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Missouri River Levels to be Dropped

(KTNC) - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is ready to move the Missouri River into what it's calling "drought reserve mode" and it'll mean much less water flowing downriver.

Corps spokeswoman Monique Farmer says water levels will drop by the end of the month. (play audio :16 "conservation measure.")

Current release levels from the dam have been running more than three times that level, at 38-thousand cubic feet per second.

Farmer says the forecast for next spring has the reservoirs down drastically. (play audio :24 "time of year.")

It was just last summer that the reservoirs and releases hit record high levels during the spring and summer flooding, with releases from Gavins Point hitting just over 160-thousand cubic feet per second.

Farmer says they will step down releases gradually to allow downstream water users to adjust. They'll cut releases initially to around 18-thousand cubic feet per second and hold for a few days. (play audio :23 "feet per second.")

It'll stay at that level until March. The Corps' plan is raising concerns. Leaders in Missouri fear such a drop in Missouri River water levels will impact the Mississippi River so much that barge traffic may have to be halted.

Nebraska Radio Network