



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

BUILDING STRONG®

For Immediate Release:
March 24, 2011

Contact:
Sarah Gross
Sarah.d.gross@usace.army.mil

Last Week to Comment on Army Corps of Engineers Aquatic Nuisance Species Study

CHICAGO – March 31 is the last day to comment on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS). Anyone wanting to view the GLMRIS program management plan or comment on GLMRIS can do so online at www.GLMRIS.anl.gov. The purpose of GLMRIS, unveiled in the fall of 2010, is to evaluate a range of options and technologies to prevent the transfer of aquatic nuisance species (ANS), such as Asian carp, between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins through aquatic pathways.

“If we are going to complete GLMRIS efficiently and expeditiously, we need the active support of any state or local agency, academic or scientific institution that has relevant information or capabilities to help develop recommendations,” said Col. Vincent Quarles, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District.

Using input obtained during the scoping period, the Corps will refine the scope of GLMRIS to focus on significant issues, as well as eliminate issues that are not significant from further detailed study.

The scope of GLMRIS is massive, including portions of 31 states and evaluating hydrologically-complex topography along the nearly 1,500 mile-long Great Lakes and Mississippi River Basin Divide. The GLMRIS analysis takes into account dozens of potential ANS that may transfer through possible aquatic pathways across this divide.

The Chicago Area Waterway System is particularly challenging given the multiple uses of a continuously flowing channel in heavily urbanized terrain. Those uses include flood risk management, storm water management and wastewater discharge, commercial and recreational navigation, industrial water supply, and transit by public safety vessels. As a result of these complexities, the study must develop a comprehensive grasp of the potential consequences of making changes to any part of this system.

Although the final GLMRIS study is not expected to be completed until 2015, the Corps intends to release interim products as they are finalized. In the meantime, the Corps and its partners in the multi-agency Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee (ACRCC) will continue to pursue effective actions toward eliminating the threat of Asian carp to the Great Lakes.

GLMRIS has produced on-the-ground results already. In 2010, after performing a screening-level assessment along the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Basin Divide, the study team comprised of USACE and other federal, state and municipal agencies identified Eagle March, located in Fort Wayne, Indiana as having the highest potential risk of ANS transfer outside of the Chicago Area Waterway System. As a result of this finding, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources completed a temporary barrier in September 2010 to impede Asian carp movement. This action is

being followed up by the Corps with a detailed analysis of potential ANS control technologies specifically focused on the potential Eagle Marsh connection.

“Because of the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee’s effective actions, we have the time to do this enormous and complex study thoroughly and properly. An effective solution must, by law, take into account all potential impacts of proposed alternatives, and because of this the solution cannot be pre-determined,” said Major General John Peabody, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Great Lakes and Ohio River Division.

In addition to GLMRIS, the Corps has other projects aimed at preventing the transfer of aquatic nuisance species, in particular Asian carp, between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins. The Corps’ current efforts to contain Asian carp include the continuous operation of the Electric Dispersal Barrier System in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, construction of a 13-mile barricade that prevents fish bypass during flooding along the Des Plaines River, participation in monitoring efforts and applying a variety of tools including intensive netting, electro-fishing and environmental DNA sampling. The Corps expedited the design and construction of a third electric barrier that was completed a full year ahead of schedule and will soon go into full-time operation.

The public comment period for GLMRIS opened on November 16, 2010. Since then, the Corps has hosted a dozen public meetings throughout the Great Lakes and Mississippi River drainage basins.

Transcripts of the scoping meetings and all comments received during scoping period will be posted on www.glmris.anl.gov when they are available.

GLMRIS periodic newsletters will be published to keep interested parties informed of the study progress. Copies of the newsletters will also be posted on the Web site. Additionally, those interested in staying current with GLMRIS may subscribe to the GLMRIS e-mail list to receive updates on opportunities for public involvement, documents that have been added to the Web site and other important news and events.

For more information regarding GLMRIS and scoping requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, and to be added to the GLMRIS e-mail list, visit the GLMRIS Web site at www.glmris.anl.gov or call or e-mail Dave Wethington, GLMRIS project manager, at 312-846-5522 or David.M.Wethington@usace.army.mil. Also, join the conversation at Facebook.com/glmris and Twitter @GLMRIS. For more information on the ACRCC visit www.asiancarp.org.