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Nashville District announces plans to tighten restrictions around Corps Dams

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (Dec. 13, 2012) – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nashville District is finalizing plans to implement 24/7 restricted waterborne access to hazardous waters immediately upstream and downstream of all Corps-owned locks and dams, flood control dams and multi-purpose dams on the Cumberland River and its adjoining tributaries. This action moves the Nashville District into full compliance with Corps regulations.

Public information meetings are planned for Paducah, Ky., Nashville, Tenn., Cookeville, Tenn. and Somerset, Ky. in January 2013. These meetings will allow the public to respond to the proposed implementation plans. Detailed information for each meeting's time and location will be provided to the public as soon as they are finalized.

The restricted areas will be the minimum area allowed per Corps regulations upstream and downstream of locks, dams, and power plant facilities. All forms of water access within the restricted areas will be prohibited including boating, swimming and wading. The Corps continues to allow bank fishing in all areas that were previously approved, including areas adjacent to some restricted areas. The restricted areas will be small areas compared to the entire tailwater below the dams on federal property. Fishing and boating will still be allowed in these non-restricted areas.

"We understand the tightened restricted areas in the Nashville District may be unpopular, but it is necessary for the district to enforce a more restrictive policy that complies more effectively with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' ER 1130-2-520, Chapter 10," said Freddie Bell, chief of the Natural Resource Management Branch. "The increased restriction will also provide the highest level of public safety and address physical security issues."

Since 2009, three fatalities, one serious injury and 10 near misses/rescues have occurred in the hazardous waters immediately downstream of dams on the Cumberland River and its adjoining tributaries. Life jacket wear has been ineffective in these areas, since all of the victims who drowned were wearing a life jacket.

The immediate hazardous water areas above and below dams in the Nashville District are best described as industrial areas that pose a high level of risk for the public because of the hydroelectric, spilling, sluicing and lock operations that are often present or begin with little or no notice. Such water releases can change a dry riverbed or calm waters into a life-threatening situation within seconds that can swamp, capsize and trap boats and people in turbulent waters.

"We want the public to understand safety is the Agency's highest priority," said Bell. "The tailwater directly below a dam is a high risk area and fishing in this area is a high risk activity. As we comply with Corps regulations by restricting these areas, we are also keeping the public safe."

For more information, on the "Restricted Areas Around Dams" please go to http://www.lrn.usace.army.mil/pao/news/boating_restrictions_near_dams.htm.

The public can obtain news, updates and information from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nashville District 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>.