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Route 60 Poplar Bluff to Dexter NOT Closing

MAY 02ND 2011 BY STAFF WRITER

Route 60 Poplar Bluff to Dexter NOT Closing

SIKESTON - The Missouri Department of Transportation has no plans to close Route 60 from Poplar Bluff to Dexter. MoDOT crews continue to monitor roadways throughout southeast Missouri and updated roadway information will be available as situations change.

For more information, please contact MoDOT's Customer Service Center toll-free at 1-888-ASK-MODOT (1-888-275-6636) or visit the Traveler Information Map at: <http://maps.modot.mo.gov/timi/index.aspx?district=10>

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Water Over Spillway; T Highway Cut In Two

MAY 02ND 2011 BY NEWS

Water Over Spillway; T Highway Cut In Two

*By Annabeth Miller,
ShowMe Times Editor*

WAPPAPELLO, Mo. – In the wee morning hours, the “unthinkable” happened at Lake Wappapello when a temporary berm built last week was topped, allowing lake water to begin flooding below Wappapello dam.

Dale Moreland of the Stoddard County EOS office reported that the topping of the dam began at about 2 a.m. At 6:30 a.m. Monday, Moreland reported the lake stage was at 398.13, with an expected crest later in the day at 399.2. Output early in the morning was at 14,000 cfs (cubic feet per second) and expected to exceed 23,450 cfs.

“During the flood of 1945, the largest output was at 18,600 cfs, and lake level was 398.979. So we are getting real close to those records.”

Moreland reported he received a report early Monday morning on the condition of T Highway, which crosses the spillway and dam.

“I received a report from a highway patrol troop at the scene that T Highway was already cut in two,” Moreland said.

Floodwaters from Wappapello will flood an area along the St. Francis River Basin south into Arkansas and as far east as possibly Highway F in Stoddard County. In anticipation of the flooding in the county, Moreland said Stoddard County Sheriff’s deputies and

members of Stoddard County’s volunteer fire departments have gone door-to-door in the projected area.

“They have warned people that they may be flooded and that they may want to evacuate,” he said. The affected area could reach as far east as Highway F (Aid Road), south of Puxico and the Powe community. “Dudley will be affected.”

Moreland also said that the flooding from Wappapello would affect Highway 60, saying the major east-west highway would most likely be closed in different places from Fisk to the Aid Road. Heavy rains over the weekend dumped even more rain in the region, exasperating the situation. And almost like pouring salt onto a wound, an additional 3 – 4 inches of rain is expected Monday. Moreland said county emergency workers are watching the radar constantly for the new round of rain.

“The water is rising,” Moreland said. “It’s not going to be a gush. It will be a slow, gradual rise and it is rising at this time.”

Photo Above: Flooding waters escape over the berm at the emergency spillway at Lake Wappapello Monday morning. To the right in the photo, the damage to Highway T by the water is visible.

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Corps Takes Additional Step In Floodway Process

MAY 01ST 2011 BY NEWS

Corps Takes Additional Step In Floodway Process

BREAKING NEWS

An SMT News Report

SIKESTON, Mo. - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is taking the final steps to activating the Birds Point New Madrid levee in Mississippi County. For the second time on Sunday afternoon, the Corps has taken a step in the activation process.

However, the officer in charge says that decision has still yet to be made.

Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh ordered crews on Sunday afternoon to move barges loaded with 250 tons of explosives across into position on the levee and to load the pipes with the explosive agent.

The final step would be to activate the floodway, which would send Mississippi River floodwaters through the breach in the levee and through the 130,000-acre floodway.

"The final decision to activate the floodway has not been made. Repeat - has not been made," the corps said in a release.

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Second Step Take In Floodway Operation

MAY 01ST 2011 BY NEWS

Second Step Take In Floodway Operation

Breaking News

An SMT News Report

SIKESTON, Mo. - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will take the second step in the activation of the Birds Point New Madrid Floodway this Sunday afternoon.

Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh, President of the Mississippi River Commission, has directed Col. Vernie Reichling, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Memphis District Commander, and field crews to be prepared to move to the next step in the Birds Point New Madrid Floodway operational plan at 3 p.m. today.

The second step in the operational plans involves repositioning the barges at Birds Point. These barges will contain the munitions that will be used to blast a breach in the floodway levee, thus activating the Birds Point floodway plan for only the second time since the 1937 flood.

At 1 p.m. Sunday the river gauge at Cairo, Ill., measured 59.89 feet, reaching an historic level.

Widespread storms Saturday night contributed to a swift rise in the river level. At Cape Girardeau, 1.5 inches of rain was measured from storms Saturday night.

The Ohio River at Cairo rose 0.7 feet in the 24 hours before the early Sunday afternoon reading of the guage.

"The Project Flood is upon us," Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh, President of the Mississippi River Commission said today. "This is the flood that engineers envisioned following the 1927 flood. It is testing the system like never before."

