



Hatchie- Loosahatchie, MS River Mile 775-736, TN & AR Feasibility Study



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States of Arkansas and Tennessee

Authority/Appropriation: WRDA 2018 (P.L. 115-270) Section 1202 / Investigations

Non-Federal Sponsor: Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee
Executive Committee Chairman – Jason Henegar

Project Description:

- Feasibility study to investigate restoration of aquatic and floodplain habitat compatible with flood control and navigation priorities.
- The study area, a 39-mile reach of the Mississippi River and the surrounding bature (land between the low-tide of the Mississippi River and the levee or bluff), begins at the mouth of the Hatchie River and extends south to the mouth of the Wolf River Harbor. Three tributaries/river mouths occur in the reach: the Hatchie, Loosahatchie, and Wolf rivers.
- Potential restoration methods: Side-channel restoration, reconnect backwater habitat, restore canebrakes, bottomland hardwood (BLH) and riverfront reforestation, enhance nursery areas, and improve islands for interior least terns.

Background:

- Loss of connectivity to adjacent sandbars, side-channels, oxbows, and backwaters, coupled with associated clearing of overbank areas, has resulted in significant declines to historic habitat.
- River cane, once a significant habitat type throughout the Lower Mississippi River, has been extirpated from the project area.
- BLH were also prevalent throughout the project area, but vast areas were cleared by local interests.
- Sandbars were dynamic features of the natural river landscape, but maintenance of the navigation channel has limited sandbar formation, and most sandbars are now along the edges of the channel associated with dike fields.
- The main channel remains connected north to south, and there is some intermittent connectivity of the main channel to other habitats, but little to no connectivity exists directly between the individual side-channels, backwaters, and other aquatic features.



Project Purpose:

- Investigate the loss of habitat complexity in the Mississippi River, including in side-channels and its floodplain.
- Find opportunities for habitat restoration that are compatible with existing navigation and flood control priorities.
- Examine restoration of ecological function, floodplain habitat quality enhancement; and enhancement of vegetative mosaic, including several scarce vegetative habitats such as wetlands, canebrakes, and BLH forests.
- Explore opportunities to enhance other habitat such as sandbars, river islands and oxbow lakes.

