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The Honorable House or Senate Member
Address House or Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman or Senator Last Name,

The Central Mountains and Plains Section (CMPS) of The Wildlife Society is a subunit of the parent organization comprised of states including Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. The Wildlife Society is a professional organization that strives to ensure that wildlife and habitats are conserved through management actions that take into careful consideration relevant scientific information. We are advocates for effective wildlife policy, law, and programs that benefit wildlife and stewardship of our public trust natural resources. The Missouri River is of vital importance to all fish and wildlife resources that are associated with the river and any action to remove fish and wildlife as a congressionally authorized purpose of the Flood Control Act of 1944 would be a disservice to the American people.

Congressmen Graves (R-MO), Hartzler (R-MO), and Luetkemeyer (R-MO) introduced H.R. 1460 in April to revise the Missouri River Mainstem Reservoir System Master Water Control Manual to seek removal of fish and wildlife as one of the authorized purposes for the Corp of Engineers to consider. The other authorized purposes include flood control, navigation, hydropower, water supply, water quality, irrigation, and recreation. Fish and wildlife and the habitat supporting them were impacted severely from the development of the Corps' Bank Stabilization and Navigation Project on the lower reaches of the Missouri River. Compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the 2003 Biological Opinion by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service recognizes that the Corps' operation of the river has contributed to the listing of three species as threatened or endangered. Retaining fish and wildlife as an authorized purpose allows the Corps' to lessen these environmental impacts while maintaining the social and economic benefits of the system. These federally mandated mitigation efforts not only compensate for losses of fish and wildlife habitat but concurrently provide societal benefits including retention and reduction of flood flows and improvement of water quality.

Fish and wildlife are public trust resources covered under the Public Trust Doctrine which establishes a trustee relationship of government to hold and manage wildlife, fish, and waterways for the benefit of resources and the public. It is the responsibility of government to consider impacts of various projects on public trust species to ensure that these resources are protected for future generations to enjoy. Fish and wildlife along the Missouri River provide significant economic and recreational value to the communities and people within the region and the United States.

The fish and wildlife habitat of the Missouri River has been altered drastically through channelization of the lower reaches from Sioux City, NE downstream to St. Louis, MO and development of a mainstem reservoir system with alteration of the lower reaches primarily to salvage a struggling navigation industry. In 2003, the Revised Master Manual study of the Missouri Mainstem Reservoir Systems found the economic value of recreation (\$85 million) far surpassed the value of navigation (\$9 million).

The severe flooding of 2010 and 2011 not only impacted individual lives along the river, but highlighted the need to develop a comprehensive Missouri River management strategy to overcome reoccurring Federal disaster payment expenditures that cost the American taxpayer billions of dollars. Current Congressionally authorized actions (i.e. Missouri River Recovery Program and Wetlands Reserve Program) have created the potential to reduce flood impacts to individuals, reduce costs to taxpayers, and further expand public benefits through enhanced fish and wildlife resources. A healthy Missouri River which includes plentiful fish and wildlife resource throughout the entire basin will directly benefit the broadest contingency of public in the Missouri Valley.

In fairness to U.S. taxpayers, we urge Congress to take a constructive approach to Missouri River issues by funding the completion of the Missouri River Authorized Purpose Study (MRAPS) which would assess each of the eight authorized purpose of the 1944 Flood Control Act. This act has never been reviewed for efficiency since 1944 or to see if there could be cost savings by adjusting management to meet contemporary needs. The scoping phase of MRAPS has been completed already.

The Central Mountains and Plains Section of The Wildlife Society urge you to oppose H.R. 1460 with respect to removal of fish and wildlife as an authorized purpose of management of the Missouri River by the Corps of Engineers. If you have any questions about our position on this issue or need additional perspective from the wildlife profession in CMPS, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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