



News Release

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Water Management Monthly News Release

OMAHA – Poor snow accumulation in the mountains and very little rain on the plains continue throughout most of the upper Missouri River basin, providing no relief to reservoir and river water users from the current drought.

“Runoff into Oahe reservoir in March was only 21 percent of normal,” said Brig. Gen. William Grisoli, Northwestern Division Engineer. “As of Apr. 1, the mountain snowpack was 69 percent of normal in the reach above Fort Peck, and 74 percent of normal in the reach from Fort Peck to Garrison.” Generally, the mountain snowpack peaks around mid-April.

With below normal mountain snow and normal rainfall the rest of the year, the forecasted annual runoff is 16.7 million acre feet (MAF), about 66 percent of normal. “It’s likely that the low mountain snowpack along with dry soil conditions due to persistent drought will absorb a good deal of the runoff before it reaches the reservoirs,” said General Grisoli. Normal runoff is 25.2 MAF.

Six public meetings to review the 2005 Annual Operating Plan will be held this month. These meetings are held each spring to review the plan for regulating the dams and reservoirs based on current runoff and storage conditions.

This year’s plan calls for steady reservoir levels at Oahe and near steady levels at Fort Peck during their respective fish spawn periods this spring, depending on the magnitude and distribution of the runoff.

However, if drought conditions worsen, regulation of the dams and reservoirs would focus on keeping water supply intakes at Oahe and Garrison reservoirs operational for as long as possible. As a result, Oahe and Fort Peck would likely decline during the fish spawn periods.

River flows will be at minimum service levels. The season length is anticipated to be shortened 53 to 61 days, depending on runoff. The final decision will be based on the amount of water in storage on July 1.

The meeting schedule is:

April 11, Glasgow, Mont., 7 p.m., Cottonwood Inn, 45 First Ave., NE
April 12, Bismarck, N.D., 1 p.m., Doublewood Inn, 1400 E. Interchange
April 12, Pierre, S.D., 7 p.m., Best Western Ramkota, 920 West Sioux Ave.
April 13, St. Louis, Mo., 1 p.m., Marriott St. Louis Airport Hotel, 10700 Peartree Ave.
April 13, Kansas City, Mo., 7 p.m., Hilton Kansas City Airport, 8801 NW 112th St.
April 14, Omaha, Neb., 5 p.m., Northwestern Division Office, 12565 West Center Road

Releases from Gavins Point were gradually increased during March to support the opening of the navigation season on April 1. Because the reservoirs are low and the navigation industry has indicated it will not be using the upper reach of the navigable river, releases will be set to meet only the flow targets at Omaha and Nebraska City, Neb., and Kansas City, Mo., during April. While there will not be enough flow above Omaha to support navigation, there will be enough water for other purposes, including water supply.

When the least terns and piping plovers arrive in May to begin their nesting season, releases will be set at a level that encourage them to nest on higher elevation sandbars. This rate will be maintained until higher releases are required to meet downstream targets. The Corps is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on a plan to conserve additional water by more closely following targets while complying with the 2003 Biological Opinion.

“The Corps will continue to pursue ways to conserve water and mitigate the impacts of the drought to the basin,” said General Grisoli. “We are increasing our resources in the upper basin to

mitigate the impacts to domestic water intakes, cultural resource sites, boat ramps and noxious weeds.”

System storage ended March at 35.6 MAF. Last year at this time it was 39.7 MAF. The amount of water in the reservoirs is nearly 21 MAF below normal for this time of year.

Releases from Gavins Point averaged 14,700 cubic feet per second (cfs) in March, compared to a long-term average of 20,700 cfs. The reservoir will remain near its current elevation of 1206 feet msl during April.

Fort Randall releases averaged 13,300 cfs in March. They will range from 18,000 cfs to 23,000 cfs in April as needed to maintain the level of Gavins Point reservoir. Fort Randall reservoir ended March at 1355.4 feet msl and will remain near that level during April.

Oahe reservoir fell two feet in March, ending the month at elevation 1574.4 feet msl. It will rise about half a foot in April, ending the month 31 feet below average. The reservoir is 8 feet lower than last year at this time.

Garrison releases averaged 12,100 cfs during March, compared to the long-term average of 20,100 cfs. They will be increased in April to support the forage fish spawn in Oahe. Garrison reservoir held steady at a record-low of 1808 feet msl during March. It will fall about one foot April, ending the month 27 feet below average. The reservoir is 7 feet lower than last year at this time.

Fort Peck releases averaged 4,500 cfs in March, compared to the 8,400 cfs average. They will remain near 5,000 cfs in April. The reservoir climbed half a foot during March, ending the month at elevation of 2198.6 feet msl. It will remain at that level during April, ending the month 33 feet below average. Last year at this time it was 7 feet higher.

The six main stem powerplants generated 474 million kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity in March, 70 percent of normal. The forecast for 2005 energy production is 5.8 billion kWh compared to a normal of 10 billion kWh.

MISSOURI RIVER MAIN STEM RESERVOIR DATA

	Pool Elevation (ft msl)		Water in Storage - 1,000 acre-feet		
	On Mar 31	Change in Mar	On Mar 31	% of 1967-2004 Average	Change in Mar
Fort Peck	2198.6	+0.3	8,773	60	+41
Garrison	1808.7	+0.5	10,624	61	+87
Oahe	1574.4	-1.8	10,568	57	-356
Big Bend	1420.0	-0.2	1,684	98	-5
Fort Randall	1355.4	+4.5	3,547	94	+355
Gavins Point	1206.6	+0.4	372	100	+10
			35,568	63	+132

WATER RELEASES AND ENERGY GENERATION FOR MARCH

	Average Release in 1,000 cfs	Releases in 1,000 af	Generation in 1,000 MWh
Fort Peck	4.5	276	38
Garrison	12.1	744	94
Oahe	19.2	1,180	147
Big Bend	17.9	1,099	66
Fort Randall	13.3	817	87
Gavins Point	14.7	906	41
			474