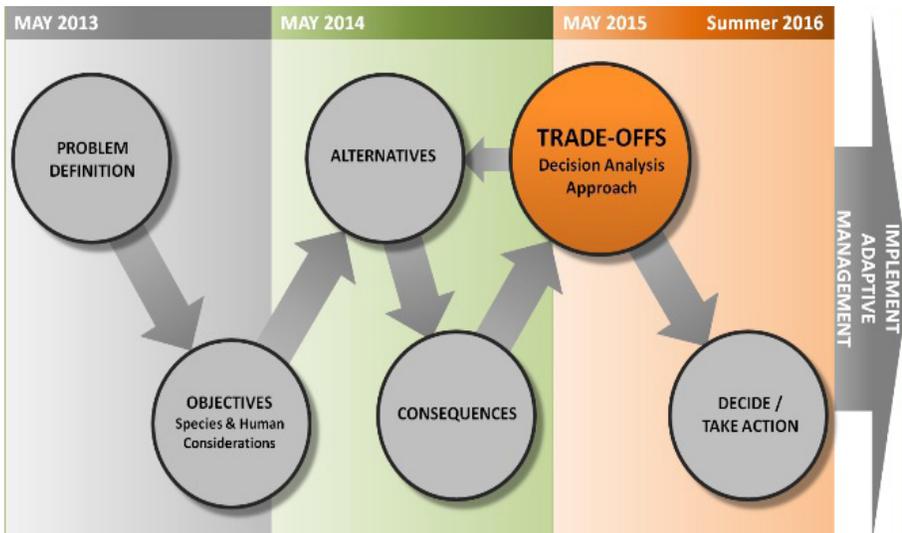




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ONE YEAR TO GO MISSOURI RIVER RECOVERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Missouri River Recovery Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement is a three-year effort that kicked off nearly two years ago. It is on the path to evaluate any needed modifications to how the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) creates habitat and avoids jeopardy to the Missouri River threatened and endangered species through the Missouri River Recovery Program. This process is on schedule and is being developed by USACE and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in close coordination with the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC).



USACE image

At the upcoming MRRIC meeting May 19-21 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the Corps will provide a presentation of alternatives that have been developed to meet objectives for the threatened Northern Great Plains population of Piping Plovers, as developed by the USFWS. The Corps will also present consequences to stakeholder interests associated with these exploratory alternatives. A trade-offs discussion will follow, focusing on the relative differences in impacts between the alternatives. Alternatives are different, complete and distinct plans developed to meet identified objectives. A mix of management actions have been developed for each alternative and evaluated. The trade-offs process allows for comparison between each alternative for a number of metrics. Because the relative value of the different metrics may be viewed differently by stakeholders, the resulting discussion will help identify areas of concern for stakeholders and provide for further conversation.

These discussions will delve into the differences between the exploratory alternatives and how stakeholder interests, identified by MRRIC and referred to as human considerations, may be influenced. Following this effort, teams will begin incorporating initial levels of implementation of management actions for the endangered pallid sturgeon into the alternatives for a second round of trade-off discussions at the August MRRIC.

Stay informed online as the Management Plan and EIS progresses, www.MoRiverRecovery.org.

Information regarding the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee's involvement in the Management Plan and EIS can be found online at www.MoRiverRecovery.org or www.MRRIC.org.



DID YOU KNOW?

- During the 2014 Missouri River field sampling, crews captured the first three genetically-confirmed larval pallid sturgeon. Laboratory analysis is still ongoing.
- Each spring broodstock collection efforts for the endangered pallid sturgeon kick off on the Missouri River. Volunteers assist the state & federal agencies with this annual effort.
- Did you know MRRP sites are open to the public? Detailed information regarding on-site management agencies, site access & regulations, acreage & land cover types & more can be found on the website. Look for the tab "MRRP Site" at www.MoRiverRecovery.org

MISSOURI RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM

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2015 BROODSTOCK EFFORTS

Missouri River

Throughout the Missouri River Basin, crews participate in ongoing efforts of artificial propagation and stocking of the endangered pallid sturgeon. These efforts, first launched in 1992, are referred to as broodstock collection. These collections are intense, one- or two-week efforts that allow hundreds of volunteers to work side-by-side with fisheries biologists to find as many reproductive pallid sturgeon as possible.



Broodstock, or broodfish, are mature individual pallid sturgeon used in hatcheries for breeding purposes. These artificial propagation efforts include collecting male and female pallid sturgeon in reproductive condition from the river and taking those fish to hatcheries where eggs are fertilized, hatched and young sturgeon are grown to an appropriate stocking size.

Early results from the 2015 collection are positive. Nebraska Game and Parks Commission staff collected 212 pallid sturgeon, sending 43 reproductive males and females to Missouri Department of Conservation's Blind Pony State Fish Hatchery to determine genetic purity, capacity to add to the population and whether they are ready to spawn. Missouri Department of Conservation collected an additional 91 pallid sturgeon with 15 sent to the hatchery. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Columbia, Mo., field office, netted 32 pallid sturgeon and one was sent to the hatchery. South Dakota Department of Game Fish and Parks pulled in 12 pallid sturgeon and two were sent to the hatchery for possible broodstock use.

In total, broodstock collection efforts from all stations below Gavins Point Dam produced 61 possible broodfish that are being evaluated at Blind Pony State Fish Hatchery for their potential contribution to future pallid sturgeon releases. Teams located above Gavins Point Dam and more northern portions of the species range will soon begin collection efforts in these areas as well.

