

Missouri River Basin Lewis & Clark Interpretive Trail & Visitor Center

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February 27, 2010

Honorable Senator Ben Nelson
440 N. 8th Street
Suite 120
Lincoln, NE 68501

Dear Senator Nelson,

The Board of Directors of the MRB Lewis & Clark Visitor Center in Nebraska City respectfully request a \$150,000 earmark in the FY2011 Federal Appropriations for the following reasons:

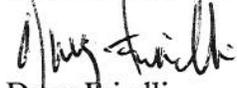
1. Public law 110-229, authorized the transfer of the Nebraska City Lewis and Clark Trail Center from the National Park Service to the MRB Lewis & Clark Center Foundation on May 28, 2008 and authorized funding of \$150,000 per year to the Center for ten years. However, those funds have not yet been appropriated.
2. To assure that the facility remained open to the public, the NPS provided funds to the Foundation for staffing, maintenance and operation of the Center with approximately **\$150,000 per year for the past 3 years**. It is estimated that **\$574,000 per year** would be required for NPS staff to operate the center for the 7-day per week schedule. The Center is operating more efficiently on a private basis thereby saving taxpayer dollars.
3. Due to restrictions imposed by the NPS fee collection policies, the **Center was not allowed to collect entry or user fees for 4 ½ years**, representing lost revenues of approximately **\$ 200,000 per year based on annual visitation of 25,000 at \$5 per entrance** and a regular schedule of **special events and meetings** that formally generated additional operating funds.
5. Now in private ownership, the Center has assumed the operating costs of the Center and is planning to increase its level of operation and public use. The Center has reinstated the collection of entrance fees that will help offset staffing and utility costs. However, it will take time to build the demand for special private events.

6. Assurance of the receipt of this funding is needed to develop annual operating and maintenance plans along with projections for the future needs and development of the Center's programs and staffing.

Our Board is very grateful, Senator Nelson, for your continued support of our project, formerly as the Governor of Nebraska and now as our United States Senator. Our vision to create a unique Center has been fulfilled...we draw visitors from all 50 States each year as well as a number of foreign countries.

Several letters of support are attached. We look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully submitted,



Doug Hriedli
Secretary/Treasurer