



# News Release

**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
Northwestern Division  
Public Affairs Office

12565 West Center Road  
Omaha, Nebraska 68144-3869

Contact: Paul Johnston  
(402) 697-2552

Phone: (402) 697-2552  
Fax: (402) 697-2554

November 9, 2001

---

OMAHA-- An open house workshop and public meeting on the Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Missouri River Master Water Control Manual will be conducted in New Orleans on Thursday, Nov. 15. It will provide the opportunity for people to ask questions and make comments on possible alternatives for operating the dams and reservoirs on the Missouri River by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The sessions will be held at the Pontchartrain Hotel, 2031 St. Charles Ave. The open house workshop runs from 2 to 5 p.m. The public meeting to collect comments begins at 7 p.m. This is the last of 14 meetings being held from Helena to New Orleans. The comment period runs ends February 28, 2002.

"The open house workshops offer people the opportunity to view a presentation on the features and impacts of the various plans on the Mississippi River. They can also study the display boards and pick up handouts. Most importantly, they can visit with professional engineers and biologists from the Corps and the Fish and Wildlife Service who can answer their questions," said Col. David Fastabend, Northwestern Division Commander.

"The hearings conducted in the evening offer the opportunity for people to present comments on the various plans and their social, economic and environmental impacts," said Colonel Fastabend. "Everyone wanting to make a comment will be accommodated, with a court reporter recording a verbatim transcript," he added.

The revised draft EIS presents six alternatives, including the current water control plan. The second is the modified conservation plan which contains four features: adaptive management, increased water conservation during droughts, changes to spring releases from Fort Peck Dam, and unbalancing the storage in the three upper lakes. The four other alternatives add a fifth feature, changes in releases from Gavins Point Dam.

- More -

The common features of new alternatives presented in the RDEIS are:

- **Drought conservation measures.** Navigation service levels would be reduced earlier in a drought than under the current water control plan. This would allow more water to be stored in the three large reservoirs in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. During severe droughts, like the one in the 1930s, support for navigation would be eliminated at a higher storage level than under the current plan. During a drought such as the one in the 1980s, these measures would increase storage by 3 feet in the three upper reservoirs.

- **Fort Peck Dam release changes.** Releases would be increased up to 23,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) for three weeks in May and June on average every three years. A mix of cold water through the powerhouse and warm water over the spillway is intended to trigger pallid sturgeon spawning by increasing both flow and temperature in the river reach downstream from the dam.

- **Unbalancing the 3 upper reservoirs.** One of the three upper reservoirs would be lowered approximately 3 feet to allow vegetation to grow around the rim, and then refilled to inundate that vegetation. The unbalancing would rotate among the three lakes on a three-year cycle. The practice would benefit the three protected species - pallid sturgeon, least tern and piping plover. In addition, it would provide spawning and rearing habitat for young forage and game fish in the lakes.

- **Adaptive management.** This is an overall strategy for dealing with change and scientific uncertainty. It promotes testing hypotheses and exploring promising changes to operations based on sound scientific data and analyses.

Modified releases from Gavins Point Dam involve:

- **a "spring rise"** from Gavins Point Dam of 15,000 cfs to 20,000 cfs above full navigation targets for 2 weeks beginning in mid-May on average every three years to trigger pallid sturgeon spawning. If implemented, the rise may begin at 15,000 cfs followed by monitoring and evaluating the biological response. The rise would not be provided in years with high downstream tributary flows like 2001 and would make full consideration of any flood threats downstream.

- **low annual releases** from Gavins Point from mid-June to mid-August to provide nesting habitat for least terns and piping plovers. If implemented, they would begin at the minimum navigation service level of approximately 28,000 cfs to 21,000 cfs, followed by monitoring and evaluation of the biological response.

All the study materials are available on the Northwestern Division homepage at [www.nwd.usace.army.mil](http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil). By clicking on the "Missouri River Master Manual EIS" button, the user has access to the entire RDEIS, the summary, workshop schedule, list of depository libraries, fact sheets, photographs, links to other sources of information and a comment response form. They can also write to: Project Manager, Master Manual Review and Update, 12565 West Center Road, Omaha, NE 68144.