



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Engineers monitor water, snow levels to regulate Corps dams to minimize the downstream impacts

CONCORD, Mass. – Hydraulic engineers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are monitoring the water levels in the region’s major rivers and the depth of snow cover throughout the region to regulate Corps of Engineers-managed dams and to minimize downstream impacts from the New England District headquarters in Concord, Mass.

“The engineers in our Reservoir Control Center are especially busy now receiving reports from our field personnel on the water content and depths of snow on the ground across New England,” said Paul Marinelli, chief of the Corps of Engineers, New England District Reservoir Regulation Section. “We also are receiving frequent data from our ‘eye in the sky’ on the levels and flow of water in major rivers – the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite.”

New England District has been using the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite (GOES), known as GOES East or GOES-12, launched in April 2003 with advanced weather imagery, as its data collection satellite. The District data collection platforms monitor pool, tailwater and river levels, rainfall, and air temperature, recording data every 15 minutes.

By collecting information about river stages and flows and their increases and decreases from 90 data collection platforms over time, the hydrologists can effectively regulate the Corps of Engineers-managed dams to minimize impacts downstream. “This system assists us in deciding when to close or throttle back water flow through our network of 35 dams to provide the maximum flood damage prevention benefits to downstream areas,” Marinelli said. Through the use of real-time hydrologic data, field collected snowpack data, and exchange of information with the National Weather Service’s Northeast River Forecast Center, significant water movement can be identified, examined and predicted.

Each winter, the Army engineers compile bi-weekly summaries of snow depths and their water equivalents from 93 key locations within the Connecticut, Merrimack, Thames, Housatonic and Blackstone river basins. With the information, engineers make calculations to determine snow density and comparisons are then made to averages based on over more than three decades of such readings.

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Army engineers monitor water, snow levels/2-2-2-2-2

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has designed a system of flood damage prevention projects which includes 35 flood damage reduction dams, 112 local protection projects, and five hurricane barriers in New England. A total of 31 of 35 reservoir projects, and three of five hurricane barriers are operated and maintained by the Corps, while the remaining projects are operated and maintained by local interests.

Damages prevented by flood reduction dams, reservoirs, and hurricane protection barriers in fiscal year 2009 alone were \$84 million. Cumulative flood reduction damages prevented by all projects, including local protection projects, since their construction through Sept. 30, 2009 are more than \$4.8 billion. These projects cost a total of \$538 million to build.

New England District operates and maintains 10 of 31 reservoirs for flood damage reduction only. Another 17 are operated primarily for flood damage reduction, and seasonally for recreational activities. The remaining four reservoirs are operated as multipurpose projects, including flood damage reduction, water supply, recreation, non-Federal hydropower, and fishery storage.

Streamflow and other project/reservoir data are available online at the Corps' New England District website at <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil>. Select New England District Reservoir Regulation Section under "hot topics" or go directly to the link at: <http://www.reservoircontrol.com>.

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