



US Army Corps  
of Engineers

# Upper Mississippi River - Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study

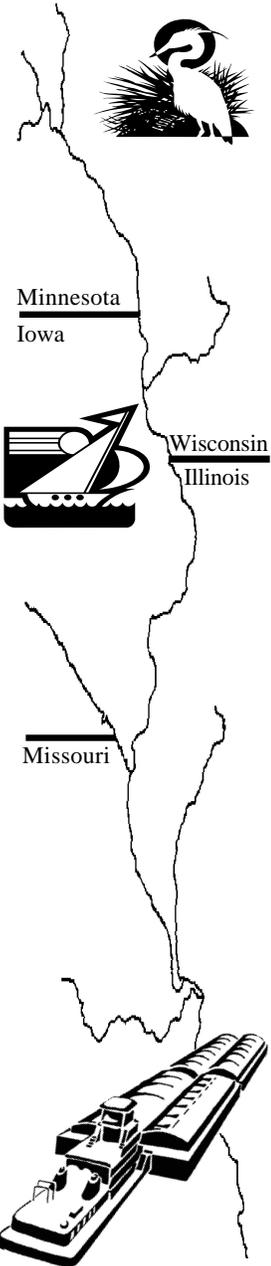
UMR-IWW System Navigation Study Newsletter

December 2001

Vol. 7 No. 1

## Navigation Study Resumes

*Focus expanded to study environmental sustainability*



**T**he Navigation Study of the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway is again underway.

Lt. Gen. Robert Flowers, Chief of Engineers for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, put the study on hold from March through August of this year to study recommendations made by the National Research Council (NRC) and a new National Federal Senior Principals Task Force. That task force is comprised of representatives of agencies with a stake in the river system.

Earlier in the year, the NRC—whose members represent the research arm of the National Academy of Sciences—recommended several changes in the study's environmental and economic analysis. The recommendations prompted a major restructuring of the study, a change that is being greeted optimistically, even by some of the study's early critics.

"The Corps certainly appears on paper to be on the right track," says Jeff Stein, the Mississippi River regional representative for American Rivers, the nation's leading river conservation group. "We are cautiously optimistic and very willing to do what we can to make this collaboration work."

Chris Brescia, president of the Midwest Area Rivers Coalition 2000—a coalition of agricultural commodity groups, grain companies and waterway carriers—says he worries the changes could delay potential lock and dam modernization but does like the emphasis on true collaboration. "We're helping the Corps of Engineers produce an interim report that captures some of the economic risk we face as a nation if we don't take action rap-

idly," he says, "It's important that we conjure up a future for the river that is not mutually exclusive, meaning you can have traffic growth on the river and still protect the environment."

The study's focus no longer will be limited to the initial study goal: whether river transportation improvements are needed and, if so, the resulting environmental impacts of those improvements. The restructured study will look more holistically at the complicated interrelationship between the environment, navigation system and floodplain. It will work to ensure the waterway system continues to be a nationally treasured ecological resource as well as an effective transportation system by seeking ways to:

- Reduce lock congestion
- Achieve an environmentally sustainable system
- Address ecosystem and floodplain management needs

The new goals represent a significant departure from the purpose of the study when it was launched in 1993, says Denny Lundberg, the project manager.

"What the NRC suggested and what other stakeholders have embraced is that we should expand the study to look at the navigation system more holistically and that we provide equal planning to protect and enhance natural resources," Lundberg said. "Certainly navigation is still a big component of the study, but we're stepping back and broadening the scope to better understand the interrelationship between navigation, floodplain uses and the environment."

