



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

Information Paper

Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration: Section 1135, Sand Hill River Polk County, Minnesota



Sand Hill River – Corps of Engineers drop structure, 2014.

Contact

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Location/Description

The study area is located in a rural setting in Polk County, Minnesota, 275 miles northwest of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Sand Hill River basin is centrally located in the Red River Valley watershed.

A major reach of the river downstream of Fertile, Minnesota, was the subject of a flood control project constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from 1955 to 1958. It involved straightening the river and constructing four drop structures and served as drainage improvement to local agriculture. Overall, more than 18 miles of the Sand Hill River was straightened or abandoned. The straightened channel decreased channel length, increased channel grade, increased channel conveyance, and reduced the flood profiles in the lower Sand Hill River watershed. A series of four concrete drop structures were installed in the new Sand Hill River alignment to provide grade control. These grade control structures created six- to eight-foot changes in bed grade, but left the river itself impassable for spawning fish.

A preliminary restoration plan completed in 2003 recommended several measures to improve fish passage in the river including construction of rock structures at each of the Corps drop structures in the river as well as installation of several riffles and pools to decrease the slope of the river and create areas for refuge and rest for migrating fish.

Status

The feasibility report was approved in January 2014. The project partnership agreement was executed in October 2014. A contract (covering three of the four concrete drop structures) was awarded fall 2015 and construction was initiated in summer 2016. The fourth and final concrete drop structure contract was awarded 12 August 2016. All four structures are scheduled for completion in fall 2017.

Authority

The study is being conducted under the authority of Section 1135 of the 1986 Water Resources Development Act, as amended. The Sand Hill Watershed District requested the project by letter dated April 2, 2002.

Fiscal

The estimated project costs were revised in 2015. The 25 percent non-Federal share includes lands, easements, rights-of-way, relocations, and disposal sites.

Estimated Federal costs	\$6,450,000
Estimated non-Federal costs	\$2,150,000
Estimated total project costs	\$8,600,000