NEWS RELEASE

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Corps of Engineers working on plans for interim, long-term critical repairs to Ball Mountain Lake Dam in Jamaica

CONCORD, Mass. – As a result of an aggressive operation and maintenance program and a responsive national inspection protocol, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District has identified critical problem areas at the dam at Ball Mountain Lake in Jamaica, Vermont.

After a series of recent investigations and tests at the Ball Mountain Lake Dam, the Corps of Engineers has determined that Ball Mountain Lake Dam is in need of critical repairs for continued safe operation. The Corps of Engineers has already taken steps to reduce the possible risks to the area. Flood operation restrictions, maximum pool restrictions, and initial Interim Risk Reduction Measures (IRRMs), including increased surveillance and monitoring, have been implemented.

The dam at Ball Mountain Lake in Jamaica is located on the West River at the eastern edge of the Green Mountain National Forest, approximately 29 miles upstream of the confluence of the Connecticut River and West River at Brattleboro, Vermont. The reservoir provides flood protection to the downstream communities in the West River Valley, including Jamaica, Townshend and Dummerston. In conjunction with other reservoirs in the Connecticut River Basin, Ball Mountain Lake also reduces flood stages on the Connecticut River.

The Corps has determined that Ball Mountain Lake Dam has seepage occurring through the contact zones at the base of the embankment, and possibly through the lower portions of the embankment as well. "We are currently performing borings and laboratory testing to determine the nature and extent of potential seepage paths in order to design the most suitable and economical fix," said Project Manager Janet Patev, of the Corps' New England District, Engineering/Planning Division.

The Corps of Engineers will reduce the loading on Ball Mountain Lake Dam by transferring flood waters from Ball Mountain downstream to Townshend Lake Dam. This will allow Ball Mountain Lake to maintain a lower pool level, thus reducing the pressure on the dam and reducing potential risks. Additionally, the Corps will increase on-site inspections and instrumentation data review. The Corps installed two seepage weirs in May 2009 that monitor seepage at the downstream toe, and further down at a known seepage location.

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Ball Mountain Lake Dam critical repairs/2-2-2-2-2-2

Construction of Ball Mountain Lake Dam began in May 1957 and was completed in October 1961 at a cost $11 million. Ball Mountain Lake Dam is an earth and rock fill structure that is 915 feet long and 265 feet high.

Under normal conditions, a 35-foot deep conservation pool is maintained during the months of October through March behind the dam. This pool is lowered to 25 feet from April to mid-June in order to accommodate the juvenile salmon, and raised to 65 feet from mid-June to mid-September in order to improve recreational opportunities, and to improve aesthetics. The reservoir area offers fine recreational opportunities, including swimming, picnicking, fishing, hunting, canoeing, scheduled whitewater kayaking, nature study and camping. Ball Mountain Lake welcomes more than 130,000 visitors each year.

Ball Mountain Lake has a permanent pool of 34 acres at a stage of 35 feet, while the 65-foot deep summer pool covers 75 acres. The flood storage area of the project totals 810 acres and extends 6.5 miles upstream through Londonderry. The project and associated lands cover 1,227 acres. Ball Mountain Lake can store up to 17.8 billion gallons of water for flood damage reduction purposes. This is equivalent to 5.9 inches of water covering its drainage area of 172 square miles.

During the 1987 floods, Ball Mountain Lake Dam utilized 100 percent of its storage capacity and prevented damages of $18.3 million. Since it was placed in operation in 1961, it has prevented damages of $131.5 million.

The Corps of Engineers' next steps include implementing additional interim risk reduction measures including holding emergency preparedness exercises, performing additional explorations and a detailed engineering analysis of the dam, and preparing designs for a permanent repair of the dam.

For more information on Ball Mountain Lake Dam check the webpage on the Corps website at http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/recreati/bml/bmlhome.htm or contact: Project Manager Janet Patev, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751; by phone at 978-318-8003; or by email at janet.l.patev@usace.army.mil.

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