



US Army Corps of
Engineers
St. Paul District

Reconnaissance Study: Minnesota River Basin in MN, SD, IA and ND

Location/Description

The Minnesota River in southwestern Minnesota originates at the Minnesota-South Dakota border. It flows 335 miles to join the Mississippi River at Minneapolis, Minnesota. The river drains 16,770 square miles in Minnesota, South Dakota, North Dakota and Iowa. Since European settlement, native prairie has been replaced by agriculture and urban development with constructed drainage systems; over 90 percent of the wetlands that existed pre-settlement have been drained. Several dams in the basin prevent natural fish migrations. A navigation channel in the lower 15 miles of the river passes through the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The Minnesota River carries substantial sediment and nutrient loads that degrade the aquatic ecosystems in the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers.

A reconnaissance study conducted between April 2003 and December 2004 recommended three initial feasibility studies:

- 1) An integrated watershed, water quality management, and ecosystem restoration analysis. This study would produce a watershed management plan to facilitate better watershed management and identify specific opportunities for the Corps of Engineers and other stakeholders to implement.
- 2) A Blue Earth River aquatic ecosystem restoration study would evaluate measures to restore habitat and connectivity between the Minnesota River and 1,200 miles of perennial tributary streams that have been isolated from the main stem for nearly a century. The study would assess options at the Rapidan Dam, including removal, modification, and rehabilitation of the structure.
- 3) A Marsh Lake aquatic ecosystem restoration study would identify measures to restore over 5,000 acres of wetland habitat within the existing reservoir and to reconnect Lac qui Parle to more than 750 miles of streams in the Pomme de Terre River basin. Marsh Lake is in the Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management area and a major bird migration corridor. Restoration would benefit thousands of migratory waterfowl as well as many other species of birds and fish.

Feasibility study costs would be shared 50-50 between the Corps and non-Federal sponsors. The following feasibility sponsors have submitted letters of intent: Blue Earth County (Minnesota), the (seven-county Twin Cities area) Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, University of Minnesota, and The Nature Conservancy.

Status

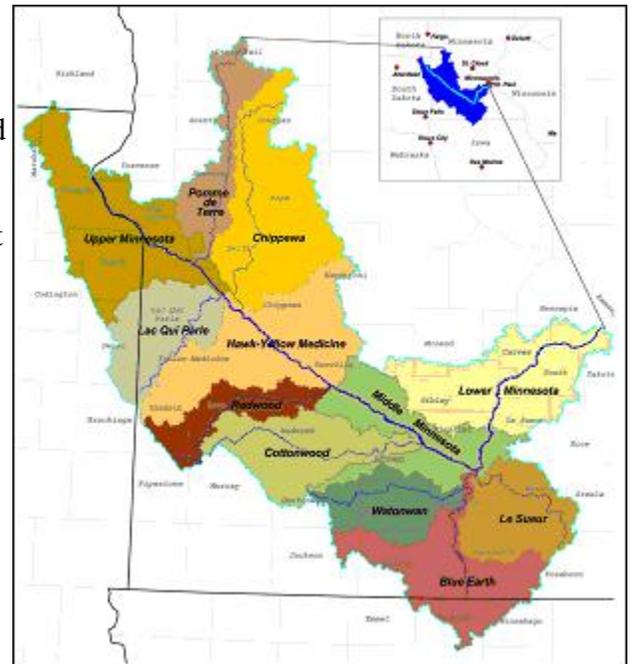
The reconnaissance report was approved on January 13, 2005. Feasibility study scoping is underway.

Authority

The study is authorized by a resolution of the Committee on Public Works of the U.S. House of Representatives, May 10, 1962, to determine the advisability of further improvements in the Minnesota River basin for navigation, flood control, recreation, low-flow augmentation, and other related water and land resources.

Fiscal

Estimated Federal cost \$320,000



Estimated Non-Federal cost 0
Total estimated cost \$320,000

FY 2006 Appropriation = \$99,000

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