



News Release

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers addresses question of river engineering and flooding

St. Louis – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers today opened a new web page to introduce a number of what are being termed “Current Corps Topics in St. Louis.”

Col. Thomas O’Hara, St. Louis District Commander, said that this web site, located at <http://www.mvs.usace.army.mil/CurrentCorpsTopics>, is an effort to respond to interests in Midwest water resources and related Corps missions.

The first installment of this page examines the relationship between river engineering structures and their impacts on possible increases in flood heights and threats. This is a subject that was rekindled and rose to prominence during the high water and flood events this spring.

The Corps position is that it strongly disagrees with previous and recent reports that Mississippi River navigation structures increase flood damages by causing higher river stages. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other researchers have repeatedly observed that river engineering structures produce desired navigation improvements without causing negative impacts on river stages or increased flooding.

There is no sound scientific evidence available at this time that indicates these structures increase river elevations for comparable flows. In fact, numerous studies over the years have demonstrated that navigation structures do not increase flood heights. Among them is the landmark 1976 study, “SLD Potomology Study (T-1)” by the Institute of River Studies at the University of Missouri-Rolla (now the Missouri University of Science and Technology.) This comprehensive study of hydrologic, hydraulic, geologic and morphological factors related to the Mississippi River downstream of Alton, Ill., confirms field observations that navigation structures have no discernable impact on flood heights.

The Corps of Engineers uses the best available engineering technology and tools to carry out its primary missions on the Mississippi River - flood risk management, navigation and environmental stewardship. All interested parties are invited to the Current Corps Topics website for a more detail discussion of this topic.

Col O’Hara invites the public to visit the site often for updates and to seek answers to questions or suggest subjects for future exploration. This new site will address this and other water resource management topics of interest. It is planned to branch into areas describing flood damage reduction measures and steps to recovery from this spring and summer’s floods. It will eventually examine other, what are termed “business lines,” in future web pages, including such issues as support to navigation, environmental issues and recreation.