



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

Press Release

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Corps of Engineers to fix scour holes at Melvin Price Locks and Dam

St. Louis, Mo – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will start to repair several scour holes on the upstream side of the Melvin Price Locks and Dam near Alton, Ill., during the first week of October. In April the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers St. Louis District discovered the holes during a special periodic inspection of the stilling basin using sonar equipment.

The scour holes were found in the bed of the river upstream of the locks and dam structure by the Corps survey vessel MV Boyer. A more detailed investigation was subsequently conducted by divers using sound imaging equipment from the Corps Engineering Research and Development Center in Vicksburg, Miss. The scour holes of various depths were confirmed and the sheet pile cutoff under the dam was deemed to be intact.

The Army Corps awarded the Melvin Price Locks and Dam Upstream Protection Scour Rehabilitation Contract to Luhr Brothers Inc. of Columbia, Ill., on September 7. Luhr Bros. Inc. plans to mobilize its equipment on October 1 and begin rock placement that same week. The \$1.6 million repair involves the placement of about 16,000 tons, or about 16 barge loads, of rock into eight scour holes at varying locations along the concrete dam. Repairs will conclude in mid-November.

During repairs parallel gates to each work site will have to be closed. Work crews need calm water conditions when placing the rock. District engineers and construction staff are working closely with water control managers and the navigation industry to coordinate these efforts.

To assist tow operators, the Motor Vessel Miranda Paige has been contracted to serve as a helper boat, assisting commercial tows entering and exiting the upstream end of the locks. A helper boat is needed because flow conditions will be altered by the closed dam gates when repairs are taking place near the lock chambers. Corps officials are working closely with the U.S. Coast Guard and the navigation industry and expect minimal, periodic impacts to navigation.

SCOUR-REPAIRS/2-2-2

While dams such as the Melvin Price structure do not pose a threat to public safety because they hold back only the relatively shallow navigation pools between dams, they do play a significant role in the nation's economy. Hence, the Corps expedited design work and the contract award. District experts report that the scoured areas pose no immediate threat to the dam, but if left unattended they could possibly enlarge or deepen which could lead to more costly repairs in the future.

Some scouring is expected with permanent structures in the river, such as bridge piers and dams. The design and construction of the Melvin Price Locks and Dam structure accounted for this and incorporated a layer of rock upstream of the edge of the concrete foundation to prevent scouring. It appears that over the last 20 years this rock layer in some areas was eroded by the river's natural forces. The repair work will not only place rock in the holes but will also fix the top layer with larger rock for added scour resistance. The Corps is also examining options for further enhancing the rock scour protection field upstream to prevent future recurrences. The District is also inspecting for similar problems at other structures on the river.

The Melvin Price's main lock chamber was put into operation October 10, 1989. The lock site is the second busiest on the Mississippi River. It normally conducts about 6,500 lockages each year, moving more than 70 million tons of commodities up and down the Mississippi River.

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Editor's Note: After hours, contact Alan Dooley at 618-719-9039 (cell) or 618-939-5985 (home). The scour holes are not visible but repair operations will be. Please call the Public Affairs Office to arrange visits to the site.