

Update: Water Levels on AGFC Wildlife Management Areas

October 21, 2009

Region 1

Big Lake WMA

Heavy rainfall and natural overflow have flooded much of the area over the past few weeks. Ice storm debris cleanup has concluded. The stop-log structure at Simmons field is closed. The internal ditch system is full, and water is beginning to spread into the timber in low-lying areas and some of the higher areas. As of Oct. 21, the 7 Mile Gauge reading was 232.9 msl with a target level of 234.50 msl. The BoDoc Gauge reading was 235.0 msl with a target level of 235.5 msl.

Big Lake WMA is dependent on inflow from the ditch system just north of the area in Missouri. Conditions are very wet, and the intake pipes are closed. Under current conditions, AGFC expects water to reach target levels in both the north and south impoundments by the opening of waterfowl season.

Hunters should use caution when boating and wading in the area and should be aware of fallen limbs in the timber, especially broken limbs that could continue falling for a prolonged period. Hunters should avoid standing under trees with broken limbs. Boaters should avoid bumping into trees, which may cause broken limbs to dislodge.

Dave Donaldson Black River WMA

Heavy rainfall and high river levels have caused flooding on most of the area. Much of the scheduled ice storm debris removal has been completed, but extremely wet conditions have prevented clean-up work in lower elevations. High water and deeply flooded water control structures have prevented board and gate placement in structures. Area staff is monitoring water levels daily and will close all structures as conditions permit. AGFC expects a full pool in public hunting areas before the waterfowl season opener.

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Shirey Bay Rainey Brake WMA

Heavy rainfall and elevated river levels have caused natural overflow to flood the entire area. These conditions are expected to prevail for the next few weeks. The area suffered moderate to heavy timber damage from the ice storm last winter. Flooded conditions have prevented ice storm debris removal from boat lanes, trails and openings. Area staff will regulate water control structures to hold water levels within the public hunting areas as close to target levels as possible. AGFC expects a full pool in all hunting areas before the opening of waterfowl season.

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Update: Water Levels on AGFC Wildlife Management Areas October 21, 2009

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Earl Buss Bayou DeView WMA

The ice storm debris clean-up has been delayed because of prolonged rainfall and elevated stream levels. Contractors may begin clearing debris as water levels recede. The Thompson Tract and South Oliver greentree reservoirs are 100 percent flooded. Because of prolonged rainfall and high water levels, AGFC decided to close water-control structures starting Oct. 19, as water levels allowed capturing and holding water. The South Oliver drop gate also was closed Oct. 19. Water levels are at or above target levels. AGFC expects hunttable water levels in all impoundments before the opening of waterfowl season.

St. Francis Sunken Lands WMA

From Nov. 9 to Feb. 1, 2010, the level of St. Francis Lake will be regulated to maintain a level as close as possible to 212 msl on the Oak Donnick Gauge. This complies with AGFC's agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The intent is to provide optimum water levels in the vicinity of St. Francis Lake during duck season. But hunters should keep in mind that this area isn't a managed green-tree reservoir, and the St. Francis Lake Control Structure wasn't designed to regulate water to enhance waterfowl habitat or waterfowl hunting.

Maintaining the optimum water level is dependent on rainfall and adequate flow in the St. Francis River. The top of the St. Francis control structure is 210 msl, so there must be at least enough water for two feet of water to flow over the top of the gates when they're fully raised.

FEMA contract work for removing ice storm debris is nearing completion. Recent heavy rainfall has limited heavy equipment from reaching some areas. Clean-up work will continue until completion or until water levels prevent completion. The contract is scheduled to end Oct. 29 to avoid rising water levels. To date, there are two mobility-impaired trails (about 2.2 miles) at Marked Tree that are in jeopardy of completely flooding and preventing access.

Region 2

Sheffield Nelson Dagmar WMA

The two concrete water-control structures west of Robe Bayou remain open because of unharvested crops west of the area along School House Road. These structures allow flooding of Kyle's GTR. The main three-stall structure (known as the foot-bridge structure) remains open because of unharvested crops north of the area near Gin Lane Road. This structure backs water into the Mud Slough GTR and holds water in low-lying areas in the northern portion of the WMA. The structure north of Interstate 40 has been closed to hold water in the Mud Slough GTR and Mud Slough. The two main structures on the Mud Slough GTR (one on the main access road, and one on the levee) have not been closed. They remain open so water can move through

Update: Water Levels on AGFC Wildlife Management Areas October 21, 2009

the GTR and not damage recent repair work at the foot-bridge structure. The structure at Hickson Slough has been closed to hold water in Hickson GTR. All of the area's screw gates are closed. Current water levels are as follows: Kyle GTR, rainwater in low-lying areas; Mud Slough GTR, 100 percent flooded; Hickson GTR, 100 percent flooded; Apple Lake Rest Area, 100 percent flooded.

