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Lake Barkley reaches pool record as district supports flood operations

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (May 2, 2011) – Lake Barkley reached a record pool level of 370.80 feet today as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nashville District continues to hold back and store water at its storage projects to alleviate a flood of record ongoing on the lower Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

Lake Barkley is the most downstream project within the Cumberland Basin reservoir system. While it provides hydropower and navigation benefits, it is now providing a valuable flood damage reduction benefit for the ongoing flood fight. A large volume of storage within Lake Barkley is being used to reduce the flows out of Barkley Dam to support efforts to reduce the flood crest on the Ohio River as it approaches Cairo, Ill.

Lake Barkley on the Cumberland River and Kentucky Lake on the Tennessee River play a key role in reducing flood crests along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. In order to apply the flood storage available in these projects to this epic flood event, their lake levels have risen to record levels and are expected to continue to rise in the coming days. This has resulted in flooding impacts throughout the Lake Barkley area, including the Dover and Cumberland City communities. The current National Weather Service forecast for the Cumberland River stage at Clarksville has the river exceeding the action level of 40 feet but staying well under the flood stage of 46 feet.

This ongoing high water event is a reminder of the May 2010 flood event of one year ago. Although a catastrophic event, the Nashville District's efforts a year ago prevented a five-foot-higher flood crest in Nashville. The Corps of Engineers revamped water management procedures that were implemented in the August 2010 high water event and in use during the ongoing flood control effort. The Nashville District also conducted an in-depth After Action Report and implemented recommendations from that report, and has increased coordination with other agencies. A technical flood study is now underway and is scheduled to be completed at the end of this year. The water management staff is currently conducting 24-hour operations to manage this high-water event, which is another measure adopted from the AAR report.

The Nashville District's Water Management Section reports that water levels on the Cumberland River are at or below seasonal levels from Wolf Creek Dam to Cheatham Dam. This is reflective of the unusually low water releases currently being made at upstream storage projects from the lakes and dams capable of storing water, which are Wolf Creek, Dale Hollow, Center Hill, and J. Percy Priest.

Water management operations for the Cumberland Basin reservoir system continue to be focused on reducing flood impacts on the lower Ohio and Mississippi Rivers where a flood of historic magnitude is underway.

The following updates are provided for each of the Nashville District projects:

Martins Fork Dam: The project is being operated in a routine manner and current conditions reflect typical seasonal levels. The lake level is 1308.7. The discharge is 141 cfs.

Cordell Hull Lock & Dam: This 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 502.86. The discharge is 7,700 cfs. The storms that blew through last week caused damages to trees and facilities, but there are no closures at this time.

Laurel River Lake: The project is being operated in a routine manner and current conditions reflect typical seasonal levels. The lake level is 1014.86. The discharge is 3,560 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 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 721.11. The discharge is 540 cfs.

All Lake Cumberland recreation areas are open. The boat ramp at Fishing Creek is now useable due to the higher water level. Fishermen are using the launch ramp heavily now due to quick access to prime fishing areas.

Dale Hollow Dam: All three hydropower units have been taken off line. The only water being released is for intermittent operation of the station service hydropower unit and water furnished to 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 658.74. The discharge is 25 cfs.

Currently there are 80-plus campsites closed at Obey River Campground and 70-plus campsites closed at Lillydale Campground. The ongoing rise in the lake pool level will unfortunately result in several additional campsite closures at these campgrounds. Tennessee State Highway 294 leading to Willow Grove Campground is currently not open and Willow Grove Marina has approximately six inches of water covering it. Eagles Cove Marina has been closed due to the high water; all parking facilities are currently inundated and there is no vehicular access to the marina office. Corps boat ramps at Lillydale Day Use Area and Pleasant Grove Recreation Area remain usable. All other Corps boat ramps are completely inundated. All beaches on Dale Hollow Lake are currently closed due to the high water.

Center Hill Dam – All three hydropower units have been taken off-line. The only water being released from the dam is a 250 cfs flow through the orifice gate. 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 654.02. The discharge is 250 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. This is an unseasonably low release from Old Hickory. The lake level is 444.42. The discharge is 5,500 cfs. Cages Bend and Cedar Creek and launching areas are open and fully operational.

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 499.62. The discharge is 0 cfs. Due to high lake levels at J. Percy Priest Lake, all launching ramps are closed except for the Poole Knobs boat ramp. Seven Points and Poole Knobs campgrounds are open. Anderson Road Recreation Area, Vivrette Creek Recreation Area, and West Fork Recreation Area are closed. In addition, the beach at Cook Recreation Area is closed until further notice; however, the picnic pavilion site will remain open to the public. The main road to Seven Points Campground and Stewarts Ferry Pike have been flooded and closed, and campers should detour at John Hager Road. All beaches are closed. Anderson Road Day Use Area is closed.

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 385.05. The discharge is 20,400 cfs. All the recreation areas are open. Lock A and Harpeth River Campgrounds are also open.

Barkley Lock & Dam – The lake level is 370.80, a new record. The discharge is 60,200 cfs. Hurricane Creek, Eureka and Bumpus Mills Campgrounds are closed due to flooding. Canal Campground has 50-plus campsites closed due to high water. Old Kuttawa, Old Eddyville, Bumpus Mills, Dyer's Creek and Dover Landing Day Use Areas are closed due to flooding. Fifteen boat ramps are inaccessible due to flooding.

Supporting Flood Operations – To assist with flood-fighting operations throughout the region, the Nashville District's Emergency Operations Center continues to coordinate with the Tennessee Emergency Operations Center. The Nashville District has provided 828,000 sandbags to areas throughout Kentucky and Tennessee to date.

Lock operations at Kentucky Lock on the Tennessee River are closed to navigation since noon today because of high tail water above elevation 341 feet.

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/>.

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