

Upper Mississippi River Master Plan Draft

Appendix A
Draft Environmental Assessment and FONSI

Upper Saint Anthony Falls, Lower Saint Anthony Falls and Pools 1- 10
River Miles 854.0 - 614.0
Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Environmental Assessment (EA) seeks to evaluate resources in the Project Area for potential effects that may be caused by the adoption and implementation of the proposed Upper Mississippi River Master Plan. Implementing the revised Master Plan will provide a vital tool for the responsible stewardship of resources of the Upper Mississippi River Project to benefit present and future generations.

The following factors were considerations for alternatives evaluated in the environmental analysis: 1) meeting project purposes; 2) minimizing adverse environmental impacts; 3) taking into account stakeholder and public interests; and 4) complying with relevant laws and regulations. This EA determined that there would be no significant impacts and that no mitigating actions or permits would be required by adoption and implementation of the Master Plan. However, implementation of any specific project that meets Master Plan guidance may require a separate review for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, and other environmental laws and regulations, depending on the specifics of said project.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District (Corps or District), has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) of the effects to the environment for a proposed update to the Upper Mississippi River Project Master Plan (Master Plan). This assessment was carried out to satisfy requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and Corps' Procedures for implementing NEPA (33 CFR Part 230).

This EA provides information to the District Commander on the potential environmental effects of the proposed action and various alternatives on the natural, cultural, and human environment for determining the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). This assessment references the information provided in the main report and associated appendices on objectives, baseline conditions, coordination results, and other data. This assessment includes the following:

1. A discussion of future conditions.
2. Identification of alternatives, including the Proposed Alternative.
3. An assessment of the environmental impacts of alternatives.
4. A discussion of compliance with environmental regulations and executive orders.

The typical focus of NEPA compliance consists of assessing individual projects for potential environmental impacts rather than for long-term comprehensive plans like this Master Plan. However, application of NEPA to earlier and more strategic decisions not only meets the CEQ implementing regulations (CEQ, 2005) and Corps' regulations for implementing NEPA (USACE, 1988), but also allows the Corps to begin considering the environmental consequences of its actions long before any specific physical activity is planned. Effective and early NEPA integration with the master planning process can significantly increase the usefulness of the Master Plan to the decision maker. If such utility can be realized, organizational outcomes can be improved, such as support for the project mission and NEPA compliance.

The Master Plan intends to develop land classifications that will guide the sustainable development of resources within the Upper Mississippi River Project. It is not feasible to define the exact nature of potential impacts for all potential actions prior to receiving specific project proposals. To ensure future environmental consequences are identified and documented as accurately as possible, additional NEPA coordination would be conducted for future projects associated with this proposed Master Plan update.

1.1 Purpose and Need for Action

The District is directed to periodically revise and update its master plans, including that for the Upper Mississippi River Project. All actions by the Corps on Corps' lands and individuals granted leases to Corps' lands must be consistent with a master plan. Therefore, this Master Plan must be kept current in order to provide effective guidance for Corps' decision-making. The Master Plan's

primary goal is to incorporate and consider the most recent conditions and information in order to prescribe an overall land use management plan, resource objectives, and associated design and management concepts (Corps 2013). The Master Plan would provide responsible stewardship of the Upper Mississippi River Project to benefit present and future generations. The proposed Master Plan will supersede the 1988 updated Master Plan and will apply changes to land classifications in accordance with Corps' regulations, thus superseding the 2011 Land Use Allocation Plan (LUAP). For more information on the project scope and purpose of the Master plan, see Chapter 1, Sections 1.2 and 1.3 of the main report, respectively.

1.2 Project Area

The Upper Mississippi River Project, here-in referred to as "Project" is limited to the Corps, St. Paul District (District) boundary. The portion of the Upper Mississippi River (UMR) that the Project encompasses begins in Minneapolis, MN just below Upper St. Anthony Falls (River Mile 854.0) and ends near Guttenberg, IA downstream of Lock and Dam 10 (River Mile 614.0). Including Lower St. Anthony Falls Pool, this 240 mile section of the river is made up of 13 lock and dams (Figure 1-1). This section of the UMR, which includes Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa, contains federal fee and title-lands that are owned and managed by the Corps and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Other sections of the Corps' Project are covered by the district in which it resides (i.e., Rock Island District and St. Louis District). For more information pertaining to the Project, see Chapter 1, Section 1.4 of the Master Plan.

1.3 Authority

The River and Harbor Act of 1930 (Public Law 71-520) originally authorized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to establish the Mississippi River 9-Foot Channel Navigation Project (9-Foot Channel). Later authorizations modified the Project by extending the navigation system to its present distance above St. Anthony Falls, MN, to the mouth of the Missouri River. The administrative portion of the Project associated with this Master Plan is Upper St. Anthony Falls through Pool 10 and associated Corps' lands. The Flood Control Act of 1944 (Public Law 78-534) authorized the Corps to construct, maintain, and operate public parks and recreational facilities at water resource development projects. Congress authorized the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) in 2007 to address both critical capacity constraints on the inland navigation system and ecosystem restoration, but provided no appropriations to date.

