US Army Corps of Engineers®
St. Paul District

Public Notice

Project: Kinnickinnic River Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Project

Date: May 21, 2025
Expires: June 23, 2025

In Reply Refer to:
Regional Planning and Environment Division North

Project Proponent. St. Paul District, Corps of Engineers, 332 Minnesota Street, Suite E1500, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101.

Project Authority. The Kinnickinnic River Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Project is authorized under Section 206 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1996 (P.L.104-303), as amended. Under Section 206, one of the Continuing Authorities Program authorities, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is authorized to undertake aquatic ecosystem restoration and protection projects. This includes dam removal initiatives that enhance fish passage, restore habitat connectivity, and support native fish populations—provided the project improves environmental quality, serves the public interest, and is cost-effective. As amended by WRDA 2024, the Federal share of the planning, design and implementation costs for any one Section 206 project may not exceed $15,000,000.

Project Location. The Kinnickinnic River is a coldwater trout stream that drains an area of approximately 172 square miles. The river begins its journey as the culmination of flows from several intermittent, spring-fed streams, approximately 16 miles northeast of River Falls, WI. The Kinnickinnic then flows 26 miles southwest, through the center of River Falls, discharging as the last major tributary to the St. Croix River at Kinnickinnic State Park, approximately halfway between Prescott, WI and Hudson, WI. Powell Falls and Junction Falls dams impound the Kinnickinnic within the City of River Falls, Wisconsin. The construction of the Junction Falls and Powell Falls dams to generate hydropower led to the creation of two impoundments that transformed the Kinnickinnic River from a naturally flowing system into two lake-like reservoirs. These impoundments expanded the water surface area, creating new shallow habitat for certain waterfowl and fish species, but also disrupted the natural riverine processes and exacerbated conditions that have degraded other critical habitats. Over time, the impoundments have caused a rise in overall temperature in the project area sections of the Kinnickinnic River.

Summary of the Selected Plan. The Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) (Alternative 7) in the Feasibility Report and Integrated Environmental Assessment, is to remove both Junction Falls Dam and Powell Falls Dam, restore the Kinnickinnic River through the project area, and enhance the adjacent riparian corridor with implementation of stream restoration features (rock arch rapids, riffle pools, cross vanes, cobble aprons, bank protection and Lunker structures), forest restoration, and marsh restoration. In total the Tentatively Selected Plan would result in a net benefit of 34.7 Average Annual Habitat Units compared to not implementing a project (No Action Alternative). The Project is consistent with city management goals of improvement of water quality, fish habitat, public safety, aesthetics, protection of infrastructure, and historic, cultural and recreational values.

Permits/Coordination. By way of this public review process, the TSP is being coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. National Park Service and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. A Clean Water Act Section 401 water quality certification is required for actions that may result in a discharge of a pollutant into waters of the United States to ensure that the discharge complies with applicable water quality standards. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is the administering agency for water quality certification for the Project.

Summary of Environmental Impacts. The TSP best meets the project objectives and reasonably maximizes benefits compared to cost. Implementing the TSP would cause benefits associated with aesthetics, recreation, land use, terrestrial habitat, wetlands, aquatic habitat, surface water quality and threatened and endangered species, while resulting in an adverse impact to hydroelectric power and temporary adverse impacts to noise, aesthetics, recreation, air quality, and surface water quality. Pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that the Tentatively Selected Plan may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect tricolored bat, Higgins eye mussel, salamander mussel and rusty patched bumble bees, would not adversely modify proposed critical habitat for the rusty patched bumble bee, and would have no effect to monarch butterfly and prairie bush clover. Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, the discharge of dredged or fill material associated with the recommended plan has been found to be compliant with section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR 230). Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that the TSP would have No Effect on Historic Properties.

Report. The draft Feasibility Report with integrated Environmental Assessment and associated appendices are available to the public and can be viewed at: https://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/Home/Public-Notices/.

Review and Comment. Any comments on the draft report should be provided no later than June 23, 2025. Persons submitting comments are advised that all comments received will be available for public review, to include the possibility of posting on a public website. Comments can be sent via email to CEMVP_Planning@usace.army.mil. Please address all mail correspondence on this project, to District Commander, St. Paul District, Corps of Engineers, ATTN: Regional Planning and Environment Division North, 332 Minnesota Street, Suite E1500, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101.

Jonathan Sobiech

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