



# NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

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For Immediate Release:  
February 7, 2012

Contact:  
Bob Anderson, 601-634-5760  
Pam Vedros, 601-634-7783

## **Mississippi Valley Division continues Operation Watershed recovery work, risk management strategies for the 2012 flood season**

**VICKSBURG, Miss., February 7, 2012** – The 2011 Mississippi River flood was among the largest recorded along the Mississippi waterway, and the Mississippi River & Tributaries system performed as designed while under tremendous and prolonged pressure from this historic event. It was the flood of record for most gauges between Cape Girardeau, Mo., and the Gulf of Mexico and it was the first time the total watershed system was required to be operated in a synchronized system manner to manage the highest level of water it has ever seen.

The safety of the public is the Corps' number one priority and with the coming flood season fast approaching and winter site conditions unsuitable for active construction, there will be many areas not fully repaired, resulting in increased risk within the system. This increased risk will require extra vigilance and advance preparedness in the coming months given the damaged condition of MR&T levees, floodwalls, water control structures and navigation channels.

Taking into account the vulnerable condition of the MR&T project and projected National Weather Service Spring forecast, the Corps mobilized a regional 2012 Flood Preparedness Team in mid-December to develop plans to manage, mitigate and communicate flood risks throughout the MR&T system. This regional effort has been hard at work identifying actions such as interim measures, construction projects and flood fight preparedness actions which will be used to manage and mitigate risks within the MR&T system.

Interim measures are temporary actions taken to reduce risk and strengthen deficiencies in the system. Examples may include temporary reinforcement of levees or riverbank scour areas. These interim measures help reduce risk to the system and bridge the gap until more permanent solutions can be implemented.

Construction projects have been identified after the Corps carefully inspected and completed damage assessment reports for all levees, channel improvements, navigation channels and structures associated with the MR&T project. The recently approved Disaster Relief Appropriations Act has designated \$802 million for repairs to the MR&T system and a prioritized list of critical repairs based on the threat to human life and safety, as well as economic impacts, has been developed. Construction of items on that list is currently underway.

Flood fight preparedness includes actions the Corps and its partners are doing in preparation for the upcoming flood season, including ensuring flood fight supply inventories have been replenished and staged for rapid deployment and conducting exercises which play out levee breach scenarios. In addition to these traditional flood fight techniques, the Corps will be implementing innovative flood fight techniques which were used effectively during the flood of 2011.

These risk management strategies will be shared and coordinated with state and federal partners at a regional flood preparedness workshop February 23. The overall goal of this workshop is to ensure emergency response partners are fully informed and prepared for the upcoming flood season.

The Corps is taking proactive measures to be prepared for any flood fighting needs along the MR&T system; however, no matter how effective the flood risk management system is, there is always a residual flood risk that people must be prepared for.

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**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS – MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DIVISION**

1400 WALNUT STREET, VICKSBURG, MS 39180

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