



Request for City Council Committee Action from the City Coordinators Office

Date: August 20, 2012

To: Honorable Elizabeth Glidden, Chair, Regulatory, Energy and Environment Committee

Subject: Comments re Army Corps of Engineers proposal to limit operating hours of Minneapolis locks in 2013

Recommendation:

Authorize submission of comments in support of US Army Corp of Engineers proposal I to limit night time operating hours for locks located in Minneapolis on the Mississippi River.

Previous Directives:

- Oct 6, 2011 Committee of Whole update on Actions Related to Minneapolis City Council Resolution on Asian Carp
- April 1, 2011 City Council: Amend Federal legislative agenda in support of closing locks when Asian Carp is located nearby.

Department Information

Prepared by: Pierre Willette and Gayle Prest, Sustainability Director

Approved by: Paul Aasen, City Coordinator

Presenters in Committee: Pierre Willette

Financial Impact

No financial impact.

Background

The US Army Corp of Engineers is proposing to reduce the operating hours for Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock (USAF) and Dam, Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock (LSAF) and Dam, and Lock and Dam 1, all in Minneapolis. Comments are due no later than Aug. 30.

The Minneapolis Citizens Environmental Advisory Committee at their Aug 1, 2012 meeting recommended that the City Council submit comments in support of the proposal while also encouraging the Army Corps to take additional action that would help limit the advancement of Asian Carp up the Mississippi River. The group also discussed how this recommendation was consistent with their April resolution recommending that the Upper Harbor Terminal be closed in order to limit lock usage and prevent the advancement of Asian Carp.

US Army Corps of Engineers proposal:

This proposal is part of a nationwide effort to maximize constrained funding and provide consistent levels of service throughout the Corps' Inland Marine Transportation System. Based on Corps' headquarters guidance, the current usage at these locks does not support 24-hour service.

The proposed lock operating hours would be from 24 hours a day to 7 a.m. to 2 a.m. during the navigation season. These hours would be implemented prior to the start of the 2013 navigation season, which usually begins in March.

Navigation stakeholders concurred with this proposal at a meeting on May 16, 2012. Stakeholders included Minneapolis terminal operators, commercial tow companies, cruise tour vessels, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and emergency responders.

Currently, during the navigation season, the three locks and dams in Minneapolis operate at Service Level 1 (24 hours per day/7 days per week). The following tables illustrate the Army Corps operational service levels and the most recent history of lockage numbers.

US Army Corps of Engineers' Lock Operating Hours Guidance:

	Annual Commercial Lockage Usage	Weekly hours	
Service Level 1	1,000 +	24 hours every day	Current
Service Level 2	500-1,000	16-20 hours every day	Proposed
Service Level 3	< 500	8-10 hours every day	
Service Level 4	Limited or substantial recreational traffic	Set times per day	
Service Level 5	Little or no commercial usages with 500+ recreational usages – no usage pattern	Weekends and holidays	
Service Level 6	Limited commercial with no consistent usage pattern	By appointment	

Actual 2011 Usage:

	FY 2011 Commercial Lockages	FY 2010 Recreational Lockages**
Upper St Anthony Falls (USAF)	1,487*	1,080
Lower St Anthony Falls (LSAF)	837	1,111
Lock and Dam #1 (Ford)	672	1,726

* 961 of USAF lockages consisted of Paradise Cruise tour boat service that did not transit through the system – they now operate out of Boom Island Park and starting in 2012 no longer go through

USAF. (If there are similar traffic patterns in the future, this would be about 526 commercial usages.)

**In 2012 National Park Service, Friends of the Mississippi River and Wilderness Inquiry all have voluntarily discontinued using the locks for their programming.

There are currently three barging terminals in operation on the City's upper riverfront that would likely use all three locks: Northern Metals Recycling, Aggregate Industries and Upper Harbor Terminal (operated by River Services). Barge transportation to the upper riverfront is limited by the size of the Minneapolis lock and dam system – which can accommodate only two-barge assemblages (all other locks on the Mississippi River can accommodate assemblages of 9-15 barges at one time).

According to US Corps of Engineers 2011 data, additional breakdown for USAF commercial lockage usage:

- Aggregate Industries had 276 lockages.
- Upper River Services had 251 lockages (Upper River Services sends barges to both the City owned Upper Harbor Terminal and Northern Metals).
- "Other" was 59 lockages.

The fiscal year 2011 operational cost for the Army Corps for these three locks and dams was \$3.47 million. Their estimated annual savings from implementing the proposed reduced level from Level 1 to level 2 service is \$770,000. The Army Corps of Engineers does not have the authority to close any of the Mississippi locks for the purpose of stopping or controlling invasive species. Congress would need to authorize such action.

According to National Park Service presentation to the City Council in 2011, closure of Upper Saint Anthony Falls Lock and Dam or Lock and Dam #1 is the most effective way to limit Asian Carp from spreading into northern Minnesota.

While the Army Corps of Engineers is proposing reducing to a Service Level 2 for the three locks, it appears that using their own guidance documents, the locks are very close to meeting even further reductions in service (one or fewer shifts per day). This could further save the Army Corps of Engineers money and reduce the odds of Asian Carp advancing up the Mississippi River. With the cruise boats no longer using the USAF block, commercial lockages are likely already at the Service Level 3 threshold of fewer than 500 lockages.

Summary of Draft Comments and Potential Impacts:

The following City position will be communicated to the Deputy Chief of Operations of the local office of the Army Corps of Engineers:

1. The City supports any reduction in operating hours at the locks and dams located in Minneapolis. This is consistent with the City's concern over the migration of Asian Carp up the Mississippi River as it would result in significant jobs lost, limit tourism and harm our environment. Reducing operating hours at the lock and dams is one of the many tools that can help limit advancement.
2. In addition, the City would encourage the US Army Corps of Engineers to look at additional methods to reduce your costs and at the same time, limit Asian Carp expansion. This includes review of limiting the number of openings of the locks for recreational users to specific times. This

could save money and by limiting the openings it would also decrease the chances that Asian Carp would migrate upstream.

3. The City strongly urges the US Army Corps of Engineers to expedite the granting of federal permits to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to install deterrent barrier technology at Lock #1 and Lock #2.

4. The City supports the US Corp of Engineers in moving speedily and effectively in other Asian Carp advancement efforts including fulfilling its requirements under recently enacted Stop Invasive Species Act whereby the Corps must submit to Congress an expedited action plan with options for stopping Asian Carp from penetrating the Great Lakes across 18 possible points of entry within 18 months.