

1. What is Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam?

The Upper St. Anthony Falls (USAF) Lock and Dam federal project is a facility on the right descending bank of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, Minnesota, originally built to help barges move upstream to the Upper Harbor Terminal as authorized by the River and Harbor Act of 1937 (Public Law 75-392), amending the Upper Mississippi River 9-Foot Navigation Project first authorized by the River and Harbor Act of July 3, 1930. The authorized purpose of USAF Lock and Dam is navigation. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) completed construction in 1963. The nonfederal sponsor for the Upper Harbor project was the city of Minneapolis.

2. Who owns and operates the lock and dam?

USACE owns the federal project, including the lock, two short segments of the dam across the Mississippi River, and adjacent lands on the right descending bank used for project operation and maintenance. The rest of the damming surface is owned and maintained by Xcel Energy and is not part of the federal project.

3. Why was the lock closed to navigation?

In Section 2010 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014, Congress directed USACE to close the lock to navigation. The closure was accomplished effective June 9, 2015.

4. Is the lock and dam still used for anything?

Yes, although the lock has been closed to navigation traffic, USACE continues to maintain the lock and dam for its authorized purpose. The lock and dam is a component of the overall damming surface across the river. The damming surface is necessary for stabilizing the riverbed and suspending the erosion of the natural waterfall that was present until approximately 150 years ago. USAF Lock and Dam is also equipped with a Tainter gate that is operated to allow flows to safely pass through the lock chamber during high flow conditions as part of the authorized navigation purpose. It additionally serves as a backup system for the upstream miter gates. The Tainter gate is not intended to generate flood risk management benefits, and the gate does not improve conditions relative to the river preceding construction of the lock.

5. What is a "disposition study"?

In a disposition study, USACE evaluates whether a federal project operated and maintained by USACE still serves its authorized purpose and whether it should be kept, changed or deauthorized, and if associated property and improvements should be disposed. Federal property and improvements required for a project to function as authorized cannot be disposed unless Congress deauthorizes the project. The federal real property disposal process is multi-phased, designed to ensure assets are reused within government, offered for social benefit and/or disposed of in an environmentally and historically conscious manner. USACE is the lead federal agency conducting this disposition study. There were no cooperating agencies with responsibility for the content of this report, and there was not a nonfederal sponsor for the study. The study is 100% federally funded.

6. Why is this study being done now?

USAF Lock and Dam has an authorized purpose of navigation but has been closed to boat/barge traffic since 2015. The study's focus is on whether federal interest exists to retain the project for its authorized purpose, based on an evaluation and comparison of the benefits, costs, and impacts (positive and negative) of not only continued operation, maintenance, repair, replacement, and

rehabilitation, or the lack thereof, but also deauthorization and disposal of the associated property and improvements. Additionally, the study includes efforts to inventory the property including survey and valuation and identify and describe opportunities for a new water resource development purpose.

7. What are the options being considered?

The study considered one no action alternative and two action alternatives:

1. No Action: USAF Lock and Dam will remain closed to navigation. The USACE St. Paul District would continue to own, operate and maintain USAF Lock and Dam, including operating the Tainter gate as needed.
2. Full Disposal: Deauthorization by Congress of USAF Lock and Dam, leading to complete disposal of the federal property and improvements at the site. USACE would no longer own, operate or maintain the lock and dam, including the Tainter gate.
3. Partial Disposal: Congressional modification of the project authorization, followed by disposal of federal project improvements necessary for only passing navigation traffic. USACE would continue to operate and maintain the Tainter gate and facilities necessary to support this function along with the federal portion of the damming surface.

These alternatives only address the lands and improvements that would not be conveyed to the city of Minneapolis or its designee under the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 (WRDA 2020) (see Question 12 below).

8. Can the lock and dam be removed?

Removal of the dam to include reconstruction of the original character of the falls is outside the scope of the disposition study. Dam removal is also not considered a feasible option for St. Anthony Falls due to the geologic setting. Removing the lock and restoring the damming surface to a pre-project condition (before construction of the lock and dam) is outside the scope of the disposition study. Scenarios for partial dam breach were also considered; however, because the damming surface is not completely federally owned, these scenarios were screened from further consideration as part of this disposition study.

9. Is the project still federally authorized?

Yes. Even though it's closed to navigation traffic, it remains a federally authorized navigation project. The property and improvements required for the authorized project may not be disposed of until the project is deauthorized by Congress.

10. Why hasn't it been deauthorized yet?

Deauthorization requires an act of Congress. USACE conducts disposition studies to determine whether projects it operates and maintains should be deauthorized. When USACE concludes in a disposition study that a project should be deauthorized, it makes a recommendation to Congress. For this project, Congress has prohibited the Secretary of the Army from recommending deauthorization and disposal of USAF Lock and Dam until such time as a willing and capable nonfederal public entity is identified to assume ownership of the lock and dam.

11. What are the other actions proposed by the city of Minneapolis or Owámniyomni Okhódayapi that may affect USAF Lock and Dam concurrent with the disposition study? How is USACE involved?

USACE anticipates issuing two other public notices for proposed actions affecting USAF Lock and Dam in the next several months, one for conveyance of lands to the city of Minneapolis or its designee as directed by WRDA 2020, and one for site modifications proposed by Owámniyomni Okhódayapi prior to conveyance.

