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March 20, 2023

The Honorable Sam Graves
United States House of Representatives
1135 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Graves:

I write to express my strong support for the proposed project by the University of Missouri Water Center to develop economic and hydrologic analysis tools and modeling infrastructure to inform decision making on flood risk resiliency and navigation projects.

The University's Missouri Water Center (MWC) is a collaborative effort between the Colleges of Engineering (COE), and Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR). The colleges have a long history of conducting research in the areas of river navigation, social science, agriculture, and natural resources in collaboration with federal agencies. The MWC was formed in 2021 by the merger of the COE's Missouri Water Resource Research Center and CAFNR's Center for Watershed Management and Water Quality.

This funding will help to expand the network of water researchers at these institutions and to develop and utilize a new generation of tools, technologies, river models, and economic analyses to provide both policymakers and stakeholders with better information to make water management decisions.

This is particularly important considering the devastating 2019 floods that impacted Missouri and the surrounding areas. In Missouri alone, 1.2 million acres of agricultural land flooded, 470 state miles of highways closed, and there were significant impacts to infrastructure such as airports, railroads, and commercial waterways. The floods caused significant damage to homes, businesses, and infrastructure, and had a devastating impact on the state's economy. By developing economic analysis tools, the project aims to provide decision-makers with the information they need to make informed choices about flood risk resiliency and navigation projects, with the goal of preventing or mitigating the impacts of future floods.

The University of Missouri Water Center's project seeks to address the challenges associated with managing flood risk and preserving water resources in the Lower Missouri River Basin and Upper Mississippi River Basin. By developing economic analysis tools, the project aims to provide decision-makers with the information they need to make informed choices about flood risk resiliency and navigation projects. This information will help policymakers and other stakeholders identify the most cost-effective and efficient strategies for managing water resources, reducing flood risk, and ultimately improving the resilience of communities in Missouri and beyond.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Spencer, Ph.D., N.A.S.
Vice Chancellor for Research
Scientific Director, NextGen Precision Health
Member, U.S. National Academy of Sciences