

River flooding raises questions for Corps

(KAIR)--The massive flooding along the Missouri River has renewed criticism of the agency that manages the river's dams.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers says much of the water that created last month's flooding came from rain and melting snow that flowed into the river downstream of all the dams. At the same time, massive amounts of water filled the reservoirs and some had to be released.

But many people who live near the Missouri River believe the Corps isn't doing enough to prevent floods or is placing too much emphasis on other priorities, such as protecting endangered species and preserving barge traffic. "I readily admit there are acts beyond our control, there are things that can happen in a flood that we can't be totally prepared for, but can we do better? The answer to that seems to me to be yes," Republican United States Senator Jerry Moran, of Kansas, said during a visit to Atchison last week. He said the management issue is a concern he's heard this spring, as well as during past floods, from his constituents. "The conversations that I have along the river, and I've had for a long time in previous floods, is that the Corps of Engineers can do a better job of managing river flow. The general complaint has been is that they ought to be releasing water up river earlier in the year, and get it down river before these kind of circumstances occur."

Moran said he will hold the Corps accountable. "The Army Corps of Engineers has a lot of pressure on it, but we need to have better answers from the Corps about why they can't do what makes sense, what's common sense, to those of us who live here in this part of the country. It's a conversation that has happened with the Corps before. Management of the Missouri River basin has received lots of criticism, but this is further evidence when the flooding is occurring in March, and we expect greater water coming down the river in the future this year, we need to make certain we don't lose the opportunity, don't step back, and not do the things necessary to see about getting the management of the river basin changed so that we don't have this repetition time and time again."

Moran's fellow Republican U.S. Senator from Missouri, Josh Hawley, told the Associated Press Congress should consider serious reforms to ensure flood control is the Corps' top priority.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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