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Sluice Gate Releases Planned at Center Hill Dam

Nashville, Tenn. [Aug. 18, 2005] — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to take measures next week at Center Hill Dam to increase the dissolved oxygen content of releases to the Caney Fork River. This action will benefit aquatic life downstream.

Sluice gate releases will be concurrent with generation of electricity in the hydropower plant beginning Monday, August 22. By scheduling sluice releases during periods of power generation, the Corps will be able to meet downstream water-quality objectives and minimize impacts to fishermen and power interests. The measures are considered the best way to maintain the State dissolved-oxygen standard of six mg/l (milligrams per liter).

Corps representatives will periodically monitor the dissolved oxygen concentration in the river below the dam to determine the success of the sluice gate releases. Last year, between September 30 and November 15, the Corps successfully used the practice to raise the levels of dissolved oxygen to acceptable levels. The sluice releases were continuous during this period. This year the plan is to provide periods of no generation or sluice releases from the dam, however, circumstances may develop that would prevent this.

The sluice gate measures four feet by six feet and releases approximately 1600 cubic feet per second into the tailwater. The three hydropower turbines at Center Hill have been modified

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by the Corps to increase the dissolved oxygen level of hydropower releases. The sluice gate release is simply another practice employed by the Corps to improve water quality conditions in the Caney Fork River. These actions are consistent with the Corps' Environmental Operating Principles.

These Principles are to maintain an environment in a healthy, diverse and sustainable condition necessary to support life, proactively consider the consequences of Corps programs, accept responsibility for activities under our control that impact the health of natural systems, seek ways to mitigate such impacts, and seek solutions to the nation's problems that enhance the environment.

Corps officials are working closely with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, TWRA, and SEPA which benefits from power generated. Fishermen and boaters should avoid the turbulent water created by the sluice gate below the dam. Turbulence could actually draw small craft in and submerge them.

For more information concerning this matter, please contact Bob Sneed at the Nashville District Corps of Engineers office at 615-736-5675.