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## Corps completes final permitting decision on dredging in Missouri River

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.—** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has completed the Final Record of Decision regarding permitting of commercial dredging in the Missouri River. USACE has sent permits to six existing commercial dredging companies seeking authorization to extract sand and gravel from the Missouri River. These permits would authorize the dredging of 5.8 million total tons of aggregate per year from the Missouri River for five years, allowing the dredging companies predictability in contracting and operations. USACE denied three applications proposing to begin or expand operations in the Missouri River. USACE conducted a transparent and balanced assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed and alternative actions, resulting in a practicable decision that balances the benefits and risks, that strives to meet the needs of the applicants, that protects our nation's aquatic resources, and that is not contrary to the public interest.

The Record of Decision for the Missouri River Commercial Dredging has been posted at:

[www.nwk.usace.army.mil/regulatory/Dredging/MO/MO dredging.htm](http://www.nwk.usace.army.mil/regulatory/Dredging/MO/MO dredging.htm)

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Missouri River Commercial Dredging was published in the Federal Register on Feb. 25, 2011. The Final EIS can be viewed and downloaded at the website above. The EIS evaluated the potential impacts of private commercial dredging operations in the Missouri River from St. Joseph to St. Louis. The Final EIS identifies the Environmentally Preferred Alternative, which would authorize a level of dredging that USACE believes would best protect the biological and physical environment and minimize the negative socioeconomic impacts on the local and regional economy and the sand and gravel industry.

USACE is required under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act to regulate dredging and filling activities in waters of the U.S., including the Missouri River. Under those laws and the National Environmental Policy Act, USACE is required to prepare an EIS that fully evaluates and discloses the potential environmental impacts of proposed permit actions that could result in significant impacts and to prepare a Record of Decision that explains the final agency action.

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USACE has determined the bed of the Missouri River has degraded or lowered a significant amount over the past several decades. The areas that have degraded the most are also the areas where dredging has been most concentrated. Dredging usually is concentrated around each company's land based processing, storage and distribution facilities, which generally occur in close geographic proximity to locations where the construction need is greatest. Such cities along the Missouri River include Jefferson City, Kansas City, St. Charles and St. Joseph. Riverbed degradation can threaten bank stability, erode levee foundations, disable water intake structures and eliminate adjacent wetlands. USACE is conducting a broader degradation "feasibility" study that will examine the impacts of degradation to federal and non-federal infrastructure and determine potential solutions. This study will examine the causes to the extent necessary to determine future conditions and effectiveness of potential solutions.

The Missouri River has been commercially dredged for at least 100 years to supply sand and gravel for concrete and asphalt used in construction and road building. As the communities along the Missouri River grew, the demand for sand grew, and dredging increased from 250,000 tons per year in 1935 to a peak of nearly 9 million tons in 2002. With the recent economic downturn, annual extraction decreased to approximately 4.6 million tons in 2009.

Under the final agency action described in the Record of Decision, commercial dredgers would be authorized to continue to extract up to 5,880,000 tons of aggregate per year from the Missouri River for another five years conditioned on spreading dredging operations to decrease concentrated dredging in discrete areas of the river. This authorized amount is divided between the five distinct river segments (St. Joseph, Kansas City, Waverly, Jefferson City and St. Charles segments) identified by the Final EIS. This approach will allow extraction to increase in the slightly degraded and stable St. Joseph and Waverly segments, keep extraction at the average amount extracted from 2004 to 2008 in the moderately degraded Jefferson City and St. Charles segments, and further reduce extraction in the most heavily dredged and severely degraded segment, Kansas City. The decision also allows a transition period in the Kansas City segment for Holliday Sand and Gravel Company to adjust operations to this reduced extraction level. The river bed and water surface elevations will be monitored by USACE during the five-year permit period and reevaluated before the commercial dredging permits could be reauthorized.

For more information call the Kansas City District Public Affairs Office at (816) 389-3486.

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