1.4 Proposed Resource Objective

Resource objectives for the proposed Master Plan are intended to guide the future management of the Project. These objectives are described in Chapter 3 of the main report.

1.5 Related Studies and Reports

For a list of prior design memorandums and master planning documents, see Chapter 1, Section 1.5 of the main report.

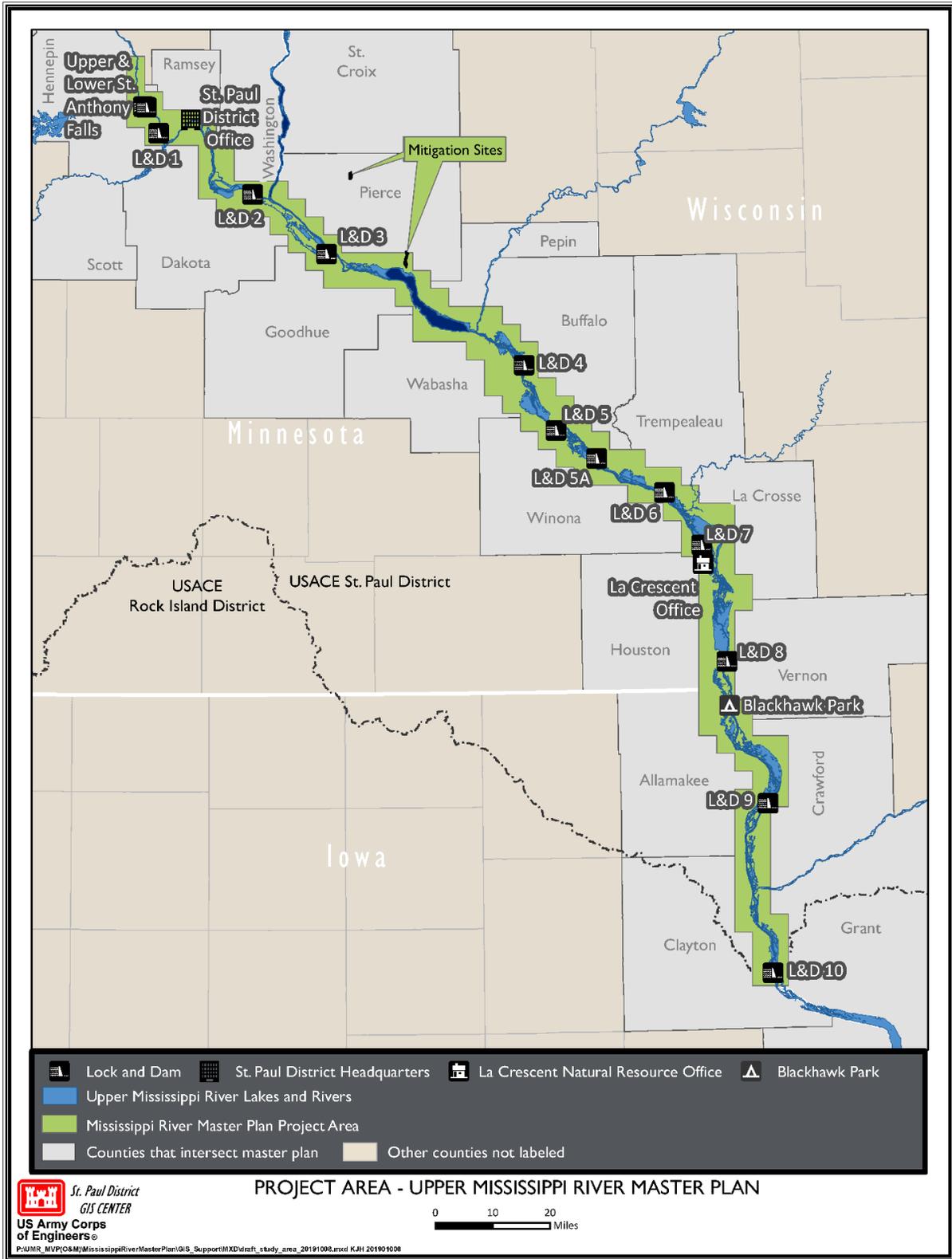


Figure 1-1. Upper Mississippi River Master Plan Project Area.

CHAPTER 2:

PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

This section of the EA describes the reasonable alternatives for revising the Master Plan. The Corps only considered feasible and reasonable alternatives. In this case, two alternatives are identified: the No Action Alternative, which would keep the 1988 Master plan as the management guidance document, with the 2011 LUAP for the classifications, or a Balanced Alternative (Proposed Alternative) which would update the Master Plan and land classifications based on Corps' guidance.

