

UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER SYSTEM - ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
FACT SHEET

LAKE ONALASKA DREDGE CUT AND ISLAND CREATION
POOL 7, UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER, WISCONSIN

LOCATION: Lake Onalaska is a 7,700-acre backwater lake created by the construction of Lock and Dam 7. The lake lies on the Wisconsin side of the navigation channel immediately above the city of La Crosse. The site lies within the USFWS Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

RESOURCE PROBLEM: Lake Onalaska is nationally recognized as one of the best bluegill and largemouth bass backwater lakes on the Upper Mississippi River and one of the major staging areas of migrating waterfowl. The area near Rosebud Island is a major fishery wintering area. However sedimentation and aquatic plant growth have virtually eliminated flows through this area during much of the year, creating both winter and summer dissolved oxygen problems.

PROPOSED PROJECT: The proposed project is to dredge a channel between Rosebud Island and the Wisconsin shore to provide oxygenated water to a valuable fishery area in Lake Onalaska. Some of the sand dredged from the area would be used to construct islands in the middle of the lake. Fine sediments overlying the sand that are unsuitable for island construction would be placed on Rosebud Island. The Wisconsin DOT would use the sand not needed for island construction and additional sand from the channel area for a nearby highway project. It is proposed that the DOT construct both the habitat project and the highway project concurrently. The Corps would design the habitat project, have review and approval authority of final plans and construction activities, and provide appropriate reimbursement to the DOT for the habitat project via a 215 agreement. Using one contract to construct both projects would result in cost savings because of reduced mobilization and use of excess dredged material for highway fill. About 15 feet of overdepth channel dredging for use as highway fill also would negate the need for future maintenance dredging. Additional intangible benefits would also result.

PROJECT OUTPUTS: The project should benefit the entire 7,700-acre Lake Onalaska fishery. The productivity and habitat conditions would be improved for warmwater fish species. Providing flows to the area would restore the winter fisheries value of a 200-acre area near Rosebud Island. Construction of islands in the lake would reduce wind-induced erosion of existing islands and create predator-free waterfowl nesting areas. These changes should have a very positive effect on waterfowl and other bird species that use the area.

FINANCIAL DATA: Total project cost of the independent Corps project is estimated at \$3,417,000. If the DOT implements the project, the total Corps cost is estimated to be \$2,700,000, of which \$2,273,000 would be paid to the DOT via a 215 agreement. Total direct construction cost savings to both agencies is estimated to be \$1,667,000. Average annual maintenance cost savings are estimated at \$27,000. Funding of the habitat project would be 100-percent Federal because it is located on the USFWS Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge.