

Waterways

A publication of the Upper Mississippi Waterway Association

PO Box 7006, St. Paul, MN, 55107

e-mail: umwa@qwestoffice.net

<http://www.umwa.us>

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As UMWA gathers for 85th...

Growing calls for infrastructure renewal

As UMWA members gather for their 85th Annual Meeting in West St. Paul, Minn., this week it's interesting to reflect on what was top of mind when we got together a year ago. At that time the Obama administration was talking about a \$50 billion plan to improve the nation's roads, railways and runways. As UMWA pointed out at that time, the reason for the glaring omission of waterway infrastructure in that plan was anyone's guess.

This year, the White House is pushing for a Jobs Plan that does include water infrastructure and calls for \$447 billion in spending or tax relief.

Much more needed

But as a recent report from the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) makes clear, even if all of that money were applied to infrastructure renewal in the U.S., it would not begin to do the job.

The August report says the country's deteriorating surface infrastructure will cost the economy more than 876,000 jobs and almost \$900 billion in gross domestic product.

Titled "Falling Apart and Falling Behind," the ASCE report says water infrastructure is severely underfunded. Along the 26,000 miles of commercially navigable waterways, there are more than 4,095 dams which are unsafe and vulnerable, especially during large flood events such as happened this year on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers.

The report says that on an average day about 43 million tons of goods valued at \$29 billion are moving



(Above) Aging infrastructure is visible on all parts of the Mississippi, including these bridges at St. Louis, Mo.

on the nation's intermodal transportation system.

Invest now

In all, ASCE says the country needs to invest about \$1.7 TRILLION in infrastructure by 2020 to bring the surface transportation infrastructure up to "tolerable levels."

To put it into perspective, ASCE says that, "Small investments in infrastructure, equal to about 60 percent of what Americans spend on fast food each year, would protect 1 million jobs; save American 180 million hours in travel time each year; deliver an

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From the Executive Director...

A Fishy Merry-Go-Round

Last month, the (Milwaukee) JOURNAL Interactive website reported that an appeals court denied a request by Wisconsin and four other Great Lakes states to order closure of shipping locks on Chicago-area waterways as part of an effort to block Asian carp from invading Lake Michigan. Not to be disheartened, Wisconsin's attorney general noted that the Seventh Circuit appeals court stated that "if federal efforts should wane", or if the record reveals new information, the sought-after preliminary relief to close the locks may well be granted.

Coincidentally and shortly thereafter, Minnesota's ad hoc Asian Carp Task Force issued a draft Carp Action Plan calling for early detection, prevention, mitigation and outreach. The Plan also listed one issue upon which there was no consensus, but more on that later.

It's interesting to note that the Task Force, according to Appendix A of the Action Plan, is comprised of three groups apparently in hierarchical order: Agencies, Technical advisors and Observers.

The Agency group is comprised of the normal assemblage of federal and state agencies, with the National Park Service and Minnesota DNR as co-chairs. The Technical group includes the University of Minnesota, Three Rivers Park District (owner of the Coon Rapids Dam), Mississippi River Fund, St. Croix Valley Foundation and the St. Paul Port Authority. Finally, the low-rung Observers group has but two: Friends of the Mississippi and UMWA misidentified as Upper Mississippi River Waterways Association.

The strategy, we're told, is to produce an action plan amongst agencies based upon general consensus, whereupon it will be presented to a wider audience for comments.

UMWA participation

Not being an agency or an advisor and with only two days notice, UMWA nonetheless filed comments by the September 1 deadline. This column will recite only the major points of our submission to sufficiently state our position:

***Early detection:** We agreed with early detection efforts in Pools 2-9, but cautioned that methods must be improved to allow testers to identify the difference

between eDNA generated by fish foods containing ground dead carp from that of living carp. We also suggested Iowa be added to the current test area of Minnesota and Wisconsin.

***Prevention:** We asked why the Coon Rapids Dam project couldn't be redefined to make it 100 percent effective, rather than (after a \$16 million upgrade) merely being a back-up to a permanent fish barrier at Upper St. Anthony Falls. We agreed that the feasibility study for a permanent fish barrier at Upper St. Anthony allowing navigation, but which prevents carp from breaching the falls, must be completed.

***Mitigation:** A number of projects to improve water quality and habitat to allow native species to better compete with Asian carp were listed in appendix D of the Action Plan; UMWA questioned the location of riverine environments where this can happen. We also cautioned that "Anticipated benefits" is not a good enough reason to solicit scarce dollars in today's economic environment.

