



News Release

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Water Management Monthly News Release

OMAHA –Lower reservoir levels and reduced flows are expected again this year in the Missouri River basin as runoff remains low and snowpack accumulation continues below normal.

“February’s runoff above Sioux City was 96 percent of normal. As of Mar. 1, the mountain snowpack was 96 percent of normal in the reach above Fort Peck, and 89 percent of normal in the reach from Fort Peck to Garrison,” said Larry Cieslik, Chief of the Water Management office in Omaha. Normally, 80 percent of the peak snow in the mountains is accumulated by early March.

“With slightly below normal mountain snow and normal precipitation the rest of the year, we are forecasting annual runoff to be 20.3 million acre feet (MAF),” said Cieslik. “It’s likely that persistent drought along with dry soil conditions and low groundwater levels will reduce the runoff this year.” Normal runoff is 25.2 MAF.

The 2004 Final Annual Operating Plan (AOP) will be made available to the public on March 19, 2004. It presents the Corps plan for water management in 2004 based upon a revised Master Water Control Manual, which will also be available that day. A draft of both documents is currently available on the Missouri River Basin Water Management homepage at www.nwd-mr.usace.army.mil/rcc.

Four public meetings to review the 2004 AOP will be held next month. This first will be April 5 in Omaha, Neb., at 5 p.m., in the Northwestern Division Omaha office, 12565 W. Center Road. The second will be April 6 in Lewistown, Mont., at 7 p.m., in the Yogo Inn. The third will be

April 7 in Bismarck, N.D., at 6:00 p.m. in the Kelly Inn. The last one will be on April 8 in Kansas City at 7 p.m. in the Hilton Hotel Airport.

Support for the 2004 navigation season will begin April 1 at the mouth near St. Louis. River flows will be at minimum service levels. Under the most likely runoff scenario, the navigation season will be shortened 33 days. The actual navigation season length will be determined by the water-in-storage check on July 1.

Opening dates are:

Sioux City, Iowa	March 23
Omaha, Nebraska	March 25
Nebraska City, Nebraska	March 26
Kansas City, Missouri	March 28
Mouth at St. Louis, Missouri	April 1

System storage ended February at 38.3 MAF. Last year at this time it was 42.4 MAF. “The amount of water in the reservoirs is nearly 18.8 MAF below normal for this time of year,” said Cieslik.

Releases from Gavins Point averaged 13,700 cubic feet per second (cfs) in February. They ranged from 11,000 cfs to 18,000 cfs in response to weather and river ice conditions. “We set releases as low as possible this winter to meet drinking water and powerplant needs while conserving water in the reservoirs. Warmer temperatures and localized precipitation allowed us to cut releases to 9,000 cfs by Mar. 2,” said Cieslik.

Lewis and Clark Lake is currently near elevation 1207 feet above mean sea level (msl). It will gradually drop to 1206 feet msl during March.

Fort Randall releases averaged 10,600 cfs in February. In early March, they will range from 2,000 to 8,000 cfs as needed to maintain Lewis and Clark Lake near its desired elevation. Releases will gradually be increased to the 18,000 to 20,000 cfs range as the navigation season begins. Lake

Francis Case ended February at 1350.6 feet msl. It will continue to refill, ending the month near 1355 feet msl.

Lake Oahe rose nearly two feet in February, ending the month at elevation 1579.2 feet msl. It will rise two feet in March, ending the month 25 feet below average. The reservoir is 8 feet lower than last year at this time.

Garrison releases averaged 23,100 cfs during February, ranging from 22,000 to 24,000 cfs during the month. In March, they will be gradually reduced to 14,000 cfs as river ice conditions permit. Lake Sakakawea fell more than two feet in February ending the month at a record low elevation of 1814.3 feet msl. It will rise nearly two feet in March, ending the month 19 feet below average. The reservoir is 5 feet lower than last year at this time.

Fort Peck releases averaged 8,800 cfs in February. They will be gradually reduced to 5,000 cfs in early March. The reservoir fell more than one foot during February, ending the month at a record low elevation of 2204.0 feet msl. It will rise about half a foot during March, ending the month 27 feet below average. Last year at this time it was 7 feet higher.

The six main stem powerplants generated 536 million kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity in February, 81 percent of normal. The forecast for 2004 energy production is 7.1 billion kWh compared to a normal of 10 billion kWh.

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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 Feb 29	Change in Feb	On Feb 29	% of 1967-2003 Average	Change in Feb
Fort Peck	2204.0	-1.3	9,603	66	-203
Garrison	1814.3	-2.4	11,891	69	-555
Oahe	1579.2	+1.6	11,504	64	+300
Big Bend	1421.1	+0.5	1,748	101	+30
Fort Randall	1350.6	+1.3	3,172	104	+503
Gavins Point	1207.1	+1.3	388	104	+36
			38,306	69	+111

WATER RELEASES AND ENERGY GENERATION FOR FEBRUARY

	Average Release in 1,000 cfs	Releases in 1,000 af	Generation in 1,000 MWh
Fort Peck	8.8	508	73
Garrison	23.1	1330	172
Oahe	18.4	1060	134
Big Bend	16.9	971	60
Fort Randall	10.6	609	61
Gavins Point	13.7	788	36
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