

Finger Lakes Habitat Project , Wabasha, Minnesota

Location/Description

Part of the Corps of Engineers' Environmental Management Program, the Finger Lakes are five backwater lakes on the Minnesota side of the Mississippi River in upper Pool 5, immediately below the Lock and Dam 4 dike. The site is in the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. With construction of Lock and Dam 4, fresh water flows could only enter the Finger Lakes overland during high water. This restriction caused low dissolved oxygen conditions in the lakes at other times of the year, hampering fish productivity.

The Corps of Engineers installed a culvert through the dike in the 1960s to provide flow to one of the lakes. The other four lakes continued to experience periods of low dissolved oxygen during the summer and winter.

The project included the installation of three gated culverts in the Lock and Dam 4 dike to provide a maximum of 50 cubic feet per second of fresh water flow to each lake. The project provides year-round fresh water flow into the four lakes to maintain minimum dissolved oxygen levels of 5 mg/l. The project improves fishery productivity in about 113 acres of backwater habitat.



Status

A construction contract was awarded in September 1992 and was essentially completed in July 1994. The project was transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for operation and maintenance in December 1994. A biological monitoring study to evaluate the effects of the project was completed in 1999. A proposal to dredge one of the Finger Lakes (Clear Lake) to improve the fishery in the lake is being evaluated in 2007. If the dredging is found to be feasible, the dredged material would be used for topsoil in conjunction with the proposed Dam 4 embankment project in 2007.

Authority

The Finger Lakes Habitat Project was planned under the authority of the Upper Mississippi River System - Environmental Management Program and constructed in accordance with a definite project report dated May 1990. The Environmental Management Program was authorized by Section 1103 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 and reauthorized by the Water Resources Development Act of 1999.

The project was planned and designed as part of a cooperative effort of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Wisconsin and Minnesota Departments of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and local interests.

Fiscal

Project design and construction costs were 100 percent federal because the project is located on lands managed as a national wildlife refuge. Operation and maintenance costs are 100 percent federal (a responsibility of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).

Federal cost \$1,445,000
Non-federal cost \$0
Total cost \$1,445,000