US Army Corps of Engineers®
St. Louis District

Press Release

Release No. 20-07 **Contact: Public Affairs, 314-331-8002/8068**

Date: September 19, 2007

1222 Spruce Street, St. Louis, Missouri 63103-2833

Rock Work in St. Louis Harbor to Help River Navigators and Save Taxpayers Millions

Nearly 530 thousand tons of rock are being placed in the Mississippi River in the St. Louis Harbor to improve navigation on a five mile stretch of river. The reach extends from the lower end of the Chain of Rocks Canal down to the Poplar Street Bridge.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers St. Louis District designed the project at its Applied River Engineering Center, located at its Service Base at the foot of Arsenal Street, and is overseeing the construction work being done by Patton-Tully Construction LLC (Memphis, Tenn.).

The rock is being used to create three chevron dikes, two in between Merchants and McKinley Bridges and one just south of McKinley Bridge. The chevron south of McKinley Bridge is complete, with the two between Merchants and McKinley Bridge nearing completion. Chevrons are called river training structures. Constructed in the shape of a 'U', with the closed part facing upstream, they will help direct river flows to improve the overall navigation channel.

The chevron construction is being done in conjunction with efforts to extend and raise the existing dike that projects south of the Chain of Rocks Canal opening at river mile 183.5. The extended dike will create a quiet water area south of the canal opening, providing better access conditions for barge traffic, and will provide better alignment for barges traveling between the Merchants Bridge piers.

A third component of this $5.1 million project includes the construction of three Bendway Weirs between Poplar Street and Eads Bridges. This work is not expected to begin until December. While work will be observable from the bridges, the completed weirs will not be.

"Bendway Weirs are totally submerged rock structures," explained Leonard Hopkins, project manager for the St. Louis District's Regulating Works Project. "The weirs will shift the river's current away from the Illinois bankline, providing better alignment and a safer navigation channel through the Poplar Street Bridge piers."

The St. Louis Harbor has been an area requiring repeated dredging by the Army Corps of Engineers to help maintain the required minimum depth of nine feet and channel width of 300 feet for safe and dependable navigation. Roughly $5.5 million was spent dredging this stretch of river between 1999 and 2005. It is estimated that the work will pay for itself in six years and then save an average of $925,000 annually in dredging costs.

-MORE-

"Work is progressing well on this project and we are looking forward to seeing it completed," Hopkins said. "This area of the harbor has been a longtime challenge for river navigators and this engineering solution will not only reduce the dredging requirements and improve navigation but we are doing this work in an environmentally sustainable manner. One of the added benefits of the chevrons will be the emergence of new fish habitat in the harbor, an area where diverse fish habitat is lacking.

"We have worked closely with our partners, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Missouri Department of Conservation, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the navigation industry. The alternative selected took into account their comments and is a win-win for everyone, including the American taxpayer," project manager Hopkins concluded.

-END-

Caption: An aerial view looking northward, up the Mississippi River in the St. Louis Harbor, shows three rock structures called chevrons, being built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to modify the flow of the river to make navigation safer and more efficient while reducing or eliminating the need for costly dredging every year. The McKinley Bridge is in the foreground with the Merchants railroad bridge beyond it. Further north and to the right is the dike enhancing traffic into and out of the Chain of Rocks Canal, which is also being heightened and lengthened in the project. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers photo by Alan Dooley

Editor's Note: Additional information about river engineering is available on the St. Louis District's webpage www.mvs.usace.army.mil Click on "River Engineering" in the blue box on the left-hand side of the home page. Additional aerial photographs are available by calling Alan Dooley, Chief of Public Affairs, at 314-331-8002.