



NEWS RELEASE

North Dakota State Water Commission

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Corps to increase releases from Lake Sakakawea at State Engineer's request

The Corps has agreed to increase releases from Lake Sakakawea by 2,000 cfs in response to continued wet conditions in the basin and pressure from the State Engineer. The State Engineer has recently sent the Corps two letters urging the release of additional water from Lake Sakakawea before ice forms on the river.

Todd Sando State Engineer said, "It is important to evacuate the water while the flexibility provided by open water is still available. Once ice forms on the river, if water needs to be evacuated, the Corps has the choice of risking unacceptably high river levels through Bismarck-Mandan or failing to have all the flood storage available in Lake Sakakawea."

While the Corps' reservoir forecast shows the flood storage being evacuated before March 1, with acceptable release levels through the winter, the runoff this year has consistently exceeded the forecast. The State is concerned that if the trend of above forecast runoff continues, the Corps options for releases will be limited once ice forms on the river.

Typically the Corps evacuates water from the lower three reservoirs in the summer and fall and then moves water from Sakakawea to the lower reservoirs in the winter to maximize revenue from the power generation. The State Engineer understands this intersystem regulation. "However, we must ensure that the Corps does not err on the side of power generation by placing undue risk on the citizens of North Dakota," said Sando.

The Corps has assured the State Engineer that they will continue to monitor reservoir levels and runoff and will further increase releases if necessary. The State Engineer and his staff will continue to urge the Corps to increase releases from Lake Sakakawea to reduce the risk to the Bismarck-Mandan area.

The Corps is holding their Annual Operating Plan Meeting on Tuesday, October 28 at 11:00 a.m. at the Bismarck Civic Center. The public is invited to attend the meeting to hear the Corps' summary and plan of operation. Public comments are welcome to be submitted to the Corps on the operation of the system.