



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Rock Island District

Information Paper

M2. Forestry Management– Emiquon West, IL

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. Forestry Management at Emiquon West is one of 23 initial NESP ecological component projects being implemented under this new UMRS program.

Bottomland hardwood forests are integral components of large river ecosystems because of the unique habitat they provide. The Emiquon West project offers the opportunity to restore the former forest corridor that stretched from the bluff line to the river in presettlement times. The addition of mast-producing trees offers habitat benefits for many birds, and mammals. The Emiquon West project would link with the The Nature Conservancy's adjacent restoration project to provide a corridor of high quality bottomland forest habitat that would connect the bluff to the floodplain, resulting in landscape scale restoration.



Problem Statement

Beginning in the 1920s, anthropogenic changes to the landscape have severely altered the topography, plant community, and drainage patterns of the project area. In order to convert the project area to agricultural production, the existing bottomland hardwood forest was clearcut, the surrounding creeks were channelized, and multiple flood protection levees were constructed. Runoff control ditches were constructed on the interior of the levee district, and drain tiles were installed. Native vegetation was replaced with row crops. This resulted in substantial loss of fish and wildlife habitat and declines in floodplain ecosystem services. Loss and degradation of this habitat also resulted in declining populations of waterfowl and other migratory birds.

Current Status

The project management plan (PMP) is currently under development in coordination with the USFWS and stakeholders. Following completion of the PMP, Project Implementation Report activities will be initiated as funding allows.

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).