



News Release

**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Northwestern Division
Public Affairs Office

12565 West Center Road
Omaha, Nebraska 68144-3869

Phone: (402) 697-2552
Fax: (402) 697-2554

Contact: Paul Johnston
(402) 697-2552
Larry Cieslik
(402) 697-2675
Date: May 2, 2005

Corps announces plan for Missouri River dam releases

OMAHA – A plan to protect endangered species, meet downstream flow needs and conserve additional water in the main stem Missouri River reservoirs was announced by the Army Corps of Engineers today.

The “steady release – flow to target” plan will set releases from Gavins Point Dam at 23,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) today as the interior least terns and piping plovers begin to nest on sandbars below Fort Randall and Gavins Point dams. The two birds are listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Compared with last year’s regulation, the Corps’ efforts are expected to conserve an additional 500,000 acre feet of water in the three upstream reservoirs. This amounts to about 1 foot of elevation.

In coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Corps will begin aggressive deterrent actions to encourage the birds to nest on high elevation sandbars. These deterrent actions may include metallic streamers, owl decoys, and visual obstruction barriers such as tree fabric placed on the low lying sandbars.

The Corps will reduce flows two out of three days, provided releases below 23,000 cfs will meet downstream project purposes. This cycling operation will conserve additional water while discouraging the birds from nesting too low. The cycling will end near the end of the month when eggs have hatched and mobile chicks are susceptible to being stranded and flooded. A steady release of 23,000 cfs will be maintained until an increase is required to meet downstream flow targets.

Because the reservoirs are low and the navigation industry has indicated it will not be using the reach from Omaha to Sioux City, the two days of reduced releases in the cycle will be set to meet only the flow targets at Omaha and Nebraska City, Neb., and Kansas City. While there will not be enough flow above Omaha to support navigation, there will be enough for all the drinking water and powerplant intakes and most river recreation facilities. However, some of these marinas and boat ramps may experience problems with access to the river until the cycling operation ends in late May.

“This operational strategy achieves the goals of the Governor’s Summit to conserve additional water while complying with the 2003 Amended Biological Opinion and meeting the authorized purposes,” said Brig. Gen. William Grisoli, Northwestern Division Engineer. “The Corps and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to work closely throughout the operational season to conserve water during the ongoing drought.”