

## Appendix H. Media

1. **Background:** Record temperatures, rapid snow melt and significant rain storms contributed to flooding in Kootenai Valley in June 2006. The spring flood event saw the Kootenai River reach 1766.56 feet above mean sea level, more than 2.5 feet over floodstage at Bonners Ferry on June 18, 2006.

During the high flows from Libby Dam, the Corps worked with local officials, citizens, radio stations and other media to inform the public of any changes of the outflow from the dam and changes in the river downstream. The Corps' message focused on protecting lives and property, responding to local and state government's requests for assistance, and managing the water resources in coordination with other federal and state agencies. Getting information out quickly on changing operations was facilitated by news releases, which were copied and shared out in the field by disaster response officials. The Corps' Seattle District Web Site was also kept updated with the latest news releases and information for easy reference by all interested persons.

2. **Media coverage.** Reporting, overall, was balanced during the event and focused on keeping their readership informed about the developing flood event. Almost all of the coverage was local; however the flood event was mentioned on MSNBC. Several television stations from Spokane (KREM and KLXY) traveled to the community and focused on the flood event. A media opportunity was held by the Corps during the event, and was well attended.

High flows began in mid-May when unseasonably warm temperatures caused low elevation streams to run off quickly. River levels throughout the Columbia Basin begin rising rapidly. The Corps' Emergency Management (EM) notified Public Affairs Office (PAO) on May 17 of potential flooding in several areas, including concern about the Moyie and Yaak rivers, which empty into the Kootenai River.

### ***May 17 Kootenai Valley Press*** **Flooding feared on the Moyie**

County emergency coordinators have been keeping a close eye on the Moyie River since temperatures suddenly shot to mid-summer like highs over the weekend, and Boundary County Commissioners hold an emergency meeting at 9 a.m. Thursday, May 18, to consider declaring a "preemptory" flood emergency, though no water has yet spilled the banks.

### ***May 18 Kootenai Valley Press*** **Flood emergency declared**

Boundary County commissioners on Thursday declared a flood emergency based on the likelihood that the Moyie River will overflow its banks this weekend. The threat of potentially heavy rain and thunderstorms is likely to compound the problem.

**On May 19**, the acting District commander declared a flood emergency. PAO sent out a news release on May 19 as EM flood teams deployed to Washington, Idaho and Montana, in response to the rising river levels. In Bonners Ferry, the flood response team began work on

fortifying a levee that was at risk of imminent failure. The Moyie River in Boundary County was already above flood stage, threatening homes near Eastport. Corps flood team members assisted the county with sandbag operations.

**May 19 Kootenai Valley Press**

**Flood watch issued on the Moyie**

The National Weather Service in Spokane issues a flash flood watch on the Moyie River at Eastport effective from Saturday evening until Sunday afternoon.

**May 21 Kootenai Valley Press**

**Boil order issued along Moyie River**

Boundary County disaster services issues a recommendation that everyone who obtains drinking water from wells or water systems near the Moyie River boil their water before drinking it or using it for food preparation.

**May 22 Kootenai Valley Press**

**Storm downs trees, disrupts traffic**

A fast moving but powerful storm sweeps through Boundary County between 3 and 4 p.m., downing trees, knocking out power, and shutting portions of U.S. 95 in the Eastport area. Emergency crews respond to a series of reports throughout the county, and the severity of the storm damage has yet to be assessed.

**Severe thunderstorm warning issued**

The National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma, issues an immediate severe thunderstorm warning in parts of Idaho, Montana, Washington and Oregon, including Boundary County, with winds up to 70 miles per hour, two-inch hail and heavy rains.

**May 23 Kootenai Valley Press**

**Moyie boil order lifted**

The recommendation by county disaster services personnel to boil water obtained from shallow wells or water systems along the Moyie River is lifted.

