



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Rock Island District

United States Department of Defense

US Army Corps of Engineers - Rock Island District

UMR-IWW Navigation Study 1994 Public Meetings

Interim Product Report, November 1995

"Response to Issues Raised at the Public and NEPA Scoping Meetings of November 1994"

Issue Statements (Part 4 of 6)

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

42. There are strengths and weaknesses related to holding public meetings. How was this format decided on and what other options for public input are being pursued?

Response: The public meeting format, which was used for the November 1994 series of eight meetings, was selected based on the goals of the meeting and the point in the study. The goals of the meetings were to provide information to the public, seek their participation in identifying problems and opportunities, and use the meetings as part of the National Environmental Policy Act scoping process. The public meeting format was well suited to this particular purpose.

The November 1994 meeting series was announced in our October 1994 newsletter and a news release was provided to study area media two weeks in advance. In addition, media kits were hand delivered to the major media in the cities hosting meetings the week prior to the meetings. Written comments were accepted at the meetings and through December 18, 1994, to provide additional opportunities for those unable to attend the meetings or anyone who did not have an opportunity to speak at the meetings. The cost of holding this series of eight meetings was approximately \$100,000, including staff time to prepare presentations, room and equipment rental, Corps of Engineers staff and contractor attendance, and travel. However, the cost of holding public involvement activities varies based on the number of locations and the amount of Corps of Engineers staff effort required for preparation and participation.

During other phases of the study, different types of public involvement activities will be held. The last week in November and the first week of December 1995, a series of five open houses will be held to allow individuals to view displays on various aspects of the Navigation Study and to talk directly with study team representatives on a one-to-one basis. Additional public involvement outreach activities will be held as the study process moves through plan formulation towards evaluation and selection of a recommended plan. These meetings will be scheduled to provide ease of participation by the public and various interests as the study schedule and funding allow (e.g., convenient locations and avoiding spring planting and fall harvesting times as much as possible).

Comments:

- It is hard to get information and understanding across in a public meeting format. (1)
- I do not know if they truly listen to people who put food on their table. (1)
- Should look at alternative public input processes (i.e., accept written comments and forget public meetings). (1)
- What does it cost to hold the public meetings? (1)
- Meeting should avoid planting and harvest times so farmers can attend. (6)
- Need more opportunity for public comment. (1)
- Why was the public notice so short? (4)
- Well-publicized forum. (1)

43. Many interests have a stake in the river. What actions is the Corps of Engineers taking to coordinate the study efforts with other agencies, interest groups, and the general public?

Response: The Corps of Engineers has and is continuing to hold public meetings, open houses, and forums to provide information to interested individuals and organizations. The study newsletter, distributed three times each year, is mailed to over 9,000 individuals and organizations. The Corps has been working to make the mailing list as inclusive as possible including Federal, State, county, and city governmental agencies; environmental interest groups; agricultural and towing industry representatives; recreational groups; the general public; and others. This list grew significantly following the November 1994 public meetings. A toll free number (1-800-872-8822) has been established for interested individuals to call, and we are in the process of adding an Internet address where interested individuals will be able to access study documents and the latest information on the study.

Throughout the study, team members are also meeting with experts from the various Federal and State agencies. Many of these meetings have been formalized into coordination committees that meet on a regular basis to discuss and provide input on study methods and progress. For example, we are coordinating study activities with the states through the Governors' Liaison Committee, comprised of a representative appointed by the governor of each of the five states in the study area (Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin). A Navigation Environmental Coordination Committee, an Economics

Coordination Committee, a Public Involvement Coordination Committee, and an Engineering Coordinating Committee have also been formed. These interagency committees include participation by the Missouri Department of Conservation; the Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources; the Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation; Iowa State University; MARC (Midwest Area River Coalition) 2000; the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These meetings are open to the public and are announced in the study newsletters and on the toll free number.

As a result of the open nature of the study and wide distribution of newsletters and information, there are many opportunities for individuals and various interest groups to participate in the study process. Individuals have the opportunity to attend meetings, call the study number, provide written comments on the study, and receive the newsletters. To date, recreation groups, environmental organizations, the commercial towing industry, and agricultural interests have been the primary interests represented. Comments have also been received for other groups such as commercial fishermen.

In addition to the newsletter updates on study progress, several interim products and reports will be made available to the public throughout the study process. As these products become available, they will be listed in the study newsletter along with the information on how to obtain a copy.