UMWA also addressed several issues including one on which members of the ad hoc group had no consensus: emergency closure of Upper St. Anthony Falls and/or Lock and Dam #1. While admitting that the Corps of Engineers does not have authority to close locks to block invasive species under emergency conditions, Mn DNR states that if Asian carp are detected, this authority is needed immediately. They further stated that until a feasibility study is completed and a 100 percent effective barrier is installed, the locks should be closed if there is an imminent threat from Asian carp. UMWA response: A more rigorously studied and science-based criteria must be established to precisely define "imminent threat". And, if Asian carp are to be combated on a national or regional effort, Federal funding would be more appropriate than piecemeal state/regional efforts.

Australia's carp experience

In a separate but related issue, Australia may be onto something more promising. The land Down Under, it seems, has had a carp problem for the last 30 years or so; there, carp are called 'European carp', or given their reproductive capacity and hardiness, 'river rabbits'.

In 2006 Australia's Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) started

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an investigation into the use of *Koi herpesvirus* as a means of controlling carp. According to its website, the virus which first emerged in Israel in 1998 caused mass mortalities in carp in the US, the UK, Israel, the Netherlands, Japan and Indonesia. We suspected that the noun ‘carp’ used on this website might mean the generic version rather than the invasive Asian variety familiar to us. However the Australian website described their carp as growing up to 20 kilograms (44 pounds), with a water system makeup of 85 percent carp in rivers and creeks – sounding eerily similar to the U.S. version. We presume Mn DNR and federal agencies know of the Australian experience.

Virus combats carp

According to CSIRO, *Koi herpesvirus* is attractive as a biological control agent that has a very limited host range, infecting only carp. The virus works by attacking the carp’s gills as well as other vital organs, eventually killing its host.

The Aussie website further stated that if CSIRO laboratory studies show promise, the next step will be extensive government, public and industry consultation to determine the best course of action to control carp. We found no discussion on the CSIRO website beyond 2006 despite our search efforts; intrigued by that void, we contacted them via email and are awaiting a reply.

No carp in St. Croix

Lastly, the September 2 issue of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* indicated that a commercial fishing operator and state fisheries employees failed to catch a single Asian carp in the St. Croix River in nine days on the water. Failing to find fish might give officials a bit more time to deal with the problem, said Tom Landwehr, [MN] Department of Natural Resources

It seems the illusive invaders are as hard to catch as the Gold Ring on 20th century carousels.

This year’s UMWA Annual Meeting speaker is a veteran of both Desert Storm, Iraq and Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan. Col. Michael J. Price assumed command of the St. Paul District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers July 2, 2010.

This year’s event will be held at the Southview Country Club, West St. Paul, Minn., Thursday, September 15.

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average of \$1,060 to each family and protect \$10,000 in GDP for every man, woman and child in the U.S.”

Waterways notes that ASCE is not the only organization trying to bring attention to the desperate need for infrastructure renewal in America. The “Building America’s Future Educational Fund” says that the U.S. is a political and economic super power today in large part because it built an infrastructure that was the envy of the world. But, they say, that infrastructure is getting old and is not being replaced or expanded fast enough to keep up with the rest of the world.

The group notes that in less than 20 years the country’s waterways and ports will be expected to handle twice to four times as much cargo as they were designed for.

While the new White House jobs package is still just a proposal, UMWA members and others in the industry are encouraged that it does include a proposal to build or modernize 24 navigation projects that have already been authorized by Congress. It is also encouraging that work has finally resumed on the navigation safety and structural improvements at Lock and Dam 3 on the Mississippi River, which are funded by the 2009 stimulus package passed by congress.

Other river related items:

- Work at Lock and Dam 3 has resumed and will continue through the winter months. UMWA member Portable Barge Service is placing rock on the Red Wing Wildlife League Property on the right descending side, below the lock. And work has restarted on the upper approach for the navigation component of the project.
- Up-river, high water levels and the state shutdown earlier this year will delay the opening of the Highway 61 bridge at Hastings, Minn., for a year. The new opening date is 2014. The new bridge will be supported by 10 piers, each containing 11 to 21 pilings and will sit about 60 feet above normal river level. The 545-foot main span will be floated and lifted into place between the end of the navigation season and river freeze-up.