




Never say 'Never'

Thousands of people up and down the Missouri River are experiencing or will experience flooding, evacuating them from their homes and businesses. City infrastructures and roads are being shut off or put out of service. The type of disaster we look to the reservoirs to prevent, is becoming reality. However, with record releases due to abnormal precipitation we can still have floods. Much will need to be sorted out in the coming months.

Terrace Park (circle) at Springfield South Dakota, Photo taken in 2007. Right photo, Overlook view at Terrace Park on Wed., June 1, 2011.

June 2011

The MSAC Mission is to pursue and promote the intelligent use of all available programs and funds to alleviate the sedimentation-caused problems of the Missouri River main-stem reservoirs.

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■ Three Views of the Railroad bridge over the Niobrara River

The upper left aerial photo was taken by MSAC in 2007 in the vicinity of the Niobrara River confluence with the Missouri River. Upper Right: Photo Credit - South Dakota Wing of the Civil Air Patrol taken on June 1, 2011. The bottom photo was taken by MSAC on Monday, May 30, 2011 by boat.



Coalition urges support for flood victims

The current extreme water runoff from a year of major snow and rainfall is forcing water releases from the Missouri River dams that have never before been experienced, resulting in flooding in many areas. While flood control was one of the major benefits of the dams when they were constructed, dams and levees can never eliminate all flooding risks. One of the problems contributing to the flooding problem is sediment accumulation in the reservoirs.

Since its creation, the Missouri River reservoir system has lost over five million acre feet of storage due to accumulating sediment. According to a recent Sioux Falls Argus Leader report, the Missouri River system has a storage capacity of 73.1 million acre feet. The system was at 68.5 million acre feet on Friday May 27, according to the report. This lost storage is the equivalent of a flood one hundred miles long, ten miles wide, with an average depth of over

Continued on page 2

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Continued from page 1

seven feet, according to Howard Paul, technical coordinator with the Missouri Sedimentation Action Coalition.

“That is a major flood, but the current run off would still create problems. Sediment causes another problem that is a major contributor to the flooding and damages we are now experiencing,” Paul said.

As sediment enters the reservoirs from flowing streams, that sediment drops out when the flow enters the still waters of the reservoirs. These sediment deposits create a damming effect within the reservoir itself, and this damming effect causes the inflowing water to have to flow over these dams, thus raising the surface elevation of the river. This takes place both downstream and upstream of the point of inflow and raises the ground water table in the soils adjacent to the river.

“As this sediment build up continues, the effects continue to multiply. The situation in south east Pierre and in areas of Fort Pierre, South Dakota, where higher and higher ground water tables forced the ‘buy-out’ of hundreds of homes is a proven example of this situation,” Paul said.

Paul added that another was the confluence of the Niobrara River and the Missouri River at Niobrara, Nebraska. Other areas are facing this same problem on an increasing scale.

“This situation will only worsen in time without sediment management. We are experiencing a very unusual event with the amount of snowpack coupled with the amount of rainfall. What is happening also magnifies the sediment problem. It cannot be ignored. We must remember a perfect reservoir system cannot prevent all flooding all the time, everywhere on the system,” said Sandra Korkow, MSAC executive director. “However, sediment management will go a long way to lessening harmful impacts felt up and down the river.”

The system must be kept in tune to maximize its lifespan and functions. Unattended sediment entry into the reservoirs puts a preventable strain on the system, which unnecessarily complicates management, she said. Employing sediment management will be costly in the short-term, but it is a necessary component of keeping the system healthy and sound



East side of Lazy River Acres west of Niobrara, Nebraska Monday May 30, 2011 (MSAC Photo)

financially in the long-term.

Dredging or moving sediment downstream of the dams and reducing the amount of sediment entering the reservoirs will not prevent all future flooding. It will benefit the ground water table levels and free up storage capacity to hold more water. Sediment management will work to decrease the negative impacts felt up and down the Missouri River, however man cannot eliminate all the harsh elements produced by Mother Nature.

“Sediment management may not prevent all the flooding currently being experienced in places like Bismarck/Mandan, Pierre/Fort Pierre, the Niobrara area, Yankton, and the length downstream of Sioux City,” said Korkow. “We do know that without moving sediment and keeping sediment from the reservoirs this situation will worsen and smaller flood events will continue to grow in severity especially near tributary deltas.”

