



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Louisville District

News Release

Public Affairs Office
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 2, 2004

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Corps revises dates for McAlpine lock repairs

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – The Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District has set the dates for the McAlpine lock closure on the Ohio River as Aug. 9-22, 2004, as a result of further consultation with affected industry.

Initially the Corps of Engineers had proposed Aug. 3-16 for the closure to repair cracks in one of the lock gates. The later dates allow river users and industry more time to reschedule traffic. During the 14-day closure, no river traffic will pass at McAlpine. Ohio River traffic will continue above and below Louisville.

Frequent diver safety inspections will occur between now and the planned repair to monitor gate conditions. The cracks in the 40-year-old miter gate are related to metal fatigue, and the repair methodology will involve steel plating and welding.

In 2004, nearly a quarter of the lock chambers on the Ohio River exceeded their 50-year design life.

The Corps is currently replacing McAlpine's two old auxiliary lock chambers with a new 1,200-foot-long chamber so it will have twin large chambers. Ohio River locks come in two sizes - the 600-foot-long auxiliary chambers and the 1,200-foot-long main chambers. The bigger lock chamber allows traffic to move quickly through, with minimum delay.

Since a typical Ohio-River tow comprises 15 barges that can carry the equivalent of 870 semi-trucks or 225 railroad cars, it's an efficient mode of transportation for bulk commodities like coal, grain and petroleum. In 2003, 56 million tons of freight passed through McAlpine lock, which averages 14 tows a day.

For updates on the lock closure, go to <http://www.lrl.usace.army.mil/>