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Nashville District managing water releases, supporting flood operations

NASHVILLE, TENN. (April 28, 2011) – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nashville District Water Management staff continues to monitor stream conditions throughout the Cumberland Basin and to manage the release of water from dams within the basin.

The weather pattern that brought the area heavy rains over the last few days has now moved out of the Cumberland River Basin. With a forecast for no significant rainfall over the next few days the flood threat along the Cumberland River has diminished. Clarksville is the only forecast point on the Cumberland that is either above flood stage or forecast to go over flood stage. It should be back below flood stage early on Friday.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers water management operations for the Cumberland Basin reservoir system are solely focused on reducing flood impacts on the lower Ohio and Mississippi Rivers where a flood of historic magnitude is underway. To this end, releases from Barkley Dam have been reduced significantly, and additional reductions are planned, to keep that water out of the Ohio River when the flood crest passes through the lower Ohio River reach. In order to support this operation, which is being directed by Corps of Engineers water managers at the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division Office in Cincinnati, Ohio, releases from many of the projects managed locally by the Nashville District have been greatly reduced, and in some cases, discontinued completely.

Nashville District water managers initiated actions on Monday to position the Cumberland system to respond to anticipated heavy rainfall within the basin and to be prepared to support the Ohio and Mississippi River flood control operation. Flows from the four large tributary projects (Wolf Creek, Center Hill, Dale Hollow and J. Percy Priest) within the Cumberland Basin have been reduced to extremely low levels. This will result in a rise in their lake levels, and in some cases could reach levels that restrict access to the water and/or impact the operation of marinas and other commercial facilities at these projects. Likewise, flows through the Cumberland River from Celina, Tenn., to Barkley Dam in western Kentucky will also be reduced. However, this effect will be somewhat masked due to the large volume of runoff still in the river resulting from recent heavy rains.

Water conditions at the projects operated by the Nashville District are summarized below. The data presented represents conditions as of 2 p.m. today. For current conditions, go to the Nashville District web-site at <http://www.lrn.usace.army.mil/lakeinfo/>.

Martins Fork Dam – The project is being operated in a routine manner and current conditions reflect typical seasonal levels. The lake level is 1307.3. The discharge is 325 cubic feet per second.

Laurel River Lake - The project is being operated in a routine manner and current conditions reflect typical seasonal levels. The lake level is 1015.25. The discharge is 3,600 cfs.

Wolf Creek Dam (Lake Cumberland) – All six hydropower units have been taken off-line. Currently, the only water being released through the dam is that passing through two orifice gates. This release supports the continued operation of water intakes located in the flowing portion of the Cumberland River downstream of Wolf Creek Dam. This is an extremely low release rate for Wolf Creek. This special operation is being done to preserve storage in Lake Barkley to support the ongoing Ohio River flood control operation. The lake level is 714.81. The discharge is 540 cfs.

Dale Hollow Dam – All three hydropower units have been taken off-line. The only water being released is that for operation of the station service hydropower unit and the Dale Hollow National Fish Hatchery. This is an extremely low release rate for Dale Hollow. This special operation is being done to preserve storage in Lake Barkley to support the ongoing Ohio River flood control operation. The lake level is 657.31. The discharge is 75 cfs.

There are some inconveniences for visitors to Dale Hollow Lake, such as high water on launching ramps, beaches unusable, access ramps to courtesy floats underwater, and campsites and parking lots covered with water. If you plan to visit an area on Dale Hollow for launching or camping, please phone the location to determine facility availability, access and safety.

Visitors should use caution near the shoreline or developed areas and be aware that there may be structures underwater that could damage vessels. Boaters should lookout for excessive floating debris. Visitors should also be mindful of wakes, tie-ups and prop washout when near the bank. Your courtesy will help prevent shoreline erosion. The lake elevation will be contingent on the amount of rain water received.

Cordell Hull Lock & Dam – Cordell Hull is the most upstream commercial navigation project on the Cumberland River. It is being operated in a normal manner. If dry conditions persist for a few days, the flow through Cordell Hull will become unseasonably low. The lake level is 504.43. The discharge is 28,600 cfs.

Center Hill Dam – All three hydropower units have been taken off-line. No water is being released. This special operation is being done to preserve storage in Lake Barkley to support the ongoing Ohio River flood control operation. The lake level is 645.27. The discharge is 0 cfs.

Old Hickory Lock & Dam – Old Hickory is the commercial navigation project located just upstream of Nashville on the Cumberland River. It is being operated in a normal manner. If dry conditions persist for a few days, the flow through Old Hickory will become unseasonably low. The lake level is 445.98. The discharge is 63,700 cfs.

J. Percy Priest Dam – The hydropower unit at J. Percy Priest Dam has been taken off-line. No water is being released. This special operation is being done to preserve storage in Lake Barkley to

support the ongoing Ohio River flood control operation. The lake level is 496.94. The discharge is 0 cfs.

Cheatham Lock & Dam – Cheatham is the commercial navigation project located just downstream of Nashville on the Cumberland River. It is being operated in a normal manner. If dry conditions persist for a few days, the flow through Cheatham will become unseasonably low. The lake level is 384.35. The discharge is 95,000 cfs.

Barkley Lock & Dam – Barkley is the most downstream project within the Cumberland Basin reservoir system. In support of water management on the lower Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, the Nashville District continues to make water releases at Barkley Dam at the direction of the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, which has assumed control of Lake Barkley during that flood event. While it does provide hydropower and navigation benefits, it is currently being called on for the valuable flood damage reduction benefits that it provides for the lower Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. The flows have been significantly reduced over the past several days and will be further reduced as the flood crest on the Ohio River approaches Cairo, Ill. The lake level is 364.40. The discharge is 24,400 cfs.

Lake Barkley has closed Eureka Campground and Hurricane Creek Campground until May 2. Extension of these closures will be determined early next week depending upon water levels. Many low lying campsites in Canal Campground are closed or will be closed by Friday April 29. Dyers Creek Day Use area is closed until further notice.

To assist with flood-fighting operations throughout the region, the Nashville District has provided a representative to act as a liaison with the Tennessee Emergency Operations Center. The Nashville District has provided one sandbagging machine to Livingston County, Ky., and one to the Shawnee Fossil Fuel Plant in Kentucky on the Ohio River at the request of the Tennessee Valley Authority. The district also sent an eight-inch pump to the city of Smithland, Ky., and is currently locating 16-inch pipes for pumping operations in the Cairo, Ill., area of operations at the request of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Memphis District.

The Nashville District has dispersed 16,000 sandbags to Montgomery County and the city of Clarksville, Tenn. Another 150,000 sandbags have been delivered to the Tennessee EOC to use as they see fit. Additionally the Nashville District has issued 544,000 bags to counties in Kentucky.

As necessary, news and information regarding water management and flood operations will be made available on the district's website at www.lrn.usace.army.mil, on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/nashvillecorps>, and on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/nashvillecorps>. For more information about the Memphis District, go to <http://www.mvm.usace.army.mil/>. For more information about the Louisville District, go to <http://www.lrl.usace.army.mil/>.