US Army Corps of Engineers ®
Memphis District

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NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

Draft Assessment of Information Needed for River-Related Management
of the
Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment

REPLY TO:
ATTN: Marsha Raus
Planning Division
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
167 North Main Street, Room B-202
Memphis, Tennessee 38103-1894
Tele: (901) 544-0817
E-mail: Marsha.L.Raus@usace.army.mil

TITLE: Draft Assessment of Information Needed for River-Related Management of the Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment

AUTHORITY The Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment is authorized by Section 402 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000, Public Law 106-541.

LOCATION: The study area extends from River Mile 953 of the main-stem Mississippi River channel south of Cairo, Illinois, downstream to River Mile 0 (Head of Passes) in Louisiana (see map on page 2). The area encompasses the main river channel and the area between the Mississippi River and Tributaries project levees or natural high ground (batture), including the mouths of all tributaries between the levees. The study boundary extends up the following rivers and canals that have existing commercial navigation (i.e. commercial barge traffic) to the point of direct influence between each channel and the main-stem Mississippi River; the White River upstream to Clarendon, Arkansas; the Arkansas Post Canal upstream to Norrell Lock and Dam, Arkansas; the Yazoo River upstream to Greenwood, Mississippi; the Red River upstream to Lock and Dam No. 2 in Louisiana; the Ouachita/Black River upstream to Columbia Lock and Dam in Louisiana; and the Old River from the Old River Lock to its confluence with the Red and Atchafalaya Rivers in Louisiana. The Atchafalaya Basin floodway system in Louisiana is included in the study area.

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LOWER MISSISSIPPI RIVER RESOURCE ASSESSMENT STUDY - OVERVIEW

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Memphis District, is issuing this notice of the availability of a draft Assessment of Information Needed for River-Related Management for the Lower Mississippi River.

PURPOSE: The Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment will produce three separate assessments and one comprehensive plan combining those three assessments. This report is the Assessment of Information Needed for River-Related Management. It examines the known and anticipated information needs based on current and foreseeable plans and operations.

The other two reports are the assessment of natural resource habitat needs and the assessment of the need for river-related recreation and access. The recreation assessment is scheduled to be available for public review in Spring 2014 and the habitat assessment will follow in Summer 2014.

Executive Summary

This report assesses information needed for river-related management on the lower Mississippi River from Cairo, Illinois at its confluence with the Ohio River to the Head of Passes in Louisiana. The investigation was authorized in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000. The Nature Conservancy – Great Rivers Partnership is the lead study sponsor; other partners are the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee, Mississippi River Corridor – TN, Audubon, The Nature Conservancy Chapters in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee, Delta Wildlife and Wildlife Mississippi.

The study team identified issues raised during scoping; examined river management activities; and collated information sources. These steps revealed four areas of information needs for river management. The information needs are related to sediment, water quality, data storage and availability, and tributary management.

Many of the world's great rivers have sediment monitoring and management plans, but there is not one for the Mississippi River. Sediment is both a management problem and a valuable asset in the river. Sediment monitoring has not been done consistently on the Lower River. A systematic monitoring and measuring protocol and the development of predictive sediment models would give river mangers the tools to develop a sediment management plan. This would benefit flood risk management, navigation, fish and wildlife, coastal habitat, water supplies and Gulf of Mexico hypoxia.

Clean water is vital to the nation's economy. Water quality in the Mississippi River is generally good and continues to improve, but monitoring is not well coordinated among the seven states along the Lower River. The sources and fates of nutrients, pathogens and contaminants in the river have not been clearly delineated. A coordinated water monitoring and analysis program for the river and tributaries would give managers the tools to make informed decisions and develop comprehensive management plans to continue improving water quality. This would benefit fish and wildlife, recreation, water supplies, coastal habitat and Gulf of Mexico hypoxia.

Data availability is important for all river management. Much of the data for the Lower River is held in agency files and databases. A substantial amount of historic data only exists as paper files and maps that can only be accessed in person. River managers either make decisions

without some information, or invest resources to generate information that may already exist. A centralized data management system that stores some information and provides linkages to the rest would give river managers and the public access to the best information available. This is vital to improved management of water quality and sediment.

Tributaries are some of the most significant sources of nutrients and sediment to the main-stem of the Lower Mississippi River. There has been very little geomorphic analysis of non-navigable tributary streams to better understand how they interact with the river. Tributary river restoration will be a necessary part of enhanced water quality and sediment monitoring programs and overall watershed based approaches for the systems. It is important for water quality, sediment, hypoxia, habitat, and fish and wildlife management.

This assessment is the first of three to be completed under the Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment. A recreation needs assessment and a natural resource habitat needs assessment are to follow. These three assessments will be combined into a comprehensive plan to guide management of the Lower Mississippi River.

PUBLIC INTEREST REVIEW: The purpose of this public notice is to solicit comments and information necessary to improve this report. This assessment does not propose any action.

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; federal, state and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps of Engineers to improve the quality of this report and to determine the overall public interest in the assessment. **The draft report will be circulated to agencies and any other parties that respond to this notice requesting copies. Copies of these documents have been placed on the District's website at:**

http://www.mvm.usace.army.mil/Portals/51/docs/regulatory/publicnotices/Memphis%20Civil%20Works/LMRRA%20public%20review%20draft.pdf
or
http://www.mvm.usace.army.mil/About/Offices/Regulatory/PublicNotices.aspx

COMMENTS OR REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: If you wish to obtain additional information or to submit comments on this proposal, contact Marsha Raus (901/544-3455 at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Planning Branch, 167 North Main Street, Room B-202, Memphis, Tennessee 38103-1894. **Comments should be forwarded to this office by 5 July 2013.**

Sincerely,

Edward P. Lambert

Edward P. Lambert
Chief, Planning Branch