



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Rock Island District

Information Paper

N. Systemic Barge Fleeting 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 Barge Fleeting project is one of 23 initial NESP ecosystem restoration component projects being implemented under this new UMRS program.

The Systemic Barge Fleeting project will develop a systemic management plan, which will be used as a tool in the Federal regulatory and real estate leasing processes. Development of the plan will lead to increased collaboration among river managers and industry users facilitate resource protection, and aide realty and regulatory decisions. The effort will examine existing fleeting sites, identify critical or sensitive habitats that need to be protected, and identify likely areas for fleeting activities within the UMRS.



Problem Statement:

Incremental increases in barge traffic may lead to increased barge fleeting activities throughout the system. Existing fleetinging areas may need to be expanded along with the development of new sites. Fleeting operations can cause environmental impacts to forested resources, freshwater mussels, benthic fauna, bankline stability, cultural resources, and aesthetics. A systemic plan will be developed to guide the development of future fleetinging areas with respect for industry needs and resource protection on Federal lands/waters.

Current Status:

In fiscal year (FY) 2005, the project team began identifying the components, data needs, and steps necessary to achieve the plan. An initial scoping workshop was held in early September for project team members. The project team includes representation from federal agencies (Corps, USFWS, Coast Guard, and Maritime Administration) UMRS State agencies (DNR, DOC, and DOT), industry, and Mississippi River Basin Alliance. In FY06 the team created the GIS database, project mailing list and drafted the current conditions inventory. FY07 activities include creating the webpage, hold meeting with resource and industry partners, public involvement, forecasting future needs, and drafting a plan.