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Braddock Dam Demolition Starts Saturday

PITTSBURGH – A controlled explosion late Saturday morning will mark the first step in the demolition of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' fixed crest dam at Locks and Dam 2 at Braddock, Pa., on the Monongahela River. The Corps' Pittsburgh District is replacing the old dam with a new gated Braddock Dam that is now fully operational, eliminating the need for the 100-year-old structure.

Due to security and safety concerns, Locks 2 will be closed to the public during this time period. The event however can be viewed on the Pittsburgh District's webcams at www.lrp.usace.army.mil.

The first blast of the dam is tentatively scheduled for noon Saturday, but could come earlier in the day, depending on progress made by work crews. All navigation traffic will be halted within the area one hour prior to the scheduled explosion. Access to the locks by boat and to any other areas leading into the blasting area will be prohibited. Several minutes prior to the anticipated blast, air horns and other safety warning sounds will be heard until the detonation.

Because only a 500-foot stretch of water lies between the old and new dams, the amount of water to be released by the initial explosion should be minimal and engineers say it will result in a surge of no more than a foot of water immediately below the dam. By the time the surge reaches The Point in Pittsburgh, it should be negligible, according to the Corps and its contractors.

Initially only a 90-foot section in the center of the dam will be breached, with the successive demolition proceeding in approximately 30 to 40 foot sections. Any disturbances from the follow-on controlled detonations should be minor, since most of the blasting will take place underwater.

River traffic should not be interrupted with the exception of periodic delays just prior to and immediately after any scheduled blast. These delays may occur as often as once per day during the main demolition phase of this work, over the next 60 days. Most blasts will take place in the early afternoon.

During the demolition phase, warning signs will be posted at all accesses to the lock, at the lock and along the left abutment to indicate the area is within the blast zone. Warning signs will also be posted approximately ¼ mile upstream and downstream of the dam site.

After detonation, navigation traffic and access will continue to be halted until the contractor can complete the necessary post-blast safety checks of the blast area to make sure all is safe. When the ½- to 1-hour post-blast safety checks are complete, an "all clear" signal will be given and traffic and access to the locks will be resumed.

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The demolition of the existing dam is part of the Corps' Lower Monongahela River project. In addition to replacing the century-old fixed crest Dam 2 with the new gated Braddock Dam, the project will also replace Locks 4 in Charleroi with new larger locks and remove Locks and Dam 3 in Elizabeth. This project is the final phase of the post-World War II modernization program for the historically significant Monongahela River Navigation System, which dates to the 1840s. The historic waterways engineering technology and contributions of these older facilities are being well documented in a variety of ways as the Corps works with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in complying with federal historic preservation law.

Editors and assignment desks, Please Note: *Because of security and safety concerns, Locks 2 will not be accessible to the media or the public during the removal process. On Saturday beginning at 9 a.m. a Corps of Engineers representative will be available for interviews at the Braddock Resident Engineer Office located off of Route 837 in the RIDC Industrial Park, Duquesne, Pa. For more information and directions to the resident engineer office, please contact Pittsburgh District's Public Affairs Office at 412-395-7501.*

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