



News Release

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Water Management Monthly News Release

OMAHA – Drought continued to plague the Missouri River basin throughout 2003. Lack of snow on the plains and below normal precipitation produced only 70 percent of normal runoff. Water stored in the six Missouri River reservoirs continues to decline.

“System storage peaked in June at 45.2 million acre feet (MAF). It normally peaks in July near 62 MAF. As part of continued water conservation efforts, Missouri River flow targets were set at minimum service levels and the navigation season was shortened six days,” said Larry Cieslik, Chief of the Water Management office in Omaha. “For the year, runoff above Sioux City, Iowa, totaled only 17.6 MAF. This was the fourth consecutive year of below normal runoff.” Normal runoff is 25.2 MAF.

System storage ended December at 38.7 MAF, down 200,000 acre feet during the month and 16 MAF below normal. Last year at this time it was 42.7 MAF.

As of Jan. 1, the mountain snowpack was 103 percent of normal in the reach above Fort Peck and 95 percent in the reach from Fort Peck to Garrison. “With normal precipitation, we are forecasting 20 MAF of runoff. We anticipate some of it will be lost to low groundwater and dry soil conditions due to drought,” said Cieslik.

Hydropower for 2003 totaled 7.6 billion kilowatt hours (kWh) compared to a normal of 10.2 billion kWh. The six main stem powerplants generated 484 million kWh of electricity in December, 55 percent of normal.

Gavins Point releases ranged from 12,000 cfs to 15,000 cfs in December based on weather and river ice conditions. “Because of the low reservoir levels and continued drought, we are setting releases as low as possible this winter to meet drinking water and powerplant needs while conserving water in the reservoirs. We will continue to monitor weather and river conditions to assure adequate water supply along the river,” said Cieslik. Moderate temperatures could allow releases to be set lower than 12,000 cfs without causing water supply problems to municipal and powerplant intakes. Gavins Point releases averaged 13,700 and 13,300 cfs last January and February, respectively.

Lewis and Clark Lake is currently under elevation 1207 feet above mean sea level (msl). It will gradually rise to elevation 1207.5 feet msl and be held near that level through January and February.

Fort Randall releases averaged 11,800 cfs in December. In January, they will range from 11,000 to 15,000 cfs as needed to maintain Lewis and Clark Lake near its desired elevation. Lake Francis Case ended the month at 1343.4 feet msl. It will continue to refill in January, ending the month near elevation 1346 feet msl.

Lake Oahe rose slightly during December, ending the month at elevation 1577 feet msl. It will rise one foot in January, ending the month 23 feet below normal. The reservoir is 8 feet lower than last year at this time.

Garrison releases averaged 15,900 cfs during December. Releases were held near 17,000 cfs during the cold weather in late December and early January to assure adequate water supply in the Bismarck-Mandan area. Releases will gradually increase during January if river ice conditions permit. Lake Sakakawea fell nearly one foot in December ending the month at elevation 1818.4 feet msl. It will drop nearly three feet in January, ending 19 feet below normal. The reservoir is 4 feet lower than last year at this time.

Fort Peck releases averaged 8,900 cfs in December. They will remain at 9,000 cfs in January and February to meet power production requirements. The lake fell more than one foot in December, ending the month at elevation 2206.8 feet msl. It will fall nearly two feet in January, ending the month 27 feet below normal. Last year at this time it was 8 feet higher.

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Daily and forecasted reservoir and river information is available on the water management section of the Northwestern Division homepage at www.nwd.usace.army.mil.

MISSOURI RIVER MAIN STEM RESERVOIR DATA

	Pool Elevation (ft msl)		Water in Storage - 1,000 acre-feet		
	On Dec 31	Change in Dec	On Dec 31	% of 1967-2002 Average	Change in Dec
Fort Peck	2206.8	-1.5	10,049	67	-245
Garrison	1818.4	-0.7	12,881	72	-165
Oahe	1577.0	+0.3	11,049	64	+16
Big Bend	1420.3	-0.7	1705	99	-36
Fort Randall	1343.4	+3.5	2,643	100	+213
Gavins Point	1207.4	-0.2	395	93	-6
			38,734	70	-211

WATER RELEASES AND ENERGY GENERATION FOR DECEMBER

	Average Release in 1,000 cfs	Releases in 1,000 af	Generation in 1,000 MWh
Fort Peck	8.9	547	79
Garrison	15.9	979	130
Oahe	14.7	906	111
Big Bend	14.0	862	54
Fort Randall	11.8	725	70
Gavins Point	13.7	844	39
			484