

## **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

### **UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER RESTORATION FEASIBILITY REPORT WITH INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

---

#### **LOWER POOL 4 BIG LAKE HABITAT REHABILITATION AND ENHANCEMENT PROJECT**

---

#### **POOL 4, UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER MILES 760 – 756 BUFFALO COUNTY, WISCONSIN**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District (Corps) has conducted an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. The final Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment (IFR/EA) dated 29 May 2024, for the Lower Pool 4 Big Lake Habitat and Restoration Project in Buffalo County, Wisconsin, investigates the feasibility of alternatives to address problems and opportunities associated with forest, aquatic fisheries habitat and aquatic vegetation within the study area.

The selected plan—Alternative 6—is the National Ecosystem Restoration (NER) Plan. This alternative would include access and backwater dredging, four island features, a sediment deflector, four shoreline stabilization features, six rock closures, and nonstructural forest management actions. The Recommended Plan is described in full detail within the feasibility study and integrated environmental assessment.

Work would improve forest habitat through Timber Stand Improvement on 159 acres, island and forest creation of 29 acres, dredging of backwater areas improving depths and benefiting 37 acres; construction of closures to benefit 218 acres of backwater area; and include a sediment deflector and side channel bank erosion protection to protect and benefit over 100 acres of aquatic vegetation and waterfowl habitat. These features may be further modified during the design phase. In addition to a “no action” plan, nine additional alternatives were evaluated during feasibility, which are detailed within Chapters 3 and 4 of the IFR/EA. These chapters discuss the full array of measures considered, the screening of the measures, the final array of alternatives and why different alternatives were screened prior to the evaluation and comparison of the No Action Alternative. The Selected Plan and the No Action Alternative were evaluated for potential effects pursuant to NEPA requirements, as appropriate.

For both the no-action and selected plan, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the Recommended Plan are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Potential Effects of the Recommended Plan

PARAMETER	BENEFICIAL			NO EFFECT	ADVERSE		
	SIGNIFICANT	SUBSTANTIAL	MINOR		MINOR	SUBSTANTIAL	SIGNIFICANT
<b>A. Social Effects</b>							
1. Noise Levels					T		
2. Aesthetic Values					T		
3. Recreational Opportunities			X		T		
4. Transportation				X			
5. Public Health and Safety				X			
6. Community Cohesion (Sense of Unity)				X			
7. Community Growth and Development				X			
8. Business and Home Relocations				X			
9. Existing/Potential Land Use				X			
10. Controversy				X			
<b>B. Economic Effects</b>							
1. Property Values				X			
2. Tax Revenue				X			
3. Public Facilities and Services				X			
4. Regional Growth				X			
5. Employment			T				
6. Business Activity			T				
7. Farmland/Food Supply				X			
8. Commercial Navigation			T				
9. Flooding Effects				X			
10. Energy Needs and Resources				X			
<b>C. Natural Resource Effects</b>							
1. Air Quality					T		
2. Terrestrial Habitat		X					
3. Wetlands		X					
4. Aquatic Habitat		X					
5. Habitat Diversity and Interspersion		X					
6. Biological Productivity			X		T		
7. Surface Water Quality			X		T		
8. Water Supply				X			
9. Groundwater				X			
10. Soils				X			
11. Threatened or Endangered Species			X		T		
<b>D. Cultural Resource Effects</b>				X			
1. Historic Architectural Values				X			
2. Prehistoric & Historic Archeological Values				X			

All practicable and appropriate means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the selected plan.

No compensatory mitigation is required as part of the Recommended Plan.

Public review of the draft IFR/EA and FONSI was completed on November 17, 2023. USFWS provided the only comments received on the draft IFR/EA, and the comments were addressed in the report. A 30-day agency review, including both state and Federal partners, was completed as part of the public review process. Pursuant to Section 7 of the ESA of 1973, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that the Action would have no effect on three species of listed mussels, northern long-eared bat and tricolored bat, eastern massasauga rattlesnake, whooping crane and monarch butterfly. USACE has consulted with USFWS on a “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination on rusty patch bumblebee. USFWS concurred with that determination. The Corps will revisit ESA determinations during project design, as warranted, and initiate further consultation if any listings or determinations have changed prior to the construction of the Selected Plan, or if more defined actions with the selected plan, could potentially affect listed species.

Archaeological and geomorphological investigations were completed across the project area in the Fall of 2023. No cultural resources were identified within the Project footprint and subsurface testing indicated a low potential for intact buried archaeological sites across the Project area. As a result of the archaeological survey and geomorphological testing USACE has determined that the Project will have No Effect to Historic Properties. In an abundance of caution, a 100-foot buffer, in which no work will occur, will be placed around the known archaeological sites, 47BF27, 47BF37, and 47BF244, located in the far northern portion of the Project to ensure that the Project will have No Effect to Historic Properties.

On 24 July 2023, formal letters initiating consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and its implementing regulation 36 CFR 800 were sent to the Prairie Island Indian Community, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Lower Sioux Community, Upper Sioux Community, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, and Ho-Chunk Nation. On 25 July 2023, the Shakopee Mdewakanton stated they are “not aware of any significant cultural sites in the proposed areas. If or when any additional archaeological work is performed, please send that information, please avoid any burial/cemetery areas that may be in or very near any proposed work”.

On 19 March 2024, letters coordinating the recommended plan were sent to the above-mentioned tribes. No responses were received. USACE initiated consultation with the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on 19 March 2024. USACE determined that the Project would have No Effect on Historic Properties and the SHPO concurred with this determination on 26 March 2024.

Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, the discharge of dredged or fill material associated with the selected plan has been found to be compliant with the terms and conditions of Nationwide Permit 27 (NWP 27): Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Enhancement, and Established Activities. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is the administering agency for Section 401 water quality certification in the State of Wisconsin. Wisconsin has issued water quality certification for 2021 NWP 27. The selected plan complies with the general NWP conditions, NWP 27 permit and regional conditions, and the Wisconsin DNR’s 401 Water Quality Certification conditions. All conditions of NWP

27 will be implemented to minimize adverse impacts to the aquatic environment.

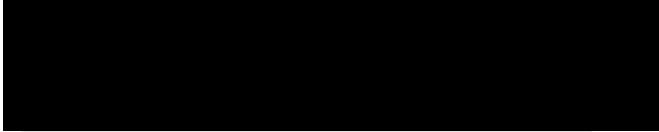
All applicable environmental laws have been considered and coordination with appropriate agencies and officials has been completed.

Technical, environmental, and economic criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resources Council's 1983 Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in evaluation of alternatives. Based on this report, the reviews by other Federal, State and local agencies, Tribes, input of the public, and the review by my staff, it is my determination that the selected plan would not cause significant adverse effects on the quality of the human environment; therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

25-Jun-2024

---

Date



---

Eric Swenson  
Colonel, Corps  
of Engineers  
District  
Commander