



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers works with navigation industry, Coast Guard to continue drought fight

VICKSBURG, MISS., January 11, 2013 – A long term, multi-pronged low-water campaign by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the navigation industry and the U.S. Coast Guard is successfully keeping the Mississippi River channel between Cairo, Ill., and St. Louis Mo., open for commercial barge traffic.

USACE and its partners continue to provide a navigation channel for safe, reliable river commerce between the Gulf of Mexico and St. Louis despite historic lows on the lower and middle Mississippi, through a combination of engineering improvements, innovative use of water storage and hard work to deepen the channel.

The channel deepening work has included engineering permanent improvements like dikes and other river training structures, rock removal and six months of continuous dredging, channel patrols, channel marking, around-the-clock water control operations, surveys and mapping, as well as releases from upper Mississippi River reservoirs.

USACE, Coast Guard and the barge industry continue to coordinate and communicate with daily phone calls, regular briefings with industry executives, public meetings with elected leaders and real-time updates as conditions change along the river.

The continuous updates include close monitoring of forecasts, rainfall and snowmelt runoff expectations, and latest channel survey information for the 180-mile stretch of middle Mississippi River between St. Louis and Cairo.

USACE St. Louis District engineers now project rock removal efforts near Thebes, Ill., will effectively lower the river bed by about two feet on or about January 11. The district hired two contractors in December to expeditiously excavate, and blast, the pinnacles of river rock that were impeding barge traffic.

The rock removal work is having a short-term impact to navigation traffic by requiring the river to close for 16 hours a day, from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., creating a slight traffic delay, but in the end, keeping the navigation channel operational.

Also, the Corps has been dredging soft bottom areas of the river, around the clock since July, trying to keep the navigation channel at the authorized nine-foot depth or deeper. Dredging work has been effective in keeping ports and harbors open. The Vicksburg District, for example, used \$26.8 million in supplemental funds last year for port and harbor dredging; an additional \$6 million has been budgeted for fiscal year 2013.

For more information, please visit the following sites:

<http://water.weather.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?wfo=lsx&gage=eadm7>

The National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center offers a regularly updated three-month precipitation forecast:

http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/seasonal_drought.html

The Corps' St. Louis District posts regular drought updates, including photos and video links:

<http://www.mvs.usace.army.mil>