Rex Hancock Black Swamp WMA

Water-control structures have been closed on both the Wiville and Lee Leblanc units. Both impoundments are 100 percent flooded.

Steve N. Wilson Raft Creek WMA

All water-control structures are closed, and all impoundments are at or above flood pool.

Henry Gray Hurricane Lake WMA

The water-control structure on the South Impoundment has been closed, and interior structures at Green Tom Slough and Wolf Lake, as well as those near the Red River, are closed. The impoundment is 100 percent flooded. The Glaise Creek water control structure is still open because of unharvested crops north of the area, but the North Impoundment is above flood pool at 193 msl.

Region 3

Bayou Meto WMA

The area has received exceptional rainfall, and water levels are much higher than usual for this time of the year. On Oct. 14, water levels were 185.95 msl and slightly rising on Salt Ditch, 183.21 msl and rising on Fish Lake Ditch; 178.67 msl and rising at Five Forks Bayou (the level rose .5 foot in less than six hours), and 177.68 msl and rising rapidly at Cannon Brake. Oct. 15 is the usual target date to begin closing pipes and gates on the Lower Impoundment, which includes the Lower, Five Forks and Long Pond structures. The first manipulations are geared toward a flood-pool level of 177.0 msl. But recent water levels have been above 177 msl and rising, so AGFC staff plans to allow the excess water to recede to the desired 177.0 msl reading before inserting gates and closing pipes. AGFC's goal is to provide relief to the farming community while still achieving desired management-plan results for the GTRs. If water levels don't recede to 177.0 msl by Nov. 1, AGFC will close the structures and pipes if the water is at 178.5 msl or lower. If levels are above 178.5 msl, structures won't be closed until the flood pool drops to 178.5 msl. Beginning Nov. 15, all gates will be closed to reach the 179.5 msl flood-pool target, unless the flood pool level is above 179.5 msl. In this case, AGFC will allow the water to drop to 179.1 msl before closing the gates. Once all structures are closed, impoundments will go through a residual rise in water to bring them back to target levels. In every scenario, AGFC is trying to provide relief to the farming community while still achieving management objectives.

Update: Water Levels on AGFC Wildlife Management Areas October 21, 2009

Gates and pipes remain open on Upper Vallier, Government Cypress and Bear Bayou GTRs. Water must be backed into these impoundments before gates and pipes are closed. Government Cypress GTR has been established as a walk-in hunting area, so AGFC has mulched trails and openings for improved access and hunting. AGFC staff also has provided two more foot bridges across the deep drainage ditch.

The Cannon Brake structure remains open because of flowage easements. Nearby croplands remain unharvested, and water levels are above the target flood pool level. Gates will be closed as soon as all landowner approval letters are returned to AGFC.

The Temple Island GTR may not be pumped this year because the vehicle bridge is damaged and unsafe. High and fluctuating water levels have prevented bridge repairs, and AGFC staff can't get fuel trucks to the relift pump.

Buckingham Flats GTR will begin to be pumped the last week of October. Under current conditions the impoundment should be fully flooded in 2-3 weeks.

Two units are flooded at Wrape Plantation WRA, and another unit will be pumped in early November. Individual units will be pumped up one per month with the last one being pumped in early January. Units within Halowell WRA will be flooded upon completion of ongoing moist-soil vegetation manipulation. Four moist-soil units will be flooded one per month with a target of the last one being flooded in early January.

General Note: Many agricultural crops are still in fields, and it may be mid-November or later before they're harvested. This will hamper flooding across the area. It's likely the Cannon Brake water-control structure will be closed later than usual this year.

Cut-Off Creek WMA

The creek is out of its banks, and the entire area is inundated. Gates and pipes will be closed as necessary to maintain flood-pool levels as the water begins to recede.

