

# MISSOURI RIVER

R E C O V E R Y P R O G R A M



US Army Corps  
of Engineers



Quarterly newsletter  
WINTER 2008

## LIFE ON THE RIVER: Learning to Live Together

By Mike George, Missouri River Recovery Program Manager

### Greetings, Missouri River enthusiasts!

As manager for the Missouri River Recovery Program, I'm very excited to introduce the first installment of this newsletter. These periodic newsletters will provide current information on recovery efforts, stakeholder activities, policy and legislative updates and stories about people who live, work and play on the Missouri River.

The Missouri River Recovery Program is a comprehensive effort led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Tribes, states, other federal agencies and non-governmental organizations to develop and implement actions to recover the Missouri River. Our vision is to create a sustainable ecosystem supporting thriving populations of native species, while balancing the recovery efforts with the river's many other uses, such as municipal water supply, navigation, irrigation, recreation, flood control and energy production. Working together to find this balance is crucial to the success of the program. I think this quote by civic philosopher and author Daniel Kemmis sums up the approach we need to take:

"There are not many rivers, one for each of us, but only this one river, and if we all want to stay here, in some kind of relation to the river, then we have to learn, somehow, to live together."

*(Daniel Kemmis, Community and the Politics of Place, 1990.)*

I hope you find the newsletter informative and engaging. For more information about the recovery efforts, visit [www.moriverrecovery.org](http://www.moriverrecovery.org).

Sincerely,

Mike George



PALLID STURGEON



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## SPRING Pulse

The 2003 Amended Biological Opinion on the management of the Missouri River, issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, requires the Corps to implement a "spring pulse" along the river below Gavins Point Dam in South Dakota and Nebraska. The pulse involves releasing additional water in the spring, which is thought to be critical for pallid sturgeon spawning and reproduction. Criteria for the spring pulse are included in the Corps Missouri River Master Manual. These criteria allow storage to influence how much water is used for the pulse.

The extended drought in the upper Missouri River basin has necessitated shortening the length of the pulse in recent years. The Corps' 2008 Annual Operating Plan includes spring pulses in March and May if there is enough water to maintain water levels later in the season.

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## MEET MR. RIC (More Commonly Known as MRRIC)

The Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC), with guidance and support provided by the Federal Working Group (a group of agency representatives appointed by the federal executives of the Missouri River Basin Interagency Roundtable), will serve as a collaborative forum in developing a shared vision and comprehensive plan for the restoration of the Missouri River ecosystem. This committee will develop recommendations on actions to recover listed species and restore their habitats while sustaining the river's many uses. MRRIC will ensure that stakeholder and public values are considered and incorporated into implementation.

The MRRIC Planning Group, comprised of representatives of basin Tribes, states and stakeholders, collaboratively developed a charter to guide MRRIC's activities. In early November 2007, the draft charter was released for public review, and input was gathered at a day-long public comment session in Omaha, Nebraska. The Planning Group met in late November to discuss these public comments and incorporate changes.

In January, the MRRIC Planning Group met in Omaha and reached a consensus on the recommended charter. The recommended charter was submitted to the Secretary of the Army for his review and approval in early February.

The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution has provided facilitation support for the MRRIC Planning Group. To learn more or find out how you can be involved, visit the MRRP Web site at [www.moriverrecovery.org](http://www.moriverrecovery.org).

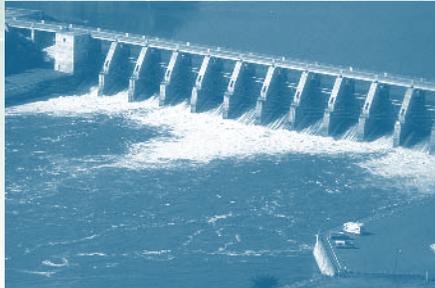
## NEEDED: More Shallow Water Habitat

The construction of dams and levees on the Missouri River has drastically decreased the amount of sediment flowing in the river. Today, the river carries only 25 percent of its original sediment. The decrease in sediment transport has impacted natural functions of the river, including habitat for native species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2003 Amended Biological Opinion requires the Corps to preserve existing shallow water habitat and create new habitat along the Missouri River. In addition to restoring habitat, reintroducing sediment into the river will restore other river functions and prevent infrastructure damage.

Restoring shallow water habitat can be accomplished by one or a combination of the following methods:

- widening the river channel
- restoring chutes and side channels
- controlling the amount of water (flow management) released from dams at certain times of the year



Between October 2006 and September 2007, the Corps' Omaha District completed three shallow water habitat projects, including construction at Council Bend and Desoto Bend, along with river structure modifications at several locations.

During this same time period, the Omaha District analyzed and developed construction plans for several projects including Boyer Bend, Bullard Bend, Lower Calhoun, Fawn Island, Middle Decatur, Plattsmouth Bend backwater, Tobacco Island and river structure modifications.

## SPRING Pulse

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In 2008 the Corps will continue to conduct research to learn more about the pallid sturgeon's response to changes in flows, spawning behavior and connection with its habitat. Additional research will assess potential downstream flooding effects and potential impacts of modified spring flows. More information on the spring rise monitoring is available through this link: <http://infolink.cr.usgs.gov/Science/Documents/OF2007-1262.pdf>.

## MISSOURI RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM Online

The Missouri River Recovery Program Web site is now live! We invite you to visit the site for information about MRRIC, recovery activities, planning, protected species and the science of recovery – all in one place!

The site will provide periodic updates on news, answers to commonly asked questions, information about public involvement and program documents. Come see the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approach to recovery: [www.moriverrecovery.org](http://www.moriverrecovery.org).

Would you rather receive this newsletter via e-mail? Visit [www.moriverrecovery.org](http://www.moriverrecovery.org) and click "Sign up for Listserv" to receive program information electronically.

The mission of the Missouri River Recovery Program is to implement actions to accomplish Missouri River ecosystem recovery goals in coordination and collaboration with agency partners and stakeholders. The vision of the program is to create a sustainable ecosystem supporting thriving populations of native species while providing for current social and economic values. For more information on the Missouri River Recovery Program, please visit [www.moriverrecovery.org](http://www.moriverrecovery.org).



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