2.1 No-Action Alternative

Inclusion of the No-Action Alternative is prescribed by the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations and serves as the benchmark against which Federal actions are to be evaluated.

Under the No-Action Alternative, the District would not approve the adoption or implementation of a revised Upper Mississippi River Projects' Master Plan. Instead, the 1988 Master Plan (Corps 1988) would continue to provide comprehensive management guidance and philosophy for the Upper Mississippi River Project into the foreseeable future (ER 1120-2-400). Resource management activities would continue to be directed towards providing continued enjoyment and maximum sustained use by the public of lands, waters, forests, and associated recreational resources under the jurisdiction of the Corps. Under this alternative, Corps and USFWS owned lands would continue to be classified and depicted based on the 2011 LUAP.

The No-Action Alternative would not meet the Corps' current regulations or project purposes as described above. Information provided in these plans is out of date and no longer adequately addresses the needs of the District, other management partners, or users of the Upper Mississippi River Project. Furthermore, the 1988 Master Plan does not include the revised land classifications. Future developments or resource management policies would require approval on a case-by-case basis without the benefit of evaluation in the context of an updated Master Plan.

2.2 Balanced Alternative (Proposed Alternative)

Under the Balanced Alternative, the District would replace the 1988 Master Plan with a revision that updates the land classifications with greater emphasis on balancing recreation and natural resources needs. Under this alternative, an updated land classification system (see Chapter 4, Section 3 of the main report, EP 1130-2-550) would replace the existing land classification system (ER 1120-2-400), that was utilized in the 2011 LUAP. For purposes of comparing alternatives, each of these classes is associated (i.e., cross-walked) with its counterpart under the No-Action Alternative as shown in Table 3-1. For the 2020 Master Plan update, the environmentally sensitive areas and water surface designations will not be utilized (See Chapter 5, Section 1 of the Master Plan for an explanation).

With this Master Plan update, the maps or plates associated with the 2011 LUAP would also be updated. The Corps conducted a project involving the refinement of real estate fee and easement lands in 2019. The updated Corps and USFWS tracts were cross-walked with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center's (UMESC) 2010 land

classification dataset and 2015 leaf-off imagery (0.5 meter) of the Project. This update resulted in a more accurate depiction of both Corps and USFWS land classifications and a more accurate land-water distinction. The nature of this update has resulted in a difference in acreage totals per land classification that cannot be linked to land acquisition or a change in fee-title for both the Corps and USFWS. For this reason, it is difficult to compare land classifications from the 2011 LUAP and the 2020 Master Plan update verbatim.

The Balanced Alternative would provide a management framework of Project resources relating to current regional and local needs, resource capability and suitability, public interests consistent with authorized project purposes, and regulations. Moreover, this alternative would meet the Corps' current regulations and goals of regularly updating Master Plans. The information provided in this alternative is up to date and addresses the needs of the District, other management partners, or users of the Project. This alternative is the District's proposed alternative that emphasizes the most recent public desires, legislative authority, regional and project-specific resource requirements, and suitability.

2.3 Other Alternatives Considered

Early in the process, the District considered two additional alternatives as follows:

- **Conservation Alternative.** The District would approve a master plan with a conservation focus. This alternative would create more protected shoreline within the Project than all other alternatives. This alternative would increase the number of acres in Wildlife Management, Vegetative Management, and Environmentally Sensitive Area classifications while High and Low Density Recreation classifications would decrease and Project Operations would remain the same.
- **Recreation Focus Alternative.** The District would approve a master plan with emphasis on recreation. This alternative would provide management with a document which is focused on recreation by classifying more lands as Low and/or High Density Recreation, resulting in less Wildlife Management and Vegetative Management lands, while maintaining Project Operations. It would open up more lands for intensive use which would have higher impacts to natural resources. Areas considered environmentally sensitive and some of the current wildlife management areas would be de-emphasized and could be opened for development.

Chapter 3 of the Master Plan lists objectives focused on recreation and environmental stewardship resources. The District has determined that the Conservation Focus and Recreation Focus alternatives do not meet the Project objectives and overall purpose of providing a balanced management plan that provides both natural resource protection and quality outdoor recreational experiences. For this reason, these alternatives were eliminated from further consideration in the Master Plan and this EA.

Table 2-1. Crosswalk of applicable land classes for Corps' fee-title land between the No-Action Alternative and Proposed Alternative.

