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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Solicits Public Comment on Great Lakes Study

Chicago – On Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2010, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is holding its first public scoping meeting in Chicago from noon to 7:00 p.m. at the Gleacher Center, located at 450 North Cityfront Plaza Drive, to gather input on the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS). The public is invited to attend this scoping meeting and to provide comments on GLMRIS. Identical presentations about the study will be given at noon and 4:00 p.m., each followed by the comment period. The purpose of GLMRIS is to evaluate a range of options and technologies to prevent the transfer of aquatic nuisance species (ANS) between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River through aquatic pathways.

Using input obtained during the scoping period, USACE will refine the scope of GLMRIS to focus on significant issues, as well as eliminate issues that are not significant from further detailed study. Issues associated with GLMRIS are likely to include, but will not be limited to: significant natural resources, such as ecosystems and threatened and endangered species; commercial and recreational fisheries; recreational uses of the lakes and waterways; effects of potential ANS controls on waterways uses such as: flood risk management, commercial and recreational navigation; and statutory and legal responsibilities relative to the effected waterways.

In addition to Chicago, USACE will hold public scoping meetings in the following metropolitan locations: Buffalo, N.Y.; Cleveland, Ohio; St. Paul, Minn.; Green Bay, Wis.; Traverse City, Mich.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Ann Arbor, Mich.; St. Louis, Mo. and Vicksburg, Miss. Specific meeting venues and dates will be announced in Federal Register notices, the GLMRIS Web site and other media.

The public scoping comment period will end on March 31, 2011. If you plan to make an oral comment, please register on the GLMRIS Web site. Oral comments will be limited to three minutes per commenter. Comments can also be submitted electronically through the Web site. Each scoping meeting will consist of two separate four-hour sessions to allow as many attendees as possible.

An ANS is a nonindigenous species that threatens the diversity or abundance of native species; the ecological stability of infested waters; or the commercial, agricultural, aquacultural or recreational activities dependent on such water. As a result of international commerce, travel and local practices, ANS have been introduced and spread throughout the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins. Connected primarily by man-made channels, ANS transfer was impeded historically by the poor water quality of those waterways. Recent water quality improvements have lessened that impediment making it more likely for ANS transfer between the two basins to occur.

For more information regarding GLMRIS, the meeting agenda and scoping requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, visit the GLMRIS Web site at www.glmris.anl.gov or call the USACE, Chicago District, Public Affairs Office at 312-846-5330 or e-mail at ChicagoDistrict.PAO@usace.army.mil.

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