



**U.S. Army Corps
of Engineers
St. Paul District**

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Public Affairs

Corps Facts

Devils Lake, N.D.

Flood Reduction Project - Outlet

July 29, 2004

FS-25

Project Background

Devils Lake is located in a closed basin in semi-arid northeastern North Dakota. Depending on climate patterns, lake levels may vary substantially. Since 1993, Devils Lake has risen more than 26 feet, flooding homes, roads, farmlands, utilities and railways and threatening several communities. During this period, the lake has expanded from 70 square miles to 206 square miles. The lake is now higher than at any time since the 1830s. Because of the high water, more than \$350 million in federal emergency response funding has been spent to relocate people, raise roads and build levees.

The lake level is currently at an elevation of about 1,449 feet above mean sea level. If the lake rises to elevation 1,459 feet msl, areas downstream (extending into Canada) will be threatened as well, including the Sheyenne River and the Red River of the North, which flows north into Manitoba. Overflows into these rivers may threaten water quality standards as Devils Lake contains high concentrations of solids, including chlorides and sulfates. The Corps of Engineers estimates an additional \$900 million in potential damages could occur if levels continue to rise to a point of overflowing into the Sheyenne River. The greatest impact would be within the Devils Lake basin.

In 1993, the Corps of Engineers and the North Dakota State Water Commission agreed to proceed with a cost-shared feasibility study. Because of rising lake levels, the Corps accelerated portions of the flood control project selected in the reconnaissance report at the request of the North Dakota congressional delegation. The Corps prepared a contingency plan in February 1996 with options that might be implemented if the lake continued to rise. As a follow-up to the contingency plan, the agency prepared an emergency outlet plan in August 1996 for an outlet to be built from Devils Lake to the Sheyenne River. The Energy and Water Development Appropriations Acts of 1998 through 2003 also provided funding for construction of an emergency outlet but imposed several conditions (including technical soundness, environmental acceptability, determination of emergency need and compliance with the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909).

Project Status

The Corps of Engineers released a final Environmental Impact Statement, with an outlet at Pelican Lake as the preferred alternative, in April 2003. The Record of Decision, signed by the U.S. Army Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. Robert B. Flowers, on Oct. 14, 2003, recommended a 300 cubic feet per second outlet from Pelican Lake at Devils Lake, which will then be pumped to the Sheyenne River. Future construction and operation, is dependent on concurrence of cost sharing provisions with the local sponsor and reporting back to Congress.

Authority

In 1997, Public Law 105-18 provided funds for the Corps to look at an emergency outlet from Devils Lake to the Sheyenne River. Additional funds for this work were provided in subsequent laws, including the Emergency Supplemental Act, 2000 (Public Law 106-246). Studies were funded through the General Investigations program. In the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, 2003 (Division D of Public Law 108-7), Congress authorized and directed the use of \$5 million for construction of an emergency outlet from Devils Lake to the Sheyenne River, subject to a number of conditions, as listed above.