

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 8, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Stephen Ehikian
Acting Administrator
General Services Administration
1800 F Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20405

Dear Secretary Burgum and Acting Administrator Ehikian,

As Members of Congress whose districts border the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA), we write to you with concern about the proposed cancellation of two leases for sites that serve this unique and innovative National Park.

The Government Services Administration's (GSA) has proposed to terminate the leases for the headquarters of MNRRA, and for the space the park leases for its visitor center at the Science Museum of Minnesota. These facilities are the base of operations for staff and the gateway for visitors to explore a 72-mile stretch of the Mississippi River. MNRRA begins on the winding prairie river near Ramsey, MN; travels over St. Anthony Falls and through the Twin Cities; winds through the narrowest gorge on the entire River; and ends where the River exits that gorge near the Prairie Island Indian Community and spreads into our nation's dominant flood plain waterway. MNRRA offers opportunities for canoeing, fishing, hiking, birdwatching, and other ways to interact with America's Great River.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of visitors learn about the biology, history, and culture of the Mississippi River through interactive exhibits and conversations with National Park Service Rangers at the MNRRA Visitor Center. The visitor's center also offers connections to many city parks and regional parks, a state park, the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and other resources along the stretch of river that MNRRA encompasses. It is a key component of a visitor experience to the area that generates roughly \$22 million in economic activity.

The staff that work out of MNRRA headquarters maintain the park and cultivate the vibrant public-private partnerships that are the foundation of MNRRA's successful model that brings together local, state, and federal levels of government and businesses and non-profits. They work together to conserve this river park and multiply the benefits it brings to our communities.

We support efforts to ensure good use of taxpayer dollars, and to modernize our federal facility holdings to better meet the needs of the American public and the agencies that serve them. However, we are concerned that GSA has not fully considered what will be lost through the cancellation of these leases. The federal government has a responsibility to maintain and support the mission of our National Parks, and that is not possible without maintaining the facilities that allow Park staff to do their jobs and visitors to learn and experience our public lands and waters.

We ask that you remove MNRRA's facilities from those proposed for cancellation, and instead engage with Park staff, their public and private partners, and the local communities about the future direction of MNRRA facilities. We need a plan that will serve our districts, the state, and the nation at large as they visit our Great American River in the great state of Minnesota.

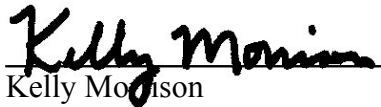
Sincerely,



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Angie Craig
Member of Congress



Kelly Morrison
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress