



**US ARMY CORPS
OF ENGINEERS
Rock Island District**

02-07-41
Release No.
July 31, 2002
For Release

News Release

Project Manager: **Denny Lundberg**
(309) 794-5632

Public Affairs Office: **Ron Fournier**
(309) 794-5274

Navigation Study Interim Report Completed

ROCK ISLAND, ILL. -- Today, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released a blueprint for moving forward with its plan to ensure that the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers continue to be nationally treasured ecological resources, as well as effective transportation systems. The blueprint is included in the Corps' Interim Report of the restructured Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway System Navigation Feasibility Study.

Brig. Gen. Edwin J. Arnold, Commander of the Corps' Mississippi Valley Division, said, "We have come a long way over the course of the past year. First, with respect to restructuring the study to give equal consideration to the ecosystem and economic development, we are demonstrating that environmental and economic sustainability can co-exist; and second, and possibly even more significant, is the collaborative relationship that has developed among the key federal agencies involved, both at the national and regional level. I am extremely proud of the role the Corps played in forging this collaborative partnership with our fellow federal agencies and truly feel that the best interest of the American people is being served."

The Interim Report outlines those navigation improvement and ecosystem restoration measures that will be carried forward for evaluation. These include nonstructural measures such as congestion fees and traffic management, and structural measures such as guidewall extensions, lock extensions, and new locks. Ecosystem restoration measures include those beneficial adjustments to system operation and maintenance, ecosystem restoration opportunities, and environmental enhancement opportunities related to the navigation system. Examples of these measures include traffic impact prevention and reduction, channel modifications, systemic fish passage and water level management, and backwater, secondary channel, and island rehabilitation.

The restructured study and the development of the Interim Report are being accomplished under a new spirit of collaboration among the stakeholders of the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway System. This Interim Report has been provided to the Corps' Washington, D.C., headquarters and to Congress. This Report is available on the navigation study website at <http://www2.mvr.usace.army.mil/umr-iwwsns/>

The Federal Principals Group for the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study has strongly endorsed the report's framework for completion of the feasibility study and the scenarios that are presented. In addition to the Corps, the Principals Group consists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, and the Maritime Administration. The Principals Group finds that the restructured feasibility study will fully address the goal of assuring an economically efficient and environmentally sustainable navigation system. The Principals Group statement is available at http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/hot_topics/

This Interim Report provides a history of past study activities, the purpose of the restructuring, initial plan formulation activities including establishment of goals, objectives and alternatives, and also identifies implementation issues.

The Report contains preliminary conclusions that will be further developed in the feasibility study. The next step in the study is the completion of a Draft Feasibility Report in early 2004.

For more information about the Interim Report for the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study, contact the project manager, Denny Lundberg, at (309) 794-5632, the Rock Island District, Public Affairs Office at (309) 794-5274, or visit the web site at: <http://www2.mvr.usace.army.mil/umr-iwwsns/>.

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