



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge
51 East 4th Street
Winona, Minnesota 55987

August 30, 1984

Mr. William Steinmetz, Chairman
Lake Onalaska Protection &
Rehabilitation District
UWEX, Room 112 Courthouse
LaCrosse, WI 54601

Dear Mr. Steinmetz:

Enclosed is a copy of the approved Fishery Management Plan for Lake Onalaska.

We received many constructive comments from your group and others during the public meeting last November and from your review of the draft plan, and have attempted to modify the plan to reflect as many of these comments as possible. However, since the plan is intended to be an interim document and will be modified after completion of the Refuge Master Plan, some of the large scale project proposals which we believe could not be realistically designed and funded within the next three years, were not included at this time.

Following are specific responses to your comments and recommendations which were presented in our December 2, 1983, meeting and your December 16, 1983, letter:

I. Steps to be taken immediately -- no Hydrological Study needed:

1. Dredge channel from Schafer's Landing past Halfway Creek and Rosebud Island. Build sediment trap at mouth of Creek.

This proposal has a lot of support from the Service and Wisconsin DNR biologists and is recommended in Wisconsin's fishery management plans for the Lake. It was not included in our Fishery Management Plan because of the very high cost and our belief that we would not be able to secure funds within the limited time (3 years) covered by the plan. However, our proposal for dredging from the main body of the Lake to Schafer's Landing which was presented at the July 18, 1984, meeting (see I.2 below) could easily be expanded should funds become available.

2. Dredge from Schafer's Landing to main body of the Lake.

We plan to use funds proposed for experimental dredge cuts to complete this work. In addition to providing improved access for fishing, we hope to improve habitat for fish by improving circulation of water in the area north of Rosebud Island. Vegetation is being mechanically removed to provide an access channel to the main Lake this year.

3. Dredge from Upper Brice Prairie Landing to the main body of the Lake.

This was not specifically included in the interim plan, but is one of the access projects the Service is willing to cooperate on as mentioned in Item 5, page 19, of the plan.

4. Dredge several two-to-three acre plots near islands north of Red Oak. Use dredge spoils to re-establish islands.

The plan allows for this option. As we discussed on July 18, however, we believe more benefits could be derived from available funds by first completing the dredge cut in the Schafer's Landing/Halfway Creek area.

5. Dredge channel from Sailing Club to main body of Lake. Unplug culvert under airport runway to Bell Island.

Land in Sailing Club area is controlled by the Corps of Engineers and leased to LaCrosse County and the Club. The Corps views maintenance of such areas, including dredging, as a responsibility of the leasee. Vegetation was mechanically removed by the Club this summer, and the Club also received a permit for dredging.

The culvert under the runway has been unplugged.

6. Clear out silt accumulation ahead of the tube at dike at upper portion of the Lake. Install sediment trap.

The culvert is clear. Sand will be removed from above and below the tube this summer. Hopefully, these excavated areas will function as sediment traps.

7. Dredge spots in channel near Brice Prairie to improve flow.

This was not included in the interim plan. It can be considered in plan update after completion of the Master Plan, and the Service will cooperate in such a project if the Lake District or other agency obtains funding.

8. Dredge channel near island barriers in northern end of Lake and use dredge spoil to re-establish islands.

This may be a viable project for future consideration, but was not included in the interim plan. A project to repair areas in the barrier island along Brice Prairie is proposed for funding in FY 86.

9. Place a number of fiberglass mats along shore above Schafer's Landing to create openings in weeds for fish.

After initial evaluation of available products, we believe large scale use of fiberglass mats would be too expensive and labor-intensive to use as a fishery management tool in Lake Onalaska. As we discussed early this year, the most practical application appears to be for aquatic vegetation control around docks. We have and will continue to cooperate with the Lake District for experimental use of aqua-screen for this purpose.

II. Steps to be taken after Hydrological Study:

All listed proposals will be considered. Funds will be requested to begin the hydrological study in Fiscal Year 1987.

III. Public Access:

Service access proposals are discussed on pages 15 to 19 of the plan. All accesses listed in your recommendations are on areas controlled by the Corps of Engineers and leased to other parties. As mentioned earlier, the Corps considered maintenance and improvement of such areas to be a responsibility of the leasee. The Service is obtaining permission to install information kiosks at several landings this summer. Vegetation has been removed to provide an access channel from Schafer's Landing to the main Lake. Funding for erosion control on Brice Prairie barrier island is proposed for Fiscal Year 1986.

Thank you for your cooperation and fine input to the plan.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Howard
Acting Complex Manager