A Corps news release is sent out on May 24 advising the public that high flows along the Kootenai River may continue, due to the remaining snow pack. As a result, Corps water managers plan on releasing full power house capacity of 25,000 cfs from Libby Dam over the next several weeks in order to slow the refill and allow storage volume in Lake Koocanusa to accommodate as much of the high elevation runoff as possible to minimize the risk of Kootenai Valley flooding and Libby Dam spilling. The high elevation runoff is expected to continue into June and July.

**May 24**

**Bonnars Ferry Herald**

**City of Bonnars Ferry Declares Disaster; Flood Warning Issued at Eastport**

**May 26**

***Columbia Basin Bulletin***

**Rapid runoff has Libby Dam turbines running full capacity**

“Last week's rapid runoff in Northwest Montana filled Lake Koocanusa to a point where the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers intends to run Libby Dam at full powerhouse capacity for the next few weeks....”

***Daily Inter Lake - Kalispell, MT***

**Libby Dam to release at full capacity**

**May 27**

***Kootenai Valley Press***

**High water to continue on the Kootenai**

The Army Corps of Engineers announced that Libby Dam will run at maximum capacity for several weeks, spilling full power house capacity of 25,000 cubic feet of water per second and keeping the Kootenai River at or very near flood stage for the duration.

**May 28**

***Billings Gazette. KXLF-TV – Butte, MT, and Great Falls Tribune***

**Corps to run dam at full capacity**

**LIBBY** -- Rapid runoff last week filled Lake Koocanusa to the point that the US Army Corps of Engineers decided to run Libby Dam at full capacity for the next few weeks. The Corp reported that all five turbines will operate at maximum capacity for a release of 25,000 cubic feet per second (CFS). Those flows are expected to continue “for several weeks in order to slow the refill and allow storage volume in Lake Koocanusa to accommodate as much of the high elevation runoff as possible to minimize the risk of Kootenai Valley flooding and Libby Dam spilling’ the Corps said in a statement. Hot weather melted snowpack last week causing Lake Koocanusa to rise rapidly, peaking at nearly 80,000 CFS during the weekend. “We had some pretty good inflows” said Mick Shea, the Libby Dam project superintendent. “You have to start moving water in order to make room for storage.”

**On June 7**, PAO sends out a news release notifying the Kootenai Valley area that the updated forecast includes the possibility of a limited flood control spill at Libby as early as June 10.

**On June 9**, due to heavy precipitation in the Kootenai Basin, the decision to spill is made and PAO sends out a news release detailing outflows from Libby dam with the expectation that flows could be further increased. As spill begins, a local television station reports that Libby Dam is being watched with great concern and that officials are worried. This report leads to several phone calls and visitors to Libby Dam interested in the rumored “dam failure.” This rumor is quickly put to rest by calls to media and responses from the project manager and local emergency management officials (Note Boundary County emergency manager quote on the rumor in the Rural Northwest coverage of the Governor’s visit). Corps’ efforts are also noted in the story.

**June 9**

*Western News*

**Corps eyes small spill to avoid big spill**

A controlled spill from Libby Dam is being considered starting as early as Saturday, June 10, as Lake Koocanusa nears full pool.

*Rural Northwest.Com*

**Boundary County Officials schedule meeting on Kootenai River**

A meeting of local officials and the general public is taking place at 1 pm today at the National Guard Armory on the South Hill, across from the Boundary ...

**Governor arrives for emergency meeting in Boundary County**

A public meeting today at the National Guard Armory addressed the current flood conditions of the Kootenai River in Bonners Ferry, ID. As a result of the threat to local crops and property, Governor Jim Risch signed and personally delivered an official proclamation that the State of Idaho has declared a State of Disaster Emergency in Boundary County. The proclamation will ensure state aid for Boundary County....

“The Army Corp of Engineers Flood Fighters are in Boundary County and currently on the River,” [Bob] Graham said. “Eric Winters and his team from the Army Corp spent the last couple of weeks building up the rock along the shoreline, and he just told me that they are now going to work on extending that even further in the next stretch.” ...

Graham added that despite a report this morning from a Spokane, WA, media outlet’s Boise office, Libby Dam is nowhere near breaching. “The failure of Libby Dam is so remote that it is nothing for us to worry about, that won’t happen. When a Dam starts dumping water over a specially engineered and designed spillway, that is a fairly normal occurrence, it does not mean the Dam has been breached.”

