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The U.S Army Corps of Engineers is accepting comments for Indiana Aquatic Nuisance Species Pathway Reports, released today.

CHICAGO – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) today, Nov. 9, released for public comment three draft Aquatic Pathway Assessment Reports for the State of Indiana: Eagle Marsh, Loomis Lake and Parker-Cobb Ditch. The purpose of each report is to evaluate key evidence to estimate the likelihood of an aquatic pathway forming and the possibility of aquatic nuisance species (ANS) using it to reach the adjacent basin, as part of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS).

In 2010, a temporary barrier was built to prevent adult Asian carp transfer at Eagle Marsh. However, the Eagle Marsh assessment report found that Eagle Marsh remains a high risk potential pathway due to the probability that viral hemorrhagic septicemia virus (VHS) could spread across the basin divide.

“There has been significant progress on Eagle Marsh. Because this was identified early on as a potential Asian carp transfer site, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources built a temporary barrier, and the GLMRIS Team began to evaluate potential permanent control options. That report will be available soon and will provide opportunity for stakeholder input,” said USACE GLMRIS Program Manager Jack Drolet.

The ANS Controls Report that identifies options and technologies that may be available to permanently prevent the inter-basin transfer of ANS during flooding events at the Wabash – Maumee basins connection at Eagle Marsh near Fort Wayne, Ind. will be released for a 60-day comment period Nov. 16.

The Indiana draft reports indicate that Porter County’s Parker-Cobb Ditch and Loomis Lake have a medium and low probability for movement of ANS, respectively.

A viable aquatic pathway exists at Parker-Cobb Ditch for the potential transfer of northern snakehead into the Great Lakes Basin and for the potential transfer of threespine stickleback, parasitic copepod and VHS into the Mississippi River Basin. The overall aquatic pathway viability rating for Parker-Cobb Ditch was determined to be medium, however, as there was limited opportunity for the ANS of Concern to reach the pathway location and then transfer into the adjacent basin within the next 20-50 years.

The overall viability of the Loomis Lake aquatic pathway was determined to be low, as no species were found capable of reaching the site solely through the aquatic pathway.

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Comments for the three draft Indiana reports will be accepted beginning Nov. 9, 2012 and will close Dec. 7, 2012. Comments may be submitted electronically at www.glmris.anl.gov or mailed to GLMRIS Focus Area 2, Summary Report Comments, 1776 Niagara Street, Buffalo, NY 14207-3199. The reports will be available for download on the GLMRIS website at www.glmris.anl.gov.

“USACE will continue to work closely with stakeholders to maintain an open dialogue regarding study efforts,” said Drolet.

USACE will host a stakeholder conference call Monday, Nov. 26, 2012 at 10 a.m. (Central) to answer questions regarding the Indiana reports. Call-in information is USA Toll-Free: 877-336-1839, USA Caller Paid/International Toll: 636-651-0008, Access Code: 8506361, Security Code: 0000.

The overall objective of the Focus Area 2 portion of GLMRIS is to produce an interim report for each of the 18 potential aquatic pathways found between the two basins (outside of the Chicago Area Waterway System or Focus Area 1). These reports are the next step in a tiered approach to assess the probability associated with the spread of ANS between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins.

Additional reports focusing on potential pathways in Wisconsin, Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania will be released over the next few months, as they are completed.

Reports include: study methodology; aquatic pathway characterization; aquatic pathway viability for ANS of Concern; overall aquatic pathway viability and some potential opportunities that, if implemented, could prevent or reduce the probability of ANS transferring between the basins.

USACE will review and incorporate public input before finalizing and re-issuing the reports winter 2012/2013.

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