

Frequently Asked Questions for Intake Dam Modification Project
Yellowstone River, Montana
October 3, 2008

Q: Why is the Federal Government proposing modifications to the irrigation diversion structures at Intake?

A: Reclamation constructed the Lower Yellowstone Project in the early 1900s to promote development of irrigated agriculture in the area. Since that time, the pallid sturgeon was listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Current operation of the Project may adversely affect pallid sturgeon. To ensure future operation of the Project meets its authorized purposes, compliance with the Endangered Species Act is necessary.

Q: When will the passage issue be resolved?

A: No Federal action can begin until after completion of the environmental review process, which will include consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The environmental review process began on September 12, 2008 with publishing of the Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register*. Public input has just begun and may affect the completion date. Thus, no completion date for the environmental review can be finalized at this time.

Q: Will the project impact local interests; such as paddlefish angling?

A: At this stage of the environmental review process, we do not know what the impacts may be, since alternatives are still being formulated. Once they are formulated, a thorough analysis will be conducted to evaluate all resource impacts, including impacts to paddlefish angling. Public input is being solicited for information about impacts to recreation and other resources.

Q: What are the alternatives being considered?

A: Preliminary fish passage alternatives identified in the Notice of Intent include:

1. Passage around the existing diversion dam;
2. Relocation of the diversion dam and canal headworks to take advantage of hydrology and topography;
3. Removing the dam and constructing one or more pumping plants; and
4. Variations of a low-gradient rock ramp in the river.

Preliminary fish screen (reducing entrainment) alternatives identified in the Notice of Intent include:

1. A fish screen structure in the Main Canal with fish bypass to the river; and
2. A rotary drum fish screen on the bank of the river.

With many opportunities for public input, the environmental review process will evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives. We are looking at combinations that would minimize pallid sturgeon entrapment in the canal system and allow pallid sturgeon to pass upstream of the diversion dam.

Q: How much will the project cost?

A: Project costs will be determined based on the option or alternative selected. At this stage of the environmental review process, we do not have enough information to make an accurate cost estimate.

Q: Why is the Corps of Engineers involved in modification of a Reclamation structure?

A: The Water Resources Development Act of 2007 authorized the Corps of Engineers to participate in the proposed Intake Diversion Dam modification project. This project also supports the Corps' Missouri River Recovery Plan efforts and implementation of the Corps' Missouri River Master Manual Biological Opinion. By providing passage for pallid sturgeon at Intake Diversion Dam, the entire pallid sturgeon recovery effort in the states of Montana and North Dakota may benefit.

Q: Why is Reclamation involved in a Corps-funded project?

A: It is not uncommon for federal agencies to collaborate on finding solutions to challenging issues, such as pallid sturgeon recovery. The Intake Diversion Dam Modification Project involves a Reclamation irrigation project; therefore, Reclamation is interested in working collaboratively to comply with the Endangered Species Act.