No-Action Alternative (2011 LUAP)		Proposed Alternative	
Land Classification (Acres)	Description	Land Classification (Acres)	Description
<p>Project Operations</p> <p><u>COE</u> <u>FWS</u> 811 192</p>	<p>These lands are required for facilities, structures, or equipment necessary for authorized project purposes. This category includes lock and dam facilities, areas restricted for safety, major dredge material disposal sites, and Corps maintenance facilities. Recreational uses of such lands may be considered appropriate on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>Project Operations</p> <p><u>COE</u> <u>FWS</u> 882 204</p>	<p>Lands required for the locks and dams, embankments, dredged material placement sites, emergency spillway, offices, maintenance facilities, and other areas that are used to operate and maintain the Project. When compatible with operational requirements, Project operations lands may be used for wildlife habitat management or recreational use. Licenses, permits, easements, or other out grants are issued only for uses that do not conflict with operational requirements.</p>
<p>Recreation Intensive Use</p> <p><u>COE</u> <u>FWS</u> 718 0</p>	<p>These lands are allocated for use as developed public areas for intensive recreational activities, including areas for concessions and quasi-public development. An intensive recreation area is generally defined as a relatively small, distinctly defined area where concentrated public use for the more traditional recreation predominates, such as campgrounds, picnic areas, and swimming areas. These areas generally require extensive facility development and maintenance.</p>	<p>High Density Recreation</p> <p><u>COE</u> <u>FWS</u> 709 0</p>	<p>Lands designated for intensive levels of recreational use to accommodate and support the recreational needs and desires of visitors. They include lands on which existing or planned major recreational facilities are located and allow for developed public recreation facilities, concession development, and high-density or high-impact recreational use. In general, any uses of these lands that interfere with public enjoyment of recreation opportunities are prohibited. Low-density recreation and wildlife management activities compatible with intensive recreation use are acceptable, especially on an interim basis. No agricultural uses are permitted on those lands except on an interim basis for maintenance of scenic or open space values.</p>

<p>Recreation Low Density</p> <p><u>COE</u> <u>FWS</u> 698 237</p>	<p>These lands are allocated for non-intensive, low-density recreation use. Low-density or dispersed recreation occurs generally throughout a large area and is not confined to a specific place. This type of recreation includes scattered, individual outdoor recreation activities. Low-density recreation areas normally are not identified with developed facilities or with areas of intense group concentration. Typical activities on such lands include hiking, backpacking, hunting, fishing, primitive camping, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing.</p>	<p>Multiple Resource- Low Density Recreation</p> <p><u>COE</u> <u>FWS</u> 163 28</p>	<p>Lands designated for dispersed and/or low-impact recreation use. Development of facilities on these lands is limited. Emphasis is on providing opportunities for non-motorized activities, such as walking, fishing, hunting, or nature study. Site-specific, low-impact activities like primitive camping and picnicking are allowed. Facilities may include boat ramps, boat docks, trails, parking areas and vehicle controls, vault toilets, picnic tables, and fire rings. Manmade intrusions, including power lines, non-project roads, and water and sewer pipelines, may be permitted under conditions that minimize adverse effects on the natural environment. Vegetation management, including agricultural activities that do not greatly alter the natural character of the environment, are permitted for a variety of purposes, including erosion control, retention and improvement of scenic qualities, and wildlife management. Hunting and fishing are allowed pursuant to potential fish and wildlife management regulations and where these activities are not in conflict with the safety of visitors and project personnel.</p>
<p>Natural Areas</p> <p><u>COE</u> <u>FWS</u> 263 4,685</p>	<p>These lands are allocated to preserve scientific, ecological, historical, archeological, or aesthetic values and to protect threatened and endangered species. Public uses that do not adversely affect the protected resource may be allowed on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>Environmentally Sensitive Areas</p> <p><u>COE</u> <u>FWS</u> 0 0</p>	<p>This special class may overlap with other designated classes. This classification consists of areas where scientific, ecological, cultural, or aesthetic features have been identified. Development of public use on lands within this classification is normally prohibited to ensure that these sensitive areas are not adversely impacted. Agricultural or grazing uses are not permitted on lands with this classification.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Wildlife Management</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>COE</u> <u>FWS</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">21,641 39,035</p>	<p>These lands are allocated for fish and wildlife and provide opportunities for wildlife related recreation. Hunting, fishing, trapping, bird watching, and photography are examples of such recreation. The lands will also be available for other traditional dispersed forms of public recreation such as primitive camping, boating, water skiing, sailing, canoeing, swimming, cross-country skiing and hiking. The primary management emphasis is protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat values, recognizing traditional forms of public recreation at use levels that have proven compatible with wildlife. Designated portions of such lands are reserved as waterfowl sanctuaries (closed areas) during migration periods. Such closed areas limit hunting and trapping. Limited development such as boat landings, access roads, trails, and parking areas are facilities that may be compatible with this allocation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Multiple Resource- Wildlife Management</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>COE</u> <u>FWS</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">22,708 41,504</p>	<p>Lands designated for stewardship of fish and wildlife resources. These lands are generally open for public hunting and fishing activities. One notable change to this classification from 2011 to 2020 includes the removal of USFWS land within the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge, as this area is not covered within the cooperative agreement. This land accounted for roughly 2,644 acres of wildlife management lands in the 2011 LUAP.</p>
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*Natural Areas are most closely related to Environmentally Sensitive Areas; however, neither of these land classifications will be displayed as a land classification for the 2020 update. Instead, Natural Areas and Environmentally Sensitive Areas will be described as Multiple Resource-Wildlife Management update.

