

Waterways

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COE preference: Reopen USAF in Spring

UMWA is among the groups strongly supporting the [Army Corps of Engineers preference](#) for re-opening both the Upper and Lower St. Anthony Falls Locks this spring until the congressionally mandated June 10th closing for the Upper Lock.

The St. Paul District of the Corps made its preference known in [an environmental assessment released last month](#) and will take comments on the assessment and their preference until January 23.

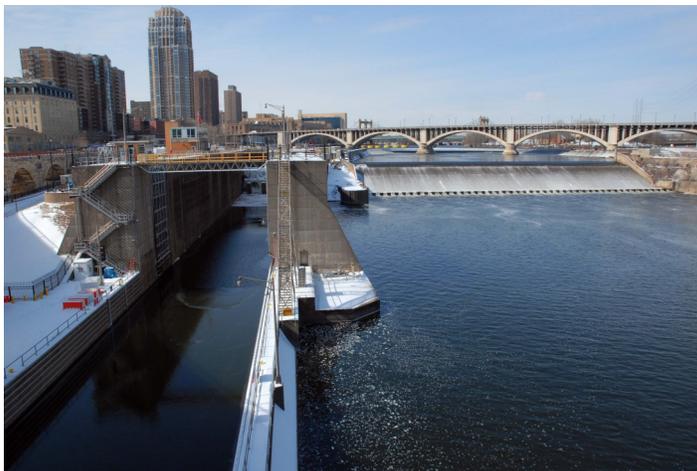
Survey says...

The analysis shows a cumulative loss of jobs because of the pending full closure with its estimate of 84 industry and Corps of Engineers jobs lost and

about 57 new positions driving the trucks that will be required to move the commodities formerly moved by barges into and

Lock will stop the potential migration of Asian Carp into the Mississippi River stretch between St. Anthony Falls and the Coon Rapids Dam.

The closure, which was part of the 2014 Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA), was mandated well before [an extensive water sam-](#)



pling program by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that shows only a small amount of eDNA in [River Pools 6, 8 and 9](#). Results can be found on the USFWS web site.

Scientists collected more than 500 water samples and found eDNA in only one.

Nick Frohnauer, Min-

out of the businesses located above the locks and dam.

The Corps has also announced reduced operating hours during the period between reopening and the mandated shut down on June 10. Those hours will be 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The shutdown was pushed by interest groups who say closing the Upper

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From the Executive Director...

2014 – A Memorable Year

Events of the last few months have not been kind to waterway interests in the St. Paul District. A late opening along with seemingly unending regional rains and high waters in June conspired against shippers as shoals and narrow channel restrictions increased demands on channel dredging to almost the breaking point. To add to that mix, the Upper Mississippi was shut down for almost a month as heavy dredging demands and agency lethargy continued to strain resources as the area was fast running out of places to put that material.

An example of the consequences of such events still haunts shipments transiting Mississippi River Pool 2 which must deal with about 1 million cubic yards of silt per year which originates in the upper reaches of the Upper Mississippi River.

Mississippi River Pool 2

Conditions in Pool 2 are exacerbated by a narrowing channel and two gas utility pipelines, the newest of which would be affected by a proposed re-alignment. This issue might end up in court because the newest pipe is only a problem if the channel is changed. The older pipe is deep enough which begs the question of why wasn't the newer one put at the same depth? In addition, the river's present serpentine line of sail requires tows to negotiate around an obstructing natural island which created a serious challenge ever since 15-barge tows have been operating in the area.

Several years ago the Corps did a study that concluded the problem of shallows and the line of sail could be corrected within two seasons for about \$5 million. During the study period, tows were reduced from 15 barges to 12 to alleviate some of the problems. The pipeline matter would become an issue later.

With the passage of time, in order to transit the area, tows were reduced from 15 barges to 12 and now to nine. The esti-

mated project cost has escalated from the original \$5 million to \$9 million and now to \$16 million – with no solution in sight. To make matters worse, project escalation further challenges Corps funding thereby adding to delay, indecision and possible further price escalation. In turn, this reduces the efficiency and reliability of barge transport for shippers and producers on the entire Upper Mississippi River.

Training structures restored?

We understand that, as an alternative, the Corps is now looking at restoring all of the training structures (dikes, wing dams, etc) that has been allowed to deteriorate over the last 40-50 years, causing a region with slack current which allows material to settle in that area. In our view, if the Corps could reestablish the river to its historic channel, dredging should be minimized. The beauty of reestablishing the "Historical River" in that area is that state agencies would have no say – it's strictly a Corps maintenance issue. Pool 2, with historical structures and dredging has always supported 15-barge tows.

Where to put dredge material?

