



Missouri River FLOOD TASK FORCE



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Missouri River Flood Task Force wraps up second meeting

Overland Park, Kan. — Following the historic flooding in the Missouri River basin, a coalition of federal, state, tribal and non-profit groups have formed to address both immediate and long-term floodplain management challenges. The task force recently wrapped up its second meeting held Dec. 12 in Overland Park, Kansas, with a clear path forward.

The goal of the Missouri River Flood Task Force is simple: communicate, coordinate, collaborate and cooperate to reduce flood-associated risks as much as possible by the beginning of the runoff season and conduct long-term recovery activities in the Missouri River basin.

“We have to understand the environment that we’re operating in – one where national resources and time are both limited,” said Brig. Gen. John McMahon, the commander of the Northwestern Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and one of three co-chairs on the Missouri River Flood Task Force. “So we must be purposeful in each of our choices and leverage what capacity we can to maximize the results of those choices. That’s why the Missouri River Flood Task Force exists.”

The task force is formed from many federal agencies, representatives of each of the eight states and various tribes in the Missouri River basin. Participating as partners and contributors to the Task Force is an array of non-profit organizations and industry groups that represent a spectrum of interests impacted by the flooding this past summer.

“The Task Force creates an open forum for the exchange of information, ideas and approaches related to the Missouri River Flood Recovery and longer-term solutions,” said Thomas Christensen, a co-chair of the MRFTF from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, a subsidiary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. “It brings together tribes, state and federal agencies, and other partners, to foster collaborative approaches that will optimize the use of available technical and financial resources to assist local communities, ag producers, tribes and other in the recovery process.”

The Missouri River Flood Task Force is chaired by three federal agencies: the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Regions 7; the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Northwestern Division.

Monday's MRFTF meeting allowed the various members and stakeholders to gage flood recovery efforts to date. Through the collaborative efforts of task force members, some key progress made includes:

- "Farming After the Flood" – a public webinar on available federal financial assistance programs for farmers being broadcast live at more than 20 sites from 1:30 to 4 p.m. on Dec. 14 at <http://flood.unl.edu/crops>
- Creation of a 7-state NRCS Farm Bill Wetland Compliance Guidance <http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/mrftf/docs/NRCS%20WetlandComplianceGuidanceFlooding%208Nov2011.pdf>
- Prioritized list of USACE Missouri River rehabilitation projects at [http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/mrftf/docs/9Dec2011%20MR%20List%20of%20Levee%20Rehabs%20\(v2\).pdf](http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/mrftf/docs/9Dec2011%20MR%20List%20of%20Levee%20Rehabs%20(v2).pdf)

"The task force reflects FEMA's Whole Community approach to emergency management. Incorporating multiple organizations and agencies, at all levels, into recovery planning strengthens our ability to recover more rapidly," said Beth Freeman, FEMA Region VII Administrator. "We are building relationships so the next time this happens we won't have to start from scratch. The conversations we had during Monday's meeting should lead to a clearer path ahead."

As the people of the basin move forward this winter and spring, a variety of entities bear responsibilities to repair and maintain impacted infrastructure, recover damaged lands, restore soil health and productivity, and assist communities. Beyond them, there are groups and members of the public interested in helping to see that work accomplished.

"Success for the Task Force would equate to timely results on the ground related to flood recovery," Christensen said, noting communication with the greater public in the Missouri River basin will be essential. "Transparency must be a foundational operating principal for the Task Force. The Task Force exists to foster sound solutions and timely action, and this will occur most effectively when the Task Force operates with transparency."

The transparency of the task force will help bind its members and the collective goals of the group into a concerted effort under the watchful eye of the public.

"By bringing those entities and people together in a collaborative environment, we can foster communication and coordination as we work cooperatively to tackle the many challenges facing the floodplain of the Missouri River basin," said Brig. Gen. McMahon.

For more information or resources on the ongoing efforts to address both the short-term and continuing floodplain management challenges for the Missouri River basin, go to <http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/mrftf/>.

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