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Contact:
Bill Peoples
William.L.Peoples@usace.army.mil
615-736-7161

Corps announces final results of the After Action Review Report for May 2010 Flood

NASHVILLE, TENN. - November 23, 2010 — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has released its final After Action Review (AAR) Report from the May 2010 Flood Event in the Cumberland River Basin. The full report and supporting documents will be posted on the Nashville District website, www.lrn.usace.army.mil at 12:30 p.m. CST.

The After Action Review looked at what happened during the event, why it happened, what lessons can be learned, and identified improvements the Corps plans to undertake in the future, some of which have already been executed.

"The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers takes its responsibilities to operate flood risk management projects with great seriousness," said Maj. Gen. John Peabody, commander of the Corps' Great Lakes and Ohio River Division. "This incident reminds us that all floods are extremely dangerous, and our sympathies go out to all those who were affected by this dramatic event."

The Corps' After Action Review (AAR) Manager, Mr. Richard Hancock, stated, "The AAR team focused on ensuring that we executed an objective and thorough review of all relevant facts. This included a public review and extensive collaboration with other agencies, especially the National Weather Service, whose input was essential to this process".

The report addresses 27 issues. There are seven issues to "sustain" or continue the good work in those areas, and 20 issues to "improve." In all issues identified as needing improvement, specific recommendations for changes were made.

Key lessons were identified in the areas of the Water Management System, Coordination of Technical Information, Communication between Agencies, and Communication with the Public.

Communication and coordination between the Corps and the National Weather Service during extreme events needs special attention. A contributing factor to problems with flood crest forecasts was technical information exchange between the Corps and the NWS. A key over-arching lesson of this historic event is that flooding could not have been prevented, illustrating that nature's power can overwhelm any manmade system, no matter how well designed, constructed or managed.

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Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Mitchell, the Corps' Nashville District Commander, said, "We are committed to being transparent as we implement lessons learned from this flood, in coordination with our higher headquarters, the Weather Service, Tennessee and Kentucky state authorities, as well as local officials. Public safety

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continues to be our number one priority as we make improvements to prepare for future events.”

Despite the devastation suffered in the Cumberland basin, the AAR team found that the Corps' water managers and operations personnel performed heroically under extreme duress in their efforts to manage the raging water flows during the flood. The tireless efforts of these professionals, many of whose own families were endangered and homes were damaged from the flood, significantly reduced the flooding on the Cumberland River. They prevented what could have been the catastrophic loss of some of the Corps' flood risk management projects.

During a high water event in August 2010, several new procedures were put into practice to increase coordination between the Corps and National Weather Service. For example, Corps hydropower operators provided real-time project release information directly to the NWS staff. Also during that event, the Water Management Section quickly implemented a 24/7 operations plan, and the Corps increased coordination with State and local officials and increased communication with the public through the media.