

December 12, 2017

Louise Mauldin

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Dear Ms. Mauldin:

We are the Friends of Mon-Maq Dam, an organization of Iowa residents who wish to preserve our beautiful and historic dam from a plan, by the Jones County Conservation Board (JCCB), to waste \$1.8 million of the taxpayers' dollars to destroy it and replace it with a dangerous alternative.

We have prepared a memorandum for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources detailing the many problems with this project. We wish to draw to your attention the potential adverse environmental problems posed by this project and the overwhelming public opposition to destruction of the dam.

We would note that, yesterday, the JCCB voted to surrender \$750,000 in Federal Highway Administration funds because it did not want to undergo a section 4(f) evaluation to determine if there were feasible and prudent alternatives to destruction of the dam and if the project included all possible planning to minimize harm to the dam. The dam is a public recreation property and an historic site which must undergo this evaluation in order to obtain FHA funding. This removes \$750,000 of the \$2,000,000 raised for this \$1,800,000 project.

We would appreciate your reading the entire memorandum. We specifically wish to draw your attention, as a representative of the Fish and Wildlife Service, to the sections summarized below:

**ADVERSE EFFECT OF LOWERING OF WATER LEVEL ON PONDS, WELLS, AND WETLANDS: PAGE 27**

This section notes that two representatives of the JCCB have admitted they have no idea what will really happen to wetlands if the dam is removed until after it is removed. The available evidence indicates there will be a severe reduction of the surface water elevation of the river between 5.45 and 11.45 feet depending on proximity to the dam. The JCCB's engineering study defined a narrow area of potential impact and conceded that "water surface area will shrink by approximately 10 to 12 acres following dam removal." Although local observation shows that the water levels of wetlands not directly connected to the river are reduced when the river goes down, no investigation was done of the impact of lowering the river level on the water table despite a scientific study showing that lowering of river levels also lowers the water table.

**FISHING: PAGE 33**

A member of the JCCB admitted that anglers are one of the major groups opposing removal of the dam. Anglers know that fishing is excellent below the dam. The JCCB admits that removal of the dam will do nothing to improve fishing there. It is common knowledge that fishing above the dam is also good. Taxpayers' dollars should not be wasted on a bogus fishing benefit, due to removal of the dam, unsupported by evidence.

#### **UPSTREAM FLOODING: PAGE 34**

The JCCB admits that removal of the dam will have little or no impact on upstream flooding with respect to 10 year or greater floods. No investigation was done on alternative remedies for less severe upstream flooding. Nor was any investigation done on the impact of removal of homes and businesses from the Monticello flood plain. Nor was any investigation done on the impact of the new Delhi dam, with its greater control of outflows from Lake Delhi.

#### **FISH PASSAGE: PAGE 35**

Based on possibly insufficient sampling surveys, the removal of the dam is advocated to allow fish passage of certain species of fish allegedly not found upstream. No investigation was done on the adequacy of these samplings. No investigation was done on transplanting the desired species to upstream locations. No investigation was done on whether the water velocity of the new passage is too great for fish to swim upstream. No documented investigation was done on any alternative to dam removal, including construction of side channels on either the north or south sides of the dam.

#### **SEDIMENT RELEASE: PAGE 36**

Approximately 4,468,500 cubic feet or 1170 semi trailer loads of sediment, impounded upstream from the dam, will be removed by the project. The JCCB's study indicates that removal of this sediment may occur by either erosion or dredging, but will have only a "medium" impact, with no detail on what that would entail. Even with dredging, there may be sediment removal by flooding or water flow through huge notches cut in the dam for dewatering. While recommending turbidity monitoring, no plan is set forth for dealing with excessive turbidity. There has been no testing of sediment for contamination. There has been no investigation of the impact of sediment release on mussels and other sensitive species. There has been no assessment of the costs necessary to mitigate the effects of sediment release on the downstream environment.

#### **WATER QUALITY: PAGE 38**

The dam provides a 440 foot platform for aerating the water and exposing it to ultraviolet radiation. A former Monticello city council member was informed that the dam had such a positive effect on water quality that, without it, the city would have to expend substantial sums of money on additional water treatment facilities. No investigation has been done to determine the existence of this effect and its impact.

#### **PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE DAM: PAGE 38**

There is overwhelming public support for saving the dam. This is demonstrated by (1) a survey showing that 405 of 436 respondents wanted to save the dam; (2) a petition to save the dam gathered the signatures of 2487 people from Jones County, equal to eighteen percent of registered voters in the county, in three weeks; (3) the majority of the public attending meetings on this issue in 2017 supported saving the dam; (4) 13 out of 17 letters on the dam published in the Monticello Express in July and August 2017 were in favor of saving the dam; and (5) two members of the Jones County Board of

Supervisors have indicated that a majority of their constituents commenting on the dam have favored saving it.

**APPENDIX C: FISHWAY ALTERNATIVE: PAGE 62**

This shows one proposal for a fishway or side channel to the north side of the dam.

Could you please also provide us with copies of any grant applications and award letters for grants to the Jones County Conservation Board for the Monticello Maquoketa Dam project?

We would ask that you rescind any grant monies not expended by the JCCB and refrain from giving any extensions of prior grants or any new grants for this project.

Thank you for your time and careful attention to this matter.

Best Regards

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President, Friends of Mon-Maq Dam

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