

*call to action***Audubon Pushes Army Corps to Include Ecosystem Restoration and Navigation Improvements in 50-Year Plan**

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In the 1930's the U.S. Congress funded, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers started building, a series of locks and dams on the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. By the late 1960s river biologists, bird watchers, fishermen and hunters began noticing the "delayed impacts" of those dams, dredging and dikes as they observed habitat degradation and decline and loss of bird, fish and wildlife species.

It took 30 years for us to realize the impacts of the locks and dams. It has taken another 40 years to realize that we can't just spend money on navigation improvements and neglect the river's ecosystem – the habitat that supports birds, fish, wildlife and people. Unless, of course, we are content to have the river managed simply as a barge canal.

For a decade river biologists, resource managers, and members of many organizations, including Audubon, have been trying to change the way the U.S. Congress and the Corps of Engineers do business on the river. In 1993 we issued a "Call for Action." In 2000, we proposed the key

Help ensure we are successful in challenging the Corps to "Do It Right for the River" in its 50-year river management plan. We need your contribution TODAY to continue the fight.

elements of a restoration plan for the river. Now, in 2004 we are at a critical point and we need your help to "close the deal," as the business world says.

This month the Corps of Engineers is finally releasing what they believe is an integrated plan for management of the river – one that could, with some changes, provide significant ecosystem restoration while maintaining the

needs of navigation. That is the good news.

The Corps' current version of the plan proposes a 50-year time frame that could include 10 new or expanded locks on the Mississippi River and two new locks on the Illinois River along with a whole host of lesser improvements to improve navigation efficiency – at a cost of about \$2.3 billion dollars if everything they ask for gets approved.

On the ecosystem side, the Corps is proposing, over the next 50 years, to restore a portion of the river's ecosystem that has been lost over the last 60-100 years through changing how we they manage water levels, by restoring backwaters, side channels and islands, and by building fish passages at selected locks. The cost would be about \$5.3 billion dollars under the Corps currently proposed plan.

We are sure the ecosystem restoration plan is needed – in fact we believe Congress should spend twice as much over the

next 50 years. But we are not sure that all of the navigation system improvements are needed.

We support immediate small-scale improvements, like helper boats, traffic management, and mooring buoys at the locks, to improve efficiency. But further evaluation of future traffic demands are needed and further independent review of the Corps projections are warranted to see if new locks are really necessary over time.

It is time to do the right thing for the river and protect habitat that is there now and restore thousands of acres that have been lost or degraded. Here is what you can do now to help: Write, email or call your state conservation agency, your governor, your elected U.S. Representatives and Senators, and the President of the United States and ask them to support the following key planks in Audubon's Campaign for the river:

- Demand that the Corps proposes and Congress adopts an **INTEGRATED PLAN** for the river that requires ecosystem restoration *and* navigation system improvement to be linked in one integrated management plan.
- Demand that the Corps proposes and Congress authorizes and provides **PROPORTIONAL FUNDING** at the rate of **AT LEAST \$2** in ecosystem restoration dollars for every \$1 spent on the navigation system.
- Demand that the Corps proposes and Congress requires that actual **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN** be done through a decision-making framework that includes natural resource agencies, the states and non-profit organizations, not simply as a Corps of Engineers project.
- Demand that the Corps proposes and Congress requires the establishment of an **INDEPENDENT REVIEW** process that includes organizations such as Audubon, to participate in the ongoing evaluation of this program's implementation over time.

Your support of this platform will provide a critical underpinning for this program as the Corps and Congress continue to define it between now and 2005. If Audubon's recommendations are included in the new plan, we can stop the current trend, which is the spending of \$10 of federal funds for navigation while the ecosystem gets \$1 in federal funds. If Audubon's recommendations are included, the river's ecosystem will have the strongest standing it has ever had and we can reverse the tide of degradation.

TAKE ACTION NOW. Write, email or phone your agency and elected officials today with these points. You can help shape the future of this river – so that it's not just more bricks and mortar but breathes new life into 1000 miles and 1 million acres of habitat through the heart of America. For details go to: http://www.audubon.org/campaign/Latest_News.html and scroll down to the Advisory on the Mississippi.