



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
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Bruce Rauner, Governor
Wayne A. Rosenthal, Director

April 8, 2015

Peter Bullock
USACE, Chicago
231 S. LaSalle St, Suite 1500
Chicago, IL 60604

RE: Sauk Lake Dam – Ecosystem Restoration Project
Project Number(s): 1509386
County: Cook

Dear Mr. Bullock:

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has received the request for scoping comments on the above mentioned project dated March 5, 2015. The project is located at Sauk Trail Forest Preserve and is owned by the Cook County Forest Preserve District. The project proposes to remove or notch the existing earthen dam of Sauk Lake for the purpose of restoring floodplain connectivity. The project may also include stream channel and riparian ecosystem restoration, installation of cobble riffles, woody debris, and removal of invasive plant species.

Office of Water Resources Permit

The removal or modification of the Sauk Lake Dam will require a permit from the Department's Office of Water Resources (OWR), Dam Safety Program. Please contact Gary Jereb (gary.jereb@illinois.gov) with the OWR for further coordination on this action.

Nature Preserves and State-Listed Species

The Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve exists approximately one mile upstream of Sauk Lake. Environmental changes at this site should be considered and potential impacts reviewed in coordination with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC). Please contact Steven Byers (steven.byers@illinois.gov) and Kelly Neal (kelly.neal@illinois.gov) for further coordination with the INPC.

Several state-listed plant species occur in the Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve. These include the state-threatened spotted coral-root orchid (*Corallorhiza maculate*) and marsh speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*). Other state-listed plant records in the project vicinity include the state-endangered yellow-lipped ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes lucida*) and state-threatened blazing star (*Liatris scariosa var. nieuwlandii*). Similar habitat for these species may occur in the project area. A qualified biologist should search the area for these species and mitigation measures should be implemented if they are discovered. Please notify the Department if these species are discovered in the project area for further review and recommendations to mitigate impacts.

Dewatering, Channel Restoration & Sediment Stabilization

Details on how the lake will be dewatered and sediment stabilized were not yet available for comment. The Department is interested in how the impoundment will be dewatered in a way that reduces environmental impacts downstream.

Also, the Department is interested in further details on the stream channel restoration and sediment and erosion control plans. The accumulated sediment may be difficult to dry and result in challenging work conditions. Sediments may need to be quickly stabilized to prevent releases and adverse impacts downstream. The Department looks forward to further project plans concerning these issues in the upcoming Environmental Assessment (EA).

Aquatic Organisms

Fishes may become stranded during impoundment dewatering and be difficult to collect or re-locate due to the accumulated sediments. The Department is interested in project plans concerning the disposition of the existing fish community and other aquatic organisms that may become stranded during dewatering. Please provide further details on this concern in the EA.

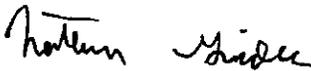
The Department is also interested in restoration of the less mobile native species to the project area. Will some species of fish, amphibians, and turtles be re-located to the project area to accelerate restoration or will natural recolonization be achievable within an acceptable amount of time? Please discuss this issue further in the EA.

Contaminated Sediments

The project area is located within a highly developed and industrialized area in the Chicago Metropolitan Area and may contain contaminated sediments. Please describe how sediments will be tested and handled in the EA.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment and looks forward to further discussion on this project.

Sincerely,



Nathan Grider
Impact Assessment Section
217-785-5500

cc: Steven Byers – INPC
Kelly Neal – INPC
Kathleen Kowal – USEPA
Thaddeus Faught – IEPA
Dan Heacock – IEPA
Shawn Cirton – USFWS