

# Waterways

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PO Box 7006

St., Paul, MN 55107

e-mail: [umwa@umwa.net](mailto:umwa@umwa.net)

<http://www.umwa.net>

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## Land-locked lake experiencing carp problem

Proponents who think that closing locks and dams will stop infiltration of Asian carp might be interested in [a story from southern Arizona](#). The Arizona Game and Fish Department says someone's been illegally stocking Roper Lake with carp and those fish are putting pressure on trout and other species that Game and Fish tries to maintain. Although it is against state law to stock non-native species, it continues to happen and Game and Fish is asking for the public's help in finding out who's doing it.

way from the Upper Mississippi, the problems at Roper Lake point up the complexity

lutions that will, in turn, generate other problems.

As UMWA's Vice President Paul Freeman pointed out in the group's official response to [a recent commentary](#) by Rep. Keith Ellison in the *StarTribune*, "It behoves all interests to insist that decisions be made on facts, not speculation or exaggerated numbers." Ellison in his opinion piece called for immediate closure of the St.



*Above: As harvest approaches, the Mississippi River once again becomes a vital connection to world markets for Upper Midwest farmers.*

Anthony Locks and has introduced federal legislation to accomplish that.

"State officials have been working diligently on

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While Arizona is a long

of an issue that is unlikely to yield to simple solutions. So-

**We hope you're making plans to come to the UMWA annual meeting September 19, 2013. You can get the details and other information on our website [www.umwa.net](http://www.umwa.net). See you there!**

## House will consider WRRDA bill after its August recess

Chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Rep. Bill Shuster, (R-Pa.), says his committee will consider its version of [a water bill when Congress returns](#) from recess and has set a goal of

having the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) to the full house in October.

Speaking to the National Governor's Conference recently, Schuster indicated that the bill will try to cut red tape

and shorten bureaucratic delays. Other goals are to streamline the project delivery process, promote fiscal responsibility, and strengthen the water transportation networks to promote competi-

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## From the Executive Director...

*[This is the statement we presented before the Mississippi River Commission at their Annual Low-Water Inspection Tour Public Hearing at La Crosse, Wisconsin August 12, 2013]*

General Peabody, members of the Mississippi River Commission and guests. Once again our Association is pleased to be a part of your annual low-water inspection tour. We are here to offer comments on a few select issues.

### Lock Closure

Last month a House Subcommittee took testimony on various bills relating to measures to control the advance of Asian carp, among other issues. Appearing before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs, a representative of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), stated their support of language that would make Corps of Engineers' lock/dam decisions subservient to concurrence with appropriate state and federal agencies.

According to that testimony, "... the affected natural resource agencies and the US Fish and Wildlife Service are in the best position to help the Corps successfully navigate the needs of other fish and wildlife while simultaneously reducing the spread of Asian carp."

Continuing, the testimony said giving the Corps authority to change lock operations to restrict invasion is critical. While state and federal agencies support the new authority and flexibility, "we (AFWA) do have concerns about the potential unintended consequences to other fish and aquatic species that are reliant on our river systems for completion of their lifecycles." These cycles, said AFWA, could be compromised by the closure of locks and dams.

AFWA concluded by stating that in an effort to reduce these unintended consequences or potentially undermine current conservation actions and efforts, AFWA recommends Asian carp legislation being here discussed [H.R. 358 and H.R. 709] require concurrence with the appropriate state fish and wildlife agencies and the US Fish and Wildlife Service on any change in operations of a lock/dam, including closure. In our opinion, AFWA is getting ahead of itself in these demands as the Corps' mission stops well short of having authority to prevent the above mentioned unin-

tended consequences. If, on the other hand, the Corps were to be given Congressional authority to operate locks to restrict invasives, it would have two masters. How then, if the Corps had to get concurrence with USFWS before executing a change, would AFWA, or Congress for that matter, have the Corps perform in order to accomplish, what could well be, two diametrically opposed objectives: (1) operating locks to provide Congressionally authorized service to commercial/recreational users or, (2) facilitate USFWS' interests in stopping the likes of Asian carp?

Not surprisingly, AFWA's testimony was devoid of any discussion relating to the economic impact of, or how to implement their recommendations.

### Lock & Dam 3 Navigation Safety Project

On May 31<sup>st</sup> of this year, the St. Paul District conducted a dedication ceremony for a \$70 million improvement project that was unique in the fact that it was the first time the district finished a plan as a design-build contract and where the work was performed without closing the lock to either the navigation industry or pleasure craft operators.

Project improvements at the facility help navigation tow captains deal with unfavorable currents as a result of the lock being located on a bend in the river. Navigation improvements include an 862-foot-long guide wall extension, a closure dike that reduces adverse currents near the guide wall, channel dredging and the placement of approximately 150,000 cubic yards of material.

In addition to the navigation improvements, the Corps upgraded the natural embankments on the Wisconsin side of the river. The lower embankment improvements include several thousand linear feet of earthwork and rock protection, concrete spillways and associated water-level control structures. The upper embankments improvements include reconstructing nine channel closures and rock protection near the dam.