12. What is the conveyance directed by WRDA 2020? Is it part of the disposition study?

Separate from the disposition study, Congress directed USACE in Section 356 of WRDA 2020 to convey, upon request, all or substantially all of the real property adjacent to or in the vicinity of USAF Lock and Dam to the city of Minneapolis or its designee. WRDA 2020 also directed USACE to provide the city of Minneapolis or its designee access and use rights by license, easement or similar agreement to any real property and structures at the lock and dam for recreation, tourism and interpretative purposes that cannot be conveyed in fee. WRDA 2020 does not allow USACE to transfer ownership or operation of the lock and dam to the city or its designee under that provision. USACE is required to retain the rights and interests necessary to operate and maintain the project so long as it remains authorized. The disposition study addresses alternatives for keeping, modifying, or deauthorizing and disposing of the project improvements and lands that will not be conveyed or granted to the city or its designee under WRDA 2020 — the project improvements and lands that would remain in USACE ownership and responsibility after the WRDA 2020 conveyance.

13. Who is Owámniyomni Okhódayapi and what is it proposing before conveyance?

Owámniyomni Okhódayapi is a Dakota-led nonprofit working with the city of Minneapolis to plan future public use of the site. On March 1, 2024, USACE issued a 25-year lease on part of the land to Owámniyomni Okhódayapi. Owámniyomni Okhódayapi is working to complete prerequisites outlined by the city of Minneapolis to be the designated entity for the property conveyance authorized by WRDA 2020. Concurrent with but separate from the disposition study, USACE, the city of Minneapolis, and Owámniyomni Okhódayapi have been analyzing how to support the Section 356 conveyance and long-term provision of access and use rights. Owámniyomni Okhódayapi is proposing to make certain site modifications prior to conveyance while USACE is the landowner. USACE expects to issue a public notice of environmental assessment that evaluates those modifications for public review this summer.

14. Will the disposition study include the future development plans proposed at USAF Lock and Dam by the city of Minneapolis or Owámniyomni Okhódayapi?

No. The disposition study addresses alternatives for keeping, modifying, or deauthorizing and disposing of the project improvements and lands that will not be conveyed or granted to the city or its designee under WRDA 2020 — what would remain in USACE ownership and responsibility after the WRDA 2020 conveyance. USACE anticipates issuing two other public notices for proposed actions affecting USAF Lock and Dam in the next several months, one for site modifications proposed by Owámniyomni Okhódayapi on lands in USACE ownership and one for conveyance of lands to the city of Minneapolis or its designee as directed by WRDA 2020.

15. Where can I find information on all three evaluations (disposition, conveyance, and site modifications)?

The Draft Section 216 Disposition Study and technical appendices are available at the following website, and public comments will be accepted through July 14, 2025.

<https://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/MplsLocksDisposition/>

USACE expects to issue a public notice of environmental assessment that evaluates Owámniyomni Okhódayapi proposed modifications for public review this summer. The public notice, when issued, will be listed on the following website: <https://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/Home/Public-Notices/>.

USACE expects to issue a public notice of environmental assessment that evaluates the conveyance of lands associated with USAF for public review in 2026. The public notice, when issued, will be listed on the following website: <https://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/Home/Public-Notices/>.

16. Will this site be used for recreation in the future?

Section 356 requires the land be utilized for public recreational, touristic and interpretive benefits. The Owámniyomni Okhódayapi future site plans aim to enhance the recreational, touristic and interpretive experience at the site by highlighting the Dakota cultural perspective.

17. What happens if nothing changes?

USACE will continue maintaining parts of the site needed to mitigate for the presence of the lock and dam (Tainter gate), even if navigation is no longer active.

18. What significance resources are near or dependent upon the site?

USAF Lock and Dam help maintain upstream water levels, provide water supply for residents within the city of Minneapolis and prevent invasive species from moving upriver.

The Xcel Energy hydroelectric facility and the University of Minnesota St. Anthony Falls Laboratory near USAF depend on the USAF damming surface to maintain upstream water levels for operation of their facilities and labs.

USAF has two historic districts surrounding the area and is eligible for listing on the national register of historic places. The proximity of the Stone Arch Bridge and the St. Anthony Falls Laboratory add to the regional significance of the site.

USAF is located within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, a 72-mile protected corridor from Dayton to downstream of Hastings, Minnesota. This stretch of the Upper Mississippi River includes natural, historical, recreational, cultural, scenic, scientific and economic resources of national significance and is the only national park dedicated exclusively to the Mississippi River.

19. Why is this location important to local communities?

It's a historic and cultural site, especially for Native American communities, and it's important for tourism and recreation. Owámniyomni (St. Anthony Falls) and Wíta Wanáǵi (Spirit Island) are central to Dakota culture.

20. Will there be any changes to the operation of the lock and dam?

Any changes to the current operation of the lock and dam would require Congressional direction. USACE continues to operate and maintain USAF as authorized.

21. What happens next?

USACE is accepting public comments on the draft disposition study and environmental assessment and will finalize the report before making any recommendations to Congress.

22. Where can I learn more or share my opinion?

You can visit USACE's project website at <https://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/MplsLocksDisposition/> and provide feedback to MplsLocksDisposition@usace.army.mil.