

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACTS: Jordan Peavey, The Nature Conservancy, (703) 841-5980, jpeavey@tnc.org <http://www.nature.org>
David Hewitt, US Army Corps of Engineers, (202) 761-0289, david.w.hewitt@hq02.usace.army.mil
<http://www.usace.army.mil>

The Nature Conservancy and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Announce Partnership to Improve Management of U.S. Rivers



The Conservancy and the Corps have agreed on changes in the management of the Green River Dam in Kentucky. The two organizations announced today a new agreement to expand this collaboration to dams across the country.

WASHINGTON, D.C. –The Nature Conservancy and the Army Corps of Engineers today announced a collaborative effort to improve the management of dams on various rivers across the country.

Under the new partnership, entitled the Sustainable Rivers Project, the two organizations will work together to improve dam operations, helping to restore and protect the health of rivers and surrounding natural areas while continuing to meet human needs for services such as flood control and power generation. The partnership is one that both organizations expect will improve the quality of America’s waterways.

“At the heart of this agreement is a shared vision of restoring and protecting hundreds of river miles and thousands of acres of some of our nation’s most important natural habitats,” said Steven McCormick, president of The Nature Conservancy. “This agreement is a result of conservationists and dam managers sitting down at the table together, stating our objectives openly, and agreeing to work together to find solutions that are acceptable to all involved.”

“We intend to build sustainability into the planning, construction and operation of our projects, and it is critical that we adapt our management of America’s rivers to meet the needs of the human and natural communities” said Lt. Gen. Robert B. Flowers, the Army’s Chief of Engineers. “The Nature Conservancy has a great deal of expertise to help us make that possible.”

The Army Corps of Engineers operates 630 dams for flood control, navigation and other purposes on numerous rivers across the United States.

The Sustainable Rivers Project will consist of a coordinated review and alteration of dam operations. There are, at this time, 13 candidate dams on nine rivers in nine states. Other dams may also become part of this project.

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State(s)	River(s)	Dam(s)
Arkansas and Missouri	White / Black / Little Red	Table Rock / Bull Shoals / Norfolk / Clearwater
Arizona	Bill Williams	Alamo
Kentucky	Green	Green
New Hampshire	Ashuelot	Surry Mountain
North Carolina/ Virginia	Roanoke	John H. Kerr
Pennsylvania	French Creek	Union City / Woodcock
Washington	Skagit	Gorge / Diablo / Ross Note: two utilities own these dams; the Corps manages them for flood control purposes.

The Conservancy and the Corps are basing their expectation for success at these sites upon their ongoing collaborative efforts to improve the quality of habitat and other conditions along the Green River in Kentucky. The Green ranks as the nation’s fourth most diverse river in terms of variety of fish and mussel species, and provides water and recreational opportunities to thousands of people from around the state and throughout the region.

The Conservancy and the Corps collaborated to identify more ecologically compatible releases from the Green River Dam. These include delaying fall reservoir releases until after the spawning period for certain fish and mussel species, and using the releases to mimic natural variations. These changes will provide significant benefits to plants and animals, without sacrificing the dam’s primary purpose, the ability to prevent downstream flood damage. And the changes actually extend recreational access to the reservoir by more than a month. The initial changes the Conservancy and the Corps proposed for the management of the Green River Dam recently passed a period of public review, and will be implemented this fall.

The Conservancy and the Corps have begun or will soon begin discussions at the other project sites. While the variables at each site will be different, the approach will remain one based on collaboration.

“The optimal solution will not always be obvious or easy, but the optimal solution is what we will work together to find,” said McCormick.

“Everyday we learn a little bit more about how we can better serve the public, and that includes how we can better protect and restore our nation’s natural treasures,” concluded LTG Flowers.

Sustainable Rivers Project: Implementation Essentials

On the selected rivers, The Nature Conservancy and the US Army Corps of Engineers plan to:

- Work together to determine the water flow requirements needed to restore and maintain natural ecosystem health
- Work with the surrounding communities to determine the influences and needs of people in the area
- Identify areas of uncertainty and/or potential conflict
- Conduct water management experiments to resolve uncertainties
- Find resolutions to conflicts
- Design and implement an adaptive water management plan that incorporates the need for ongoing assessment and revision