



## **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Update on GLMRIS In Relation to GLC/CI Report *Restoring the Natural Divide***

February 27, 2012

**Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study** – Use of “*Restoring the Natural Divide*” by the Great Lakes Commission and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (GLC/CI)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) appreciates the efforts of the Great Lakes Commission and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (GLC/CI) and welcomes the information generated by the *Restoring the Natural Divide* report (GLC/CI Report). The report considers potential hydrologic separation of the Great Lakes and Mississippi basins in the Chicago area.

The Corps intends to use the information generated by the GLC/CI to inform the report authorized by Congress – the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS). In GLMRIS, Congress directed the Corps to prepare a feasibility study of the range of “options and technologies” available to prevent the spread of aquatic nuisance species (ANS) between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins via the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS) and other aquatic pathways. One of the “options and technologies” being considered by USACE is hydrologic separation.

### **How will USACE use the GLC/CI Report?**

The GLC/CI Report identifies many potential opportunities and constraints inherent in the analysis, planning, and potential implementation of a hydrologic separation alternative.

The GLC/CI Report affirms the need to answer the many questions identified by the GLMRIS team in the course of detailed assessment of this alternative.

The GLC/CI report presents one piece of a very complex puzzle being assembled in GLMRIS. An existing Corps hydrologic separation team has already conducted a preliminary review of the report. The Corps team has developed a summary of comments and questions to discuss with the GLC/CI study team in order to improve our understanding of the underlying assumptions, data sets used, and methodology. The Corps team will meet with the GLC/CI study team in early March to discuss these points.

### **How will GLMRIS build upon the contribution of the GLC/CI Report?**

- GLMRIS will develop models related to flood control to further evaluate the impacts of flooding under the various separation scenarios. These models would:
  - o Address the residual risk of reasonably anticipated extreme flood events that could overtop the types of barriers conceived in the GLC/CI report, thereby continuing the risk of ANS transfer despite substantial public investment,
  - o Identify if any additional capital investments would be required beyond the current Tunnel and Reservoir Project (TARP) as part of potential mitigation measures in a hydrologic separation scenario.
- GLMRIS will involve local, regional, and state jurisdictions in assessing the feasibility of a plan that would rely upon improved local and regional sewage treatment.
- GLMRIS will model the impacts of hydrologic separation on water quality in the CAWS and Lake Michigan and consult with regulatory agencies on regulatory requirements to identify the water quality impacts of new discharges to the Great Lakes resulting from a hydrologically separated system.
- GLMRIS will consult with agencies that regulate the waterway, including MWRD, the operator of the Stickney and other large wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) that discharge to the CAWS, to determine future regulatory requirements and future plans for any anticipated improvements. Issues to be addressed include:
  - o Level of disinfection that is anticipated at the Stickney WWTP within the study period,
  - o Whether system-wide nutrient reduction will be implemented within the study period,



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- Anticipated regulatory requirements for emerging contaminants (e.g. mercury or other toxics) expected to be promulgated during the study period.
- GLMRIS will identify sediment remediation requirements that would be necessary with the implementation of a barrier separation project.
- GLMRIS will evaluate the functionality of stormwater systems as they currently exist, and may evaluate a changed future condition if the implementation of green infrastructure is anticipated by local municipalities to significantly reduce runoff.
- GLMRIS will continue to evaluate impacts to waterway users and the viability of mitigation for those impacts, building upon work already accomplished by the GLMRIS and GLC/CI study teams.

The GLMRIS Team continues to document observations and questions for further clarification with the GLC/CI study team. The GLMRIS Team looks forward to meeting with the GLC/CI study team, as well as other key stakeholders such as the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, to further discuss the implications of these observations.