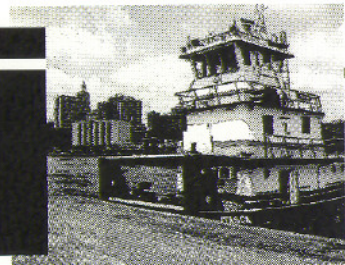


WATERWAYS

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With 'chief's' endorsement

Corps river plan goes to 2005 Congress

The Army's Chief of Engineers, Lieutenant General Carl A. Strock, has approved and signed the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study. His "chief's report" was forwarded to Assistant Army Secretary for Civil Works John Paul Woodley, Jr., on Dec. 15.

A framework

The report provides a framework for ecosystem restoration and navigation improvements on both waterways.

In his comments, Lt. Gen. Strock said, "I am especially pleased that the study results enjoy the solid support of our non-federal sponsors, and I believe the independent review from the National Research

Council has strengthened our effort."

Investments recommended by the plan include long-term expenditures of \$5.7 billion for ecosystem restoration and \$2.6 billion for navigation efficiency improvements.

Design work begins

Because there was an appropriation of \$13.9 million in the 2005 appropriations package passed by Congress last year, the Corps can begin design work on some of the items in the plan.

Word is the Corps will use the design money for preconstruction engineering and design on projects that include Mississippi locks 24 and 25 and LaGrange on the Illinois system.

There will also be design work on two environmental

restoration projects, fish passages at lock and dams and some smaller environmental projects.

Construction will wait until passage of a new water resources bill which will come before the new Congress this year.

1st stage projects

Lt. Gen. Strock says a 15-year first stage should include \$1.58 billion for ecosystem work, \$1.79 billion for new locks and \$235 million for other navigation items.

If passed, first stage projects will include new locks next to 600-foot chambers at five Mississippi locations south from Lock 20 and at Peoria and LaGrange on the Illinois Waterway.

Holman levee looks likely by 2007

The 3M company has pledged \$1 million to help build a levee around St. Paul's flood-prone Downtown Airport. With that money in place, it appears that the project may be complete by 2007, a completion date that had been put in jeopardy by a narrow city council vote that cut the levee project from the 2005 budget.

Other money will come from the Metropolitan Airports Commission, which owns the field, state bonding and the FAA.

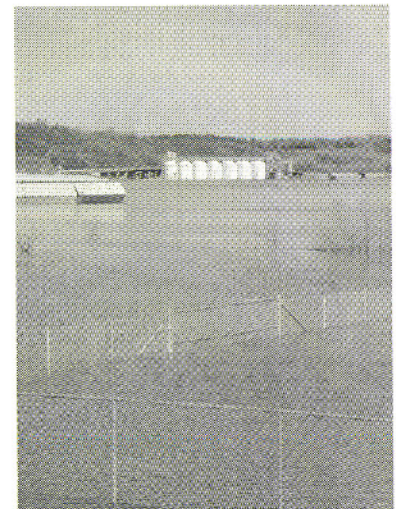
A recent announcement by the Minnesota National Guard that it will move at least half of

its helicopters and maintenance to St. Cloud gave additional urgency to the project.

Governor Tim Pawlenty and St. Paul Mayor Randy Kelly told a recent news conference that they are confident that with the 3M money and other funding secured, they will get the remaining state and federal dollars needed to complete the project.

Northwest Airlines, which had at one time opposed a levee, now supports the idea because air traffic diverted by flooding went to Twin Cities International.

During 2001 flooding, Holman Field was closed for 78 days.



(above) Water stretches across Holman Field to CHS Two House during the 2001 flood.

Executive Director's Report...

Recently I watched a TV interview with Nobel Laureate Paul Nurse, a 50-ish British biologist with an insatiable curiosity for everything from stem cell research to economic theory, and president of The Rockefeller University. An off-handed remark about outer space in the middle of a dissertation on something totally unrelated struck me as odd, and immediately grabbed my attention.

