



THE GREAT LAKES AND MISSISSIPPI RIVER INTERBASIN STUDY - *HAPPY HOLIDAYS!*

November 2013

Hello everyone,

I hope this message finds you well!

In lieu of our regular newsletter, I wanted to take the time to write a personal note to update everyone on the current status of our GLMRIS Team's efforts.

While many exciting releases and engagements have taken place since our last newsletter in July, the majority of the team's time has been tremendously focused on the drafting, compilation and quality assurance review of the GLMRIS Report, which will be made public in January.

Outside of the day-to-day GLMRIS Report activities, the team has both hosted and attended several key engagements and working groups with our partners. Most recently, we participated in a meeting of the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee (ACRCC) in Chicago in late October, at which partners at the state, federal and bi-national level discussed current Asian carp transfer prevention and monitoring efforts in the Great Lakes and their tributaries, progression of technologies and research, and setting priority focus areas for 2014.

In July, the ACRCC released the [2013 Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework](#) that showcases an integrated, interagency set of projects to prevent the establishment of the invasive fish. Also, Asian carp

[environmental DNA sampling activities](#) successfully transitioned to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service this summer. The Corps, however, continues to lead the charge along with the USFWS and the U.S. Geological Survey to determine what a positive DNA water sample really means, so scientists have the best possible tool available to inform future activities.

While the team continues to engage with the ACRCC and other organizations, we are most excited about the rapidly upcoming release of the GLMRIS Report to our Congressional, regional and public stakeholders. Currently on schedule for submittal in early January, the report will provide an explanation of potential alternatives that are designed to prevent the inter-basin transfer of aquatic nuisance species (ANS) through the aquatic pathways of the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS). The GLMRIS Report identifies eight potential alternatives to control the inter-basin spread of 13 aquatic nuisance fish, algae, viruses, crustaceans and plants, in all life stages.



Updating the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee on the status of the GLMRIS Report in Chicago, Oct. 24, 2013.

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The GLMRIS Report will deliver a conceptual level of design on the variety of alternatives, as well as a corresponding level of detail pertaining to other alternative-specific information including cost, regulatory requirements and real estate. The report will also include an evaluation of potential impacts to uses and users of the CAWS, and corresponding mitigation requirements for adverse impacts.

While the GLMRIS Report does not recommend a specific plan, the information contained within the document will allow for more educated decision making.

The GLMRIS Team, which extends across the country from Florida to Alaska, has put a significant effort into making this report the highest-quality document possible. A technical review team consisting of dozens of subject matter experts, including specialists in risk assessment, plan formulation, economics, real estate, ANS, environmental compliance and various types of engineering, completed a review of the report earlier this fall.

Based on this review, the GLMRIS Team received nearly 500 comments, edits and suggestions for improvement!

The report has also undergone policy review within the Corps organization at the Division and Headquarters levels, as well as a review by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. Most recently, the report was submitted for review by the Office of Management and Budget in November 2013.

After the report is made public, we are planning to host some public meetings around the Great Lakes and Upper Mississippi River basins to discuss the contents of the report and to listen to your input. Comments on the report – or on GLMRIS in general – will also be accepted online or by mail. Be sure to stay tuned for more information on the [GLMRIS website](#) in the coming months!

The team takes great pride in our efforts to be as transparent as possible, and we hope to continue to live up to the highest of your expectations. We look forward to your feedback on the alternatives we will be presenting in the GLMRIS Report, as well as ideas on how we can all work collaboratively to advance the most practical and effective solutions toward protecting our natural resources.

I have also included an update (on the following page) from one of my colleagues in the GLMRIS Focus Area 2 Team - Corps Louisville District Community Planner Nate Moulder.

Please read it if you'd like to learn more about these concurrent activities. Also, be sure to check the website for all of the latest GLMRIS-related information from both focus areas.



Model of the massive 82 pound, 53-inch long bighead carp (in background) discovered August 2013 in the landlocked Flatfoot Lake near the Illinois-Indiana state line. The [Illinois Department of Natural Resources](#) had a model developed of this invasive species for awareness and outreach efforts. Flatfoot Lake is an urban fishing pond with no connection to Lake Michigan.

Our team wishes you a happy and healthy holiday season and hopes to see you early next year. Until then, see you on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Tweet us @GLMRIS, or follow the conversation by using #GLMRIS.



BEST,
DAVE



Focus Area 2 Update

The Corps is continuing coordination with local and state agencies on prevention opportunities at the [sites](#) outside of the CAWS that received overall ratings of medium or high for risk of ANS transfer during high-water events.

In August, the Corps met with the Porter County Soil and Water Conservation District to review closing – via a road culvert near the basin divide – the Parker-Cobb agricultural ditch pathway near Valparaiso, Ind. The Conservation District is now working with the Porter County Highway Department to implement this solution. This pathway was given an overall rating of medium for the potential transfer of northern snake-head into the Great Lakes Basin and of parasitic copepod, threespine stickle-back and viral hemorrhagic septicemia virus (VHSV) into the Mississippi River Basin.

Initial modeling was performed for the Wabash-Maumee Basin connection at Eagle Marsh, Ind., to better understand the unusual hydraulic characteristics of the area. The team used existing information to the maximum extent possible, augmenting with new data only where significant data gaps existed. Following the completion of the ANS Controls Report for Eagle Marsh, the Corps Louisville District was tasked with providing engineering support in the form of hydrologic and hydraulic modeling for the stakeholders (Natural Resources Conservation Service, Indiana Department of Natural Resources and Little Rivers Wetland Project) developing the final plan for a barrier at this pathway. The Eagle Marsh pathway is the only high-rated pathway for Focus Area 2.

During summer 2013, the Louisville District set out to further understand the flow frequency on the Graham-McCulloch Ditch; the related effect on elevations in the Eagle Marsh area; and the unusual hydraulics of the Junk Ditch and its connections to the St. Mary's River during high flows. Additional survey data for the Graham-McCulloch Ditch and Junk Ditch channels and surrounding areas of concern was gathered by NRCS personnel and Corps contract surveyors.

The updated hydraulic modeling illustrated that improvements to the Graham-McCulloch Ditch berm will not induce flooding on Junk Ditch.

This is important because prior to the 2013 update, it was envisioned that any effort to permanently separate the two basins at Eagle Marsh would have to be accomplished in two phases to allow for a large amount of mitigation resulting from induced flooding. Now, with the improved modeling, it is expected that a project could be implemented in one phase with only minor mitigation of induced flooding required north of Engle Road.

Stakeholder agencies have come to a consensus that the preferred plan to separate the watersheds includes reconstruction of the Graham-McCulloch Ditch left-bank berm to an elevation that will prevent inter-basin flow for a one percent annual chance event and partial deconstruction of the right-bank berm to lower water-surface elevations in Graham-McCulloch Ditch. This feature was central to Alternatives H and I in the [ANS Controls Report](#).

NRCS is taking the lead on the design and pursuing funding for berm reconstruction.

Construction is tentatively scheduled to begin summer 2014.