In a separate, but related issue, a Corps contractor found an upland abandoned gravel pit in Buffalo County (Wisconsin), which promised to be a win/win situation for the beneficial use of dredged material while helping to productively reclaim an abandoned pit. Reacting to the surge of frack sand shipments on their County highways, Buffalo County instituted a limit of 25 truck trips per business per business day – a limit which threatens to be a template for movement of dredged material from the river valley to upland deposition sites as well as other commodities between riverside origin-destination points.

Now, a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency project to reduce metals and other health-threaten elements in dredge materials, threatens to limit the placement of dredged materials to only lined pits. This

“An example of the consequences of such events still haunts shipments transiting Mississippi River Pool 2....”

change would result in a five to ten fold increase in material handling costs while reducing or even eliminating a predictable source of necessary and beneficial construction material. In our view, such local regulations impede the movement of interstate commerce seemingly in violation of the U.S. Commerce Clause wherein Federal statutes supersede state regulation.

Left to wonder...

For its part, the MPCA states that proposed Soil Resource Values (SRVs) as they're called are simply internal guidelines, along with background levels, that will be considered upon requests for disposal permits. Perhaps . . . but industry, shippers and producers are left to wonder as the agency is not scheduled to release modified values until mid-February.

If issues such as we've discussed above moves into our legal system, unknown but talented Administrative Law Judges will most probably find themselves in the lime light deciding on such mundane issues as "reasonable" or "unreasonable" restraint of trade; only a day-at-the-office for them, but of important economic and environmental consequences for the Upper Mississippi River.

Paper applauds tax

The *Des Moines Register's* editors [commend the industry](#) for its support of a diesel fuel tax hike to rehab and build infrastructure.

They call it a, "big deal."

The paper says, "In fact, the barge industry itself has for several years

advocated for the diesel fee increase from 20 cents to 29 cents per gallon. They obviously directly benefit, but they point out that river infrastructure improvements also benefit other commercial and recreational boaters, flood control and hydropower. Also, environmental projects planned on the Upper Mississippi will improve habitat for fish and other wildlife...

Like so many other critical transportation projects, however, repair and replacement of waterways infrastructure has been neglected far too long. There's a nearly \$5 billion backlog of construction needed on inland waterways, it's estimated. This creates inefficiencies when barge traffic is backed up by locks shut down for repairs or by locks that are unable to handle large barge volumes. Those bottlenecks have a direct impact on Iowa's economy..."

"...MPCA states that proposed Soil Resource Values (SRVs)...are simply internal guidelines..."

Other items of interest:

- Members of the news media were invited to tour the dewatered Lock and Dam 5A near Fountain City, Wis., this week. Rehabilitation work is scheduled for completion by March 9, 2015. Last year 5A had a [new gate installed](#), a major project which you can visit online.
- Because barges can't deliver on its frozen rivers, [gasoline prices in much of rural Alaska](#) have not dropped along with those in other parts of the country. Experts say they're likely to stay that way for months to come until barges can again move up the river with cheaper gasoline. Current supplies are sold at last summer's higher prices.
- Infrastructure delays are not unique to the U.S. In [Brazil, BR-163](#) an important road for soy and corn shipments to the north of the country remains unpaved and won't be completed until next year at the earliest.
- ASCE has released an updated and revised version of its [Infrastructure Report Card as an App](#) for Android or Apple phones. It's free for download. Also on the web site, read the Society's take on the hope for infrastructure legislation in 2015.

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nesota DNR Invasive Fish Coordinator told reporters that, “The lone positive bighead result appears to support historical, physical catch evidence of low numbers of invasive carp in this stretch of the Mississippi River.”

No captures made

He said that some individual captures of Bighead and Silver Carp have been made since 2008, but none were captured in the pools that were being tested in August 2014.

This was the first sampling of water from the Southeastern Minnesota pools.

Dam test coming up

Upstream from the St. Anthony Falls locks, crews are nearing the end of a major rehabilitation project on the Coon Rapids Dam. The \$16 million, two-year project will be tested this summer, including new gates that contractors say will stop the invasive carp.

Nine of 10 gates in the dam have been replaced and the remaining gate has been repaired. The new gates are metal and hinged and will stay in the “up” position to keep the carp from moving past the dam.

As *Waterways* has mentioned before, some people think at least a partial solution to the invasive carp problem is to eat

them. [The Outdoor-Hub.com web site](#) recently offered its visitors 7 recipes for preparing Bighead or Silver Carp. The web site says common carp have a strong taste while the flaky white meat of the invasive species is milder and readily absorbs spices and marinades. The site says Asian Carp are the most commonly eaten fish in the world.

No regulation in KY

In Kentucky, the Fish and Wildlife Department says the Asian Carp industry in that state will remain unregulated to encourage fishing and removal of the fish.

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