

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 4, 2010

Lieutenant General Robert Van Antwerp
U.S. Army Chief of Engineers and Commanding General
U.S Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Dear Lieutenant General Robert Van Antwerp

A little more than one year ago, severe storms and record water levels held behind Howard Hanson Dam damaged the dam's earthen abutment, resulting in a reduction in the amount of water that can safely be stored behind the dam. Left unchecked, the flood protection the dam could provide at that point in time was estimated at a one in three probability of flooding.

Since that time, the federal, state, and local governments have worked together to provide interim measures of protection until a permanent fix for the dam can be fully implemented to restore flood protection to the full authorized levels. Progress has been made and due to those interim measures, including the completion of the grout curtain, work on the dam's drainage tunnel, repair and improvement of levees, and deployment of flood barriers in the most vulnerable areas, the estimated probability of flooding has decreased to one in thirty. This decrease in the probability of flooding is a critical achievement. However, it is difficult for those who live, work, or own businesses in the Green River Valley to rest easy until the full protection offered by Howard Hanson Dam is restored.

Our priority at the federal level is to achieve the safest and fastest permanent fix to Howard Hanson Dam, which requires no delays in the study, design, and construction of the project. It is our understanding that the study phase of the project is progressing at an aggressive pace and has a goal of completion in June of this year. Given the realities of the federal budget process, it is imperative the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) achieve this goal in order for the construction project to be included in the fiscal year (FY) 2012 President's budget submission to Congress. Furthermore, the completion of the study in June provides ample time for the USACE to focus efforts on the design phase of the project for the remainder of FY2010 through FY2011, allowing for full advantage to be taken of construction funds in FY2012. We would like clarity on the policy regarding the progression of construction projects as they move from the completion of a study into the design and engineering phase.

To review this timeline, the ultimate completion of the project, and to discuss the importance of achieving it, we respectfully request a meeting with Major General William T. Grisoli, Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations. We view his experience as former Commander of the Northwestern Division as an invaluable asset. This experience affords him a local perspective of the importance of Howard Hanson Dam, not only to those living downstream but for the economic engine it protects in the region. We are looking forward to working with Major General Grisoli as well as we did with his immediate predecessor, Major General Temple.

Additionally, we request the participation of a member of your direct team in a conference call with our local elected leaders. The inner workings of the USACE are not an intuitive process and leaves those working through it with many questions. In particular, it has become evident that prior experience with the USACE does not directly translate when working on a dam safety project. It would be most helpful to have these important differences acknowledged and directly addressed in a forum that offers time for questions to be asked and answered by the USACE with one voice.

We are acutely aware that a permanent fix for Howard Hanson Dam is not a simple task and that such construction projects take time to execute properly and safely. Thank you for your attention to these requests. We look forward to your response regarding the timeline as we have laid it out and the immediate next steps necessary to achieving it.

Sincerely,

Patty Murray
John Smith

Maria Carbone
D. B. Bunker

Norm Richards

Jim McAnulty

John Arline

Benjamin

Neil Zuma

Memorandum

For the Director

Subject

W. L. A.

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