



August 29, 2022

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Ms. Amy Bowell-McClean, Project Manager
Attn: CENWO-PMA-A
1616 Capitol Avenue, Omaha, NE 68102.

Dear Ms. Bowell-McClean,

The Izaak Walton League of America appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Draft Feasibility Report and Integrated Environmental Assessment of the ecosystem restoration project on the Missouri River on the Lower Brule Reservation. This project is being conducted under Section 203 of the 2000 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). The Missouri River, its water, floodplain, wetlands, forests, plants, fish, birds, and animals, have been critically important to members of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe for tens of thousands of years and the river remains vital to Tribal members today.

Man-made changes on the river are severely impacting LBST lands. Riparian forests were permanently flooded, and connected wetlands were lost when dams formed Lake Sharpe and Lake Francis Case. Those areas once provided crucial year-round wildlife habitat especially during severe winter months.

The proposed project seeks to preserve and restore the Tribe's historically significant cultural resources. It would add 60 acres of cottonwood forest, and 17.7 acres of connected wetlands. The wetlands would be adjacent to a constructed island, peninsula, and breakwater. The island would restore important habitat lost with the construction of the reservoir.

Lake Sharpe's waves and ice are causing severe erosion, resulting in the loss of aquatic and terrestrial habitat. To date, over 2,000 acres of Tribal land has been lost and 450 additional acres are threatened. There are two cultural resource sites within the project, other cultural sites could be lost in the next 50 years unless steps are taken to protect the area.

Sediment is a major concern for the Missouri River reservoirs. A high percentage of Lake Sharpe's sediment comes from the Bad River with the rest from other tributaries, and its shoreline. Sharpe's shorelines face a year-round assault from waves and ice, accelerating erosion in the reservoir. This is impacting private, Tribal, state, and Corps lands.

The League urges the Corps to continue working with the LBST, the Missouri Sedimentation Action Coalition, other federal and state agencies, and interested stakeholders on methods that reduce erosion and sediment accumulation. This is needed to protect the future of the reservoir system and the river's congressionally authorized project purposes.

When completed this project will require monitoring for five-years to ascertain if the benefits are obtained. The Corps, LBST, state, and federal agencies will conduct the monitoring. Any needed changes to the project would require LBST concurrence with costs shared by the Tribe. We believe comprehensive monitoring is critical to assure the project's elements are fully examined and the objectives are realized.

We commend the Corps for the public involvement that has been done in the early phases of the project with the LBST and agencies. We urge the Corps to continue to engage with interested stakeholders throughout the project, so questions and concerns are addressed.

The League supports the completion of this study and the analyses needed for the feasibility report and environmental assessment. This process will determine the threats, and loss, of natural resources and the degraded habitats linked to the construction and ongoing operation of the Big Bend Project.

We also support a study of erosion on approximately 3.9 miles of shoreline of Lake Sharpe adjacent to Lower Brule. We hope this will help develop alternatives that will restore degraded aquatic, wetland, and riparian habitats for fish and wildlife and preserve cultural, spiritual, and ceremonial resources and maintain other tribal traditions.

The Izaak Walton League of America appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Draft Feasibility Report and Integrated Environmental Assessment of this restoration project on the Missouri River. We respectfully ask to be kept informed on all future actions regarding this project. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Paul Lepisto

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