Broodstock collection crews consist of volunteers, federal agencies (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and state agencies in Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota and Montana.



TURNING PLANS INTO PROGRESS ON BIG MUDDY

Cranberry Bend

Near Missouri River mile 282 you can see progress of a new side-channel chute. This project is the Missouri River Recovery Program's Cranberry Bend site managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge.

Construction of this side-channel chute, and moving an existing levee further inland, will create 41 acres of aquatic habitat with the intent to benefit the endangered pallid sturgeon and other native fish and wildlife along the river and improve floodplain connectivity to 450 acres of land.

ESI Contracting of Kansas City, Mo., was awarded the construction contract. Work commenced this past winter and is overseen by the Kansas City District's Resident Office. Construction preparation began in the winter, but with warmer weather finally making a debut, the project site work has really kicked off and large-scale construction efforts have begun.



This contractor has experience from previous projects with the Kansas City District and has proven valuable in their approach to this job. An effort such as strategic stockpiling of materials for the new levee on the opposite side of the chute construction is one example of beneficial work.

Bob Schoen, resident engineer for the Kansas City District, and his crew oversee the construction. "This project is making amazing progress and ESI made the most of the winter months. The low river stages, low groundwater and frozen ground provided them with an opportunity to stockpile the material and allow it to drain and dry out (this spring). Now they are able to use it to build the levee with soils in the right condition allowing for more ideal levee placement. They have really met this job head on."

This project incorporates beneficial reuse of material to create in-channel habitats in the river margins. Once the new levee is complete, the old levee will be notched and the chute will open up.

Additionally, the old island at the project site will be enhanced and new wetlands and a sandbar will be created. New dikes will be constructed and old dikes extended to ensure the navigation channel is maintained. Dike modifications will also help sustain the new sandbar near the island.

Due to construction, the Cranberry Bend site is temporarily closed to public access and will reopen following completion of the project, anticipated in the fall of 2015.



USACE photos of Cranberry Bend

Missouri River Recovery Program Report

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

The Missouri River Recovery Program's annual report provides information regarding MRRP activities and accomplishments for the fiscal year 2014. While the program completed multiple tasks and reached many milestones, some of which can be identified through the following highlights.

The Missouri River Recovery Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement efforts and the concurrent development of an Adaptive Management Plan continued to assess the efficacy of current and future MRRP actions as well as describe how decisions will be made in the MRRP moving forward utilizing the most up-to-date scientific information.

Through the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee, the project continued to make progress by coming to a consensus on stakeholder interests, referred to as human considerations for assessment of consequences and was able to incorporate conceptual ecological models for the listed species.

Bird productivity surveys for the least tern and piping plover were again conducted in 2014. This activity concluded a piping plover increase of approximately 25.8 percent and a slight decrease in least terns by 3 percent from 2013. It was determined nesting activity increased in 2014; however nest success was decreased for both species from 2013.

Efforts for the pallid sturgeon again included upper and lower Missouri River broodstock collection, hatchery propagation, pallid sturgeon population assessment project, shallow water habitat program and the habitat assessment monitoring program. A primary focus for 2014 was data collection focused on investigations to better understand the relationship between age-0 sturgeon habitat use and availability in order to determine limiting factors that inhibit pallid sturgeon recruitment. Through collection efforts, pallid sturgeon larva were captured in the lower Missouri River in 2014. More information on this discovery will be reported in the fiscal year 2015 report as results are still being analyzed.

Look for the full Missouri River Recovery Program 2014 Annual Report online this summer!
www.MoRiverRecovery.org

GET INVOLVED!

- You can receive program updates by following the Missouri River Recovery Program on Facebook; www.Facebook.com/MoRiverRecovery
- You can request a presentation from a MRRP representative online
- Email questions directly to us; MRRP@usace.army.mil
- Send us suggestions for upcoming Recovery Channel issues or Facebook posts
- Explore the river through our interactive online tool, the Missouri River Basin Explorer; www.MoRiverRecovery.org
- Sign up for our emailing list online or send us a message with your request

www.MoRiverRecovery.org

MISSOURI RIVER
RECOVERY PROGRAM

FACES OF MRRP



Ruth Bentzinger joined the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District in 2009 bringing over ten years of experience in project management, National Environmental Policy Act compliance, environmental impact analysis, habitat assessments and field monitoring.

After serving as an environmental planner in the Planning Branch, Ruth assumed her current role as lead natural resources specialist for the Missouri River Project Office in 2014. Her primary focus is oversight of land management activities on Corps-owned land along a 237-mile stretch of the Missouri River from Sioux City, Iowa to Rulo, Neb. Some of these responsibilities include: working closely with the Missouri River Recovery Program team in the transition of completed project sites to the operation and maintenance phase; coordinating with state agencies, levee sponsors and landowners to ensure land activities are compliant with federal environmental laws, Corps regulations and consistent with authorized purposes; conducting project site inspections; and communicating with the public about recreation opportunities on Corps lands.

Ruth holds a bachelor's degree from University of Nebraska Omaha in environmental studies/life sciences. She is also a certified wetland delineator and is listed as a qualified bird surveyor by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

For information on the Missouri River Recovery Program, visit www.MoRiverRecovery.org.