Walsh said Public Safety is the Corps' highest priority and that all resources are being used to battle the effects of this flooding. Hundreds of Corps' personnel from around the nation as well as the Engineering Research Development Center, in Vicksburg, Miss., are working around the clock, monitoring the situation.

He added that he and his advisors are closely monitoring the situation but that no decision has been made at this time whether or not to operate the floodway. However, should flood pressures continue to increase it may be necessary to move to the next step in the Floodway Operations Plan.

Activating the floodway is multi-step process, with step one taken Saturday in moving the barges to Birds Point, and step two Sunday in repositing the.

The other steps in floodway operation include loading the pipes in the levee with slurry (explosives), and finally activating the floodway.

On Saturday, Welsh held a briefing with news media in Sikeston, and U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson attended that briefing.

Walsh was scheduled to conduct a briefing at the Southeast Missouri Regional Port Authority in Scott city, with U.S. Senator Roy Blunt and Emerson both in attendance. That briefing was cancelled due to weather conditions.

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Corps: First Step Taken In Floodway Plan

APRIL 30TH 2011 BY NEWS

Corps: First Step Taken In Floodway Plan

*By Annabeth Miller,
ShowMe Times Editor*

SIKESTON, Mo. - No official decision has been made to activate the Birds Point – New Madrid Floodway, but the commander in charge of floodfighting efforts said the first step was taken Saturday afternoon toward possible activation.

Major General Michael J. Walsh, commander of the Mississippi Valley Division of the corps and the president of the Mississippi River Commission, said at a press conference Saturday afternoon that he ordered the Motor Vessel Mississippi, a corps vessel, to leave Hickman, Kent., and travel up river to Birds Point.

“That’s one of the many decisions we make before - and if - we ever get to the decision of operating,” the floodway, Walsh said. The MV Mississippi arrived at Birds Point Saturday evening.

Walsh said three additional decisions must be made now that the barges have been moved

to the northern end of the floodway at Birds Point: take the barges and “pre-position them; then the decision would be made to charge the pipes; and finally a decision to operate the floodway by blowing three gaps in the levee – one at the northern end at Birds Point and two down at the southern end of the system.


“There are still a lot of decision points as we move forward in this event,” Walsh said. “The decision clock has been rolling.”

If activated, the plan will be to artificially breach the levee in three places – one north and two south - by using of ammunition. The move will flood more than 130,000 acres of prime agriculture land in Missouri, but, the corps says, relieve pressure on a river system that has never experiences such high levels.

Walsh reported the Cairo river gauge - at the confluence of the great Mississippi and Ohio rivers - on Saturday afternoon was measuring 59.19 – not the highest ever recorded on the gauge but Walsh said it was close to the record of 59.5. The projection is that the level at Cairo will reach 60.5 for May 2 and 3.

“We’re keeping a close on that and we’re also keeping a close eye on the system,” he said. “This system has never been under this kind of pressure before and there’s different places where things are beginning to degrade. So we’re keeping track of the Cairo gauge and we’re also keeping track of the system.”

Walsh reported sand boils and seepage at a number of levees near the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, a condition that Walsh said also threatens the integrity of the total project. The sand boils and seepage weakens the integrity of the levee.

"There is  water in places where we have never ever seen it before," Walsh said.

U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson, R-Cape Girardeau, was on hand for the briefing – one of her many stops in a day of checking on floodfighting throughout the region. She listened intently to what Walsh and other corps officials had to say – as well as to the area residents who attending. She was joined by State Rep. Ellen Brandom, R-Sikeston. Near the close of the briefing, a gentleman from the Commerce area asked Walsh about the integrity of the levee in his area and said he was trying to decide if he should move his family before flooding occurred at Commerce.

“What you tell me will determine my decision,” the man told Walsh.

Unlike other corps briefings this week that had a few members of area media in attendance, Saturday afternoon’s briefing was a “full house.” Several television outlets sent news crews, more newspapers joined the group of journalists, and a national telephone network was set up for those not in Sikeston to participate. One reporter on the telephone hookup identified herself from CNN-News.

Photos Above: Major General Michael J. Walsh, Commander, Mississippi Valley Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and President, Mississippi River Commission

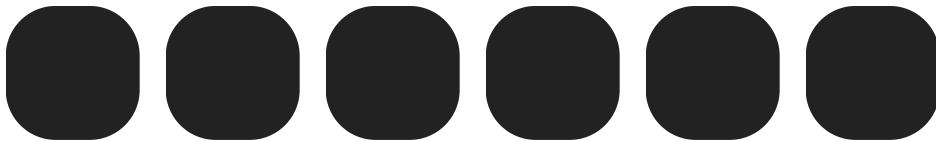
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- On Twitter: <http://twitter.com/#!/MemphisDistrict>
- On Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Birds-Point-New-Madrid-Floodway-Joint-Information-Center/120898681323357?sk=wall>

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