



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

# News Release

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## **Corps of Engineers working with others to keep Mississippi River open for navigation during drought**

MEMPHIS, Tenn., July 25, 2012 – As the Lower Mississippi River approaches near-record low stages, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is working to keep this most vital of America’s waterways safe and reliable for navigation. The Corps’ Memphis District is playing an important role in this regional, multi-agency response.

“We are closely monitoring river levels and regularly communicating with the U.S. Coast Guard and the navigation industry,” Tom Minyard, the Memphis District’s Chief of Engineering and Construction said. “We have a number of tools at our disposal to ensure the river stays open and useable.”

The Corps is mandated to provide a minimum navigation channel that is 9 feet deep and 300 feet wide on the lower Mississippi River. Dredging and long-term channel improvements help ensure commercial traffic is able to move up and down the river to support our national and local economies.

Minyard said many permanent river “training structures” like stone dikes are now in place providing better conditions than in previous low water years. The dikes project out from the bank and help speed the flow of water through certain areas, causing the river to deposit less sediment in the navigation channel.

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He went on to say Corps survey boats, working with a fleet of government and commercial dredges, are aggressively responding to any low water hot spots.

Record low water occurred in 1988 when the river fell to -10.7 on the Memphis gage. Current National Weather Service forecasts call for the river to reach -8.3 in Memphis by August 1. This will be an amazing 56.3 feet lower than the highest reading during last year's spring floods. The extended forecast calls for the river to continue to drop to -9.6 feet on the Memphis gage by August 22.

“Communication and careful coordination between all parties is essential and will help us as we move through this challenging time,” Minyard said.

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