*continued on page 2*

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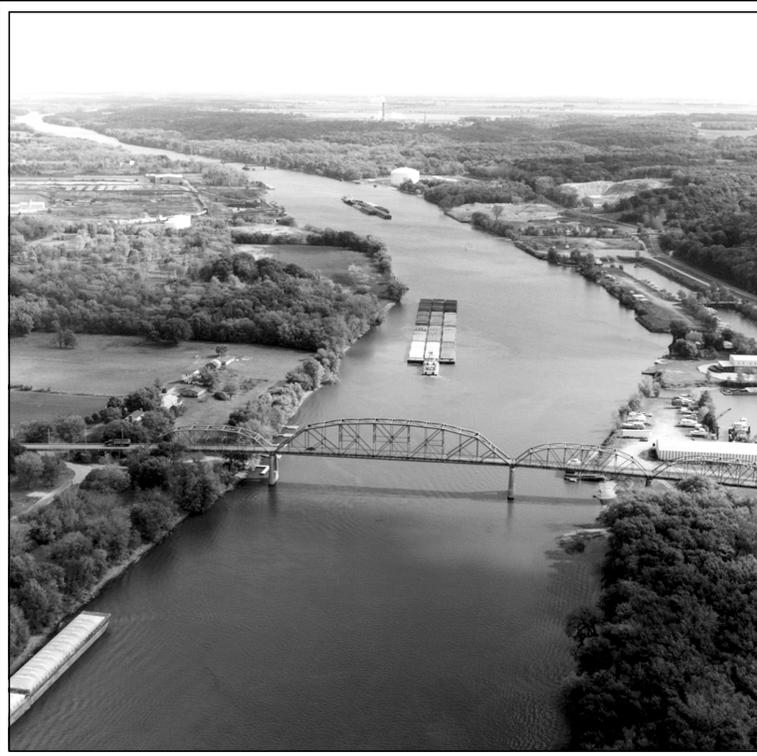
What is particularly exciting, Lundberg says, is the new emphasis on collaboration among agencies and groups, both private and governmental. Some of the agencies have a major stake in the rivers' ecosystems and others in the role the rivers play in the national economy. While participation by the public, interest groups, states and other federal agencies has been extensive in the study to date, the Corps has developed a new structure for the study that will provide even greater and more immediate input and participation than before.

As part of the study's new structure, other federal agencies have a major study role through the new National Federal Senior Principals Task Force that was assembled at the invitation of Lt. Gen. Flowers. This "federal family" approach reflects the broad importance of the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway, Lundberg says. The task force already has helped refocus the study's goals and will continue to meet quarterly to monitor the study process.

Task force members include Washington-level representatives of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds; and the Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration. Regional representatives of those agencies also are working closely with the study team, as are the core advisory groups and coordinating committees that were formed at the study's inception.

Collaboration isn't limited to the study process, however. One of the new study goals is to explore the fragmented approach to the current management of the river. The study

will assess the interrelationship of various agencies with interest in the river system and suggest opportunities for greater collaboration.



The team is working to complete an interim report in July 2002, followed by a final report two-to-three years later. The interim report will assess the need for navigation improvements as well as ecosystem restoration and floodplain management and will identify additional Congressional authorization that may be needed. It may also identify measures that can meet those needs on an interim basis under present authorities.

Another key purpose of the report is to assess the need for and potential contents of a comprehensive river plan. That may include identifying additional

opportunities and partnerships that could help preserve, protect or restore critical elements of the ecosystem.

The report will be developed collaboratively with federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, key stakeholders and the public.

Because of the NRC's conclusion that it is difficult if not impossible to predict 50 years into the future, a scenario analysis will be used to look at and make recommendations based on several potential future "worlds." Those scenarios will represent alternative sets of conditions or developments related to the river system and will be developed in collaboration with many other groups and agencies.

The general public will have its first opportunity to learn more about the study's history and new direction at a series of upcoming public meetings, described in more detail on Page 6. ♦

## *Navigation Study At a Glance*

The Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study is a multi-year, multi-million dollar study that is assessing various improvement needs on the waterway system over a 50-year planning period. The study area includes 854 miles of the Upper Mississippi River, with 29 locks and dams, between Minneapolis-St. Paul and the mouth of the Ohio River. It also covers 348 miles of the Illinois Waterway, a stretch with eight locks and dams that connects the Great Lakes with the Mississippi River. ♦

## *Study website gets a new look and new features*

As one step in an effort to make the Navigation Study more collaborative, the study team is upgrading its website. The new site, located at: <http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/NavigationStudy.htm>, will be more interactive and comprehensive than the previous site and will thereby improve opportunities for public involvement. The new site also will include data and links that reflect the broader scale of the restructured study as well as study reports published to date. The first phase of the new website is expected to be complete by mid-December and will feature the new design and many of the new search components. Most new features should be complete by mid-January.