Without the Missouri River dams, flooding would be much worse and Americans would not enjoy hydropower, a prime drinking water source, irrigation supplies, and expanded recreation. “We must keep this investment running smoothly and invest to maintain it,” Korkow said.

This is a very crucial time for many areas up and down the Missouri River as people are working tirelessly in efforts to combat the flooding. This is a very serious disaster for thousands of people, stated Korkow.

“MSAC does not want to shift the focus of what needs to be done here and now to fight the flooding. The discussion of the need for sediment management is not diminishing but grows each day,” Korkow said.

“We do know without moving sediment and keeping sediment from the reservoirs this situation will worsen and smaller flood events will continue to grow in severity especially near tributary deltas.”

Sandra Korkow, MSAC



Niobrara Sewage Lagoons: Photo taken June 1, 2011 by the South Dakota Wing of the Civil Air Patrol. Follow the flood link at www.breadysd.com for more SD Civil Air Patrol photos. In March, MSAC held its annual meeting in Niobrara, which was already experiencing flooding in January when the Niobrara River was backing up.

News Briefs ...

Expect to hear more from South Dakota’s Title IX Task Force

A reappointment of the Title IX Task Force is underway in South Dakota. Not much had progressed regarding South Dakota’s Task Force when it was learned the state would have a difficult time meeting its in-kind match. However, redefining the scope of the assessment and the availability of federal dollars for another phase may make continued work of the Task Force feasible.

Summarized from the Federal Register of November 3, 2010: The Task Force is to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary of the Army on plans and projects to reduce siltation of the Missouri River in South Dakota and to meet the objectives of the Pick-Sloan Program. Plan also to include: promotion of conservation practices in Missouri River watershed, control and remove sediment from Missouri River, protect recreation from sedimentation, and protect Indian and non-Indian historical and cultural sites from erosion.

MSAC Annual Meeting in Niobrara

MSAC conducted its tenth annual membership meeting in Niobrara, Nebraska on March 22, 2011. The evening featured a panel discussion with John Remus of the US Army Corps of Engineers Omaha District; Cindy Steele of the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Huron, South Dakota; Rayder Swanson, a Knox County Supervisor from rural Niobrara; and Howard Paul, MSAC’s Technical Coordinator. MSAC

President Larry Weiss acted as the facilitator. The group tackled a wide-range of sediment issues over more than one hour of discussion and took questions/comments from the audience.

Jack Soulek of Lake Andes was elected to the MSAC Board of Directors. Larry Weiss of Pierre and Mary Hurd of rural Avon were re-elected. All director terms are for three years. At May’s meeting, Board of Directors reappointed Weiss as President, Hurd as Vice President and Jake Fitzgerald as Secretary-Treasurer.



Discussion Panel at Annual Meeting

SD Farmers Union - District One approves sedimentation resolution

District One of the South Dakota Farmers Union approved a resolution at its April 30th meeting in Yankton supporting sediment management in the Missouri River reservoirs.

The resolution calls for efforts to reduce the amount of sediment entering the reservoirs and a plan for removal of sediment in order to protect and retain benefits produced by the dams. It requests the federal government to provide the managing agency and cooperating agencies the funding necessary to develop a plan for sediment management and on a continuing basis the funding necessary to accomplish sediment management.

To view the entire resolution visit: www.msaconline.com.

MSAC to receive education grant

A \$12,000 grant from the 319 Information and Education Project (IEP) will boost MSAC’s education efforts over the next two years.

MSAC will promote reducing sediment entry to the Missouri River reservoirs through public displays, presentations, news articles and at www.msaconline.com. A traveling display will illustrate the history of the Missouri River reservoir creation, the system’s benefits, and the negative effects of sediment accumulation in the reservoirs. Information and resources concerning sediment reduction also will be a focus.

The grant enables MSAC to engage the Missouri River Institute at the University of South Dakota in a project to generate several illustrations of Lewis and Clark Lake and future sediment progression along with expected progression when sediment reduction is actively employed.

According to the South Dakota Discovery Center’s Web site: The goal of the IEP was and is to implement a comprehensive statewide effort to promote and facilitate public understanding of watersheds and related water quality management issues in an effort to contribute to the protection, restoration and maintenance of water resources.