



# News Release

**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
Northwestern Division  
Public Affairs Office

12565 West Center Road  
Omaha, Nebraska 68144-3869

Phone: (402) 995-2416  
paul.t.johnston@usace.army.mil

Contact: Paul Johnston  
(402) 995-2416

Jody Farhat  
(402) 996-3840

Date: May 17, 2009

Release 09-014

## Corps set to run pulse to help sturgeon

OMAHA – With all of the reservoir and river conditions right, the Army Corps of Engineers announced today that it will initiate a “pulse” of water from Gavins Point Dam beginning at noon tomorrow. This increase is intended to benefit the endangered pallid sturgeon in the Missouri River.

With storage in the system of reservoirs far exceeding the minimum required for the pulse, other components that go into the decision to conduct it are downstream river conditions, water temperature, and nesting activity by the protected least terns and piping plovers.

There are flow limits in place that trigger reduction or elimination of the spring pulse during high downstream flows. An additional safeguard is the use of observed and anticipated rainfall into the Corps’ daily river forecast to provide greater assurance that flows will remain below the limits. River levels above these flow limits coupled with forecasts from the National Weather Service for additional rain resulted in the elimination of the pulse planned for March.

In coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the number of days required to return to minimum navigation flows has been cut by three days to reduce the risk to downstream river users and to two protected birds, the least tern and piping plover, that are beginning to nest below Fort Randall and Gavins Point dams. In addition, the size of the peak flows will be reduced slightly to further limit the risk to downstream river users. The temperature requirements below Gavins Point have been met.

The level of the Missouri River will remain below the flow limits of 41,000 cubic per second (cfs) at Omaha and 47,000 cfs at Nebraska City. While river levels are now high at Kansas City, Boonville and Hermann, Mo., they each will be well below today’s stages by the time the pulse arrives. In addition, releases from several Corps dams in Kansas will likely be reduced enough to cut 1,000 cfs from the pulse when arrives in Kansas City about May 24.

The pulse from Gavins Point will be 6,000 cfs. Releases will be increased above the 17,000 cfs currently being provided to support minimum navigation. The peak release of 23,000 cfs will be held for two days. Beginning Wednesday, releases will be gradually reduced over 7 days until they return to the level necessary to maintain minimum service flows. Due to a hydropower unit at Gavins Point out for maintenance, 1,000 cfs will flow through the spillway during the two-day peak.

As the pulse travels downstream, the level of the river on Saturday will rise by about 1.5 feet at Omaha and less than a foot at Nebraska City. River stages will decline below Kansas City over the next two weeks as tributary stream contributions diminish. Boonville will be nearly 10 feet lower than today's stage and Hermann down 5.6 feet.

Over the course of the year, the impact of the pulse will reduce the levels of the upper three reservoirs by around 0.2 of a foot.

The pulse complies with the provisions of the Missouri River Master Water Control Manual and the 2003 Amended Biological Opinion published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It identifies pulses in the spring from Gavins Point as part of the Reasonable and Prudent Alternative to avoid jeopardizing the continued existence of the endangered pallid sturgeon.