



US Army Corps
of Engineers
St. Paul District

Information Paper

M1. UMRS Systemic Forest Mgmt. Plan

Upper Mississippi River System - Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program

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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. The Systemic Forestry Management Plan is one of 23 initial NESP ecosystem restoration component projects being implemented under this new UMRS program.

The project provides for the development of a regional management plan, which will establish a foundation for the Corps, partner agencies and stakeholders to more effectively collaborate on and implement environmental stewardship activities within UMRS forests.

Problem Statement:

The forest and grassland components of the UMR and IWW floodplain are very important habitat for migratory and nesting birds as well as other wildlife. These habitats have been significantly affected by man's use and manmade modifications of the rivers and their floodplains. While the existing forests and grasslands may appear to casual observers to be natural and pristine, some of the important processes that determine their growth and survival have become artificial and are much harsher than pre-settlement conditions.

Coordinated management at a system level is needed to ensure long-term sustainability of these resources.



Current Status

In fiscal year (FY) 2005, the project team began writing a draft systemic forest management plan, with several reviews by partner agencies and groups. Three additional projects were implemented including a forest inventory, a survey of sediment depth, and classification of more than 200,000 acres of vegetation on the Illinois River floodplain. In FY06, the team continued work on the draft plan and presented it to the Science Panel for review. A workshop was conducted to scope a floodplain vegetation succession model, which would be used in making future forest management decisions. In FY07, a contract feasibility investigation was completed for hydrogeomorphic (HGM) modeling and analyses of the NESP project area. The report concluded it is feasible to complete the HGM analysis within a 3-5 year timeframe to provide important information on forest restoration potential and site suitability for forest species diversity. A Project Implementation Report for the Reno Bottoms Forest Restoration Project will be developed in FY08. Implementation/construction of the Reno Project and completion of the final systemic forest management plan is scheduled for FY09. The Reno Bottoms Project is located in Pool 9, Houston County, in the 1st Congressional District of Minnesota.

Authority

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