

Member Day Hearing Testimony by Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, II (MO-5)
House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Energy & Water Development
Tuesday, April 9, 2019

Thank you, Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson, for holding this hearing and giving Members the opportunity to share our priorities with the Subcommittee. As you may know, recent Missouri River flooding has devastated Nebraska, Iowa, and Northwest Missouri. The March runoff in the upper Missouri River Basin above Sioux City, Iowa, was a record 11.0 million-acre feet, surpassing the previous record of 7.3 MAF set in 1952. The March runoff for Gavins Point to Sioux City was more than a typical year's worth.

Though the full scope of the damage is still being assessed for Missouri and Kansas, the total likely exceeds \$3 billion, just for Iowa and Nebraska. According to the Missouri Department of Transportation, 120 roads were closed due to flooding, and 168,000 acres are under water in Atchison and Holt Counties in northwest Missouri. The U.S. Army Corps KC District estimates 64 breaches occurred among the 13 impacted PL84-99 Program levee systems (two levee systems overtopped, and 11 levee systems overtopped and breached).

My congressional district – Missouri's Fifth – did not experience the level of devastation that occurred in northwest Missouri. However, make no mistake, farmers and residents in Ray, Lafayette and Saline Counties were impacted. Levee sponsors in my district are seeing a lot of seep water behind levees and clogged drainage pipes, which will delay planting. Many levees – though they did not overtop or breach – experienced erosion and side wash from the high, rapid river levels. Levees are saturated and weakened from the March flood and the grass covers will have to be re-seeded. Further snow-melt or heavy rains locally could place the region in another perilous situation.

I urge your committee to consider supplemental disaster assistance for these Midwest states impacted by the Missouri River flooding, and particularly funding for levee rehabilitation assistance through Public Law 84-99 for both federal and non-federal flood control projects damaged by the flood.

I am certain that my colleagues from Missouri, Nebraska and Iowa would concur that timely help is essential - our farmers are already dealing with challenges on multiple fronts: low commodity prices, higher equipment costs, tariffs and market uncertainty, and rising farm debt. NOAA predicts that nearly two-thirds of the lower 48 states have an elevated risk of flooding through May, placing further risk on the lower Missouri River basin. If levees are not repaired by next year farmers along the Missouri River or tributaries may not be able to purchase crop insurance. I urge your subcommittee to act swiftly to provide supplemental disaster assistance and kickstart the recovery process for the Midwest. Thank you for your consideration.