



News Release

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Corps of Engineers receives engineering award for Pool 8 Islands project

VICKSBURG, MISS, March 11, 2004 -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, received a 2004 Chief of Engineers Environmental Award of Excellence for its Pool 8 Islands habitat project near La Crosse, Wis., from its headquarters this month. The St. Paul District is one of six district offices within the Mississippi Valley Division.

Corps of Engineers' headquarters established this biannual awards program in 1965 to recognize and promote excellence in design and environmental achievement by its engineers and professional contractors. This year, the mostly non-Corps judges received 17 entries in the environmental category, eight of which were selected for awards. Only St. Paul District received the highest award presented, the award of excellence.

The Pool 8 habitat project is part of the Upper Mississippi River Environmental Management Program and was planned and designed in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Wisconsin and Minnesota Departments of Natural Resources and local interests. The project took almost 10 years and \$4.5 million to complete. It consisted of rebuilding more than four miles of islands in Pool 8 that eroded between 1939-1989, following lock and dam construction on the Mississippi River. This erosion was caused by wave action, floods, river currents and ice action and resulted in a decline of more than 1,000 acres of aquatic habitat for waterfowl and fish.

"By restoring the islands, we were trying to do what would happen naturally without the locks and dams," said Jon Hendrickson, USACE hydraulics engineer. "River currents and sediment transport were returned to more natural conditions, wind-driven wave action was reduced and diversity of habitat was restored."

About the project, the panel of judges said, "This comprehensive project documents the success of restoration over time. A combination of hydraulics, geotechnical and biotechnical improvements was used to set an example for successful floodplain restoration along the Mississippi. [It is] an outstanding example of an engineering solution that has stood the test of time and successfully integrated itself with nature."

2-2-2-2 Engineering Award

"Although not a large public works project, the design challenges and innovative solutions were outstanding and the success of the design concept has been clearly documented," they continued. "By using earth fill and rock to create islands and restore natural vegetation and the floodplain, the habitat conditions for migratory birds, fish and other species were optimized. The project required complex hydraulic, geotechnical, ecological, and biotechnical analysis, and deserves the highest award."

Numerous individuals from the district office and other agencies supported the completion of the Pool 8 Islands habitat project. About receiving this award, Corps' project manager Don Powell, said, "The award recognizes the expertise of the multi-agency team that planned and designed the habitat restoration project along with local public input. The success of the project in achieving the return of aquatic vegetation to the area is a result of many people working together toward a common goal."

The Mississippi Valley Division is responsible for Corps water resources programs in a 370,000-square-mile area that includes portions of 12 states; its boundary extends from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. District offices are headquartered in St. Paul, Minn.; Rock Island, Ill.; St. Louis, Mo.; Memphis, Tenn.; Vicksburg, Miss.; and New Orleans, La. For more information, see www.mvd.usace.army.mil.