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Work continues on pumps for Grand Prairie Project

Note to editors: Digital photos of visit to Milwaukee facility available upon request

MEMPHIS, Tenn., Jan. 25, 2007 – Work on six large surface water pumps for the Grand Prairie Pumping Station is nearing completion at a manufacturing plant in Milwaukee, Wis. The pumps are an integral part of the overall plan designed to aid the vital but threatened East Arkansas agricultural region's groundwater supply.

The Grand Prairie Irrigation Project is a comprehensive water management plan that will protect and preserve the Alluvial and Sparta Aquifers in eastern Arkansas. The project also allows for the continued irrigation of current agricultural crops and reduces further depletion of groundwater aquifers, while providing critical benefits for the millions of waterfowl, which annually migrate through the region.

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The project will use excess surface water and excess water from the White River to supplement a network of on-farm water storage facilities that capture and store runoff from rainfall and recovery of irrigation water during the growing season. Normal runoff and capture of irrigation runoff is not enough to meet the water needs so this supplemental system will provide the extra water to fill on-farm reservoirs. This supplemental water, when combined with on-farm capture and storage facilities, will meet the irrigation needs of the farmers and protect the seriously declining groundwater supplies.

The pumps are being built in Wisconsin. Two employees from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' office in Memphis, Wayne Quarles and Alan Cardwell, visited the company's Milwaukee facility in early December to check progress on the work.

"We were there as part of the quality assurance team to observe scale model tests of two sizes of pumps," said mechanical engineer Quarles. Quarles and Cardwell, an electrical engineer, serve as quality assurance inspectors and technical advisors on the Corps' Grand Prairie Project team.

ITT/FLYGT is building four pumps with an 84-inch diameter discharge, and two more pumps with a 42-inch diameter discharge. The multiple pumps and discharge sizes will provide the flexibility to meet the various pumping requirements as the demands for water change during the year.

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Four pumps will be operated by a 6,000 horsepower electric motor, and two pumps will be run by 1,500 horsepower motors. National Oilwell Varga of Sugarland, Texas, is building the motors.

Cardwell said work on the pumps is approximately 90 percent complete, and the electric motors are 40 percent complete.

Once the pumps and motors are finished, they will be climate control packed, shipped to Memphis and stored at the former Chicago Bridge and Iron facility on President's Island.

"They will remain there until we are ready to install them at the pumping station," Quarles said.

Construction on the Grand Prairie Pumping Station itself is suspended while Corps biologists work with the Fish and Wildlife Service to determine whether the project will impact the ivory billed woodpecker or its habitat. The Corps voluntarily agreed to reinstate consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service after an Arkansas District Court issued a preliminary injunction halting construction last August. If the court allows the Corps to resume construction, Corps leaders want to make sure the pumps for the facility are ready for installation.

"It's important that the public know we are proceeding with work on the pumps and motors that has already been authorized," said the Corps' Memphis District Commander Col. Charles Smithers. "We will be ready to resume other work quickly once we get the green light from the courts."