



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

NEWS RELEASE
BUILDING STRONG®

For Immediate Release:
Jan. 2, 2013

Bob Anderson
601-634-5760
robert.t.anderson@usace.army.mil

Corps keeps Mississippi River open as drought continues

ST. LOUIS, Jan. 2, 2013 – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to project river stages will sustain the authorized 9-foot deep commercial navigation channel between St. Louis, Mo., and Cairo, Ill. The Corps continues to apply all available capabilities and resources to keep the channel open.

The latest weather outlook indicates a warming trend and the potential for rain next week. Additionally, the removal of rock obstructions will enable an approximately 2-foot deeper channel in the Thebes reach of the river by January 11. Recent rains and water releases from the Corps' Carlyle Lake in Illinois have improved the forecast for the Middle Mississippi River.

Based on the latest National Weather Service worst-case, "no rain" forecasts, river levels won't reach -5 feet on the St. Louis gage until mid-January. At that point, the rock formations at Thebes will be removed enough to prevent a negative impact to the 9-foot-deep navigation channel.

According to Mississippi Valley Division Commander, Maj. Gen. John Peabody, "The Corps rock removal contractors are making excellent progress in removing the rock obstructions from the primary area of concern," he said.

Low water on the river is allowing the Corps' contractors to remove an estimated 890 cubic yards of limestone from the river bottom primarily through excavation. The rock removal will reduce the risk to vessels in the channel during low water. Current work addresses areas that will have the most immediate impact on the navigation, with additional rock removal is planned for later this year.

"We believe we will deepen the channel ahead of the worst-case river stage scenario, and I remain confident that navigation will continue," Peabody added.

Removing the rock formations is one of many operations the Corps is undertaking along the narrowing river to maintain a 9-foot deep channel for river navigation. Dredging has been ongoing since early July to preserve the channel, as well as continued surveys and channel patrols to keep commerce safely moving on the Middle Mississippi.

The Corps is in constant communication and coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard and the river industry as the drought has reduced water levels throughout the Mississippi River Basin to historic lows.

For more information, visit www.mvs.usace.army.mil/lowwater.