

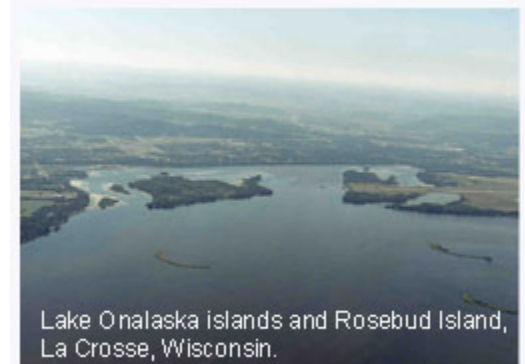
Lake Onalaska Habitat Project, La Crosse, Wisconsin

Location/Description

Part of the Corps' Environmental Management Program, the site is located at Lake Onalaska, above lock and dam 7 at La Crosse, Wis. Lake Onalaska is a 7,000-acre backwater lake on the Wisconsin side of the Mississippi River navigation channel. The site is in the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

The lake is nationally recognized as one of the best bluegill and largemouth bass backwater lakes on the Upper Mississippi River and a major staging area for migrating waterfowl. However, sedimentation and aquatic plant growth had virtually eliminated flows through a fishery wintering area near Rosebud Island, creating winter and summer dissolved oxygen problems. Islands in Lake Onalaska had also eroded, leaving the lake subject to increased wave action and turbidity.

The project included dredging channels behind Rosebud Island to provide oxygenated water to the fishery area and constructing three islands in the middle of the lake to reduce wave action. The channels provide flow to a 200-acre area near Rosebud Island, restoring the winter fisheries value. The islands in the lake reduce wave action to promote growth of aquatic vegetation and provide predator-free waterfowl nesting areas.



Status

The project was combined with a highway project to obtain additional highway embankment fill. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation awarded a construction contract in February 1989. Channel dredging, island construction, and placement of highway fill were completed in October 1989. Spreading and seeding of topsoil on the three islands and rehabilitating Rosebud Island were completed in summer 1990.

Remedial work to correct an erosion problem on the islands was completed in 1993. Island stability and vegetation surveys in 1990 indicated a relatively dense cover. In the area downstream of the channel cuts, pre- and post-project monitoring studies indicate a marked improvement in dissolved oxygen levels; minimum winter oxygen levels are being met.

Authority

The Lake Onalaska 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 August 1988. 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 Department of Natural Resources, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and local interests.

Fiscal

Habitat project design and construction costs were 100 percent federal, because the project is on lands managed as a national wildlife refuge. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation was reimbursed for the habitat portion of the project. Operation and maintenance costs are 100 percent federal (a responsibility of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).

Federal cost \$2,064,000

Non-federal cost \$0

Total cost \$2,064,000