Among the many new features, the interactive website will:

- Be searchable. A new keyword search option will allow visitors to the site to search all navigation study documents containing a particular term or phrase.
- Include a calendar feature that will allow quick searches of upcoming meetings by location or date.
- Provide information on and links to areas new to the study.
- Feature a question-and-answer section that will address frequently asked study questions, a list of study milestones, and a current study timeline. ♦

### *Economic and Environmental Groups Meet*

As one of the first steps in a new collaboration between groups with varying interests in this multiple use river system, the study's Economics Coordinating Committee met in conjunction with the Navigation Environmental Coordination Committee in late November. The Corps of Engineers hired an independent contractor to facilitate the discussion, and the result was the development of a common vision for the river system, says Project Manager Denny Lundberg.

"We developed a common understanding that sustainability is a balance between economic, environmental and social considerations," he says. "The groups also provided an



initial set of considerations that need to go into the scenario development." For a more detailed summary of the meeting's outcome, check our website: <http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/NavigationStudy.htm>. ♦

### *Governors Liaison Committee Meets*

The Governors' Liaison Committee—the group that has been the study's core advisory group since the study's inception—met November 13 in St. Louis to review the study's new directive. The committee discussed the concepts of economic, environmental and social sustainability.

The committee will meet again on February 26, 2002, at the Doubletree Hotel Minneapolis Airport at the Mall, 7901 24th Avenue South, Bloomington, Minnesota. ♦

## *Questions and Answers*

The Navigation Study has new goals and objectives, raising questions among even those who have closely followed the study's progress. Here we offer answers to key questions about the changes, provided collaboratively by members of the study team.

*Q: What are the most significant changes in the study's new direction?*

A: The scope of the study has been significantly broadened to focus on the authorized federal navigation projects on the Mississippi River above Cairo, Illinois and the Illinois Waterway System and the ecological and floodplain resources that are affected by these navigation projects. A primary objective of this restructured effort is to relieve lock congestion, achieve an environmentally sustainable system and address ecosystem and floodplain management needs related to navigation in a holistic manner. The restructured navigation study seeks to ensure that the river and waterway system will continue to be an effective transportation system and a nationally treasured ecological resource.

*Q: What happens to all the work done since the study began in 1993? Will it be scrapped, or is it still valid and usable?*

A: The majority of the work that has been completed to date is very useful in defining the future direction of the study. When we tie it into our new objectives and goal statement, it will help define the interaction between navigation and the other multiple resources of the river system. The study has definitely pushed the state of the art and developed a better understanding of the impacts of navigation traffic on the river system. Approximately \$24 million has been expended since 1993 on studying the impact of the navigation system on the environment. The research findings and analyses remain a valuable, integral component of the study. In addition, all of the engineering work done to define the condition of the river system, the infrastructure and potential alternatives will be useful in reformulating potential recommendations. While the team will no longer use the study's initial economic model, much useful information was gathered on the existing economics of the current system.

*Q: Study team members have talked about a new level of collaboration. How does this differ from the initial involvement of the public and other groups and governmental agencies in the study process?*

A: The way we termed it before, we were doing more coordinating. Coordinating is bringing information to the public, other federal and state agencies and others as it is developed, and then receiving information and comments through that process. Collaboration, the way we define it, is giving stakeholders more ownership in what we're doing. One of the primary topics for our upcoming public forums will be the collaborative process—what else do we need to consider? We've discussed the possibility of having the Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Sierra Club, American Rivers or others participating with us to explain for themselves how they have ownership in this study. They're part of it.

