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Army Corps releases final Aquatic Nuisance Species Control Paper based on public input

CHICAGO - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) released today April 18 the final Inventory of Available Controls for Aquatic Nuisance Species of Concern – Chicago Area Waterway System (ANS Control Paper), an Interim Product of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS).

In response to public comment on the available options or technologies that may be effective at preventing the transfer of ANS through aquatic pathways in the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS), new information has been added to the ANS Control Paper. In the category of “Lethal Temperature”, three new control methods are outlined, including: 1) freezing, 2) carbon dioxide pellet blasting and 3) desiccation (drying). The team has also expanded the discussion of predatory fish in the “Biological Controls” category to include fish that eat mollusks and added a new sub-section to the “Benthic Barriers” category regarding the use of silt as a type of sediment-surface barrier.

The paper was originally released in December 2011. During the 60-day public comment period that ran from Dec. 21, 2011 to Feb. 17, 2012, USACE received 195 comments.

The majority of comments (120) were related to hydrologic separation, which is included as a control for further evaluation in GLMRIS. Other comments mentioned variations of control categories also previously identified, including controlled harvest and overfishing, sensory deterrents (such as water guns and acoustic, bubble or electric barriers), biological controls (native predators), vertical-drop barrier, ultraviolet light and the alteration of water quality.

“Public input is an important element of the GLMRIS study process, and we are grateful to everyone who took the time to review the draft inventory and submit comments to make this a thorough inventory of potential controls,” said Gary O’Keefe, GLMRIS program manager.

As evidenced by the comments received during the 60-day public comment period of the ANS Control Paper, the GLMRIS Team has sufficiently inventoried the available ANS Controls, which will serve as the basis for further study. Using the information contained in the paper, USACE will develop a process to refine the list of ANS Controls to determine which warrant further consideration for potential future implementation.

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The final inventory of potential controls is the latest in a series of Interim Products that have been released by the GLMRIS Team, including the Aquatic Nuisance Species White Paper, which identified 39 species of concern for further consideration in GLMRIS, as well as baseline assessments of cargo and commercial non-cargo traffic in the CAWS. The final ANS Control Paper and Fact Sheets, as well as other Interim Products describing baseline study information, are available for viewing or download on the GLMRIS website at www.glmris.anl.gov. The public may also visit the GLMRIS website to view the written comments received during the 60-day comment period or learn more about ways to stay involved with the study.

Over the next several months, the GLMRIS Team will be releasing three new Interim Products. These include an assessment of the baseline value of commercial fisheries in the Great Lakes, Upper Mississippi and Ohio rivers; a report outlining possible controls for the potential inter-basin connection of the Wabash and Maumee rivers near Fort Wayne, Ind.; as well as a ranking of probability for aquatic pathways to form at other sites along the basin divide.

The GLMRIS Team has also recently identified new opportunities for release of Interim Products and public engagement in the study process. Products resulting from the screening of the ANS Controls and the further evaluation of the 39 ANS of Concern - CAWS identifying the highest-risk species are anticipated to be released for public consideration in early 2013.

By late 2013, the GLMRIS Team is targeting for public release an array of alternative plans that would include general descriptions, a range of expected costs and anticipated mitigation requirements to alleviate adverse impacts to existing waterway uses.

“We’re very excited about the latest plans to engage the public,” stated GLMRIS CAWS Project Manager Dave Wethington. “The team sees these opportunities as a way to continue to involve our stakeholders, while also trying to accommodate requests to expedite the study process.”

The array of alternative plans anticipated by the end of 2013 would be among the final candidates proposed for detailed engineering and design. USACE officials regard this public input opportunity as a significant milestone in providing stakeholders a mechanism to consider potential alternatives in advance of the anticipated study completion date.

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