



News Release

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St. Louis area flooding

Current high water and flooding in the St. Louis region shares some characteristics with events of June and July, but is much different in other aspects, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in St. Louis.

Weekend events in and around St. Louis were characterized as regional and local flash flooding, with amounts and timing of rainfalls simply exceeding capacities of creeks, smaller streams and drainage systems to carry the water away. Too much rain fell too quickly, much into areas that do not have flood damage reduction systems to protect them.

While main rivers in the region, including the Mississippi, Missouri, Illinois, Meramec and Kaskaskia Rivers are also flooding again, the overall picture in the St. Louis region is variable and complex.

High water earlier this year was characterized by very high rainfalls for protracted periods over wide areas. Iowa and parts of Illinois experienced record or near record amounts of rain for several days. In the case of Iowa the rainfall was virtually statewide. As a result in June and July, the Mississippi River rose to flood stage, with higher gage readings in northern reaches of the St. Louis District, with lower crests south of the Missouri River.

This weekend's rain was more localized and has apparently ended for now. So while the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers are expected to flood, as well as major tributaries, the flooding is expected to feature rapid rises followed by rapid drops.

The Illinois River, which drains northern reaches of the state, was heavily impacted by 8+ inch rainfalls and is at or near flood stages as a result. The Illinois River however, flows through relatively flat topography and will thus stay at high gage readings for a longer period of time.

The rapid rise and fall on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers will reintroduce a problem for navigation and boating interests. Rapid rises tend to pick trees and logs, as well as other floating "drift" and carry in into the rivers. Much drift that has been pulled from banks following the August rapid river fall has not yet been burned or otherwise removed and this material may again become drift.

In addition, the rapid rises and flow increases are scouring large quantities of sand from the river bottom, which will be dropped rapidly as the rivers fall. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had to activate dredges early in August to restore sand-filled navigation channels and similar challenges may again arise as the river again goes up and down rapidly.

As a result of the weekend's rain and rapidly rising rivers, the Corps of Engineers is again consulting with drainage and levee districts to do all that is possible to ensure public safety and to reduce damage.

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In Pike and Lincoln counties where June and July flooding damaged levees which are still to be repaired, water is expected to flow through existing breaches into primarily agricultural areas again. Corps of Engineers flood fight experts are consulting today with local authorities to determine what, if anything can be done, and impacts of additional flooding.

The Corps of Engineers in St. Louis reports that navigation locks closed during Mississippi River flooding earlier this summer are expected to remain in operation this time, but that in one case, at the Chain of Rocks Locks 27, they are restricting tows using the 600-foot auxiliary chamber there to 70 by 400 feet. This is necessary because work barges that were at the Locks for recent work had to be stored in the auxiliary chamber to protect them. The main chamber remains in operation for normal use.

Corps reservoir lakes in the region are also performing their flood damage reduction assignments very well.

One of the lakes, Mark Twain, that was in the news in July when it absorbed high rainfalls and discharges had to be increased to record flows, which flood property in the Salt River valley, has considerably lowered flood stages on the Mississippi River and southward past Pike and Lincoln Counties in Missouri and on both sides of the Mississippi River as it flows through the St. Louis area.

According to Corps water control experts, Mark Twain Lake was able to safely take in and hold flows reaching 100,000 cubic feet per second (CFS) Sunday. Throughout the rain, discharges at the Clarence Cannon Dam, which forms the lake, were held at 4,500 CFS to minimize damage in the Salt River below the dam, which was already being hammered by intense rain falls.

As the Mississippi River's crest passes the mouth of the Salt River north of Clarksville, Corps water control managers will increase releases from the Clarence Cannon Dam to approximately 12,000 CFS. This should will not exceed the capacity of the Salt River nor raise Mississippi River crest.

In fact, by holding the 100,000 CFS inflows until the crest passed, Mark Twain Lake is estimated to have reduced crests southward on the Mississippi River by as much as five feet, lowering impacts on both sides of the river southward into St. Louis by that much.

The Corps of Engineers is continuing to monitor events and to share information with levee districts and local authorities and will do so until flood threats pass.

As many citizens learned again over the weekend, flooding can be very dangerous and is not confined only to areas that have flooded previously this summer. Safety lessons, including not driving into water covered roads, have again been retaught the hard way.

The St. Louis District commander, Col. Thomas O'Hara, continues to emphasize that public safety must remain the number one concern. Citizens should monitor media reports during weather events such as the region experienced over the weekend and follow directions of local safety officials, O'Hara says. There are "No Shortcuts to Safety," he told his staff Monday morning.

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Editor's Note: Updated information about area rivers is available on the web by visiting the Corps' website at <http://www.rivergages.com>. This website includes links to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and National Weather Service websites that track Mississippi River flow and projected rainfall amounts. A "River and Reservoir Gage Readings" report is also available on the St. Louis District's website <http://www.mvs.usace.army.mil>