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US Army Corps of Engineers
St. Paul District

Information Paper

M1. UMRS Systemic Forestry Mgmt. Plan

Upper Mississippi River System - Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program

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Location/Description

The program area comprises the Upper Mississippi River System, as defined by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 (WRDA 1986), which includes the Upper Mississippi River from Minneapolis, Minnesota, to Cairo, Illinois; the Illinois Waterway from Chicago to Grafton, Illinois; and navigable portions of the Minnesota, St. Croix, Black and Kaskaskia Rivers. This multi-use resource supports an extensive navigation system (made up of 1200 miles of 9 foot channel and 37 lock and dam sites), a diverse ecosystem (2.7 million acres of habitat supporting hundreds of fish and wildlife species), floodplain agriculture, recreation and tourism. Based on the recommendation of the recently completed UMR-IWW System Navigation Feasibility Study that examined system needs over the next 50 years, the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) was implemented to achieve the dual purposes of UMRS ecosystem restoration and navigation improvements. The Systemic Forestry Management Plan is one of 23 initial NESP ecosystem restoration component projects being implemented under this new UMRS program.

The project provides for the development of a regional management plan, which will establish a foundation for the Corps, partner agencies and stakeholders to more effectively collaborate on and implement environmental stewardship activities within UMRS forests.

Problem Statement:

The forest and grassland components of the UMR and IWW floodplain are very important habitat for migratory and nesting birds as well as other wildlife. These habitats have been significantly affected by man's use and manmade modifications of the rivers and their floodplains. While the existing forests and grasslands may appear to casual observers to be natural and pristine, some of the important processes that determine their growth and survival have become artificial and are much harsher than pre-settlement conditions. Coordinated management at a system level is needed to ensure long-term sustainability of these resources.

Current Status

In fiscal year (FY) 2005, the project team began writing a draft systemic forest management plan, with several reviews by partner agencies and groups. Three additional projects were implemented including a forest inventory, a survey of sediment depth, and classification of more than 200,000 acres of vegetation on the Illinois River floodplain. In FY06, the team continued work on the draft plan and presented it to the Science Panel for review. A workshop was conducted to scope a floodplain vegetation succession model, which would be used in making future forest management decisions. In FY07, the updated draft systemic forest management plan will be reviewed by partners and the public before being finalized. A contract scope of work and schedule will be developed for systemic hydro-geomorphic (HGM) analysis of the NESP project area. The analysis will provide important information to determine forest restoration potential and site suitability for forest species diversity. A Project Implementation Report will be developed for three adaptive forest management projects scheduled for construction / implementation in FY08.

Authority

Pending new authority, our current activities supporting UMRS navigation and ecosystem improvements are performed under authority provided by Section 216 of the Flood Control Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-611).