

Missouri River Flood Related Meetings and Reports Improve Collaboration and Examine River Management

By Steve Gaul

Missouri Basin 2011 runoff above Sioux City totaled 61.0 million acre-feet, or 246 percent of normal and the highest amount in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) 114 years of detailed record keeping. In contrast, the Corps' August 1 forecast for 2012 annual runoff from the Missouri Basin above Sioux City was 21 million acre-feet, or 85% of normal (which is about 24.8 million acre-feet of water). While runoff is forecast to be below normal in 2012, efforts to address potential future flood conditions remain a priority. In addition to physical recovery activities, the unprecedented 2011 flood conditions did help lead to a variety of efforts to improve communication and collaboration for recovery and reexamine flood control and river management. A few of the major analysis and coordination activities included:

1. A series of Governors' Missouri River Flood Control meetings,
2. Formation of a Missouri River Flood Task Force and completion and transitioning of the group's activities;
3. Completion of an independent panel report on reservoir system regulation during the flood;
4. Completion of a Corps post 2011 flood event analysis/report on mainstem flood control storage during the flood;
5. Missouri River Basin Water Management meetings held throughout the Basin by the Corps; and
6. Completion and release of the Corps 2011-2012 Annual Operating Plan for the mainstem system.

The reports are now available, and it is worth noting the role of the coordinating groups.

The initial Governors' Missouri River Flood Control meetings were held August 19, 2011, and October 17, 2011, in Omaha followed by a December 15, 2011, conference call and a May 23, 2012, meeting in Bismarck, North Dakota. The Governors and their representatives from seven states reached a clear consensus that flood control must be the highest priority in the operation of the Missouri River mainstem reservoir system. It is anticipated the meetings will continue and they are expected to provide greater input and more flexibility in the Missouri River system's management.

The Missouri River Flood Task Force was a separate effort to improve communications, collaboration, and coordination for recovery activities on the 2011 Missouri River flood. That group completed its efforts with a May 24, 2012, meeting in Omaha. Federal agencies provided organizational support for the group, which included representatives from federal agencies, states, and tribes. Work was also performed in a collaborative way to allow others to participate in various parts of the effort as partners, observers, and contributors.

The task force produced or reviewed informational material such as a publication on flood recovery options for agricultural lands, listings of levee rehabilitation projects, and Corps presentations on runoff, river aggradation and degradation, and channel conveyance. Much of the group's accomplishment was via coordination in working group conference calls between federal agencies and those involved in flood recovery efforts. Department of Natural Resources staff provided state representation for Nebraska and participated in working groups on floodplain management and river management. Although the formal duties of the task force have ended, Corps and Task Force officials indicated that the task force effort would be transitioned into future coordination. The task force website can be found online at <http://www.nwd-mr.usace.army.mil/rcc/MRFTF/default.html>.

In addition to information on task force activities, the reports mentioned above are available online. These include:

"Missouri River Mainstem System 2011 – 2012 Annual Operating Plan" (January 2012) by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - <http://www.nwd-mr.usace.army.mil/rcc/reports/pdfs/finalAOP2011-2012.pdf>,

"Post 2011 Flood Event Analysis of Missouri River Mainstem Flood Control Storage" (April 2012) by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - <http://www.nwd-mr.usace.army.mil/rcc/reports/pdfs/Post2011FloodEventAnalysisof-MainstemFloodControlStorage.pdf>, and

"Review of the Regulation of the Missouri River Mainstem Reservoir System During the Flood of 2011 (December 2011) - <http://www.nwd-mr.usace.army.mil/rcc/MRFTF/docs/MRIndependentReviewPanel.pdf>.