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Missouri River Flood Task Force completes eight month effort, transitions

Omaha, Nebr. — Nearly a year after record high rains and runoff in the upper Missouri River Basin caused the Flood of 2011, the Missouri River Flood Task Force (MRFTF) wrapped up eight months of formal meetings and post-flood collaboration, and transitioned to a readiness posture -- ready to be activated again if a natural disaster threatened the mid-west.

“The goal of the Missouri River Flood Task Force was simple: communicate, coordinate, collaborate and cooperate both near-term and long-term recovery activities in the Missouri River Basin,” said Brig. Gen. John McMahon, the commander of the Northwestern Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and one of three co-chairs on the MRFTF. “I believe as we transition from the task force into improved internal agency coordination with states, Tribes and others, we have accomplished those goals.”

The task force was formed in the fall of 2011 from many federal agencies, representatives of each of the eight states and various tribes in the Missouri River Basin. Participating as partners and contributors to the task force was also an array of non-profit organizations and industry groups representing a spectrum of interests impacted by the flooding last year. The task force was co-chaired by Thomas Christensen, Regional Conversationist of the Natural Resources Conservation Service Central Region, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Beth Freeman, FEMA Region VII Administrator.

The May 24 meeting in Omaha was the fourth and final face-to-face meeting, but the task force also coordinated virtually, via bi-weekly teleconferences within their work groups, focusing on levee repair, agriculture impacts, Tribal support, regulatory issues, floodplain management, river management, hydropower, navigation and overall communications.

“While our regular face-to-face meetings may be ending, the communication and partnerships developed will continue throughout the basin, and be maintained, as we continue to raise awareness, responsibilities, and solutions to the competing challenges that exist throughout the basin,” said Tom Christensen, MRFTF Co-chair.

Some of the ongoing dialogue and coordination that was initiated by the task force will now transition into actions addressed by the existing Missouri River Basin Interagency Roundtable (MRBIR) as well as state Silver Jackets programs that currently tackle similar non-emergency Missouri River basin issues. “I think keeping the awareness, tools and networks that exist during an emergency event active in our normal day-to-day

conversations and interactions will greatly help us in future emergency event planning,” said Beth Freeman, MRFTF Co-chair.

Part of the transition plan of the MRFTF includes an activation plan if forecasts indicate another dangerously high runoff for the system. “Today may have been our last formal meeting as a group, but the preparation, planning, discussions and relationships developed will last well into the future and are invaluable,” said McMahan.

For more information on the resources developed by the Task Force, or information on the ongoing efforts to address both the short-term and continuing floodplain management challenges for the Missouri River Basin, go to <http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/mrftf/>.

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