Bonners Ferry Mayor Darrell Kerby said Eric Winters and his team from the Corps of Engineers has been unbelievably helpful. “We have been very pleased with their support, and we look forward to continuing that joint effort over the next couple of weeks.”

*Kootenai Valley Press*

**Flood threat real, but is there a silver lining?**

While Boundary County braces for yet another test of our will against nature, knowing we could well take a pounding, there could be some small measure of opportunity here as well, thanks to the boom in local land prices and some federal regulations that make cashing in on the Kootenai difficult.

**Community urged to brace, work together**

Emergency coordinators from around the state, including Idaho Governor Jim Risch, Major General Larry LaFrenz, head of the Idaho Army National Guard, and Bill Bishop, the Idaho director of the Department of Homeland Security, met at the Bonners Ferry National Guard Armory as Boundary County prepares for what could be the worst flooding in many years.

**June 10**

*Kootenai Valley Press*

**Flood threat eases slightly**

The threat of floods eased slightly overnight as rainfall didn't reach levels feared, and current predictions indicate that flood stage on the Kootenai River will nearly, but not quite, be reached tomorrow evening.

**KXLY Television, Spokane**

**Officials declare flooding emergency, keeping eye on Kootenai River**

Officials in North Idaho are keeping their eyes on the Libby Dam after Idaho Governor Jim Risch declared a state of emergency in Bonners Ferry where there are serious concerns about the Kootenai River flooding. Recent rapid run-off has filled Lake Koocanusa forcing the US Army Corps of Engineers to run the dam at full capacity for the next several weeks. They're hoping to minimize those flood warnings along the Kootenai River.

*Bonnors Ferry County Daily Bee*

**Flooding fears continue to rise along Kootenai River**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expects the Kootenai River to crest one foot above flood level on Sunday and remain there for approximately a week. That's the forecast given to first responders from Boundary County, Bonner County, the Department of Homeland Security and state officials at a meeting with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on Friday. Flood stage is 1,764 feet above sea level. The Corps' reservoir control in Portland projects the level rising to 1,765 feet Sunday.

**Flash flood advisory issued on the Kootenai: UPDATED:**

The Spokane Office of the National Weather Service has issued a flash flood warning on the Kootenai River, effective from Friday evening through Tuesday evening. The river is expected to crest nearly two feet above flood stage by Sunday afternoon. A general meeting of government officials and people who may potentially be affected will be held at 1 p.m. Friday, June 9, at the National Guard Armory.

**June 11**

*Kootenai Valley Press*

**Monday forecast could worsen flood threat:** The outflow at Libby Dam has been increased to accommodate overnight rain, but the National Weather Service's Spokane office is warning of continued unsettled conditions that promise continued concern. *With Saturday photos.*

**On June 12,** PAO sends out a news release notifying residents that the flood control spill will continue and more rain is predicted in the forecast. On June 13, the Corps holds an impromptu media conference at the Bonners Ferry Airport. LTC John Leighow, acting Seattle District commander, speaks to the group of reporters that included television, radio and

newspapers. The purpose of his visit was to see the flood event firsthand, and to listen to concerns of stakeholders.

### **June 12**

#### ***Kootenai Valley Press***

**Kootenai River level still rising:** Recent weather forecasts include a potential for significant rainfall in the Kootenai River basin tonight and mid-week which could cause a rise in water level in Boundary County. The current river level at Bonners Ferry is 1762.43. Should the predicted rainfall occur, the Kootenai River in Boundary County could reach the 1764 foot elevation (flood stage) early Thursday.

**High water raises West Nile fears:** High water on the Kootenai River could result in standing water in the Bonners Ferry area for up to several weeks, and residents are encouraged to take extra precautions against mosquito bites.