CHAPTER 3:

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

For purposes of this EA, the District considered all socioeconomic and natural resource parameters that have the potential to be influenced by the proposed Master Plan update. Many of the social, economic and natural resource parameters were eliminated from further consideration due the scope and action of updating a master plan. See chapter 2 of the Master Plan for descriptions of the current physical setting, socioeconomic condition, and natural resource condition of the Project that this EA will not cover or evaluate for impacts. The parameters below focus on the current existing conditions of said parameters within the Project.

3.1 Socioeconomic Resources

For a full description of the socioeconomic resources of the Project, see Chapter 2, Section 4 of the Master Plan, which covers topics on population characteristics, distribution trends, economic conditions, educational opportunities, aesthetic qualities, and recreation characteristics.

3.1.1 RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

See Chapter 2, Section 4.3 of the Master Plan for a description of recreation facilities, activities, and opportunities currently available in the Project. Chapter 5, Section 2 of the Master Plan also describes the different Pools throughout the Project and some of the recreational opportunities they provide.

3.1.2 EXISTING / POTENTIAL LAND USE

The existing land use associated within the 1988 Master Plan was last updated during the 2011 LUAP. The lands classified in the 2011 LUAP was derived from Corp and USFWS ownership data and cross-walked with the USGS' UMESC 2000 land cover data. Table 2-1 of this EA describes the existing land classifications utilized for the Project and the total acres of Corps and USFWS fee land dedicated to each classification. The different land classifications of the 2011 LUAP help Corps and USFWS personnel dictate how these lands can be managed.

3.1.3 PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

See Chapter 5, Section 2 of the Master Plan for a description of each of the Corps' owned recreation areas and the facilities available at each. This section includes the different Corps' day-use areas (i.e., Locks and Dams, boat landings) and areas that are outgranted to other governmental and private entities.

3.2 Natural Resources

The natural resources management mission of the Corps is to manage and conserve natural resources using ecosystem management principles, while providing quality public outdoor recreation to meet the needs of present and future generations. The natural resources within the Project are vast, plentiful and managed by multiple state and federal agencies. Chapter 2, Section 3 of the Master Plan

describes the natural resource condition of the Project through a Level One Inventory. The Level One Inventory was completed using available information from a variety of sources, such as the USGS' land class inventory, USFWS, National Park Service, and different state natural resource departments.

3.2.1 BIOLOGICAL PRODUCTIVITY

The Project has a tremendous amount of varying habitat types that support many complex forms of fish and wildlife. Varying aquatic habitat types throughout the Project make it one of the greatest places within the United States for fish quantities and species numbers. The floodplain forests, marshes, and wetlands habitats within and bordering the UMR provide ideal habitat conditions for many species of birds and migratory waterfowl. This area and the habitats within are so important that in 1986, Congress designated the Mississippi River "...as a nationally significant ecosystem and a nationally significant commercial navigation system." The UMR is the only river with such designation (Public Law 99-662). For a detailed description of the biological resources and species guilds that inhabit the Project, see Chapter 2, Section 3 of the main report.

3.2.2 TERRESTRIAL HABITAT

The St. Paul District hired its first full time forester in the 1980s, beginning the Mississippi River Project Natural Resource Management Program. Over the three decades that this program has been in existence, it has overseen the planting of thousands of trees, management of invasive species on hundreds of acres, and restoration of dozens of sites degraded by past human activity on District managed lands. The implementation of the Upper Mississippi River Restoration program has had a further beneficial effect on UMR forests through the restoration, creation and enhancement of floodplain forest habitat. For a detailed description of the historical and current terrestrial habitat (forest) of the Project, see Chapter 2, Section 3 of the main report.

3.2.3 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

In 1973, Congress passed the Endangered Species Act (Act) to protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems on which they depend. The purposes of the Act are to provide a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered and threatened species depend may be conserved and to provide a program for the conservation of such federally-listed species. Section 7 of the Act states that all federal departments and agencies shall seek to conserve threatened and endangered species and utilize their authorities in furtherance of the purposes of the Act. In accordance with Section 7, it is the policy of the Corps that all Project lands and waters be managed in a manner which assists in the overall conservation of federally-listed threatened and endangered species, and the ecosystems upon which they depend. Species and/or their critical habitats that occur on water resources development projects shall be protected and/or conserved in accordance with the Act, as amended, and with existing statutes. Species which are candidates for listing will also be given consideration. Apart from federally-listed species, individual states are authorized by their state legislature to identify species that are at greatest risk to disappear from their state. State law directs state conservation departments to alert resource managers and the public of these species and the actions that can help preserve the species in question. For a full description of both federally and state-threatened and endangered species that may occur within the Project, see Chapter 2, Section 3 of the main report.