Seven Devils WMA

Gates are scheduled to be closed on Nov. 1 under the area's water management plan. As of mid-September, however, water was above the gauges. AGFC will monitor water levels and close the structure when water recedes toward target levels.

Region 5

Dr. Lester Sitzes III Bois d' Arc WMA

The GTR is completely flooded from recent rain. High water and deeply flooded water-control structures have prevented the placement of boards and gates in structures. AGFC staff is monitoring the water levels daily and will close all structures as conditions permit. Area staff placed all gates in Red Slough WRA and Little Grassy moist-soil unit on Oct. 15. Both impoundments were 90 percent flooded Oct. 21.

Update: Water Levels on AGFC Wildlife Management Areas October 21, 2009

Ozan WMA

Water-control structures are closed on all three Ozan moist-soil units. All units are 90 percent flooded.

Sulphur River WMA

Water-control structures are closed on the two units on Henry Moore WRA. Both areas are 100 percent flooded. No pumping has occurred this year because of excessive rainfall. The river bank has shifted and must be repaired before setting the pump next fall.

Region 6

Harris Brake WMA

The area's green-tree reservoirs are typically at full pool for the opening day of duck season because of on-demand water supply from adjacent Harris Brake Lake. But the GTRs won't be flooded for this year's opener because of maintenance on the lake. AGFC Fisheries Division began a scheduled drawdown of the lake Sept. 1, but prolonged rain has delayed progress. The lake hasn't reached the desired level of 7 feet below normal pool. The lake drains through the GTR, and the remaining lake water could be captured. But AGFC recently planted 12 acres of hardwood seedlings, which can't tolerate early flooding. Harris Brake GTRs will remain dry through Dec. 1, when AGFC will close water-control structures to catch rain water or, if available, lake water. Surrounding waterfowl areas have caught water from recent rainfall and will be available for opening day.

Bell Slough WMA

The GTR is well above full pool after heavy rainfall in recent weeks. The GTR will remain at full pool.

Region 7

Dardanelle WMA

McKennon Bottoms moist-soil unit is 100 percent flooded.
Bob Young/Carbon City WRA is 100 percent flooded.
Horsehead Creek WRA is 50 percent flooded and rising. If necessary, it will be pumped to 100 percent by Nov. 7.
Potters Pothole/Hartman moist-soil unit is 50 percent flooded. If necessary, it will be pumped to 100 percent by Nov. 1.
Johnson County WRA is 100 percent flooded.

Ozark Lake WMA

The South and West Dyer Lake Cells are 100 percent flooded. The East Cell is currently being cooperatively farmed, and the water-control structure remains open. The East Cell will be flooded when farming operations conclude.

Update: Water Levels on AGFC Wildlife Management Areas October 21, 2009

Frog Bayou WMA

All seven moist-soil units are 100 percent flooded.

Region 8

Lloyd Millwood Nimrod WMA

AGFC closed the area's two water-control structures Oct. 7, the first day staff could reach the structures because of high water. Nimrod Lake is well above normal pool and will likely remain above normal for several weeks. The water-control structure would not close tightly when staff attempted to close it. If water levels recede to a point that the structure causes problems, staff will work on closing it again.

Galla Creek WMA

The water management plan for this impoundment calls for closing the water-control structure on the 411-acre GTR Nov. 1. Because of current hydrology and ongoing restoration work, however, AGFC staff won't close the structure this year. This will be the third consecutive year the structure has remained open to allow restoration work. AGFC expects the structure to remain open for several years while restoration and reforestation work continues.

Ed Gordon Point Remove WMA

Water-control structures have been closed on 16 of 17 impoundments. Boards will be placed in the Cedar Ridge impoundment after Nov. 9 to facilitate access for the modern-gun deer permit hunt and to preserve this year's millet crop for late migrating waterfowl. Remaining boards will be placed in the water-control structures for the Widow Pond impoundment under a flowage easement with an adjacent landowner. All impoundments are either full or the levees overtopped as a result of flood waters.

Petit Jean River WMA

AGFC staff closed the Slaty Pond GTR water-control structure on Oct. 1, as outlined in the area's water-management plan. The impoundment is full. The Pond Creek GTR water-control structure has been closed to capture flood water. The water-control structure in the Blacklands impoundment has been closed to capture flood water from the river and overflow from Kingfisher Lake. All moist-soil units are currently full or overtopped. All structures are closed on Santa Fe GTR, which currently has water levels several feet above normal.