



Quick Facts

There are 18 Refuge, Fisheries, and Ecological Services field stations of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that are either located or carry out work on the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. Funding for these stations, that was directed at the two rivers, exceeded \$11 million in FY 2005.

Highlight

In cooperation with the Corps of Engineers and the UMR State natural resource agencies of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed an electronic GIS based inventory of important fish and wildlife resources for over 1200 miles of the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. This inventory contains thousands of locations for birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, as well as important private and publicly owned lands. The database was developed from scores of references and numerous meetings with natural resources management professionals.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

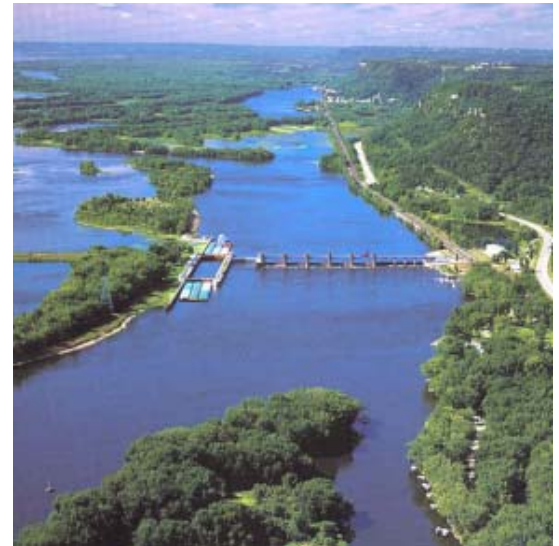
Midwest Region

A Plan for Cooperative Conservation on the Upper Mississippi River

Its importance to our nation's natural heritage is unsurpassed – the Upper Mississippi River system supports 60 percent of all North American birds and 40 percent of all North American waterfowl at some point in their life cycle. The system contains 400,000 acres of wetlands and deepwater habitats; there are 11 national wildlife refuges encompassing 270,000 acres. It is home to seven federally endangered or threatened species, including at least 100 nesting pairs and over 2,000 wintering bald eagles. Sport and commercial fisheries provide over 10 million user-days each year. A 1992 study showed the system provides over \$1.2 billion in recreation benefits.

The Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers are major transportation corridors. Over the last 60 years they have been intensively managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for commercial navigation. With 29 navigation locks and dams on the system, the Corps spends more than \$140 million every year on operation and maintenance practices that have taken a toll on fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. In addition, high nutrient inputs from the basin and new invasive species threaten the integrity of this nationally significant ecosystem.

The Environmental Management Program (EMP) enacted in 1986 has



demonstrated success in restoring aquatic and wetland habitats, but has been too limited in scope to reverse the overall system-wide decline that is due to floodplain development and watershed influences.

As the Corps looked ahead to meet future navigation needs, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service saw the opportunity to meet future needs of the ecosystem. The challenge of marrying these two seemingly incongruous uses has been met in a spirit of innovation and cooperation.

The result of 12 years of close work between the two agencies, states, and other partners is the Integrated Feasibility Report and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Upper Mississippi River System Navigation and Feasibility Study, known as the UMRS Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program, or NESP. It calls for a dual-purpose,

50-year project authority for 9-foot channel commercial navigation and ecosystem restoration. The current 50-year project addresses only navigation. The plan recognizes the importance of both navigation and natural resources represented by the Upper Mississippi River and the unique opportunity to coordinate activities for the benefit of both uses.

NESP calls for integrated management of the river system for both navigation and habitat. The ecosystem component consists of a large number of system-wide restoration measures and the navigation component consists mainly of new navigation locks at existing dams. The ecosystem restoration component would include measures such as backwater and side-channel restoration, water-level management, floodplain restoration and fish passage along 1,300 miles of rivers and in many thousands of acres of wetlands.

The recommended plan represents a long-term solution to long-standing natural resource conflicts on the Upper Mississippi River. The Service, the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa and Missouri, the Corps, and environmental and navigation interests have worked together for a quarter century to address conflicts between commercial navigation and conserving natural resources. The proposed plan addresses these varied needs in a comprehensive manner into the future.

NESP costs over 50 years are projected at \$2.6 billion for navigation improvements and \$5.7 billion for ecosystem restoration. Pending Congressional legislation would authorize the first 15 years of implementation at \$1.8 billion for navigation improvements and \$1.58 billion for ecosystem improvements.

The Service has a diverse and extensive role in NESP. Working together with the Corps, the states and partners, the Service will identify, prioritize and design hundreds of ecosystem restoration projects in five states.

The Service will be part of project performance monitoring; will work with the Corps to protect habitat for endangered and threatened species; will review projects built on Service lands; and will be responsible for up to \$1 million a year for operation and maintenance costs at full implementation.

The Service is a permanent member of the Interagency Science Panel, which supports adaptive management for NESP and integrated river management. In addition, the Service and the Corps will co-lead the interagency River Council, which will help guide new and existing multi-purpose river initiatives - navigation, ecosystem restoration, flood reduction - into the future.