NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:
Oct. 28, 2012
Release No. MA 2012-111

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Corps of Engineers team in New England prepares for impacts, storm surge from Hurricane Sandy

CONCORD, Mass. – As Hurricane Sandy descends on the Atlantic coast, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers team of engineers and scientists in New England are preparing for the storm impacts in the New England region.

Weather forecasts are predicting damaging winds and possibly widespread power outages, high seas and storm surge causing coastal flooding, and heavy rain and possibly flooding for the region.

Hydraulic engineers from the Corps of Engineers are monitoring the rainfall throughout the region and the water levels in the region's major rivers to regulate Corps-managed dams and to minimize downstream impacts from the New England District headquarters in Concord, Mass.

Engineers are closely watching storm surge and high tide levels at the three hurricane barriers it is involved with operating – New Bedford Hurricane Barrier in New Bedford, Mass.; Fox Point Hurricane Barrier in Providence, Rhode Island; and Stamford Hurricane Barrier in Stamford, Conn. They will close hurricane barriers at critical times to help reduce the potential for flooding in those cities.

At the Cape Cod Canal in southeast Massachusetts, the Corps team is watching the wind gauge as sustained winds of approximately 70 mph could close down the Bourne and Sagamore highway bridges to traffic coming onto or leaving Cape Cod. The Corps coordinates those decisions with the state. If it becomes a safety issue the bridges will be closed by the state police.

The Corps Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Concord, Mass., is monitoring the storm and coordinating with states in New England on any engineering support, technical assistance or sand bags that they may need. The Corps will position a Corps engineer as liaison, if requested, within the state EOC to provide immediate assistance to states. Additionally, geotechnical engineers can respond to city-managed local protection projects to make assessments of storm damage.

The Corps is prepared to support the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Homeland Security in the event that an area is declared a federal disaster area. The Corps provides FEMA with engineering and technical support.

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Corps team prepares for Hurricane Sandy/2-2-2-2-2

The engineers in the Corps' Reservoir Control Center (RCC) receive frequent data updates from its 'eye in the sky' on the levels and flow of water in major rivers – the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite. Army engineers are monitoring key locations within the Connecticut, Merrimack, Thames, Housatonic and Blackstone river basins.

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-managed dams to minimize impacts downstream.

The system assists the Corps in deciding when to close or throttle back water flow through its network of 35 dams to provide the maximum flood damage prevention benefits to downstream areas. Through the use of real-time hydrologic data, field data, and exchange of information with the National Weather Service's Northeast River Forecast Center, significant water movement can be identified, examined and predicted.

The Corps has designed a system of flood risk management projects in New England 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.

Cumulative flood reduction damages prevented by all projects, including local protection projects, since their construction through Sept. 30, 2011 are more than $6.6 billion. These projects cost a total of $538 million to build.

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 River Watch.

Additionally, updates can be obtained from the Corps' New England District via Facebook and Twitter at:

On Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/CorpsNewEngland
On Twitter: http://twitter.com/CorpsNewEngland

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