

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Water Control Manuals: GAO Addresses Need for Review/Revision



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The United States Government Accountability Office ("GAO") issued a July 2016 report titled *ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS – Additional Steps Needed for Review and Revision of Water Control Manuals ("Report")*.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers ("Corps") uses Water Control Manuals ("Manuals") to manage and operate more than 700 dams (and their associated reservoirs) across the United States.

A number of Corps operated reservoirs are located in Arkansas.

The water resource projects owned and operated by the Corps are utilized for purposes such as flood control, hydropower, and water supply. The Manuals include water control plans which describe the policies and procedures for deciding how much water to release from reservoirs.

GAO notes that many of the Corps projects are over 50 years old and concerns have been raised as to whether the Manuals have been revised to account for changing conditions.

The GAO Report reviews:

1. Operations and Water Control Manuals
2. The extent to which the Corps has reviewed or revised selected water control manuals
3. The Corps' efforts to improve the ability to respond to extreme weather

The Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 included a provision providing for GAO study of Corps' review of project operations (Including whether practices could better prepare the agency for extreme weather). As a result, GAO reviewed:

- The Corps' guidance on project operations
- Agency practices

The Report also addresses the Corps organizational structure and operations/maintenance budget formulation process.

To undertake this study, GAO interviewed Corps officials from headquarters, all eight Corps divisions, and 15 Corps districts.

As a result of the findings from this Report, GAO recommends that the Corps develop guidance on what constitutes water control manual's review and how to document and track which manuals need revisions.

[A copy of the report can be downloaded here.](#)