



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
St. Paul District

# Information Paper

## C. Systemic Public Involvement

### Upper Mississippi River System - Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program

#### Contact

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#### Location/Description

The program area comprises the Upper Mississippi River System, as defined by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 (WRDA 1986), which includes the Upper Mississippi River from Minneapolis, Minnesota, to Cairo, Illinois; the Illinois Waterway from Chicago to Grafton, Illinois; and navigable portions of the Minnesota, St. Croix, Black and Kaskaskia Rivers. This multi-use resource supports an extensive navigation system (made up of 1200 miles of 9 foot channel and 37 lock and dam sites), a diverse ecosystem (2.7 million acres of habitat supporting hundreds of fish and wildlife species), floodplain agriculture, recreation and tourism. Based on the recommendation of the recently completed UMR-IWW System Navigation Feasibility Study that examined system needs over the next 50 years, the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) was implemented to achieve the dual purposes of UMRS ecosystem restoration and navigation improvements.

#### Problem Statement

Public involvement is an important component of any study, project, or program. The Corps of Engineers has the responsibility to involve and coordinate with the public in order to open and maintain channels of communication and give full consideration to public views and information throughout a decision-making process.

Currently, there are nearly 11,500 names on the mailing list, including congressional representatives; Federal, State, county, and city representatives; various interest groups and organizations, including waterway system users and environmental groups; businesses; drainage districts; libraries; media; and the unaffiliated general public.

- The public was informed and involved during the Upper Mississippi River - Illinois Waterway System Feasibility Study; continuing their involvement throughout the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program should be a goal.
- Public involvement can gain and maintain support for a project.

- People affected by a public decision should be given accurate information regarding the decision, should have a voice in that decision and should have the opportunity to help determine how the decision will be implemented.
- Public involvement can educate the public on why a decision was made and, if appropriate, why there are no other options.
- The mailing list should be maintained.
- Newsletters (providing systemic and project-specific information) should continue to be mailed to the public.
- The website should be updated to include current systemic and project-specific information, meeting information, and program documents (e.g., newsletters).
- Balancing the timing and level of public involvement efforts for the specific projects within the program will be a challenge.
- Without public involvement, the public would have no opportunity for feedback.
- The Corps would have no way of knowing or understanding the public's concerns.
- There would be no way to address/implement the public's concerns during the planning process.
- The Corps' credibility could suffer.
- The project could potentially be stopped by public opposition.

#### Current Status

Systemic Public Involvement is currently working to assist individual projects within NESP and is focusing on many start-up activities for communications needs, such as web site, program recognition and identity, communications network, and newsletter updates.

#### Authority

The Water Resources Development Act of 2007, TITLE VIII Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway System, authorized the project.