



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
Memphis District

# News Release

---

Release No.

PA-11-12

Contact:

Jim Pogue

---

For Release:

Immediately

Phone:

(877) 219-0478 (work)

(901) 828-0152 (cell)

---

## **Third largest watershed in the world reaches historical records**

Sikeston, Mo., May 1, 2011 – Historical record elevations at the Cairo gage is currently 59.66 feet. These stages are higher than the 1937 historical flood on record.

“The Project Flood is upon us,” Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh, President of the Mississippi River Commission said today. “This is the flood that engineers envisioned following the 1927 flood. It is testing the system like never before.”

Walsh said Public Safety is the Corps’ highest priority and that all resources are being used to battle the effects of this flooding. Hundreds of Corps’ personnel from around the nation as well as the Engineering Research Development Center, in Vicksburg, Miss., are working around the clock, monitoring the situation.

He added that he and his advisors are closely monitoring the situation but that no decision has been made at this time whether or not to operate the floodway. However, should flood pressures continue to increase it may be necessary to move to the next step in the Floodway Operations Plan.

-MORE-

The Floodway is part of the Mississippi River and Tributaries system designed to minimize damage and save lives from historic flood levels and is located on the west bank of the Mississippi in southeast Missouri, just below the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Its purpose is to lower flood stages and pressure on the entire system during major flood events. The floodway is 35 miles long and varies from 4 to 12 miles in width. Its area comprises about 133 thousand acres, or 205 square miles of land.

The Commander of the Memphis District has the responsibility to plan and operate the BP-NM Floodway upon direction from MRC President. After the devastating impacts from the 1927 flood, the 1928 Water Control Act gave the President of the MRC the authority to operate the BP-NM Floodway when and if he determined it was necessary to protect public safety.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the MRC are coordinating closely with other government agencies, communities, stakeholders, contractors and organizations. The ability to operate the Floodway if necessary is integral to protecting the safety and well being of local citizens along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.

The Mississippi River watershed covers more than 1,245,000 square miles and drains 41 percent of the contiguous United States. It is the third largest watershed in the world. The Mississippi River runs 2,350 miles (3,781 km) from its headwaters at Lake Itasca, Minn. to the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico.