

The Lower Brule Sioux Tribe is very pleased to see this gathering of federal agencies, devoted in their respective ways to the health and wellbeing of the Missouri River and all its life. The goal of moving forward with an adaptive management philosophy is especially gratifying to us, as our people have traditionally taken account of environmental and community imperatives and values whenever we are faced with change.

With so many perceptions of the important issues and the diverse ways of approaching them among the federal, state and local agencies, private landowners, and the Tribes, the integrative spirit of this initiative and its dedication to the task of protecting and preserving part of our original wildlife heritage appears to provide a fresh way forward in managing all our cultural and natural resources.

The Lower Brule Sioux Tribe is therefore ready and willing to contribute and will gladly sit down in partnership with this emerging committee, as we share the complex, but satisfying task of developing the wisdom and mutual understandings that will get things done.

With respect to your request for input into the committee formation and process, as outlined in your “Proposed Framework for Establishing the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee”, we must respectfully defer our contribution for the moment. Our reasons are several, and we wish to outline these in order to provide, for the group, a perspective that comes from generations of involvement in matters that affect the River and our people.

Our historical relationship with the federal government encompasses treaties, laws, agreements, jurisprudence, and other legal undertakings, set within an environment of social and political imperatives, that trace the struggle of our people for justice since the early 19th century. We must therefore maintain our direct, individual relationships developed over time with federal, state and local agencies and public interest groups, as well as other Tribes who share our fundamental rights and concerns along the Missouri River and its many tributaries in the Basin.

The weight of responsibility, given this history, prevents us from letting go of our diverse partnerships to be part of a collective voice – even as we recognize how powerful this voice might be. We cannot risk diminishing our capacity to pursue our own interests, as these too are powerful forces that well up with every development issue that affects our environment.

Having said this, we intend to cooperate fully with the committee, even to the extent of participating in a technical way, as long as we can develop a mutually satisfactory set of relationships that respect the structurally unique relationship between Tribes and the federal government.

In particular, we are most anxious to bring to a table devoted to the “best science” our integrative view of the processes of nature. The reason is simple. Science, and scientific

undertakings, take place within cultural contexts – in fact, within sociopolitical environments made up of distinct interest groups, agendas, and economies of scale, all directed by political, rather than intellectual, forces. As we have emerged through thousands of years of living within the natural environments along the River, we maintain a way of seeing that may contribute substantially to the necessary interface between science and culture, between scientific implementations and the ideas and needs of diverse communities.

If, with reference to the proposed framework, we are able to maintain our traditional independence and interdependence with other communities along the River, pursuing relationships and authorizations that exist or that the MRRIC or its members may develop, we will be very happy to work with you on an outline of an association that the Tribe finds just and mutually beneficial.

Michael B. Jandreau
Chairman
Lower Brule Sioux Tribe
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