

GAO Report on Missouri River Flood and Drought

Government Accountability Office, *Missouri River Flood and Drought, Experts Agree the Corps Took Appropriate Action, Given the Circumstances, but Should Examine New Forecasting Techniques*, GAO-14-741, Sept. 2014.

<http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/665763.pdf>

The Missouri River stretches from western Montana to St. Louis, Missouri. The Corps manages six dams and reservoirs on the river to provide flood control and for other purposes, such as recreation and navigation. The Corps bases reservoir release decisions on the guidance in the Master Manual. In the 2011 flood, the Corps managed the highest runoff volume since 1898, resulting in record reservoir releases. Subsequently, drought occurred in the basin in 2012 and 2013.

GAO was asked to review the Corps' release decisions and communication during the flood and drought. This report examines (1) experts' views on the Corps' release decisions; (2) experts' recommendations to improve the Corps' release decisions; and (3) stakeholders' views on the Corps' communication, as well as any suggested improvements. GAO worked with the National Academy of Sciences to convene a meeting of nine experts to discuss the Corps' data, forecasts, and release decisions. GAO also interviewed 45 Missouri River basin stakeholders, including state and local agencies, among others, to discuss their views on the Corps' communication. The views of stakeholders are not generalizable.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Corps evaluate the pros and cons of incorporating new forecasting techniques into its management of the Missouri River reservoirs. The Department of Defense concurred with the recommendation.