

# Dams

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On Monday, the average daily inflow — dam releases, precipitation, tributaries and other factors — stood at 158,000 cfs. After an upstream downpour, the average daily inflow soared to 167,000 cfs on Tuesday.

The flooding situation has caught one major break, as historic snowpack in the upper basin has nearly melted away, according to Jody Farhat, chief of the Corps' Missouri River Basin water management office in Omaha, Neb.

The Montana snowpack above Fort Peck has dropped to 9 percent of its peak accumulation, while the reach between Fort Peck and Garrison has dropped to 10 percent of the peak accumulation.

While the snowpack — which was 151 percent of normal at one point — has declined dramatically, the recent heavy rains have kept the Corps from lowering releases, Farhat said.

"Garrison, Oahe and Fort Randall are near their crest right now. We have not gained additional storage space in the system," she said. "A couple weeks from now, we may have a little bit more comfort level."

Fort Randall should stay at its

crest for the next few days before starting to decline later this week, Farhat said. In the meantime, Gavins Point will maintain releases of 160,000 cfs and an elevation of 1,206 feet, she said.

"I think, when we get into August, we will start reducing the Gavins Point releases. ... But we aren't backing off until the end of August," she said.

The forecast calls for a storm system to move through the region, which could bring one or more inches of rain by the middle of next week.

In order to check on maintenance work at the spillway, the Corps diverted surplus water out of Fort Randall Dam through four regulating tunnels Thursday. The Corps previously used the tunnels

June 23 and moved a record release of water.

"We released 156,000 cfs on Thursday, with 118,000 cfs going through the tunnels and 38,000 cfs through the power plants," Curran said. "This is the second time in history that such a high volume of water was released through the regulating tunnels."

The water was diverted to allow for a routine inspection of the spillway slab at the dam. Spillways are passageways through which surplus water is discharged from a reservoir.

Inspecting dams is a normal and routine part of the Corps' current surveillance program. Inspections are conducted more frequently during high water events.

The spillway slab is 40 acres of concrete with a thickness of 2 to 6 feet, used to carry water downstream and away from spillway gates that are 40 feet wide by 29 feet tall.

The opening of the regulating tunnels allowed approximately 120,000 cubic feet per second of water through 22-foot diameter pipes during a four-hour period.

"We opened it very wide. This is the first time we have ever had all the gates open all at once," Curran said. "This was a special inspection. We had done repairs a couple of weeks ago, and we wanted to get back out and check out things."

The inspection reaffirmed that Fort Randall Dam remains structurally sound and able to

withstand the pressure of the heavy releases, Curran said. The dam receives a regular inspection anyway as part of its maintenance, he said.

Thursday's tunnel releases were open to the public, and 250 visitors came out to see the sight, Curran said.

Curran isn't sure if the Corps will open up the four tunnels again this summer.

"What we may do is shut down half the spillway and then inspect half of it. Then we may move over to the other part of the spillway and evaluate things," he said. "We want to get a good overall look at it since we just did some repairs. Things are holding up great, and there are no signs of stress."

Curran said he hasn't seen anything like the current raging, violent water coming through Fort Randall Dam.

"It's incredible. I have been here 11 years, and none of our releases have been this spectacular," he said.

The current flooding leaves spectators — including himself — in awe, Curran said.

"We don't want to sensationalize this, or make it sound like we're having fun, because a lot of people are suffering from the flooding," he said.

"But it's a pretty incredible amount of power, to see the amount of energy from the water that comes through here."

## Chavez Back In Charge At Cabinet Meeting

BY JACK CHANG  
Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — President Hugo Chavez went back to work Thursday, addressing soldiers at a promotion ceremony and then talking for more than an hour while presiding over a televised Cabinet meeting.

Vowing to beat cancer, Chavez showed no apparent signs of weakness as he spoke to his Cabinet members, who clapped for him as the meeting ended.

"Here is the government, demonstrating what it's capable of," Chavez said during the meeting, which was shown live on state television.

Raising the issue of his cancer diagnosis, Chavez said: "We will win, and we will live."

Chavez also lambasted his political adversaries, suggesting the opposition has no chance of winning next year's presidential election against him.

"You will never again govern the Venezuelan fatherland," he said.

"We're moving toward 2021," Chavez added, referring to the year he's mentioned at times as a tentative moment for his retirement from politics.

He spoke for an hour and a half, his longest speech since he stunned the nation with a June 30 announcement in Cuba that he had undergone surgery to remove a cancerous tumor.

Chavez appeared relaxed and comfortable as he addressed his ministers and reviewed government housing and railway projects.

Chavez met earlier in the day with cadets and other soldiers at Fort Tiuna, Venezuela's largest military base. He spoke at Venezuela's military academy, overseeing the promotion of several hundred soldiers in fatigues standing in formation in a courtyard.

The president scoffed at suggestions by some of his opponents and commentators that he has faked illness, allegedly as part of his re-election strategy.

"I was reading in the morning something crazy that, 'No, it was an invention of Fidel Castro and Chavez,'" Chavez told the soldiers.

"After two operations some have said it's a lie," he added. "If only you saw my abdomen. I'm not going to show you, but they're quite a few stitches."

Chavez's public appearances were his first since Tuesday, when he spoke and met with visiting leaders during Venezuela's bicentennial celebrations.

Chavez told a well-wisher Thursday that he couldn't stay to speak long at the military base.

"I don't have much time, but I give you my heart like always," Chavez said, at times sounding out of breath.

The former lieutenant colonel recalled in his speech to troops that he had been stationed at the base. He then hollered commands to the troops to stand at ease and at attention.

He described his health problems as "very difficult," adding that "I was always a healthy boy, a healthy cadet."

Chavez talked about "the result of this operation that lasted six hours to extract a malignant tumor that was lodged there."

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