



**US Army Corps
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Walla Walla District

News Release

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Dworshak helps Clearwater County prepare for spring inflows; construction-era sand finds new future in flood damage reduction

OROFINO, Idaho – What looks like a small mountain of sand left over from the 1970s construction of Dworshak Dam is now helping Clearwater County emergency management officials prepare for rising water in the Clearwater River, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials at Dworshak announced today.

“The county contacted us several days ago to ask about using some of our construction-era sand leftovers for sand-bagging operations along the river should water levels begin to cause concern when the snow melted,” said Paul Pence, Dworshak’s natural resource manager.

The Corps agreed to let the county use the sand once they ran out of their own, with the provision that reimbursement may be required after the flooding is past, according to Corps emergency management officials in Walla Walla, Wash.

Advanced planning set up county emergency managers for success, said Pence. “They pre-positioned a dump truck and front-loader near the sand pile days ago, so they could be ready if the forecast for hot weekend temperatures resulted in high flows.”

The county’s foresight and coordination with the Corps proved prudent when 90-plus-degree temperatures caused melting above-normal snowpack to fill the river near flood level (17 feet deep) over the weekend, with some low-lying areas experiencing flood conditions. The county exhausted its own supply of sand and began drawing from the 50-plus-year-old dam construction sand pile on Monday, hauling it to where they are placing sandbags to help minimize flooding damages.

County Emergency Manager Don Gardner said Dworshak’s old sand might help save some properties from flood damage.

“We’re using it to help protect several homes and a section of Orofino’s downtown along the river,” Gardner said during a telephone interview this morning. “The weather forecast calls for up to a half-inch of rain today, and we expect the river to peak about a foot above flood stage.”

“I’m glad the sand could go to good use to help reduce flooding in our community,” said Pence. “We applaud the county for coming to us well in advance – it really helped them be ready for the spring thaw.”

While not all rivers and streams in Idaho are flooding, snow melting under warmer spring temperatures has caused high, fast cold water flows in most areas of the state. The Corps encourages people to keep safety in mind – keep children and pets away from high-flowing rivers and streams, and beware of unstable riverbanks and irrigation ditches.

Citizens concerned about high-water hazards near their homes and businesses should contact city or county emergency managers in their local area for assistance.

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