

Jan. 1997
Weiser, Idaho

Sen. Larry Craig

Dear Senator Craig:

We are writing at this time to express our deep concern over the potential for future devastating flooding in the Weiser River Drainage. We solicit your help in initiating a plan to prevent future catastrophic floods.

As you are well aware lands within the Weiser river drainage as well as the Payette River have recently experienced flooding of unprecedented proportion. We needn't reiterate to you the tremendous loss to property, homes, bridges, roads and etc. caused by the flooding. We have little heart in proceeding at this time to put things back together as there is no assurance that we will not experience similar or even worse flooding in the immediate and/or long term future.

The weiser river floods quite often in the areas adjacent to the river. Flood control dikes have been built for protection against water damage. These dikes have been shown during the most recent event to be very ineffectual in protecting the local citizens against the cost and misery of floods.

As we contemplate the future we read where weather occurrence such as produced the recent floods are becoming more and more frequent. This makes us wonder if we just sit back and keep rebuilding after nature takes her course or if there is something which could be done. We don't have any faith that dikes can be anything but stopgap measures to prevent future flooding, as shown above the system of dikes previously constructed can only be counted on to eventually overtop and make big events even more devastating.

We have seen how the dams above Boise were able to take the peak of the floods on the Boise river and now how they are able to evacuate the water in a controlled flow to make the dams ready for the next occurrence. We look to our own situation and feel this could possibly be our long term solution.

We are aware that the US Bureau of Reclamation has done feasibility studies on a number of dams in the Weiser River Drainage but were never able to justify their construction because of unfavorable cost benefit ratios. We feel there are several factors which may make the dams more attractive at this time not only in costs but in benefits also.

Number one and of course most pressing on our mind at this time is the realization at how vulnerable dikes are to overtopping

ether from lack of maintenance or just sheer volume of unexpected water from unusual occurrences. Number two is the abandonment of the Union Pacific Railroad going in the upper drainage which the relocation of played a factor in making some of the dam sites economically unfeasible. Number three is the distinct possibility of some financial help from the owner's of the Power Dams on the Snake River in our country during the FERC relicensing process to help mitigate for the impacts of the power dams and related facilities to this area.

The area has also been financially impacted by the loss of sawmills and the railroad going to McCall. Idaho Power has also closed many of their local offices which has also had an impact on our economy in the loss of local jobs. The construction of Multipurpose Private/Public Constructed Dams and the development of the weiser river water shed would certainly be a help to a greatly weakened local economy.

With our limited technical review of the BOR's work it would appear that the construction of the Lost Valley extension, the Monday gulch and the Goodrich dams would go a long ways toward taking the top of future floods and allow the dikes to take care of localized flooding. These dams constructed high up in the water shed in addition to flood control would allow the maximum use of the water downstream for irrigation, for resident fish enhancement, for municipal water for the city of weiser and for recreation with some water left over for the Salmon recovery effort.

We are therefore asking your help in getting the necessary funding for the BOR to update their studies and to begin construction of the dams mentioned above or alternate sites if they prove more suited when the engineering studies are complete.

We know you share our concerns for the future of this area. We feel the above is a reasonable approach but also realize the difficulty in getting approval and funding to accomplish this type of work. Whatever help we can give you in your efforts to push this forward would be gladly given