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Corps announces plans to evaluate options at Brandon Road site as continuance of Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS), initiates public comment period

CHICAGO - As a next step in the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS), the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) has directed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to proceed with a formal evaluation of potential aquatic nuisance species (ANS) control technologies. The focus of this analysis will be to reduce the risk of interbasin transfer of ANS to the maximum extent possible through the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS) in the vicinity of Brandon Road Lock and Dam.

The GLMRIS – Brandon Road effort will assess the viability of establishing a single point to control the one-way, upstream transfer of aquatic nuisance species from the Mississippi River basin into the Great Lakes basin near the Brandon Road Lock and Dam located in Joliet, Illinois. While the GLMRIS Report describes alternatives to prevent aquatic inter-basin transfer of ANS between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds, implementation of one-way ANS controls at Brandon Road is believed to be one of the most rapidly achievable structural options. Construction of one-way ANS controls at Brandon Road is expected to enhance protections for the Great Lakes basin while providing additional information and experience to inform two-way risk reduction solutions.

The Corps is scoping the development of a feasibility-level decision document to support an agency decision that could provide the basis for further possible action.

“The Brandon Road control point was identified in the GLMRIS analyses as the only single location that can address upstream transfer of Mississippi River species through all CAWS pathways,” said Dave Wethington, GLMRIS Project Manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. “That makes it an ideal location to evaluate potential control technologies.”

As part of the Corps announcement, a public comment period on the proposed GLMRIS-Brandon Road effort is beginning on November 17, 2014 and will run through January 17, 2015. Comments can be submitted by attending either of two public meetings that will be held in December in the Chicago region, through electronic submittal on the GLMRIS website, as well as via conventional mail.

Public meetings are being conducted to allow stakeholders to learn more about the upcoming effort and provide comment on the proposed activities involving the Brandon Road site. Public meetings are currently scheduled for Saturday, December 6, 2014 near Joliet, IL and on Tuesday, December 9, 2014 in Chicago, IL. Virtual attendance via the Web or call-in will be made available to maximize opportunities for participation. Additional information,

including advance registration to speak at one of the upcoming public meetings, can be found on the GLMRIS Website at: <http://glmr.is.anl.gov>.

The location of the Brandon Road Lock and Dam also serves as a valuable control point for species of particular public and stakeholder concern – the Silver and Bighead carp. Placement of technologies at- or downstream of- the Brandon Road lock structure enhances effectiveness of the controls by incorporating a mechanical fail-safe (lock closure) in the event of technology malfunction.

The Brandon Road site is located south (downstream) of the confluence of the Des Plaines River and the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal (CSSC). Previous investigations have indicated that a potential hydrologic bypass can occur during periods of high precipitation from the Des Plaines River to the CSSC. A one-way control point at the Brandon Road site would minimize the likelihood of bypass of Mississippi River ANS into the Great Lakes basin during flood events.

A project at the Brandon Road site is likely to minimize a number of previously identified adverse impacts to existing waterway uses and users, such as increased potential for flooding or degradation of water quality. These impacts contributed significantly to the lengthy timeframes and significant costs of the structural alternatives presented by the GLMRIS Report.

As strategic control of ANS is a shared responsibility among federal, state, regional and public stakeholders, the GLMRIS Team will continue to collaborate with agency and nongovernmental partners to support an integrated management approach to control Mississippi River ANS transfer into the Great Lakes. In order to achieve the maximum effectiveness of an ANS control program, nonstructural measures, including biological, educational, and management controls, must be incorporated into any technological solution. This management strategy requires the close coordination of a variety of local, state and federal agencies to implement actions commensurate with their resources and authorities, toward achieving a comprehensive ANS solution.

A teleconference for stakeholders to ask questions about the upcoming efforts at the Brandon Road site will be held Nov. 25, 2014, at 11 a.m. EST. Call Information: Dial-in: 1-888-621-9649 or 1-617-231-2734. Event ID: 417591.

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