



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
St. Louis District®

# News Release

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## St. Louis Corp District Dredge Goes to Work Early in Season

St. Louis – The St. Louis District mobilized its dredge, Motor Vessel (M/V) Potter today, July 29, in advance of its scheduled August 11 activation date. The decision was made in response to low water levels on the Mississippi River and little precipitation in the long-range weather forecast. This river is again low this year due to more than five years of extended dry conditions in the upper reaches of the Mississippi and Missouri River valleys, from which the river in St. Louis receives most of its flow.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District Chief of Operations Peggy O’Bryan explained today that the decision to mobilize Dredge Potter was based on river stages, weather forecasts, water inflows from the Missouri River, channel surveys and reports from industry on channel conditions.

“The District is charged with maintaining a safe and dependable navigation channel on 300 miles of the Mississippi River, 80 miles of the Illinois River and 36 miles of the Kaskaskia River,” she said. “Dredging in conjunction with the operation of the lock and dam system on the upper Mississippi and channel structures work together to ensure the 9-foot navigation channel.”

M/V Potter is one of three U.S. Army Corps of Engineers “dustpan” dredges, designed specifically to work in the sandy bottom of the Mississippi River and its tributaries. She is at the same time, one of the oldest Corps vessels and the most modern. Launched as a steam-powered dredge in 1932, she was refitted with a modern diesel power plant and other upgrades in 2001.

The average annual cost of dredging to maintain a safe, operational river channel for which the St. Louis District is responsible, is about \$12 million. This figure has been reduced very substantially in past years by the extensive use of what are known as river engineering structures. These are rock structures, many of which can now be seen along the banks of the rivers. They redirect water flows to cause the river to self-maintain much of the channel with its own energy. This is environmentally sound and cuts costs. The combined dredging and structures program supports commercial barge transportation in the St. Louis Harbor, which at 32.6 million tons handled ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in tonnage handled on the nation’s inland rivers and 21<sup>st</sup> overall when ocean ports are included in statistics.

In addition to Dredge Potter, the St. Louis District calls on commercial contract capabilities including Dredge America which often works under contract in the region, or if necessary, Corps of Engineers dredges from other districts.

*Editor’s Note: Dredge Potter will work during the next few days in the St. Louis Harbor about five miles downstream from the site of the Anheuser-Busch Brewery. To assist in identifying the dredge from the air, M/V Potter is a large (247-foot) angular, buff-yellow vessel with red trim. When working there is an 800-foot-long dredge material disposal pipe deployed from her stern. After hours and on weekends, contact Alan Dooley at 618-939-5985 or 618-719-9039.*