



News Release

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Water Management Monthly News Release

OMAHA – Drought maintains its grip on most of the upper Missouri River basin, despite several significant snow storms in November. With extraordinary conservation measures continuing, storage in the big main stem reservoirs remained essentially steady through November.

Runoff above Sioux City, Iowa, was 1.1 million acre feet (MAF), 104 percent of normal. “Runoff is normally low this time of the year, so small increases can result in large percentage changes,” said Larry Cieslik, Chief of the Water Management office in Omaha. “We held releases from the reservoir system to historic low levels in October, but downstream tributary inflow fell off in November, requiring increases to meet the needs of water supply intakes on the lower river.

The current runoff forecast for 2005 is 20.3 MAF, 81 percent of normal, compared to the normal of 25.2 MAF.

System storage ended November at 36.4 MAF, an increase from the 35.7 MAF recorded last year at this time. The amount of water currently stored in the reservoirs is 18.9 MAF below average.

The draft 2005-2006 Annual Operating Plan was released Oct. 20 for public review and comment. It proposes two “spring pulses” to satisfy the requirements of the Endangered Species Act, provided there is sufficient water in the reservoir system. To conserve water, the pulses would be delayed until 2007 if there were not at least 36.5 MAF of storage on March 1 and May 1. Increased reservoir levels are dependent on rain this fall and snow on the plains and in the mountains this winter.

The draft plan maintains the same level of “flood control constraints” currently in the Master Water Control Manual. These are the flows that act as triggers for reducing releases from Gavins Point during higher downstream river levels.

The plan also describes the overall management plan for the dams and reservoirs. It anticipates that there will be only minimum flows for the 2006 navigation season and it could be shortened 15 to 58 days, depending on runoff this winter and spring. A final determination on season length will be made July 1, 2006.

Steady to rising reservoir levels during the spring fish spawn are likely if there is normal or above normal runoff. However, continued drought conditions may not make that possible at all the upper three reservoirs. To the extent reasonably possible, the Corps will set releases at Garrison Dam to result in a steady to rising pool during April and May. The ability to provide such conditions depends on the volume, time and distribution of the runoff from melting snow on the plains and in the mountains of Montana and Wyoming.

The draft 2005-2006 Annual Operating Plan with a detailed description of the spring pulses is posted on the Northwestern Division website: www.nwd.usace.army.mil and is also available in hard copy by writing to: Water Management Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 12565 West Center Road, Omaha, NE 68144. Comments on the draft plan and the supplement to the Master Water Control Manual will be taken through Dec.16.

Gavins Point reservoir will remain near elevation 1207 feet above mean sea level (msl) during December. Releases averaged 11,000 cfs in November compared to the normal 32,900 cfs. Releases were slightly increased on Nov. 3 as tributary flows declined, and again late in the month as temperatures dropped well below freezing. They will be maintained near 12,500 cfs in December, though further adjustments may be necessary depending on icing conditions.

Fort Randall releases averaged 9,300 cfs in November. They will average 11,400 cfs in December as needed to maintain Gavins Point reservoir near its desired elevation. Fort Randall reservoir ended November at 1338.7 feet msl. It will end December near elevation 1341 feet msl.

Big Bend reservoir will remain in its normal elevation range of 1420 to 1421 feet. Releases will be adjusted to meet hydropower needs.

Oahe reservoir rose nearly 2 feet during November, ending the month at elevation 1575.6 feet msl. It will rise half a foot to 1576.1 feet in December, ending the month 23.5 feet below average. The reservoir is at essentially the same level as it was last year at this time.

Garrison releases averaged 13,400 cfs during November, compared to the normal 20,500 cfs. They will average 16,000 cfs through December. Garrison reservoir fell half a foot in November, ending the month at elevation 1813.5 feet msl. It will fall a foot in December, ending the month 23 feet below average. The reservoir is a foot higher than last year at this time.

Fort Peck releases averaged 4,600 cfs in November, compared to the normal 8,800 cfs. They will be maintained near 8,000 cfs in December to meet power generation needs. The reservoir rose slightly in November, ending the month at elevation 2202.9 feet msl. It will fall a foot in December to 2201.9 feet, ending the month 29 feet below average. It is currently 3 feet higher than last year at this time.

The six main stem power plants generated 303million kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity in November, 39 percent of normal because of reduced releases from the dams. The forecast for 2005 energy production is 5.6 billion kWh, compared to a normal of 10 billion kWh.

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Daily and forecasted reservoir and river information is updated everyday and is available on the Water Management section of the Northwestern Division homepage at www.nwd.usace.army.mil.

MISSOURI RIVER MAIN STEM RESERVOIR DATA

	Pool Elevation (ft msl)		Water in Storage - 1,000 acre-feet		
	On Nov 30	Change in Nov	On Nov 30	% of 1967-2004 Average	Change in Nov
Fort Peck	2202.9	+0.3	9,432	63	+63
Garrison	1813.5	-0.5	11,707	65	-130
Oahe	1575.6	+1.7	10,814	64	+313
Big Bend	1420.5	-0.4	1,657	96	-20
Fort Randall	1338.7	-2.5	2,367	100	-149
Gavins Point	1207.3	-0.3	391	91	-10
			36,368	67	+65

WATER RELEASES AND ENERGY GENERATION FOR NOVEMBER

	Average Release in 1,000 cfs	Releases in 1,000 af	Generation in 1,000 MWh
Fort Peck	4.6	272	34
Garrison	13.4	797	103
Oahe	7.4	442	55
Big Bend	7.2	428	27
Fort Randall	9.3	553	53
Gavins Point	11.0	657	31
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