### **June 13**

#### ***Kootenai Valley Press***

##### **Punches slipped; knockout still possible:**

As of 5 p.m. Tuesday, June 13, the river level on the Kootenai River at Bonners Ferry was 1762.16; flood stage is 1764 feet. Should currently predicted rainfall occur, the Kootenai River in Boundary County could reach the 1764.1 foot elevation (flood stage) over the next few days. Warnings of severe weather in Boundary County appear unfounded.

##### **In midst of 'A-Team' meet, another warning issued**

Even as a large group of experts gathered in Boundary County, including National Weather Service Spokane station chief John Livingstone, the National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center, Norman, Oklahoma, has issued a severe weather alert until 9 p.m. today

#### ***Bonner County Daily Bee***

##### **Rains predicted for soggy Kootenai Valley:**

Although the Kootenai River failed to reach flood stage of 1,764 over the weekend, predicted rainfall Monday night and mid-week could still send the river over its banks.

#### ***Northwest Public Radio***

##### **Emergency crews assess Bonners Ferry Flooding:**

Crews from the Army Corps of Engineers and FEMA are on the ground in North Idaho to assess the strength of levees following recent floods. The biggest concern is that heavy rains forecast for later this week could further weaken the levees and ruin more crops.

**June 14**

***Idaho Statesman***

**Engineers say 46 miles of dikes need repair**

COEUR D'ALENE — A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers survey of dikes holding back the high-flowing Kootenai River has found that 46 miles of dikes have been damaged, with a cost of \$1 million per mile to repair. Engineers on Monday surveyed 80 miles of dikes on both sides of the river that hold back water from thousands of acres of farmland and crops in Boundary County. Already, underground seepage has damaged an estimated \$2.5 million worth of crops in the county. Meteorologists are also predicting that the threat of flooding in Bonners Ferry is more severe than first thought, with National Weather Service river forecasts showing the river rising to about 2 feet above the flood mark by Friday. Cindy Henriksen, a corps spokeswoman in Portland, said that the new forecast for higher flows was based on anticipated rainfall from approaching storms, plus possible increases in outflow of Libby Dam in Montana.

***Western News***

**Big Spill ongoing:**

The potential for severe thunderstorms in the upper Kootenai drainage has the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers considering another increase in the amount of spill form Libby Dam.

***Kootenai Valley Press***

**Flood update**

Recent weather forecasts include a potential for significant rainfall in the Kootenai River basin over the next few days. This may cause a rise in water level in Boundary County. The current river level at Bonners Ferry is 1762.46. Should the predicted rainfall occur, the Kootenai River in Boundary County could reach the 1764.2 foot elevation (flood stage) over the next few days.

**June 15**

***Kootenai Valley Press***

**Threat of flood diminishing**

Wednesday and Thursday's rain contributed to a rise in the level of the Kootenai River at Bonners Ferry. Between 5 p.m. Tuesday and 4 p.m. Wednesday the river level climbed from 1762.16 feet to 1762.46 feet above sea level. Today the river rose another .78 feet it it's current (4:30 p.m.) level of 1,763.24.

**River reaches action stage**

The Kootenai River at Bonners Ferry reached "action" stage at 1 a.m. this morning, and the National Weather Service predicts it will rise another foot, reaching flood stage, by as early as mid-afternoon today. Recent rains in Northwest Montana and southeast British Columbia have resulted in increased discharge from Libby Dam. As a result, the National Weather Service has continued a flood watch for Boundary County through Friday morning.

*Spokesman Review*

**Raising water level swamping Boundary County Farms:**

As water conditions change and continue to rise, PAO sends out a news release that water releases have increased to 46,000 cfs and that the Kootenai River is expected to exceed flood stage on June 17. The most significant story on the Corps' activities appeared as an editorial in the *Western News*, recognizing the Corps top priority of the flood damage reduction mission -- protecting lives. The *Columbia Basin Bulletin and Missoulian newspaper* covered the state of Montana's concern that spill could have been avoided -- that more emphasis than necessary was placed on water for salmon.

