



December 7, 2016

An Open Letter to President-Elect Donald J. Trump on Conservation and Environmental Policy
Dear President-Elect Trump,

As you establish your new administration to prepare to lead our country for the next four years, we hope that you will continue our nation's commitment to environmental improvement. As you "Drain the Swamp" in Washington, D.C., please be sure to protect our literal swamps, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and floodplains throughout the United States. These irreplaceable natural resources form the backbones on our entire ecosystem.

One way that your incoming administration can improve our environment, exercise fiscal discipline, increase the safety of people who live along the water, and respect the long tradition of sportsmen in our country, would be to dramatically change our country's flood management plans.

For too long, the Army Corps of Engineers and its allies in agriculture and industry have followed a flood management policy primarily based on building levees. That approach has failed. It has made flooding worse (just as basic science predicted it would), while harming our irreplaceable environment. The only thing that approach has succeeded in is spending enormous amounts of taxpayer's money.

As you appoint people to leadership positions in the Environmental Protection Agency, President's Council on Environmental Quality, Department of the Interior, and more, we respectfully request that you appoint people who are independent from the iron triangle of the Army Corps and the barge and farm sectors. That cartel has succeeded in creating a flood management system good for them but harmful to the rest of our country. We need new flood management plans based on allowing the rivers to access the wetlands and floodplains nature intended for them to access. Instead, the Army Corps and their allies have cut our rivers off from their natural floodplain via levees in far too many places, and more devastating floods and ecological damage have been the result.

Frequently, taxpayers are forced to pay enormous sums for the damages these man-made floods cause. In this case, better environmental policy is also more conservative fiscal policy. A perfect example of this is the New Madrid Levee project in Southeastern Missouri. The only people who support this terrible plan are the Army Corps and a few powerful farm families who will benefit from this new levee. It will be devastating to everyone and everything else, and the first act your administration could do to send a pro-conservation message is to veto this project permanently.

We also encourage your administration to change the system of farm subsidies the next time the current system is up for renewal. We need a system of farm supports based less on subsidies to corporate agriculture and wealthy landowners and more on incentivizing growing more food and better farm-practice management in areas such as irrigation and clean water.

Finally, we hope that our nation will continue to engage in worldwide efforts to combat climate change. The potential for climate change to affect flooding is all too real. We support efforts at the national level to work with other nations and encourage technological and industrial changes that will address the serious challenge of climate change.

Great Rivers Habitat Alliance is a conservation organization based in Missouri and Illinois. We count many hunters, fishermen, and sportsmen among the conservationists who support us. We sincerely wish that your administration can be a leader in protecting our invaluable rivers and floodplain, and we hope the people you appoint to key leadership roles will accept the responsibility to change the failed river and flood policies we have followed for the past several decades.

Respectfully,



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