

FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE OF  
**GOVERNOR DAVE HEINEMAN**  
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## **Nebraska Withdraws from Missouri River Association of States and Tribes**

(Lincoln, Neb.) Gov. Dave Heineman today announced Nebraska's departure from the Missouri River Association of States and Tribes (MoRAST) because remaining in the association is not in the best interest of Nebraska.

"Our highest priority is protecting our citizens' homes, farmers and ranchers, and businesses along the Missouri river," said Gov. Dave Heineman. "Nebraska's interests are currently best served by alternate forms of discussion and engagement. Our efforts must focus on flood control as the highest priority in operation of the Missouri River mainstem system. I believe it is currently in Nebraska's best interest to engage more directly with those states and federal partners through other means." This announcement was made in a letter to J. Michael Hayden, who serves as executive director.

Governors and representatives from Missouri River Basin States recently held two meetings in Omaha to discuss issues and concerns related to Missouri River flood control. The result of those meetings was to form a Missouri River Working Group to coordinate and actively address matters pertaining to Missouri River flooding. These Governors and their representatives have stated a clear consensus that flood control must be the highest priority in operation of the mainstem system. MoRAST is made up of representatives of both a water management agency and a fish and wildlife agency. Through discussion related to this year's historic flooding, concerns have been raised that MoRAST may not prioritize protection of citizens' homes, farmers and ranchers, and businesses.

MoRast is a regional interstate organization formed by joint resolution of the Governors of Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa and Kansas and the Mni Sose Intertribal Water Rights Coalition. It was formed in 2006 to help resolve issues related to the basin states and tribes, to serve as a forum to foster communication and information exchange among the member states, tribes and various other governmental units, and to facilitate the management of the natural resources of the Missouri River Basin.

*The text of the letter follows:*

Dear Governor Hayden:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the State of Nebraska's official notice of withdrawal from the Missouri River Association of States and Tribes (MoRAST). I greatly appreciate the value of cooperative activity for Missouri River management, but believe Nebraska's interests are currently best served by alternate forms of discussion and engagement. Our efforts must focus on flood control as the highest priority in operation of the Missouri River mainstem system.

Governors or our representatives from seven Missouri Basin States met in Omaha in August to discuss our concerns with and issues related to Missouri River flood control. A subsequent Governor's meeting was held in October. In addition the Governors of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming have formed a Missouri River Working Group to coordinate and actively address, as needed, matters pertaining to Missouri River flooding. I was pleased with the opportunities those meetings provided for interaction with other states and our federal partners and look forward to working with them on future Missouri River flood control and recovery efforts. With an understanding of our support for flood control as having the highest priority; I am also strongly committed to continued discussion and cooperation on the broad spectrum of Missouri Basin water uses and issues.

Governors and their representatives from seven of the eight basin states have stated a clear consensus that flood control must be the highest priority in operation of the mainstem system. However, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources staff who attended the September 27-28 MoRAST meeting in Rapid City, South Dakota have indicated that the meeting was not responsive to Nebraska's focus on flood control. In addition, I have concerns that with the Board of Directors including representatives of both a water management agency and a fish and wildlife agency from each state, the Board composition may not reflect the basin's multiple water uses, including flood control, in a balanced manner.

The Missouri River flood of 2011 has resulted in major damages in Nebraska and enormous hardships for many of our citizens. I am committed to reducing Nebraska's exposure to future flood hazards while working with other Basin states, our federal partners, and basin stakeholders to improve river management. I appreciate past work of MoRAST, but I believe it is currently in Nebraska's best interest to engage more directly with those states and federal partners through other means.

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