

On Monday, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will hold a public meeting in Omaha to discuss its management of the Missouri River.

When members of the public from western Iowa and eastern Nebraska attend these meetings, they should deliver a message to the corps. That message? In the wake of this year's epic flood, the corps's Missouri River flood control policy must be updated, as proposed in legislation I have introduced.

For all of recorded history, the flood of 1881 was the worst Missouri River flood experienced. In fact, the flood of 1881 is what the Corps of Engineers continues to use as the baseline in its master manual for calculating flood control storage space requirements throughout the river's reservoir and drainage system.

While the 1881 flood predates reliable record-keeping, the corps estimates that the flood sent 42 million acre-feet of water downstream from March to July of that year. This year, during that same time period, we've seen more than 48 million acre-feet come down the river. According to the corps, we will see a total of 61 million acre-feet of runoff during the 2011 calendar year.

This far surpasses not only the runoff associated with the flood of 1881 but also the previous verifiable annual record of 49 million acre-feet that accompanied the flooding of 1997.

The 2011 runoff is a new worst-case flood scenario, and the Corps of Engineers needs to recognize this in the master manual. Because the use of the 1881 flood as the benchmark for flood control calculations by the Corps of Engineers no longer provides residents along the Missouri River with adequate protection from severe flooding, the corps's master manual needs to be updated. I have introduced legislation (H.R. 2942) that would require the corps to do so.

H.R. 2942 would require the corps to amend its flood control storage calculations so that they are based on the new highest runoff in recorded history, the runoff of 2011. The effect of this change would be to increase the amount of storage space in the Missouri River reservoir system that is set aside for flood control.

The new amount would be above the 16.3 million acre-feet that has been the standard in each version of the master manual. By increasing the amount of storage space in the system, the corps would be better able to contain excessive amounts of upstream runoff that fuel Missouri River floods.

The legislation would achieve this change at no additional cost to taxpayers, and it has earned bipartisan support from members of Congress representing Missouri River states. Importantly, these members represent both upstream and downstream areas.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers needs to update its water control policies to reflect this year's record runoff in order to better protect against severe flooding in the Missouri River system. The point of the Pick-Sloan program, which created the Missouri River's six dam reservoir complex, was to prevent serious downstream flooding on the Missouri River.

Congress has the authority to tell the corps to use the storage space available within the reservoir system to prevent serious downstream flooding, and my legislation would require the corps to fulfill this duty.

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Congressman Steve King, a Republican, represents Iowa's 5th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. Click [here](#) to read the Original Column in the Omaha World-Herald.