Comments:

- What are the provisions for input from other agencies and interests? (2)
- Why are state resource agencies skeptical of the Corps and this study? (2)
- Are commercial mussel or fishermen involved in the study? (2)
- What is the level of input from private environmental groups? (2)
- Study needs wider exposure to public and people who live along the river. (2)
- Who is involved in work groups, both public and non-profit, and are committee meetings open to the public? (1)
- Public needs to see interim reports, receive updates on major developments, and have opportunities to assess the study throughout the progress. (5)
- Public needs more specific information and accurate costs. (2)
- Can Corps improve its 800 number and add E-mail to provide information? (3)

44. A wide range of comments and concerns has been expressed throughout the study. How is this public input being taken into consideration, and is the study, prior to completion, critically evaluated to determine if there is a viable option that provides an economically, engineeringly, and environmentally sound alternative which is publicly acceptable?

Response: The intent of public involvement is to gather the comments and input of the public for consideration in the study. Public involvement provides an opportunity for input and discussion so that both the Corps and public become more informed about the alternative plans and potential impacts. The Corps of Engineers will take the comments and concerns that are raised into consideration as the study progresses and decision points are reached. Ideas and comments will be addressed and implemented where practical and appropriate. In addition to inclusion in the Content Analysis Report, dated February 1995, and this document, information presented at the meetings and in written statements has become part of the permanent record of this study. Issues raised throughout the study will be considered in the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement.

Public involvement is important in evaluating alternatives as part of the NEPA process, and as more specific alternatives are identified, public input will be useful in determining the public acceptability of a particular plan. Throughout the study process, the completeness, efficiency, effectiveness, and acceptability of the various measures and alternatives are evaluated as they relate to economic, engineering, environmental, and public involvement considerations. Rather than stopping the study, issues related to these factors typically are incorporated into the study and often result in modifications to the analysis and recommended plan. This helps to determine the eventual recommendation which could range from no Federal action (no project) to various combinations of measures. There have been past instances where widespread public unacceptability has halted proposed projects that were judged to be economically, engineeringly, and environmentally complete, effective, and efficient. If there is a recommended plan, the study results are reported to Congress, which then decides if any further action is to be taken.

Comments:

- Would Corps recommend no new construction based on opposition by public? (3)
- If as a whole there is significant resistance to the project, how can it be justified? (1)
- The major concern appears to be the possible ecosystem decline not traffic congestion; will the scoping and future planning be changed to reflect these concerns? (4)
- Concern that public input will not be considered and acted upon. (17)
- Public involvement should focus on heeding public opinion not just hearing it. (3)
- Corps must act on this input or it is not meeting NEPA. (1)
- Why aren't people listened to and taken seriously? (3)
- I would have to say, based on past experience, there is no apparent way to influence the Corps decision-making process. (1)
- Are you listening, do you care about the costs, the negative effects, the hardships that your actions will cause to people and the river ecosystem? (1)
- Always 99 percent do not want Corps involvement yet they are always there to screw up the rivers. (1)
- Does anyone at this meeting support this study? (2)
- Is there a point where the entire study is critically evaluated to determine if it should be completed and changes recommended? (1)
- Will there be an evaluation at the end to determine if enough information is available to decide what to do? (1)
- Why don't we get to vote on item like the Navigation Study in elections? (1)

45. How is the Navigation Study being coordinated with other Federal actions that are likely to affect the river and environmental corridors?

Response: Throughout the study, the Corps of Engineers is meeting with representatives of various Federal and State agencies and private interest groups. Many of these meetings have been formalized into coordination committees that meet on a regular basis. For example, we are coordinating study activities with the states through the Governors' Liaison Committee, comprised of a representative appointed by the governor of each of the five states in the study area (Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin). A Navigation Environmental Coordination Committee, an Economics Coordination Committee, a Public Involvement Coordination Committee, and an Engineering Coordinating Committee have also been formed. These are interagency committees which include participation from the Missouri Department of Conservation; the Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources; the Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation; Iowa State University; MARC (Midwest Area River Coalition) 2000; the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These meetings are also open to the public and other interest groups and agencies.

This study will include decisions made in association with the Missouri River Master Manual that would affect the flows of the rivers which may affect the system navigation. The results of that effect, if the results are known at the appropriate time, will be used as input in this Navigation Study. Ongoing coordination exists both within the Corps of Engineers and with other participating agencies and interests. The Mississippi River Heritage Corridor and other similar initiatives have no direct relationship to the Navigation Study and are not being considered as part of the study effort.

Comments:

- Is this study being coordinated with other Corps and Federal actions that affect the river and floodplain (e.g., USDA)? (4)
- The study should address land and water management policies of other Federal initiatives (e.g., Mississippi River Heritage Corridor Study and Mississippi National River and Recreation Area). (3)
- Missouri River Watershed Plan needs to recognize impacts of navigation on the Mississippi River. (3)
- Why isn't the Missouri River included in this study? (1)
- What is this study's relationship to the Missouri River Master Plan? (1)

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