



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

AUG 14 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt
United States Senate
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-2508

Dear Senator Blunt:

Thank you for your letter of March 15, 2015, to Thomas J. Vilsack, on behalf of the North Central Missouri Regional Water Commission (Water Commission), the sponsor of the East Locust Creek multiple-purpose reservoir. The Water Commission has asked for consideration of three financial requests to address existing challenges in advancing the completion of the reservoir. I apologize for the delay in this response.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) supports the efforts being made by the Water Commission and the significant positive impact that the completion of the reservoir will have for Missouri. This important reservoir is a priority for the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and we continue to support project implementation. The project has evolved over time, moving from single-purpose water control structures to a complex, regional water supply project covering a larger drainage area and producing many more benefits.

NRCS thoroughly evaluated the Water Commission's request for a waiver of \$341,000, as requested. This payment reflects the amount owed for the construction of the single-purpose structures. Given that the newly planned reservoir will enhance the original flood prevention and water quality benefits, and that the single-purpose structures will continue to function as sediment traps, NRCS agrees with the sponsor's request and will waive the requirement to repay this amount. In addition, NRCS was confirmed that the requested \$350,000 in funding for matching land acquisition costs will be made for this project. However, NRCS is unable to assist with the Water Commission's land acquisition funding obligations due to statutory requirements. I was glad to learn that the State of Missouri is able to provide this funding and that the project will move forward.

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I am pleased that USDA can provide additional assistance to the Water Commission and the people of Missouri in this effort to secure a reliable, high quality water supply.

Again, thank you for writing and for your support of conservation in Missouri.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Bonnie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Bonnie".

Robert Bonnie
Under Secretary
Natural Resources and Environment