**Jun 16**

*Kootenai Valley Press*

**Flood alert reissued**

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers water managers increased spills at Libby Dam as more rain than was forecasted increased the inflows to Lake Koocanusa. Forecasts generated by the National Weather Service River Forecast Center are used by the Corps to make decisions on dam operations. The Kootenai River is expected climb above flood stage by late Saturday morning in Bonners Ferry.

*Western News Editorial*

**We're in an emergency situation at Libby Dam.**

Consider this: Libby Dam was designed to hold back a pool - a reservoir - with a surface no higher than 2,459 feet above sea level. Now the dam isn't going to crumble and come down if we go a foot above that mark but it is not recommended nor has it been tried in the 30-plus years the dam has stood. In other words, a massive filling of the reservoir by runoff from Canada could jeopardize the structure or parts of the structure at the dam. We're not in imminent threat of the dam collapsing because the spillway can handle more than the maximum flow ever recorded on the Kootenai River. None of us want to see that because it is the reason the dam was built.

**So accusations that U.S. Army Corps of Engineers brought us to the brink of disaster doesn't hold water.**

In addition to the design specifications of the dam, going above 2,459 feet above sea level is a violation of the international treaty with Canada and a violation of the federal enabling law for Libby Dam. Also serious.

**The Corps has a mandate built in that goes something like this: Thou shalt not flood. It's probably not written anywhere but they are the anti-flood guys and gals.**

Could they and the other water managers in the federal Columbia River system done a better job this year of preparing for the runoff? In hindsight it's quite easy to point out that if they did this or that, we wouldn't be damaging the Kootenai River fishery right now or creating problems for people living along the river right here in Montana.

We'll have plenty of time to discuss that in the coming weeks and months. I really believe we must take a conservative approach to refill, at least a more conservative approach than we have in recent years since we've seen spills twice in four years. I've heard people say there hasn't been a spill at Libby Dam prior to that. That isn't quite true

from what some state wildlife people tell me. It's just been a long time because this area has experienced a prolonged drought.

Regardless, we must be conservative with refill for the safety and protection of the dam and the lives and property of the thousands of us living downstream, for the survival and protection of the great fishery. After that we should think about the downstream endangered species - sturgeon and salmon.

For now we have to spill, and we should be encouraging the Corps to stay way ahead of any real problems that could evolve with some Biblical rain or warm weather event in the huge drainage above us. The weather forecast, at least right now, might be favoring a slowing of the runoff into Lake Koocanusa. If that evolves, the Corps will back off on the spill amounts. As long as Mother Nature doesn't try to show us again that she really is in control. -- Roger Morris

### ***The Columbia Basin Bulletin***

#### **Montana suggests Libby Dam spill might have been avoided**

Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer is criticizing an ongoing spill over Libby Dam, suggesting it could have been avoided if not for pressure to store water for Columbia River salmon "While the short-term decision this last weekend to spill at Libby was probably necessary for flood control, it begs the question of how the feds operate the dam year round," Schweitzer said in a press release ...

"If the federal government operated the dams with the primary objective of not harming the residents who live near them, a secondary objective of providing for the resident fish, and lastly to assist the recovery of salmon hundreds of miles away in the Columbia River, we wouldn't run into these situations."

Although the Corps operates Libby Dam, it does so under direction from biological opinions developed by other agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. One requirement is that Lake Koocanusa reach its full pool elevation by June 30 to ensure there's enough water for salmon flow augmentation.

Bruce Measure, one of Montana's representatives on the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, also criticized the June 30 refill date.

"Instead of working with other knowledgeable agencies and scientists to prepare a biological opinion for operations that we know would stabilize the situation at Libby and benefit both resident and anadromous fish, they insist on a fixed refill date that does not take annual weather changes into account."

Lake Koocanusa is managed under a "variable discharge" policy known as VAR-Q, in which releases fluctuate based on changing forecasts for inflows. Measure contends that the fixed refill date is incompatible with that approach.

