



News Release

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Navigation Channel Re-established on Upper Miss' River north of Winfield, MO Restrictions Lifted

August 20, St. Louis – Yesterday the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dustpan dredge, Motor Vessel Potter, completed emergency dredging operations on the Upper Mississippi River at river mile 257, near Hamburg, Ill., about 15 miles north of Winfield, Mo.

Dredge Potter mobilized 10 days ahead of schedule on August 15 after two groundings on the Upper Mississippi River halted navigation. The dredge arrived at river mile 257 Saturday morning and started dredging operations. The Army Corps of Engineers is charged with maintaining a 9 foot deep, 300 foot wide navigation channel on the Upper Mississippi River. In three days the dredge successfully re-established a safe, dependable navigation channel at proper, authorized dimensions at this location.

Traffic was slowly moving through the area during dredging operations but will now be able to transit the area unhindered. All U.S. Coast Guard restrictions have been lifted.

Potter is now heading south to river mile 223, just north of the Mississippi River's confluence with the Illinois River. A 15-barge tow carrying grain grounded at this location on Thursday. After the tow was removed, surveys completed and a safe channel was marked by buoys, the Coast Guard determined a closure was not necessary at this location. Mariners are being instructed to transit between river miles 222.5 - 224.5 during daylight hours and monitor Coast Guard information broadcasts for updates.

Once on site, Dredge Potter will begin work at this location to widen and deepen the channel, which was silted in by heavy sediment loads in the river.

River engineers explain that during recent flooding and high water events, large amounts of sediment were scoured from the bottom or carried in the river. Then the river's level fell quickly. For example, at St. Louis the river fell 22 feet in 10 days decreasing the energy of the river. As the river fell and its energy decreased, sediment dropped out of suspension and to the bottom of the river.

River surveys are ongoing in the 300 mile stretch of the Mississippi River managed by the St. Louis District to identify areas in need of dredging. Locations requiring dredging will be prioritized, addressing the most critical areas first. The dredging season typically runs into December or early January.

The St. Louis District also uses a contract cutter head dredge, Dredge America, which is expected to get under way on the Middle Mississippi River this Saturday.

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