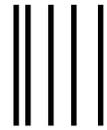
*Q: The biggest criticism stems from your economic model. Will it still be used in the final study?*

A: The National Research Council found the ESSENCE Model, which represented an effort by the Corps to advance the state of the art of economic forecasting, to contain flawed assumptions and data. Until the model has been corrected and independently evaluated and also garnered wide acceptance, it will not be used. The scenario analysis, which we will be using in place of forecasting, allows development of scenarios that can influence the future rather than trying to react to it. Out of those scenarios will come traffic forecasts. They will be run with the Tow Cost Model, used by the Corps in the past for Ohio River studies.

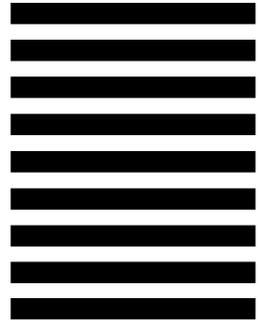
*Q: Will the Interim Report present recommendations for navigation improvements and/or ecosystem restoration projects?*

A: The Interim Report will contain a matrix outlining various scenarios and potential alternatives. Four-to-five scenarios will be developed that cover a broad range of future world conditions; alternatives will reflect a combination of measures designed to address the needs of the navigation system and the environment. A preliminary assessment of alternatives will be accomplished as part of the Interim Report. ♦

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US Army Corps  
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December 2001

UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER - ILLINOIS WATERWAY SYSTEM NAVIGATION STUDY  
COMMENT SHEET

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**note: Name, Telephone, and Address are optional and can be left blank**

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Please check **ONE** category below that represents your primary interest in the study.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Group     | <input type="checkbox"/> State Government                   | <input type="checkbox"/> No Particular Affiliations; |
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## Team Contacts

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***Environmental and Historic Properties Leader:***

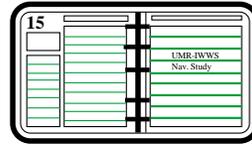
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***Engineering Leader:***

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***Public Involvement Leader:***

Kevin Bluhm (St. Paul)  
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## Upcoming Meetings

Navigation Environmental  
Coordination Committee

Meeting tentatively planned for January 2002

Economics Coordinating Committee

Nothing scheduled as of newsletter release

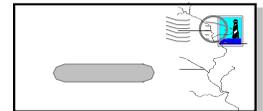
Governors' Liaison Committee

February 26, 2002 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.  
Doubletree Hotel Minneapolis Airport at the Mall  
7901 24th Ave. South, Bloomington, Minn.

Check the study's website at  
<http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/NavigationStudy.htm>  
or call 800-872-8822 for updated meeting times and locations.

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If we do not receive a response, we will continue sending you a newsletter at the current address on our database. ♦

## Public Meetings Planned

The general public will get the first comprehensive look at the restructured Navigation Study at a series of public meetings tentatively scheduled for March. The meetings will be held throughout the study area and will include informal interaction with the study team and other groups and agencies with a critical stake in the river system.

The meeting format will include an update on study changes as well as a chance for audience members to provide feedback. Members of the public will get the chance to hear from the study team and from representatives of other federal agencies and private groups with a vested interest in the project. The next issue of our newsletter will include detailed information about the meetings and locations. ♦

## Questions?

○ For general study information, call Denny Lundberg, project manager, at 309/794-5632 or write to the address below, ATIN: CEMR-PM or visit our home page at: <http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/NavigationStudy.htm>

○ For information on Public Involvement meetings, call the toll-free telephone number, 800/USA(872)-8822. Meeting announcements will be in the Public Involvement menu. Meetings are also announced on the study's website. Or call Kevin Blum, public involvement coordinator, at 651/290-5247, or write to the address below, ATIN: CEMR-PM-A.

○ To be added to the mailing list for future newsletters, study updates, and meeting announcements, write to the address below, ATIN: CEMR-PM-A, or call the toll-free telephone number and leave your information in the Public Involvement menu.

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