He related that a gigantic black hole was recently discovered at the very fringes of the universe some 12 billion light-years from earth. And given that the outer limits of the known universe is some 13-plus billion light-years distance from our planet, this newly discovered object was born just after the big bang created the universe itself! That's big news if you're into stargazing.

DR. NURSE went on to explain that a black-hole is not really a hole, but quite the opposite; it's a mass of interstellar stuff so dense that nothing escapes its powerful gravitational pull, except radiation, x-ray in this case. Starting its journey some 12 billion years ago, this radiation has finally reached earth-bound telescopes that are able to 'see' what is otherwise invisible to the unaided human eye.

The real meaning of this event, Dr. Nurse asserted, is not that it extended the limits of the universe; cosmologists have suspected it was 13-plus billion light years away for some time now. Nor did it explain what preceded the big bang. What it did was to underscore the fact that each new discovery adds to our understanding that the universe is a vast and still expanding wonder – and, more importantly, that this discovery helps satisfy the human condition to want to know how things work.

ASTRONOMY ASIDE and closer to home, there is a strong and growing need to know how a new congress will work when faced with another guns-or-butter economy, rising national debt, bitter

competition for funds and rising expectations by all special interest groups.

Take, for example, the future of navigation capacity. While the completed Navigation Study has been passed up the ladder, the recently departed Congress did not approve appropriations for larger locks because the WRDA bill containing authorizing language did not make it through the lame duck session.

ONE REASON for this failure, we are told, is that some in Congress, including those who say they support waterway projects but who also want to advance their political careers, do not want to be seen as favoring excessive expenditures at a time when fiscal conservatism is the policy du jour, and many domestic programs are left to twist in the wind.

Nonetheless, the lame duck session was able to pass an omnibus spending bill for FY 2005 which contained \$13.5 million in planning funds for the Corps of Engineers to start pre-construction engineering and design work. These funds, as we recently came to know however, must cover design work for environmental projects as well.

In spite of the high demand for federal dollars, many are hopeful that the next Congress will do what the last one didn't: appropriate \$2.03 billion for lock construction and \$1.58 billion for environmental restoration.

Congressional agencies have predicted that the amount of freight shipped to and from this nation will double by 2020. And if we are to meet future demands of increasing population, more foreign and domestic commerce, a 20% increase in recreational boating and improvements to the environment, it is essential we pursue a nationally integrated approach to transportation and fund it accordingly.

OTHERS ARGUE differently, however. One view aggressively argues that the fiscal policy in the United States is on an unsustainable path, and foresees the current wartime budget deficit getting much larger as health and retirement costs mount for the

baby boom generation. At best, they claim, these deficits will gradually harm the future income of Americans. At worst, they could trigger a fiscal crisis, which could accelerate and possibly exacerbate the damage. In other words, they argue, economic decline of the this country is the end path of current economic policy.

As usual, truth has a way of hiding somewhere between extremes and finding it is a challenge for any government, in any time. We can only hope that the new Congress finds the strength and courage to pass laws that speak to the many serious issues facing this nation, and not lapse into a legislative black hole where nothing is emitted except body heat.

River system keeps cement flowing

While much of the U.S. is experiencing a shortage of cement, the Aggregate and Ready Mix Association of Minnesota reports increasingly dependable supplies at the end of the fall construction season..

A report on the *Business Wire*, which goes to subscriber publications such as newspapers and business magazines, recently said the river had a lot to do with it.

"The upper Midwest has been spared the shortages experienced in the southeastern and western states through a combination of domestic cement shipments and foreign shipments. Additional handling capacity for barge traffic on the Mississippi River has also allowed more cement to be shipped into the Minnesota market throughout the summer."

The availability of water transportation is likely to play a role in 2005 as well. The same report says some analysts are predicting further volatility into 2005 because of demand from China and Asia and hurricane devastated areas of the U.S.

The Association's Executive Director Fred Corrigan (an old friend of the waterway industry) says, "The goal of the ready mix industry is to serve the state of Minnesota with an adequate and dependable supply of concrete."