3.3 Cultural Resources

Historic properties are integral, nonrenewable elements of the physical landscape. Several historic properties have been located along the UMR, substantiating the fact that the river was extensively used by people for its resources. Historic properties in the Project area are described in Section 2.3.2 of the main report. Cultural resources and historic properties will continue to be recognized as significant resources and protected in the Project area.

CHAPTER 4:

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

An Environmental Analysis was conducted for the No-Action Alternative and Proposed Alternative, which is presented in the following paragraphs. The effects of the No-Action Alternative are those expected to occur in the near-term and future in the absence of a master plan update, which can be compared to the existing condition of the Project. The No-Action Alternative serves as the base condition against which the Proposed Alternative is compared for evaluating effects. The effects of the Proposed Alternative are the results of the expected differences, in short and long-term conditions, between the No-Action Alternative and the Proposed Alternative. The environmental effects of the No-Action Alternative and Proposed Alternative are summarized in Table 4-1 at the end of this chapter.

The updated Master Plan would consist of land classifications, resource objectives, and other specifically-stated policies considered for analyzing environmental effects. However, this EA does not assess the impacts of specific recommended future management actions and opportunities. These recommendations would be part of the Operational Management Plan (OMP) and identified as tasks which would be reviewed and completed at a later date. Because of the wide variety of possible future management recommendations or tasks that could be proposed, an additional evaluation to determine consistency with the stated site objectives and further NEPA consideration would be required as these tasks are undertaken. In a similar sense, any future construction activities or federal actions that are described in the updated Master Plan would need further NEPA evaluation and applicable environmental compliance reviews once undertaken.

4.1 Socio-Economic Effects

4.1.1 RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Land classes designated for recreation under the No-Action Alternative would remain in place under the designations of recreation intensive use and recreation low density. Also, the recreation designations and recreation resource objectives within the 1988 Master would remain in effect throughout the Project. The resource management activities would continue to be directed towards providing continued enjoyment and maximum sustained use by the public of lands, waters, forests, and associated recreational resources under the jurisdiction of the Corps. Though recreation objectives would be outdated, the No-Action Alternative is not anticipated to affect recreational opportunities within the Project.

The Proposed Alternative would result in the refinement or focusing in of recreation lands, specifically low density. Many of the low density recreation lands depicted with the No-Action Alternative were intended to classify as recreation beaches throughout the Project. However, many of the classifications are misrepresented, as only a portion of those lands contain a beach that would be used by the public for recreation purposes. The refinement of lands would result in a drop of total acres related to low density recreation under the Proposed Alternative, there would not be a loss of

recreation opportunities, as these lands (beach areas) are now better represented by the updated land classifications.

The 2020 Master Plan includes updated recreation objectives that, in general, are focused on improving recreation lands and facilities to increase recreational opportunities for the public. For more information on the recreation resource objectives, see Chapter 3, Section 1.3 of the Master Plan. Although maintenance of current recreational facilities would continue under the No-Action Alternative, it would not accurately reflect the current recreation need based on use trends. Thus, the Proposed Alternative would result in a minor benefit towards recreational opportunities when compared to the No Action Alternative.

4.1.2 EXISTING / POTENTIAL LAND USE

Under the No-Action Alternative, the current Corps and USFWS lands would keep their designation determined by the 2011 LUAP. This action would have no effect on the existing and potential land use of the Project.

The Proposed Alternative includes the refinement of real estate fee lands for both the Corps and USFWS within the Project. Updated tract information cross-walked with USGS UMESC 2010 land classification and 2015 leaf-off imagery (0.5 meters) would result in more accurate land classifications and land-water distinctions within the Project. As part of the 2020 Master Plan update land classifications would be updated to meet current Corps' regulations. The combination of these two actions would drive better decisions on land use and land management for both Corps and USFWS personnel. For the above reasons, the Proposed Alternative would result in minor benefits towards existing and potential land use when compared to the No-Action Alternative.

4.1.3 PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Under the No-Action Alternative public facilities and services would remain the same and are not anticipated to be affected. Any necessary repair to public facilities would be completed as needed.

The 2020 Master Plan update would include updating operating principles and assure that the documents guiding the public services is up to date. The Proposed Alternative would also include potential improvements to the existing public facilities and services throughout the Upper Mississippi River Project. Overall, the implementation of the Proposed Alternative is anticipated to have minor positive effects to public facilities and services by guiding the enhancement of public access and recreational opportunities.

4.2 Natural Resource Effects

4.2.1 BIOLOGICAL PRODUCTIVITY

Under the No-Action Alternative, areas designated as wildlife management would continue to follow the guidance established during the 1988 Master Plan. These areas would continue to be prioritized for fish and wildlife, resulting in no effect towards biological productivity of the Project.

