



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers** ®  
Walla Walla District

# News Release

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## Corps initiating interim risk reduction measures to improve public safety at Mill Creek Storage Dam

**WALLA WALLA, Wash.** – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Walla Walla District officials said they are enacting safety measures at Mill Creek Storage Dam after identifying seepage issues.

These safety measures are part of a new, risk informed process the Corps developed to ensure acceptable public safety and to prioritize dam safety deficiencies at its 610 dams nationwide. These dams serve a variety of purposes including navigation, flood risk management, water supply, irrigation, hydropower, recreation, and environmental enhancement.

“As part of this process, the Corps is screening its dams and assigning safety classification ratings,” said Mark Lindgren, interim chief of engineering, Walla Walla District. “The new dam safety classification system, entitled Dam Safety Action Category (DSAC), spotlights dams and navigation locks with compelling problems first, so a national priority can be assigned for funding, studies, investigations and remedial work,” he said.

The DSAC rating system rates dams from 1 to 5, with DSAC-5 being the “most safe,” and describes a policy for developing and implementing interim risk reduction measures to reduce the probability of unacceptable performance of Corps dams.

Mill Creek Storage Dam received a DSAC rating of 1. That means the “risk to public safety is unacceptable when Bennington Lake is more than 17-percent full for an extended period of time.” In addition, the findings create an urgent and compelling requirement for the Corps to undertake and implement interim risk reduction measures and system modifications.

Because there are potential issues with the Mill Creek Storage Dam’s integrity, the Corps limits the time and amount of water it stores in the reservoir. The reservoir’s water level is normally between 5-10 percent of its capacity. On average, once every three years it is necessary to divert some water to the reservoir during flood season to prevent flood damage to the City of Walla Walla and/or surrounding areas.

“When the Corps diverts water into the reservoir, we face challenges in meeting our high standards for public safety – our top priority,” said Lindgren. “To address these concerns, the Corps closely monitors the project’s performance and modifies operations if there is unreasonable risk to the public. In addition, the Corps is actively pursuing funding to implement interim risk reduction measures and longer-term solutions to correct deficiencies and reduce risk to the Walla Walla Community.

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## Mill Creek\2-2-2

Those measures include:

1. Modifying operating procedures to include flood control, conservation pool constraints and diversion operations.
2. Coordinating with Walla Walla County on pre-positioning emergency supplies and contracts.
3. Increase monitoring and surveillance.
4. Working with Walla Walla County to maximize an emergency alert system.
5. Installing lighting to assist with emergency operations at night.
6. Performing a potential failure mode analysis.
7. Conducting a comprehensive dam seepage and stability analysis.
8. Revising and test the Emergency Action Plan.
9. Installing a seepage filter and pressure test the outlet conduit.
10. Verifying dam and project elevations.
11. Evaluating intake tower stability.
12. Evaluating additional options for diverting floodwater.
13. Evaluating increased channel capacity.
14. Completing a hydrologic re-evaluation.
15. Working with Walla Walla County to develop a flood response plan.

Starting in 2010, the Corps will develop long-term alternatives and solutions and implement them from 2012 to 2014. Throughout this process, the Walla Walla District will pursue permanent solutions.

Meanwhile, Corps officials will closely monitor the performance of Mill Creek Storage Dam and modify operations if they feel there is risk to the public.

“While we cannot completely eliminate risk, we can reduce risk,” Lindgren said.

**To keep the public informed, The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Walla Walla District staff scheduled a public meeting on Nov. 12. at the Walla Walla Community College Health Sciences Building in the Performing Arts Theater room, 500 Tausick Way, Walla Walla Washington. There will be an open house from 6-7 p.m. followed by the public meeting from 7-8:30 p.m.**

**A fact sheet is available for download on the Walla Walla District’s Web site [www.nww.usace.army.mil](http://www.nww.usace.army.mil).**

-30-

**NOTE FOR MEDIA: Photo and graphic resources are available for download at [http://www.nww.usace.army.mil/html/offices/pa/NR/NR08\\_files/NR08-90PIX/NR08-90PIXPage.htm](http://www.nww.usace.army.mil/html/offices/pa/NR/NR08_files/NR08-90PIX/NR08-90PIXPage.htm)**