



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
St. Paul District

Information Paper

Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration: Section 206, Grand Marais Creek, Minnesota



Erosion at confluence of Grand Marais cutoff and the Red River of the North

Contact

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Location/Description

Grand Marais Creek is a tributary of the Red River of the North. The study area is located in a rural setting about 7 miles north of East Grand Forks, Minnesota, and 275 miles northwest of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

A joint State-county project in 1909 constructed a 1¼-mile-long cutoff to the Red River of the North to eliminate alleged public health nuisance problems associated with standing water at the mouth of the river. This cutoff abandoned approximately 6 miles of the creek's natural channel between the cutoff and the creek outlet, which resulted in loss of aquatic and riparian habitat. The ditched cutoff itself has relatively little aquatic habitat value; and the faster flows in the steeper cutoff result in downcutting and accelerated bank erosion in the cutoff, adversely affecting adjacent properties. In addition, headcutting is progressing upstream of the cutoff and severely degrading aquatic habitat in the creek.

A preliminary restoration plan developed in 2003 evaluated a combination of measures: removing the plug that blocks creek flows from going down the historic natural outlet channel, installing a weir in the

cutoff to divert low flows into the historic natural channel (with larger flows split between the cutoff and natural outlet), removing sediment in the abandoned natural outlet to restore the flow path, installing grade and erosion control structures, installing 10-foot by 10-foot culverts for township and farmstead road crossings, and establishing 150-foot-wide buffer strips along each side of the old natural outlet to create a riparian corridor.

Status

The 2003 preliminary restoration plan was prepared in response to a letter request from the Red Lake Watershed District, which will be the non-Federal sponsor for any project. The plan was distributed to the watershed district, Federal and State agencies, landowners, and other stakeholders potentially affected by the study area's problems and by corrective measures. Corps study efforts have been intermittent based on availability of funding over the last several years. The Corps has been updating costs and quantities for the feasibility study. The Red Lake Watershed District has secured funding from other sources and has indicated it intends to pursue the project on its own. If the watershed does not pursue the project on its own, the feasibility report will be completed when Federal funds become available.

Authority

The study was conducted under the authority of Section 206 of the 1996 Water Resources Development Act, as amended. The Red Lake Watershed District requested the project by letter dated November 24, 1999.

Fiscal

The estimated project costs are being reevaluated and updated. The 35-percent non-Federal share includes lands, easements, rights-of-way, relocations, and disposal sites.

Federal funds allocated to date	\$250,000
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