Under the Proposed Alternative, there would be an increase in lands classified as multiple resource-wildlife management. This designation would allow for the Corps and the USFWS to prioritize fish and wildlife management on these lands, resulting in a benefit for the species that inhabit these lands. For this reason, the Proposed Alternative would provide a minor benefit related to biological productivity within the Upper Mississippi River Project when compared to the No-Action Alternative.

4.2.2 TERRESTRIAL HABITAT

Under the No-Action Alternative, areas designated as wildlife management would continue to follow the guidance established during the 1988 Master Plan. These areas would continue to utilize restoration and forestry management, resulting in no effect towards the terrestrial habitat of the Project.

Under the Proposed Alternative, there would be an increase in lands classified as multiple resource-wildlife management. This designation would allow for the Corps and the USFWS to prioritize restoration and forestry management on these lands, resulting in an overall terrestrial benefit to these lands. For this reason, the Proposed Alternative would provide a minor benefit related to terrestrial habitat within the Upper Mississippi River Project when compared to the No-Action Alternative.

4.2.3 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

The St. Paul District has determined that the No-Action and Proposed Alternatives would have no effect on federally-listed threatened or endangered species. Both alternatives involve the use of documents that classify lands, under both of which the Corps would continue to adhere to the applicable endangered species laws and regulations. Any proposed projects derived from this Master Plan would need to undergo separate Section 7 consultation if necessary.

4.3 Cultural Resource Effects

Based on known site information, the required reclassifications, resource objectives, and resource plan of the No Action and Proposed Alternatives would not change current cultural resource management plans or alter areas where cultural resources exist. Impacts on cultural, historical, and archaeological resources were considered during the refinement processes of land reclassifications. All future activities would be coordinated by the Corps archaeologist or FWS Regional Historic Preservation Officer with the respective State Historic Preservation Officer and federally recognized Tribes to ensure compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. In addition, the increased allocation of lands to wildlife management would provide some level of protection to cultural resources as ground disturbance to these areas would be limited. Therefore, no short- or long-term, minor, moderate, or major adverse impacts on cultural, historical, or archaeological resources would occur as a result of implementing the 2020 Master Plan, but there may be minor long-term benefits as a result of land classification changes that would limit potential ground disturbances.

4.4 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative effects are defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) as, “[T]he impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.”

Cumulative impacts result when the impact of the Proposed Alternative is added to the impacts of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions (40 CFR 1508.7). The cumulative impacts associated with the Proposed Alternative are described below.

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions have and continue to contribute to the

cumulative impacts of activities in and around the study area. Past actions include the construction and operation of the 9-Foot Channel, recreation sites within the Project, as well as residential, commercial, and industrial facilities throughout the region. These developments have had varying levels of adverse impacts on the physical and natural resources in the region. Many of these developments, however, have had beneficial impacts on the region's socioeconomic resources. In addition, many of the previous impacts have been offset throughout the years by the resource stewardship efforts of the District, USFWS, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa DNRs, and other management partners.

The most significant past action was the construction of the 9-Foot Channel which led to the development of the Project. The construction of the locks and dams created new natural and physical conditions under management by the District and other management partners. The construction of the 9-Foot Channel also had an impact on historic properties by inundating terrestrial areas. Since that time, the District has worked to preserve, protect, and document historic properties within the Project boundary.

Existing and future actions also contribute to the cumulative impacts in the Project. Existing and future actions include the operation of project facilities, upgrades and maintenance of recreation sites, as well as residential, commercial, and industrial development throughout the region. Continued Project operations would result in the sustained maintenance and development of recreational facilities. These facilities would enhance the recreational offerings made by the District, USFWS, and other management partners. Such improvements would result in varying levels of impacts to the surrounding resources. Similarly, surrounding residential, commercial, and industrial development could result in varying levels of adverse impacts to many resources. Within the Project boundary, adverse impacts would be offset through resource stewardship efforts. The programmatic approach to project management, included in this EA and attached Master Plan, would allow for future development plans and mitigation responses to be adapted to address any adverse actions. This adaptation would allow the District and other management partners to continue to reduce the contribution of its activities to regional cumulative impacts through proactive actions and adaptive resource management strategies.

The Proposed Alternative would contribute minor increments to the overall impacts that past, present, and future projects have on the region, mainly through the implementation of updated land classifications and resource objectives outlined in the proposed Master Plan. The implantation of the Proposed Alternative would not have significant cumulative effects.

4.5 Summary of Environmental Effects

The Environmental Assessment Matrix below indicates the adverse and beneficial effects of the Proposed Alternative when compared to the No-Action Alternative for the proposed Master Plan update. The No-Action Alternative is considered to be the base condition, and includes those actions expected to be undertaken in the future in the absence of an additional project. Therefore, the impacts to each of the resource categories under the No-Action Alternative are in general the impacts that would occur without the implementation of the Master Plan Update (Table 4-1).

Table 4-1. Environmental Assessment Matrix.

