

2389

Mississippi River Citizen Commission

820 Bainbridge

La Crosse, WI 54601

608-782-3670

678 Sioux Street

Winona, Minnesota 55987

507-454-4141

ragrawe@hbci.com

PO Box 399

Lansing, IA 52151

563-538-4159

Commissioners: William Howe, Kent Pehler, Robin Grawe, John Campe, Marc Schultz, John Wetzel, Bill Burke

August 30, 2005

Upper Mississippi River NW&FR

Attn: CCP Comment

Room 101

51 East Fourth St

Winona, MN 55987

Dear Refuge Staff:

The Mississippi River Citizen Commission (MRCC) is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (CCP/EIS) for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. The very strong interest of the public in river issues as demonstrated by the consistently large attendance at Fish and Wildlife Service-sponsored meetings and workshops is evidence that the River and the Refuge are important to the public. In the last several decades this interest as exemplified in GREAT, the Upper Mississippi River Master Plan, the Environmental Management Program and the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program has been the basis of support for the partnership and collaboration that is paramount to conducting successful River programs.

The MRCC is established to be a catalyst to further the democratic process in River decision making. Public involvement that facilitates information and educational activities among River users and River decision makers is the key to success.

The MRCC urges the Fish and Wildlife Service to place stronger emphasis on education as a top priority in establishing specific objectives of the CCP/EIS. We believe the history of shared authority for River management means that partnership/collaboration should be a top priority contained within specific CCP/EIS objectives.

In Alternataive D the guiding principles for habitat management (objective 3.2) must receive extensive partner review and be embraced by the public to be effective and supportable. Periodic public review of the CCP/EIS objectives with an evaluation of the status of implementation of objectives should be made part of the CCP/EIS.

Certainly a comprehensive discussion within the CCP of the shared authorities for management of the River is necessary for people to have a sense of who is responsible for what on the River. That understanding has been demonstrated in the past to be essential for river programs to be designed and implemented on a partnership basis.

Additionally, the MRCC urges the Fish and Wildlife Service to seek ways to involve public volunteers, either through The Friends of the Refuge, other citizen groups, or ad hoc work groups, in such activities such as plantings, clean-up, and repair.

Our comments are intended to assist the Fish and Wildlife Service in arriving at a CCP/EIS that can succeed in achieving the goals of the pool plans and allowing traditional public use of the River and Refuge.

Thank you for considering our opinion in this important matter.

Sincerely,

Kent Pehler, Chair