

Public comment sought on Intake Diversion Dam

Modification, Lower Yellowstone Project at Intake, Mont.

Omaha, Neb. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers along with the Bureau of Reclamation, co-lead agencies on the Intake Diversion Dam modification project, are seeking public comments on a draft supplement to an environmental assessment that was released in 2010. The supplement identifies alternatives to modify the existing diversion dam located in Intake, Mont. to improve passage for endangered pallid sturgeon and other native fish in the lower Yellowstone River. “This supplemental EA results from an extensive, collaborative effort from the stakeholders and interested parties that have focused their energy on the goal of finding the most acceptable solution that will benefit the pallid sturgeon, the Lower Yellowstone Irrigation District and the local economy,” said Jerry Benock, Reclamation project manager.

This draft supplement to the 2010 EA is consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the Council on Environmental Quality’s regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508), and other applicable environmental laws and regulations.

“The existing diversion dam is an impediment to successful upstream and downstream movement of the endangered pallid sturgeon and other native fishes,” said Tiffany Vanosdall, U.S. Army Corps project manager. “The proposed modification will improve fish passage for pallid sturgeon consistent with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Extensive coordination occurred with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; and the Lower Yellowstone Irrigation Project to prepare this draft supplement,” according to Vanosdall.

The public is encouraged to provide comments on the draft supplement during the open comment period from April 1, 2014 to May 1, 2014. There will be two public meetings from 6 to 9 p.m. at the following locations:

Apr. 23 Glendive, Mont. Dawson County High School – 900 North Merrill
Apr. 24 Sidney, Mont. Sidney High School – 1012 4th Avenue South East

A formal presentation will occur at 6:30 p.m. followed by an open house.

BACKGROUND: The diversion dam was constructed by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1905 to divert water into a main canal in order to provide a dependable water supply sufficient to irrigate over 50,000 acres of land. For more than 100 years, the dam has likely impeded upstream migration of the federally-listed endangered pallid sturgeon and other native fish due to increased turbulence and velocities associated with the rocks at the dam. In 2007, the Corps received authorization under the Water Resources Development Act to use funds from the Missouri River Recovery Program to assist the Bureau of Reclamation with protecting fish from becoming entrained in the irrigation canal and improving fish passage at the diversion dam. In 2010, the Corps and Bureau of Reclamation finalized an environmental assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact which allowed for construction of a new headworks structure with screens to reduce fish entrainment in the irrigation canal. Construction and screen installation was completed in spring 2012.

The draft supplement is available for viewing at:

<http://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/loweryellowstone/index.html> and hardcopies will be available at libraries in Glendive and Sidney, Mont. The public may submit comments via comment forms available at the public meetings. Written comments should be sent to: Bureau of Reclamation, Montana Area Office, ATTN: Intake Diversion Dam EA; PO Box 30137; Billings, MT 59107. Comments can also be emailed to: sha-MTA-LYI@usbr.gov. Comments must be postmarked or received no later than May 1, 2014.