Collectively, these improvements reduce the risk of a catastrophic failure to the dam, which would rapidly reduce the water level within Pool 3. We congratulate the St. Paul District for another job well done.

Proposed Realignment in Pool 2, St. Paul Dis-

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trict

Pool 2 might best be described as a microcosm of how things can go wrong on the Upper Mississippi River: too much water, too much protection and too little money.

Too much water

Over past two decades, water flow in the Upper Mississippi River has increased about 24% (COE). Due largely to a 70% increase in flow from the Minnesota River.

Increase in urban streets, roof-tops and other hardscape features.

Increased agriculture tile used to drain fields.

Surge of water into Minnesota River causing banks to erode, sending more water into the river than into the ground.

With water comes silt, upwards to a semi-load of dirt to Pool 2 every 12 minutes, year after year.

An estimated 1 million tons of silt rushes through narrow channels in St. Paul and settles into southern Pool 2 and Lake Pepin.

This is bad for fish and bad for barges. (TwinCities.com, 7/28/12)

Too much protection

Ironically, one reason Pool 2 is ignored is that federal legislation protects surface-water use.

Since 1988, it's been part of the 72-mile Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Building of roads, homes and businesses are strictly limited.

It also means relatively few people care about the river; it could become a swamp and no one would lobby for help.

By contrast the Lake Pepin portion of the Mississippi River has no such protection. Consequently, it is lined with scenic highways, marinas and homes, and is active with commercial vessels, power boats, canoes and sailboats.

Which means thousands use it and protest if it is being damaged.

They become the squeaky wheel. (TwinCities.com, 7/28/12)

Too little money

Currently, funding and other issues relating to this mission are suffering from project inertia as federal and state agencies grapple with economic, political and other considerations.

In closing, we ask the Commission to recognize the many different and, at times, conflicting uses of the Upper Mississippi River, and to consider all the benefits the lock and dam system provides: commercial and recreational boating; municipal waste-water facilities; power plant cooling; island building; bank stabilization; environmental habitat; commercial and recreational fishing, and more.

We thank you for this opportunity to share our comments with your Commission.

Greg Genz  
President

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*“...Pool 2 might best be described as a microcosm of how things can go wrong on the Upper Mississippi River...”*

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**Other items of interest:**

- Work on the [Ohio River Olmsted Dam](#) will stop in January if Congress doesn't increase the spending limit. The Corps of Engineers says more than 600 construction workers would become unemployed, and the delay would further set back the federal project at least another year and add \$80 million more to the projected cost of \$3 billion.
- It was 150 years ago this month that the President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a day of thanksgiving to celebrate the U.S. victory at [Vicksburg, Miss.](#), and the reopening of the Mississippi for its full length. Then as now, the waterway was vital to the country and its economy.
- Another cruise line has announced its intention to cruise the Mississippi River. [Viking River Cruises](#) will start in 2015 and the vessels will be larger than the “longships” Viking uses on European rivers. The Mississippi currently has two overnight cruise boats the 150-passenger Queen of the Mississippi from American Cruise Lines, and the 436-passenger American Queen belonging to the American Queen Steamboat Co. Both cruise from New Orleans to Minneapolis/St. Paul.

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measures to slow the spread of carp,” Ellison says. “Possible techniques include electric, bubble and sound barriers. Officials have also increased monitoring and encouraged boaters and cruise operators to avoid unnecessary use of the locks along the river. None of these options, however, are 100 percent effective.”

As the Arizona experience shows, even laws protecting land-locked lakes are not 100 percent effective. Ellison says the reason for haste now is that, “Last month an invasive carp was caught just below St. Paul.”

In its letter to the *Star-Tribune* responding to Ellison, UMWA points out that reconstruction of the Coon Rapids Dam to make it a 99.9% effective barrier is

already underway and local watershed districts and municipalities have decided to be proactive and have the Rum River Dam at Anoka redesigned to act as a barrier.

You can read more about UMWA’s thinking on the carp problem at our web site [www.umwa.net](http://www.umwa.net) and in the Executive Director’s column on page 2 of this newsletter.

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tiveness, prosperity, and economic growth.

“WRRDA will be the most policy and reform-focused legislation of its kind in the last two decades,” Shuster says.

Shuster said that the existing water infrastructure is growing more and more obsolete every day.

“The ports, channels,

locks and dams, and other infrastructure that support our maritime and waterways transportation system and provide flood protection for our homes and businesses are vitally important to a healthy national economy and job growth,” Shuster said. “We need fiscally responsible reforms for how our nation maintains and improves this infrastructure, and we need to empower states with the flexibility they need to move forward with projects when federal bureaucratic hurdles stand in the way of progress.”

One of Shuster’s staff recently said that bipartisan agreement on the framework of the bill has been reached, but language and provisions are being fine tuned.

The U.S. Senate passed its version of WRDA (S-601) in May, also with bipartisan support.

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**Upper Mississippi Waterway Assoc.  
PO Box 7006  
St. Paul, MN 55107**

**Address label here**