Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 19, 2012

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army, Civil Works
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy,

It has come to our attention that commerce along the Mississippi River may soon be in jeopardy. According to industry groups, barge traffic could be severely impaired or altogether grind to a halt along the middle Mississippi River between St. Louis, MO and Cairo, IL. This has the potential to occur as soon as December 10th of this year.

The problem has arisen because of the drought and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' current plan to halt releases of water from the Upper Missouri River reservoirs on approximately November 22nd. We understand that the Army Corps typically reduces and eventually shuts off water flows during this time of the year in accordance with its Annual Operating Plan (AOP) for the Missouri River, but doing so now could result in such low water levels on the Mississippi River that normal barge transportation would be impossible. On November 13, flows from the Missouri River made up 61.1 percent of the Mississippi River, according to the U.S. Geological Service gage.

Ensuring that the Mississippi River is open to traffic is vital to the manufacturing and agriculture communities, and ultimately American jobs. The river system is the global gateway for American products and commodities, and its continued traffic flow is of the utmost importance.

We ask that the Corps speed up the process of removal of rock pinnacles at Grand Tower, IL and Thebes, IL. Removal of rock in this area is essential for normal barge traffic to continue within low water levels. We also ask that water flows be maintained from the Missouri River until the rock removal is finished.

An industry review of the statute, regulations and legislative and operating history demonstrates that Congress specifically intended the Missouri River reservoir system be operated to benefit downstream areas in the Mississippi River as well as the Missouri. Corps management of the Missouri reservoirs has deviated from the AOP during exceptional circumstances. The navigation community recognizes the legitimate needs of the other users of Missouri River waters, and believes this problem can be solved without significant impact on other water claimants.

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We trust that you recognize the importance of this issue to U.S. jobs and industries, and are hopeful that you will work with all parties involved in these impacted areas. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Respectfully,

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Rep. Elijah Cummings (MD-7)

Rep. Jeff Landry (LA-3)

Rep. WM Lacy Clay (MO-1)

Rep. Spencer Bachus (AL-6)

Rep. Gene Greene (TX-29)

Rep. Erik Paulsen (MN-3)

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Rep. Adam Kinzinger (IL-11)

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Rep. Sam Graves (MO-6)

Rep. Cedric Richmond (LA-2)

Rep. Peter Roskam (IL-6)

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson (MS-2)

Rep. Glenn 'GT' Thompson (PA-5)

Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, II (MO-5)

Rep. Gregg Harper (MS-3)

Rep. Terri A. Sewell (AL-7)

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Rep. Jerry Costello (IL-12)

Rep. Mo Brooks (AL-5)

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Rep. Bruce Braley (IA-1)

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Rep. Timothy V. Johnson (IL-15)

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Rep. Steve Scalise (LA-1)

Rep. Mark Critz (PA-12)

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Rep. Marsha Blackburn (TN-7)

Rep. Don Manzullo (IL-16)

Rep. Judy Biggert (IL-13)

Rep. Jason Altmire (PA-4)

Rep. Diane Black (TN-6)

Rep. Russ Carnahan (MO-3)

CC: Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood
Secretary of Energy, Steven Chu