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

CHAPTER 5:

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND REVIEW

5.1 Applicable Environmental Laws and Executive Orders

The Proposed Alternative would comply with federal environmental laws, Executive Orders and policies, and applicable state and local laws including but not limited to the Clean Air Act, as amended; the Clean Water Act, as amended; the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended; the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1958, as amended; the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended; the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended; the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended; Executive Order 11990 - Protection of Wetlands; Executive Order 12898 - Environmental Justice; the Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981 (the Proposed Alternative would not result in the conversion of farmland, as defined by the Farmland Policy Act, to non-agricultural uses); and Executive Order 11988 - Floodplain Management.

This document addresses only changes to the master plan update and subsequent land classification changes. Each proposed project derived from this Master Plan would need to have a separate NEPA review and comply with all applicable environmental laws and regulations.

5.2 Public Involvement and Coordination

Planning for the overall project has been coordinated with the public, state and federal agencies, and other interested parties. See Chapter 7 and Appendix B of the Master Plan for additional details regarding agency and public coordination.

Three consecutive public scoping meetings were held in July, 2019. The first meeting was on July 22 at the County Administrative Building located in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, the second was on July 23 at the Onalaska Library located in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and the third was on July 24 at the Red Wing Public Library in Red Wing, Minnesota. The format of each public scoping meeting was an open house in which the public was given the opportunity to provide official comments on the Master Plan update. Each meeting was advertised via the St. Paul District webpage, a news release, and social media posts.

Several different mediums were used to obtain public and agency input during the master planning process.

Webpage: The Upper Mississippi River Master Plan webpage invited comments using an online questionnaire. Fact sheets were posted along with a copy of the previous Master Plan.

Interactive Web-map: to better assist those who wanted to provide comments through the online questionnaire, a web map application was developed to provide a visual aid to the Master Plan boundary.

News Releases: These releases were emailed to local and state newspapers and radio stations in July

2019 in preparation for the public scoping meetings.

Comment Cards and One-on-One Communication: Questionnaires and master planning fact sheets were handed out to the public at the scoping meetings.

A public notice of availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment was published on 13 August, 2020 on the Corps website: <https://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/Home/Public-Notices/>.

The public comment period will end on 17 September, 2020 and all comments received, including Corps responses will be included in the Agency and Public Review Comments (Appendix B).

5.3 Distribution of Draft Environmental Assessment

This Environmental Assessment, along with the updated Master Plan, map plates and applicable appendices have been provided on the following website: <https://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/Home/Public-Notices/>. Prior to the distribution of these documents for public review, they were sent to the following agencies for agency review.

Federal

Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Geological Survey

State

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

We request and welcome written comments on the Environmental Assessment. Please provide written comments by 17 September 2020, to the St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ATTN: Mr. Trevor Cyphers, CEMVP-PD-E, 180 Fifth Street East, Suite 700, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101, or by email to: UMRMasterPlan2019@usace.army.mil.

REFERENCES

- Council on Environmental Quality Executive Office of the President. 2005. *Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act*.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 2013. *Engineering Regulation 1130-2-550, Recreation Operations and Maintenance Policies*. Chapter 3: Project Master Plans and Operational Management Plans. Washington, DC.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 2009. *Integrated Reservoir Operating Plan Evaluation and Environmental Impact Statement Environmental Impact Statement*. St. Paul District, St. Paul, MN.
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- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 2003. *Engineering Regulation 200-1-5, Environmental Quality Policy for Implementation and integrated Application of the USACE Environmental Operating Principals and Doctrine*. Washington, DC. Updated 2013.
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- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 1988. *Master Plan for Public Use Development and Resource Management – Part III*. St. Paul District.
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. National Wetlands Inventory website. U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. <http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/>



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DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, has assessed the environmental impacts of the following project:

UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER PROJECT MASTER PLAN

The Master Plan lays out future recommendations for management of both recreation and natural resources within the Upper Mississippi River Project area. The Master Plan is a vital tool for the responsible stewardship of resources at the Upper Mississippi River Project to benefit present and future generations. The Master Plan provides guidance and includes direction for appropriate management, use, development, enhancement, protection, and conservation of the natural, historic, and man-made resources within the Upper Mississippi River Project. The Master Plan supersedes the 1988 Master Plan, and provides a balanced, up-to-date management plan that follows current Federal laws and regulations while sustaining Upper Mississippi River Project's natural resources and providing outdoor recreational experiences.

I have reviewed the information provided in the accompanying Environmental Assessment, along with data obtained from cooperating federal, state, and local agencies and from the interested public. Based on this review, I find adopting and implementing the Upper Mississippi River Project Master Plan will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Minor benefits are anticipated with recreational opportunities, existing/potential land use, public facilities and services, biological productivity, and terrestrial habitat. There are no minor adverse effects anticipated with the proposed Master Plan update.

For the reasons above, the Proposed Alternative does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. The District will reevaluate this determination on a case-by-case basis for implementation of individual projects associated with this Master Plan.

Karl D Jansen
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer