

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2019

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The high water along the Mississippi River that started in January has officially broken a 92-year flood record: this is the longest sustained flood stage period on the river since 1927, when 27,000 square miles were inundated in the most destructive flood in United States history. We ask that you expeditiously grant Louisiana a disaster declaration so that our state may begin working to prevent the loss of vulnerable lives and property.

While some would attribute this record flow to localized rain events or drainage in places like Louisiana or the Lower-Mississippi Valley, the reality is much different. As you know, the Mississippi River system is one of the largest watersheds in the world and drains nearly two-thirds of the United States – 31 states from Montana to New York to two Canadian provinces. The system’s massive scale subjects it to a multitude of variables that impact it – factors like river management practices, development in the upper basin, insufficient operations and maintenance, or the record-setting rainfall we’ve seen across the U.S. this year. The combined effect of these dynamics has produced noticeable change in the river’s behavior in recent years, including an increase in high-water events like the historic flooding we’re experiencing right now.

Consider the Bonnet Carre Spillway, one of the many flood control structures built after the 1927 flood. For most of its 82-year existence, Bonnet Carre was opened an average of once per decade to relieve the Mississippi River. The current operation of Bonnet Carre is the fourth opening in as many years. Similarly, current forecasts indicate that the Morganza Spillway will open early next month for just the third time in history – but the second time this decade. Likewise, waters are already high in the Atchafalaya Basin where flood fighting has persisted for two months protect areas like Pierre Part, Avoca Island, Amelia, Bayou Chene and more.

Changing conditions on the river are a national and international concern that falls on the shoulders of the State of Louisiana.

These flood waters are also a direct threat to one of the largest concentrations of energy infrastructure and production in the United States. Steps must be taken now to protect lives, property, communities and the infrastructure that powers the United States.

We strongly urge the Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to work closely with the State of Louisiana, our parishes, levee districts and other emergency managers to expedite emergency measures to prevent flooding in Louisiana that results from drainage from other states and a lack of proper river management and maintenance on the Mississippi River system. Protection measures such as gabion baskets and sandbags, and a barge structure at Bayou Chene and other protection features in the Atchafalaya Basin are required.

We respectfully and urgently request that you approve an emergency declaration immediately, and all other necessary steps to ensure success in the Flood Fight of 2019

Sincerely,



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
U.S. Senator



John Kennedy
U.S. Senator



Steve Scalise
Member of Congress



Cedric Richmond
Member of Congress



Ralph Abraham, M.D.
Member of Congress



Garret Graves
Member of Congress



Clay Higgins
Member of Congress



Mike Johnson
Member of Congress