

## Flood Control and Flood Plain Management

Federal interest in flood control began in the alluvial valley of the Mississippi River in the mid-19th century. As the relationship of flood control and navigation became apparent, Congress called on the Corps of Engineers to use its navigational expertise to devise solutions to flooding problems along the river.

After a series of disastrous floods affecting wide areas in the 1920s and 30s, Congress determined, in the Flood Control Act of 1936, that the federal government would participate in the solution of flooding problems, affecting the public interest, that were too large or complex to be handled by states or localities. Corps authority for flood control work was thus extended to embrace the entire country. (The Corps turns most of the flood control projects it builds over to non-federal authorities for operation and maintenance once construction is completed.)

The purpose of flood control work is to prevent damage through regulation of the flow of water and other means. Prevention of flood-related damages can be accomplished with structural measures, such as reservoirs, levees, channels and flood walls that modify the characteristics of floods; or non-structural measures, such as flood plain evacuation, floodproofing and floodway acquisition, that alter the way people use these areas and reduce the susceptibility of human activities to flood risk.

Corps flood control reservoirs are often designed and built for multiple-purpose uses, such as municipal and industrial water supply, navigation, irrigation, hydroelectric power, conservation of fish and wildlife, and recreation.

The Corps fights the nation's flood problems not only by constructing and maintaining structures, but also by providing detailed technical information on flood hazards. Under the Flood Plain Management Services Program, the Corps provides, on request, flood hazard information, technical assistance and planning guidance to other federal agencies, states, local

governments and private citizens. Once community officials know the flood-prone areas in their communities and how often floods might occur, they can take necessary action to prevent or minimize damages to existing and to new buildings and facilities, such as adopting and enforcing zoning ordinances, building codes, and subdivision regulations. The Flood Plain Management Services Program provides assistance to other federal and state agencies in the same manner.

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