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**MSAC offers comments on American Rivers Designation of Niobrara River among America's Most Endangered Rivers**

What people have known in this area for a long time about sedimentation at Niobrara and Lewis and Clark Lake, thousands of Americans will now be alerted to thanks to American Rivers' recent announcement of America's Most Endangered Rivers of 2013.

The Missouri Sedimentation Action Coalition echoes American Rivers call for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to improve sediment management within the Missouri River system and to prioritize funding in their FY 2015 budget. The exact way to do achieve those objectives is not as obvious.

"Having a national spotlight focused on the sedimentation problem at the confluence of the Niobrara and Missouri Rivers fuels the discussion needed to plan for the future of Lewis and Clark Lake. Engaging people to think about the consequences of doing nothing about sediment is a step toward finding management solutions. People need to keep talking about this. Talk needs to turn to action," said Sandy Stockholm, MSAC executive director.

Most agree dam removal isn't a feasible option, she said. Ways to reduce sediment delivery to the system along with getting desirable sediments past the dam are needed. This needs to be achieved by sustaining the benefits, such as recreation, created by the Lewis and Clark Lake reservoir and Gavins Point Dam.

"One thing many agree on is the need for returning sediments downstream of Gavins Point. Finding common ground will point us in the direction of a feasible solution. The best way of doing that is still somewhat elusive," Stockholm said.

Improving the sustainability of the Lewis and Clark Lake reservoir and the rest of the Missouri River reservoir system is critical.

"We know the current mode of operation is not acceptable to maintain benefits and the system for future generations. As this American River designation points out, damage has already been done and we can't just watch the problem grow," she said.

Recognition by a national organization – like American Rivers - of the sedimentation problem in the Niobrara area illustrates the magnitude of this problem. Missouri River reservoir sedimentation also has gained notice by the National Academy of Sciences in recent years, she said.

"At one time, building the Missouri River dams was just an idea," Stockholm said. "They were only talked about. Americans found the will to invest in an ambitious project aimed at producing a variety of benefits. Once again we'll find the way to foster our Missouri River reservoirs and dams so necessary for future generations."