product of the Committee Drafting Team. It then becomes the work product of those responsible for making the alterations.

Virtually every term and provision in this charter has been discussed and carefully considered. While the recommended charter contains many notable features, the following are paramount:

Complements Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) provisions

Although WRDA was not enacted until the last month of the Drafting Team's work, the group strived to develop a proposed charter that satisfies WRDA's requirements for a recovery implementation committee while providing more detailed structure and procedures for the Committee's work.

Consensus-based decision-making

The Drafting Team recommends this Charter, which is founded on consensus based decision-making regarding all substantive matters. We believe a broad consensus supporting Committee recommendations will provide the impetus needed to move forward.

Broadly based membership

All involved federal agencies, eight basin states, twenty-eight federally recognized Indian tribes, and sixteen stakeholder categories may designate representatives to the Committee as required by WRDA.

We have one concern that we ask you to address as you establish the Committee. We believe that financial assistance, for expenses only, is indispensable for many members who have no resources other than personal funds. Can the federal agencies find a way to solve this problem?

We fully recognize that our work is only a first step toward species recovery, broadly supported water management policies, and continued cooperation among basin residents and government agencies. The group that wrote this charter has been canvassed, and many of its members have expressed a willingness to commit another three years in this effort to follow the will of the American Public as expressed by their representatives in Congress through the 2007 WRDA bill. Not only have they expressed a willingness to commit the time, but they have indicated they currently have the financial and constituent backing needed to participate. This charter should make it perfectly clear that the people involved have shown a willingness to collaborate, and a degree of trust already exists. That being the case, a foundation for MRRIC is in place for you to build on. We pledge ourselves to this effort, and we look forward to working with all federal agencies with responsibilities for the Missouri River in implementing the proposed charter and establishing the Committee.

We request that you adopt this charter as you begin to implement the Missouri River-related provisions of WRDA. We are available to meet with you at your convenience. Indeed, we urge you to meet with us so we can answer any questions you may have. We look forward to this first challenge in collaboration. Although we gave it our best effort, we humbly welcome any suggestions you have to offer. It is our hope that, over time, you will find the Committee not only to be a resource, but a dependable partner in your decision making.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Chapman, John Thorson
Co-Chairs
Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee Drafting Team