### ***Missoulian***

#### **Koocanusa Reservoir refill date prompts flooding**

**On June 17**, PAO issues a news release indicating that water releases have increased to 55,000 cfs. Emergency services coordinators put out a call for sandbaggers and ask for help in putting a rumor to rest: sandbagging efforts at the Best Western Inn, also a casino, were being done as a preventive effort and they were hearing reports that the casino was flooded. PAO was clear about this when communicating the sandbagging efforts.

**June 17**

***Kootenai Valley Press***

**Help needed sandbagging**

Emergency services coordinators in Boundary County put out a call at 4:45 p.m. for additional assistance in sandbagging low-lying areas threatened by flood. Those who'd like to help in flood damage prevention efforts are encouraged to call the Boundary County Sheriff's Office, (208) 267-3151.

**Dam outflow ramped up; flooding imminent**

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers water managers increased spills at Libby Dam this morning to 55,000 cubic feet per second as inflows came in higher than forecasted to Lake Koocanusa.

**June 18**

***Bonnors Ferry County Daily Bee***

**Volunteers sandbag Kootenai River Inn as water hit highest level since dam's construction** Hundreds of volunteers worked all day Saturday piling sandbags around the Kootenai River Inn and Casino in Bonnors Ferry as fears of flooding rose as quickly as the level of the nearby Kootenai River. Fed by the largest discharge of water in history from the Libby Dam, the river exceed flood stage just after midnight Saturday morning when it was measured at 1,764.02 feet above sea level. Flood stage is 1,764 feet. By 12:50 p.m. Saturday, the river was at 1,765.26 feet, the highest it has been since the dam's construction in 1974. The dam's output has jumped from 35,000 cubic feet per second Thursday to 43,000 cfs, and 48,000 cfs Friday, and then, at 9 a.m. Saturday, the dam increased output to 55,000 cfs.

***KLEW TV, Lewiston, ID***

**Flooding continues in Bonnors Ferry**

BONNERS FERRY, Idaho A flood warning continues in Bonner County. National Weather Service officials say the Kootenai River will likely continue to run high until Tuesday or Wednesday.

***MSNBC***

**Volunteers protect casino from flooding**

BONNERS FERRY, Idaho Volunteers put sandbags around the Kootenai River Inn and Casino over the weekend to protect the structure from rising waters in northern Idaho's Kootenai River.

***Kootenai Valley Press***

**Koocanusa full, but starting to recede**

Today Boundary County was notified the Libby Dam is still at full pool but its inflows are beginning to recede. Libby Dam outflow is expected to remain the at 55,000 cubic feet per second today, and the water level on the Kootenai River in Bonnors Ferry is predicted to reach levels between 1,766.5 to 1,767 feet by the end of today.

**Lake reaches full pool, but should start dropping**

On Saturday, Boundary County was advised the Libby Dam was at full pool. The water level in Bonners Ferry is predicated to reach levels between 1766.5 to 1767 feet by Sunday (June 18, 2006) morning.

**On June 20**, PAO sent out a news release saying water releases from Libby Dam were slowly being decreased.

**June 20**

*Kootenai Valley Press*

**Corps decreasing water releases at Libby Dam:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers water managers slowly decreased water being released from Libby Dam in Montana starting at noon today.

*Northwest Public Radio*

**Bonners Ferry Flood update:**

Emergency workers and volunteers spent the weekend sandbagging along the river bank in Bonners Ferry, Idaho.

**June 21**

*Kootenai Valley Press*

**Water down, but damage continues:**

The level of the Kootenai River in Boundary County is dropping, but the potential for additional damage to the dike/levee system and adjacent lands will continue for several more days.

*Western News*

**Spill boosted to 31,000:**

**Corps hoping dry weather forecast materializes.**

**June 23**

*Western News*

**Corps begins cutting back releases:**

After the event, the plan for an after action report (AAR) began in July 2006. PAO sent out a news release on Aug. 1, announcing that the Corps was reviewing the impacts and damages from the spring run-off event and that an AAR had begun. The decision was also made to hold two public meetings in the area. The first meeting was to explain the AAR purpose and scope and to provide an opportunity for local officials, stakeholders and members of the public to ask questions. The second meeting was to present a final AAR and operations for 2007.